Second Chances

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Summary

Law died trying to save Luffy from being executed. But where one adventure ends, another is set to begin and he must relive his childhood. If he dies, this time it's for good. This story contains gender confusion and temporary gender change No romance so far
"Tora-o! No!"

Law held up his hand to signal his crew as he brought Kikoku down on Blackbeard. The blade sliced through flesh, muscle, and bone like butter. The Yonko's hand impacted his stomach and he felt a pulling, twisting, agonizing pressure ripping him apart. But there was no defense against the barrage of seastone bullets and the man's life was extinguished before Law even began to fall.

He fell to his knees, coughing up blood as he wrapped his arms around the gaping hole in his body. A roar shook the ground and signaled his first mate's arrival, the large bear decimating the men and women that stood between him and Law.

Only his room was keeping him alive. He slumped forward to lie face-first on the ground, sighing as Bepo's Electro had the overpowering smell of ozone and cooked meat permeating the battlefield.

"TORA-O!" Luffy screamed in agonized grief from where he was trapped on the scaffold, alone as his guards had long since joined the fight.

Law was forced to move to send bullets back at the marines that had fired them. The movement had him coughing again and blood splattered the ground. His energy was fading fast, the week-long battle proving too much for him but he smiled anyway. He'd taken out the last major wall between the strawhatted captain and the One Piece.

Bepo finally reached him and gentle paws lifted him up, the bear cradling him in his arms. "Sencho..." There was hopelessness in his voice as he stared at Law's wound.

Chuckling, Law reached up to rub the red stained muzzle tenderly, smiling softly when he immediately pushed into the touch. "We planned for this....Bepo."

"Sencho, no! You can't die yet!" Bepo cried, tears pouring from his warm black eyes. "I'm not ready!"

"You'll never be ready." He replied softly.

A blast of Conqueror's Haki signaled Luffy's freedom and half the combatants fell—most of them enemies. The ground quaked and Law looked down as Luffy Picked himself out of the crater. Black met green and Law smirked at the man. "This is just like you, waiting for all the fodder to be taken out so you can go for the big guns."

A calloused hand touched the edges of the wound and Law smacked it away.

"What are you doing here? Go fight." He huffed.

The man didn't say anything for a few minutes, just staring at Law with a heartbroken expression. "You're dying."

"Don't be ridiculous, Mugiwara-ya." He scoffed. "You think I'll just let you have the One Piece?"

The grief was back and up close it was like another blow. "You promised you wouldn't leave me! You promised!"

"I'm not-" A coughing fit cut him off, deep wet wracking coughs that had blood dripping to the
stained ground. By the time he was able to breathe properly, there was a large puddle and he tightened his grip with his powers. "Not going anywhere," he wheezed between breaths.

The last of his strength was draining away and he leaned heavily against Bepo, unable to hold himself up. The bear was now crying uncontrollably and Law reached up to drum his fingers against his muzzle.

"Don't cry, Bepo." He said softly.

"Don't leave me, Tou-san!" Bepo sobbed. "You're all I have left!"

His breathing was starting to become labored, hands starting to shake. "You have the crew."

"They're not nakama, not PACK!" He whimpered and nuzzled Law's face desperately. "They've been…they've been talking, Tou-san…They want my Mink."

Law jerked Luffy forward, glaring into his desolate eyes and causing him to freeze. "You will take Bepo into your family or I will NEVER forgive you."

He began to cough again, releasing Luffy to cover his mouth and warm blood began to seep through his fingers. He was losing his grip on his powers and both shouted at him, trying to keep him stable but he was succumbing to the wound. Blood was leaking into his lungs and widening the puddle at their feet and he couldn't catch his breath. He became lightheaded and their voices became a distant hum as his room shattered.

Cracking his eyes open, Law gave their blurry faces a bloody grin. "I lied. I'm g-going to the…the White City." Reaching up to put a hand on each of their cheeks, he gasped out, "See you...there."

"NO! NO! T-TORA—"

"TOU-SAN DON'T—"

A seastone bullet imbedded itself into his struggling heart and he went limp, not even having the energy to be shocked by the betrayal. Like a switch being flipped, everything went black.

Before suddenly becoming blinding white.

"LAW-CHAN, NO!"

Turning onto his side with a gasp, he coughed up blood, stomach whole once more but feeling more than a little bit bruised. A foot slammed into his side with more than enough force to crack ribs and he let out a pained cry.

"VERGO, YOU BASTARD! I'M THE TRAITOR!"

Law knew that voice. He heard it every night in his nightmares. Opening his eyes, he saw Corazon picking himself up from the ground, beaten and bloody.

Then, before he could take in a shocked breath, Vergo shot the man in the chest.
"CORA-SAN! VERGO YOU BASTARD!" Law shouted as he watched his friend crash back down. Only vaguely did he notice the childish sound of his voice as rage immediately clouded his senses and he created a room. He switched with Corazon as Vergo prepared to deal the finishing shot and as the bullet buried itself in his shoulder, Law leapt up to press his thumbs to the man's chest.

"COUNTER SHOCK!"

The voltage took a surprising amount out of Law and as the smoldering corpse fell to the floor, so did he.

"Law-chan!" Large hands scooped him up and he cracked his eyes open to smile up at his…his father, seeing him above him, expression screaming worry.

"Cora-san…" He greeted happily. "Did I get him…?"

The man smiled back, eyes wide with relief and wonder. "You did, Buddy. You got him."

He was brought up to the man's chest, finding himself encased in Corazon's protective arms and he curled up, exhausted. His room shattered, but he barely felt the pain. "Don't let Doffy hurt you, Cora-san…I love you…" He started to cry.

Corazon shushed him, rocking him gently. "Don't worry, Law-chan. I won't let him hurt you." He said soothingly as he began petting his hair.

Too exhausted to stay awake, Law could only trust him to keep them both safe.

Waking up took more effort than it usually did and his body was killing him. "Bepo, what time s'it?"

"Law-chan!"

The sound of Corazon's voice had him jerking in surprise and his eyes snapped open only to be blinded by sunlight. He threw his arm over his eyes and made a pained sound when his skin pulled—he knew that pain too. Oh god. "Cora-san?" He asked, voice weak in a way that had him cringing.

Large hands brushed his hair out of his face and this time when he opened his eyes, he saw the man's shadowed face as he blocked the light. He was smiling, tears in his eyes. "You're awake! Law-chan, I've been so worried-it's been a week!"

No wonder he felt so crappy. Law sat up quickly in alarm, ignoring his screaming body as he looked around. It was a sleeping cabin in a ship with bookshelves, a desk, and the bed he was laying in. the desk only had some loose papers and a slumbering Den Den Mushi.

Corazon grabbed him by the shoulders. "Careful, careful! Don't move so fast, you'll tear something!" He said quickly as he lifted Law the rest of the way into a proper sitting position against the headboard.

Law turned back to the man, feeling completely lost. "Where are we, Cora-san?"

The man smiled at him, brushing his knuckles against Law's jaw. "I stole Vergo's ship. Admiral
Sengoku will be meeting us personally at Mangrove Cove.”

Law frowned, squinting slightly. "Admiral?"

"I promise you'll be okay." Corazon said quickly. "I've explained everything and he's promised you'll be safe." He winced slightly at Law's blank look and stroked his jaw again. "Trust me, Law-chan. If he tries anything…I'll get you out of there. I'm good at running away." He finished with a smile.

"I prefer the term 'emergency retreat'." Law replied with a weak smile that had the man beaming and the sight took Law's breath away.

Corazon suddenly leapt up. "Ah! You must be starving! I'll make you some food!" He hurried to the door…

…and promptly tripped, falling on his face.

Law giggled before clapping a hand to his mouth in mortification. He avoided the shocked man's wide eyes and said gruffly, "Try not to burn down the ship…"

Smiling sheepishly, Corazon said, "I'll have water ready just in case."

Then Law was alone. Taking a deep breath, he created his room just large enough to encase the cabin and decided he was strong enough to remove the Amber Lead from his system. Bringing an inkpot to his hand, he used his teeth to create an outlet and got rid of the ink before he concentrated on the wound. He concentrated on the blood flow and the feeling of his own veins and arteries, finding the taint of the Amber Lead and guiding it towards the wound.

It went quickly, his skill not diminished with his age, and drop by slow drop, the toxin left his body to drip into the inkwell. He started to sweat, breathing becoming labored from the exertion and he realized that while he had the knowledge he needed, he no longer had the stamina. His focus never wavered, not even when Corazon reentered the cabin with the promised food.

Corazon watched silently as drop by drop, the jar was filled. It was just over half when he finally got it all out of him and he let his room go. He tried not to be sick, the strain nearly too much for his fragile child body, but at the same time he felt so much better. He was free.

A freezing hand touched his jaw and he opened his eyes tiredly, gazing up at Corazon with pride and happiness. "I…I did it…"

Tears were falling unchecked as he smiled down at Law. "You did. Good-Good job, Buddy."

He suddenly scooped Law up and cradled him in his arms as he broke down into relieved sobs. Smiling, Law pressed closer and basked in the man's presence. It didn't take long for sleep to claim him again.
Chapter 3

When he woke again, he found himself in Corazon's arms. There was the sound of waves and cries of gulls. The steady rocking of the ship and the warmth surrounding him nearly lullled him back under but he opened his eyes to see a perspective of a Marine Battleship he wasn't used to. The deck was abandoned and despite the sounds of nature, it was ominously silent. They were really alone.

"Ah! Good morning, Law-chan!" Corazon said happily. Law realized he was steering one-handed and wondered if that was really safe. "We're about ten minutes out from Mangrove Cove. Think you can stomach some food?"

Considering it, Law nodded and he watched Corazon drop anchor before carrying him into the ship. The empty halls were spotless and the silence was louder without the sound of the waves. It was kind of eerie and he was glad when they entered a room.

It was a kitchen, thankfully not as spotless as the rest of the ship since it looked like the inhabitants had left in a hurry, but the large room still felt oppressive with the lack of life. Law couldn't wait until they were off this ghost ship.

Corazon set him on the counter and got to work making a quick meal for him and Law asked, "Have you eaten?"

He supposed he startled the man as he jumped, nearly splashing himself and the floor with the water he'd boiled for the rice. The man caught it though, only a bit sloshing over the side as he laughed sheepishly. "Sorry, got kinda used to the silence. Yeah, I ate, don't you worry about me."

Law stared at him a moment, trying to see if he was lying or not, but he didn't see any sign of deception. Not that that meant anything, the man WAS a spy after all. Hm. "I don't wanna eat alone…"

Corazon smiled and shrugged. "I suppose I could eat a bit more. How's grilled fish and onigiri sound?"

"Good." He replied and watched the man work in silence. He reached out whenever something threatened to get too close to the flame or if the man flipped the fish a bit too enthusiastically and the food was finished without incident. He accepted a plate of food from the man and said, "Thank you." But he waited for him to take the first bite before digging in.

God, he was STARVING. But despite his hunger, he ate calmly, careful not to miss a single bite.

Corazon began to make more food between taking bites of his own. "It's good to see you have an appetite, Law-chan."

Law's hand faltered on its way to his mouth and he blushed. "I—s-sorry, I'm just…" His words died in his throat when he saw the happy smile Corazon was giving him.

"Don't be sorry, Law-chan. You-you're a growing boy." He turned back around, but Law saw his tears.

Oh right. Law had been on the verge of death, with no appetite and unable to stomach anything but a handful of rice and water. He remembered that last month and the man's desperation despite sleeping through most of it.
"Eat up, Law-chan, we've got a busy day ahead of us!" Corazon said cheerfully as he placed more food on Law's plate and Law smiled, doing as he was told.

After breakfast, the man took him to get a bath, standing guard in case he lost too much strength and he told Law about how Sengoku pretty much raised him after Doflamingo abandoned him to return to the Holy city. About how he'd enlisted in the marines to get strong enough to take his brother back from the thugs he'd used to replace him. How he'd been a Celestial Dragon and how they ended up losing everything because of their mistakes.

He told him everything and Law listened silently, wishing there had been a way for him to help.

When he was clean, he got dressed in some new clothes Corazon must have bought and with his hat returned to his head, he felt much better. They continued toward Mangrove Cove and Law could already feel the Buddha's Haki.

He was nervous, knowing about the man's Reigning Justice. Law's head had a price on it because of the Amber Lead, then there was his life of piracy to worry about and the fact he now had a five billion berry fruit under his control. The man could decide that Corazon was addled from his undercover mission and take Law down.

Corazon suddenly lifted him up. "Don't worry so much, Law-chan. He's a man of his word."

"Everyone wants to kill me." He said quietly. "Why would he be any different?"

"Because he promised me." Corazon told him softly, brushing his fingers along Law's jaw and Law wondered if he knew that law was aware he was stroking the vitiligo patch there. "I know you don't have good experiences with the World Government, but my father is a good man. He won't hurt you, I promise."

Oh how much Law wanted to argue. About how the man had been the one to order Ohara's decimation and how he had wanted Luffy and his brother dead just because of who their parents were.

But the man loved Corazon as much as Corazon loved him.

"Okay." He said, looking away from the man's open face. Then he glared at him. "But one wrong move from him and I'm taking you with me when I run, even if I have to knock you out."

The man looked surprised before he smiled and nodded. "Thank you, Law-chan. Now let's hurry up to the deck, I forgot to slow us down."

Law didn't have a chance to respond as the man grabbed their bags and darted out the door just as the ship began to beach. The whole ship jerked beneath them, but Corazon was used to such disasters and didn't lose his footing as he shoved the doors to the deck open.

The ship was actually capsizing!

"How do you manage to do these things?!" He shouted as Corazon ran up the nearly forty five degree angle to the railing.

"It was an accident!" He defended as he leapt from the railing to land on a nearby rocky cliff. Turning around, they both watched it sink.

After a moment, the man said, "It's coming towards us, isn't it?"

Law sighed wearily. "Yes."
The next few minutes were a relative blur as Corazon ran as fast as he could, the Battleship barely slowed by the cliff and Law watched solemnly as he focused his Haki just in case he had to harden his body. But the ship finally hit bedrock and exploded outward before going still.

The cloud of dirt, debris, and sawdust enveloped them both even though Corazon blocked most of it from Law with his coat and both began coughing as he slowed to a stop. Law was wheezing like an asthmatic as he struggled to cough out the dust and by the time he was done, he was exhausted.

A hand carded through his hair. "Are you alright?"

"Sh-shut up!" He choked out with a grimace, feeling his face going red.

Chuckling, the man rubbed his back and a few minutes later, Law was able to breathe again.

And immediately realized they were not alone.

Corazon looked up when he felt Law go tense and smiled widely as he snapped to attention with a salute. "Tou-san! It's been so long!"

"Yes." Sengoku the Buddha said calmly as he stopped a few yards away, looking at Law with hard gray eyes. "So this is the boy from Flevance."
"So this is the boy from Flevance." The man said as he closed the distance between them.

Law watched him warily, hand gripping Corazon's shirt in a position where he could grab his gun if he needed to. Even in Corazon's arms the Admiral was tall and Law drew in slightly subconsciously, though he still said in a scathing tone, "No, I'm the girl from Ohara."

Grey eyes narrowed at him as he stared at him blankly.

Then Corazon tilted Law's head up so that they met each other's eyes. "You promised to give him a chance, Law-chan."

Law hmphed but settled down again as he watched the Admiral warily.

"So this is Law." Corazon said cheerfully. "Law-chan, this is Sengoku, my father. Say hello."

"Hello, Buddha-ya." He said without inflection.

That got a raised brow. "Charming kid. His manners seem to be a little lacking."

Law flipped him the bird and smirked at his outraged expression.

Corazon let out an exasperated sigh. "Dad, that's just the way he talks. It took me three years to earn a –san, don't expect to be given respect right off the bat."

"I am an Admiral!" He exclaimed.

"I am a thirteen year old boy orphaned by the World Government for an entirely curable disease they could have PREVENTED if not for their greed so EXCUSE ME if your position in their military doesn't exactly inspire a sense of RESPECT." Law snapped back with a dark glare.

"How could we have prevented it, boy?" Sengoku demanded in irritation.

"If you'd look in the Vault," He began, ignoring their surprised looks, "You will find the research on Amber Lead and its toxicity above ground dated nearly a CENTURY ago. But rather than WARN the people of Flevance that they were literally digging their own graves, they hid the findings for PROFIT." He said in disgust.

There was a long moment of silence.

"How long have you known that, Law-chan?" Corazon asked in concern.

"A while." He replied shortly but his voice had softened.

"Rocinante, I need a word with you." Sengoku said as he refocused on the blond. "Privately." He gestured back the way he'd come.

Hesitating a moment, Corazon set Law down onto his feet and Law fought down the urge to cling to him as his legs threatened to buckle. The man patted Law's head with a smile. "We'll be right over there. I'll be right back, okay, Law-chan?"

Though he really didn't want to be left alone, Law realized how clingy he'd been and decided, "Sure, I'll guard the bags."
Only sheer force of will kept his arms steady as the bags were placed in them and he waited until they were a few yards away to set them down. Curse this weak child body! He flopped down beside the bags and reclined against them as he looked up at the patches of blue visible through the trees. He needed to get to Zou soon.

With the sound of the sea breeze blowing through the mangrove forest, he was lulled into a light doze though he kept his senses open for danger. Thus he heard the bullet long before he needed to lean to the side to avoid it. Still a bit sluggish from exhaustion, however, his cheek was grazed and blood began dripping from the burning wound. This wasn't Sengoku's style, so why was he getting shot at?

"You bastard! What the hell did you do!?"

Turning to look at the child yelling at him, he felt a spark of excitement at the shock of red hair. "Eustass-ya…what a pleasant surprise."

The boy pointed a gun at him and growled, "Very fucking funny! What the hell did you do to me, Trafalgar?!

Law shrugged carelessly. "I didn't do it. Where's Killer-ya?" If he remembered right, they were from the same island.

"Here, Law-san."

Tilting his head up until he was looking behind himself, he saw the maskless boy crouched behind him, hair covering his eyes as he dug the bullet out of the ground.

Kid lowered the gun with a huff. "Then who the fuck did? Do you know how long it took me to get that fucking tall? I bet it was that bitch Bonney!"

"No." He denied immediately. "She was nowhere near the battle."

The boy looked surprised before he squinted down at Law. "Oh yeah, you died, didn't you?" He sat down in front of Law and crossed his legs. "Man, you shoulda seen it. Fucking Strawhat, man, he went CRAZY. It was a massacre. And when they started going after your guys, we thought he snapped, but then Bear told us the only ones using seastone bullets was your crew—which, wow, talk about mutiny."

Law let out a tired sigh. "I don't need to know this."

Kid shrugged. "Whatever, dude. I'm guessin' we can't go back then."

"Probably not." Killer said as he knelt at Kid's side in seiza pose. "I remember quite clearly being torn apart."

"Yeah, we're not going back." Kid said flippantly before he kicked Law's leg. "You look like shit. The fuck happened to you?"

"Fuck off." He grumbled, knowing he'd have a bruise by morning.

"Your manners are still shit too." Kid scoffed, laughing when Law shot him the finger.

"Your sign language could use some diversity." Killer said with a small smile.

Surprised, Law carefully signed out, 'Fuck off.'
Both laughed this time and he smirked. Once they calmed down, he asked, "So you come from Mangrove Cove, huh?" He hadn't realized they were in the South Blue.

"Yeah, but I'm thinking we should leave earlier this time." Kid said. "I mean that fucking Strawhat bastard set sail at seventeen! And you've already started too, making me fucking look bad at Saboady!"

"You accomplished that on your own, Eustass-ya. It was hardly our faults." Law chuckled in amusement.

"Fuck you, man!"

"Why is the Buddha here?" Killer cut in before they could start bickering.

Law glanced back at the two oblivious adults still deep in conversation before he said, "Cora-san wants to put me under his protection so Doffy won't kill me."

"But you're a pirate." Kid said in confusion. "And not just a member of any old crew, you were part of the DONQUIXOTE family!"

He nodded. "I know, but Cora-san asked me to give him a chance and I will. I trust his judgement."

"You are terrible at that." Killer noted with a frown.

"Hey, shut your facehole!" He huffed.

They were silent a moment. "Do you need help, Law-san?" Killer asked hesitantly.

"Thank you, but Cora-san will protect me." He was SURE about that.

Kid stared at him for a long moment. "I don't believe you." He moved closer and pushed Law's hat back so he could see his eyes. "Seriously, you look like crap and you haven't punched me yet, so you're nowhere near healthy."

"I'm saving my strength in case Buddha-ya tries to betray Cora-san." He said in mild irritation.

They looked back at the duo and saw Corazon gesturing widely and looking angry as Sengoku's face started to redden in his own anger. Both sat on either side of Law. "Then you won't mind if we stick around." Killer said easily.

Law frowned suspiciously at them. "What do you even care?"

"You dying so early would be totally lame." Kid huffed. "If Strawhat was my only rival, I'd probably shoot myself in the head.

Killer punched Kid in the arm, hard and Law looked at him in confusion. "That's not funny." He said calmly.

"Ow, son of a bitch." Kid hissed as he rubbed his arm. "It wasn't a joke."

"I know. Which is why it's not funny."

Law looked at Kid. "You shot yourself in the head?"

"Hey, shut up." He said in annoyance.
"If I weren't conserving energy, I'd be teasing you." He yawned as he let it go, watching the arguing adults.

"Yeah, yeah, look at this cool robot I found in our clubhouse!" Kid said, taking it out and showing it off proudly.

Law looked at it curiously. "Little you made that?"

"Yup! It got destroyed last time, but look!" He set it on its feet and wound it up. It began punching as it walked and Law jerked forward in awe.

"Oh wow!"

"I made a switch on the back," He grabbed the robot and flipped the barely noticeable switch before setting it back down.

It began crouching every other step, looking like a gorilla and Law giggled at the ridiculous thing. "Is that its victory dance?"

"See, HE gets it!" Kid exclaimed to Killer who just let out an exasperated sigh. Kid began telling Law all about the robot's conception and how he'd made one that could somersault but had to scrap it because it would make the toy too bulky.

"—and look! It doesn't do it while it's moving, but," He pressed the head down and with a bit of creaking, it suddenly sprung up.

Law jerked back and laughed in delight. "So cool!"

Grinning, Kid kept him occupied with the robot as Killer kept an eye on the still oblivious adults. They had cooled down some, but they still hadn't bothered to check on the obviously sick boy. He wondered even if the man was a good guy, was he capable of taking care of the boy? So far, the only answer he could see was 'no'.

Suddenly Law began to wheeze and Killer turned back to him quickly, grasping his arm as he doubled over. "Law-san, what's wrong?"

"My…my immune system…may be…compromised…" He gasped out, starting to cough. "May've caught…a virus…"

"No, that's not it." Kid denied as he leaned forward to press his ear to Law's chest. "You weren't on that Battleship that crashed into the cliffs, were you?"

Law hesitated. "…yes. Why?"

"Those ships are built with asbestos, Law-san." Killer answered. "They can cause mesothelioma after only a few days of exposure. It's scarring in the lungs—" He began to explain only for Law to wave him off as he started to get his breath back.

"So I-I inhaled the fibers…" He panted. "Great, more poison. Room." Immediately he saw that the boy was right and began to remove the carcinogenic fibers, expanding his room to include Corazon and his father. Seriously, how had these men survived this long? They still hadn't even noticed the kids!

Getting rid of the fibers from their lungs as well, he ended his room and collapsed against Kid in exhaustion.
"C'mon, let's get you some water." Kid said as he got to his knees. Together they forced Law to his feet and wrapped one of his arms around their necks as they half carried, half dragged him away from the path.

"I'm s'posed to watch the bags…" Law protested weakly, spots dancing before his eyes.

"Don't worry, the only ones that come this way are the fishermen." Killer reassured him. "They'll see Buddha-san and walk away."

They didn't go far anyway. About eight yards away from the path, they came across a river and they carefully knelt down on the rocky shore. Kid took off Law's hat, finding he was on the verge of losing consciousness. He looked at Killer and together they dunked his head in.

He came up spluttering. "What the—"

"Wake up, fool. We're at the river." Kid scoffed. "So drink!"

Glaring dully at him, Law dipped his hands into the water to scrub them as clean as he could before he cupped his hands and brought it to his mouth, drinking. The duo held him steady as his throat protested and he coughed. Trying again, he managed to drink without issue.

"LAW-CHAN?!"

They looked back at the road to see Corazon at the bags, looking around anxiously.

"Cora-san!" He called back, wincing when his voice cracked. Corazon spun around to look at him and relief filled his features as he jogged over. Law's eyes went wide and he held up his hands.

"Don't run, there's a river—"

It was too late. The man tripped over an exposed root and went down hard, tumbling the rest of the way down the slight decline but Kid jumped to his feet and barely stopped the man from rolling into the river.

"Oops." The man laughed with a sheepish smile, looking back at Law from where he was splayed out on his back. "What're you doing over here, buddy? You're supposed to be guarding the bags."

"He was coughing real bad, so we took him to get some water." Kid replied as he looked down at Corazon blankly.

"The asbestos from the capsizing battleship irritated the tissues in his lungs." Killer explained as he continued to steady Law while he drank. "He has removed the carcinogen, however it has depleted his strength."

Rolling up and around, Corazon crossed his long legs and looked down at them curiously. "What are carcinogens?"
"What are carcinogens?"

"A substance that causes cancer through direct exposure." Law replied as he continued to drink. It eased some of the roughness in his voice, but it was still lower than usual. "Most common effects of this particular carcinogen are Asbestosis, the development of plaque on the diaphragmic pleura through exposure. Lung cancer. Mesothelioma, Pleural or Peritoneal."

"Which is…bad?" He asked uncertainly.

"Deadly." Killer confirmed patiently as Kid resumed helping him steady the older captain over the water.

"But who cares about the death tolls?" Kid muttered bitterly. "It's cheap, plentiful, and rakes in the dough. Who cares about the working class?"

"Has anyone looked into this?" Sengoku asked, startling the three children since they hadn't noticed him walk up. Fucking Admirals. "That is a heavy claim to make."

"Are you joking?" Kid asked in cynical amusement. "How nice it must be up there on your pedestal. How's the weather, Buddha-SAMA?"

"Kid." Killer hissed warningly.

"Maybe he'll listen, Eustass-ya." Law said, voice nearly inaudible. "I'm not dead yet, right?"

"Why would he listen?" He demanded. "My family spent YEARS sending letter after letter begging for help as my father's condition worsened to the point he needed fucking artificial lungs just to BREATHE because his lungs were so stiff from the Asbestosis they refused to bring in oxygen—AND THEN the fucking nobles raised the fucking price on all our medical imports to the point half the populace is suffocating and you wanna know if anyone's LOOKED INTO IT?!"

Killer put a hand on the boy's chest and Kid backed down, struggling to reign in his temper. When he looked back up, his wine colored eyes were ice-cold. "There was a 'riot'," He formed air quotes with his fingers. "Last year. Probably never even graced your desk, but a total of twenty three 'deviants' were gunned down by the Marines stationed at the Palace. You know what those people were doing before they were MASSACRED? Begging for help! You exhume those corpses, you'll find the asbestos concentration in one body could fill an inkpot! Oh, but wait," He said in false cheer. "They burned their corpses sending that shit straight back into us!"

Law grabbed onto the boys. "You've been affected?"

Kid shrugged off his hand with a dark glare. "I don't need your help!"

"Well too fucking bad!" Law growled as he created his room, springing forward as the boy tried to run and he tackled him to the ground. Pain tore through his shoulder from the bullet wound and then Kid punched him in the face where his bullet grazed him. The scuffle was violent but even as weak as he was, Law kept even with the boy.
Then Killer helped restrain his captain. "Stop being stubborn, Captain."

Scowling, Kid went limp when he couldn't get free and Law released him to kneel by his side. Putting a hand to his chest, he began to scan him for the exact problem and was alarmed by how far along the lung cancer was. Still, it took less than a minute before he nodded to Killer to let him up.

"Done. Once I recover, I can start healing the townspeople." He said brightly. "I'm starting to get the hang of this."

Kid caught him as he collapsed. "What the hell?!" He set him down carefully, but the boy was unconscious. He smacked the discolored cheek lightly. "Oi, Trafalgar, wake up!"

Corazon walked over and scooped the boy up, replacing the fuzzy cap on his head as he said, "He's overtaxed himself. While his control is astounding, he's only had these abilities for a couple days, technically."

Kid gaped at him. "What? That means—is he still poisoned?" He asked worriedly before it turned to anger. "Trafalgar, you fucking idiot, you better've healed yourself first!"

Crouching, Corazon put a hand on Kid's head. "He healed himself last night, don't worry."

Kid crossed his arms with a scowl. "I'm not worried. Did he get you too?" He asked Killer.

"Yes." He confirmed with a small smile. "Cora-san, Buddha-san, he also removed the asbestos in the both of your lungs while you were chatting."

Corazon looked surprised. "He did?" He smiled down at the boy in his arms and traced one of the vitiligo patches on his face tenderly.

Sengoku cleared his throat. "I will investigate the riot while you find a hotel, Roci. Put him to bed."

Kid and Killer jumped in Corazon's way. "Woah, you're not goin' anywhere without us!" Kid exclaimed with a glare that dared him to try.

"You're Law-chan's friends, of course you can come." Corazon said with a smile. "And call me Rocinante. Corazon was just my alias."

"Yes, Cora-san." Killer said politely.

Letting out an amused huff, Corazon walked back to the bags and picked them up. "So which way to town?"

"What's your budget?" Kid asked as he and Killer led the way, jogging to keep ahead of the man's longer strides.

"Who needs the money? As a Marine, they can't officially charge me." He replied as a sense of unease overcame him. Why would two children ask about budgets like it's a normal thing?

Kid and Killer exchanged a surprised look before Killer asked, "You'll pay them anyway?"

"Not officially. There'll be no record so they can't be taxed." He said cheerfully.

Five minutes later they entered a shabby but clean building where an older woman sat behind the counter reading a faded and torn magazine. She looked up in surprise and brightened before she
saw Kid and Killer. "Boys! What are you doing here?! Back to steal more of our food?" She demanded sternly.

Kid's shoulders hunched slightly and he looked away as he muttered, "We brought you a guest…"

"A-a guest?" She asked, once again surprised.

Corazon approached the desk. "Marine Commander Rocinante, ma'am. How much for the night?"

She frowned at him. "Why? We both know you won't pay it."

Corazon smiled wider. "See, about that…these boys are friends of my son…and I've been hearing some worrying things about this island. While I investigate, I'd like to be sure my son is being looked after if I'm called away too long. There's no tax for babysitting, is there?"

All three looked at him in shock.

Then she looked at the boys. "Look, while I'd love to look after your boy, Kid's uncle needs the money more than I do."

Kid laced his fingers behind his head lazily. "The bastard kicked me out. He's not getting a single Berry if I can help it."

"How long ago?" She demanded in shock. "Where have you been staying?!!"

"None of your business!" He exclaimed defensively.

"I'm looking after them." Corazon said calmly. "So two rooms, I think. I'm not sure how long we'll be staying for."

Though she still looked worried, she reluctantly said, "Two doubles, that would be 7,000 Berries."

"Ten thousand it is." He said as he took out his wallet. "You drive a hard bargain—"

"—what—" She began to protest only for him to talk over her.

"—yes, a hard bargain, but you can't fool me. Fifteen thousand would make sense in the town center, but I'll have to do a fair bit of walking! Yes, five thousand off, I am a bargaining king!" He picked up the bags again after dropping the money on the counter. "So where are our rooms?"

Looking shocked, she led him and the silent duo through a side door and up a set of narrow stairs, up to the top floor where there were only four doors. She opened up the one on the left. "This room and you boys can have this one across." She opened that door as well.

Corazon put a hand on her arm as she made to head back down and said quietly, "Remember, it's for babysitting, if anyone asks."

On the verge of tears, she nodded and hurried back down the stairs.

Kid and Killer followed him into the room on the left and as soon as Killer shut the door, Kid exploded, "What the fuck was that?! You're not taking care of us!"

"Sure I am." He replied as he set Law on the bed and pulled his shoes off before pulling the blankets over him. "I'm not asking for anything in return, but you're Law-chan's friends so you're my responsibility too."
"We're not friends!" He immediately denied. "And we're perfectly fine on our own! We don't need your charity!"

"Well you're getting it!" He said cheerfully before he pulled both of them into a giant hug. "Welcome to the family!"

"What the fuck—let me go—lemme go, you asshole!" Kid shouted as he struggled to get free. "You can't just—let go!"

Corazon laughed, happy with his decision. "Nope, you're family now and I'm going to train you to be strong men of the sea!"

"You can't just decide that!"

He grinned widely, excited. "You can run, but I'll find you. Law-chan will be so happy to know he's got brothers!"

"I'm going to kill him when we're stronger!" Kid exclaimed. "We've got an agreement!"

"Consider it void!"

He wouldn't listen to any of Kid's protests. Killer just sighed and accepted the new development.

Chapter End Notes

A/N: It is my understanding that the conversion rate from Berri to American Dollars is 1 Dollar = 100 Berries so I just add on two zeros to whatever number. So she wanted to charge them seventy dollars for two rooms, but he bumped it up to 100 dollars. I have approximately no knowledge of the cost of rooms, but 35 dollars a night seems pretty cheap for a double.

Guest reviewer: Thank you! This is only the first half of the journal I've written it in and I've got eight journals for this story, so it's gonna be a long one. I might cut it off at some point and make a sequel, make it a series to keep it from being overwhelming. :) As for the crew betraying him…It's not the original Heart Pirates. I won't explain what happened for a long while—Law doesn't like to think about it, but he and Bepo were the only ones left from the original crew.
"Your dad is fucking insane. I'm going to kill him. I really will." Kid growled as he pounced on Law.


"Cora-san has decided to kidnap us." Killer sighed from where he was curled up on Law's left side, legs drawn up with his head resting on his knees. His mostly hidden eyes were closed.

Kid shook Law by his shirt, looking torn between freaked and furious. "He found us! No matter where we hid! We even split up! How can a guy that trips over air sneak up on Killer?! HOW?!"

"Don't be so dramatic, Eustass-ya." He yawned again as he sat up and rubbed his eyes. He felt way better. "How long have I been out?"

"Three days." Kid groaned as he flopped down on his other side, arms spread wide and eyes on the ceiling. "This isn't cool, man. We're totally good here! I mean, we're technically homeless and food's hard to come by cuz the factories are polluting the water and we're being killed by the buildings around us cuz they're filled with asbestos and—" He grit his teeth and Law saw him close his eyes tightly. "Why couldn't you have found your fruit last year…?" He asked quietly.

"That's not fair, Captain," Killer chided gently.

"I'm sorry." Law said, drawing his own legs up and wrapping his arms around them, resting his chin on his knees. "I didn't know there were more countries like Flevance…"

Kid sighed. "Flevance was way worse, dude. I'm just—why didn't they send me back to when my folks were alive? I could've abducted them and gotten them cheaper help anywhere else."

"Did the government ever own up?" Law asked as he shifted into a cross-legged position.

"About the carcinogens? Nah, they were still denying it when I took that lead aspirin." He huffed.

Killer flopped over their laps, startling Law. "Stop talking about that, Captain."

"It was that or getting gutted and strung up by that fool." Kid muttered as he began to stroke Killer's wavy hair.

Sighing, Law laid back down and rubbed his eyes sleepily. "Well, when I'm recovered, I'll heal the people one by one before sending them off to other islands."

"Will you help me sink this shithole in the sea?" Kid asked sleepily, apparently just as tired.

"Blow shit up to piss off the nobles? Hell yeah."

Killer started to snore softly and they hooked pinkies in a silent pact before sinking into their own sleep.

They snuck out of the building after Law took a bath and changed into clean clothes. He wanted to get an idea of the true scope of the epidemic and despite the wrongs done to them, the people of Mangrove Cove were very kind and answered his questions, letting him examine them. He asked
to see the worst patients and found the hospital overrun by people on life-support.

One by one, he began to cure them but only managed six adults. The others would survive another day, so he didn't get too frustrated about it and as he watched his final patient greeting friends and loved ones with joyful tears, he told him what he'd told the others.

"You need to leave this island. The buildings themselves will kill you and you will now be more susceptible to these diseases. When I have healed your families, they will join you."

And just like the others, the man gave token protest but the thought of their families surviving longer elsewhere had them agreeing, and he sent them to collaborate with the fishermen for transport to a neighboring island.

As they exited, Law sat down on one of the chairs and wiped his forehead. "This is going to take so long with me this ill. We need to convince everyone to keep quiet for as long as possible so there won't be any interference."

"Too late for that, Law-san." Killer said solemnly from where he was looking out the window. They joined him and saw a man leading a small group of Marines.

"Is that one of your nobles?" Law asked as he made his way to the door. The man didn't look like he was there to congratulate the cured.

"Yeah, fucked if I know his name though." Kid huffed.

"It's Giorgio." Killer supplied as they neared the exit.

"So I hear a young boy is responsible for these miraculous cures." They heard the noble saying to the now silent crowd. "Bring him to me immediately."

Stepping outside, the first thing Law noticed was the man's abnormally large forehead. How was that even genetically possible? "What do you want, Forehead-ya?" He asked.

"What did you call me?!" The man demanded in fury. "My name is Giorgio Allen Ricardo Bartholomew Andrew Gene Edwardo!"

"Okay Garbage-ya." He said causing Kid to snort. "What do you want?"

"What did you call me?!"

Law gave him an annoyed look. "You have too many names. To avoid offending you by calling you the wrong one, I took the first letter of each name and it spells garbage. Now what do you want?"

"You are the one who healed these men?" The man thankfully decided to move on.

"Four of them were women," He corrected. "But yes, I healed these people."

"Where is your medical license?" He demanded.

Sighing, Law reached into his pocket and removed the small laminated certification he'd been given in Flevance after he'd passed the exams. "Right here." He said.

Walking over, the man tried to snatch it from his hand, but Law held it out of reach. "Give me that!"

"No, you can see it just fine where you are." He denied.
"Don't you say no to me you little freak!" The man shouted before he kicked Law hard enough in the chest to send him skidding back to the entrance of the hospital.

"Hey asshole that's my brother!" Kid shouted furiously as Law gingerly picked himself up, hand to his chest.

"He is peddling his wares in the city without paying the trading tax and without the authorization of my family." The man said haughtily.

"Eustass-ya, ignore him." Law said as he got to his feet. "He didn't even kick that hard." He'd gotten worse kicks from Dellinger. Looking at the man he'd healed, he said, "I told you to get some solid food in your stomach. Without a sterile hospital environment, your compromised immune system needs all the help it can get. You are now wide open to viruses because of it."

"Thank you." The man said gratefully before he hurried off.

Law turned back to the furious redhead. "There is far too much strife here to justify even the slightest bit of collateral damage." Not to mention the abundance of asbestos.

Kid's eyes widened in understanding and he reluctantly stood down.

"What are you babbling about? Don't ignore me! Shoot him!" He ordered one of the Marines escorting him.


"Did I ask you for permission?! SHOOT HIM!"

Grimacing, the man lifted his gun and pointed it at Law who stared at it in mild annoyance. These people needed Jesus.

"Why are you pointing a gun at that child, ensign?"

"Sengoku-Taicho!" The Marine exclaimed in relief, jerking to attention. "I was under orders by Giorgio-sama!"

The Admiral turned his cold gaze on the shaking noble as he asked, "Why did you order this child to be shot?"

When the noble only stammered incomprehensively, the Marine reported, "The reason I was given was that the child was ignoring him and healing without authorization from the Edwardo family, Sir!"

"Who did you heal, boy?" Sengoku demanded of Law.

Reluctantly, Law said, "I had three cases of Pleural Mesothelioma, one case of Peritoneal Mesothelioma, one case of Asbestosis, and one case of the final stages of Lung Cancer."

"Do you have your medical license?"

Law handed him the card and the man looked it over intently.

"You will need to renew this by next February." He warned as he handed it back. "Come with me and we will get you the authorization to heal in this country."

Law looked at him in surprise before he nodded quickly.
Sengoku then turned back to the Marines. "If I find out you've turned your weapons on children again, I will have you discharged faster than the bullet. Am I understood?" He demanded.

They all saluted. "Hai, Sengoku-Taicho!"

Sengoku began to lead the way to the palace and the trio followed in silence before Kid leaned over to whisper, "Why don't you let people know you're related to a Marine? It'll keep them from interfering."

"Because I don't rely on other people to get the job done." Law whispered back in annoyance. "Just cuz he's my new Ojii-ya doesn't give me more of a right to protection than any other kid."

"But I hate red tape!" Kid groaned. "Let's just punch the jerk in his ugly forehead!"

"Once I am no longer malnourished," Law began calmly, "I believe I could have the hospital empty within one week. Just be patient, Eustass-ya." He turned to him and leaned in, lowering his voice. "No one will die from these diseases again, Kid. But you guys need to spread the warning to cooperate with the nobles. The children are now protected, but the adults are at a greater risk because of it."

"He's right." Killer said with a frown. "Captain."

Kid rubbed his face. "Okay, okay. Don't get yourself killed while we're gone, Trafalgar."

They ran off.

He quickly caught back up with Sengoku and they walked in silence to the registration office where Sengoku paid for everything. He now had the authority to act as a doctor for the next month with the requirement that he pay forty five percent of his earnings in that time.

"Why didn't you argue about such a tax?" Sengoku asked as they exited the building.

"Forty five percent of zero is zero, Buddha-ya." Law said calmly. "I work for free."

"...I see." The man said. "You need to get something to eat. What will you be doing for the rest of the day?" He asked as he handed him some berries.

"I will be at the hospital speaking with the doctors." He replied. "How is Cora-san? Any sign of illness? Shortness of breath, wheezing, coughing?"

"None that we've noticed." He said. "He will also be at the hospital this afternoon to review patient records. Perhaps you will see him then."

And just like that, Law was alone. Moving to an alley, he released a shuddering breath and closed his eyes tightly against the pain in his chest. Lifting up his shirt, he looked at the darkening bruise and checked for any breaks. None, but he would be experiencing his own shortness of breath for the next few days.

"Didn't kick you that hard, huh?" Kid scoffed as he stood at the mouth of the alley, arms crossed as Killer came from one of the shops.

Law let his shirt fall. "It's nothing, just bruised. How'd it go?"

We've spread the warning and evacuation talks are already in progress." Killer answered.

"There've been some requests though." Kid said solemnly. "Once the people in the hospital are
healed, the villagers want you to take care of the children first. Then the women, then the men. Some people will be sticking around to avoid arousing suspicion too."

He nodded. "Sounds like a plan. I'll need to speak with the evacuators to ensure their crafts are asbestos free."

"I'm designing facemasks just in case," Kid said. "We don't have a lot of time, even if all goes according to plan. There are 600 people on this island."

Law nodded again. "Okay. You've both got your bags ready in case we need to flee ourselves?"

"Always, dude. See ya."

Both left and he continued to the hospital like he hadn't stopped.
He was speaking with one of the head doctors in order to learn more about the ailments common to the island, curious about any other toxic substances that could be on the island. But beyond some poisonous plants, the place was remarkably tame. He planned to go capture some animals to see if they showed similar symptoms to the humans later, but for now he asked if he could shadow her in order to see how they treated the patients normally.

Just as she was agreeing, large hands grabbed Law and he found himself being crushed against a familiar chest.

"LAW-CHAN!"

"Cora-san, I'm talking to Koyashi-ya!" He exclaimed, voice muffled by the man's heart covered shirt.

The man crouched down as he set Law on his feet and Law realized he'd discarded the feathered mantle and donned a Marine coat with gold epaulets draped over his shoulders like a cape. The man gave him a wide smile and Law was relieved to see that it was the only change. "I'm glad you're awake! Have you eaten anything since breakfast earlier?"

Exasperated fondness filled him and he turned to the doctor to say, "I'm sorry, could you excuse me for a moment?"

The woman was smiling. "Of course, of course!"

He looked back at Corazon and smiled. "Yes, I got lunch in the cafeteria. Tomorrow I should be recovered enough to heal ten patients. How are you? Any shortness of breath, coughing, wheezing?"

The man shook his head. "Nope! I'm perfectly fine. I'm glad you woke up, I was very worried."

Feeling guilty, Law jumped up to hug him around the neck. "I'm sorry I worried you, Cora-san. I was just very tired."

"Ah, you're better now, that's all that matters." He said cheerfully as he hugged him back. "Did Kiddo tell you the good news?"

Pulling back, Law looked at him, amused by Kid's new nickname. "That you've stolen them too?"

"Adopted and yes!" He said happily. "I've always wanted a big family!"

"As long as I stay the oldest." Law replied flippantly, causing Corazon to clap his hands and beam at him. Then he asked, "Have you looked into the medical records yet, Cora-san?"

The man was shocked. "How'd you know that's what I'm here for?"

Amused, he replied, "Sengoku-ya told me."

Corazon looked a bit disappointed. "Oh. No, not yet. I just got done looking through the incident reports from a year ago—we finally found the paperwork for the riot…among other things, but that's work stuff and until the investigations done, the details are confidential." He smiled sheepishly when Law snorted. "So who do I talk to about the files?"
"Koyashi-ya, actually." He said. "She's the hospital archivist in conjunction with her doctoral responsibilities. She'll be able to help you."

"Introduce us then!" He said eagerly.

Taking the man's hand as he stood, he led him over to the waiting woman. "I'm sorry about that, Koyashi-ya. Please meet my father Rocinante. I'm afraid he'll be stealing you from me, he's here on business."

She smiled at Corazon and they shook hands. "Your son is a delight to talk to. You must be very proud, him being fully certified so young."

Corazon smiled softly at Law, who pretended he didn't see. "Yes, I'm very proud." Then he clapped. "But he's right, I'm here on Marine business. I need to look into some patient records."

"Of course, if you'll follow me," She agreed and the duo headed away.

Frowning slightly in thought, Law went to go find her partner, Doctor Janal.

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"Cora-san, Buddha-ya, could I speak with you both for a moment?" He asked after they finished dinner and he gave the boys a look.

Kid huffed but said, "Right. Come on, Killer."

The duo left and the adults looked back at Law curiously. "Should I make a room?" Corazon asked.

"Probably not necessary, but I would appreciate it." He replied and the bubble surrounded their table. He leaned forward to rest his elbow on the surface and made sure his hand hid his mouth from potential lip readers. Better safe than sorry. They immediately realized what he was doing and Corazon mimicked his pose, Sengoku leaning forward with his fingers laced in front of his mouth.

Giving them an appreciative smile, he said bluntly, "This country is poison. Anyone that lives here will develop painful and deadly diseases within weeks. The six people I healed today have already been evacuated and an hour ago, we received confirmation that they have been cleared by the doctors over in Barcel Bay. They will be under close observation for the next few weeks in which time I will perform follow up examinations to ensure they have been truly cured."

"My point is that over the next few weeks, we will be performing a covert operation to save these people from a lifetime of suffering."

"Why are you telling us this?" Sengoku queried. "It's none of our business where these people go."

"Because the nobles won't give up their iron grip so easily." He replied. "I was nearly shot because I ignored Garbage-ya in order to ensure one of my patients didn't forget to eat. What would such a man do when faced with the threat of his 'subjects' escaping?" He lifted his free hand, fingers spreading for emphasis. "We can't hide it long enough to get everyone away undetected and I'm afraid they will order the fishermen's boats to be sunk under some bogus charges. Then there will be the chance of rumors being spread claiming Mangrove Cove to be another Flevance." He said wearily. "How long will it take you to prove that these diseases are not contagious?"

"We have all the proof we need." Corazon replied. "We'll be submitting the reports to HQ and the
surrounding islands tomorrow morning." Then he added softly, "Flevance will never happen again."

That promise hit Law harder than he was prepared for and he looked away quickly to hide it, taking a shuddering breath as he tried to get a grip of himself, hand clenching to a fist on the table. It took a moment, but then the tension left his body and he looked back at the duo, nodding calmly. "Thank you. Eustass-ya, Killer-ya, and I have everything under control so far, but will we be able to come to you for help if we need to?"

"Of course!" Corazon exclaimed in shock while Sengoku just nodded solemnly. "You can always come to us when you need help!"

Nodding with a small smile, he stood up. "Thank you, I'll keep you updated."

They stood as well and the dome vanished.

"Wait, who is Garbage?" Corazon asked in surprise.

"Giorgio Allen Ricardo Bartholomew Andrew Gene Edwardo." Law replied easily. "To avoid calling him by the wrong name, I took the first letter from each name to address him."

"And he tried to shoot you?!" He demanded in outrage.

Law waved it off as they began to head for the exit. "Calm down. He had one of his guards do it, but he was shaking too much and would have missed."

"I have already sent a report of the incident to HQ." Sengoku reassured the man. "A missive should be sent out soon to every base warning against the injury of children or elderly."

"You were there? Why didn't you tell me he was nearly shot?!"

Law side-stepped into an alley unnoticed by the adults and he began to make his way to the scrapyard near the factories. The factories were still billowing smoke and he gave them a distasteful look. They were an eyesore ruining his view of the ocean and they were creating worse patients for him.

He passed through the wrought iron gate and into the maze of parts and scraps. Shards of glass, broken sake bottles, stakes of jagged metal, and various other hazards made passing through moderately difficult and he looked around at the objects curiously. Broken equipment mostly, but there was more metal that could be justified by the relatively small community. He wondered what they did before the discovery of asbestos.

"There you are!" Kid huffed as Law turned a corner and he saw he was digging through one of the piles. "What were you doing, trading war stories?"

"I have ensured their aid." Law replied, ignoring the boy's dramatics. It'd only been twenty minutes since the two had left.

"Tch. You're too trusting." Kid scoffed. "You've been corrupted by Strawhat."

"It seems to work for him." He brushed off. "Anything I can do to help?"

"Yeah, here," He repelled a large metal tub from nearby and Law caught it. "Catch what I throw you." Then he scrambled up a small tower of machine parts, starting to take things apart and throwing pieces over his shoulder.
It was surprisingly fun. Kid didn't pay attention to where he was throwing them so Law had to run, jump, and dive to catch the parts in the tub. He was giggling quietly to himself, breathing heavily from the exertion and feeling pleasantly sore. His vitiligo pulled a bit painfully, but he was able to ignore it.

Then as he was backing up to catch a piece, he tripped over a half-broken cinderblock. "Oops." He said as he crashed to the ground. He made sure the tub wasn't overturned, but as his shoulders hit the ground under the weight, he felt a sharp pain in the left.

The part Kid had thrown was caught by Killer. "Are you alright, Law-san?"

He laughed as he pushed himself up into a sitting position, reaching with his right hand to try and see what stabbed him. "Ah...mostly."

"You have a shard of glass in your shoulder." The boy said as Kid made his way back down. He set the part in the tub and put his hand to Law's arm. "Please hold still." He yanked it out.

"Wow, that was in deep." Kid said in surprise as they looked at the two inches smeared in blood.

Law created a room and began to clean the wound before stitching it closed. "Stab wounds are the easiest to heal." He brushed off as he got to his feet. "So what's all this stuff for anyway?" He asked as he peered into the nearly full tub.

"For the masks." Kid said as Killer tossed the shard away. "We've got twenty so far, but we need at least a hundred."

"Can I help at all?" He asked.

"Probably. Come on."

They led him deeper into the scrapyard where the piles started to become larger and taller, casting them into a dark shadow. At the largest pile, they revealed a hidden door and they entered an expertly crafted metal room that seemed to take up most of the pile. It had only cluttered desks that looked like some engines threw up on them and the walls were made of glass showing the scrap hiding them from view and Law smiled. "It looks just like your room on—" He saw the door at the far wall and his eyes widened. "No way."

Kid grinned widely. "Yup. This baby's a part of my ship. It's mostly built, I just need to make the engine."

"How…" How the hell could they hide something that big? He created a room and made it into a sphere instead of a dome and saw metal scaffolding was surrounding the vessel, basically holding up the scrapyard and the system would allow them to roll the ship towards the edge of the scrapyard once they lifted the drawbridges covering the tracks. It was very impressive for a couple of kids, though he could see where Kid had obviously gone back with experienced eyes to patch weak parts.

He ended the room. "I never suspected you to be capable of such subtlety."

"It was my idea." Killer chuckled as Kid spluttered furiously.

The redhead threw a wrench at them. "Stop pissing around and fucking help me, assholes!"

Chuckling, Law walked over, dodging when Kid recalled the wrench and asked, "What do I do?"
Chapter 8

The next day he managed not only the twelve adults, but all the babies in the maternity ward. It had been a unanimous decision by the other patients so that the babies had a better chance of survival. Though the exposure was minimal in them, he didn't argue, not really caring either way.

The patients set off an hour later for Barcel Bay with no one the wiser and an hour after that, the townspeople received news of their cleared checks. It took all they had not to rejoice at the news, hyperaware of the nobles walking the streets observing the tax collection.

After the confirmation, the trio retreated to the scrapyard where they continued to work on the masks. With Law's help, they would most likely reach their goal by the end of the next week. They were so busy, they only saw Corazon and Sengoku at meals where they updated the men of their progress and were told the investigation was still pending due to a mix-up of paperwork at HQ.

Somehow Law went off on a tangent and was telling Corazon about some of the broken medical equipment they'd found in the yard that he'd be able to repair and use to help the remaining patients until he could heal them. Medical equipment was just about the only machinery he knew how to fix and he told them about the classes on technical support that they'd been forced to take in the Academy. How one girl in his class had been a veritable genius, able to figure out why a machine didn't work properly just by the weight distribution.

"Everyone thought she was cheating, like maybe she saw the teachers mess 'em up or she peeked in them before class started, but—"

The sound of a gunshot interrupted him, followed by a scream for help.

He was out of his seat in a flash, out the door before they even stood up.

"He's a fast one." Sengoku said as they quickly followed.

"He's good at running away." Kid scoffed.

"He prefers the term 'emergency retreat'." Killer replied calmly.

They saw Law taking on one of the Marines, three more rushing in to help, but Law appropriated a rifle and used it as a club to take them down with non-lethal force. He hit one in the knee causing him to fall, then shoved the handle into another's gut to knock the air out of him and knock him out when he doubled over. The last two also had their knees busted and the boy ran over to a downed man. The fight took less than a minute.

Law fell to his knees beside a still man and a crying woman, finding the man's bullet wound and ripping open the shirt to get a better look. "No exit wound, I'll need to remove the bullet. I need floss, alcohol, and a safety or clothespin." He created a room to stop the bleeding and was thankful for his thin fingers as he began to dig out the bullet. The man groaned and he said, "Be still or it will hurt even more."

He used the alcohol to sterilize the wound after he finished and pulled a sewing needle out of his hat, threading the floss through and starting to stitch the wound. He ignored the man's pained sounds, unable to numb him and if they wasted time trying to get him to the hospital, he'd bleed out.

"What happened here?" Sengoku demanded as they watched the boy work.
"By order of Mayor Ricardo, this man is to be executed." One of the Marines grunted as he clutched his leg.

"Why?" He demanded.

"We are not allowed to ask questions, Sengoku-taicho."

The Admiral's fury came fast and strong, overwhelming most of the gathered townspeople.

"You're complicating this operation, Sengoku-ya." Law said calmly as he was finally able to stitch up the epidermis. His room ensured that his stitches were perfect.

"Rocinante, keep an eye on them while I speak to my men." Sengoku snapped as he stalked towards the cowering Marines. "Pick them up and get back to Base! Now!"

The group hastened to obey and once the Admiral was gone, the man's heart rate returned to normal and his muscles relaxed, allowing Law to continue sewing him up. His own bullet wound twinged painfully and he thought he'd be sleeping well that night.

When it was sealed, he tore a strip from the man's shirt and used it as a makeshift bandage, the safety pin holding it closed. "There. Take him to the hospital and they'll tell you how to treat it until I can heal it tomorrow."

"Thank you so much." The woman all but sobbed as a few villagers helped her pick him up and they ran off.

"Why'd you interfere?" Kid demanded. "This could cause us trouble."

"I don't care. These people are my patients and I will not have them killed until they are perfectly healthy." He said in annoyance. Then it melted away as he said quietly, "Cora-san…I can't stand up…"

Corazon was quick to scoop him up. "I've got you, Law-chan." Then he grabbed the other two.

"Hey! Put me down!" Kid exclaimed angrily as he struggled to get free.

"I'll take you boys back to the room and put you to bed before I go keep an eye on our victim." He said cheerfully. "The more you struggle, the longer he'll go unprotected."

Kid immediately went limp. "You fucking asshole, I hate you."

"Don't worry, you'll grow out of it!" The man replied cheerfully. "Law-chan's tried to kill me—what, sixty times? He got over it."

Law stared back blankly when they looked at him in shock. "He's an idiot."

Corazon nuzzled his fuzzy hat happily. "But I'm your idiot now!"

That got a smile from Law and he snuggled into his shirt.


"Partly." He allowed. "But he means well and he loves easy. Like a giant klutz puppy."

"More of a cat person, really." Kid scoffed, but he settled down.
Back at the motel, Corazon set them up in one of the beds, not bothering to try and get the boys to sleep in the other room. They'd made it very clear from early on that they wouldn't leave the boy vulnerable. "You boys get some sleep and I'll see you in the morning at breakfast."

"Goodnight, Cora-san." Killer and Law said while Kid just hmphed. When he left, both boys relaxed and settled down properly.

Then Law spoke up, voice muffled by his pillow, "I promise that Cora-san's a good guy. He won't even care that we'll be pirates when we're older."

"Shut your face-hole," Kid scoffed. "Don't you know anything about kids? We're supposed to be belligerent and unruly in the beginning. It'll make 'em appreciate good behavior later on. Duh."

Law gave a surprised laugh. "I knew I liked you for a reason! That's so mean."

"It was my idea." Killer said with a smirk.

"Shut the fuck up, no it wasn't!"

Law listened as they started to bicker over him and he relaxed further with the noise, easily slipping into an exhausted sleep.
Despite having to treat the bullet wound, he managed twenty people. His powers seemed to be like a muscle that he was making stronger with each use and as the group left to pack, Law took a late lunch with his family.

"The potential of these powers, Cora-san…it's immense…” He said a bit breathlessly after he finished explaining how he'd actually mended the bullet wound—not just stitches, but actually healed it. "There were so many limitations I never realized I had. I can get a glimpse into how the body works, watch first hand as the heart pumps blood, observe the birth and death of cells…I don't need a microscope or biopsies or x-rays or blood tests—within my operating room, I am like a god."

"Don't get a big head, jackass.” Kid scoffed. "I'll admit you rock at the healing thing, but maintaining your bubble long enough to do anything like that?"

"I just need to practice." Law brushed off. "Not now, obviously, and not with living creatures just yet, but I can do this with time. I can be the greatest surgeon in ALL the seas."

Kid leaned his chair back precariously on two legs as he scoffed again. "I heard a little kid in the Grand Line's goin' for the best doctor…” He smirked. "My money's on him."

Law growled. "I've heard about him too, but he's going more for pharmaceuticals. Wants to cure every disease or something, but I could do that too!"

"I don't know." Kid said nonchalantly. "Frail thing like you? If you wanna be the best you gotta be strong enough to overpower your patients if they resist treatment."

"I'm not frail!" He exclaimed in outrage.

The boy's chair dropped down to all fours and he leaned forward to grab his arm, showing how his fingers wrapped full around the wrist.

Law went red and jerked his arm free. "That doesn't mean anything! I could kick your butt!"

"You couldn't kick a stool!" He laughed.

"Guys, please, we shouldn't disturb the other patrons—" Killer tried to diffuse the situation, but neither gave sign of hearing.

"Then I'll hit it!" Law said furiously and his fist landed square on Kid's cheek, sending him skidding towards the door.

The restaurant went silent as Kid picked himself up into a sitting position, rubbing his cheek. Then the boy grinned at Law. "You call that a hit? My grandma hits harder than that! And she's dead!"

"Boys, if you're going to fight, take it outside." Sengoku ordered calmly.

Law ran at the grinning boy and Kid laughed as he scrambled to get out the door.

Killer sighed wearily as sounds of the fight came through the open windows and leaned on his
palm. "Family reunions are going to be a nightmare when they're older…" Pushing away from the table, he went to go make sure they didn't kill each other on accident.

"It seems the strength of his abilities are not entirely connected to his physical strength." Sengoku noted as the shouting started, sipping his drink calmly.

Corazon chuckled. "Unless he overuses it. My Law-chan will be a very formidable man of the sea one day."

"As a Marine, I hope." The Admiral said wryly.

"O-of course! Yes, as a strong Marine!" He said quickly, laughing a bit nervously.

Before the man could respond, all of the metal in the room began to lift up from the tables before darting towards the open windows. "Kid!" One of the customers whispered in shock as they ducked under the projectiles and when it was clear, they hurried to the windows. "It's Garbage-san!"

The duo went to peer out as well and they saw Law was pinned under the noble's foot as the man poured a bag of sawdust on him. Then they saw the silverware and trays weren't the only thing flying towards Kid but bolts, nails, tools, wagons, weapons—they all coalesced into a giant metal arm that the noble didn't notice.

"I'd like to see you heal these peasants with your freak powers when you're as sick as they are!" The man laughed as he threw the empty bag at Law's face.

"Law-chan!" Corazon shouted in alarm as he leapt agilely through the window. "You smarmy bastard, when I get my hands on you—" A hand on his thigh had him stopping short and he looked down to see Killer, the boy wearing a strange mask. Green eyes looked up at him solemnly.

"That is asbestos." The boy said calmly. "You will let us handle this."

Corazon realized both boys were wearing the masks and that the street had been cleared of other people. His attention was grabbed by Law as the boy started to cough like his lungs were coming out and the noble just laughed, keeping him on his back.

Fury burned through him and he clenched his fists as he said, "Don't kill him, Kiddo. Death would be a mercy."

Kid clenched the metal fist he had created and his eyes darkened with a hidden grin. "You got it, Tou-san."

That got the noble's attention. "T-Tou-san?"

Kid jerked the thumb of his flesh hand towards the approaching Admiral. "Yup. And that's my Oji-san. That 'oh shit' moment hittin' you yet, dickbag?"

Without waiting for a response, he gave a swift uppercut with his metal arm with an ease that didn't seem possible with the bulky form larger than the buildings around them. It impacted the noble with enough force to send him flying all the way to the palace where he caved in a wall.

Suddenly all the metal clattered to the ground.

"Ah, fuck. Spent all my juice repellin' the dickwaffle." Kid huffed in annoyance, looking at his now-bare hand.
Killer hurried to Law's side and helped him onto his front as he brushed off sawdust and Law coughed it out of his lungs. "Do you have enough strength to remove it, Law-san?"

Unable to stop coughing, the boy just shook his head.

Kid walked over as Law continued to cough. "We need to get as much out of your lungs as we can before you suffocate. Do you trust me?"

Law looked up at him for a long moment, face flushed and eyes watering before he closed them tightly and nodded.

"Naïve." Kid huffed but he crouched down beside him and took out a metal flask. "You need to breathe this in."

Eyes widening in understanding, Corazon exclaimed, "Hold on! That will just make it worse! Or he'll drown!"

"If we don't rinse out his lungs, he'll suffocate." Killer replied gently. "I'll admit, it's a bit risky, but it's better than the alternative. Why don't you go apprehend his assailant?"

"I'll take care of it." Sengoku said before heading towards the palace.

Kid had Law turn back over and began to pour water into his mouth. Then he said, "Breathe."

Only sheer force of will allowed law to continue taking in water. When Kid jabbed him in the chest, he turned quickly and coughed the sludge out. It took a few times, but then he was breathing easier, color leaving his cheeks. Exhausted, he fell unconscious.

Setting him on the ground, they unbuttoned his shirt to help him breathe better and used the last of the water to turn the sawdust into mud so Corazon could hurry over.

The man gasped in horror. "Where did he get that bruise from?" Even after three days it was dark and painful looking, shaped like a footprint.

"Garbage-san gave it to him when Law-san refused to hand him his medical license." Killer answered as he removed the mask he wore. He frowned at the mottled flesh. "He told us it wasn't that bad."

"So he's a liar. How the times have changed." Kid scoffed as he wiped the unconscious boy's face clean with an oil stained but clean handkerchief. Bending down, he listened carefully as Law breathed. "We should take him to the hospital. He needs to be sedated or the tearing of lung tissue could get serious."

Corazon immediately picked them all up and called to the silently watching townspeople, "I'll be back to pay our tab!" Before he took off running towards the hospital.

Ten minutes later Law was in a bed with an oxygen mask and an IV. Kid and Killer were on either side of him as always, Kid snoring lightly, out cold. Corazon sat in the visitor's chair, head in his hands as the doctor revealed Law had cracked ribs from the noble's kick the few days before and that some had snapped in this latest incident.

As she left, Sengoku entered and both blonds looked up at him expectantly. "He is injured, but stable. We have incarcerated him. Roci, what do you want us to do?"

Corazon looked at Killer. "Are the other nobles as bad as he is?"
"No." He replied. "While they're greedy bastards that won't hesitate to bleed our country dry and poison its people, they rarely indulge in such violence."

The man nodded. "I want him incarcerated while we perform an in-depth investigation on the family's rule here. It should take long enough to have everyone safely evacuated."

Sengoku nodded back. "I'll take care of it. You're off this case so you'll be helping with the boys."

Smiling, the man nodded again. "Thank you, Tou-san."

The man ruffled his hair affectionately before leaving again.

"Why hasn't he arrested us yet?"

Corazon looked at Killer in shock. "What?"

Killer drew his legs up, wrapping his arms around them. "I've heard a lot of stories about Sengoku the Buddha. How he will do anything to uphold justice. How he was the one to order the destruction of Ohara...and would kill children just because of the families they belong to...His motto is Reigning Justice but he won't hesitate to conform to Absolute Justice..." He rested his chin on his knees. "We're basically overthrowing a government here...I don't understand why he's letting us."

Corazon didn't answer for a long moment. "My father has made some hard choices in the line of duty. Some things can't be justified more than that...but things are different when its family."

"But we're not. Not really." He protested. "He's only known Law-san a few minutes longer than he's known us and I highly doubt you've followed any legal procedure in claiming us as yours."

He rubbed his face with his palm. "And I don't understand that either! You just—you just scooped us up off the street, no questions asked! Who-who does that?"

"Killer, I took you in because you needed help." The man said solemnly, voice soft. "I'd do it for any child. Granted, I wouldn't just adopt them right off the bat like I did you two, but you're Law-chan's friends. He doesn't have very many people he likes, but it's very obvious he likes you two. And it's mutual. Why wouldn't I take you in?"

"We could be violent sociopaths bent on the destruction of anything standing between us and our goals." He responded immediately.

"As long as you take care of Law-chan that's alright." He replied with a smile. "Now go to sleep buddy. I'll watch over you all."

After a moment, Killer laid down with his head across Kid's on Law's chest so he could listen to his breathing. He seemed to be stable, though every few breaths his breathing stuttered slightly. It very quickly lulled him to sleep.

Smiling, Corazon stroked their hair out of their faces, noticing how swiftly the tension bled from them with the motions. Seriously, how could things so tiny have already gone through so much?

Violent sociopaths. Who wouldn't be violent when their entire country was killed by a corrupt government? He hoped that by saving the people of Mangrove Cove, the murder lust would be curbed just enough to spare innocents.

He held no illusions. The boys would become powerful pirates in the future.

But for now, they were his cute little babies. Smiling, he took out his photo Den Den Mushi and
took a picture of the three boys curled up on the bed. The snail was technically only for work-related images, but, well, one picture wouldn't hurt. If nothing else, the blackmail would protect him from any potential future backlash.

He pictured the boys, each in their own pirate crews. Tall, powerful, and terrifying. How he'd walk up to them and how they'd put on an act to impress their crews, acting cool and distant with him in his Marine coat. How they'd react to the stories he'd undoubtedly have to tell the crews and maybe they'd even threaten him.

And he'd bring out the photo album, watching the horror on their faces—

"So you're serious about adopting these brats?"

Jumping, Corazon looked at his father, fighting away a guilty expression. What the man didn't know wouldn't hurt the boys. "How long have you been standing there?"

The man ignored him, looking down at the slumbering children. "You don't know the first thing about raising kids."

He looked at the sleeping boys solemnly. "I can't do them any worse. They're not really children, not with what they've been put through. So they'll be a little more forgiving if I make it clear I'm doing my best."

After a moment Sengoku sighed. "Then you'll want to sign these."

Looking over to him, Corazon saw he'd taken out a stack of papers and accepted them. "What are these—adoption papers?!"

To Sengoku's amusement, he didn't waste any time in finding a pen and started to fill them out at a nearby table. "The ones for Law-chan have already gone through."

Finishing with a flourish that had some containers falling on their sides, he handed them back over for the man to check. "Now I'll have the law backing me if they try to run away again!" He grinned widely, he'd have to memorize the date!

"You'll be off duty for the next year to adjust to your family's newest additions." He told him firmly. "You will be stationed in the New World for safety's sake—"

"Zou."

Both looked at the bed in surprise and saw Law's eyes were at half-mast, pupils painfully wide. Corazon hurried back over and smoothed his hair back. "What was that, Law-chan?"

"Gotta go ta Zou…" He replied, voice rough and slurring slightly as he squinted up at him…not that it helped. "Zunisha-sama is in danger…probably…or wazit Nekomamushi-sama…?" He asked himself before sinking back into unconsciousness.

"-sama?" Corazon asked in shock, staring down at his son in wonder. Who had managed to earn such respect from his little prickly pear?

"Your son has a lot of knowledge I didn't expect him to have." Sengoku said thoughtfully as he too stared down at the slumbering boy. At Corazon's curious look he said, "Not many people have set foot on Zou in the hundreds of years it's been officially recorded. Fewer know the name of one of the Royal Family's most prominent members. Less than five know the island's name."

"The island isn't called Zou?" He asked in confusion.
"The populated areas are called, collectively, Zou. But the island itself is called Zunisha. She is a thousand year old elephant that wanders the New World."

Corazon smiled proudly. "My Law-chan is so mysterious!"

He ignored him. "We will need to contact the people, but Zou is always ready for visitors. I'm sure they won't protest you all vacationing for a year."

"Thank you, Tou-san." Corazon said softly, looking back at the trio. The younger boys had shifted while they'd spoken, Kid's hand in Killer's hair and Killer clutching the redhead's shirt loosely.

Humming, the man left Corazon alone to settle in for a long night.

Chapter End Notes

This was a long chapter lol. I've taken some liberties with asbestos, sort of mixed it in with fiberglass to add a bit more danger to inhaling the fibers. So if I get something terribly wrong, just assume it's something to do with the One Piece world. And the rinsing out the lung thing-DON'T EVER TRY IT I MADE IT UP IT'S DANGEROUS AND YOU WILL DIE

That said, things will pick up a bit so the next chapter will be short and lacking any real detail so that the one after won't be thirty pages long. I'll do my best to make it at least a thousand words-that's my personal opinion on a good chapter size and those first few…I failed. Oh well.

Reviews: thank you all for your encouragement, I'm having a lot of fun with this story although it does take a few…odd turns. I hope you'll stick with it.

Maru101: I wish I'd done those scenes like you suggested, but I'm writing a kid's point of view. You'll see that as the story progresses, they start to act more and more like children. They can't help it, it's biology.

As for Kid knowing about Law's past…you learn a lot about someone over the years, especially rivals/enemies. And yeah, he's attached to Law already, it's my opinion that they've developed a bit of a friendship over the years—mostly ruminating about Strawhat's shenanigans. Becoming brothers wasn't too much of a leap. And they're all just pretty much rolling with the adoption. The Grand Line is crazy and if you don't adapt, you die.

About Garbage-ya…yes, I wanted his name to spell garbage and rich bad guys always seem to have twenty million names so…

Sixty assassination attempts…yes, it does seem like a lot, but Law wasn't afraid of death and I think he tried a few more times, but mostly half-heartedly since Corazon didn't tattle. Then there was the abduction for their six month adventure. Law DEFINITELY tried a few more times. It was probably more like 20, but Corazon exaggerates.

Law being so open…he's had an entire lifetime to accept their deaths, something greatly helped by his victory over Doffy. He's a bit more well-adjusted than his other
childhood and he's got his Cora-san back! He's happy, and it lets him remember the good times.

Everything else…you'll just have to wait and see. Obviously everyone's alive since they never died, but he's not thinking that far ahead. Corazon's like a giant wall keeping him in the relative present. :)

Oh, and I know Zunisha's a dude, but I wrote this before I knew that, so in this story, she's a girl.

Phew! Sorry about the long AN. Hope you keep reading and enjoy it!
Law woke up the next day with his chest screaming at him. It was like fire every time he took a deep breath and he diagnosed broken ribs. Carefully sitting up, he grimaced at the tight bandages aggravating his bruise. The rawness of his throat and lungs didn't help either and he plotted all of the ways he was going to make that bastard suffer.

He began treating himself. Mending the broken bones was a bit more challenging than mending flesh (too hard and it could restrict his movement or breathing but too soft and it could snap again), but it didn't really require any extra strength. Then he managed his lungs, removing the fibers and healing the damage before starting on the bruises. They looked terrible. Corazon probably freaked.

When he finished, he used his room to get out of the bed without disturbing any of the slumbering group and looked for his clothes. When he couldn't find them, he just shrugged and headed out into the hall in the gown he'd been dressed in. At least they'd given him boxers too.

Room by room, he healed the patients within. Some had other injuries they'd been admitted for—broken bones, mottled limbs from the heavy machinery at the factories—which he also treated.

On his fifth patient, Corazon all but fell into the room. "Law-chan, what are you doing, you weren't cleared by your doctor!"

"I am my primary physician and I say I am well enough to work." He replied absently.

"You were injured?" His patient asked curiously.

"No, I wear this gown for the breeze." He replied and they laughed.

Corazon gave him an exasperated look. "Okay, but don't push yourself too hard, okay?"

"Do I ever?"

The man went to go wake the others and Law soon had three shadows but he had his own clothes now. His healing was going smoothly, no unforeseen complications and nothing major enough to set him back on his estimated number of patients. But his family was starting to get on his nerves because as he worked his way through the remaining patients, they nagged him about everything.

"Tell me when you need a break."

"Don't fucking pass out on us, Trafalgar."

"You want some water?"

"I really think you ought to take a break."

"Should we get an early lunch?"

He wanted to strangle them. It was mostly Kid and Corazon, but Killer threw in his own share of comments and he very quickly became annoyed by their badgering but held his tongue as he continued on as usual. "Yes" "No" "I will" "I won't" became the only things he spoke for the next three hours and at noon exactly, he finished healing the last patient he was able and the last patient in the hospital. The timing was perfect.

"How about we get some lunch now?"
A tic appeared on his forehead. "Fine."

So after a quick lunch, they saw the patients off on their way to Barcel Bay and a few hours later the clearance came through along with an update on the mothers and their children.

He left at that point, not caring about the emotional broadcast, but twenty minutes later he was called back to speak with the doctor in charge of his patients’ care. The man was very arrogant, but Law wasn't above stoking the man's ego in order to ensure his patients received the very best treatment. He practically had the man wrapped around his finger by the time he ended the call and he noticed Corazon was looking at him with pride.

He colored slightly and glared at him. "What?"

Of course, he was pulled into a crushing hug. "Ah, my little Law-chan is growing up so fast! Covert operations and successful subterfuge and manipulations!"

"Cora-san!" He protested, struggling until he realized the man wasn't going to let him go. Sighing, he gave in and hugged him around the neck. "Don't be so dramatic. I only ensured my patients receive the best care until I am able to rejoin them."

"Still! Well done!" He insisted.

"Yeah, yeah, Trafalgar's the shit. Can we get back to savin' the country now?" Kid asked in mild annoyance.

"Drama queens everywhere…” Law huffed as Corazon set him down.

Kid flicked him off and they headed to the clubhouse to continue working on masks.
The next few days passed quickly. Law's patients increasing exponentially. As promised, he healed the children first, then the women. By the second week, three hundred people remained on the island and based on the previous days, it would only take five more days to have the rest taken care of.

But on the third day, his worst fear happened and the rumors began to spread. Barcel Bay closed its ports to them and the other islands followed suit. Law was infuriated and when news came of Barcel Bay sending the patients back...he lost all mercy.

"Get there now." He ordered Kid and Killer. "Destroy their ships and if you have to, burn down their ports. Those people are not coming back!" Nodding, the duo was quick to run off.

"Law-chan, wait, we can have this settled in a few hours—" Corazon began to protest.

"We don't have hours." He said, face blank as he paced the small kitchen where the fishermen kept the Den Den Mushi. They were in one of the restaurants and a dozen or so people were watching with anxious expressions even though they couldn't hear a thing. "You need to contact Sengoku-ya and find out what's happening on the Marine front. Was this the World Government again or our spurned nobles?"

Grimacing, the man nodded and took off for the Marine base.

Law had the villagers find him a map of the area and he began contacting other islands for aid only to be rejected. He wanted to rage, to go and raze these selfish islands to the ground, hell, even just bury his face in his hands helplessly. But the villagers' gazes burned into his back and he forced himself to remain calm. They needed him to be calm. He needed to keep them calm.

Then he had an idea. Shoulders relaxing, he left the room and smiled at them. "This is a minor setback. It doesn't change anything, we're going to get all of you off this island."

The men took his word for it and the tense atmosphere dissipated.

Forty tortuous minutes later, the kids returned and Law explained his plan.

"Oh shit, why didn't we think of that?" Kid asked in surprise. "Yeah, my ship could probably fit us all. It'll be a tight squeeze, but they can deal with it. And it's not like we're leavin' the Blue...but it'll take a few days to get the engine built and actually gettin' it to the water is gonna be an issue too."

Law rubbed his face. "We don't have that kind of time."

"Time for what?"

Jumping, they turned to see Sengoku, the man looking angrier than they'd ever seen, past or present. Law straightened. "Who was it?"

"The Edwardo Family." He said with a scowl. "We caught them attempting to flee the island and have incarcerated them. You were correct, they didn't want to lose their subjects."
Law hummed. "It's a minor setback. My main concern is for the people in Barcel Bay. They need to get away from that island—"

"How? We just sunk all their ships." Kid asked.

"That's the problem, isn't it?" He shot back in irritation, angry that his poor decision had stranded those people in a hostile environment.

"The Fist is on his way!" Corazon called as he stumbled into the room, Den Den Mushi held protectively in his hands as he fell face-first. He grinned up at them and held up the snail to Sengoku. "Here, Tou-san!"

The Admiral took it. "Sengoku."

"Ah, Senny! I've heard you got yourself into a bit of a mess!" The snail laughed.

"Garp, what are you doing?" Sengoku demanded.

"I got curious! You just take off and suddenly you're investigating hazardous material poisoning a country? It sounds like fun!"

"Jesus Christ." Kid said in horror. "Everything's gonna go tits up…"

"I didn't sign up for a Monkey…" Law groaned, burying his face in his hands. He didn't doubt the man could help, but he didn't know how similar he was to his grandson.

"Garp, this is a serious matter. There are four hundred fifty innocents that need to be evacuated from Barcel Bay immediately!" Sengoku exclaimed. "How many ships are at your disposal?"

"Eh…one, two…three. I had five, but, well, we ran into Newgate. Yeah, we've got room for the poor bastards. Alright men, we're on a rescue mission!" The snail shouted and they heard cheers. "To Barcel Bay!"

"How long will it take you to get there?" Sengoku demanded.

"Eh? We're already here. Oh, they look like they've been raided."

"I'll just-er, go contact the families…" Kid said before he hurried out of the kitchen to find the snail.

"Emergency cauterization of a wound." Law told the Den Den Mushi. "We will contact the refugees and arrange their pick-up. Do you have a fax Den Den, Fist-ya?"

"Probably. Why?"

"I will send you copies of the names of the refugees to ensure everyone is accounted for." He told him, lifting up his bag.

"Ah, good idea, brat! Hey Senny, you employing kids now?"

"He is in charge of this operation." Sengoku replied with an amused smile. "He only came to me for help when the nobles began to interfere."

Law ignored them as he finally found the folder and he handed it to Corazon. "This is a list of every patient I've treated."

The man ruffled his hair before taking off to go have it faxed over.
Then Kid returned with the other snail. "They'll all be at the eastern coast. They've been quarantined in the prison, so they'll need to be broken out."

"Even the newborns?!” Law demanded in outrage. "I won't let this become another Flevance!" He bolted from the room, heading for the hospital to get materials in case his room failed.

"Sengoku-san," Killer began calmly. "Would you please accompany Law-san to treat the refugees?"

"I'll go give Tanushi-san a heads-up." Kid said quickly before also leaving.

"Of course." Sengoku agreed immediately. "What should I watch for?"

"He'll collapse, but it will be momentary." He replied. "Maybe to his knees, maybe he'll catch himself on something, but when he falters he is tapping into his emergency reserves. At that point if he continues to heal them, keep an eye on his hands. When they begin to shake, he is at his limit and needs to be stopped."

Nodding in understanding, he headed for the fishing boats while Killer went to go inform the villagers before they panicked. He would also need to warn Corazon of a slight chance of mutiny from the Marines.

Ten long minutes later, the fisherman, Law, and Sengoku were at the eastern shore and the Marine Warships came into view.

"Head out into the ocean." Law told Tanushi. "Well out of the range of cannon fire just in case. We'll need a lift back."

"You got it, buddy. Be careful." The man said as Sengoku grabbed Law around the waist and leapt up onto the nearest ship.

"Senny!" Garp greeted, glomping Sengoku.

"Gah!" Law exclaimed as he was crushed by the hug. Thankfully the man released Sengoku and peered at him.

"And brat!"

Law ignored the name. "There are newborns being held in that prison. I need to get to them quickly before they succumb to the harsh environment."

"I don't usually take orders from a no-good waif like you, but this time I'll make an exception." Garp said cheerfully. "Let's go men!"

Using planks, they all headed onto land and most went to surround the prison to keep away the rioting crowd. But the Vice Admiral and Admiral quickly made their way into the compound. Guards and more vitriol-spewing townspeople were apprehended and taken into custody but when they found the right floor, Law shoved himself free of Sengoku and ran to a specific cell. "It's alright everyone, we're going to get you all out of here." He used armament Haki to strengthen his hand and ripped the lock off the door before pulling it open. "Dana, Mary, Alice, Tani, Nochiko, Moni, Mira, Amelia, Kisa, Kora, Demi, and Dory, allow me to examine your children before I check you."

As the Marines began calling roll, Law took care of a few minor infections in the infants as the refugees were escorted to the ships. They were otherwise completely healthy and he began to heal
the mothers, finding bruises and cuts that he was also forced to heal.

On his fourth mother, a dizzy spell overcame him and the woman steadied him in alarm. "Are you okay, Law-kun?"

Taking a deep breath, he straightened. "I'm fine. Let's finish taking care of you all." Pushing aside the lightheadedness, he continued working and to his relief there were no other complications and he was happy to tell them, "You'll be just fine as long as you follow the meal plans I assigned you."

With heartfelt thanks, they allowed themselves to be escorted out by their husbands and an entourage of Marines.

Running a hand through his hair, Law took a moment to get a grip on himself before he joined Garp and Sengoku. "How is it?"

"Nearly everyone's been accounted for." Sengoku told him. "The last few refugees are being checked in now."

Closing his eyes briefly in relief, he asked, "Any injuries?"

"Nothing our medics can't handle. You've done enough Law-chan." Sengoku said calmly.

Law looked up at him in confusion, something about what the man said niggling at his mind, but it was too fuzzy to focus. What had he called him?

Garp laughed. "Look at you, you're dead on your feet!" He crouched down and grasped Law's arms, lifting them up to reveal they were quaking even in the man's grip.

After a second, Law processed that and tried to jerk away from him. "Hey! Let go!"

Instead, the man lifted him up by his arms and a muscle in Law's jaw jumped as he clenched his teeth tightly against the pain. His ribs were still tender.

"Don't put so much stress on my ribs or they'll fracture again." He said in annoyance as he glared at the man.

"You're just like my no-good grandson!" The Vice Admiral laughed as he wrapped his arm around Law's legs so that he was sitting on it. "You'll be a powerful Marine when you're older!"

"I'd rather die!" He shouted furiously. Struggling to get free, but his legs may as well have been encased in steel. "Let go of me you crazy old man!"

The man just laughed. "You're at the end of your rope, brat. Just relax and let us handle the rest."

'I got this Tora-o. Relax, okay? Here, watch this for me.'

A weight on his head brought him out of the memory and he realized Garp had put his dog hat on his head. "Watch that for me, would you? I got some insubordinate subordinates to beat up."

Then Law was in Sengoku's arms and Garp was suddenly across the field, fist connecting with the Marine Commander's head.

His own head was starting to hurt. "What just happened, Ojii-ya…?" He asked in a weak voice.

The man sighed, shifting Law so that his head was resting on his shoulder. "Garp has decided he likes you."
"Why? Make him stop." He muttered, the warm weight of Sengoku's hand on his back making it hard to resist the darkness tugging on his vision. He'd overdone it…

"That would be like trying to tame the Grand Line, buddy." He chuckled. "Why don't you rest while I take care of our guests?"

"You're ruining my image." He huffed but allowed himself to be swept away.

He woke up in time to see the others off and they gathered on the decks as he addressed them all.

"I know you've all been through so much already and now you're moving even farther from home." He said solemnly as he looked over his patients. "You're worried and afraid. Don't be." He gave them a wide smile. "It's almost over. For those of you with family still on Mangrove, I have your information and they will join you as soon as they can. Don't worry anymore, you're in good hands."

"Be careful, Law-san!" Amelia suddenly shouted.

"Take care of your brothers!" Kola, her husband, added.

They all began calling their farewells and well-wishes as if he were the one being sent out into the unknown as the ships began to set sail. Smiling, Law lifted his hand in farewell and watched them head below deck. "If any of them get hurt, I'll kill him."

Chuckling, Sengoku picked him up. "Don't threaten Marines, buddy. He'll keep them safe." He carried him to the extraction point and Law wrapped his arms around the Admiral's neck as he jumped to the boat.

Once he was sitting on the bench, Tanushi steering them back to the cove, he asked, "How are you, Tanushi-ya?"

"I'm just fine, Law-san, thank you. The others?" He queried.

"Good. I had to take care of a few infections in the newborns, but they'll be fine now." He shook his head to the drink Sengoku offered him, hands trembling too much to hold even a cup. He didn't want the fisherman to see.

"That's good." He said contently. "You know, ever since you arrived, I feel like the angels are finally watching over us."

Law didn't respond, looking out into the open sea. In their time, all these people were dead or dying. Where were their angels then? When the skin of his palm pulled painfully, he looked down at his fist and unclenched it, his vitiligo too-white against his skin. No, they couldn't rely on any god to save them, they had to be the change they wanted to see in the world.

But how much could they change? What should they change? He'd nearly lost all of his patients to a poorly thought out decision...he clearly wasn't at the top of his plotting game. Ah well, he'd just have to consider the issues as they came and play it by ear.

"LAW-CHAN!"

Looking up, he saw Corazon on the dock, waving at him happily. The last of the tension bled out of him and he smiled at his father. "Get away from the edge before you fall in!"
"I've never once fallen off a dock!" He protested with a grin as he plucked him out of the boat.

And promptly fell back in.

"That doesn't count!"

Chapter End Notes

Okay, so I probably could've fit last chapter into this one. I thought it'd be longer, it covered like ten pages in my journal…oh well.

There was a tiny bit of introspection here, but he brushed it off pretty quickly. And uh-oh, Garp's decided he likes the no-good waif. Law just can't escape the Monkeys.

Selphina: I don't think I'll ever go over the circumstances that led to the first chapter in the story. I was going to have Law sacrifice himself to kill Kaido, but to be honest, Blackbeard's the bigger threat here. Kaido has never even met Luffy so his defeat wasn't so personal. Blackbeard nearly got Luffy killed all those years ago and Law isn't above holding a grudge against someone he's never met :)

Chapter 12

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

They kept tabs on the refugees through Sengoku as Law healed the villagers and Kid and Killer worked on the boat's engine. With Garp's ferrying the newly healed people to safety, they wouldn't need to rely on it for too many people but they tried to hurry anyway. Things had worked out well for the villagers, so they wouldn't need to use all of the masks they'd created—Law estimated they would have twenty or so guests on deck when they finally left.

Between being healed by Law and Garp's return trips, the villagers took refuge in the ship, the only guaranteed asbestos free shelter, and did their best to help the two kids but were mostly left watching in shock as the genius redhead worked.

The days were filled with quiet anticipation and tension that would have sparked fights if not for the kids' experienced diffusions. Four long days later, there were twenty three people on the ship as the kids cleared the rail, causing all the villagers to exclaim in shock and awe as they watched. Everyone had a mask on as the ship began to roll towards the edge of the rail.

"This is the hard part." Kid said as they looked at the edge of the cliff, the drop too far to just continue rolling—they'd nosedive.

"How'd you plan on getting it out?" Law asked curiously.

"A ramp. But we didn't know your bitch ass would force us to leave so early. We ain't even started on it." Kid huffed.

"I can take care of this." Sengoku said calmly, startling them again as the man had been watching the villagers to make sure they didn't mess with the controls and send them plummeting to their deaths. "Just move the ship back…" He glanced between the edge and the ship. "About five yards and prepare for the drop."

Sharing looks, the trio nodded and returned to the ship where Kid manned the controls and had everyone move back from the rails as he used his powers to pull a lever, causing the ship to lurch backwards as the rail's track reversed. When he stopped, they watched Sengoku face the ship and gather Haki into his fist.

"I didn't know Haki could do that." Killer muttered.

Then the Admiral slammed his fist into the ground, all the gathered energy exploding into the ground causing it to quake. He side-stepped and they watched in shock as the ground suddenly split, creating a fissure wide enough for the ship to fall into the rushing water.

"Jesus Christ!" Kid exclaimed as they free-fell and he struggled to keep the ship floating as they hit the water a bit too hard in the front, seawater crashing over the deck and sweeping people's feet from under them. They didn't sink and as they leveled out, he started them moving against the current to get into open water.

Sengoku leapt down onto the deck, brushing off his hands. "This is a beautiful ship, Kiddo." Before Kid could do more than puff up with pride, he asked, "What could a boy need with a ship this big?"

"To fish." He replied easily.
"What, seakings?" Law scoffed, getting a glare from the boy.

"Well excuse me if I got carried away when designing it!" He grumbled. "I wanted a big workshop and Killer wanted a big kitchen. Then there's the bedrooms, guestrooms, washrooms, toilets, supply room, provisions room, the engine room—which takes up the majority of it to be honest, water tanks, the purifier so we have potable water—"

Law tuned him out as he babbled, keeping a watchful eye on the villagers as they cheered when they cleared the cliffs and sailed into open water. They all made sure no one got hurt or fell overboard.

"Everyone's off the island, right?" Kid asked Sengoku as he kept half an eye on the map of the area.

"Yes, our troops have retreated to Barcel Bay to keep an eye on the prisoners." The man replied.

"Good. Trafalgar."

Looking away from the celebrating crowd, Law took out a small black box about the size of his hand, opening the lid to reveal a dramatically oversized button. He held it out for the duo.

"What is that?" Corazon asked curiously.

"Everyone, sit your asses down and keep your masks on!" Kid shouted to the villagers who bemusedly did as they were told. Then together, he and Killer pressed the button.

Nothing happened for a moment, but then they felt the water quake. Waves crashed into the ship, sloshing onto the deck and there was dead silence before they all turned to look at the island just as the charges in the upper layers detonated sending rocks, trees, and buildings explosively into the air. The first shockwave hit them and hands clapped over ears as the ship pitched on the now-violent waters.

They all watched in shock as their homeland was swallowed by the sea.

Kid crushed the detonator before he repelled the pieces overboard into the churning waters. "What a tragedy, Ojii-san. Your punch to free our ship must have collapsed an underwater cavern or something."

"W-what?" The Admiral spluttered in shock.

He pinched the bridge of his nose when Law said, "You should be more careful, Ojii-ya. You shouldn't make a habit of destroying islands."

"Law-chan!" Corazon exclaimed in shock.

"Now, now, he couldn't have known there was an underground cavern."

"You are not pinning that on me!" Sengoku said in mild annoyance.

"Who else could have done it?" Law asked innocently.

"You blew it up with some sort of charges." He said with a scowl.

"Blaming children for your mistake isn't nice, Ojii-san." Killer chided mildly. "How could a couple of kids sink an entire island like that?"
"Yeah, we were on the ship the entire time." Kid said.

"You blew it up with some sort of charges that you detonated remotely." Sengoku growled.

"If that's true, where's the remote?" Law queried. "Surely you'd preserve such evidence."

Throwing up his hands, the man leapt over the rail to join the villagers.

Grinning, the boys high-fived each other.

Chapter End Notes

Will ASL be introduced into the story? If the whole trio makes a cameo, it will be much later on. I don't want to spoil anything, but only two of them have run into Law so far. I don't know if I can write proper ASL antics, but we'll see.

Thank you for the reviews, everyone! And all the follows and favorites! I'm glad people are liking this story!

I'll post the next chapter soon but typing is so tedious, especially on my ASUS 2-in-1 Laptop. Not to complain, but the magnets that hold it closed are really strong so if my wrists rest on it for any period of time, they start to stiffen up on me. But I'll soldier through it!
Chapter 13

Things settled down as they began their journey to Beetroot Island where Garp had stashed the others. With no complications, they would arrive around dinner time the next day and they passed the time playing card games with the others, making competitions out of it to ensure they didn't lose interest. With the three kids and Corazon, it got pretty silly as losers had to do dares given by the previous round's winner.

Of course, there was bickering, mainly between Law and Kid as the realization they were trapped together on a boat settled in. It would fade by the next day, but until they adjusted, they butted heads until Sengoku banished them to separate ends of the ship.

Despite that, meals were lively affairs as everyone chatted and laughed. Law helped the women and a few of the men cook the food to make sure they were given a balanced meal and he just listened silently to the lighthearted chatter.

Due to Kid's large crew, there were more than enough rooms for everyone, but the boys stayed in Kid's room together instead of risking mutiny from the displaced people. With all three in one place, chances of someone successfully sneaking up on them (not counting Corazon or Sengoku) were close to zero.

The next day passed in the same fashion with some of them amusing themselves with trying to fish through the rails with only a hook. Others just sunbathed on the deck, taking naps in the sunlight. It was a peaceful voyage and as the sun slowly shifted from its zenith, the deck was mostly quiet.

Killer suddenly dropped down from the crow’s nest. "Large ship heading our way from the west. It's flying a Jolly Roger."

Kid and Law frowned. They were six hours out from any island, there was no way they could avoid them.

"Come on, everyone, time for lunch!" Corazon called cheerfully and everyone headed below deck, blissfully unaware.

"Maybe they won't engage." Killer said optimistically as he peered through the spyglass.

"Did you identify the flag?" Law asked as he took it to see for himself.

"They haven't seemed to have created a personalized one yet." He replied.

"Suspicious." Kid muttered.

Law started picking out faces on the large ship. "Del Rio, 12 million. Ajax, 15 million, I think."

Kid growled. "The Scourge Brothers. The fuckers are known for their cruelty and merciless slaughter of any crew they come across."

"They don't look very happy." Law said as he noticed bruises and bandages. "They look like they lost a fight."

"So they'll be especially chipper, huh?" Kid scoffed.

"While their numbers could be an issue—twelve at least—we should be able to take them down if
"It comes to a fight." Law said. "How many cannonballs can you Repel?"

Kid thought about it. "Probably only like ten. Fifteen if they're the smaller variety."

"You boys are not going to fight pirates."

All three glared at Sengoku who was looking at them in exasperation.

"Don't hinder our training, Ojii-san." Kid said in annoyance. "These assholes are nothing!"

"We need to test our strength against small-time thugs or we won't know where we need to improve." Killer said sensibly.

"Don't tell me what to do." Law said with a scowl.

The man didn't look moved. "You boys will not fight pirates." He repeated as he rolled up his sleeves.

Suddenly Killer was distracted. "Look! They're flying the white flag!"

"Suspicious." Law said this time as they watched the ship get nearer.

Suddenly a kid leapt onto the railing, arms in the air as he shouted, "SENCHO~~!"

Shock had Law's mouth going slack before he exclaimed, "PENGUIN?!!" He was quick to dart down to the lower deck as the ship stopped and held out his arms as the boy all but pounced on him, catching him in a tight hug as his heart thudded a mile a minute. Penguin. It was Penguin! "What the hell are you doing in the South Blue?!!"

The boy, he couldn't be older than six, giggled. "Looking for you! When I woke up here, I remembered you found the thing in the North so I started poking around, but on my way to Shichi village, I caught one of your transmissions with Garp-san and heard you were in Mangrove Cove! I was on my way there when one of his reports to HQ said you had set off with the remaining villagers, so I figured I'd meet you halfway! And you'd probably need money too, so I caught the Scourge Brothers for you!" He spread his arms widely in the air, grinning happily.

Law smiled in amusement. "Thank you, Penguin. Why don't you meet my new brothers while Ojii-ya transfers the pirates to the holding cells?"

Sengoku scoffed, but immediately went to apprehend the crew.

Penguin's head cocked to the side, oversized hat shifting crookedly as he asked curiously, "Was that Sengoku the Buddha?"

"He's my Ojii-ya." Law replied with a smile, leading him up to the navigation deck where Kid and Killer were watching curiously. They stared at Penguin in similar states of shock, unable to reconcile the tiny child with the Heart Pirates' sharpshooter, but there was only one hat that ridiculous.

"AH!" Penguin suddenly shouted, startling all three as he suddenly pointed at Killer. "You're so adorable! My heart!" He clutched his chest overdramatically, making pained noises.

Scowling, Killer crossed his arms while Kid laughed in amusement.

"My Tou-san is downstairs distracting the villagers with lunch." Law told the boy once he'd settled down. "We didn't want them to get in the way if the pirates were hostile."
Kid suddenly pointed behind Law. "What the hell is that face?!"

Turning, Law saw Corazon on the stairs, apparently having tripped while they were distracted if the mark on his face meant anything. He was wearing that ridiculous shocked look on his face and Law grimaced.

"H-he called me Tou-san!" The man exclaimed.

"What do you want?" Law demanded wearily.

Blinking, the man grinned and stood up. "Oh, right! Lunch is ready! So who's your friend, Law-chan?"

"I'm Penguin, sir, hello!" The sharpshooter greeted him cheerfully. "Since Sencho is my Tou-san that makes you my Ojii-san! Welcome to the family!" He leapt up to glomp the man around the waist.

Looking like his entire year had been made, the man hugged him back happily.

"How does that even make sense?" Kid asked in confusion. "A captain isn't a father! They're brothers!"

Law shrugged. "Don't ask me, they do what they want."

Penguin latched onto his arm with a large grin. "I'm Sencho's Ace of Hearts! That makes me the head of the Defense group!"

"Well, why don't you all get lunch?" Corazon asked cheerfully. "I'll get Tou-san."

"I have a Hijiji-san too?!” Penguin asked in delight, apparently having missed that part of their earlier conversation.

Kid huffed in amusement as he put down anchor, Corazon already gone. "Great! I'm starving!" He locked everything in place before running to the stairs and sliding down the railing.

"Cool!" Penguin said in delight as he followed suit.

Scoffing, Law opted for the stairs and smiled when he heard Penguin's laughter amidst Kid's shouts.

"I wonder who else will remember." Killer mused as he kept pace with him.

"I think a better question is, why do we?" He sighed. "Maybe if we can figure that out we can predict any others."

"A topic for tonight, I suppose."

They joined the others for lunch where Penguin was greeted with open arms.
They reached the coordinates Garp had provided around seven that night. It took about three hours to reunite families and find homes for the remainder. Money and jobs, the Marine base on the island would take care of and the money from the captured pirates would be divided per person—Ajax plus Del Rio alone were a combined worth of twenty seven million which would give each person 45,000 berries. It gave them some pocket money to replace any items they'd been forced to abandon.

Law was forced to endure nearly half an hour of fawning as the refugees reaffirmed that they were alright and if they weren't his patients, he would've confiscated their hands. But he put up with it because he was aware of the thin ice he was treading around the sharp-eyed Admiral. Better to keep himself in check or risk crumbling the bridges being built.

Around eleven, as the crowds began to disperse and Law was wondering if he could sneak back to the ship now that he'd done his time, a new issue cropped up.

"I SAID NO!" Kid's shout caught everyone's attention and Law quickly made his way over to see a red-haired man trying to grab the boy's arm. "You think you can just take me back after abandoning me in the freaking scrapyard? HELL NO!"

Kid still had family on Mangrove Cove? Law watched with a frown, not sure about what was going on.

Kaizo, whom Law had treated for a mild case of Asbestosis, made another grab for him. "I didn't abandon you! I just told you to make yourself scarce for a few weeks—"

"It's been SIX MONTHS!"

"It's not my fault you never came back!" The man said in offense.

Kid gaped at him in disbelief before he dodged another grab, glaring at him. "Fuck you, you lying piece of shit! You can go fuck yourself!"

"Watch your language, young man!" Greta, Kaizo's wife who Law had treated for Peritoneal Mesothelioma, chided from beside her husband.

"Fuck off, bitch, just cuz you're ridin' his dick don't give you ANY power over me!" Kid growled, hands clenched into fists so tight Law was surprised he wasn't bleeding.

And WOW. That kind of language meant someone was about to die. He decided to step in.

"Regardless, Kaizo-ya, Kid is no longer your responsibility. He has been my legal brother for weeks now and you lost all rights to him when you did not protest the adoption within the allotted timeframe."

"You can't just take kids off the street and call them yours! Without the consent of his legal guardian—"

"You lost your rights as his legal guardian the moment you sent him off." He cut him off calmly, stepping between the duo and Kid for good measure. "Unless you could provide a valid reason to contest our father's guardianship, and unless Kid himself wishes to return to your care, it is highly
unlikely that anyone would grant you custody again."

"We're blood related!" The man spluttered furiously and Law's hand shifted discretely to his hidden hand-and-half sword.

"You are homeless, jobless, and without a Berry to your name." The refugees had not been told about the money yet, but even then it wasn't a lot. "You abandoned him for six months without cause and from what I've seen you treat him rather poorly. Why would anyone grant you custody?" He asked mildly.

"He is MINE! You have NO right—" The man reached out to grab Kid only to freeze. The sword's blade glinted in the torchlight, the sharp point causing a small bloodstain to start to bloom on the man's shirt. "Back up. Or I will gut you." He began to leak killing intent as he said, "Don't you ever touch my brother again."

Terrified, the duo quickly left and he re-sheathed the sword in his coat as he released the killing intent. He missed Kikoku.

"...I had it under control..." Kid muttered quietly.

"You would have killed him." He replied as he turned to face him. "I did not go to all that trouble saving their lives for you to lose control in a fit of temper, no matter how warranted it may be."

"Six months, man!" Kid growled angrily as he ran a hand roughly through his hair. "Bet you anything the fucker just wants my ship."

"Kid, why didn't you tell anyone?" Kayla, the hotel owner, asked in a pained voice. "Any one of us would've taken you in! You didn't have to stay in the scrapyard!"

There was a chorus of agreement from the others and Kid ducked his head to unsuccessfully hide a blush as he replied quietly, "There's no way you'd be able to afford it and I was already nearing the final stages of lung cancer before Trafalgar healed me. I wouldn't have lasted long anyway." That last part was admitted almost too quietly to hear and the group gasped in horror.

"Is-is that why he kicked you out?!" She asked in shock before it turned to fury. "That despicable cretin!"

Kid was the one being fawned over this time and though he protested, Law could see it was doing him good to know they cared.

"He didn't tell me he had cancer."

Law looked at Killer, who was pale and shaking beside him. "He treated it using radiation from his Devil Fruit last time. Do you recall him ever falling ill for no explainable reason?"

He nodded. "Why didn't he tell me?"

"It's what siblings do, Killer. They lie to protect their brothers and sisters from the harsh realities they live in." He said, remembering Lamy before he continued, "He didn't want to see you hurt for him, not when you were already in so much pain."

"But cancer...I could've lost him..."

Law put his hand on the boy's back as Killer buried his face in his hands. "You seem to be developing a complex. I recommend you speak with Penguin after we conclude our talks."
"Sencho, don't say it like that!" Penguin chided as he suddenly popped up between them. "Whether or not he has a complex doesn't invalidate what he's feeling right now! You should treat him better!"

"I'm not an invalid." Killer said in mild annoyance.

"See? You've gone and made him defensive!" He sighed.

"Oops." He said blandly. Emotions weren't his strong suit. Patting Killer's back, he said, "The traumas you have been forced to endure seem to be harming your emotional well-being. They are as important to treat as any physical wound so as a doctor, I highly recommend you be treated by Penguin before they become worse." He reworded it and Penguin looked pleased.

"Better. Thank you, Sencho." Penguin said happily.

Killer glared at the boy but before he could argue, Law said calmly, "If you resist treatment, I will not be held responsible for your injuries."

The boy switched his glare to him but didn't protest.

"Great! Glad that's settled!" Penguin said cheerfully. "Now let's find Kid and get something to eat!"

He dragged them into the thinning crowd.

Chapter End Notes

Where are the adults when they need them? Ah, they're working with the based Marines to go over the paperwork regarding the refugees. The boys can take care of themselves, they've saved an island and dismantled a government mostly alone, didn't they? At least that's what Sengoku tells Corazon as he drags him to the base.

I seem to have misspelled Hiijiji last chapter, but in my defense, my computer makes the I's and J's so similar, I'm just gonna pretend I've spelled it correctly. (Hiijiji=Great Grandfather)

Thanks for the reviews! I can't say very much to avoid spoilers, but they won't reach Zou for a while. Sengoku would never allow four children to go through the calm belt so they'll have to go the long way.

Anyone have any ideas for filler islands? I kind of skimped on those so I'll have to come up with them while typing and I'm not very good at original islands. Also if anyone could help me come up with some trouble they'd run into…I've really drawn a blank. As for Luffy remembering…Luffy is a mystery I still haven't solved. We'll all just have to wait and see :)

Personal info: No, actually, I never thought about wireless keyboards! I'm definitely buying one as soon as I can!

If anyone has any questions, always feel free to ask! Most of this is already written (I've finally gotten through the first journal with this chapter and there are EIGHT), and if I can, maybe I could fit your ideas somewhere!
Chapter 15

The next day was nice and quiet as Law headed out into the town to find the hospital, thinking he might as well take care of some patients while they were on Beetroot. The townspeople were chatting peacefully with their friends and with vendors that were opening up their shops. Some spoke about the refugees and the incident at Mangrove. Others were talking about him, pointing as discretely as they could and watching him as he passed.

He ignored them, letting their voices become white noise. Instead he focused on Penguin's humming as the boy walked a step behind him, still in a bit of stunned disbelief that he was really here. He reached back and took his hand, pulling him so that they were walking side-by-side and smiled when the younger boy began to swing their clasped hands.

The hospital was in sight when Law was startled by large hands grabbing him under his arms, pulling him up and back.

"Bwahahaha!"

Eyes widening, Law began to struggle. "Let go of me, you crazy old man!"

"Time to train, brat! I'll make you into a strong Marine!" Garp laughed as he grabbed Penguin too.

"H-hey! What gives?!" Penguin demanded as he too began to struggle.

"I don't wanna be a Marine!" Law exclaimed.

Garp ignored his protests as he answered Penguin cheerfully, "Time for training, birdie! Once we find your AWOL brothers, we'll get started!"


It wasn't. The man found a forest with a large clearing and attacked them. Law thought it was worse than his time with the Donquixote crew since the Vice Admiral didn't pull a single punch despite the monstrous strength his grandson apparently inherited from him. His speed made sure that even when they separated, they couldn't get away. It was less training and more of an unprovoked beat-down.

So the two captains began to use their Devil Fruits.

"Hey brats, no cheating!" Garp exclaimed angrily when he realized and he hit them both hard enough to send them through trees.

Dazed, they didn't sense the seastone until the cuffs clicked around their wrists. Both struggled to sit up, suddenly powerless and stared at the cuffs in shock. What the hell?!

"Get off your lazy butts!"

Law barely dodged the punch aimed at his head and took note that this was the kind that only suppressed their powers and not their strength.

"Sencho, look out!" Penguin called and the battle continued.

By the end of the exercise, they were all sore, tired, bloody, and bruised all over. They thought that was the end. That he'd leave them alone now and Law could heal them and they'd retreat to
the ship…but Garp had other ideas. Piling them up on his arm, he carried them from the clearing.

"Wahaha! You boys are pathetic! My six year old grandson lasts twice as long!"

"Well I'm sorry we don't have your family's thick skulls!" Law exclaimed angrily, too exhausted to give more than a kick to the man's other arm. He didn't even notice, the bastard.

"Don't worry, I'll fix that soon enough!"

Chills of foreboding shot down their spines, but before they could properly freak out, he was tossing them away.

Over a fucking cliff! They shouted in alarm as they tried to get to the cliff walls and grab hold of something, but they were going too fast and all they got were cracked nails and abrasions until they hit the rushing river at the bottom.

Penguin and Killer were quick to right themselves and found their respective anchors sinking to the rocky floor. They could barely see them but they were quick to swim over and grab them, pulling them to the surface where the churning waters carried them further inland.

"Up ahead!" Penguin shouted over the rushing water. "Rocks!"

Together they did their best to avoid crashing into them despite their need for handholds. In water this strong, they'd have no more luck than they had coming down. They just had to wait for shallow waters and hope the river didn't exit out into the ocean. At least they didn't have to worry about hypothermia yet. The water was warm.

Finally, after about two hours, the exhausted duo dragged their captains onto a sandy shore of silt. There was no exit, they'd have to climb.

Kid struggled to shove himself upright on quaking arms. "Dammit! The hell is wrong with that bastard?!" He coughed out water and fell onto his elbows.

"I don't want to be like Mugiwara-ya…" Law whimpered as he stared up at the distant sky, a thin strip barely visible between the cliffs.

All four shuddered at the thought.

"Might as well start climbing." Killer sighed as he looked up at the distant sky. "We should have a few more hours before nightfall."

Sighing, they all got to their feet and began the torturous ascension.

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It took them five hours to reach the top, Law and Kid slipping at least twice each, but their crewmates were quick to catch them before they went far. By the time they reached the top, they were beyond exhausted and flopped face-down into the dirt.

A loud growl had them all going limp with frustration.

"Is that a wild animal?" Law asked, not looking up.

"Several." Penguin confirmed after he checked. "Wolves, about fifteen."

Groaning, they pushed to their hands and knees, grabbing up rocks since Garp had confiscated their weapons.
"Most kills gets to be de facto Captain until we set out." Kid said and the others grinned. When the wolves pounced, they met them halfway.

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Using a bone shard from the downed wolves, they got the cuffs off and Law treated them all as best he could in his exhausted state. He only managed to disinfect the wounds before they made him stop.

"You can try again after we've set up camp." Penguin said and he reluctantly nodded.

But when they left the gorge, they found themselves in a hostile forest full of bloodthirsty animals. Why the hell had they brought the refugees here? This place was dangerous!

Persistent buzzards that didn't seem to mind their meals still kicking, more wolves that they took pleasure beating into submission with their comrades' bones, monkeys that were actually their most difficult adversaries (the irony was not lost on them), and snakes the size of the trees they perched in. If they weren't so exhausted, it would've been fun.

Around midnight, they gave in to their roaring stomachs and set up camp, roasting one of the monkeys they'd killed before the others retreated and sat around the fire, ears peeled for any attackers. They ate in relative peace and wondered where they were supposed to sleep if the ground and trees were vulnerable.

After dinner, Law tried healing more of their injuries, wanting to at least stop the bleeding of various bites and gouges.

Killer put a hand on Law's quaking one. "That's enough, Law-san. We won't die, but you will if you keep trying to force it." He chided calmly.

Law rubbed his face with a filthy hand, sighing as he released his room. He lost his balance and fell against Kid, who steadied him. "I'm sorry. I wish I could do more."

"You've done enough, stop bein' a bitch." Kid huffed.

"If I weren't so tired, I'd deck you one." Law grumbled sleepily even as he leaned more heavily against him.

"You couldn't punch the broad side of a barn."

"Save the arguing for tomorrow." Penguin yawned. "We need to figure out where to sleep."

"We'll just have to take our chances in the trees." Killer said. "The ground will be too cold, we could get sick."

"That's all we'd need." Kid muttered as they reluctantly began to put out the fire.

When it was out, they each chose a tree and climbed up. They couldn't wait to be back in town where their nice warm ship waited for them.

"If the monkeys come, die in silence." Law muttered, causing the others to laugh and despite the danger, it didn't take long to fall asleep.

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"TIME TO TRAIN!"

"ARE YOU FUCKING KIDDING ME?!" Kid shouted as they immediately leapt out of their trees to engage the one Monkey they hadn't considered returning. They took out their anger and frustration on him, but he was a Vice Admiral and they were barely above civilian. The battle lasted five minutes.

It was the start of a long week and about ten days later, they returned to the village bloody, bruised, and altogether looking like they'd been mauled by a bear.

Within minutes of their passing the outer limits, Corazon was running up to them, looking like he'd already tripped on the way. He gathered them up into a crushing hug that they didn't even react too, far too exhausted. "Boys! Where have you been?!" He asked anxiously.

"Training." Law said dully, Penguin and Kid already out cold and Killer close behind. Closing his eyes, he too went limp as unconsciousness swept him away.

"Bwahahaha!" Garp laughed loudly as he looked at the group. "You're coddling the brats, Roci! When I was their age I was taking down giant tigers with my bare hands! They're pathetic!"

"Fuck you." Law muttered in his sleep.

Corazon held them closer. "You can't push them so hard! They're just kids!"

"Ah, they'll survive." The man brushed off. "I thought joining a pirate crew would've hardened that soft heart of yours but you might actually be worse!"

"Because I'm trying to give them safety after so long suffering?!" He demanded angrily.

"They don't need pity!" Garp sighed impatiently. "That chip they've got on their shoulders will push them to become better than the ones that wronged them! They'll want to be strong enough to protect the only family they've got left and all you're doing is holding them back!"

Corazon sighed wearily, knowing he was right. "At least let them keep some sort of weapon next time…"

"Weapons are a privilege, not a right!"

He would need to plan how to teach the boys to sneak weapons past the Vice Admiral's eagle eyes because arguing with Garp would just be an exercise in futility. Dropping the argument, he hurried with them to the hospital to have their wounds treated.
To their relief, the Vice Admiral was leaving the next day. Wary of any last minute beat-downs, they made themselves scarce, hoping to avoid him. But it was all in vain.

"COME TELL YOUR OJI-CHAN BYE!"

They each had a good sized lump on their heads as they stood behind Corazon and Sengoku's legs, watching the crazy Marine board one of his ships.

"You boys better keep training! I won't go so easy on you next time!"

Law gave him the bird, Kid mimicking him and the man laughed.

"Don't let them slack off, Roci! See you at HQ, Senny!" He headed out of sight and they watched warily as the ships began to sail away, clutching at the legs of their respective shields and not relaxing their grips until the ships went beyond the horizon.

Penguin released Corazon's leg and straightened with a bright smile, putting his hands on his hips. "That wasn't so bad! At least he's gone now!"

"He'll be back." Law said dully as he too straightened, but he kept hold of his father's leg.

Corazon rubbed their heads, knocking their hats askew. "Don't worry boys, you'll learn how to minimize the damage sooner than you think."

"That isn't comforting." Kid muttered halfheartedly.

"Now come on, I'll show you how to hide weapons so the next time he dumps you somewhere you'll have a better chance."

All of them brightened at that and followed him into town.

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That afternoon as they ran laps around the village (taking the Vice Admiral's threat very seriously) Law brought up their arrival. "Penguin, what do you remember before waking up here?"

The boy hummed. "Well, I remember dying, obviously. Pretty standard stuff, nothing interesting. There was literally no transition between there and here, one minute I'm bleeding out, the next I was waking up on my Momma's farm in—well, wherever we lived." He frowned thoughtfully. "Still don't think it has a name."

"You left your mom to come here?" Killer demanded.

"Yeah, she said as long as I send her a pic of us for her birthday next year I could go." He replied with a shrug.

"She just—why'd she just let you go?" Kid demanded in shock.

"I'm way over the age we usually leave." He replied in amusement. "I'm lucky my dad didn't kick me out a long time ago." He turned to Law. "Oh, and she thinks I should have a solid partner right now, so Sencho, if she or any of my family asks, we're like—together."
"The hell? You're only—what, six?" Kid asked, flabbergasted, as Law just nodded.

Penguin looked at them in surprise. "Oh right, you don't know, do you? I was raised by penguins. It's where I got my name." He grinned widely at their shocked faces. "We don't really know why I look like a human, but we weren't complaining!"

"Wait. So you're, genetically, a penguin?" Killer asked curiously.

"Yup!" He said cheerfully and there was a long moment of silence as they absorbed that information.

"You gotta be the ugliest damn penguin I ever saw." Kid scoffed.

"But I'm a cute human!" He said optimistically. "It's why my mom made sure I could talk and stuff! None of the other penguins liked me like that and Mom thought my best bet to find a mate was to get a human one!"

"So why haven't you?" Killer asked curiously.

Penguin pouted slightly. "Sencho killed 'em all."

"They were perverts trying to take advantage of you." Law replied calmly.

"You say that about all of them, but some of them you killed before I could even introduce them to you!"

"You weren't very upset when I did." He replied mildly. "You didn't love them and they didn't love you. I won't allow anyone to take you for anything less than true love." He turned to pin him with a glare. "And if they try, they deserve to die."

Penguin gave a put-upon sigh, but didn't argue.

"How could you tell they weren't in love if you killed them before they could meet you?" Killer asked Law.

"I stalked them." He shrugged. "Not one held his hand."

"That's hardly a declaration of love."

"I hold his hand. If they don't, they obviously only want him for sex." He huffed in irritation.

Penguin made a surprised sound. "Is that why Georgie—"

"Yes." He growled, immediately angered by that name.

"Huh. I always wondered what he did." Penguin mused.

"What'd he do?" Kid asked curiously.

"When I tried to hold his hand, he hit me." He replied flippantly.

"How long did he suffer before you killed him?" Killer asked Law.

Law just chuckled darkly and they wisely dropped the subject.

Kid asked Penguin, "Would you even be able to reproduce with a human?"
"Nope. Sencho checked, no baby Penguins." He giggled.

"What about a penguin? Would they come out like you or the mother?" Killer wondered.

Kid looked at him in horror before asking in disgust, "Dude, wouldn't that, like, hurt the mom?"

"I wouldn't want to. They're all jerks." Penguin huffed. "But yeah, technically. And since all the major stuff comes from the dad, they'd come out like me."

"How the hell'd you survive without feathers?"

Penguin cocked his head to the side. "Adaptation."

"Dude, shut up, that kind of stuff takes generations of change!" Kid exclaimed. "There's no way you could survive without feathers!"

"I don't know what to tell you. I can handle the cold fine even completely naked!"

"It's true." Law said smoothly as the duo made to protest and they reluctantly accepted it.

"What does a penguin farm?"

"Fish." Penguin replied, the 'duh' going unsaid.

"The fuck? How do you farm fish?"

They continued to discuss Penguin's home life while Law listened with half an ear, more focused on the fact that their only lead to why they had been sent back was a dead end.

They started on their final lap and when they reached the forest, they'd find the monkeys and start training.

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They left the island the next day amidst the tearful farewells of the refugees.

"So where to?" Kid asked as they sailed north.

"Can this ship sail through the Calm Belt?" Corazon asked as he leaned against the rail, watching the vanishing island. Law and Penguin were near the map table where Sengoku was taking a seat, Killer in the crow's nest.

Kid hummed. "It can, but it's an easy target for seeplings."

"Then we'll have to go through Reverse Mountain." Sengoku said as he looked around. "Where are your compasses?"

"Don't need 'em. We're going north." He replied.

"Blue north." Law specified.

"That's kinda obvious, shithead."

"Is there another north?" Corazon asked curiously, causing Kid to give him a surprised look.

"Oh. Like—twelve." Kid replied. "I'll probably get sick the first few days on the other side of the mountain."
"Why?" Sengoku asked warily.

"My Devil Fruit makes me sensitive to magnetic forces." He explained. "Even this far out, I can tell the magnetic fields of the Grand Line will knock me on my ass until I can get used to the mess."

"I've never heard of a Devil Fruit that controls magnetism." Corazon said curiously.

"And how unusual to find one in the Blues." Sengoku mused. "Well, we'll just take over steering until you get well again."

Kid sighed in annoyance. "Then I'll need to teach you how to sail her. Come here."

Sengoku walked over and Corazon stole his seat. As Kid explained her controls, Law climbed onto Corazon's lap and decided to take a nap.
Chapter 17

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

It was a long way to Reverse Mountain, even with a motorized ship and the boredom quickly set in. They began training again, running laps around the decks, sparring, and started doing basic exercises. Sit ups and push-ups, they turned it into a competition to see who could outdo the others and when Corazon joined in to make it proper training, the hours bled away.

Outside of training, Kid and Law fell back into their usual banter and though they fought more often than ever, it was the most relaxed they'd been since arriving. On the flipside, Killer and Penguin would stretch out on the deck with a set of cards and they'd play each other in peaceful quiet until they felt rested enough to resume their training. Even then there was no real banter between the two, only the sound of flesh striking flesh, but it was just as intense as the two captains' battles.

More often than not, Penguin won his fights, but when he fought against Kid, he always lost.

It annoyed the redhead and their fifth day at sea he exploded angrily, "Are you throwing your matches!"

"No!" Penguin exclaimed in offense. "Your stupid Devil Fruit is messing up my balance! Sencho would kick my butt if I went easy on an opponent!"

"But I'm not even using it!" He protested.

"You subconsciously release charges when you fight." Law replied as he swept Killer's legs out from under him only to have to dodge the boy's grab and following kick. "It's very annoying."

"I never noticed." Killer noted as he went with the punch and harnessed the momentum to land a sweeping kick to Law's side.

Law grunted in pain and with a burst of speed he grabbed the boy's ankle and, with a complicated twisting maneuver, slammed him face-down on the deck. He placed his hand on his neck, the palm crackling with electricity. "I am also sensitive to magnetic charges within a certain range."

"Yield." Killer said and they got to their feet, him rubbing his face while Law rubbed his side. "That's good to know."


Grinning, the boy jumped to his feet and attacked.

"Where are we going?" Law asked Corazon as they docked on Brighton Island. They were about an hour out from Reverse Mountain and they needed to refuel and stock up on provisions.

The port was crowded and Sengoku had set out to deal with some pirate ships they spotted along the docks with Penguin following along, so it was just Corazon and Law as they walked through the stalls.

"We're going to Zou." He replied. "Tou-san thinks we should take a year to get used to each other
before I reclaim my position as Commander."

He ignored that last part. "That's very clever. Zunisha-sama moves around so much, Doffy won't be able to find us so easily."

"-sama?" He asked in surprise.

Law looked up at him curiously. "Oh yeah. I never told you about getting sent through the North Calm Belt by some pirates, did I?"

"No!" He exclaimed in shock and horror. "How'd you survive?!"

"Penguin's dad saved me." He replied, thinking back to all those years ago. "I stayed with them for a while, but when Marines started coming in, they sent me with one of their cousins through a secret passageway through the Red Line and it took us to Zou quicker than just exiting the Calm Belt. I was stuck on Zou for about five months waiting for a passing ship and Nekomamushi-sama kinda took me in. He told me how she wanders the New World to protect the Mink tribe from poachers and how through her constant release of Haki, they grow strong enough to protect her back." He smiled up at him proudly. "It's where I learned that electric attack! Nekomamushi-sama taught me as long as I swore to do everything in my power to protect Zunisha-sama when I am a strong warrior!"

"He's gonna be disappointed you're still a little bitch."

Law turned to glare at Kid. "Only bitch I see here is you, Eustass!"

Kid laughed. "A bitch with shit insults!"

Growling furiously, Law went at him while Killer and Corazon sighed, continuing their shopping.

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Sengoku tied ropes around the boys' waists as they neared Reverse Mountain and said, "Now you boys need to hold on tight. You shouldn't worry about going over, but it's going to be a very rough ride. Ready, Roci?"

"Ready!" He confirmed from the controls. He sailed them into the current and cut the engine as Sengoku leapt to the deck below to redirect them manually if he had to. The ships controls weren't quite sensitive enough to maneuver in such a narrow channel, so they'd be more of a hindrance than help.

All four kids watched eagerly as the mountain drew nearer and a heavy rain began to fall. Thanks to Corazon's keen aim, they were trapped right in the middle of the current and locked in as they rocketed towards the rising river.

Then they were going up, letting out excited shouts as they clung to the railing for dear life. Up and up, there was no need for redirection and they soon exploded from the peak, going weightless as the stormy clouds stretched on for miles around them, the sun shining brightly and casting rainbows in the spray of droplets.

Then they were falling and the peace was broken as they burst back into the downpour, hollering in delight as they sped towards the Grand Line.

Law caught sight of something strange and suddenly it wasn't fun anymore. "IS THAT A WHALE?" He shouted in alarm as they all noticed the wall of grey in their path.
"We're gonna crash!" Penguin exclaimed in horror. "Brace for impact!"

Kid suddenly collapsed as they passed into the magnetic field of the Line and Killer let out a slew of curses at the timing as he grabbed a hold of him. Law held out his hand, energy beginning to spin below it as he prepared to create a room, only to be startled by a shrill whistle that deafened him. To their shock, the whale moved just in time for them to avoid a collision.

As they slowed down in the relatively peaceful waters, Corazon turned the engine back on and Sengoku returned to the navigation deck, tucking away a thin whistle.

"Law-san." Killer's voice barely cut through the sound of his heartbeat thudding in his ears and he remembered Kid.

Quickly, he created his room and began to check the unconscious boy over. "The nerve impulses in his brain were overwhelmed by the magnetic frequency of the Grand Line, just as he warned us." He made absolutely sure before he said, "He'll be fine in about a day. If he's lucky he'll sleep through most of his body's adjustment. There's no need to worry, it's just like being bombarded with Conqueror's Haki for the first time."

"Go put him to bed, Roci." Sengoku ordered as he took over the controls. The taller man carefully freed Kid from the rope before scooping him up and carrying him into the ship, Killer a step behind as he followed anxiously.

"Ne, Hiiiji-san, was that a whale?" Penguin asked as he jumped up onto the railing, looking out over the open waters.

"Yes, that was Laboon. He's an island whale that was caught up in Reverse Mountain's west stream, stranding him."

"Have no efforts been made to relocate him?" Law asked with a frown.

"He refuses to leave the mountain. We've lost a few ships, but there's nothing we can do."

"Couldn't you just kill it?" He asked.

"Island whales are endangered and protected by law." He replied.

"Oh! Like my family!" Penguin said in understanding.

Sengoku looked at him curiously. "Your family?"

Penguin grinned, nodding. "Yeah! My family lives halfway through the North Calm Belt." He said brightly. "Genetically, I'm a penguin. It's just something went weird while I was in my egg and I developed like a human instead. My mom thought it was cuz she ate some weird fish while they were making me, but we don't know for sure because everything important filtered out by the time Sencho could run blood tests."

"So close to the Grand Line, anything is possible." He hummed.

"Growing up like a human wasn't so bad." Penguin said as he sat down and began swinging his legs. He giggled. "Everyone was so jealous I have fingers! But they're better swimmers than I am, so they didn't—like, shun me or anything which was lucky I guess. But on the other hand, I'm not very attractive for penguins so Mom wouldn't let me move out. She didn't want me to be lonely, but I don't want a partner anyway!"

"Then stop trying to get married." Law said in annoyance.
"They proposed to me!" He protested.

"Which is another reason I got rid of them." He hummed. "Just say no. You must know the person a minimum of six years, they must be approved by me, and if they ever try to touch you inappropriately, you better kick their ass. No sex until you're married, and no marriage until conditions one and two have been met."

Penguin sighed heavily. "Yes, Sencho."

"I'm only looking out for you, Penguin." Law said solemnly. "I don't want you to be tricked by some pervert."

Penguin tackled him in a hug sending them both crashing to the deck. Their hats flew off as he rubbed their cheeks together with a bright smile. "I know, Sencho, thank you!"

Smiling, Law hugged him back, running his fingers through the red and gold hair to get it out of his face. Hopefully this go around the boy would run them off before Law had to intervene.

There was a boom of thunder before a bolt of lightning struck the figure head. Rain began to pour even though there wasn't a cloud to be seen and puddles immediately began to form on the deck. Penguin let out a delighted sound before he ran off to go splash around on the lower deck. Law sat up and brushed his soaked bangs out of his eyes as he watched Penguin through the railing. Some things never changed.

"How many people have asked for his hand?" Sengoku asked mildly.

"Only six." He replied, standing up. "Four women, two men, all over twenty years old."

"I hope you ran them off properly."

Law fought back a dark grin and smiled serenely instead. "They'll never bother him again."

He hummed. "Why don't you go make sure he doesn't fall overboard?"

Giving a lazy two-finger salute, he untied himself at last and went to the stairs. A few down, his curiosity got the better of him and he slid down the railing, surprised by the rush he got from it. But he misjudged the momentum thanks to the rain and shot off the end to slide across the slippery deck. He was laughing the entire time and bowled Penguin over as the boy was too distracted to notice him. Both burst into giggles before they got up and began a game of slip-and-slide tag. The safeguards on the rails would prevent them going over so they barely spared any thought for safety.

It wasn't until much later that Law wondered why he acted so childish.

Chapter End Notes

Woo! Lots of reviews to answer! And for all the new favorites and follows—thank you too! You guys are awesome!

Iviidiis: They're on their way to Zou! But I'm sorry to say Bepo won't be there. You'll find out why eventually. (He's my favorite, so this sort of saddens me)
Nana: Thank you! But I can't really remember if this was an original idea or if the whole Penguin-raised-by-penguins idea was in a fanfiction I read somewhere… I've read so many, it sort of blurs. :( And never underestimate what a mother can do for her child. They'll find a way. What is that way? I'll leave that to you readers :P As for meeting ANY of the ASL trio, it won't be for a while yet. They've got to reach Zou, then spend a year there, then Corazon's getting assigned somewhere—there's a lot to be done before then.

Hiezen: I don't blame you, mate. I've avoided stories for strange tags before too, but eventually, when I run out of stories… my curiosity gets the better of me and a whole new world opens! I'm glad mine is one of the ones that are worth the read (I've been scarred by so many stories, but I'm a gambling gal that don't learn her lesson… and most of them have been on AO3 lol.) I've thought about posting there, but… we'll see.

And I chose Law because I love his character so much! He's actually what dragged me back into watching One Piece and Law fanart is what has gotten me through to the ninth journal! That, and the OP Themesongs… One Piece is Love.

JarOfIdeas: Thank you for the review! Now I rely heavily on the One Piece Wiki for everything Canon related, so most of the info in my story is plucked straight from there. As far as it says, Coby is a Captain and Sengoku hasn't been promoted to Fleet Admiral yet—I'm probably twisting the timeline a bit, but I haven't found concrete dates yet, so he's just an Admiral for now. And Garbage-ya isn't a WORLD Noble, just some commoner Noble. If I talk about a Celestial Dragon, I'll either call them that or World Noble, otherwise they're just peons.

Thank you everyone for reviewing/following/fa-ving this story!
Chapter 18

The next day after lunch, Law went to check on Kid, who still hadn't woken. Chemicals were balanced and Law saw no side-effects from the boy's forced slumber. So why hadn't he woken up yet?

As he was checking his eyes, the boy jerked his head to the side and swatted at him but Law avoided it by leaning back. "The fuck outta my face..." Kid muttered.

Huffing slightly, Law said, "Well, Sleeping Beauty seems to be in perfect health. There's nothing to worry about, Killer."

"What're you talkin' about?" Kid asked as he sat up, rubbing his eyes. Killer hugged him tightly and knocked him back into a horizontal position.

"You passed out once we entered the Grand Line's magnetic field." Law replied as he ended his room. "You've been out for about twenty two hours." He was going to say more, but seeing Killer's shoulders start to shake, he silently left the room. He'd go see what he could scrounge up from Lunch's left-overs.

With Kid awake, their training continued properly and every day their games left them exhausted and sore, but they didn't complain in earshot of the adults. They didn't want them to think they were weak or anything.

They soon came upon their first island and Kid asked, "What's this place called?"

"Candied Island." Corazon said brightly. "I really wouldn't recommend eating anything, no matter how good it looks. People go around licking things all the time."

Law stared at the candy cane trees rising seventy feet in the air and asked in shock, "It's really candy though?"

"Yup. Everything but the people."

"But you can't survive on candy! How do they get the nutrition they need?" He asked in shock.

"Oh, the animals have all the nutrients of regular animals. But the rest they get from trading." He replied.

"I wanna eat a candy animal." Kid said determinedly.

Sengoku chuckled. "Good luck. They're notoriously hard to catch."

"Challenge accepted!" They exclaimed excitedly.

"We'll stay here for three days while the logpose sets, so you'll have plenty of time to track one down." Corazon said in amusement.

"Why do we need a logpose?" Kid asked. "The next island is only two days out." He pointed northeast.

Sengoku put a hand on his head. "No offense meant, Kiddo, but we have no idea if your internal
compass works properly in the Line."

"Yeah, we can't risk it being as unreliable as a Blue compass." Corazon sided with the Admiral.

Law was surprised when Kid didn't take offense. "You're just shrugging that off?"

Kid shrugged again. "They didn't mean it as an insult. They're just ignorant bastards too scared to take chances, which makes sense with four kids."

"I guess…" He said with a thoughtful frown. Then he grinned. "Someone alert the News Coos! Eustass-ya is being reasonable!" He exclaimed dramatically.

"Hey, shut up! I'm always reasonable!"

"Oh, never mind. There it goes."

Growling, Kid tackled him and they began to brawl as the island neared.

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It started out pretty fun. Roads made of peanut brittle, chocolate, and other candies; boulders made of jawbreakers and chunks of caramel; trees made of lollipops, licorice, and candy canes—everything was made of all sorts of candy and despite Corazon's warning, they tried a few things anyway. Law's favorite was the rock candy formations they found near the hot chocolate springs and they decided to collect some to take with them later.

"An animal!" Kid called, pointing at a grazing deer that seemed to be made of the same candy as Gummy bears.

"I don't like the green ones." Penguin said and they looked at him in surprise before considering the deer thoughtfully.

"Red." Law said and they nodded in agreement as they began to hunt down their preferred flavor. The hunt took them deep into the forest and they frowned when the milk chocolate earth turned to dark. The path seemed to be getting darker as well and they kept their senses open for gummy danger.

They didn't expect to come across a bear. And while it was gummy, the claws were still sharp enough to gouge through the candy cane tree like it was marzipan. But they just grinned at the worthy opponent and took out their weapons.

It took fifteen minutes even with the four of them working together, and by the time the bear went still, they were covered in some strange fruity syrup that was the animal's blood.

"This part isn't fun." Killer sighed as he wiped it out of his hair. They were all sticky messes.

Curiously, Law licked it. "Huh. Tastes like strawberry." He poked the dead bear. "Should we… cook it?"

"Won't it melt?" Penguin asked.

"Only one way to find out." Kid replied and began searching for wood for a fire.

Surprisingly, the fire caught on the branches they found and Law and Penguin began looking around for berries and herbs to supplement the meal.

"Ugh, everything's candy." Law grumbled as they came back with various finds. They cut some
of the bear off and began to roast it over the fire. It didn't melt.

"Yeah, this island's not so great health-wise." Penguin hummed. "Maybe we can find a cookbook at the town though."

"Will we get in trouble for killing a bear?" Killer wondered.

There was a moment of silence.

"It was self-defense." Kid replied, which was technically true and they put it from their minds.

When the 'meat' started to smell like it was burning, they took it out and let it cool for a bit before they divided it between them.

After the first bite, Law said, "Cooking it seems to have made it taste rotten. Let's try it raw."

They looked at the oozing bear. "You first." Kid said, tossing the 'meat' away.

Rolling his eyes, he approached the animal and took out his sword to carve a small piece off. Without hesitation, he popped it in his mouth and chewed thoughtfully. "It's…not bad…"

Penguin tried it next. "I say five out of ten."

"I say six." Law replied. "We're gonna have to find a way to cook this properly in town. We can't just waste it."

Kid and Killer tried it next. "Yeah, it's definitely missing something. Let's get it to the ship and store it."

They all looked at the giant creature. Even between the four of them, transporting it would be nearly impossible.

"Time to make a gurney." Killer said and they began to look around for sticks and materials to drag it towards the shore.

~~~rp~~~

"You boys are a mess!" Corazon exclaimed as they located the adults three hours later.

"How do you cook a gummy bear?" Law asked, ignoring the obvious statement. "We tried with just fire, but either we used poisonous branches or there was some strange chemical reaction caused by the heat to make it taste fermented."

"You boys took down a bear?" Sengoku asked in surprise. "That's very impressive. They can get pretty violent here."

"I'd be violent too if all meat tastes like the bear does." Kid scoffed. "Three out of ten. Would not eat again."

"Drama queen." Penguin scoffed.

"Says the guy that gave it five."

"It tastes better than raw fish." He shrugged.

That was also true.
"You tried it raw?" Corazon asked in shock.

"It tasted better raw than how we cooked it." Law replied. "Is there, like, some sort of cookbook we can get? Cuz we're not wasting all that bear."

"How big was it, exactly?" Sengoku asked.

"About two feet taller than Tou-san." Killer replied.

That caused both men to gape at them in shock. "That's more than eleven feet tall!" Corazon exclaimed.

"You boys did not fight a twelve foot bear." Sengoku said wearily, pinching the bridge of his nose.

They just grinned and he directed an exasperated look at the sky.

"Cookbooks…I'm not sure they'd tell how to cook a bear, but I'm sure we could find one somewhere." Corazon said easily as he paid for the dishes in his basket. They went through the glass ones way too quickly, so he'd gotten metal ones, but Law noticed something off.

Law cleared his throat. "Um, Tou-san…those are just hard candy painted silver."

"W-what?" He asked in shock and Kid cracked one in half to show the glossy insides.

"Not even the good kind of hard candy." Killer said with a frown and they looked at the panicky vendor.

"You're charging me for dirt?!" Corazon exclaimed angrily as he grabbed the guy.

"Technically, this is a rock." Law said easily. "I think this is sugar free."

The other kids made disgusted faces and there was a scuffle as Corazon forced the man to give him his money back.

"How'd you know it wasn't real?" Sengoku asked curiously as he looked at one of the pieces. "This is really well done."

Law chuckled. "It isn't reflecting the light properly. The shine is more blue than yellow."

"Blue?" Kid asked in confusion. "It looks normal to me."

"My power gives me a slight edge to my vision allowing me to perceive a greater range of colors." He shrugged.

"Neat." Penguin said in surprise.

"Cookbooks." Law reminded, watching Corazon toss all the plates back at the cowering vendor in a fit of pique.

"Right, well, there's a store just down the street that had some books in it." Corazon said with a huff as he turned away from the stall. "Let's see what we can find."

~~~rp~~~

The next day Law walked home to home as he was directed towards people that could use some healing. The amount of cavities he encountered would have caused a lesser doctor to faint and he
spent a majority of that day and the next filling cavities and placing caps. Some teeth he had to pull and he wondered how these people had survived so long.

"Candy apples are not real apples!" He raged to his family over dinner. "They're just hard candy in the general shape of a fruit! I've checked, it's pure sugar and it's rotting these people's teeth right out of their mouths!"

"Should we stay a bit longer?" Corazon asked.

Law gave him a surprised look and faltered slightly. "Oh, um…aren't we on a schedule? They've lasted this long." He brushed off.

"A couple of days won't hurt." Sengoku said. "The vacation time isn't affected until we reach Zou."

Law brightened. "Good! I think a day and a half to beat some sense into these people's heads about nutrition!" He grabbed Penguin. "Come on, let's go make a chart of the food pyramid!"

"Food pyramid?" Corazon asked curiously as the two boys ran out the door.

"Yeah." Kid said absently. "The higher up on the chart, the less of the things you should eat. Sweets and fats and oils are the top cuz they're really bad for you but grains and junk take up the bottom cuz they're good for you and you need more of them or something." He shrugged in disinterest. "Should we just sell the bear? Candy meat tastes gross."

Sengoku chuckled. "You boys will have to discuss that amongst yourselves. But finish your food."

"Only assholes waste food." Kid muttered as he let his head thunk to the table. He turned and tried to eat a bite that way, but had to sit up anyway to swallow. "I changed my mind. It's a two now."

They just shook their heads in amusement and continued eating their own food.
After the two boys gave the people of Candied Island a mentally scarring presentation on the effects of malnourishment and various deficiencies, the group set out again for the next island in the line.

"What's that island called?" Penguin asked curiously as they peered at the island that seemed to be made almost entirely of stone that rose up in a low dome. On two sides of the dome were two thin but tall mountains that rose almost twice as high and ended in two points that curved away from each other. Law thought it looked like a crab.

"Crab Island."

"The fuck? That's not original at all..." Kid grumbled as they frowned at the dome.

"Oh, it's not named after the formations." Sengoku said. "If memory serves, this island is home to some of the most ferocious fire crabs known."

"Fire crabs are real?" Law asked in delight.

"Where the hell did you hear about fire crabs?" Kid asked incredulously.

"There are legends in the North Blue about a monstrous creature born in the hottest volcanoes." Law said. "They're usually antagonists, attacking wanderers for no discernable reason and tearing them apart piece by piece until the only thing left is a spinal cord next to a still heart. So you feel every agonizing second." He grinned at their horrified looks. "Oh, you should hear some of the horror stories people told us when they came to Flevance. My mom swore she'd never bring Lamy with us since almost every single time the people being treated had some nightmare to share that they swore up and down were true."

"While it's true that fire crabs are aggressive," Sengoku began after a moment. "I don't believe such an attack has ever been reported. They're tiny creatures, no larger than your hand, but they do have venomous claws. It's more like a bee sting than a snake bite, however, and there has only been five hundred confirmed deaths in the past thousand years."

Law pouted slightly. "That's boring."

Corazon laughed. "Did we forget to mention they're called fire crabs because they explode when they get agitated?"

"WH~AT?!" They exclaimed in shock and delight.

"That's partly why they're so aggressive." Sengoku chuckled. "It's become somewhat of a sport for people to agitate them into exploding. There's a popular dish here called Glansor where a customer is given a live fire crab. Once it explodes, it is ready to eat."

"That's brutal." Kid said.

"That's animal cruelty!" Penguin exclaimed in sudden anger.

"It's actually good for the ecosystem." Sengoku replied easily. "Fire crabs lay eggs every five
months, ten to twelve eggs at a time. With a population exceeding the tens of thousands, they have been officially labelled pests."

Penguin frowned, but didn't seem to have an argument for that beyond, "It's still cruel."

"And I'm still gonna do it." Kid snickered. "How badly do their pinches hurt with the venom?"

"Comparable to being ripped apart."

That caused them to pause and Law frowned slightly. "Killer, you stay away from them. Forever."

"You don't have to tell me twice." The boy scoffed.

"Why him in particular?" Corazon asked curiously.

Law pretended he hadn't heard him as he said, "Penguin, I'm going to let one pinch me. You will monitor my reaction and ensure I don't injure myself if the pain is too great to bear."

"You are not getting pinched on purpose!" Kid exclaimed in shock.

"It's for science." He replied. "I want to see what's affected to cause such pain and see if I can stop it with my room."

"You're insane!" Kid shouted furiously. "No! No way in hell!"

"Sencho, I'm not comfortable with that." Penguin said hesitantly. "Can't we find someone already under the venom's effects?"

Law huffed in annoyance. "Fine."

"Let's stock up on supplies first." Corazon said with a bit of a forced smile. "We only need twelve hours for the logpose to set." He shared a glance with Sengoku. They couldn't let Law out of their sights for a moment.

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After six foiled attempts to sneak away during the restocking, Law decided to try a different approach and didn't try again. It took three hours to have everything loaded and the group set out to explore.

Fire crabs weren't the only attraction. Tide pools teeming with marine life dotted all along the shores and Law was distracted from his plans by the amazing biodiversity. Starfish, snails, jellyfish, regular crabs, hermit crabs, fish—there were so many lifeforms in the pools that he completely forgot about the fire crabs as he explored the ecosystems.

He was leaning mostly into one of the tide pools as he tried to catch a panicking baby shark that had been trapped inside. "Come on, come on. Don't be scared, I'll getcha back to the water." He said as he supported himself on the bottom of the pool, reaching. Just as his fingers closed around it, he felt something latch onto his wrist and withdrew with a startled exclamation of pain.

But even though the creature let go, the pain was getting worse, spreading up his arm like fire. "Oh fuck! Fuck fuck fuck—" He cut off when the shark began to thrash and forced himself to calm down. "No, no, it's okay. I gotcha little guy." He said as he carried the critter to the shore, lowering it into the water even as the fire was spreading to his chest. It was quick to swim away and he returned to the pools as the others quickly ran over.
“What happened?” Kid asked anxiously.

“Nothing.” He said, hiding the purple bruise already darkening on his wrist. “Just a jellyfish sting. I'm okay.”

“Liar. Let me see your wrist.” He ordered, reaching for it.

Law jerked away, not sure if being touched would make it hurt more. “No! I mean, no, I'm okay. It's okay, I can—just leave me alone!” He ran away before the hand Corazon was reaching out could touch his back and Penguin immediately gave chase.

“SENCHO! Come back here!” Penguin shouted, but when Law didn't slow, he pulled even. “What got you?”

“I think it was a fire crab.” He said as he sped up, hearing Sengoku closing in. “Don't let them touch me!” He shouted in alarm as he ducked under a grab and ran inland instead.

Penguin immediately fell back and stopped Sengoku. “Sencho was pinched by a fire crab! Don't grab him!”

“Dammit.” The man growled. "We need to get him to one of the hospitals. Why'd he just run off?”

“It must hurt a lot.” Penguin replied. "How long till it feels like he's being torn apart?”

“It sets in quickly. Within a minute of being pinched.” He sighed. "We need to get him treated with the antivenin."

"Antivenin?! I thought you said it was a bee sting!” Penguin exclaimed.

"It isn't fatal." Sengoku said calmly even though he was running again. "But there's only one way to ease the pain. Law-chan likely won't be aware enough to use his room properly once it really sets in."

“Well, he always gets what he wants in the end…” Penguin sighed as they followed after his captain.

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Law regretted ever wanting to let the fuckers sting him as he curled up inside of a small cave in the base of the hill. He was sweating and feverish, limbs spasming uncontrollably as the fire burned hotter. He was observing the venom attacking his nerves specifically and could see that they didn't just target certain areas or sections of the nerves—this stuff was on a search and destroy mission. But there wasn't enough power for it to actually destroy his nerves so he was left with fire licking at tender that refused to light. Like any fire without fuel, it would burn itself out, but he wasn't sure how long that would take.

And it was only getting worse. He could feel it spreading deeper into his body, into nerves that were never usually triggered. He could see how this was like being picked apart. It was tearing its way from his epidermis inwards and he could feel his organs being affected one at a time, like it was drawing it out on purpose.

And he couldn't get it out. Not with how much his hands were quaking. Heck, even if they'd been perfectly still, removing the venom wouldn't have been easy for his current skill level. He needed to work on that. Who would have ever thought that removing traces of addictive substances from the body would be easier than removing venom from nerves?
It started to become hard to think as he fell onto his side and curled up into as tight a ball as he could manage. It was almost as bad as getting his arm ripped off by Doffy, but the pain was spread all over his body. As it began to tingle, he could imagine tiny little crabs using their sharp little claws to tear away his skin and muscles all the way down to—

—the bone. Oh god. He started to cry. It was too much and his room shattered. He didn't even feel it, overwhelmed by everything else.

Penguin felt the room shatter and whirled around, backtracking until he found the approximate location. He could hear crying and panic filled him. "Sencho! Sencho!" He found the crack of a barely noticeable cave and looked inside, finding his captain looking tinier than he'd ever seen him. "Captain!" He shouted, squeezing through the opening and hurrying over. He could feel the heat of fever even from a foot away and he tried to push him onto his back. Warning bells began to go off when the boy didn't even react.

"Is it him?" Sengoku demanded from the entrance.

Helplessness filled him when he realized the amount of pain his captain had to be in and he began to cry himself. "Y-yeah!" He choked out. He began to pick him up, actually being burned from the heat. "He's on fire…!" He sobbed as he pushed him through to the man.

Letting out a few quiet curses, Sengoku said, "It's okay. Let's get him to the top of the hill. There are springs up there—we can cool him off without sending him into shock."

Penguin nodded and they both ran up the stone steps wrapping around the hill. They were too far apart to just jump levels, but then they got closer and closer together. Finally, they didn't have to circumvent the hill anymore, heading straight up.

"Move, move!" Sengoku shouted as he barreled through the crowds. "Someone call a doctor, he's been stung by a fire crab!"

Personnel began to clear the way for him. "This way. Bring him over here." They led them to a closed off pool and directed him to lower the boy in slowly, helping him when Law struggled.

Law let out a piercing scream as he struggled to get away from the water. It took Sengoku, Penguin, and four others to get him to his neck and then they dunked him in, almost like a baptism. The boy came up coughing, and still struggling to get away, but he wasn't screaming and he looked more aware.

It was like a fog was lifted and Law looked around in confusion, body still burning, but the pain had died down some to more manageable levels. "Why did I want to do this on purpose?" He choked out as he grabbed onto Sengoku tightly, crying harder.

"Because you're insane." Sengoku replied easily, relieved the spring had worked.

"This is only temporary." One of the workers said. "The pain will return just as bad in five minutes. We've summoned a doctor with the antivenin, but it could take ten minutes to scale the hill. I'm sorry."

"Please just ask them to hurry." Sengoku said quietly as Law tightened his grip in silent terror. In order to distract him a bit, he asked, "I take it you can't remove it, then?"

Law shook his head. "M-my hands. They aren't steady enough. And nerves, th-they're too
dangerous to mess with right now... at my current skill level..."

"Nerves?" He asked and Law began to explain to him how the venom attacked the nerves specifically in order to destroy them, but it wasn't strong enough to do so. The workers listened in shock and they had a feeling that even though they understood enough to make antivenin, they had no clue how the venom actually caused such pain.

Then it started to build up again and Law began to panic. Worse, he could feel it spreading to his lungs and every breath became agonizing.

He began to shake Sengoku as he shouted, "It doesn't damage the nerves! WHY DOESN'T IT DAMAGE THE NERVES?!" Then he curled in on himself again, crying uncontrollably. He couldn't even pass out!

Sengoku was at a loss. He didn't know how to help either child and he was not a man used to feeling helpless. He didn't like this at all and he'd definitely be pushing for the fire crabs to be moved from Pest to Threat. The agony of a sting was clearly unbearable and if a boy that could walk with cracked ribs and withstand those ribs shattering without so much as a whimper was in clear agony, a normal person would be driven to madness!

Finally, a doctor arrived and though he was clearly horrified by Law's state, he was steady as he forced the boy's arm out, flinching at his pained scream, and injected him. As they waited for it to take effect, he said, "I'm sorry. There's usually a healer stationed up here just in case, but we were replacing the expired injections."

"Is he going to be okay?" The Admiral demanded as he felt taut muscles starting to relax.

"It takes a few minutes to kick in, but then the pain is muted while the antivenin smothers the venom." The man replied. "It takes about four hours on average for the venom to be completely eradicated."

"Are all stings so bad?" He asked. Why hadn't these creatures been reported ages ago?

"This is the worst reaction I've ever seen." He replied. "That he isn't screaming is a nice change. He must have a very high pain tolerance." He shook his head slightly. "No, he must have been stung by an older crab. The older they get, the worse their venom and we try to ensure none of the crabs on the islands reach over five years. Where was he stung?"

"The tide pools. He was rescuing a baby shark and was supporting himself on the bottom of a rather shallow one." He sighed as he began combing his fingers through the boy's wet hair. "He apparently didn't see it and it got his wrist." He carefully tugged out Law's other arm and the healer examined it carefully. The entire hand was black and purple now.

"Ouch. Yeah, this is a bad one. It got a vein." He ran his finger along the original bruise and the light touch elicited a whimper that had him pulling back immediately. "I'm sorry, little one."

They let him tuck his arm back into his protective curl.

"It'll scar." The healer said with a frown. "I'm estimating the crab is at least ten years old. We need to find it and destroy it."

Penguin stood up, a furious expression on his face. "I'll find every crab in the pools and rip them apart!"

Before they could protest (What if he got stung too?) the boy was gone.
Sengoku let out an exasperated sigh as the healer quickly went to go tell someone to have another antivenin sent to the tide pools. These kids were going to make him go grey early.

Chapter End Notes

AN: Whoa. I think I went a little overboard on this chapter, but the fire crab drew me in! I know Law must seem extremely out of character here, but please remember he's just a kid. He doesn't have the pain tolerance of an adult and even if he did, this didn't just attack a single point in his nerves, but the entire nerve. It's my understanding that the more of a nerve affected, the worse the pain.

Fun fact: Glansor is a dish I made up in one of my Doctor Who fanfictions, the only difference was no venom and it actually did attack its victims out of spite, leaving only the spine and brain intact. Cruel creatures, they were driven to extinction, but time travelers get to enjoy the dish whenever they want, lol.

On a personal note: I got me a wireless keyboard, and I'm so in love! This is so much easier than using my laptop, although it's been so long it took me a while to get used to a full-length keyboard again. Logitech, got a keyboard and a mouse for only thirty bucks! A bit more than I'd planned to spend, but I don't think I'll regret it.

Hopefully this means I'll be writing more chapters! Please excuse any mistakes, I made this up as I went and haven't really proofed it. If I made a horribly obvious mistake, please tell me in the reviews and I'll take care of it lickety split!

Thank you all for the reviews and favorites! I hope you all enjoy!
When Law woke up, he was confused. When had he gone to sleep? Looking around their room on the ship, he wondered if they'd already left the island. Damn, he never got to eat one of the little fuckers. He'd have to make a point to go back some day and try it.

Sitting up took more effort than he expected and his first attempt failed. Okay, so maybe there was a bit of nerve damage, he mused as he tried again, falling against the headboard with an exhausted sigh after nearly three minutes of struggle. He created a room and took stock of his health, finding it wasn't nerve damage, but muscle strain. That made more sense and he eased a bit of it before moving away from the headboard.

Oh, that hurt, but he was up and it seemed he'd stay that way so he swung his legs over the side of the bed.

Before he could get up, the door burst open and Penguin was tackling him back down. "SENCHO!" The boy all but wailed and Law was startled to hear him start crying.

"Hey, hey. What's wrong?" He asked in alarm.

"My captain is stupid, that's what's wrong!" He exclaimed angrily as he sat back and glared at him through tear-filled eyes. "You can't get up yet! You nearly died!"

"Don't be dramatic." Law chided. "It hurt like hell, but it wasn't fatal."

"A broken leg isn't fatal either, but it can still kill you!" He shouted as he shook Law. "Don't you ever do that to me again! I can't lose you, Sencho!"

"You're clearly suffering from some sort of complex." Law said calmly. "Please calm down and think clearly."

"That's not nice, Law-chan." Corazon said as he entered with a tray of food. He was watching his feet carefully, obviously trying very hard not to spill it. "We've been very worried about you, you've been out for nearly a day and a half."

Law looked at him curiously. "So which island are we heading to now?"

Kid suddenly leapt up onto the bed, Killer behind him. "We haven't left Crab yet, doofus."

"Why not?" He asked in confusion.

"This may come as a surprise to you," Killer began calmly. "But our ship is not well stocked on medical supplies. Even if it was, you and Penguin are the only ones that know anything beyond battlefield first aid. And finally, this is a wound that even you couldn't treat, what makes you think we would risk taking you away from the professionals?"

Well, when he put it that way... "Still. A day and a half? What have you been doing all this time?"

"Eat while we talk." Corazon said as he set the tray on Law's lap, having waited until Kid and Penguin had pulled him up against the headboard again. When Law started to eat, he said, "Tousan has been looking into pushing the fire crabs from Pest label to Threat considering the severity
of your reaction. And Penguin wasn't exaggerating, you would have asphyxiated if they hadn't gotten you to the hospital in time. How much do you remember after the injection?"

"What injection?" He asked through his mouthful of chicken fried rice.

Corazon's eyes widened slightly. "Law-chan, you don't remember any of that?"

Law gave him an irritated look. "If I did, would I be asking?"

Kid snorted. "You seemed pretty aware when you were badmouthing the nurse's bedside manner."

"I'm sure it was terrible." He brushed off. They always were.

"And the doctors' examination methods. And their treatment options. And their hospital in general."

Law frowned. "Did I really? Were the conditions that bad?"

"You seemed to think so."

Law looked at Penguin. "Was I right to complain or do I need to apologize?"

Penguin hesitated. "Their hospital is far below our standards, but I don't think it warranted complaint."

He went back to his food. "Then I will apologize."

Corazon ruffled his hair affectionately. "I'll go tell Tou-san you're awake, he's up on deck. You boys look after him."

"Hai!" They agreed easily and the man took off.

The boys all turned to glare at Law. "Seriously, if you ever pull some shit like that again, I'm gonna kill you myself." Kid growled.

"I'm shaking." He said blandly before saying, "It really was an accident. Although to be honest, I was planning on ordering Glansor and letting it pinch me then."

They gave him exasperated looks and Killer asked wearily, "Why are you so eager to get hurt?"

"I'm not. But I need to feel it first hand in order to properly heal it." He replied. "This instance, however, was a mistake. I'm not strong enough to manage this particular venom."

"But why?" Penguin asked painfully. "Why do you always practice on yourself? Sencho, there were six other patients that had been stung! This is the induced stroke all over again!"

"That was also a mistake." He replied calmly. "Clearly afflictions that effect the brain are better left to second-hand treatment, but there was low-risk to this case. I am confident that if this hadn't been an older crab I would've been able to withstand it without short-term memory loss."

Penguin rubbed his face. "You aren't getting it."

"Is this some sort of guilt complex for surviving when others died?" Kid asked with a frown.

Law gaped at him in shock. "NO!"
"Then what the fuck are you hurting yourself on purpose for?!" He demanded angrily.

Sighing, Law set down his fork and pinched the bridge of his nose. "If you must know, using myself for first-hand experience during treatments gives me a greater awareness of my body and with each treatment my tolerance for pain increases. You need to remember that I was working towards trying to take down a man that can use strings as a freaking saw. I was working under the impression that my end would be bloody, messy, and agonizing. And I wanted to be sure I survived long enough to make it mean something."

They all fell silent, considering that.

"I still don't like it." Kid muttered. "You don't need to fight him this time."

He laughed sharply. "You're joking, right? He'd hunt me down to the ends of the earth. Even now he's likely got eyes all over the North Blue, searching for me. It won't be long till he gets another spy in the Marines and he'll know where we're going. He wants me to give him eternal life using my Devil Fruit or he'll kill me so he can give the fruit to someone that will." He shook his head. "I can't let that happen. We don't need another Kaido."

"I won't let him have you." Kid growled. "I won't let anyone have you. So you better stay alive Trafalgar, cuz I'm not the only one that will go after him if you die, and if you get Killer killed, I'll find you in the afterlife and kick your scrawny ass."

"Don't you dare." Law growled furiously. "Don't you dare let him kill any of you!"

Kid sneered at him. "You don't get to order us around on this. So stay alive or we're all goin' down with you!"

"Don't say that!" Law shouted as he tackled him, fist drawn back to punch him but Penguin caught his wrist and refused to let go. When he tried to use the other, Killer grabbed it and they dragged him off the redhead before he could use his feet instead. He struggled against them, ignoring his screaming muscles, glaring at the boy with fury and terror at the thought of losing any of them to Doffy. It didn't matter that he'd already be dead in that scenario, these boys and Corazon and Sengoku were all he had left.

Kid tackled him to the bed and pinned him there by holding himself up on his chest as he glared right back. "Then live Trafalgar! It's that simple."

He wanted to shout back that it wasn't that simple and Law realized, "Maybe it is survivor's guilt. That's weird."

Just like that, the tension broke and they laughed.

"What on earth happened in here?" Corazon asked in confusion from the doorway and they realized that in the scuffle, they sent the tray and the food all over the floor.

"My food!" Law exclaimed in horror and he shoved Kid off as he hurried to start picking it up but Penguin and Killer yanked him back.

"I'll get it, Sencho." Penguin said calmly and went instead.

"We had a conversation." Kid said easily to Corazon as the man entered with Sengoku a step behind. "It escalated."

"I'll bet." Sengoku said as he began looking Law over. He grasped Law's left arm and tugged it up to see his hand was still mottled by bruises. "This is looking better. It's a good thing they
stopped you from hitting him."

Law was mortified. "Y-you saw that?"

"I didn't want to interrupt your 'conversation'." He replied as he ran a hand through Law's hair, sweeping it back and out of his face. "I'm glad it was a fruitful one. I hope I won't walk in on another one like it?"

Law silently shook his head, looking away and wondering how much he heard.

"Good. Once you've finished eating, we'll head up to the hospital so you can speak with the doctor yourself. Roci said you don't remember anything you did or said, so we'll hopefully figure that out as well."

Penguin handed the tray back to Law and he silently resumed eating, cheeks still red.

Corazon put a hand on his forehead. "Is the fever coming back? Your face is red."

"M'fine." He muttered through his mouthful avoiding all of their eyes. Assholes, why were they watching him eat? He got irritated and demanded, "Do you have to watch me eat?"

"Yes." Kid and Penguin said while Killer and the adults looked away sheepishly.

"Just making sure you're really okay, buddy." Corazon chuckled. "You were gone for a while." He blinked. "Oh, you're red again."

Law glared at him in embarrassment and the man finally seemed to get it because he brightened, hugging him tightly.

"Oh, don't be embarrassed, Law-chan! The doctor's said that based on the bruising on your hand the crab was at least ten years old! That's enough venom to drive grown men insane!"

Law felt irritation well up inside of him. "Why are you all so over-dramatic?" Honestly, you'd think he was literally ripped to pieces by a vicious crab.

The others all sighed. Some things wouldn't change from just one conversation. "Just eat your food and indulge our theatrics." Killer huffed.

Law scoffed, but obeyed, eager to go speak to whoever treated him and learn their methods of healing.

Chapter End Notes

I thought I was done with Crab Island. Oops, guess not. I just thought that they'd have a few things to say about the entire thing and I surprised myself with my own realization that this has to be survivor's guilt. But why does it feel he's hiding behind labels?

My Microsoft Word program can't connect to the internet so all the things I write are illegal, I guess? At least that's why I assume I'm getting errors when I try to upload chapters, so I've started using Copy and Paste. Only problem is, I was reading over the last few chapters and it totally erased the italics. So, sorry but after this chapter, I'll be replacing italics with caps lock. :(
Thanks for the favs and follows, guys! I'm hoping I can keep this up!
Chapter 21

Chapter Notes

There's some slavery mentioned in this chapter and hinted at noncon. Nothing explicit, but I figured I should warn you before you read. On a lighter note, we get a teaser at some of Law's (made up) past.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

After apologizing to the doctor about his behavior while indisposed, he asked questions about their methods of treatment and the healing properties of the hot springs. He listened carefully so that he could write everything down later in his medical journal and by the time his check-up was complete, any hard feelings were forgotten as they entered deep discussions about finding a way to take the springs' healing components and combine them with the antivenin.

As Law prepared to leave, Corazon urging him to wrap things up, the doctor cleared his throat slightly. "May I ask one last question?"

Law looked at him curiously. "Shoot."

"Well, if your... attitude... had not been caused by anything in your environment, that means you have a general disgust for everyone and everything by default..." The man hesitated slightly. "How do you hide it so well?"

Law smiled slightly. "Just look at everyone as if they have bombs hidden in their clothes that they'll detonate if they get angry. That's what my mom taught me, anyway. If they ignite the charges, there will be no salvaging the situation, you and your town is wiped off the map." He saw Corazon pointing at his bare wrist and scoffed slightly. "I gotta go. Bye."

He ran over to the man and they jogged to the ship where the others were waiting.

"Fucking finally, what were you doing, braiding each other's hair?" Kid huffed in annoyance.

"Chill out, drama queen." Law scoffed as they began to sail away from the island. "Do we have any candy left?"

"I think we've got some Gusher bushes still producing." Killer replied.

Law went to go see, hoping there were some blue ones left.

~~~~rp~~~~

On the next island, they didn't find anything really interesting, it was a normal island. It would take two hours for this pose to set but they wanted to stretch their legs a bit after restocking and decided to explore the crowded bazaar.

Somehow, he got separated from the group and was left wondering how he'd lost track of a freaking giant like Cora-san. He wasn't worried though and he continued to browse the wares on display.

Someone bumped into him and he got a strong whiff of Sake. "Oi! Watch it, brat!"
He ignored the drunken mess of a human being as he went to the next stall.

"Don't ignore me, you little pest!" The back of his shirt was grabbed and he frowned as he was lifted up to their eye-level. He still couldn't see Cora-san or his Oji-ya. "Someone should teach you to respect your betters!"

Refocusing as the man drew back his fist, Law took out his collapsible bo staff and had it extend before he slammed it into the guy's head in one smooth motion. The man fell like a bag of bricks and Law landed on the street with a small thud. He should probably keep the staff out if those types were common.

"Boss!"

Dammit. He dodged the men that attacked him and began to take them down. There were ten guys and he was little, but the entire battle only took ten minutes.

Letting the staff rest over his shoulder to avoid the blood dripping onto his hat, he walked away from the pile of men and was given a wide berth by the shocked townspeople.

"Law-chan! There you are!" Corazon said happily as he scooped him up. "I've been looking everywhere for you! Don't wander off, it's dangerous!" He exclaimed worriedly, as if Law weren't holding a staff with both ends dripping blood.

"Sorry." Law said easily, knowing Corazon was weird about when he worried. "There are a lot of people." He looked around before asking warily, "Where's Penguin?"

Surprised, Corazon looked around too. "AH! Where'd he go?!"

Law climbed up to stand on his shoulders and surveyed the crowd. "There he is, by the fountain!" He yelped in surprise when he was pulled into a sitting position.

"Hold on, buddy." He said cheerfully before he began running in the direction Law had indicated. When they exited the crowd, they saw that Penguin was now fighting a group of people.

Growling, Law shoved himself back to his feet using Corazon's head but as he leapt from his shoulders, he was caught around the waist.

"Now Law-chan, you can't fight all their battles." Corazon chided gently. "He's got it under control.

Reluctantly, Law lowered the staff and stopped struggling. "But he's so little."

"So are you." He reminded with a smile. "You don't see me interfering in your fights."

"EVERYONE'S little to you, though!" He exclaimed.

"Ojii-san, pick me up too!" Penguin said excitedly as he leapt up to hug him around the waist.

Grinning, Corazon did as he was told and set them each on a shoulder. "There, this way I won't lose either of you again."

"I can see Ojii-ya from here." Law said, pointing.

"HIJIJI-SA~~N!" Penguin shouted, waving when the man turned to look.

Law saw his eyes go straight to his staff and nonchalantly shifted it behind their backs, but it was
"You run into trouble?" Sengoku asked as he met them half-way, Kid and Killer at his side.

"Sencho told me to kick their asses, so I did!" Penguin said cheerfully. "But his friends didn't like that so I had to beat them up too."

"They what?!" Law demanded furiously. He was off Corazon's shoulder in a flash as he ran back to the fountain. "I'm going to kill them!"

Corazon snagged him by his shirt, bringing him back. "Hang on a moment, what are you talking about? Penguin, we weren't with you when you started fighting."

"Let me go! I'm going to eviscerate that pedophile and feed his organs to his friends!" Law shouted furiously. He saw they noticed him and were scrambling from the scene. "ROOM!"

The dome exploded outwards and though it hurt to do so, he pushed it until they were all inside, yanking them over to their group where Kid and Killer were quick to take them down.

Law's room shattered and he made a pained noise before he could stifle it. Fuck, that always hurt! But he pushed it back and struggled to get down to the fuckers.

Corazon was alarmed by the sound. "Law-chan, are you okay?"

"Boys." Sengoku's calm voice pierced through Law's enraged thoughts and all of them turned their heads to look at the man. "Leave this one to me. Penguin, who was the man that molested you?"

Penguin pointed at the bloody mess collapsed between the two men Kid and Killer had face-down in the dirt staffs prepared to crush their skulls. "Oh yeah, he also said he had other kids on his ship, so…"

The crowds were quick to clear out when the killing intent all five let out at that news started sending people to their knees.

"Sengoku-taicho?" A Marine Commander asked in surprise before the group saluted sharply.

"Locate these men's ship immediately! They have children held hostage on board." Sengoku ordered.

"HAI!" They affirmed before they began searching for identifying marks.

"Sir! There is a vessel with this symbol in dock 37!" One said and they were gone, heading for it.

Pain from the shattered room had faded, so Law tugged at one of the strands from Corazon's hat.

"Cora-san, they probably need to be healed."

"That's not something you need to deal with right now, Law-chan." He replied. "The hospital can take care of them."

"They don't deserve to feel that pain any longer than they have to. I can take it away in seconds!" He protested.

"Law-chan—"

"Roci." Sengoku cut in calmly. "If he thinks he can help, let him." He reached up to take Penguin from his shoulder and said, "I'll keep an eye on the kids. Go."
Reluctantly, Corazon nodded and he began jogging towards the dock the Marines had named. Only to find the boat in question ablaze.

"Where are the children?" Corazon asked the Commander as he approached.

"Saint Charloss has ordered them to be executed with the remaining pirates as damaged goods." The man replied.

Law was out of Corazon's hands and running towards the ship before either man could react. He ignored his father's shouts as he ran up the plank and jumped onto the burning deck. It was a standard ship, so he knew exactly where to run and within seconds of boarding, he heard banging, shouting, and crying.

"Get away from the door!" He shouted and after a second to give them time, he kicked it and it burst open.

Inside the room were five apparent slaves. The two oldest were thirteen and ten, the last three between one and seven.

"Are there any others?" He asked them as he created a room and had the collars and shackles relocate into the sea.

"N-no." The ten-year old girl said shakily.

"Then let's go, the ship's being burned down." He said, going to pick up the youngest—a mink? A little jaguar Mink that had Law's heart skipping a beat. He gave no outward sign as he lead the duo holding the last two back to the deck.

And into flames. Throwing up an arm to shield his face from the heat, he cursed as the girl screamed and jerked back. "Cora-san!" He shouted, but doubted the man could hear him over the roaring flames.

"This way!" The boy said, pointing towards the mast. They nodded and ran over, Law making them climb up first as the encroaching flames began coming faster. He made sure they didn't drop either of the children before he started up after them, just as the fire hit some accelerant and completely covered the deck.

"Now what?" The girl asked as they looked down at the blazing deck.

"Kids!"

Turning, they saw the crew of the neighboring ship had connected the rigging of the ships with a boarding plank. Law slid down so that he was using the net as he helped the girl walk over, Mink mostly supporting herself with the claws buried in Law's shoulder. The boy did the same on the other side and they soon made it to the plank where she hesitated. Swallowing thickly, she tightened her grip on the crying boy in her arms and began to cross with the boy clutched tightly to her chest.

"You next." Law ordered the boy, who nodded and climbed back up. The girl in his arms was crying too, face buried in the boy's neck and her thin arms in a stranglehold around his neck. He started to cross the plank too but the ship began to capsize and he lost his balance. The man at the other end caught him and pulled them to safety as the plank fell into the water.

"Kid!" The men shouted in horror.
Law climbed up onto the rigging and carefully stood. "You better catch her!" He shouted and he unhooked the Mink's claws from his shirt. When the men were ready, he told her to curl up before he tossed her over. She was caught, but his relief was short-lived as an ominous crack rent the air.

He looked down and saw the flames were climbing up after him, eating through the wood. It jarred and he lost his balance, falling over the edge, but he caught himself on the now-loose netting, swinging above the flames and the intensity of the heat nearly had him slipping.

A room would be nice about now, but since he'd pushed it so far earlier, plus getting rid of the exploding binds, he was tapped out until he regained some strength.

The mast began to tilt and he quickly climbed back up, not hearing their shouts as he focused. The way the mast would fall was towards the ship, but the angle meant it wouldn't actually reach it. He saw the other side of the sail's rigging had also had the net burned away, so the mast wouldn't turn. He would have to jump and time it just right so he wouldn't hit the water. Normally, one of the men would likely be able to jump in and save him, but with the capsizing ship posing a serious hazard AND the boiling hot water…yeah, he wouldn't bet on that.

It took him a moment to figure out when to jump, but then he got into a half crouch as it finally began to fall.

There! He jumped with all his strength and landed on the neighboring ship's deck in a roll.

"Ow." He muttered as he sat up, feeling blood starting to drip from his raw cheek, hands and knees also bleeding from landing on the rough wood.

Suddenly he was scooped up off the deck and held in the air as the crew cheered in relief. Then he was set down as the other kids were brought over and they hugged him tightly as they cried in relief, the Mink mewling against his chest.

Without warning, Corazon plucked him up, hugging him within an inch of his life as he cried as well.

Law smiled and hugged him back tightly. "I'm okay, Cora-san. Now put me down so I can check them over."

The man reluctantly obeyed but kept a large hand on Law's head as he created his room just large enough to surround them.

Thankfully, there was no sign of force on them. Just some hand-shaped bruises in unmentionable places that he was quick to heal. He removed the Soaring Dragon brand from their backs and with that, there was no proof they had ever been slaves.

Ending his room, he smiled. "There, all done. Where are you from, we'll take you home."

The two looked away, toeing at the boards. After a moment, the boy said, "Fishman Island…"

"Oh good, it's on the way!" Corazon said cheerfully as the crew reacted in shock. "We were going to go through Mariejois, but it won't take too much longer if we stop by the island."

Both looked ecstatic and began crying again.

Law was put on Corazon's shoulders so he could pick up the duo still clutching the children and Corazon told the crew, "Thank you for saving them. But you didn't see any children." He said with a sharp look.
"U-uh, s-sure." They agreed quickly.

As Corazon headed to the plank to disembark, Law leaned forward. "Um, Cora-san? Can you not tell Penguin I ran onto a burning ship?" He asked sheepishly.

"As long as you don't tell Tou-san I let you." He replied easily.

Grinning, Law hugged the Mink closer as he giggled. "Deal!"

"Kids, if anyone asks, there was no fire or boat jumping, or capsizing ships."

"Okay, Cora-san!" They said eagerly.

The man quickly reached the fountain and called to Sengoku, "Give me the kids. We gotta go—like, now." He winced as Penguin immediately leapt onto his shoulder and Law moved so Kid could sit on the other, Killer reluctantly joining the ones in Corazon's arms. "Take them out." He said as he took off.

Sengoku sighed and took out a gun. "Alright, but you owe me an explanation later."

Law felt Corazon activate a Calm field and smiled at his thoughtfulness. "So what are you guys' names? I'm Law, this is Penguin, Kid, and that's Killer."

"I'm Suki." The girl said cheerfully. "This is Donnie and the kids…she said her name is Yuki, but the boy doesn't talk that well. The hairy kid doesn't speak at all."

Law stroked the cub's head soothingly. "She's only a baby. She won't be able to talk for a few more months." Then he told the others, "They were slaves of that asshole Charloss. I got rid of collars and the marks though, so if anyone asks, the slaves sank with the boat."

"They were gonna sink us with it, but Law-chan saved us!" Suki said happily.

"Just Law-san?" Killer asked.

"I had to stop the Marines from carrying out Charloss's orders," Corazon replied. "Which is why we need to leave immediately."

"Haha! No way! Tou-san, you just got like 20 times cooler!" Kid said excitedly.

"Did you get rid of any witnesses?" Penguin asked with a frown.

"Don't talk like that in front of the little ones." Law chided him immediately.

"Sorry, Sencho."

"But yes." Corazon said before they reached the correct dock.

Kid and Killer immediately got to work preparing for take-off while Corazon carried the others into the ship. Law and Penguin got to work making them food while Corazon fetched them some better clothes.

"What is that?" The man asked curiously as he returned, peering at the pot Law was stirring at the stove.

"A substitute for her mother's milk." Law replied. "It hasn't been that long so the malnutrition hasn't set in yet, but until we get her home to her mother, this will be the best we can do." When it was thick enough, he turned off the heat and poured it into a hastily created bottle made from a
cup and a glove. After cooling it so it wouldn't scald the cub, he gently coaxed her into drinking. It took a few moments, but then she was drinking like she was starving.

This was the sister he never had. The reason Momo and Baki took him into their home after he lost Corazon and drifted in the New World. "Maki-chan..." He murmured quietly and for the first time, baby blue eyes opened to look at him. He smiled at her, a weight settling over his shoulders at the knowledge his mother would never love him again. But this was okay. "We're going to take you home, little one."

She mewed quietly and he felt his heart break. He'd give his mother the cub that had been stolen from her. Maki began to purr and it took all he had to keep from crying.

"Sencho, aren't you going to eat?" Penguin asked once the other kids were served.

"Gene..." He began quietly to avoid his voice cracking. "Do you remember what Okaa-ya told you about why she took me in...?"

"Wha—" He gasped, hands flying to cover his mouth as he stared at the cub. "No!"

"I'm not hungry," He told him softly.

"I'll call my cousin and tell him to send a message to Nekomamushi-sama!" Penguin said before he ran off.

Law looked up when he felt their worried looks burning into his back and smiled. "Come on, eat guys. You'll need to get your strength back. We don't want your parents to think we didn't feed you."

"Come sit with us, Law-chan?" Suki asked shyly.

He immediately walked over. "Sure, but I ate earlier so I think I'll just have some water."

They immediately brightened and as they fed the two kids between bites of their own food, Law fed his sister.

Chapter End Notes

Well, there we have it. Are these chapters too long? I wouldn't get used to it.

So you guys had some questions! I'll try to address them all here.

Sarge1130: The Heart Pirates at the execution weren't the original twenty or so we were introduced to on Zou. Something happened at some point and all but Law and Bepo were killed. As for how they're in the past, it takes a back burner for a while, but I'll address this eventually. :)

Guest: I'm not really sure if they've realized it yet even by journal nine. Maybe they just brushed it off as Law being a weird kid so he gets weird friends. Maybe they have their suspicions, but they're keeping it to themselves? Who knows?

Sarge1130: Hello again! I'll address both reviews in this one since I barely noticed it was all yours. He won't actively try to change the future, he's not that confident in his planning at the moment. He's just taking the punches as they come, focusing on the
here and now. I'm glad you liked my idea of how he got rid of the Amber Lead, but again, I'm not sure if it was an original idea, so don't give me the credit.

As for Corazon crashing the ship...he was a little distracted by Law. He thought the kid was gonna die but not only is he's still alive, he's been saved! All that work he put in during the six-month journey has paid off and he's got his favorite little prickly pear forever now! What's a little thing like steering a ship to the miracle he held in his arms? Lol, the poor man is smitten.

Yeah, Law doesn't trust Sengoku, but he's putting an effort in for Corazon and surprisingly, the Admiral doesn't seem that bad. As for Vergo, yep. Law killed him. Vergo wasn't expecting an electric attack, plus he's nowhere near Punk Hazard strength. It gave Law the fighting chance he needed to take him down.

If I forgot something, I'm sorry! Thank you everyone for the reviews, follows, and favs!
Law shut the door to the kids' room, all five tucked in and out cold. The little girl, Yuki, had wanted a bed time story, so Law had spent the last half hour trying desperately to come up with an interesting story without death or bloodshed or pain in general. Suki and Donnie had been very helpful and thanks to them, the youngest three had been out cold by the time the frog found the diamond that would—well, he hadn't gotten any ideas on what the diamond was for, so it was a good thing they'd all fallen asleep.

"Law-chan, could I have a word with you?" Sengoku asked and Law turned to look at him curiously.

"Sure. What about?" He asked.

"Can you tell me what happened over there?" He requested.

"Yeah, okay. When we got there the Marines were gonna take them down with the ship cuz Saint Fuckwad decided they were damaged goods." He told him as if he were commenting on the weather. "I didn't agree with that, so I went to get them out. Thankfully there was no sign of… force. Just a few bruises I took care of." He informed him.

"You're leaving out a lot of information." He said calmly. "Could you go into a bit more detail about the rescue?"

He gave a mildly annoyed sigh. "The ship may have been on fire and there MAY have been some ship jumping involved."

"WHAT?"

Law flinched at Penguin's shout and closed his eyes wearily. Damn it all to hell. He heard the boy run over and braced himself for the hand that grabbed his arm and spun him around before shoving him against the wall beside the door as he fisted his shirt. "What the hell do you mean you ran onto a burning ship when you CAN'T SWIM?!"

"Lower your voice." He snapped back, opening his eyes to glare down at him.

That just stoked the boy's anger and he hauled him away from the wall and toward the deck. Law resigned himself to a good reaming but that didn't mean the others had to hear it.

"Engine room." He ordered and Penguin changed paths to go down to the lower levels. They soon entered the room and the moment the door shut, Penguin started to yell.

Law sat on deck later that night, the baby Den Den Mushi mimicking the occasional snore or murmur from the kids' room on his shoulder.

"Aren't you tired, Law-chan? You've had a long day." Sengoku asked as he stepped up beside where he sat watching the ship carve its way through the waves, leaving a white trail behind them.

"I can't sleep." He replied as he stretched out his legs through the railing and draped his arms over the rung near his chest, forehead pressed against the top rung. The water was boring.

Sengoku hummed. "Why don't you join me in the crow's nest? We can play cards until it's Roci's
"Sure, okay." He said, glad for something to do and they headed up.

Four games in, the Admiral asked, "Has Roci told you he plans to rejoin the Marines after his vacation?"

"It will be a better place with him there." Law replied as he drew another card. "Assuming he's allowed to do what's right."

"Since he only answers to me, yes. He will be trusted to act as he sees fit." The man replied.

"Any idea where he'll be stationed?"

"Wherever needs him. We won't know for a year." After a few more lost hands, the man shuffled the deck and they started again. "Will you stay with him?"

"Of course." He said immediately. "The world isn't safe for a 'frail thing' like me." He scoffed. He lost this round and huffed as he was dealt a new hand. "I'm thinking about setting sail around nineteen or twenty. There are so many people that can't afford a doctor, they can't wait around forever."

"So that's your plan? Become a travelling physician?" He asked curiously.

"I won't lie to you. I don't take any bullshit. Sooner or later, I'll have a bounty." He rearranged his current hand and grinned suddenly, but not at the cards. "If I punch a Celestial Dragon, would you answer their summons?"

The man gave him a weary look. "Yes, but I won't like it."

"As long as it's you." He said, smile softening. "So you better keep your strength up, Ojii-san. Because when that day comes, I won't go easy on you."

The man chuckled. "You're a weird kid, Law-chan. And I'm going to pretend this conversation never happened."

Giggling quietly, Law laid out his hand revealing a full house.

Sengoku threw his cards down in disgust.

~~~rp~~~

Law fed Maki as Penguin served everyone breakfast.

"Brekky!"

Looking down, Law blinked at the onigiri Yuki was holding out to him with sticky fingers. She was looking at him with bright hopeful eyes and—he couldn't say no to that. "Thank you." He told her as he accepted the oddly shaped rice ball and under her watchful gaze, he took a bite. Relief filled him when it wasn't umeboshi. He didn't think he could hide a reaction to that. "Thank you, Yuki-chan, it's very good." He told her and she beamed at him before running back to the table.

Though he wasn't really hungry, he finished the rice ball so he could refocus on feeding Maki.

Later that day, he was fighting with Kid while Killer and Penguin sparred, the three youngest in the hastily created pen padded with enough blankets and pillows to make it the most comfortable
spot on deck. Corazon was steering the ship, Sengoku keeping an eye on them to make sure the toddlers didn't get out and none of them were knocked overboard.

"Um…can we train too?" Suki asked shyly, Donnie fidgeting slightly behind her.

"Yeah. You can join in next round." Kid grunted as Law kneed him in the gut.

It would keep the kids occupied during the long journey so hopefully there wouldn't be too many melt-downs between them and Fishman Island. Plus, there was the added benefit of new fighting styles to challenge their own.

~~~rp~~~

It had been a week since they got the kids and despite Law's efforts, the lack of sleep was affecting not only his concentration, but his temper. He was back at the railings, determinedly NOT sulking about losing to Kid after they'd gotten into a brawl over which magnetic field was the strongest of all things.

As he was watching the water sloshing against the hull, he heard someone approach. The quiet and calm gait told him it was Killer and he scowled at the water, ready for the nagging.

"Law-san, you really need to sleep." The boy said.

Law gave him an irritated look. "Oh I'm sorry, let me just go turn off my brain."

Despite not being able to see the boy's eyes, he got the distinct impression Killer had just raised a brow at him.

He let out a quiet huff and turned back to the water. "I'm an insomniac. Sleep doesn't come easy."

"But you slept every night at Mangrove." He protested in confusion.

"That's because I was pushing myself to the limit." He replied. "No offense to you guys, but you don't wear me out enough."

"But using your room will wear you out?"

Law nodded.

"Then why don't you keep it activated until you can't anymore?" He suggested.

Law made to respond only to stop. "Killer, you stupid genius! Where were you a week ago?!" He created a room and smiled widely. "I can work on my control while I'm at it!" Taking out a pen, he stared at it intently as he concentrated and it began to rise into the air. It hovered shakily, but after about a foot, it fell.

Killer left him to it and he tried again, feeling the strain after the fourth attempt and after the sixth, he was forced to end it as he panted from the exertion. He frowned. "So using Takt leeches from the time I can keep my room open. That's…embarrassing."

Penguin pulled him from where he was still tangled up in the rails as Kid scoffed. "Like we don't all know you've kept it open for hours before. Don't be a sensitive little—"

"LANGUAGE!" Law shouted over him with Suki and Penguin.

"They're asleep!" He protested indignantly.
"But you don't know how deeply!" Law retorted. "They could be taking in every word we say!"

"Shut up! Gah, you're such a momma bear!" He exclaimed.

Law had his bo staff out in seconds as he crossed the deck, meeting Kid's in the middle. The resulting battle more than made up for the compliment.

But when Law fell asleep against him while they rested a few hours later, no one commented on the fact that Kid didn't move away.
Chapter 23

Two days out from the next island, Killer sounded the alarm on a spotted pirate ship. Penguin was quick to help Suki and Donnie take the children inside, locking themselves in, and Law and Kid prepared to help the adults defend the ship.

Cannonballs whistled towards them, the first volley missing but far too close for their comfort. The next would be sure to hit if Corazon couldn't get them away, but they had a motorized ship and the man pulled as sharp a right as he could, trying to flank the enemy vessel.

"This is why we need canons!" Kid exclaimed as the projectiles missed the ship by a few feet.

"I'm starting to see your point." Sengoku sighed as he walked to keep the ship in his sights. "But they won't pierce the hull either way."

"You wanna fix the fucking dents?!

"Language." He chided absently as they watched the ship trying to turn to keep them in their canon's range. Their own ship was too quick and Corazon brought it right up behind them. "Keep this distance, Roci!" He shouted before he leapt towards the enemy's deck to engage them.

Killer called down, "Rats!"

"What?" Law asked in confusion.

"Enemy coming by water." Kid replied as grapple hooks attached to the rails. Almost immediately the men were coming on deck and the duo hurried to engage them.

Law ducked under a punch and used his sword to gut the man, decapitating him when he fell before he had to use it to block another pirate's blade. The man grinned at him with tar blackened teeth and Law wrinkled his nose at the smell of death hanging around him. The man was dying of something and he wondered if he even knew it as he engaged him in an intense swordfight.

But these pirates fought dirty and he also had to dodge punches and bullets as more of them stormed the deck.

It felt good to have a proper challenge. These guys, despite being Grand Line pirates, were pretty low-level, so the two kids had no problems against them even as they pulled every dirty trick in the book. Killer was using a slingshot to help when the duo started to get overwhelmed and with the occasional bolt hitting the men, it only took twenty minutes until they were taking down the last one.

Kid wiped his forehead. "Phew! That was fun!"

Law grinned and nodded. They began to rifle through the men's pockets for valuables before they tossed them all overboard for the sharks to tear apart.

"Boys, we could've identified them if they had bounties." Corazon called in amusement.

Sighing, Law created a room and used a quick Shambles to bring the men back on board.

"How come you can do that so easily when you can barely lift Penguin in the air for more than ten seconds?" Kid asked curiously.
"Takt is mainly an intimidation technique." Law replied. "Shambles is much easier because I'm not fighting against my power's main focus—handling a patient's body parts. It's specifically geared towards bringing the parts to me so I can observe them up close. With Takt, I have to fight against instant travel and not just switch pieces with the air in front of me, but with the air particles between us one after the other. More concentration, more power, more energy wasted."

"Lame." He huffed and Law shoved him lightly as Sengoku returned to the deck, dropping down a canon.

"This is the only one you get." Sengoku said.

Kid brightened, looking like his entire year had been made and he began fawning over the well-cared for canon.

"Are they all taken care of, Tou-san?" Corazon asked. "Because the ship looks like it's turning."

Surprised, the Admiral looked back. "I thought I got them all. Let's see." He jumped back over and vanished inside.

There was a strange charge in the air and Law hurried to the rail as he recreated his room to grab onto Sengoku and bring him back, just as the enemy ship exploded. The concussion hit them like a brick wall and they flew back from the force. A loud ringing in his ears had Law disoriented and he shook his head, trying to clear it as he pushed himself to his knees. He overshot it and fell onto his back, grimacing at the pull of burned skin. Second degree if he was feeling it right and he could feel debris peppering his face and arms.

Hands grabbed him and he opened his eyes to see Sengoku in front of him, obviously talking, but Law couldn't hear.

"I can't hear you, give me a moment." He said calmly and checked himself with his still-active room. The damage to his eardrums was mild and was simple to correct.

"—mean you can't hear?!" Kid was shouting angrily. "Why the fuck did you even run towards the ship?!! Did you know it was going to explode?!!"

"No, but I knew something was going to happen and needed to get Ojii-san in my room." Law huffed as he let Sengoku carefully remove the shrapnel from his face. He glanced at the flaming wreckage that had been the ship and scoffed. "Coward."

Corazon walked down to them with Killer at his side and the boy went to Kid to check him over.
"Bad news, Tou-san. The pose has gone crazy."

"One thing at a time." Sengoku said calmly. "Let's get the boys taken care of."

Despite Law's protests that he could take care of himself, Corazon carried him into the ship while Kid went to the controls and took him into the bathroom where he began treating him with the first aid kit.

Sighing, Law resigned himself to treatment he didn't need, cooperating when he disinfected the cuts and rubbed ointment on the burns before covering them with gauze and putting plasters over the sluggishly bleeding wounds. Those would hurt coming off.

Law found himself smiling as Corazon looked at his work with such pride and said, "Good job, Tou-san."

The man lit up and hugged him tightly. Law was thanking every god out there that his clothes had
protected his torso from the heat. He giggled and hugged him back, careful not to aggravate his burns. He'd use his room later to heal them enough to make them stop hurting, but had no doubt the man would want to do a follow-up. Best leave him something to fawn over.

~~~rp~~~

"Don't they hurt?" Suki asked at dinner that night as Law fed Maki between a few bites of his chicken.

"What?" He asked distractedly, looking away from Maki to peer at the girl only for a mewl to drag his eyes back.

"The burns." She said in amusement. "That girl's got you wrapped around her furry little fingers."

Law didn't acknowledge the second part. "No, they don't hurt. Well, they do, but I had this run-in with a fire crab—" He looked up again at their horrified gasps. "What?"

"Fire crabs are horrible!" Donnie exclaimed. "The stings are bad enough to make grown men go mad! People have clawed themselves to death trying to end the pain!"

"It was only ten years old." Law reassured them.

It seemed to have the opposite effect and the horror doubled. "Who let one get that old?!"

He huffed. "Calm down. I got the antivenin eventually and Penguin killed every fire crab on the island."

"No one hurts my Sencho." Penguin growled angrily.

That seemed to appease them but they were still looking at Law with new eyes. The looks annoyed him and he was glad when the younger kids made sounds of protest that regained the duo's attentions.

"Can't you just heal the burns?" Kid asked through a mouthful of food.

Law glanced at Corazon as he scoffed. "Not right now. Even at the rail I stretched my room a little too far."

"You need to work on that shit, man." Kid grumbled.

"Language." They all said and he flicked them off.

Maki mewed again, sounding irritated, and Law looked back down at her causing her to smile and he forgot about the others.

Yeah, he was a lost cause. Children and animals were his weakness and this girl was a triple threat considering she was also his sister. Smiling back, he rubbed their temples together and she closed her eyes, purring loudly as he giggled.

After a few minutes of peaceful chatter, Sengoku said, "Law-chan, you need to eat your dinner too."

Law looked up in surprise before looking back at his plate. Picking up his fork, he frowned slightly. He wasn't hungry. He set the fork back down. "I'll wrap it up to eat later."

Though the man frowned, he nodded and Law refocused on Maki, listening to their conversations with half an ear.
with half an ear.
"Law-chan, can you braid my hair for me?" Suki requested as they neared an island. They were just over halfway to the Red Line thanks to Kid hijacking the controls while the adults had been busy taking care of Law and the enemies respectively. Kid had proved he was more than reliable to the two adults and so they’d allowed him to direct their course.

Law finished the tiny braids he was giving Maki and smiled at how ridiculous they looked. But she was cute, so they worked. "Sure. What kind?"

"There are different kinds?" She asked curiously and he grinned.

Lamy had trained him for this.

When he finished the netted braids, Donnie exclaimed, "Cool! Braid mine too, please!"

Law complied only to receive a similar demand from Yuki.

"Haha! You know how to braid hair?" Kid laughed in a delight. Only his was more taunting than impressed.

Law gave him a cool look. "The perks of having a younger sister."

Kid looked surprised before he grimaced.

"You have a sister, Law-chan?" Suki asked curiously.

"Sure do." He said happily. "Her name's Lamy and she's six years old." He smiled at her.

"Where's she at?" Donnie asked, looking around as if she'd just pop up from the deck.

"She's with my parents." He replied.

"Tell us about her?" Suki pleaded.

So he did. He told them her favorite candy, how she liked the festivals they held every other week in Flevance, how she didn't want to be a doctor because their parents were usually too busy to play with them and how she wanted to own an ice cream shop instead so that she could eat all the ice cream she wanted.

He had to stop when they reached the island and as they got their bags, Donnie said innocently, "Your sister sounds awesome. You must miss her a lot."

Law carefully picked up Maki and smiled when she rubbed their cheeks together. Yeah, he missed her. But he knew she was in a better place. All he could do was remember her and try to ensure other people never felt the same pain he did.

"Ready, Law-chan?" Corazon asked cheerfully as he scooped him up and put him on his
shoulders.

"Yeah, let's go!" He said and they set out to get provisions.

Surprisingly it was uneventful and they set sail again a few hours later.

~~~rp~~~

He was taking a nap against Killer as he played Penguin a game of cards when the snail on his shoulder made a strange sound, waking him up immediately. He shushed the others and listened.

"Maw!" Came through clearly and Law was on his feet, darting across the deck in a flash. He scrambled up the steps, tripping a few times but at length he made it to the pen and asked Maki breathlessly, "What did you say?"

"Maw!" She replied strongly, reaching for him.

He broke into a wide grin as he lifted her into the air and laughed happily. "You said your first word!"

She giggled and reached down for him. "Maw Maw Maw Maw Maw Maw!"

He pulled her into a hug and closed his eyes as he felt absolute joy wash over him. He hadn't been too late. She was really okay.

"Not much of a word, is it?" Kid scoffed from the controls. "What's she tryin' to say? Maw? Mom? Maul?"

"LAW." Killer said with a grin. "She mewls, remember? She knows m's the best."

Kid chuckled. "So I was right. She's sayin' Mom."

That sent a surge of panic through Law and he pulled back to smile at her. "Your mom will be very happy you can speak! Come on, try another. Nii-san. Nii-chan?"

"Maw-nii-chin!" She giggled and Law damn near swooned in delight as she got it.

"That's right! My clever little kitten, that's perfect!" He said as he rubbed their cheeks together, causing her to purr contently. "I'm your big brother and your mom will be so happy to have you back! Her name is Momo, you know. Momo-kaa-san and she loves you. Can you say Momo?" He asked her.

"Momo-kaa-chin!" She dutifully repeated and he started to cry, hugging her tightly.

"That's it, Kitten. You got it!"

"Don't forget her Tou-san!" Penguin reminded with a forced cheerfulness.

"Oh yeah." Wiping his eyes, he pulled back to grin at her. "And your daddy! Can you say Baki-otou-san?"

That one took her a bit longer, but he patiently coached her through the pronunciation until she got it.

When she got it, Law and Penguin cheered only to be surprised when Corazon, Suki, and Donnie joined in. Maki ate it up, clapping her paws together and giggling happily.
Smiling, Corazon said, "Lunch is ready, guys."

Suki and Donnie cheered happily as they ran down the stairs. Penguin picked up Yuki while Corazon got the little boy and they also headed down below.

Kid dropped anchor, locking the ship's controls. "So why are you being such a girl about this?"

Law gave him a wan smile. "With Cora-san alive, I had no reason to return to Zou immediately. I didn't get lost in the New World when the ship I hitched a ride on capsized and so I didn't drift for two weeks until Inuarashi-ya's guards saw me and reeled me in. Which means a family wasn't assigned to take care of me until I recovered and they won't come to see me as the child that was stolen from them. My mom and dad won't remember me like I remember them, but they'll still be getting a child when we reach Zou." He held up Maki. "Theirs."

"Jesus Christ." Kid exclaimed in shock.

"So no more mom jokes, okay? She needs to know Momo-okaa-ya is her mother." He pressed a bit shakily.

"Momo-kaa-chin!" Maki said and Law immediately nuzzled her as he praised her. Positive reinforcement and repetition.

"Momo-kaa-san will be so proud of you, Kitten." He told her as he headed downstairs. "She'll be so surprised you know who she is. But you wouldn't forget her, would you?"

"Mo!" She denied and he laughed happily in delight.

"That's my baby sister."

She purred against his chest and he hugged her tightly.
They reached Saboady with no other issues two weeks later and in that time, Maki learned to say hungry, sleepy, help, and potty (though that last one was still hit and miss). Since they had to wait three days for the ship to be coated, they went to the amusement park to pass the time.

The adults and adults-turned-kids kept a sharp eye on the other four as they had fun, but since the duo’s Fishman attributes were in easily hidden places, no one batted an eye at any of them.

Maki, on the other hand, got several longing looks as the day stretched on and by the time they had to leave, Sengoku had put Law on his shoulders in a subtle claim that had the eyes turning away.

On the second day, they received a surprise in the form of a sobbing woman running up to them and screaming her apparent son’s name.

"Kobi! Kobi, oh thank god!" She dropped to her knees and hugged the boy tightly, sobbing into the now-crying boy’s neck.

"Momma!"

"You're his mom?" Suki asked in shock.

Still crying, she held up a picture of her and the much chubbier little boy at one of the rides. "I just turned around for a second and-and he was GONE!" She cried. "Oh, Kobi! Momma's missed you so much! Don't you ever leave me again!"

"You have to leave here." Donnie said solemnly. "We were taken too. Over there." He pointed to a carousel. "They'll probably target him again, so you should really leave the island before they realize he's back."

Looking terrified, she clutched her child close and ran over to an exhausted looking man who must have been the father because he too burst into tears, hugging them both tightly. Then they grabbed their bubble bags and were gone.

Sengoku looked at Donnie. "Do you remember where they took you?"

Both kids shook their heads.

"It was really dark." Suki replied. "We were in a box. We looked out holes, but all the trees look the same."

He nodded solemnly. "Well, we'll just need to keep a sharp eye on you. You're almost home."

"Not me!" Yuki protested. "I live on Dressroba!"

Law couldn't help but laugh while the others just looked confused. Proof that Mugiwara was a child! "DressROSA, Yuki-chan."

"Rosa?" She asked in confusion. "You sure?"
He smiled. "Yes."

"Oh, okay!" She accepted easily.

Chuckling, Corazon clapped. "Well, come on! We've still got daylight! Let's play!"

"We can stop there first." Kid said as they followed the three kids. "Dressrosa is closest to the Red Line anyway. It's the ring shaped island, right? With the raised center?"

"Yes. You can feel it?" Sengoku asked in interest.

"Yeah, there are some weird charges coming from over there though." He mused. "But ugh. There's a spot with no charge at all. It's like a void that keeps moving around and I think it's sucking in the other charges. It's rank." Shuddering, he suddenly burst into a run. "Hey, wait for me!"

Killer followed a step behind.

"Ne, Hiiiji-san, can you pick me up too?" Penguin asked hopefully.

Sengoku immediately bent down to pick him up. "Don't you want to ride any of the rides?"

The boy shook his head. "I'm sleepy." He covered a yawn and settled against his chest. "Cotton candy always makes me sleepy."

Law smiled down at his sharpshooter and created a room. "It appears you crash relatively quickly after the sugar rush. Good to know."

Giggling sleepily, Penguin hugged his leg and was out cold in seconds, head pillowed against it.

Smile softening, Law reached down to pat his head before settling down and looking at the others to see Yuki now on Corazon's shoulders as the four kids got on a ride too big for her. "Do you want to go on something, Ojii-san?" He asked.

"No, buddy. How about you?" He returned.

"Nuh-uh."

"Then let's join your father, yeah?"

That sent a thrill of happiness through Law and he grinned widely. "Onward!" He said dramatically, giggling when the man broke into a jog.

~~~rp~~~

The coating was done the next day and Law grimaced as he sank into the resin. "Ew. This is disgusting."

"Don't be a baby." Kid scoffed as he peered at the instructions on how to sail the coated ship over Corazon's shoulders.

Then it began to inflate as the coating mechanic released the air.

"Agh! Gross gross gross!" Law exclaimed as it crawled up his legs.

Donnie, Penguin, and Suki laughed at him. Luckily Yuki and Maki were asleep or he'd never live it down. Grabbing his hat, he hit the deck and was relieved it was over.
"It tickles!" Penguin giggled, also grabbing his hat before the bubble lifted it off his head.

"Never again! Ugh, that was so gross!" Law exclaimed in disgust.

"Don't you want to meet my family?" Suki asked in confusion and he grimaced. If they docked at Fishman Island, the bubble would pop.

Sighing in defeat, he nodded.

"Mine too!" Donnie exclaimed excitedly and Law gave him a smile, nodding again.

"Ready?" The mechanic shouted.

"Ready!" Sengoku called back and a moment later, they started to sink.

They waved to the man as they submerged and soon they were surrounded by water. Thousands of fish of all sorts swam around them and jellyfish dotted the darkening water like fireflies. A large shark swam past them and Law smiled fondly.

"Wow!" Penguin said in awe. "It's almost like home!"

Leaving the steering to the adults, they splayed out on deck and watched the fish swim by. A calm settled over the group and despite the many large creatures, they began to relax in the serenity. So close to the water and with very little sleep from lack of using his room on the island, Law fell asleep, Kid following soon after.

"Cards?" Killer asked the group and they nodded so he took out their deck and began to deal them in for a game of Slap Jack.

Barely made the minimum. Thank you, Slap Jack, lol.

Okay, time to address some reviews! Thank you all for reviewing! Some awesome questions have been brought up, and I'll try to answer them all.

Will the boys form a frankencrew? Nope! Kid and Law are still captains at heart and would NEVER serve under the other's flag. No sirree, they'll have their own crews.

How close were Luffy and Law in the past? Family, at the very least. They've been through so much together, which has barely been hinted at. Law was willing to go down with Luffy since Dressrosa, but canon Law I doubt would actually sacrifice himself for the future King. There's been some off screen bonding and the only name for Luffy and Law's relationship is family.

Will Law's stamina and skill increase faster this go around? Yes. I'm trying to keep him from going super! Law, but he'll be very strong. They all will since they're starting so much earlier than before. Law knows what will help strengthen his abilities now, so yeah, he'll be surpassing his adult self in terms of skill, but the stamina is still an issue he has to get through the hard way.

Was Vergo's ship empty when Corazon stole it and did Law know about his past?
No, the ship wasn't empty when he stole it, he just kicked everyone off with his authority as Marine Commander and they listened because they were peons. That's what Sengoku was getting after him about when they were speaking in the Calm field. ("Why the hell would you steal the ship when you could have just told them you needed to meet with me?" "Law-chan hates Marines." "ARE YOU KIDDING ME, YOU BETTER BE JOKING, YOU LEFT WITHOUT A NAVIGATOR BECAUSE THE BRAT WOULD BE SCARED!" "Law-chan also killed their leader, so I doubt they'd—" "HE DID WHAT?!!" Relax, he was a spy for Doffy." "WHAT?!") and so on lol

As for his past, yes and no. The anime hints that Law had figured out Corazon was a Marine long before he apologized to him about it. But the former Celestial Dragon bit? Not till Doffy revealed it.

Why didn't Sengoku react more strongly to Law getting attacked? Law was a pirate. Law stares down the barrel of a gun without fear. Law is a trouble maker and a delinquent with shit manners who doesn't care about anything but Corazon. Sure, the kid's saving people for his friends, but to Sengoku, it isn't enough to wipe the slate clean. He still extends an olive branch in the form of paying for Law's registration because Corazon asked him to give Law a chance, but as far as he's concerned (at that time) if the kid got himself killed, it was one less pirate in the world.

Have Kid and Killer been back much longer than Law? Yeah, less than a year, but more than a few months. Kid's folks were already dead if you hadn't gotten that figured out (his mom was killed begging for help for her husband and that's why Kid was with his uncle)

Law's Devil Fruit. The Ope Ope no mi is only as powerful as the doctor wielding it is knowledgeable. Corazon told Law when he tried to heal him on Minion (or was it Swallow) that it wasn't magic. It relied on his knowledge of healing to work.

Did Corazon land in the water or boat? He landed in the boat, that's why he said it didn't count :)

Them blaming Sengoku for sinking the island. No, he didn't take it negatively. The place would've been quarantined anyway, sinking it didn't really do much but make him exasperated at their antics.

Penguin finding them so easily. I don't know why, but I've got it in my head that he's the spy of their crew, hijacking Den Den Mushi signals and using the hacked lines to impersonate high ranking officers in order to give any Marines on their tail wrong information and assure their escape. So yeah, hacking signals is more of a hobby and he came across the reports by luck.

As for how he won so easily against the pirates…more on his species much later.

Law=13 Killer=12 Kid=10 Penguin=6...or thereabouts

Thank you for the reviews!
When they neared the city, the kids' excited shouts woke them up. "We're home! We're home!"

Getting up, they ran to the rail and saw the brightly glowing city below them. Even from their distance, they could see it was bustling with activity and Law thought it looked far more impressive from the deck of a ship than inside a submarine.

As they neared, however, they were met by guards.

"Halt. You must undergo an inspection before you enter the city." One said.

"Fine! But don't break anything!" Kid exclaimed as he rubbed his eyes sleepily.

But the guards all froze when they laid eyes on the two kids. "Donboshi-sama!"

"-sama?!!" The other kids exclaimed in shock.

Donnie scratched his cheek sheepishly. "Yeah, my dad is the first prince Fukaboshi."

Well then. "Huh. Good for you." Law said.

The boy grinned a bit uncertainly. "You'll still meet my family, right?"

Confused, Law asked, "Why wouldn't we?"

"Don't expect any special treatment just cuz you're royalty, brat!" Kid exclaimed. "I'll still punch you in the face during spars!"

Giggling, the boy nodded happily.

"Donboshi-sama, your parents will be very glad to see you." One of the guards said, holding out his hand for the boy to take.

When he hesitated, Law said, "We'll take Suki-chan home then come and see you, okay?"

"See you soon!" He said and took the guard's hand. They were gone in seconds and the other guards went about examining the ship before allowing them to pass.

At the docks, they set anchor and locked both the controls and the doors before they started following the excited girl towards her house. It was a good distance from the dock, but they kept up easily enough.

"Momma! Papa! I'm home!" She shouted as they ran down a dark street and a few buildings down, a door slammed open revealing a Baggai Cardinalfish Fishwoman with fins on her head that she had bound back like hair.

Her eyes were wide when she saw Suki. "SUKI-CHAN!" She screamed before she was all but tackling the girl. It was sort of a repeat of Kobi's reunion with a lot of crying.

Law stroked Maki's back while Kid and Killer looked away from the emotional display awkwardly. Penguin was crying too, which set off Yuki. "Oh no…" He murmured quietly as the
girl started to sniffle.

"No no no, don't cry! Yuki-chan, don't cry!" Penguin said quickly as he held her closer to his chest. "I'm just really happy!"

"I-I-I want my momma too!" She sobbed into his shirt.

Seeing how freaked out Penguin was, Law took Yuki and handed him Maki so he could focus on the distraught girl. He began stroking her hair, taking her away from the crying girls and nuzzling her head. "I know you do, Yuki-chan. Just a little bit longer and you'll be with her."

"I want her now!" She shouted.

He hummed and started rubbing her back. "I know. I wish I could give her to you right now. I would in a heartbeat. You know that, right?" She reluctantly nodded. "We're getting you to her as soon as we can. Just a little while longer. I promise." He used his Haki to surround her in warmth and the effect was almost immediate as her cries quieted back down to sniffles. Yeah, he cheated a bit. Whatever worked.

"P-promise?" She asked as she began to calm down.

He smiled, holding up his pinky to her. "Promise."

Smiling, she hooked hers around it.

He let out a relieved breath as she settled against his chest and accepted the whining Maki back from Penguin. "I got her." He brushed him off when he made to take Yuki back and the boy smiled, nodding.

"—and there was fire so we climbed up the mast where the boat next to us made us a walkway using a board and they let me go first and-and Donnie went next but the ship began to sink and he would've fallen into the water, but the men grabbed him and Yuki-chan! They saved him! We couldn't get Law-chan or Maki-chan, but he threw Maki-chan to us and he was so cool! He waited until the mast was falling to jump onto the other ship and he only got scraped up! Then he made all the hurt go away and Cora-san and Sengoku-san have taken such good care of us, they took us to the AMUSEMENT PARK!" She finished breathlessly.

The woman turned to them, looking beyond grateful. "Thank you all so much for saving her."

"You're welcome!" Corazon said cheerfully.

"She didn't tell you how brave she was though, did she?" Law asked. "She didn't panic or drop Kobi-chan when we got out and she crossed the plank connecting the rigging to the other ship even though we were so high up."

"It was scary." She agreed.

The woman stood, Suki in her arms. "Would you like to come inside for some tea?"

"We don't want to impose." Sengoku said only for her to smile brightly.

"I insist! Please, just a few cups!"

The Admiral smiled back. "Very well."

The kids cheered and followed the woman into the house.
An hour or so later they arrived at the palace. Before the guards could do more than cross their tridents, Donnie burst out of the giant doors. "You came!"

"What's with all the doubt today?" Kid asked in mild irritation. "We said we would, didn't we?"

The boy giggled. "Yeah. Come on! My family wants to meet you!"

And they were running again. Thankfully the destination was closer than Suki's house had been to the docks, so they weren't out of breath when they stopped in what appeared to be a throne room.

"Tou-sama! Ojii-sama! Everyone!" Donnie called as they entered. "They came! Just like I told you they would!"

So they were the cause of his doubt?

"Why'd you make him think we wouldn't come?" Kid demanded before Killer put a hand over his mouth.

"That's the KING, Kid! Don't antagonize him in his own palace!" He hissed.

Kid smacked his hand away, but settled for an annoyed huff instead of the tirade he'd likely planned.

"Hello, Neptune-sama." Sengoku addressed the king. "Thank you for having us."

"I want to hear your version of the rescue of my grandson, jamon." The king replied bluntly.

"I wasn't there." He pushed Corazon forward while Penguin pushed Law.

Law spoke up. "To go into detail, I request you allow my father to silence the area around us so that the children needn't hear about it." He handed the two girls to Penguin before stepping closer.

"Very well, jamon."

Corazon made sure the kids were outside of his Calm field before he quickly reported about Penguin's molestation and revelation that the crew had other children on their ship. How'd they'd gone for Law to heal any possible injuries so the children wouldn't have to suffer longer than necessary. The revelation of Charloss's order and Law's running in as Corazon took down the Marines.

Law took over and told them about the simple layout of the ship and how he'd found the room they occupied. How he had to kick the door in and then their escape. Donnie's suggestion to climb the mast, then the other crew's intervention. He glossed over his own escape and then gave them details about the boy's injuries that had most of them seething with anger.

Corazon released the Calm field as the king said, "I see. Thank you for rescuing my grandson, jamon. We owe you a great debt for this, jamon."

"I acknowledge your gratitude and you are welcome," Law began as he took back Maki. "But I believe the only proper repayment would be his continued freedom."

"I must insist on a reward. Even a small one." Fukaboshi said solemnly.

Law looked up at Corazon, who looked at Sengoku.
"Then a new coating on our ship so that we may reach the New World safely will do." He said.

"Oh yeah, I forgot about that." Kid said in surprise.

Law scratched his cheek sheepishly. So had he.

"Done!" Neptune boomed. "It will take three days, jamon! We will summon you when it's complete, jamon!"

Donnie grabbed Law's free arm. "Come on, I'll show you to the town! I know all the best places!"

Law let himself be pulled and they were running again.

Well, they'd be sleeping well that night.

Chapter End Notes

I have no clue how the king talks. Wikipedia says he ends his sentences with 'jamon', so…whatever. I haven't seen the Fishman Island arc yet, so I have no idea what the island looks like either. There won't be much description, sorry.

Reviews! I've gotten a few more questions!

Is Penguin gay? The answer is no. In this story, it's more like he's asexual. Because he's a penguin and he likes other penguins, but all the penguins he knows are assholes, so it's kind of turned him off them. He likes the way some humans look. They're cute to him and he would much rather cuddle them than anything else. But momma knows best and saying he had a mate out there was the only way she'd let him go find his Sencho.

Are these OC's going to be major characters? Well, yes and no. I guess they're like Vivi in Alabasta? Important when they're there, but after they're kind of forgotten? I like them, but I'm not really fond of flat OC's, so I'm trying to give them more life. It's hard :

Law's eating…Don't worry too much, he IS eating, just not as much as he used to. He's got a lot of things on his mind right now.

THE VOID! DUN DUN DUN…lol no, it isn't Thriller Bark or the Florean Triangle. I'm debating on that coming into the story or if I should just leave it as one of the Line's unsolved mysteries.

Law's submarine: No, he didn't get it because of the coating. That will become part of the story later too.

As for the crews picking up hitchhikers of other crews, probably not. The people wouldn't ask and they wouldn't offer. They can take care of themselves, though they WOULD give them directions.
They spent the days waiting for the coating with Donnie and Suki, enjoying the city and ignoring the adults that thought they were being sneaky as they enjoyed themselves. The princes couldn't go anywhere without the crowds bowing or exclaiming and the guards were so obvious as they perched on the rooftops that Law was amazed Donnie and Suki didn't notice. Shop by shop, they were introduced to the gadgets the citizens used to heat food, get around the city, even mow seaweed. None of it would work above the surface, but they were interesting anyway.

But inevitably the peace was broken when Law and Kid's arguments devolved into a brawl. It apparently frightened the guards because in moments they abandoned their hiding spots and pulled the two apart by the backs of their shirts.

"Hey! What gives, lemme go!" Kid exclaimed angrily as he tried to kick the guard holding him. His legs were too short to reach him though.

"Are you guys following us around?" Donnie demanded in annoyance. "Put them down, they were just playing."

"They were releasing killing intent." The one holding Law said.

Law huffed in annoyance. "It's just to intimidate each other. That's how we play." He turned to look at the one holding him as he continued, "We're sorry we worried you, it won't happen again."

"Dude, don't make promises for me!" Kid exclaimed in mild annoyance.

"Kid." Killer said in exasperation.

The boy crossed his arms in a sulk. "Don't nag me, you asshole."

After a moment the guards set them down and retreated.

Law straightened his shirt and looked around curiously. "Hey, where'd Tou-san and Ojii-san go?"

"We lost them around the market street." Penguin replied immediately.

"Then I guess it's a good thing you're bein stalked then, eh Donnie?" Kid scoffed as he smoothed his shirt out.

"Aw, don't sulk, Kiddo." Law teased as he patted the boy on the head, laughing as he dodged the punch. And they were fighting again, this time without the killing intent so the guards didn't interfere again.

~~~rp~~~

Law was separated from the group again and he looked around the unfamiliar streets in mild annoyance. Seriously, how did he keep managing to lose sight of his giant of a father or Sengoku's ridiculous hat? Tired from wandering around in search of them, he went to go sit near one of the fountains in the market square. The bench faced the colorful reef displayed within and he leaned forward with Maki in his lap so that they could watch the fish swimming around.
He began humming as he combed his fingers through the longer hair on Maki's head. It wasn't obviously longer yet, but it was long enough to get tangled. He made a note to buy her a brush before they left and wondered who she would become in the future. Would she be as close to Momo as Law had been? Maybe with her back, his mom wouldn't look so sad when looking at the other Mink children. Law had no doubt she'd loved him, but losing a child like that...he couldn't even begin to imagine the pain.

"Your Kaa-san is going to be so happy to have you back, Maki-chan." He told her as he pulled her into a hug. "She's missed you so much." Closing his eyes tightly as the tears threatened to spill over, he pressed his face into her shoulder. "Take care of her for me, Imouto-chan. Make her smile every day."

"Smile!" Maki said as she pushed him away. She frowned and reached up to grab his face, making him smile. "No cry, Nii-chin!"

"I'm not crying, who's crying?" He laughed as he wiped his eyes. "I just got something in my eyes. Smiling, he rubbed their noses together, making her giggle. "Don't you know big brothers don't cry? We leave that to our little sisters. So don't ever be ashamed of crying, okay? You're doing it for the both of us."

"No cry, smile!" She replied.

Feeling like being a bit silly, he got to his feet and swung her around in the air. "Yup! Smile, smile, smile! You gotta smile when you're happy, but also when you're sad! Smile when it hurts and especially smile when you're mad!" He giggled when she threw her arms out like she was flying. "You always have to smile, Maki-chan, cuz when everything goes wrong I'll remember that you're smiling and the day won't seem so long."

The faces of his family flashed behind his eyes and he laughed so that he wouldn't cry. He was so emotional lately!

"Come on, Maki-chan, let's go find the others." Maybe he could burn through it by fighting more with Kid. That always cheered him up!

~~~rp~~~

He caught up with them near Seastar Mall and handed Maki to Corazon before immediately picking a fight with Kid. The boy was easy to rile up and when he inevitably pinned him to the ground, he felt a lot better.

"Who's frail now?" He asked with a grin.

Kid shoved him off. "Shut the hell up you're still a freaking twig."

Law just laughed and went to Penguin. "Did I miss anything?"

Three hours later, they were back at the fountain, only Suki and Donnie had gone, taking their stalkers with them. Law was on Corazon's shoulders and Kid was on Sengoku's. Maki was in Penguin's arms where the boy sat beside Sengoku, Killer opposite him at Corazon's side with Yuki on his lap. Law and Kid were sparring using chopsticks Law had combined into swords using his room.

"If we take the direct route to Dressrosa, we'll have to stop at either Kuri Island or June Bug," Sengoku was saying to Corazon as they looked over a map Kid had drawn up of the charges he felt. Apparently most of them were islands.
"Which would be safest?" Killer asked.

"They both have their dangers." The Admiral replied. "Kuri Island has dangerous swamps that make travelling between towns a risk. But June Bug is an island full of bugs the size of giants. The dangers in that instance are apparent."

"What does bug meat taste like?" Law asked as he snapped Kid's chopsticks. They had to pause the game to fix them.

"You are not eating bugs." Corazon chuckled as he passed the fallen stick back up to Kid. "Besides, there's no way we could eat all of it, so killing one would be a waste."

"Ah, we could chop off a few legs." Law replied as they resumed their fight.

"That's inhumane." Sengoku said in amusement. "I think that Kuri Island will be our best bet. At least that danger is mostly stationary."

"Mostly?" Penguin asked curiously.

"Disease carrying parasites!" Law sang playfully. "Toxic gases, poisonous bugs, venomous creatures—"

"Don't sound so damn happy about it!" Kid laughed, grinning in amusement.

"Acidic emissions!" He finished brightly. "Think of all the patients I can treat! So many exotic diseases and ailments!"

"Guess we'll be looking after the kids then, huh Killer?" Penguin asked cheerfully.

Law immediately sobered at that. "No way they're stepping foot on that island."

"No arguments here." Killer chuckled. "No parasites allowed on the ship."

Law gave him a hurt look. "I thought you liked me." He yelped when Kid got him with the chopsticks and struck back.

"Disease carrying parasites then. " He said with a smile.

Sengoku and Corazon chuckled in amusement. "Alright then, our course is set. Now all we have to do is wait for the coating."

Chapter End Notes

They're almost to the New World! Ah, I wish typing was easier for me! There's so much coming up, I'm so excited! Working in journal nine has made me so impatient with myself, why do I take so long?! Oh well.

Reviews: Several of you are begging for Shachi…I'm sorry, but he still hasn't shown up in number 9. Don't worry, he will. Law needs his submarine after all.

And I just realized how many OCs are in the story. Man, I've spent so long on them, I forget they aren't canon. It always makes me so happy when you guys mention their names in the reviews, these people LIVE!
As for the void, crazyrubsoff, making it Raitel would be so easy. Too easy. I know how ironic it would be for Kid to go out of his way to avoid it when his dream involves it, but one day curiosity will kill the cat and they'll go find out just what's making Kid's skin crawl.

Oops. Spoilers, lol. Think I'll end this here. :)

Thanks everyone for the reviews, follows, and favorites!
They set off from Fishman Island with no trouble, promising Donnie and Suki that they'd visit when coming back through the next year. It was surprisingly easy to settle back into their routine although the three missing kids left a noticeable gap in their crew.

Law hated it. He was used to a large crew, and even in the black period AFTER, the Strawhatted boy made a nuisance of himself by ambushing him for parties. He couldn't remember so much as a week going by with less than ten people around him at any given point. It was getting harder and harder to forget.

The adults steered them through the Red Line and the kids spent most of the time sparring while Yuki and Maki slept. Law easily goaded Kid into arguing with him and their fight was louder than usual as Law tried to drown out the silence of the ocean. Penguin cheered them on and roped Killer into doing the same so the silence never truly settled.

When they exited the tunnel, they didn't surface immediately due to a large group of island whales.

"I thought you said they were endangered!" Law exclaimed as he looked at the sheer number of tail fins they had to weave the ship around.

"This is ninety five percent of the entire species in all six oceans." Sengoku chuckled. "It may look like a lot, but it really isn't."

Scoffing, they dropped it and once they were through, they surfaced into a downpour. Kid headed for the controls to direct their course while Law and Penguin headed inside with the kids.

~~~rp~~~

He was right about all the patients he'd be able to treat on Kuri Island. What he hadn't counted on was the inhabitants' reticence to be healed by him. Even on the verge of death! Thankfully Kid was more than happy to help him force them to accept his help even though the amount of parasitic infestations had him green with disgust.

Law was in his element and eagerly delved into removing the creatures and examining the effects they had on the bodies of his patients. He made mental notes of the wounds that held them and collected a few samples to study the anesthetic they released to prevent immediate detection.

Other patients weren't as interesting as they just had infected wounds or illness from tainted water but he healed them with the same energy because these illnesses were still caused by unusual circumstances. The entire island was a hotbed of activity.

By the time they set sail that night, the citizens were torn between outraged and thankful, but Law was happy with his work. Before they unsealed the ship, he ensured none of them had become hosts or carriers. Then he checked the decks for stowaways before giving the all-clear.

They were on their way to Dressrosa.

~~~rp~~~
"This is it! This is Dressroba!" Yuki shouted excitedly as they entered the city.

"Rosa, Yuki-chan." Law corrected patiently. He looked around the rural town and thought it looked so different. Peaceful and quiet, there were only the citizens wandering about doing their daily business and he felt guilty for thinking it looked wrong.

They spent the day wandering around the kingdom, waiting for her to spot something familiar while Sengoku went to stock up on supplies. Everything looked the same to them and if it weren't mostly farmland, Law might've actually gotten lost. But finally, nearer to the King's Plateau than he'd expected, she pointed at a shop. "That's my Papa's store!"

Law immediately headed for the shop, the girl's hand held firmly in his own. Penguin ran ahead to open the door for him and they entered a weapons shop. A tired looking man looked up at them when they entered, but when he saw Yuki, his eyes went wide.

"Y-Yuki-chan!"

"Papa!" She cried happily and Law let her go so that she could run to meet the man.

"KIMI! KIMI, GET IN HERE!" The man shouted. "YUKI-CHAN'S BACK!"

There was a loud bang as something was dropped in the other room before a door behind the counter slammed open and a woman exited, looking around wildly.

"Momma!" Yuki cried and the woman ran over to grab her in a tight hug.

Same song, different tune. Law heard Kid make an excuse of helping Sengoku restock before he and Killer wandered off. He wished he could follow, this was all so tedious. He left the small talk and explanations to Corazon and went to look at some of the swords mounted on the wall. They all appeared to be excellent quality, but he was a bit too young for a proper sword yet.

Maki batted at the tassels on one and he quickly moved away before she caused an incident.

"Ready to go, Law-chan?" Corazon asked as they wrapped up their conversation.

Law headed over and hugged Yuki back when she came to hug him around the waist. "Be careful, Law-nii-chan! You'll visit right?" She asked hopefully.

Smiling, he put a hand on her braided hair. "Of course we will. It might not be for a while, though."

"That's okay! You'll come back someday!" She said happily before running back over to her parents.

Corazon scooped up him and Penguin. "Come on, let's go find where the others ran off to!"

"Yosh!" Penguin cheered and they left the shop behind, Maki waving shyly over Corazon's shoulder.

~~~rp~~~

Law slept a majority of the way to Zou. The sudden lethargy worried the others and they did their best to keep him occupied with spars and talks, but inevitably he'd wander off and they'd find him splayed out in a shady corner of the deck out cold.

Maki was taking it hard since she had no one close to her age to play with in the pen and they
tried to keep her entertained, but she was hard to placate. She wanted Law and wouldn't take no for an answer. So they started putting her with him, but instead of waking him up, the girl would curl up against him and go to sleep.

It wasn't healthy for either child and they noticed that despite all the extra sleep, the circles under his eyes were darker than ever.

Penguin flopped down on top of the boy. "Sencho, come on..." He whined. "You can't sleep so much or it'll make it harder for you to sleep at night and then you'll get cranky and probably murder us all in a fit of insanity and then we'll HAVE to come back and Kid will probably haunt you to make sure you didn't get a moment of peace—"

"Penguin." Law said waringly before saying, "I'm taking a nap."

"It's not healthy." He protested.

"I don't care." He shoved the boy off and curled up on his side, facing away from him.

Penguin made a pained sound. "Oh no..." He had no doubt that the boy wasn't sleeping, but that meant...this was bad.

"What the hell's going on?" Kid demanded when Penguin retreated from Law's spot. "He did a freaking 180!"

"It happens." Penguin said miserably. "But what a time for it to hit! We'll be at Zou in less than three days and he'll probably have one of the adults take Maki-chan home!" He put his face in his hands. "Ugh! I should've seen it ages ago! The emotional rollercoaster he's been on for the past MONTH—"

"Don't beat yourself up over it." Killer said calmly. "Is there a way to snap him out of it?"

"It's a hormone imbalance. He's a teenager again, it'll probably hit him hard with the depression he's susceptible to..."

"Harder than this?" Kid asked incredulously. "No, wait, back up. Hormone imbalance? I can fix that."

Both looked at him in surprise.

"How?" Penguin asked in confusion.

Kid smiled. "It's somethin' I was workin' on. The body functions through nerve impulses, right? Those are electrical charges. It's only short term, the body always equalizes itself, but if his head's cleared enough, he can fix himself!" He said cheerfully.

They stared at him for a moment.

"Is that why Wire—"

He coughed slightly, blushing. "That was when I first started. He agreed to it—" He quickly added and the blond's anger cooled down. "—but, yeah, that was my bad."

"You think you can do it? Because if you hurt my Sencho, I'll show you exactly why Seakings avoid our island." Penguin said softly.

Kid scoffed. "Shut up. I don't want him hurt either, we still gotta work out what we'll use each
other for since Tou-san says our former agreement is void."

"Like you would've killed each other anyway." Killer brushed off off.

"We were working on it." Kid growled. "Not the point! Shut up!" He stalked past the pleased Penguin and snickering Killer to approach Law, who had rolled onto his back again. "Oi! You gonna get up anytime soon, jackass?"

Law calmly flicked him off without opening his eyes.

"Let me rephrase that. GET THE FUCK UP." He growled as he grabbed his shirt and yanked him to his feet.

Dispassionate green eyes cracked open to stare at him blankly. "What."

"Don't you 'what' me!" He huffed, annoyed that the boy made no move to support himself. "Do you know you have a hormone imbalance?"

Law blinked slowly. "So?"

"SO fix it!" He exclaimed. "We've only got a few more days until we reach Zou and Maki needs you smiling!"

"One of you lot can take her—"

"Bullshit!" He growled angrily. Dammit, Penguin had been right. "You're not abandoning her because you got some stick up your ass! You need to level out the chemicals so you can be a good fucking big brother!"

"She doesn't need a brother like me. Just get her home." He said boredly.

"The fuck's that supposed to mean?" He demanded in confusion. "Brother like you? You've been a damn good brother to that little girl!"

"I'm just using her to replace Lamy." He replied. "She deserves better."

"Dude, what?" He shook his head. "No, whatever. You're clearly beyond reason." Setting him on his feet, and feeling a bit relieved that he stood on his own, he reached up to put his palm to the boy's forehead and concentrated.

Law jerked as if electrocuted and scrambled back from him only to lose his balance and fall on his ass. He grabbed his head in clear agony. "OH FUCK! What the hell did you do?!"

"Bit o' mental recalibration." Kid replied calmly. "You done bein' an emo bitch? Cuz I can do this ALL day."

"Jesus Christ it hurts!"

"Then fix it, dumbass." He scoffed in amusement.

Law growled but created a room. It took less than a second before the pain left his expression and then the realization set in. "Oh fuck, I'm a teenager! Oh god, I'm not ready for this."

Kid laughed.

Growling, Law kicked his legs out from under him, sending him face-first. "Dude, shut the hell up! You'll have to deal with it too!"
"Like I'm not already a moody bastard." Kid laughed as he sat up, rubbing his face. "At least I'm aggression instead of depression. We can burn through aggression with training. But you?" He grinned and wiggled his fingers playfully. "You're stuck with me if you don't use your room to ease the process. Cuz catatonic states outside of losing your crew is NOT acceptable!" He finished sharply, glaring at him.

Law looked away and rubbed at his bare knuckles. "I wasn't paying attention. Then it was just… too much."

Kid huffed. "Whatever, stop bein' a chick about it. Now come on, you need to eat." He growled as he stood up.

Rubbing his face tiredly, Law followed him into the ship and they headed for the kitchen where he realized, "Oh my god, I'm starving!" He hurried forward and began gathering ingredients for a quick meal.

Kid watched him in confusion. "What the fuck? Your appetite was affected? You stopped eating —" He paused. "Oh."

"Oh?" Law asked curiously from where he was at the stove adding pepper and salt to the eggs he was scrambling.

"Shut up." He left him in the kitchen and headed back to where Kid and Killer were waiting. "I'm so fucking pissed off right now! He's fucking 'starving!'" He used air quotes.

Penguin started to cry.

"So?" Killer asked in confusion.

"He stopped eating after we found the brats!" Kid exclaimed in annoyance. "Because he was upset about MOMO-SAN!"

"Ah." He frowned. "I didn't realize loss of appetite was a symptom."

"That's why I'm ticked off! We SHOULD HAVE! We ate with him for like a month! FULL MEALS! Three times a fucking day and he never skipped once! Why didn't it raise a red flag?!"

Killer didn't have an answer for that. "Well, now we know and we can head this off next time."

Crying harder, Penguin ran into the ship. "CAAAAPTAAINN!"

Kid growled angrily. "Why is this even a thing? He's like, ten!"

"Thirteen."

"Until he's eighteen, that's like—ten."

Killer rolled his eyes. "Why don't we go make sure he eats a proper meal?"

"Lord knows how he's survived this fucking long." Kid grumbled as he followed him inside.

Chapter End Notes
And here's the crux of the matter. Law's depressed and there's a reason it hit so hard and so quickly. More on that later. I feel kind of bad for speeding through Yuki's return, but Law just didn't care to participate in small talk.

They're almost to Zou! I'm predicting a monster chapter next go around. Let's see what happens. More on Law's past, a parent is reunited with her child, and some interesting things are revealed about Zunisha-sama! Stay tuned!

Also, I've created an account on AO3, but it's not as user friendly as FFN. I'll have to wait until school starts back up so I can do a proper copy and paste. I'm doing all this on mobile and I'd rather not make it any more complicated than necessary. I'll let everyone know when I start posting chapters there, but FFN will always be the first updated.
As Zunisha came into view, Law packed up the belongings scattered around his room and was surprised at how much stuff he’d accumulated since leaving Mangrove. Then he packed up Maki's things in a separate bag—bottles, her Mink brush, her hair brush, her clothes and shoes and toys… she probably had more things than she really used, but he just shouldered the bags.

"You ready to go home, Kitten? Momo-kaa-san will be so happy to see you." Law said quietly as he picked her up. He noticed spots on her fur suddenly, identical to her father's and if he'd had any doubt, it was gone now.

"Momo-kaa-chin!" She said excitedly before mewling.

Smiling, he rubbed their cheeks together.

"Almost there, boys!" Corazon's voice echoed down the halls of the ship and he began blowing out the candles before heading up to the deck.

Up top, he watched as they neared the dock around her left hind leg. When they were close enough, Kid had a thick chain wrap around a hitching pole, fastening it to ensure the ship wasn't lost in the elephant's voyage.

"The island is a fucking creature?" Kid asked as they left the ship and peered up the wrinkled cliff of a leg. "The fuck we get up there?"

"This way." Law said with a smile as he led them down the dock to a hidden platform. "Using a system of pulleys, we have to lift ourselves up."

"Handy." Sengoku said as they got on and the two adults prepared to do the pulling while the kids sat in the middle and tried to keep as still as possible to avoid any accidents.

"So Zou isn't what the island is called." Law began with a smile. "Her name is Zunisha-sama and she's a thousand years old. She protects the Mink tribe from prospective Kings. In return, her constantly active Haki ensures they have the strength to defend her from poachers and the like. It's a symbiotic relationship and though she never SEEMS to take notice of what's going on, she's keeping track of everyone that mounts her back." But that was as much as he could tell them.

"The kingdom itself is called the Mokomo Dukedom, ruled from 6 am to 6 pm by Inuarashi-ya and 6 pm to 6 am by Nekomamushi-sama."

"That's weird." Kid said.

"They've got some sort of feud going on. I don't know, I didn't pry." He shrugged. "Anyway, the kingdom is divided into six main sections starting with Whale Forest at the nape of Zunisha-sama's neck. Within is the Guardians' Residential District. They protect the forest from invaders. The third area is at the approximate center of her back and is called Kurau City. Most of the civilians reside there. Then, Right Rump Forest—which is exactly what it sounds like. Fifth is the Deep Dark Swamp, located on her hindquarters—"

"Ew."

Law shoved Penguin lightly. "Shut up, that's not why it's a swamp."
Penguin giggled.

"Last is the Right Flank Forest where Inuarashi-ya resides with the Musketeer Squad." He finished.

"Why do you call Nekomamushi '-sama' and Inuarashi '-ya'?' Kid asked. "Didn't you say his guards were the ones that helped you?"

Law smiled in amusement. "I do it to annoy him mostly. But since I was under Nekomamushi-sama's protection while waiting for a ship, he sort of earned my respect after a while. He's really fun to train with if he'd stop licking me all the damn time." He sighed in irritation.

"L-lick you?" Corazon asked in shock.

"He's a cat." He replied simply.

"Like Maki-chan?" Killer asked.

Law gave him a startled look. "N-no. No, he's—" He stopped, thinking. What was he? "A lion Mink, maybe? He's got a mane. And he's enormous! Taller than Tou-san and—" He shook his head. "You'll just have to see for yourself. We'll be meeting Inuarashi-ya first since Ojii-san said we're staying here for the year."

"Anything we should know?" Kid asked.

"Don't ruin their fur. They'll gut you. Also, don't ask to pet them—" He sent a side-long glance to Penguin who pretended he didn't see. "Think of it like someone asking to touch your face. But while they're human in some ways, they're all animal in others. Instincts mainly. Canine Minks like bones and tend to be overly affectionate with friends; feline Minks love catnip and cat toys—some stereotypes are pretty accurate."

"Haha." Kid laughed in amusement.

Killer gave him a wary look.

"Almost there, boys." Sengoku warned and they looked up to see the scaffolding was only a few yards away.

Law was the first to exit the lift and onto the loose skin surrounding the lift. He turned to watch the others stumble and slide in amusement. That never got old. "Lost your land legs already?"

Kid went red and glared at him. "Shut the hell up! You could've warned us!"

Law smiled serenely. "Must have slipped my mind."

"Anything else 'slip your mind'?" Killer asked dryly as they got their feet under them.

Giving a put-upon sigh, he said, "Twice a day Zunisha-sama cleans herself with what the citizens have dubbed the 'eruption rain'. It brings the Minks fish, sustains the life of the vegetation, and the water is purified through aqueducts for drinking." He waved it off in disinterest and they began to trek through the forest, Zunisha's skin giving it a very rough terrain and everyone but Law and Sengoku seemed to struggle with it. It took them twenty minutes to reach the city and he said, "Don't worry about getting washed away. There are some protections put in place to catch you—in the city." He pointed ahead at the gate.

"How many times have you been swept away?" Corazon asked curiously.
"Irrelevant." He said with a slight blush.

Penguin giggled again. "Don't be embarrassed, Sencho. Even the other Minks have been washed away."

He huffed and ignored him, readjusting the bags hanging from his shoulder. A few minutes later, they neared the gate of the city and the visitor's bell rang five times, then half.

"Why'd they cut it off?" Penguin asked in confusion.

"I don't know." He replied with a frown. Shrugging, he made to pass through the gate.

"Well if it isn't the little pup!"

Law leapt back when Inuarashi landed a foot away from him and was caught by Corazon before he fell. Wow, he was MUCH bigger than Law remembered. "Inuarashi-ya." He greeted.

The dog Mink scoffed as he straightened up. "Still a punk." Then he grinned, showing off his teeth. "We didn't know you were the one coming." He looked over the group before focusing on the adults. "Why don't you pups return that little one to her parents while we talk business?"

Law only hesitated a moment before he started walking into town, the other three following.

When they were a fair distance away, Kid asked, "Are all Minks that freaking huge?"

"Not all of them. Bepo wasn't that big." He replied before considering it. "Maybe because he left so young, but it could also just not be in his genetics."

They talked about the Duke all the way into the residential area of the town. The Minks looked at them with bright smiles but didn't approach them and Law felt the back of his neck prickle. A large group was tailing them and felt his unease grow. What if he started to cry?

He did his best to lock down his emotions. He couldn't allow himself to make a big deal out of it. It was just like returning the other kids. Strangers to strangers.

His heart hurt.

Too soon the familiar house came into view and he straightened, schooling his expression as he walked up the steps to the front door. Raising his hand, he knocked loudly.

"You ready, Maki-chan?" He mumbled to the girl. "Just like we practiced."

She nodded as the door opened revealing a jaguar Mink in her late twenties. Law didn't allow himself to notice any more as he held up Maki.

"Momo-kaa-chin!" The girl crowed brightly and the woman gasped in shock, hands covering her mouth.

"M-Maki-chan…" She whispered before she was carefully taking her from Law's hands. She scented the girl before rubbing their cheeks together and starting to cry.

Law took off Maki's bag and gave them a moment before he held it out by the strap. "Here's her stuff, Ma'am."

"Ma'am?" She asked and through her tears he was confused to hear…amusement? "Is that any way to address your mother, Kitten?"
Law looked up at that with wide eyes, feeling like he couldn't breathe. Her brown eyes were as warm as he remembered and he could see that—"Y-you remember me?" He felt like he was on the edge of a precipice, vertigo threatening his precarious balance.

She got down onto one knee and with her free hand she pushed his hat out of his eyes so that she could hold his gaze as she said, "Zunisha-sama remembers everyone that steps foot on her back. And through her, so do we."

Law didn't understand. He couldn't think, his mind was blank.

Laughing, she pulled him into a warm hug and he began to cry uncontrollably. He'd been so prepared for her to not recognize him. Weeks and weeks of preparation for the emotional blow… he couldn't handle the RELIEF.

"Oh, my sweet little Kitten..." She murmured. "Don't you cry." She picked him up like he didn't weigh a thing and stood. "Boys, would you like to come inside? The rain will start soon."

"Thank you." Killer said as he picked up the dropped bag and they followed her into the cozy house.

"So you remember too?" Penguin asked as he went to perch on his favorite table.

"Not as much as you probably think." She said as she sat in her armchair, alternating between petting her purring daughter and the now-silently crying Law. "Zunisha-sama wouldn't give us important information like who became King or whether the dukes killed each other—just the small stuff. I remember helping raise Law-chan, but not much until your group's arrival."

"That's really clever. Enough for you to help but not enough to make you interfere." HE mused thoughtfully. "But does this mean that whatever brought us back is centered around Sencho?"

"Looks like it." Kid said. "I know we're amazing and all, but why'd we get brought back too?"

"Maybe secretly Sencho LIKES you." Penguin scoffed. "Ever consider THAT?"

"But he's not the one that did it, even if that made sense." Kid huffed in annoyance. "That leaves bear or one of the Strawhats."

"I doubt any of the Strawhats knew enough about Sencho to know about your relationship." He denied.

"They got pretty close after you lot kicked the bucket." Kid replied. "Mugiwara was probably the only reason he got through that."

"Shut up. Don't ever talk about that." Law said quietly, looking up to glare at them with red eyes. "It never happened!"

Momo started to purr and it set him off again.

"So where is your husband, Momo-san?" Killer asked politely.

"He's on guard duty at the bell tower right now." She replied, purr curiously unbroken. "If we'd known it was today, he would have requested time off. I can't believe you found Maki-chan…" She began to cry again as she hugged both close.

They were saved from the silence becoming awkward as the eruption rain started and they ran to the window, watching in shock as the street they'd just walked down turned into a raging river.
"Oh no, there goes miss Anuki." Penguin giggled as the cackling raccoon Mink floated by only to be fished out by one of the neighbors a few houses down.

"Now the levels of the houses make sense." Killer mused as the rain began to die down. "It's to keep the water out."

"Cool." Kid said in awe.

After a moment longer of watching the river, Penguin asked, "Cards?"

"Yeah."

Chapter End Notes

Okay, so since the chapter was more than 4,000 words, I decided to chop it in half. So you get two chapters tonight!

A little side note, while reading another story, I made the realization that a hand-and-half sword is actually a longsword. I was using it as a description of the blade length…so no, Law can't fit a freaking longsword in his coat. Sorry about that.
Chapter 30

A few hours later, there was a knock on the door. Law stirred slightly where he was dozing against Killer's side but didn't wake as Penguin went to go answer it.

"Ojii-san!" The boy greeted happily as he leapt up to hug him around the waist.

Corazon smiled as he picked him up for a proper hug. "Hey, buddy. How you boys doing?"

Momo reentered the room and her eyes went wide before she burst into a grin. "You must be Cora-san! Law-chan's told me so much about you!"

That woke Law up and he jerked slightly before he put a card down as if the game hadn't ended an hour ago.

Killer shrugged and matched it.

"You fucking—" Kid growled and the game resumed.

"Come in, come in! Would you like some tea?" She asked as she ushered him towards the couch.

"Cora-san!" Law said sleepily and he threw down his cards so he could climb up to join Penguin on the man's lap.

"Ha! Won by default!" Kid said with a grin as he threw his own cards down.

Killer chuckled in amusement as he gathered the cards and wrapped a rubber band around them.

"Where's Hiijiji-san, Ojii-san?" Penguin asked the man.

"There was a bit of an issue with our living arrangements." He replied. "Nothing important, but there's a few issues they're ironing out." He accepted a cup of tea from Momo with a smile. "Oh thank you miss…"

She smiled, sitting across him in her armchair. "You can call me Momo. Has Law-chan told you anything about us?"

"No." Law replied, head resting against Corazon's stomach. "I didn't think you'd remember me."

She tsked. "I could never forget you, Kitten."

Blushing, he turned away.

Smiling sadly, she told Corazon, "My husband and I took care of him while he was here. He became a part of our family." She wagged her finger at him. "So you better take good care of my kitten, mister. He looks so much better so keep up the good work."

Corazon smiled as he looked down at the red-faced boy. "Of course I'll do my best."

"Aw, embarrassed, KITTEN?" Kid asked as he grinned up at the boy.

"I'll cut you." Law growled as he swiped at him only for Kid to dodge.

"You couldn't cut a wet paper bag!"
Growling, Law launched himself at the redhead.

Momo giggled. "It's nice to see him so lively."

Smiling, Corazon nodded. "It really is."

"Hey, watch it!" Killer exclaimed when the brawling duo bumped into him.

"Grab him!" Kid laughed and both tackled the blond who gave out a startled curse as he fell.

"I'll save you, Killer!" Penguin declared before he flopped onto the pile.

"Not helping!"

The three on top laughed while he just huffed and the grinning adults began to make small-talk.

~~~rp~~~

Sengoku reached the house around the same time as Baki and Law was startled to see the snow leopard Mink burst into tears when Maki said without prompt, "Baki-otou-chin!"

Law leaned towards Momo from where he was perched on Corazon's shoulders. "Momo-okaa-ya, show him the spots." He whispered.

"That might exacerbate the problem—" Killer began to protest, but it was too late.

"SHE HAS MY SPOTS!"

Law grimaced. "Oops." HE rested his chin on his father's head as Baki cried even harder.

"You're shit at this." Kid snickered.

"Language!" Law, Killer, and Penguin all chided.

"English, mofos, do you speak it?"

Penguin replied in a series of clicks, gaws, and noots.

"Penguin!" Law laughed, scandalized. "You watch your mouth!"

The boy giggled.

"What'd you say?" Kid asked suspiciously.

Penguin gave him an innocent smile.

"Say something not-scandalous." Killer requested and Penguin began to babble like usual…

In penguin. Law noticed Killer looked enthralled and narrowed his eyes at him suspiciously.

Kid was suddenly in his face, squinting at him. Corazon blinked at him in surprise but otherwise didn't move as Kid demanded, "What're you lookin' like that for?"

"I don't know what you're talking about. I'm not lookin' like nothin'." Law replied, meeting his eyes evenly.

Kid turned and peered at the duo suspiciously. "You're lookin' like somethin', but for what?"
Amused, Law said, "I'm not lookin' like nothin' for nothin'."

"Are too! I saw you! Oi Killer, what're you doing?" Kid demanded.

"Listening to Penguin talk, Captain." Killer replied distractedly.

Kid blinked. "Oh."

"Oh?" Corazon asked curiously.

"Nothing!" He said quickly, defensive. He dropped off Corazon's knees and landed in a sitting position on the couch, folding his arms. "I didn't see anything."

Confused, Corazon looked at Sengoku. "Tou-san?"

"Yes, Roci?"

"I don't understand."

Chuckling, Sengoku replied wisely, "One day when you're older, you'll come to realize...kids never make sense."

Both Law and Kid sweat-dropped. That was a fancy way of saying he had no clue.

"He's sayin' the cub there's makin' goo-goo eyes at the little bird." Baki said conspiratorially from where he was now leaning over the back of the couch between Kid and Corazon.

"I did not!" Kid exclaimed angrily, a blush on his face.

Law lowered his head back onto Corazon's. "Done crying, Baki-otou-ya?"

Baki scoffed as he leapt over the back of the couch to land on Corazon's other side. "Still a punk, I see."

"Inuarashi-ya said that too." Law said in confusion. "I'm not a punk."

"Yeah you are." All of them replied in synch, even Penguin and Killer although they went right back to what they'd been doing.

He huffed.

"So you're the guy taking care of our little porcupine, huh?" Baki asked Corazon before he clapped him on the arm. "Good luck, he's a paw-full."

"Am not." Law protested.

"You joined a pirate crew at ten years old." Sengoku said dryly.

"You took out one of said crew's executive officers and fled with a traitor." Corazon added.

"You destroyed a corrupt government and shanghaied two high ranking officers into aiding in the island's complete destruction." Kid said calmly.

"You went against the Celestial Dragons and practically stole from them." Killer chipped in.

"By running onto a burning freaking ship when you can't even swim!" Penguin exclaimed hotly.
"Most in less than three months." Sengoku finished.

Law kicked his legs idly. "Has it already been three months? Time sure flies when you're having fun." He said with a serene smile.

"You destroyed an island?" Baki asked, impressed.

"No, of course not. Look at me." Law denied easily. "I couldn't destroy a SCALE MODEL of an island."

"You are a bit of a runt." Baki gave in easily just to rile him up.

"Who're you calling a runt you overgrown gerbil?!"

"Oi, who you calling a gerbil you Minkless ape?!"

Law gasped, instantly outraged. He sat up. "I don't need a body covered in Mink because REAL warriors focus on STRENGTH and not LOOKS!"

"Neither of which you have while I have BOTH!" The leopard said smugly.

"You're nothing but a fluff-ball full of hot air!"

Both bared their teeth at each other, tension crackling between them.

"You boys better not be fighting again." Momo called from the kitchen where she was feeding Maki.

"No, Ma'am." Both replied, settling down like nothing happened.

"Good because I've got a fresh jar of umeboshi in the pantry!" She sang and both hunched in slightly, Baki's ears pressing flat against his head.

Kid coughed into his hand, "Whipped."

Neither denied it. She was the queen of this jungle.

"She uses food as punishment?" Sengoku asked in amusement. "Is that why you don't like umeboshi, Law-chan?"

When Law just gave him a sulky look, Killer asked curiously, "What exactly warrants umeboshi?"

"Fighting in the house."

"Broken furniture."

"Broken anything, really."

"Messes."

"Disobeying orders."

"Sleeping in."

"Wasting food or water."
"Ignoring the chore wheel."

"Skipping school."

"Skipping work."

"Picking fights."

"Being too loud."

"Making too much noise."

"Throwing things out the window to see who'll chase them."

"Using a slingshot to pelt people with peas."

"Greeting people by shaking their paws and using Electro to shock them."

"Pouring honey into Anuki-ya's garden to attract bees."

"I remember that one!" Baki laughed. "Greg thought I wouldn't do it. Easiest 2,000 berries I ever made."

"She kept them too, started a little beehive thing." Law said with a small smile. "Is that still going?"

"You dodged a bullet there, cub. She had us all track down the queen bee. I kid you not, the thing was the size of my fist and as ornery as—well, as Anuki-san when her bees started dying."

The kids all giggled in amusement.

Baki kicked back with his paws behind his head. "So where are you lot staying? I'd imagine Inuarashi-sama wasn't too eager to have the runt there too far from Whale Forest."

"Not at all." Sengoku sighed. "They'll be staying in the northern part of Kurau."

"Why's he gotta stay close to Whale Forest?" Kid asked in confusion.

"I'm technically one of Nekomamushi's Guardians of Whale Forest." Law replied. "That means I have to go to the Academy in the Guardian's Residential District."

"Why didn't you warn us about that?" Sengoku asked in mild exasperation.

Law blinked. " Didn't think that far ahead." He nuzzled Corazon's hat and sighed tiredly. "I was kind of distracted by a baby."

"Excuses." Kid scoffed.

"So are we all going to the Academy?" Penguin asked before they could start bickering.

"That'll depend on you." Baki replied. "There are three different schools here. The one in Whale Forest where you'd be trained to become one of Nekomamushi-sama's Guardians; the Academy in Right Flank Fortress where you'd be trained to become one of Inuarashi-sama's Musketeers; then the one in Kurau itself where you'd learn basic fighting forms and regular school things."

"What's the difference between the Guardians and the Musketeers?" Corazon asked curiously.
"The differences are plain as night and day." Law said before he giggled.

Baki snorted. "That's literally it. They protect the kingdom at different hours."

"Working at night will strengthen our senses in time." Killer mused.

"But when Garp tracks us down, you'll be too exhausted to kill him." Law pointed out.

"Two equally important factors..." Kid said thoughtfully.

"Should you plan the murder of a Vice Admiral in the presence of an Admiral?" Baki asked in amusement.

"It's Garp." Sengoku replied easily. "He takes it as a compliment."

"Crazy old man." Law and Kid muttered.

"Night training will help us more in the long run." Penguin pointed out. "We can always plot later."

The other three sighed in defeat. "...yeah..."

Baki chuckled. "Then after dinner we'll take you to Whale Forest to meet with Nekomamushi-sama. You ARE staying for dinner, right?"

"We wouldn't want to impose—" Sengoku began only for Baki's laugh to cut him off.

"Impose? Gahahaha! You're Pack! You're FAMILY!"

Looking like his entire year had been made, Corazon hugged the Mink tightly and Baki just laughed, hugging him back.

Annoyed, Law moved to sit beside Kid on the couch. He'd had enough emotional stuff for one day. "Ugh, feelings." He muttered in disgust.

Kid grinned at him. "What's the matter? Fill your quota of emotional outbursts already?"

Law gave him a dirty look.

"Boys, why don't you come help me start on dinner?" Momo asked as she handed Maki to Baki.

"Okay!" Penguin and Law agreed eagerly and Law vaulted over the back of the couch in his haste to escape the redhead's teasing. Kid and Killer followed a bit more slowly.

"I don't know how to cook." Kid said as they watched Law and Penguin get the fish out.

"That's okay, you can wash and chop up the veggies!" She said brightly. "We do this so you can learn. Knowing how to cook what Kristhva gives you is very important."

"'Kristhva?'" Killer asked as he and Kid got to work at the sink.

"Oh, sorry." She said a bit sheepishly. "Kristhva is our name for the waters of the New World." She explained as she took out the fruit and seasonings. "In our culture we believe the oceans are under the control of six deities: Kristhva for the New World, her twin Kristoff for Paradise, and their younger siblings Kali, Kora, Keimi, and Kilo."

They listened curiously as she went into detail about their religion.
Chapter 31

Dinner was a lively event as Law told the two Minks stories about the few times Maki got into or caused trouble on the ship. She was mostly well-behaved, but her instincts had more than one of them getting hurt trying to catch her before she hurt herself. By seven, the food was eaten and the table was cleared.

As they walked through the dark streets, Law took Penguin's hand and chatted with him about how he could probably use his room for a crude form of taxidermy now and what they could probably use. If he could get the parts to join properly, they could even try it on living creatures.

"Fucking weirdo!" Kid exclaimed after listening in for a few minutes. "You better not give spiders wings or I might really have to kill you!"

Law smirked at him. "Aw, scared of the itty bitty spider, Eustass-ya?"

"No but if it could dive-bomb my face—stop laughing, you freak!" He shouted furiously before he tackled Law.

Penguin narrowly escaped getting dragged down with him and jumped out of the way, pulling Killer with him. They watched them wrestle before Law managed to kick Kid off and he took off with a peal of laughter, Kid growling furiously as he gave chase. A few yards away, he tackled him and they were wrestling again.

By the third time, it became apparent that the anger was fake since Kid began laughing too. So intent on their game, neither noticed when they entered Whale Forest or the Duke until they were crashing into his legs.

"Well well well, if it isn't the spotted porcupette…"

Law rubbed his head as he looked up at the enormous Mink. The name registered and he leapt to his feet as he glared at him. "What'd you call me you overgrown housecat!!"

"Goronyanya!" The Mink laughed as he picked him up by the back of his shirt. "Such a sensitive little kitten. That still hasn't changed."

Law felt his entire face go red at that and he immediately calmed down as he took out his staff.

"Oh, you wanna play, Kitten?" The Mink asked with a fierce grin as he tossed him away carelessly and took out his own trident tipped staff.

Law rolled like he'd learned after the first few tosses (and he noted absently that the skill was the only reason he survived Corazon tossing him out of so many windows) before he immediately launched himself back at the feline as he attacked him with all he had. Despite his MUCH smaller size, he actually managed to make the Duke move around from the ferocity of his attack and the months of training showed.

Still, the giant cat was toying with him and his smug grin enraged Law. He had been SO CLOSE to being even in terms of physical strength with the Dukes and now he was less than a fly. A CITIZEN could probably defeat him easily.

The trident sliced cleanly through his staff and Law was forced to pull back. He'd need to fix it later, but for now he just threw the pieces aside as he dodged the trident by a hair and he drew his sword, reforming the pieces into a whole as he ducked under a swipe and spun around to avoid a
stab. Grabbing the hilt mid-spin, he allowed the momentum to unsheathe the blade for him so that he could focus on blocking the next slice. As the sheath flew off into the trees, their blades met with a shower of sparks, Haki the only thing saving his sword from the staff’s fate and Nekomamushi looked impressed.

"You're further along than I expected." The Mink told him as he grinned widely. "I'll have to test your companions as well, but if they're anywhere near your level, they'll fit right in at the Academy."

"Thank you, Nekomamushi-sama." He said tiredly. Then a bit of irritation leaked through as he said, "One of these days I'll make you stop calling me spotted."

The Duke just licked him in response and Law hurried away to hide behind Corazon's legs.

The Mink laughed as he twirled his trident. He pointed it at Penguin. "You. Let's go, Birdie."

Penguin went pale before he obediently ran to meet him with his own staff.

"You know, he might actually call you spotted because of your hat." Corazon said with a smile as he crouched down, putting a heavy hand on Law's head as they watched Penguin evade every single attack like his legs were made of springs.

"No, it's his patches." Baki denied. "We think they're cute. You humans don't have much mink, the least you could do is have patterns to identify you."

Law growled. "Vitiligo is not cute, don't romanticize terminal illnesses."

"It's not terminal anymore." Kid replied as he rubbed a patch right under Law's jaw.

Law smacked his hand away, glaring as the boy snickered.

"I GOT A HIT!" Penguin shouted happily as he bounced around, dodging every strike effortlessly as he threw his hands in the air in celebration. "Like zero power, but still a hit! Your fur is so soft, can I pet you?!"

"BRAT!" The Mink shouted in frustrated amusement. "You can PET me when you can knock me back with one punch!"

Oh that was a good motivator for the boy. The spark of determination immediately flared to life in his eyes and he threw himself back into the fight with vigor.

Once they'd all been tested, the Duke looked impressed. "You've all got potential. But before we can teach you anything, you must swear an oath to use what you are taught to protect us and Zunisha-sama from anyone meaning harm. Let's begin."

Law sat this one out since he'd already given the oath and he used the time to mend his staff.

Sengoku sat on one side of him, Baki and Momo on the other, all three watching the group curiously, none of them having seen the oath being given before.

There were so many holes in the wood. He wondered if he could fill the porous material with steel to harden it without taking away the simple design. It would allow him to use Haki to protect it like his sword and he'd be able to channel Electro through it. He giggled quietly to himself as he realized all the advantages to it and wondered how he'd never thought of it before.

"What are you laughing about over there?" Nekomamushi demanded warily as the others reeled from the backlash of the oath.
He immediately stopped and got to his feet. "Nothing. You're hearing things." He held out his staff, hands at each end. "Test this for me."

The Mink was suddenly right in front of him and the flat of the trident blade slammed into it.

Law was driven to his knees, but it held. "Thanks." When he pulled away, Law collapsed it and returned it to its hiding place. Then he looked up at the feline and waited.

"Inu-baka's messenger said that all you had left to do was figure out schooling, so we're done." The Duke said as he replaced his trident. "Tomorrow at six, boys." He told the children and with a burst of air from the force of his jump, he was gone.

"Do you have to fight him EVERY time you meet?" Penguin asked Law wearily.

"Yes." He replied flippantly. Then he growled. "Fucking porcupette I'll show him fucking spines..." He went to find his sword's sheath.

"What the hell's a porcupette?" Kid asked in confusion.

Law caught his sheath as Carrot threw it to him and he nodded to her in thanks before he finally put away his blade.

"It's a baby porcupine." Penguin said when Law made no move to answer.

Predictably, Kid started laughing.

Growling, Law threw his sword to Penguin so he could tackle Kid and they began trading blows as they rolled around on the ground.

At one point, Kid managed to gasp out, "Actually, since he called you spotted, that means they can see your skin." He grunted as Law's fist made contact with his face, but nailed him back. "So he's calling you a SPINELESS baby porcupine!"

Law blocked the next blow and gaped at him in shock.

Corazon reached out and snagged Law before he could get far, holding him up by one arm.

"Let me go! I'm gonna pull that bastard's tail!" Law shouted furiously as he struggled to get free from his father's hold. "Spineless! I'll show you fucking spineless!"

"Ah, teenagers." Momo sighed fondly. "So eager to fight."

"I say let him." Baki said cheerfully. "Get it out of his system."

"It's our first day on Zou, Law-chan, can you at least wait until we're settled in to antagonize the nobles?" Corazon asked in amusement as he ignored the boy's struggles.

"He started it!" Law said hotly before he blushed in mortification and stopped struggling. Jesus Christ he was being so childish! "Fine! But next time I see him, I'm gonna pull his tail!"

"He'll flatten you!" Penguin exclaimed worriedly.

Law glowered in the direction the Duke had gone. "It'll be WORTH it." He turned when he heard Carrot giggle and shook his fist as he yelled, "I'll pull your tail too, Carrot!"

"You can try!" She sang cheerfully and the others all tensed, having not realized she was there.
"I don't know about you lot, but I'm beat!" Baki laughed. "And little Maki-chan needs her beauty sleep!"

"So do I," Momo began as she flicked her hair over her shoulder only for Baki to cut in.

"But you're already beautiful." He protested, causing her to giggle in surprise.

"Bleagh." Law made a face at their flirting.

"Oh hush." Momo laughed as she batted at Baki playfully before she continued, "We'll see you in the morning for breakfast, I hope? Or dinner, if you boys decide to start your new schedule." She mused thoughtfully.

"Yes ma'am." They said obediently while Law just nodded, swinging his legs idly since he was still suspended.

"Oh." He said suddenly. "She likes to wake up at three in the morning and yell until you get her water." He warned. "But she won't drink it if it's already by the bed. It has to be fresh."

Momo smiled. "Good to know. Goodnight, everyone."

They vanished into the darkness.
Chapter 32

"So Ojii-san, how long can you stay?" Kid asked as they headed back to Kurau at a more sedate pace.

"A Marine ship will arrive within the month." He replied as he picked up Kid and Killer, Corazon picking up Penguin as the boys started to flag. "I'll leave then."

"You should stalk Garp and visit before him so that we can be prepared." Law said.

"That's no fun." Corazon protested and got glares from all four boys.

"Knowing him, he'll drop by soon after I leave." The Admiral chuckled.

Law looked at Penguin. "Life jackets."

"He wouldn't!" Kid exclaimed in horror.

"Do you know how to dive?" Law asked them.

"Not from a height like this!"

"He won't throw you off Zunisha-sama." Corazon said calmly.

Law signed to Penguin, 'Life Jacket'

He nodded solemnly.

Catching it, Kid told Killer, "If he does, I hit first. You need to be conscious enough to swim us back to the docks."

Though he obviously didn't like it, Killer nodded.

"He won't throw you off the elephant." Sengoku said in exasperation.

"Of course not, Ojii-san/Hiijiji-san." They said placatingly.

Sighing, he let it go.

At the outskirts of the city, Sengoku led them to one of the newer houses. Law looked around curiously as they entered, finding it was fully furnished but looked a bit bare with no decorations.

"They gave us a freaking house?" Kid asked in shock as he also looked around the spacious living room. There were two couches on either side of a coffee table and two armchairs on the last two. There were shelves for books and small tables in each corner for flowers or statues. The whole room was done in light neutral colors except for the tables and the floor which were dark oak. It looked pretty impressive.

"You'll have earned it by year's end." Sengoku replied with a smile. "Why don't we show them their rooms, Roci?"

Corazon nodded and they headed upstairs where they found four doors. "Two to a room," He told them as they opened the doors right beside each other baring rooms slightly smaller than the living room below. "Law-chan, Penguin, this will be yours. Bathroom's right across the hall to the left."
Two beds, two dressers, and one giant window above the desk between them. It was very large and Law was already making plans for a bookshelf.

When he was set down, Penguin immediately ran over to the window and shoved it open. He looked to the right and waved. "Hey there, neighbor!"

When the boy giggled at no audible response, Law quickly ran over to see what Killer was doing, but the boy was already lowering his hand from whatever it was.

'I'm watching you' Law signaled to the boy with a glare.

Smiling in amusement, Killer gave a flippant wave and retreated into the house.

That smug bastard! Just because Law liked him—

Oh god. By the time they were of age, Killer would fit all the requirements!

"Rule one has been revised." Law said to Penguin as the boy shut the window. "I must VERBALLY approve prospective partners."

Penguin gave him a confused smile. "Okay? What brought that—" He gasped in realization, clapping his hands together in delight. "Oh! Do you think he's—"

"We're not talking about this!" Law cut him off angrily.

The boy's excitement wasn't dimmed. "But we can still hold hands and stuff, right?"

Regretting opening his stupid mouth, Law reluctantly nodded.

"Wait." Corazon protested, looking between them in confusion. "Would you be my grandson or my son-in-law?"

"Yes!" Penguin laughed.

Law shoved the younger boy towards the door. "Go take a bath. You are his grandson until I have sufficient proof that Killer treats you well enough to shift it to son-in-law. But we still have six years before he even qualifies so FORGET IT!" Then just before the door to the bathroom shut, he added, "A third clause has been added! Both parties must be of age! That means EIGHTEEN!"

The door shut on Penguin's giggles and Law fumed silently for a moment.

Corazon picked him up and held him against his chest. "Don't think about it too much. Like you said, that's years away."

"He's so little…" Law mumbled into his shoulder, muscles going lax as a large hand rubbed his neck and shoulders. Then he had a sudden thought and tensed back up. "Oh no! Are the hormones making me territorial?" He asked in horror causing the man to burst into laughter. He blushed and hit him. "IT'S NOT FUNNY! This isn't right!"

"Oh calm down, buddy, you're overreacting." Corazon chuckled. "You're only being a big brother."

Comforted but still worried, Law let his head fall against his chest. "God, this is just the beginning…I'll have to keep a close eye on my hormone levels…if I ever yell at you, don't take it personal, okay? I love you."
Corazon gasped in shock before he began showering his face with kisses.

Laughing, Law struggled to get away. "S-stop it! That tickles!"

The man pulled back to grin at him with delight. "Law-chan is ticklish?"

Law's eyes widened. "No!" But a finger poked at his belly and his traitorous mouth let out a squeak.

The next few minutes were a blur of laughter and demands for him to stop. Thankfully the man started to laugh so hard he couldn't keep it up and Law didn't have to resort to begging.

Just as they were calming down, Kid and Killer stuck their heads in as Sengoku asked, "What's with all the noise in here?"

Law clapped his hands to Corazon's mouth as he said quickly, "Nothing!"

He should've expected it. He should've known the guy didn't need to speak to get the message across. But he didn't and so the fingers brushing his side had him crumpling immediately with helpless laughter.

It all went downhill from there as Kid immediately pounced on this new weakness. But an accidental graze against the boy's side gave Law the knowledge he needed to turn the situation to his advantage. Now Kid was the one all but shrieking with laughter and Law felt a thrill as he got the boy to beg him to stop.

Kid kicked him as he panted for breath. "You ASSHOLE!"

"Payback's a bitch." Law replied with a breathless chuckle.

"You DID walk right into it, Kiddo." Sengoku said in amusement.

"I didn't know you were ticklish." Killer mused with a smirk.

The 'oh shit' look Kid got at that had Law giggling again.

"Bath's free!" Penguin chirped as he headed past the duo in the doorway for where he'd left his bag on his bed, clad in nothing but a towel.

"Dibs!" Kid shouted, out of the bed in a flash and dragging his blushing First Mate out of the room with him. A moment later, the bathroom door slammed shut.

Killer was damn lucky his captain was so perceptive or Law would have shown him first-hand what Electro did to normal humans. Huffing, he released the electricity he'd been gathering.

Corazon rubbed the boy's head affectionately as he got up. "I'll see you boys in the morning. Don't break anything."

"Night!" Both called to them and a moment later, they were alone.

Sliding off his bed, Law walked over to Penguin's and began toweling the boy's hair dry for him. "Do we have anything steel in our bags?"

"I've got a few rods." He replied, sitting still as Law combed his fingers through his hair. "I need a haircut."

"I don't know." Law said with a smile. "I think you'd look pretty badass with braids."
Penguin giggled as the other began pulling his shoulder-length hair into a loose braid. "You just wanna braid my hair. Okay, I'll grow it out."

"Good boy." He said and Penguin laughed, swiping at him. After a moment, Law sobered. "If I ever told you to do something irrational, you'd protest, right?"

Penguin looked at him in confusion. "Well, it depends on the order but if you, like, ordered me to stop talking to Killer, yeah. I'd protest a lot. Then do it behind your back anyway."

Smiling, Law pulled him into a hug. "Good. Cuz I'll probably be irrational a lot."

"That's okay." Penguin said as he snuggled into his arms. "You'll never be as bad as Nami-san."

That dissipated the last of the tension and both giggled. Law nuzzled his damp hair and said, "You don't even know. She got so much worse…"

Penguin was quiet for a moment and Law knew what he'd ask before he said it. "How long…?"

"Too long. Leave it at that." He said quietly, hugging him tighter.

Obediently, Penguin dropped it and they fell into a comfortable silence.

Then Kid suddenly called from the hall, "DONE!"

Pulling away, Law kissed Penguin's forehead before heading into the bathroom for his own shower.
They spent the night putting their things away and rearranging their rooms as quietly as possible. Then they all congregated in Killer and Kid's room to play cards and work on an idea to build a balcony between their windows. They'd need permission from one of the Dukes before actually building, but that was long way off.

After putting in his two cents (he just wanted a few potted plants and to start a garden) he got to work combining the steel bars with his bo staff. It was slow going since his strength wasn't at its best, but he was satisfied with his progress. With minimal breaks, he figured he would finish by morning.

During one of these breaks five hours in, Killer asked, "What are you doing, Law-san?"

"Filling the holes in the cellular structure of this staff with the metal in order to strengthen it and allow me to better integrate it into my fighting style." He replied a bit absently, eyes riveted on the staff as he examined his work to try and spot any holes or broken bonds fusing into frankencompounds. Breaking through the bonds instead of actually slicing the metal was difficult but would be infinitely easier than the alternative.

"Why? It's just a stupid stick of wood." Kid scoffed. "When it breaks you can just get another."

"Take care of your weapons and they'll take care of you." He replied. But his staff wouldn't just be a weapon. It'd be his fighting companion in non-lethal confrontations. He needed to trust it in battle to protect him and eventually it would trust him to look after it too.

One day he would hold it and it would tell him its name. For now he poured his energy, his Haki, and his very being into it as he forged it into a proper companion. When he sliced his finger on the steel bar's now-jagged edge, he barely paid it any mind, simply mixing the blood in as well.

The trio left him to it and he was so intent on his task, he didn't notice when the adults woke up and checked on the kids. He was nearly done, he just needed to fill a few more centimeters.

After a few minutes of futile name calling, Sengoku sat in front of him and watched him work curiously. He noticed that something about the staff looked different, but he couldn't place it. When he asked the other boys what Law was doing, they just said he was making it better.

He'd never noticed the light green the boy's eyes were. The pupils were almost nonexistent and he assumed it had to do with his powers since they were in the little bubble.

"Still nothing?" Corazon asked as he walked over with Law's shoes. Kneeling beside him, he put them on the boy unnoticed and wondered if he should be concerned.

Sengoku grunted. "Nothing. If he weren't blinking and I couldn't feel his Haki fluctuating, I'd be worried."

"He hasn't moved?"

"Not an inch."

For five minutes, they watched the boy with only the occasional blink telling them he was even
conscious. Then suddenly his pupils expanded nearly his entire iris before returning to a normal size and his room vanished like a bubble popping.

"Ready to get breakfast, Law-chan?" Corazon asked and both adults blinked when he jerked back in alarm, looking at them with wide eyes.

"Fucking Marines…” Law muttered before he collapsed his staff and tucked it away. "Yeah, I just need to get my—oh." He looked at his shoes in surprise before looking at them suspiciously. "How long have you been sitting there?"

"Ten minutes." Sengoku replied.

"Five." Corazon said cheerfully. "So what were you doing?"

He immediately brightened and took his staff back out, holding it up proudly. "I made it better.” Curiously, Corazon picked it up to look it over and immediately hit the ground.

Law furrowed his brow in confusion. "What are you doing?"

"Pick it up! Pick it up!" The man said quickly and when Law did, he shook out his red hands. "That's heavy…”

"What? There's only about three grams added to its original weight." Law protested.

"Try it, Tou-san!" Corazon huffed.

Skeptical, the man accepted it and he too hit the ground.

Law got angry and snatched it back. "You don't have to be jerks about it!"

"Law-chan, look at my hands and tell me we're joking." His father said seriously, holding them up for Law to examine.

Glaring at him, Law took one and blinked at the marks. Those would bruise. "I don't understand.” He created a room and healed him before doing the same for his Grandfather. "I just patched up the porous nature of the wood with steel."

"Why?" Sengoku asked in confusion.

"To make it stronger, more durable, first and foremost." He replied. "But also to enable me to protect it with Haki and channel Electro through it.” He twirled it around and smiled at how light it still felt. "This will be my main partner in battles and I need to be able to trust it to protect me."

"Well, it seems determined that only you can wield it, so I'd say it's off to a good start." Sengoku chuckled.

"Are we leaving or what?!" Kid shouted from downstairs.

A glint appeared in Law's eyes and he ran past the adults and out the door. "Hey Kid-ya! Catch!"

"Law-chan!" Corazon exclaimed in shock as they heard a crash and hurried downstairs.

Law was laughing his ass off as Kid struggled under the weight, looking confused and furious. The other two were trying to help, but it was useless.

"Our first victory!" Law crowed in delight as he scooped the staff up and hugged it.
"What the fuck?!" Kid gasped out, hand to his heaving chest. "I thought you just patched it up!"

"I did! But something happened!" Law said with a grin as he created a room anchored to his hand and used it to heal Kid's chest. "It's a MYSTERY." He said in wonder.

The redhead huffed as he brushed off his shirt. "Well next time keep your 'mystery' to yourself, asshole."

Rolling his eyes, Law put his staff away and grabbed Penguin's hand. "Let's go, I'm starving!" He all but dragged the boy out the door.

"Hey, wait up!" Kid exclaimed as he ran to catch up, snagging Killer's hand to drag him along. The adults followed at a more sedate pace.

~~~rp~~~

Despite Law pulling the same trick on Baki, breakfast passed without incident and they visited for about an hour. Law played with Maki as the adults chatted about stuff Law didn't care about and the other kids played cards.

But then it was time for bed and they reluctantly returned to the house. They said goodbye to Corazon at the street leading to the Right Flank Forest and Law wondered how they were supposed to get used to being a family when they were up at different hours of the day.

It was too late to change it and Law wouldn't be allowed in the day class anyway.

Getting ready for bed, Law put his staff beneath his pillow for easy reach and Penguin drew the curtains shut, plunging the room into darkness. But after a few moments, Law adjusted it so that a beam of light enveloped his bed, smiling as he stretched out contently in the warmth.

But he couldn't fall asleep. Tossing and turning, he stripped down to his boxers but couldn't get completely comfortable. He felt like something was missing.

For twenty minutes he stared up at the ceiling, exhausted but unable to sleep. Had he not worn himself out enough?

Across the room, Penguin let out an exasperated sigh and Law jerked when he climbed into his bed. "Can't sleep." The boy muttered sleepily before he curled up against him and fell asleep immediately despite the sun.

The weight on his chest seemed to be just what he needed because Law slipped under only a few seconds later.

When Sengoku checked on them a few hours later, he chuckled at the sight of both curled up together on one bed, Kid and Killer in a similar position in the next room. Seemed it'd been a bit too much to expect them to immediately sleep in separate beds.

He headed back downstairs to fill out the paperwork that had been delivered by News Coos.
Reviewer: as I've explained in previous author's notes, the Heart Pirates that wanted Bepo's mink were not the original crew, that's why Law accepted Penguin back so easily.

As for Law saying he was going to the White City, the island has been destroyed along with its people. He was saying that he was going to die.

Thanks for the review!
"WAKE UP!"

Leaping up like a scalded cat, his staff was arcing towards the source of the yell before his mind realized it was Kid. The boy blocked it with his own hastily drawn staff and grunted as the force sent him skidding back. Then he scoffed and shoved him away.

"Well, looks like it gives a bit more force to your swings, but nothing too outrageous." He replaced his weapon. "Let's go, breakfast is almost ready.

Covering a yawn, he nodded and went to go get dressed, chilled now that the sun had begun to set.

Breakfast (dinner) was a quiet affair with Law dozing off in his food and Kid yawning every five seconds, head propped on his hand as he ate hungrily but absently. Penguin poked Law whenever he started to tilt over and Killer chatted with Corazon about his new job training the young Musketeers in human combat.

But then the bickering started and it was like a switch had been flipped. From the amount of food they were eating to the way they braided their respective crewmates' hair in preparation for battle, the arguing was quick to grow in volume until Law was lured away by Penguin in order to get it done. Stealing glares at each other, the two captains got to work and when they finished they reluctantly admitted that each braid was effective.

Law's were just more elaborate.

"Dude, teach me that." Kid demanded as he looked at Penguin's hair.

"Thought knowing how to tie braids was 'girly'." He teased.

"Everything you do is girly, you wimp."

"Who're you calling a wimp, shorty?" Law demanded angrily.

"Who you callin' short, you midget porcupette!"

Growling, Law made to tackle him but was blocked by Penguin. "Maki-chan wants to play with you!" He said quickly and the fight was immediately derailed as he went to his sister.

Too soon they had to head out to Whale Forest on their own.

"I like this idea already." Penguin said cheerfully as they followed Law down the dark path. The stars illuminated the woods brightly where there were gaps in the foliage and there were fireflies blinking in and out of existence. The only sound besides their footsteps were the sounds of insects.

"It's so beautiful here at night."

"Girl." Kid huffed.

"Just because you're insecure in your masculinity—" Penguin began to huff only for Kid to cut him off.
"What did you say?! I'm not insecure!" Kid exclaimed furiously.

"Then what's with your obsession about gender stereotypes?"

"Shut up!"

Penguin held up his hands placatingly. "Look, it's nothing to be ashamed of. I've noticed it a lot in you humans, you put so much stock in gender roles that when the lines society created start to overlap—"

"You're calling me an asshole now?" Kid demanded in growing temper.

"Why'd you feel the need to make fun of me just for saying I like the night here?" Penguin asked calmly.

Kid made to retort, but nothing came out.

Penguin seemed satisfied by this response and they fell silent as they neared the Guardian's Residential District.

"Ah, there you are!" Nekomamushi boomed as he leapt into their path. "Right on time!"

"Hey Nekomamushi-sama, wanna see my new bo staff?" Law asked with a grin as he took it out.

"Sencho—"

"—don't—"

"—seriously—"

Law tossed it to the Mink before they could stop him and he dropped like all the others. As the Mink struggled under the weight like a pinned bug, Law took his time picking it up. "Isn't it neat? It won't let anyone else pick it up."

"So you throw it at him?!" Wanda demanded incredulously as Nekomamushi laughed. "You could have broken something!"

Law smiled. That would have been nice.

"Time for school, brats!" The Mink all but cackled as he scooped them all up. "First lesson—how to land in a roll!"

He threw them in the direction of the Academy. Law knew without hearing their curses that his brothers blamed him for that, but soon they would learn it was just how the Duke was.

"What the fuck Trafalgar, we TOLD you—"

That was not this day. Luckily, his unwarranted chastisement was interrupted by Pedro.

"If you have breath to talk, you can fight." Then the blond jaguar Mink then attacked them and their training began.

~rp~

Penguin was right, Zou was beautiful at night. The Residential District was active and glowing brightly as the nocturnal groups went about their lives as if it were day. 'School' ended at three so they headed out to a nearby tavern with their classmates to hang out. It served both children and
adults and the building was boisterous and crowded as they shared sodas with the kids. They listened to stories about what they had been in the future that was probably only fifty percent made-up. And it was nice that they remembered just as much as the others did—enough to remember Law really did care, but not enough to recall anything embarrassing about his stay on Zou.

They were kids, but they were just enough NOT-kid to get along with the quartet. It definitely helped that some were fans of the Kid pirates and they stoked Kid's ego enough to keep him happy.

At length, Law and Killer retreated to a relatively isolated table while their partners continued to socialize. They were joined by Willow, an antelope Mink, and Jacob, a jackal Mink. Jacob was Killer's age, a year younger than Law while Willow was a year older and as they started talking about training schedules on the weekends, both humans began to relax. Business was less grating to talk about than personal things. They were not social creatures. Being out with so many people was EXHAUSTING, but their little bubble was calm in a storm.

Unfortunately the peace didn't last long enough. Willow leaned forward with a familiar look on her face that Law felt he was not rested enough to deal with at the moment. "So Law-kun…I hear you're going through your adulting phase…and I'd like to offer my aid."

Jesus Christ, not another one. He put his hand on her wrist and looked into her eyes as the other two coughed, shocked into choking on their drinks from the bold question. "I appreciate the offer, Willow-ya, I really do. I have no doubt you'd be the perfect partner to help ease the way, however —" He tightened his grip when her face crumpled slightly so that she couldn't leave. "—I am unable to experience any sort of sexual desire. Do not take it as a blow to your ego—you are remarkably beautiful." Seeing she was looking better, he sealed it by reaching up to stroke her cheek with his free hand, making her blush and look down. "It's a medical condition. You will find more satisfaction with another partner."

"You are so kind to me!" She exclaimed emotionally before she rubbed their cheeks together. "Do you mind if I spread the word to head off any broken hearts?"

So dramatic. "Please do, Willow-ya. Thank you." He told her as he picked his drink back up.

"Call me –chan, please?" She pleaded.

"The only girl I will ever show such affection to is my baby sister." He told her. And Suki and Yuki, but they'd likely never meet. "However, I will address you by your first name if you would prefer."

Looking happy, she nodded quickly.

"As you wish, Windy-ya."

She all but swooned and beat a hasty retreat. Law didn't watch her go, already done with the night. Honestly, he was barely a teen. Why was she looking to do such things so young anyway?

"Dude." Jacob said with wide eyes.

He looked at him. "What?"

"You gay or somethin'? Who'd turn down an offer like that?" The boy asked in a hushed whisper, leaning forward so that they weren't overheard.

"My sexual orientation has no effect on my nonexistent libido." Law said calmly. "Accepting her
"What do you mean? You, like, really don't like anyone?" The boy asked in wonder. "So then you're-like, safe?"

"Safe?" He asked in confusion.

"Yeah, you won't steal all the ladies?" He clarified.

Infantile. "No, I won't steal any women."

Laughing in relief, the boy left, probably to also spread the word.

Scoffing, Law drank his soda. "What's it like in your sex-driven world, Killer? It must be so exhausting."

"It's got its perks." He replied before going slightly green. "Ugh, don't talk about this."

Setting his cup down, Law linked his fingers and rested his chin on them, elbows on the wooden tabletop as he smirked at him. "It is my duty as a doctor to ensure you are properly informed about the complexities of sex—"

They boy definitely looked sick now. "Seriously, don't. I'm informed!"

Humming, he decided he'd leave some carefully placed pamphlets around the house for them anyway but for now, he dropped it. "As my little brother, there are some rules you should be aware of for your safety and the safety of others."

Killer looked at him warily. "…rules?"

"No sex until you're eighteen." He replied immediately and the boy buried his face in his hands. "If I find out you have had relations with anyone before then, I don't care who they are. I will kill them. If it is with Penguin, you will never see him again. Am I understood?"

"He's like six!" He exclaimed in horror.

"Which is why I would castrate you before taking our leave," He replied calmly. He really didn't think the warning was necessary, but it had to be said. "He is my baby and until you prove yourself worthy of him, you will not have my approval. Without that approval, Penguin will go no farther than kissing."

Now the boy was as red as Kid's hair and it both amused and relieved Law that he was reacting more intensely to the thought of kissing than sex. "I wouldn't."

"You will soon be entering puberty yourself." Law said. "I'll be keeping a very close eye on you, so I suggest you watch yourself. Am I understood?"

"Yes."

That ended those talks. He went on to talk about normal rules that went along with sharing a space—mainly personal space, private property, privacy rights, code words to use in public in case something personal cropped up…the usual.

"These are all valid points and should be discussed in a family meeting." Killer told him.

That taken care of, they relaxed into more idle chatter and began throwing around more ideas about the balcony. Depending on how big they made it, they could add some bird feeders and the
Mangrove duo wanted an awning, but Law wanted it open so he could sunbathe. He burned easy, but the warmth made it worth it.

"Boys?"

They looked up and were surprised to see Corazon in the doorway, looking around the crowded building for them.

"OJIIMI-SAAAANN!" Penguin cried in delight as he tackled the man out of the door.

Smiling, they headed over to the door where they met Kid and waved goodbye to the kids. Corazon was picking himself up, holding the boy up with one arm. "You boys have fun today?"

Kid immediately launched into a play-by-play of their training with the Minks as they began making their ways home. Inevitably Law had to interject and they started to bicker over the details.

Chapter End Notes

Man, this took forever to get out. What's it been, two weeks? Sorry everyone. I've been in a bit of a writing funk and since most of my editing happens while typing it up (believe me, the paper version sort of sucks) It means that I couldn't just type it up word for word. But, hopefully the funk is gone and I'll be doing this every night or so again.

A couple of questions were asked, so let's get on that.

Why isn't Law allowed in the Day Class? That's a matter of how possessive the Dukes are of their soldiers. Their feud makes them want to completely separate themselves from the other to the point they make sure they're never up at the same time. Some people (Carrot, Wanda, Tristan) have to go between the Dukes to keep them both properly informed and some soldiers would be up standing guard at all hours, but Nekomamushi would never share Law if he could help it.

Law's bo staff…He chose it because it's easy to hide and it will be his only weapon when Garp gets hold of them again, but it won't be his only weapon. He'll have a sword for lethal fights and use the staff when he just wants to knock heads, but he won't have Kikoku back unless he's extremely lucky so he's just making do.

Thank you for the reviews and favorites!
"You turned down WINDY?!!" Kid's exclamation as he ran inside told Law he'd heard about the interaction. But did he have to talk about it so publicly? Killer was right, they needed to have a family meeting.

"Turned who down for what?" Corazon asked curiously from across Law. They were working on a puzzle that they'd found in a second-hand shop and he'd cajoled Law into helping when it became obvious the missing pieces made it too hard to do alone. Penguin was walking in after Kid but Killer sat beside Sengoku reading the cartoons from the man's paper as said man finished some last-minute paperwork. Penguin and Kid had decided to stay later at the tavern while Law and Killer had opted for time at home.

Kid jumped up to land beside Law on the couch. "Willow Windy. She wanted to have sex with him." He replied bluntly, causing Corazon to choke slightly on air. "She's really pretty. I don't give a shit about that kinda stuff right now, but all the older kids say she's a hot commodity—and he turned her down!"

"Good." Sengoku said as he signed another paper, putting it on a stack before binding them carefully together. "He's far too young for something like that."

"How old was this girl?" Corazon asked, still shocked.

"A year older than me." Law replied a bit absently as he successfully connected three clusters with a single piece. He rocked at this puzzle. "She took the rejection well."

"Where'd you hear about it?" Killer asked his captain curiously.

"If you two weren't such antisocial freaks—"

"Don't call them that." Corazon protested.

"—weirdos," He corrected dutifully. "Then you'd have heard 'em all talkin' about it. They think you're a goddamn saint or something—"

"—sweet fluffy homicidal puppy was a favorite." Penguin chimed in with a grin and Kid reached up to rub Law's fluffy hat roughly.

Law smacked the hand away.

"Accurate." Penguin giggled when Law flicked him off.

"—you got 'em all feelin' sorry for you or something. Is it true? You can't get it up?" Kid asked crudely causing both Corazon and Penguin to choke and go red.

"Hormone levels indicate that I should already be experiencing sexual urges. I feel nothing." Law replied boredly. "I have yet to discover an actual reason for the lack of such bodily functions as 'getting it up' but am not overly concerned about it."

"Maybe you're brain damaged."

"That's not nice." Penguin huffed. "He's only had three concussions major enough to alter his personality."
Everyone looked up from their tasks at that and turned to look at Law.

"Don't do that. It's creepy." Law said. "And it's four, not three."

"The fuck? Your brain was actually damaged?" Kid demanded in horror.

"How?" Killer demanded.

He raised a brow. "How was I damaged or how has it affected me?"

"Both." Sengoku said as he set his pen down to focus fully on him.

Leaning back against the couch, Law looked at the ceiling as he recalled the injuries. "First…was when I was four, I believe. I fell off the bed’s bars when I was climbing over them and the impact somehow made the retention of memories…stronger? I can't forget anything. Oh, it'll get buried and take me a few minutes sometimes, but I can remember all the way to my first steps." He shrugged in disinterest and went back to the puzzle. "On the minus side, I will never forget the horrors of potty training."

Kid made a disgusted face. "Gross."

Law ignored him. "Second time was when I was seven. The river flooded and we were all blindsided by it. My parents were quick enough to get Lamy, but Mom's hand slipped from mine because of the mud we'd been playing in." He swept his hand to the side. "I was gone. It ran into the cemetery a few miles down and I bashed my head on a tombstone before Oraka-ya fished me out. She was the groundskeeper and heard the water. This scar is because she caught me with her gardening hoe." He showed them the scar that stretched from his elbow to the inside of his wrist.

"Jesus Christ, when'd that get there?" Kid asked in shock as he grabbed Law's wrist.

"My pale skin acted as camouflage." He replied. "Now that it's darkening, my scars will become more prominent. He let him trace the scar as he continued on to the effects. "That one affected my sense of smell and my hearing. It's why I can't stand umeboshi—the vinegar is too much for me."

They all took that in for a moment. Then Killer asked, "The next one?"

"Ten. Happened while escaping the guards on the other side of the barricade." He replied. "I snuck onto a pirate ship while they were fighting the Marines and ended up getting clipped by a cannonball below deck. That was a crazy day." He rubbed his head at the phantom pain. "They escaped into the Calm Belt. Idiots would've made it across if not for the racket they were making. Seaking missed me by a hair as it bit through the vessel and—it's blurry. Everything was all garbled because of the concussion and all I really remember is the water was so cold. Then Penguin was in my face."

"My uncle went missing again." Penguin told them. "So we were out looking for him and he's got these patches of grey on his chest, kinda like Sencho's hat, so I thought it was him, but found a human kid bleeding all over the place. I called for help and we got him back to our house and did what we could. We didn't think he'd make it cuz he slept for almost seven days."

Corazon made a pained noise at that.

"That's when the periods of mild catatonia began." Law continued on to the effects. "I'm not entirely sure why it only happens with depression, but we've learned to catch it before it really sets in…most of the time." He shrugged. "Fourth time was here while I was waiting for a ride back to the North Blue. We were doing field exercises in the Whale Forest—which we do around summer since that's the absolute worst time to keep your brain functioning in the heat…ugh, it's horrible."
He shook his head. He shouldn't complain. At least he didn't have fur. "We were ambushed by invaders during one of the sessions. None of us were good at seeing with our ears yet and the forest is very loud, so we didn't realize it wasn't part of the drill until Maggie-ya screamed and went down. We smelled blood and I was the first one that got to her. As the others fought off the dozen or so enemies, I tried to stabilize her long enough for the healer to arrive. We almost lost her, she'd been impaled, but I was able to patch up the pierced organs before they failed—I always carry spare needles and thread. Not sanitary, but infections can be fought."

"Better than her being dead." Penguin hummed.

Law nodded, connecting another section to the blob that was coming together. "As his comrades were killed by the students and teachers, one of the pirates attacked me. I couldn't defend myself, if I got distracted Maggie-ya would be dead. Luckily Tristan-ya arrived just as I was hit and was able to take over. She told me that Pedro had been the one to take down my assailant and carried me to the hospital where I slept for two weeks. The injuries had happened in too close a time-frame for me to escape unscathed. The older wound was worsened and caused periods of rage following the catatonia. That's mostly gone now, but the effects of number four still afflict me."

"What did it do?" Penguin asked anxiously.

"Nothing I haven't been able to compensate for." He reassured him. "My balance is just fucking terrible."

"WHAAAT?!" The other two kids and Corazon cried out in shock.

Law looked at them in amusement. "You haven't noticed? I'm always locking my knees, sitting down, or leaning against something. Walking's easier now, at least."

"You are very good at hiding it." Penguin defended.

Law smiled, pleased.

"Geeze, think you know a guy…" Kid muttered. "And none of those coulda caused your ED?"

"Oi, it's not ED." Law said in annoyance. "And no, none of the areas affected are linked to the areas responsible for such functions. The only things that could prevent even the most basic erections are spinal damage or the hindrance of blood flow. There is no sign of either."

"You'll be the most boring adult." Kid huffed. "Remind me not to invite you to any of my parties."

"I wouldn't go to your parties if you paid me." Law scoffed in derision.

"That's because you're boring as fuck. Oh, wait—"

"Haha, did you think of that all by yourself?" Law taunted.

"Spineless porcupette!" Kid growled.

"Useless midget!" He shot back furiously.

Kid tackled him and the puzzle was ruined as they crashed into the table before the floor. No one paid attention to the puzzle, watching them wrestle.

"You really can't tell." Killer mused.
They nodded in agreement but after a few more minutes, returned to what they'd been doing before Kid had brought it up.
Chapter 36

True to Kid's word, Law noticed a distinct change in the way the other kids treated him. The girls were much more openly affectionate with him while the guys seemed to lose some sort of tension he hadn't noticed. They were much more at ease around him and more willing to be friendly.

Seriously, they'd all considered him a threat? He'd never once gave a sign of interest in the girls! It was nice, really, not having to worry about any drama. And now that he was 'neutral', he was let in on conversations as boys talked about girls they liked and vice versa. He was roped into sending along messages for the couples that wanted to keep their budding relationships quiet and though he steadfastly maintained that he wasn't a delivery boy, he didn't really mind.

It made his afterschool life interesting and now that they knew he didn't have anything to add on those fronts, they didn't try to force him to participate in 'guy' or 'girl' talks. Killer didn't have it so easy, but sometimes Law deigned to rescue him and drag him along to document the wildlife. They would work in silence and recharge after a day of being social.

After a few talks about fashion and pop culture that went over his head, the girls gave him magazines to keep him informed. They didn't make much sense to him fashion-wise—yeah, some colors looked better with other colors, but why couldn't someone wear two shades of the same color if there was a stark enough contrast? He gave that up as a lost cause, but some of the articles were interesting.

They had far more information about relationships and sex than he'd managed to pick up and he realized there was more to such acts than he'd thought. The knowledge irritated him because he'd been twenty seven or so when he'd died. He could've known so much more if he hadn't avoided such publications.

So he made a point of subscribing to his own magazines and though he did give the fashion and celebrity pages a passing glance, he was more in it for the tips. And when he began talking to the girls about what he'd learned, they offered more information from previous issues. It sucked him in like a black hole, his curiosity piqued, and he became 'one of the girls' so gradually he didn't realize until a few weeks later Kid caught him with a magazine and laughed for nearly ten minutes.

Law hated being laughed at almost as much as he hated the World Government. Too many years he'd spent alone after Corazon, wandering city to city with people pointing and laughing at his 'spots'. Kid's hospitalization was barely avoided thanks to Sengoku's timely intervention.

"Boys! What in heaven's name has gotten into you?!!" He demanded as he held them apart.

"No one laughs at me! I am not a joke!" Law shouted furiously as he struggled to get free to continue hitting the wide-eyed redhead.

"Buddy, you need to calm down." Sengoku warned. "He was only teasing."

To Law's mortification, he could feel tears welling up before they spilled over.

"Oh god, he's PMSing." Kid said in horror.

"Kid!" Sengoku exclaimed as Law slipped out of his shirt, out of the room before Sengoku could even make a grab at him.

"I'm sorry! I panicked!" Kid defended weakly.
Sighing, the Admiral set him on his feet. "Go find him and apologize."

Kid tried. He checked everywhere for the boy, even in the dark city, but Law was nowhere to be found. He asked the others for help, but they all came up empty. They went to bed without him as the adults kept looking, but none of them slept well.

"Zunisha-sama isn't THAT big! Where could he be?" Corazon asked wearily as they met back up.

"You looking for Law-chan?"

They turned to see Wanda approaching and nodded.

She hummed. "Don't worry so much. We'd warn you if he left the village. He's got his little hidey-holes all over."

"He's very upset." Sengoku said tiredly. "We want to make sure he's okay."

"Don't worry, Law-chan is strong. When he's ready to face you, he will." She put a hand on both of their arms. "I doubt he'll stay gone longer than a day."

Reluctantly, they nodded and while Corazon headed for work, Sengoku went back to the house. On his way to check on the boys, he heard voices and softened his steps to avoid detection.

"—m sorry, I totally overreacted." Law was saying in such an exhausted voice that Sengoku winced in sympathy.

"I shouldn'ta laughed at you. Gene's right, I put way too much stock into gender stereotypes." Kid sighed. "You're still a bitch tho."

Law snorted. "Yeah, and you're still a bastard."

"Not to be rude," Killer began in annoyance, voice muffled by something—probably his pillow. "But can you kiss and make up before shutting the hell up?"

"How about you kiss my ass?" Both huffed before there was a moment of silence. He knew they were glaring at each other.

"That's not nice." He was surprised to hear Penguin speak but wasn't sure why. Of course the boy would know when his captain returned.

"I'm not nice." Again they spoke in synch and he had to stifle a chuckle as this silence lasted longer.

"Aw, will you be finishing each other's sentences next?" Killer taunted.

"Come on, guys, you were having a moment." Penguin groaned.

"Since it's over, can we SLEEP now?" Killer demanded.

"Why are you so cranky?" Kid huffed.

"I'm. Tired." He grit out.

There was a moment of silence.

"Guess he's aggression too." Law said and Kid laughed causing Killer to let out a frustrated

"But I'm comfy." The boy protested.

This silence was the longest yet.

"Oi! Why you all gotta hog MY bed?!" Kid demanded.

"I'm only here for Penguin, I'm not sleeping alone."

Kid huffed. "…whatever, bitch."

"Oh my god shut the hell up!" Killer exclaimed.

"Don't be cranky." Kid scoffed. "Cuddle your little bird."

Law chuckled and lowered his voice to a murmur. "Don't antagonize your big brother."

Kid also lowered his voice as he said, "I'm going to punch you in the morning."

After the silence had stretched on for twenty minutes, Sengoku risked peeking inside and found all four in Kid's bed, the Mangrove duo back to back with the other two curled up against their chests. Smiling, he took out his photo Den Den Mushi and took a picture. He could justify one image.

That one was definitely going on his desk.
They settled in well on Zou. There was very rarely any sort of fight that couldn't be resolved in a few spars and everyone was very welcoming to the family. On weekdays they attended the Academy where they learned first-hand how much Nekomamushi threw around the younger Minks and even the adults. They hung out with their friends as well but the weekends were for family. Only the guards at the tower and doing rounds in the forest worked on the weekends but those assigned changed every week so that everyone could have the days off. The families would gather in the parks and as the students fought those from the opposite class, the adults would have their own contests.

Things couldn't go well forever, however. It had been about three and a half weeks since they arrived on Zou when Zunisha suddenly jerked, causing the boys to shoot up in alarm. They'd fallen asleep in Killer and Kid's room like they did every Sunday night and for a moment Law was disoriented.

Then Zunisha roared in pain and the sound was as terrifying as it was deafening. It had his heart skipping a couple of beats.

"What's going on?" Kid demanded worriedly.

"We're needed." He replied as he grabbed Penguin's hand, leaping from the bed and dragging him to their room where they were quick to pull on shirts, grabbing their weapons and meeting the duo in the hall. Together, they ran to Whale Forest, alone since they were the only Guardians residing outside the forest. The sentry horn led them to the battle and soon they heard the clash of weapons and the shouts of strangers.

It was still daylight so they could see the Jolly Roger of Redbeard, a pirate with a 200 million Berry bounty. They leapt into the fray and synched up quickly with their comrades and despite how spread out the fighting was, they were very obviously pressing the intruders back.

Despite keeping an eye on the enemies, the tide of battle had Law surrounded by them. "Room." He said as he raised his bloody sword. The pirates all laughed at him since there was no way he'd be able to reach them like he was. He just smirked and diced them all up effortlessly. The panicked shouts were music to his ears and he chuckled as he began to recombine them in as ridiculous a manner as possible. Legs to torsos, arms to crotches—he was proud of this one. His first successful Shambles.

Leaving them in wriggling masses of terror, he rejoined the battle, ending his room for the moment in case he needed it again later. He had about three of those left.

They were doing well. None of the adults looked worried and they were running out of enemy very quickly. They treated it as a training exercise, calling out improvements the children needed to make—and they did since the enemies now knew as well.

Then Redbeard himself arrived and they immediately encountered a problem as the captain raised his arms and rocks, logs, branches, and even his downed crew became blades of varying size, rising into the air to surround them. As they closed in, Law saw Kid halt them for a moment and Redbeard focused on him with a grin before he raised the sword in his hand to attack the distracted Redhead.

Law's room exploded outward with enough force to knock several people on their asses and then he was in front of Kid, sword to sword with the captain.
"Look at that, someone stole these creatures' fur already." The captain chuckled as he pushed Law back half a foot.

Law fell to his knee, arms shaking as he sent everyone beyond the circle of blades. He didn't have enough power to take himself as well. He needed a moment to regain some strength.

"Law-chan!" He heard Pedro shout in fear but tuned him out as he put all his focus into keeping the captain's blade away.

"You did that to my crew, didn't you, little freak?" The man grinned maliciously at him. "Chopped them up and stuck them together like shoddy art?"

"Everybody's a critic." He huffed. "Yeah, I did."

"You'll regret that."

"Doubtful. They look much better that way, don't you think?" He replied with a smirk even as he felt his arms starting to give. He had the Haki to protect his blade, but not the strength to hold it up. If he survived this, he'd need to work on that.

Then suddenly the man let up and Law overbalanced, falling forward. He quickly rolled aside just in time to avoid the captain's sword, but then a few blades broke away from the ring to rush him and he was ducking and dodging.

The first draw of blood had Kid shouting in fury and Law's heart skipped a beat when he heard the sound of metal slicing through flesh. He looked quickly and saw to his relief and horror that Marcius had pulled Kid away in time but got the blade instead.

Everyone quickly distanced themselves from the circle and Kid stopped struggling as he stared at the bleeding stump where the buffalo Mink's arm had been. Law could reattach it. Probably. Another blade nicked him and he refocused. He had to survive first.

"You're pretty quick, but without your fur you're worthless to me." Redbeard said as he jumped away and raised his hands again. Nearly every blade turned to point at Law, preparing to skewer him.

"Sencho!" Penguin screamed in terror as they descended, but Law smirked, hat hiding his eyes.

"Shambles."

The blades impaled Redbeard as Law switched places with him and as blood exploded in nearly every direction, Law fell to his knees in exhaustion. His ears caught the faint pop as the blades returned to their former selves and Law looked up to see the boulders descending upon him. And he laughed because wouldn't that just be nice? Having a second chance only to die within the first year? At least he took out the bastard that hurt Zunisha-sama with him.

His world exploded in pain as he was all but buried alive and everything dimmed nearly to black. The rushing in his ears faded and for a moment he was sure he was dead, but then the pain intensified and sound rushed back. Faint shouts and screaming were barely audible over the pounding of his heart and as only portions of his body throbbed in time with his heart beat, he knew without even looking that if he ended his room, he was dead.

When the weight on his back began to shift, he became aware of them trying to dig him out. Penguin was shouting for him, sounding like he was crying. Law wanted to tell him to stop crying, but something was piercing his neck. He began correcting the blood flow wherever he
could to keep him from bleeding out, but too many parts of his body were offline.

It was the darkness in his brain that scared him the most. Completely disconnected. That meant his head had been crushed. Shock threatened to set in but he knew it would kill him. He had to keep it at bay. He had his room shrink until it was barely surrounding him. He had to conserve power.

Suddenly light blinded him even with his eyes closed and he heard someone shout. Rubble began to fall away and hands reached for him.

He lifted his hand in a halting motion.

"Law-chan, we need to treat your injuries." Pedro said as more and more rocks were removed. "Are you pinned?"

He signed, 'Yes. Head. Don't move rock.'

"Stop! Don't touch anymore! Which rock, Law-chan? Where are you hurt?"

Where WASN’T he hurt? First thing's first. 'Can you see sword.'

"Yes, just the hilt."

Carefully, he spelled out, 'Slowly remove with downward pressure.'

"Move back." Pedro ordered the others and Law felt the blade move.

Gasps told him there was a lot of blood. He stopped the bleeding, but his vocal chords were ruined. He'd be lucky to ever speak again. If he survived.

"Law-chan, where are you hurt?" Pedro repeated.

'Head. Throat. Arms. Legs.'

Penguin started crying harder,

"Can we get you out?"

'No.'

Terrified chatter started amongst the kids.

"What do we do?" He asked helplessly.

Law didn't know.

Someone sounded the emergency horn as Pedro asked hesitantly, "Will you survive?"

Law didn't answer immediately and some of the other kids began to cry too.

'Doubt it.' He spelled out.

"What's going on?" Inuarashi's voice boomed over everyone's panicked cries.

"Law-chan has been crushed, Inuarashi-Koshaku." Pedro said grimly. "The damage is too extensive to pull him out. He doesn't believe he'll survive."

"His little bubble's still active, isn't it? Don't give up!" The Duke growled. "Get these things off of
him! Carrot, take the kids back to the Academy! No arguing!” He snarled over the kids’ protests.

The voices cut off but Law couldn't focus anyway as more and more of his broken body was bared to the surrounding Minks.

"Seal off the forest! No one in, no one out! Bring every first-aid item you can find and bring water to cleanse the wounds."

"This boulder is too heavy, we can't lift it!” Roddy called.

"All together men!"

He didn't know up from down, dark from light, who he was—everything scrambled and for a moment he knew nothing, not even pain. Then the chaotic haze lifted and he was left shaking and terrified as he regained awareness, rock gone.

"Can you open your eyes, pup?” Inuarashi asked softly, kneeling beside Law.

His left eye wouldn't, but after a bit of a struggle, his right cracked open and he looked up at the towering figure with blurring vision. A sob escaped his ruined throat and he realized the blur was from tears.

Inuarashi stroked Law's cheek with a finger. "Don't be afraid. We'll start small. Can you heal your legs?"

Law checked with his room but was dismayed to find most of his limbs were crushed beyond repair. 'No.' He signed shakily.

"What would you need to heal them?"

'It doesn't matter my head—'

The Duke gently grasped his hand, basically shutting him up. "We're not talking about your head. What do you need to heal your legs?"


"Gather the fallen!” He ordered sharply.

Eye widening, Law tried to protest but the Duke just licked his cheek and held him still.

"Their sacrifices will ensure you live. They would be honored."

Law started to cry, signing 'no' over and over but they paid him no mind.

"The only marrow match is young Annette, sir." Tristan said softly.

The girl was two years older than Law and a cheetah Mink. She was going to ask Jacob out the next class and because of Law, Jacob knew and was going to say yes. The boy had a massive crush on her.

Oh god, Law couldn't do that to him!

"Law-chan, you have to.” Tristan told him gently as she carefully laid the girl down beside him. "She's already gone. Don't make us lose another child."

If he'd been an adult, it would have been simple. But he was a kid and she was his friend. His
hand was shaking uncontrollably, but he still managed to sign out, 'no', signing an exclamation point to get his message across.


"To Kid." Pedro came in, voice shaking but determined. "You let this happen to save him. How would he handle that knowledge if you died?"

That wasn't fair! 'She's my friend.' He signed as he sobbed silently.

"How would she feel if she found out that she could have saved you but failed?" Tristan asked and Law felt his resolve crumble.

Crying harder, he reached out for the scalpel in the tool kit Tristan had laid out. He struggled for a moment to shove aside all of his emotions so that he could focus and his hand stopped shaking. He made the first incision and with their help, the operation began.
It was a grueling surgery. Most of his limbs were crushed, but he couldn't just give himself her parts. An entire limb would have been rejected by his powers so he had to work gradually, starting with the bones. He had to ensure his powers accepted them by transplanting his own marrow within them and the precision was nearly beyond him. By the time he finished a single leg, his reserves were nearing empty.

Inuarashi put his hand on Law's back and sent his Haki into him, giving him strength. Law continued on to the tendons, ligaments, and muscles. He could use some of his own, but her legs were longer and some of his were torn. It was a bit like his practice with taxidermy, sewing the pieces of different animals together and it was quicker than fixing the bones had been. He moved on to the dermis and epidermis, but encountered a problem: the surface area prevented him from using only his skin.

It took them some time to calm him down and convince him to use hers, but then he was moving on to his other leg, thick stripes of cheetah mink stretching up the limb. He finished with the second leg thanks to another transfer of energy and exhaustion was making it hard to think, so he just concentrated on the surgery, moving on to his arm. He should have started with it, he thought sluggishly. It took so much power from his room to move the crushed limb, but he was so used to moving himself like a puppet while injured that he hadn't considered the additional drain it would have on him.

As a result of his focus, he missed Nekomamushi's arrival and the resulting fight. But as his energy started to flag, the two Dukes sat on either side of him, Nekomamushi offering his own Haki to strengthen him.

"You're doing good, kitten. Keep it up." The feline Mink said supportively.

And the surgery continued. The limbs, he soon found out, were the easy parts. The bones in them were bigger, allowing for some room for error. But as he started on replacing the bones of his spine, he found nerve damage was an issue along with the marrow. It took all his skill as a surgeon to get feeling back to his legs and though he managed, the pain was almost enough to crash his room.

Both Dukes were quick to give him energy and he eased the pain, vaguely comparing it to his stint with the Fire Crab. It had been close, the nerve damage something he kept an eye out for as he continued.

Determined to put as much of her donations to use as he could, he fixed everything. He used her bones, muscles, fat, ligaments…then he used her vocal chords to repair his own, tuning it as close to his voice as he could, but perfection could wait until he was more rested and not in so much danger of death.

Then he started on his crushed head, noting what was damaged beyond repair and finding most of the damage wasn't so much from being crushed as it was from internal bleeding. He got rid of excess blood and fluids, the headache easing some, and found that although the damage was still extensive, it was all portions of his brain that wouldn't affect his personality much. His devil's luck had seemed to come through for him again and he got started on using her brain to replace what he lost only to encounter another problem.

Minks were not human. They shared the same blood, but like Fishmen, they were fundamentally different brain-wise. It was an organizational issue mainly and if he were well-rested, it wouldn't
have been an issue, but he was exhausted from almost sixteen straight hours of using his fruit under someone else's power. He had to take a moment to rest, frustration and helplessness filling him.

Pedro stroked his repaired back soothingly, the stripe of fur along his spine giving an odd sensation to being petted. "We've got you, Law-chan. You're almost done."

He whined quietly, but got back to work. He sorted out what was what in her brain and started the next portion of his surgery. It was a bit like trying to fit pieces from the wrong puzzle together and the picture was nonsense. He twisted them around until it just seemed to click and he knew that he'd overcome the most difficult part of the surgery.

His skull was ruined and he had to use hers, which was just as well because he needed her auditory system. It was easier to just bring her ears along to use instead of reconstructing the bones to accommodate his human ones. Then he needed the part of her brain that allowed him to control them, but with that, he was done with his brain and he replaced his skin, not needing to use any of hers thanks to the ears and he was happy that he at least got to keep his hair. Her red hair would have made his skin look washed out.

Sitting up proved to be more difficult than he'd anticipated. His balance, what little he regained, was gone and he could barely sit up without falling over. But it still shouldn't be that horrible. He'd accounted for the greater height.

Tristan put a hand on his arm, eyes apologetic as she explained gently, "You'll need her tail."

He had to move away to be sick, but then he placed it as well, the new limb already moving on its own and he realized it was connected to the part of the brain controlling his ears. At least that was an issue that resolved itself.

All that was left was repairing his eyes and he found it wouldn't be a simple fix. Even though his right eye worked, the ocular nerve was even then deteriorating and his left was beyond repair. He started to cry again. "I-I d-don't wanna t-take her eyes…!" He said in a choked voice. He didn't want to look in a mirror and see his friend staring back at him!

"You're too young to lose your eyes." Nekomamushi said calmly.

"I can…I can take them from one the intruder's…" He said shakily.

"They wouldn't fit, kitten. You know that."

"Let her see you become a great warrior of the sea." Inuarashi said. "Let her see every person you heal regain lost hope. See them smile and rejoice with their loved ones. Take them, Law-chan, and let her see the world."

Whining quietly, he began the transplant. And as he healed them, he realized that he was more Mink than human. More Annie than Law. The first thing he did with her eyes was cry.

Nekomamushi carefully picked him up and Law was suddenly overwhelmed by his scent. Safety and comfort and home, he could only describe it as Nekomamushi. "Let's get you back to your family. I'm sure they are very worried."

"A-Annie…?" He asked as the Mink began to purr, the sound resonating deep in Law's bones and comforting him more than it usually did. The Duke licked his head and against his better judgement, Law leaned his head back so that the next swipe was against his cheek. A quiet rumble startled him as it came from his own chest.
The Duke didn't notice. "She was an orphan. But with her sacrifice, she will be placed in the Warrior's Garden."

The purr deepened as satisfaction filled him. No being thrown back to Kristhva for the girl. She would stay with Zunisha-sama forever. "Where was she...last time?" He asked a bit hesitantly.

"She left early to join Newgate's crew. From what we learned, she succumbed to poison after an enemy ship engaged her division. She would be proud having given her life to protect our home."

That brought him more comfort than anything else and he curled up in the Mink's arms, listening to his heartbeat to center himself. This had been an exhausting day and he wondered when he'd be able to fight without having a near-death experience. Honestly, it was ridiculous.

"SENCHO!"

Law curled up tighter, eyes closing tightly. Oh god. How was he going to face his family? Like he hadn't been enough of a freak already, now he was wearing a classmate's skin and eyes...

"Nekomamushi-sama, is Sencho okay?" Penguin asked anxiously.

"The surgery was successful." He told the three kids and the gathered group outside the opening gate. Some family members of the other children and Corazon, Sengoku, Momo, and Baki. Corazon and Momo both looked ready to break down. "However, due to the extent of the damage...a sacrifice had to be made on our parts. We lost Annette today." There were some groans of despair from the group. "But she was able to save Law's life and we have decided to lay her to rest in the Warrior's Garden."

They cheered and Law flinched. It was a great honor to be lain to rest in the Garden, but it was still so fresh in Law's mind that he felt nothing but sorrow for his lost friend.

"What sacrifice, Nekomamushi-sama?" Baki asked, blue eyes locked on the boy in the Mink's arms. Something looked off, but he couldn't figure out what.

Hesitating, the Duke sat down and beckoned the family forward. Momo gasped when they saw the spotted fur and as Nekomamushi had Law sit up, they saw the stripes bisected him a little too uniformly.

"Most of him was crushed beyond repair, even with his extraordinary abilities." He said solemnly. "He was forced to replace a vast majority of his body.

Corazon reached over to cup Law's face in his hands, tilting his head up and noticing the fresh pink patch of skin vanishing into his hair. And the ears. "Law-chan...look at me please."

To their alarm, he pulled away, shaking his head and covering his eyes with his hands.

"W-what happened to his eyes?" Killer asked anxiously as Kid tried ineffectually to pull Law's hands away.

"He had to take hers."

Law began to cry helplessly. "I'm sorry!"

They jumped at the sound of his voice, higher pitched than usual, but Corazon quickly scooped him up into his arms and held him tightly. "Oh Law-chan, it's okay. Don't cry, I'm sure her eyes are very beautiful." He told him soothingly as he began to rub his back, trying not to be distracted by the thick fur he felt or—was that a TAIL?
"But I w-want MINE!" Law whimpered.

"Oh kitten..." Momo said in a pained voice as she put a hand on his back. "We know you do. But you'll get used to these and one day you'll think of them as yours. Now let's see your pretty little eyes." She coaxed.

It took him a moment to work up the courage, but then he opened them. The first thing he saw was Baki turning and running away. He felt like his heart was being crushed, but thankfully he felt his borrowed strength fading. Darkness was encroaching on his vision and he closed his eyes again, curling up against Corazon's chest. "I have to sleep now." He said in a steady voice. Things would look better in the morning, when he wasn't so raw from the emotional day.

Corazon kissed his head, a fuzzy ear tickling him when it flicked his face. "Of course, Law-chan. I'll put you to bed." He promised and a second later, Law was gone.

"Make sure he drinks plenty of water." Nekomamushi said as he stood up. "Only broth for the next few days until his stomach's settled. I need to help the others." He left them there.

"We had to practically force him to perform the surgery." Tristan said softly. "They were friends. I'd expect some emotional upheavals for the next month at least." Then she followed the Duke.

"I'll bring over some food for you all." Momo said as she patted her sleeping daughter's back. "And some broth to heat when he wakes."

"Thank you, Momo-san." Sengoku said with a small smile. "Let's go, Rocì." He picked up the three boys and steadied them when they tried to get a better look at Law. "How about you boys? Were any of you hurt?"

Kid looked away and silently shook his head.

"Just a few bruises. No one else besides Marcius-san got hurt cuz Sencho moved us all out of Redbeard's circle." Penguin said. "And before he got there, we were only fighting his crew, so we kinda let our guards down...I'm sorry..."

"You'll learn never to let your guards down soon enough." The man replied. "Although I do wish you wouldn't go up against pirates with bounties over 200 million."

"He came outta nowhere..." Kid muttered defensively but said nothing else.

Soon they reached the house and the boys all piled on Law's bed as Corazon set him down. Penguin immediately began checking Law's vitals and didn't relax until he was sure the boy was just sleeping.

"Annie was so much bigger than him..." Killer began quietly as he traced one of the spotted stripes on Law's leg. "Do you think these are to cover the extra surface area?"

"Probably." Kid said as he looked at the seamless transition from Law's flesh to Annie's. They'd both been so pale. If he weren't looking right at it, he'd think Law was wearing some odd harness. As he thought about how he'd look as an adult, he admitted, "It'll look freaking cool when he's bigger. Still gonna call him a kitten though."

That made the others laugh and some of the tension left the air.

"Check it out though." Corazon said as he rolled the boy over slightly to coax out the new appendage.
Stars entered their eyes. "So cool!"

Kid was the first to grab it and they all exclaimed in delight when it wrapped loosely around his arm. "It's so soft!" He said, using the tip to tickle Killer. It flicked out of his hand and settled near Law’s leg. Laughing happily, he picked it up and began stroking it.

Penguin made a startled sound. "Listen!"

A soft rumble was coming from the sleeping boy and Corazon curiously reached over to stroke the sensitive vitiligo patch beneath his jaw. He grinned brightly when the sound exploded in volume. "He's PURRING!"

"Alright, that's enough." Sengoku chuckled as he put a hand on Corazon's back. "He just finished a sixteen hour surgery. I think he deserves some rest."

Reluctantly, they all nodded.

"Can we sleep in here, Ojii-san?" Kid asked hopefully.

The man smiled. "Alright, but you have to sleep or I'll make you go to your own beds."

They didn't bother doing more than kick off their shoes before Penguin curled up against Law, Killer on his other side while Kid took the spot on Law's free side.

"Goodnight boys." Corazon said as they shut the curtains and exited the room. As soon as they were outside though, Corazon's smile faded, replaced by a dangerous expression that reminded Sengoku just whose crew he'd been on for the past six years. "I'm going to have a word with Baki."

"Don't hurt him too badly." Sengoku called to the man's back and wondered how much longer he could push his vacation before Kong got after him. He didn't want to leave with Law in such a vulnerable state.

If Baki didn't get over whatever his problem was, he'd see how far he could push back his return.
Chapter 39

Law woke up to pain everywhere. Down to the bones, it was almost as bad as the Fire Crab and it took him a few moments of just trying to breathe through it to be able to create his room. He began to ease the pain and checked to make sure everything was working as it was supposed to, happy to see he hadn't suffered any sort of negative reaction overnight.

Until he checked his hormones. Jesus Christ it was a battleground there. The estrogen Annie's brain was causing his body to produce was throwing everything off. A few tweaks and balance was restored and after removing the excess hormones, he felt much better.

Now onto the topic of Baki's retreat…

…nope. No matter how hard he tried, the only conclusion he came to was that the Mink was disgusted that Law had stolen Annie's body parts. Law could understand that. It hurt, but it prepared him for the reactions the others would have. He'd need to request a transfer to the Day Class, have as little contact with the other children as possible.

Especially Jacob.

Carefully extracting himself from Kid and Penguin, he headed for the bathroom. He had blood dried in itchy patches all over his skin and he made a note to change the sheets when the other got up.

It turned out to be a bit of an adventure, the shower. He couldn't quite control the tail so it kept escaping his hands as he shampooed and conditioned his new furry bits. It knocked over the bottles so many times, he just left them on the floor as he got out all the blood and dirt.

But finally he was clean and he got rid of the excess water with his room. He had no way to close the towel around his waist without binding his tail and he felt a bit disgruntled by that. He'd need new clothes to accommodate the new addition and his new height too.

Reentering the room, he saw the others were still asleep, so he tried to be quiet as he dug through his bag for the extra brush he'd used for Maki's fur, using it on his own. It made a purr start up and he listened to it curiously. He'd definitely need to get THAT under control.

He finished quickly and took out his loosest pair of jeans, making a hole for his tail and making another button for him to fasten it closed. A bit awkward looking, but he wasn't flashing anyone, so he counted it as a victory; although the way they bunched up his fur was sort of painful. He grimaced, but put up with it for the moment.

After brushing his hair, he headed downstairs to find something to eat. Each step jarred him a bit painfully, but it was negligible so he pushed through. He planned on making some sort of broth, his stomach still too tender for anything with substance no matter how hard it growled at him.

The sound of voices made him freeze and he listened to the sound of Momo's voice. Anxiety and some unknown emotion clenched his chest and it took him a moment to draw a steady breath. He couldn't face her right now. It was too early, and he still felt so raw. What if she acted like Baki?

He thought quickly and shouted, "Gonna go talk to Pedro-ya, bye!" As he spoke, he was running for the door in case they tried to stop him and in seconds, he was outside. Running was so much
easier and it seemed her muscles would be more of a benefit than he'd expected as his speed was increased exponentially. He enjoyed the feel of air on his face as he'd never felt it before and watched the scenery change as he entered the Whale Forest only a minute later. This was amazing!

Stopping, however, quickly became an issue and he ended up splayed out on the ground, scraped and bruised but otherwise okay as the jaguar Mink let out a stream of curses behind him. Law giggled slightly, amused. "Pedro-ya, I was looking for you."

The Mink rolled onto all fours, picking himself up. "Well, you found me." Then his eyes widened. "Law-chan! You should still be in bed!" He helped him up and began brushing him off.

"I feel okay." He replied as he also tried to brush the dirt off. "What do you know about Annie's biology? I want to make some guesses as to the severity of my impending growth spurt. Also, I'm hungry."

"Didn't you eat breakfast before running here?" He asked in surprise, taking Law's hand and leading him towards the Residential District. It was daytime so there wouldn't be too many places open, but the tavern always was.

"No. Once I find out how much I can expect to grow, I can get more comfortable clothes." He continued. "These are bunching up my mink all the wrong way."

"I'm not surprised. Those have to be at least two sizes too small. And where are your shoes?"

Law looked at his feet. Sure enough… "I don't know. Probably by my bed."

Scoffing, the Mink took him to the tavern for soup before they headed for the hospital to ask about Annie's medical records.

~~~rp~~~

From what Tristan and the other nurses remembered, Annie came from a family line with predispositions for tall statures. The tallest had been her father at eight feet and six inches. She had been at six eleven, but either way he'd be topping his old height by at least a couple of inches. It would be gradual. For the next year, he'd only be expecting a foot of growth.

Movement out of the corner of his eye caught his attention and he pounced before he realized it was Pedro's tail. He blushed slightly. "Oops. Sorry." He said sheepishly as he picked the dropped file back up. But the tail was moving in a lazy flicker as the Mink just scoffed and Law couldn't concentrate. Back and forth, he couldn't tear his gaze away.

He was caught by the scruff of his neck before he could pounce again and to his confusion, he found himself curling up against his will, tail coming up between his legs and he batted at the twitching tip.

A booming laugh made him remember he was being held and he caught Nekomamushi's scent. Was it night already? "I see your instincts have been affected by your surgery." The Duke laughed.

"Yeah it's very distracting." He said with a sigh as the Mink began to lick him. "Oh yeah, that's why I came here. Have you seen my hat, sword, and staff?" He asked.

"They're likely with your shoes." Pedro said with an amused smile. "As for the staff, none of us could move it, so it's exactly where you dropped it."
Law purred as Nekomamushi rubbed their cheeks together and grabbed onto his face so he could lick a stripe up the bridge of his snout. Then, before he could realize what he was going to do, Law bit his fuzzy cheek, tail flicking wildly.

The Duke yelped in surprise more than pain and looked at him in amusement as Pedro and Tristan laughed their asses off. "You're such a punk!"

Law giggled and butted his head against his chin affectionately.

"Maybe he should get home, Nekomamushi no Dan'na." Pedro said. "He's been here for a while."

"I'll take him." Tristan offered. "I need to pick up some fresh bandages."

"Wait." Law protested suddenly. "Marcius-ya. And I needed to talk about my future training." He looked irritated. "I should've written this all down."

"Marcius is stable for the moment and I don't want you using your powers for at least another day." Tristan told him.

"What about your training?" Pedro asked.

"I have to transfer to the Musketeer Squad." He told them solemnly. He explained about everything that had been going on between Annie and Jacob and how he didn't think it would be fair to the boy or the other students to be constantly reminded of what they'd lost.

He kept the fact that he wouldn't be able to take the kids' outright rejection to himself. Because if a man that loved him like a son couldn't stand to look at him, what chance would friendship fare?

After mulling it over, Pedro frowned and reluctantly admitted, "That's a fair point. But maybe only for a few months. Wait for a bit of the rawness to fade before bringing you back in."

Nekomamushi sighed. "I don't like it. You're one of mine." He nuzzled Law's hair. "But maybe you're right. I'll talk to Inu-baka about it and we'll get back to you later."

Nodding as he was set back onto his feet, Law took Tristan's offered hand and they said their goodbyes before heading back towards the city. A few months should be enough time to prepare himself for their reactions.

Well, enough to hide his heart breaking.

They stopped by the former battlefield where rubble still stood on the bloodstained soil and Law wrinkled his nose at the overpowering stench of blood. There was a surge of power and he immediately spotted his staff. Running over, he checked it for breaks or chips but it was whole and he nuzzled it contently.

Then they headed for the house and Law was relieved that the freshest scent from his mother led AWAY from the house. He split from Tristan and headed over, entering through the front door. A strange scent hit his nose, but he couldn't place it. Brushing it off, he called, "I'm back!"

"SENCHO!" Penguin shouted in relief as he immediately tackled him in a hug. Law smiled widely as he caught him and hugged him back tightly, purring contently.

"Where THE HELL have you been?!" Kid shouted furiously as he burst into the room. "No note! Things still here! We thought you were taken! What were you thinking, you could have DIED and we'd not know until—until—"
To Law's alarm, Kid began to cry. He was quick to pull him into the hug and the boy buried his face into his chest. "What are you talking about? I told Momo-okaa-ya and the others I was going to talk with Pedro-ya."

"I had a calm field up, buddy." Corazon said from the kitchen door. "She was trying to get Maki-chan to sleep."

He blinked. "Oh, sorry."

Walking over, the man pulled them all into a large hug. "Just make sure we heard you next time. So what'd you talk about?"

"A few things." He said, purring louder. "I needed a rough estimate of how much I should expect to grow, so we went through Annie's medical files to find out if her genetics would affect mine. Roughly, I'll grow about a foot in the next year, so my clothes will need to accommodate that."

"Oh right, you'll need some new outfits." Corazon realized, looking him over.

"Then I needed to find my things. I got my staff, are my sword and hat here anywhere?" He asked.

"By your bed, dude." Kid muttered.

"Huh. Pedro-ya was right, they were with my shoes." Law mused before shaking his head. "Then there was Marcius-ya, but Tristan-ya wants me to recover another day before trying to reattach his arm." He took a steadying breath. "The last thing was about my training."

"Your training?" Sengoku asked as he and Killer entered the house with bags of groceries.

"One of the reasons I went to talk to Pedro-ya. And I'm sorry about worrying you all, I thought you heard me yell on my way out." He brushed it off. "Anyway, yeah. One of their friends just died, man. And here I come wearing her skin and eyes." He smirked at their grimaces but the pallor of his skin gave away his own queasiness. "Not to mention the emotional blow going would deal to Jacob-ya. He had a thing for Annie and knew she was going to ask him out tonight in class."

"Oh no…" Penguin groaned in dismay.

He hummed, desolation stealing over his features before he caught himself and locked those emotions away where they belonged. "Yeah, so if Inuarashi-ya is willing, I'll be transferring to the Day Class for a few months to give them time to recover before they have to face me."

"I don't wanna go to separate schools, Sencho!" Penguin protested as he started crying again. "Don't leave! I don't wanna sleep alone!"

Law's purr revved back up as he rubbed their heads together affectionately. "It's just for a couple months. It'll be like a blink."

Killer put a hand on Penguin's back. "You can sleep with me and Kid. Think of Jacob, Penguin."

The boy whined but nodded.

After a moment, Sengoku spoke. "While that is a valid concern, it couldn't have waited a few more days? You should still be in bed."

"I'm okay." He replied. "I mean, my insides are kind of...fuzzy, and I probably shouldn't run so
fast for the next four days, but the pain's gone and if I stay in bed my muscles will atrophy."

"At least stay in the yard." Corazon pleaded.

Blinking up at him, Law nodded. "Only till tomorrow afternoon though."

Happy, the man accepted it.

"It's time for you to head in, boys." Sengoku told them calmly and they reluctantly went to go get their weapons.

"Don't tell anyone about my transfer." Law told them as they pulled on their shoes. He didn't want them to get their hopes up if the request was denied.

"Go to sleep." Kid replied quietly as he trudged out the door.

Killer hugged Law before following his captain.

Penguin started to cry again and Law's heart clenched in sympathy. Cupping the boy's face, Law licked a stripe to his forehead before rubbing their noses together with a rumbling purr. "I'll be here when you get back."

Still crying, the boy hugged him tightly before running out the door.

Lowering his arms, Law rubbed his own eyes and missed them already. Turning, he looked up at his father with wide pleading eyes and got a smile in return.

"Yes you can sleep with me."

Perking up immediately, Law darted over to the couch and threw his arms around the seated man's neck. Not even bothering to wait until they were in bed, Law closed his eyes and fell asleep right there.

"Two thousand berries says he foregoes shirts until winter." Sengoku said with a smile as he handed Corazon a cup of tea.

"That's a sucker's bet." Corazon chuckled as he sipped at the drink. "Did you notice his look earlier? When he was talking about Jacob-kun?"

Sengoku hummed affirmatively. "You'll have to keep a close eye on him. This morning was peculiar as well. I don't think I can recall him ever just shouting for us." He reached over to run a hand through the boy's hair, causing him to nuzzle Corazon's shoulder. "Or leave without his hat."

"I…I don't think he planned on leaving." Corazon began quietly. "I think he heard Momo and decided to cut his losses."

"Any luck on the Baki front?"

"He said that Law-chan smelled like death. That he couldn't stand smelling that on him and that he had to get away." The man replied. "He promised to stop by in a few days when Law-chan smells like himself." He rubbed the mink at the nape of Law's neck and heard the boy start to purr.

"Which brings us back to him running off."

"You think he's jumped to the wrong conclusions about why Baki left?"

"No. Given all the information available to him, there is only one conclusion for him to reach."
"Either way he sees it as rejection and has entered avoidance mode." He mused.

"Maybe I'm wrong, but I think so. And now he wants to transfer out of the Academy?"

The man grimaced. That sounded about right. "He's using him as an example of what the other kids' reactions will be...we'll need to talk to him about this tomorrow."

"He won't believe us. Probably won't even believe Baki when he comes by." Corazon replied wearily.

"Stubborn boy." Sengoku muttered and Corazon chuckled, nodding in agreement.

Finishing his tea, he stood up. "I think I'll put him to bed. Goodnight, Tou-san."

"Goodnight, Roci. See you tomorrow."

Chapter End Notes

Poor Law-chan. I just won't give him a break.

Okay, so I just got the reviews and I suppose I should clear up how he was communicating when his arm was crushed...well, he used an altered form of Takt to control his body within his room, allowing him to use his arm as if it weren't ruined. I took the idea from how he used his severed arm to wound Trebol. There's no way that blade could have used so much force without getting knocked out of nerveless fingers, so Law had to be holding the hand closed somehow. Creepy puppetry.

If it wasn't clear, though, he was spelling out words with his only hand since actual sign language uses broad gestures and usually both hands and his throat was ruined. He used creepy puppetry to grasp the tools with his actual hand although it probably would have been easier to just float them everywhere. He wasn't thinking clearly.

And in my world, His room creates a map of sorts of whatever he's concentrating on. A bit like x-ray, a bit like CAT scans, a bit like a plain anatomy text, he was able to focus on certain parts of his body and operate as if he were looking down at a patient.

Crushed head...I think I covered that in the last chapter. The parts of his brain affected weren't anything really important, I've heard of people that lost half their brain still being able to function normally—I don't know, he was just lucky. He IS a D.

Annie was a cheetah mink and he now has stripes pretty much framing his body like one of those safety harnesses stuntmen use with parachutes and the like. I can't really explain it, just picture those jogging suits with stripes up the sides and add a few straps going across the chest, back, up the neck, and around the limbs.

Anyway, glad you've all enjoyed! Next chapter up soon!
When Law woke up the next morning to Corazon's alarm clock going off, he felt not only Corazon in front of him but someone behind him as well. He'd know the scent of Penguin anywhere and as Corazon reached over to turn the alarm off, Law felt Penguin bury his face in his back.

Noticing the boy, Corazon smiled and used a Calm field as he carefully got out of bed and even though he tripped once he was free and fell face-first, Penguin wasn't disturbed from his deepening sleep. He gave a thumbs up to Law, who returned it with a smaller grin, and went to get ready to leave.

Law closed his eyes and dozed for a few minutes until he sensed that he could escape without waking his sharpshooter. He used his room to switch with a pillow and stroked Penguin's hair a few times to make sure he didn't rouse. When it was safe, he ended his room and left the bedroom to head for the bathroom.

It didn't take him long to get ready since he didn't need a shower yet and he went to check for Kid and Killer, but neither were back so he went downstairs where Sengoku and Corazon were sitting at the table looking at the papers. Law noticed Redbeard's face on the front page and his growl got their attentions.

"Law-chan!" Corazon greeted brightly. "He still asleep?"

Law nodded and walked over to the table, hopping up onto the stool and pillowing his head on his arms. "He must've come straight home. I'll have to ask Kid to try and keep him distracted-his social life shouldn't suffer because I got myself hurt." He stretched his arms out, ending up with his chin on the table. The position felt good on his spine and he closed his eyes as he stilled. There was a moment of companionable silence.

Then, "Law-chan, if you think you're up to it, could I ask you about what exactly you did during the surgery?" Sengoku requested.

Law didn't bother opening his eyes as he explained the procedure without going into too much detail. He didn't think their stomachs could handle it. Well, his father anyway. Who knew with Sengoku? Still, despite his vague description, there was the sound of glass shattering.

Opening one eye, he looked over and saw that Corazon had squeezed his mug of coffee too hard and the scalding liquid had ruined his newspaper, but neither man seemed to have noticed, eyes intent on him.

So he just closed his eye again and continued his report. There were no more mishaps and when he finished, a heavier silence fell than before. He tensed when he was suddenly grabbed and only relaxed when Corazon had him cradled in his arms, hugging him tightly. "Don't make a big deal out of it. It's over."

"We knew though, Law-chan." Corazon said guiltily. "We knew that someone was going to attack Zou. We just didn't know who or when."

Law scoffed. "Don't be ridiculous. How could you know?"
"You told us." Sengoku said quietly.

Law looked at him in confusion. "I told you? When? I had no clue Redbeard would be coming."

"Back on Mangrove, after you were hospitalized." Corazon said. "We were talking about coming to the New World to prevent Doffy from finding us when you woke up and told us either Zunisha-sama or Nekomamushi-sama were in danger."

Law frowned in confusion. "I don't remember that." And he didn't remember Redbeard attacking last time either. His stay on Zou had been peaceful beyond a few rescued castaways.

"You were still heavily sedated, I'm not surprised." Sengoku said. "We discussed it with both Dukes and they believe Zunisha-sama was the one that warned you of Redbeard's attack. They say she has been known to do so before."

Okay, that made sense, but, "Why me? Why not one of the Dukes? If they had known, the intruders wouldn't have even made it on her back." They wouldn't have lost Annie. He wouldn't have had to use her to save himself...

He felt Zunisha's Haki focus on him, an amalgam of emotions coming through. Sorrow predominately, but he also got the strong impression that she had done what she needed to and didn't regret it.

"But WHY?" He pressed. She didn't answer, her Haki retreating so he sighed and just let it go.

"We may never know her reasoning, buddy." Corazon said calmly. "The point is, we knew there would be an attack and STILL we let our guards down. And you kids paid the price for it. I can't just let it go."

Law sighed and reached up to hug him. "Well, if you won't believe you're not to blame...then I just have to tell you that I forgive you for your imaginary transgressions."

Corazon chuckled and nuzzled his hair affectionately. "You're a sweet kid, buddy."

"I am not! Shut up!" He exclaimed in annoyance as he smacked his face.

The man just laughed and continued to shower him with affection as Sengoku chuckled and returned to his paper.

~~~rp~~~

Breakfast/dinner passed without incident and as Corazon headed for work, Law stayed with Penguin until the boy fell asleep. Once all three were out cold, the duo headed into town for clothes shopping.

"Why do I have to ride on your shoulders, Ojii-san?" Law asked as he nuzzled the bird on his grandfather's hat.

"You don't have shoes that fit and you should still be resting." The man replied. Law huffed, but didn't really care. He leaned down to rest his head on the other man's. "Ne, Ojii-san, didn't you say you were supposed to leave last month?"

"Yes, but with the attack looming ahead, I was hesitant to leave in case I was needed." He informed him. "And now with Redbeard's attack, there is some paperwork that needs to be filled out. Due to the Dukes' hectic schedules and the fact that Garp is the one handling most of my
paperwork...we'll be lucky to have it done by fortnight's end." He sighed.

Law hummed. "What kind of paperwork?" He pretended that he couldn't see the Minks blatantly staring at him as they passed, watching the ground.

"Bounties mostly. In order for them to be given the bounties without the proper identification, they need my signature. Well, not mine specifically, just Vice Admiral or higher."

"You should just stay for the year then." Law said with a smile.

"You want me to stay?" He asked in surprise.

"Of course I do. I like you, Ojii-san."

The man smiled, warmed by the boy's admission. "I'd like to stay but there are some things I can't do from here and I really can't trust Garp to do them."

Law frowned slightly. "We're gonna miss you when you go."

"I'll miss you boys too. You take good care of your father while I'm gone, alright?" He asked and smiled at the soft purr from the boy.

"You got it, Ojii-san."

They reached the shop and their focus turned to clothes.

Chapter End Notes

Not much going on in this chapter. Most of it's filler, but I wanted Law to spend some time with just the adults.

Reviews:

Fairyfox: Oh my gosh, yes please draw him! I want to see if my image of him has travelled well! Post a link in a review so that I can see it wherever you post it. I'm so glad you like the story!

Guest: When I wrote that, I meant stripes of spotted fur, not fur with stripes. I'm sorry for the confusion.

I don't think there were any other questions, but if I missed one somewhere, please point it out again!

Thank you all for the reviews/follows/favorites! I'll try to work quickly to get the next chapter out!
Chapter 41

As they headed back for their home, Law readjusted the loose jeans he wore. He had to use a belt to hold them up, but they were the most comfortable pair the shops had had. Most importantly, they accommodated his tail and had spots on them. He did get some sandals that were a few sizes too large in order to have room for his impending growth spurt but he'd given up on finding a shirt that didn't irritate him somewhere.

As their home came into view, Law noticed Tristan waiting for them with Marcius beside her. Brightening, he let go of Sengoku's hand and ran over. "I can heal him now?" He asked eagerly when he saw the carefully preserved arm in her hands.

"Yes, you should be sufficiently recovered by now." She replied. "But I will be keeping a close eye on you just in case."

"Sure." He agreed easily and led them inside, taking them to the kitchen so that Marcius could sit at the table and Law on the table so he could reach. This would take some time and he wanted them both to be comfortable. By the time Sengoku returned from placing their purchases upstairs, they were in place, Law's feet braced on either side of the Mink's thigh for balance.

Tristan helped him bare the stump, Law's room stopping the bleeding and allowing him to examine it for infection or tissue death. It was well-cared for and they washed the wound before disinfecting it. After one last check to make sure he hadn't missed anything, they unwrapped the severed limb and prepared it in a similar fashion.

It was infinitely easier doing this on another person and as he began stitching the bone back together, he tuned everything out beyond the tools and Tristan's helping hands. It took about an hour and a half as he mended the bones, muscles, had blood flow through the drained veins, and the skin knit back together. When he finished, there wasn't even a scar. The adults were chatting idly about something he didn't care about and so didn't immediately notice when he was done.

Until Marcius yelped in pain and tried to jerk his paw away.

"I need to check your fingers for response to stimuli." Law said as he found himself now standing on the chair since he hadn't released him. The Mink immediately relaxed and Law finished his examination. "They seem to be in working order. Make a fist for me."

A series of tests ensured the limb was fully functional and Law jumped down to the floor. "Good as new. However, I wouldn't stress the muscles for at least another three days."

"Thank you, Law-chan." The buffalo Mink said warmly.

Law met his eyes and said, "No. Thank YOU for saving my brother's life, Marcius-san." He bowed low to the stunned Mink before leaving the room to go sunbathe on the balcony. He could use a nap.

~~~rp~~~

He was woken up by the sound of Baki's voice and jolted upright. Crawling to the edge of the balcony, he peered through the dense foliage of his plants and saw him and Momo walking towards the house through the metal bars. Seeing Maki, he let out a pained mewl but didn't move. He hunkered down lower as they got closer and watched them approach he door, three loud knocks booming in the quiet night.
Penguin answered and greeted them happily, inviting them in. Law retreated from the plants and got to his feet as the closing door muffled their voices, jumping up onto the metal railing and using it to jump onto the roof into the receding sunlight. He estimated five more minutes of daylight as he flopped down on the tip of the slanted roof where the tiles were pleasantly warm and stretched out contently.

Not a moment later, he heard the door to his room open. "Law-chan?” He curled up tightly at the sound of Baki’s voice and felt his tail wrap around him protectively. Footsteps approached the window and the Mink called again, "Law-chan? Where are you, cub?"

Law kept very still, but it was in vain.

The Mink's head popped over the edge of the roof and immediately spotted him. "There you are. Can I talk to you for a moment, cub?"

Well, he'd been found. Uncurling, he sat up as the man came to sit down beside him.

"Penguin says you're upset about something." The Mink said after a moment of silence. "What's wrong?"

"Nothing. I'm okay." He said as he watched the distant forest grow darker with the setting sun.

"You wanna look me in the eyes and tell me that?" Baki challenged gently.

Law drew his legs up and wrapped his arms around them as he rested his chin on his knees. His tail wrapped around his ankles and he wondered if this was the way it had acted around Annie. He couldn't remember.

"It's because of me, isn't it?"

"No." He replied.

"Because I ran away." He continued as if Law hadn't spoken. When he didn't confirm or deny it, Baki sighed quietly. "Law-chan, the Whale Forest has never been sealed off before. Losing contact while all of you were inside was...terrifying. The guards wouldn't tell us anything except that three Guardians were down in an invasion and that no one was allowed in or out. SIXTEEN HOURS, Law-chan." He mimicked Law’s position, but his arms wrapped around his stomach. "Then here come the boys without you. They say you were hurt and all three are crying too hard to understand more than Redbeard's name. When Nekomamushi-sama brought you out, I was so relieved you were alive, but then I get closer to you and all I can smell is death...I couldn't handle it. Not on you, cub. You're my baby. I already lost Maki...I couldn't. Not you too. I had to get away."

The raw pain in his voice made Law's heart ache. "I thought you couldn't stand the sight of me wearing Annie's mink..." He admitted almost too softly to hear.

"Losing her was sad, Law-chan, but I'd rather have you. As far as I'm concerned, that mink is yours." He unfolded to grab Law and pull him into his arms, nuzzling the soft fur at the nape of his neck. "It already smells like you."

Something eased in Law’s chest at that and he snuggled into the Mink's hold as a quiet purr started up. It got louder when Baki started licking his face and he allowed the bath for a minute before he growled playfully, grabbing onto his neck and biting his ear.

Baki yelped and jerked back. "You little punk!" He pinned the giggling Law to the roof and continued licking him as he struggled to get free. Then he suddenly let him go but before Law
could get far, he pounced on him.

It devolved from there and when they inevitably rolled off the roof, they were lucky enough to land on the balcony where they found Momo and Corazon standing on the rails spying on them.

"Boy's no fighting on the house!" Momo chided immediately when she realized she was caught.

"He started it!" They both exclaimed.

"No excuses! Dinner's ready so go get washed up!" She ordered and they complied, just thankful there was no umeboshi for her to punish them with.

Corazon was glad that they had underestimated the Mink and that the issue had been resolved, but- "He's going to be fighting a lot, isn't he?"

She smiled as they both jumped off the railing. "Don't worry, it's just playing. He won't bite hard enough to break the skin." She put a hand on his arm. "It's a simple game. If his 'attack' would deal a good injury, yelp or shout. Teach him where to bite and claw."

He nodded and the conversation was dropped as they headed for the kitchen where dinner started the same as always.
Chapter 42

Law started at the Academy in Right Flank Fortress the next day and was seen off at the entrance by Corazon. Thankfully, the man's fawning was interrupted by Sicilian, who attacked them both before he grabbed Law by the scruff of his neck and threw him inside the room.

"Bye, Law-chan, see you after school!" Corazon called cheerfully as if he weren't fending off the other.

"Bye, Tou-san!" Law called back and then the Mink was focusing on him.

"If you can talk, you can fight!" He growled.

All in all, it wasn't that different from the Guardians. He fell into the swing of things pretty easily, but just when he thought he'd gotten the hang of his new opponent, the Mink grabbed him and threw him into a pit.

Rolling over, Law picked himself up and looked up at the distant opening to see Sicilian peering down at him. "When you get out of there, join the others doing laps around the courtyard!"

Annoyed but relatively unscathed from the drop, Law started the grueling process of climbing the sheer wall bare-handed. But the third time a nail broke, sending him falling back the few feet he'd managed, he fell onto his ass and created a room to heal the injuries. As he was getting up, his hand brushed a rusty pipe that had fallen from a pile of scrapped weapons. Looking at his nails again, he looked back and got an idea.

He found the strongest metal (some sort of titanium sword that seemed to have been overwhelmed by Electro based on the damage) and like his staff, used it to fill in the microscopic gaps in the nail and nail bed, anchoring it down into the bone to prevent breakage. It was a good thing he hadn't been trimming them since they allowed him a better grip, almost like dull claws. He'd need to figure out a way to sharpen them without making them obvious dangers.

Twenty minutes after being thrown in, he was joining the other students, but beyond acknowledging nods when they greeted him, he kept to himself.

~~~rp~~~

He didn't talk much to the other kids. There were a few questions about the invasion, but after he explained it, they left him to his own devices. But while they didn't try to get him to participate in conversations or anything, he noticed that they tended to stick near him, never actually leaving him alone.

Despite not wanting to get attached, it happened anyway and within the first week, he was chipping in. He wanted to call foul play. Clever bastards.

"So you're making friends then?" Penguin asked as he sewed up some torn clothes, Killer doing the same beside him on the bed.

Law had Kid pinned on the other bed and was licking dirt and sweat from his face while the annoyed boy stared at the ceiling. That had been another effect of the change that had started with the occasional lick and quickly gotten out of control. Almost like the fighting, the others just rolled with it after some halfhearted complaints. Law had a feeling that Momo had a hand in their compliance though since the first time he'd done it, Kid had nearly knocked his block off.
So after some halfhearted struggles, the redhead let him get it out of his system.

He hummed. "Yeah, but I'll still be glad when I'm back at Whale. The sun SUCKS."

"You burn like freaking tinder, man." Kid scoffed as he suddenly smacked a patch of red skin on Law’s side.

Law yelped in pain and they were fighting, ending up rolling off the bed and onto the floor. Neither noticed, more focused on the brawl.

"Maybe if you wore a shirt-" Penguin began only to be cut off.

"Shirts bunch up my mink, man. It hurts." Law huffed as he ended up pinned by Kid. The boy grinned smugly and rubbed their cheeks together, a move that never failed to get a purr.

"You just need to get used to it." Killer replied as he checked his work. "Speaking of, how's the steel doing?"

"Titanium." He corrected as he sat up. "No side-effects yet. I've found they can withstand quite a bit, but as they grow the beds get weak. I have to figure that out."

"Why not just restrict the nail growth?" Kid asked.

Law looked at him in shock. "Kid, you stupid genius! Where were you a week ago?!"

Killer scoffed in amusement. "Deja vu, much?"

Law ignored him as he created a room.

"Deja vu?" Kid asked him curiously.

"He said the same thing when I suggested using his room to wear himself out enough to combat his insomnia."

"Oh yeah." Kid snickered. "Airhead."

"Shut your face-hole." Law huffed.

Suddenly Corazon called, "Boys? Can you come down for a minute?"

Kid was out the door in a blink. "Coming!"

They followed at a calmer pace and found him frozen in the doorway of the living room. Law looked past him and was surprised to see three Marines inside with Corazon and Sengoku.

Instinctual wariness had him balking as well so Penguin was the only one that continued over to Corazon, climbing into his lap like nothing was wrong. "What's up, Ojii-san?"

"These are Vice Admirals Kuzan, Tsuru, and Issho. They came to pick up Tou-san." Corazon said.

"You're leaving?" Kid asked Sengoku with wide eyes.

Law had a hand on Kid's back before he could back up more than a step and he leaned in as he said softly, "Don't run off. He's probably gonna leave tonight and you'll regret not being here to tell him bye."
Kid shoved him away before he ran over to the Admiral instead, hugging him tightly around the neck and not moving.

Sengoku hugged him back. "I'll see you boys in a year when you pass through Saboady."

"But we don't want you to go!" Penguin protested as he too hugged the man, crying.

"Sorry, buddy, but I have to. I've been gone too long as it is."

Killer wordlessly went to go sit beside the man, leaning against his side with his hair hiding his eyes.

Law, on the other hand, went to stand in front of the three Vice Admirals where they sat on the other couch with cups of tea.

"What are you glaring at, boy?" Tsuru demanded, giving him a stern look.

Well, her specifically now. "When we meet up in a year, I expect to find my Ojii-san whole and healthy." He said calmly as he looked between them. "So you better protect him."

"Law-chan, don't threaten Vice Admirals." Corazon sighed in fond exasperation as he pulled Law to sit on his lap.

"It's only a threat if they let him get hurt. Till then, it's friendly advice." Law defended, crossing his arms in front of his chest.

Issho laughed in amusement. "Cute kid."

Law growled. He was NOT cute. "How would you know?"

"Law-chan, don't make me put a Calm field around you." Corazon warned mildly.

"Don't make me submit it in writing." He replied, scraping at his nails. "Then again, stone carving sounds fun. What's the weight limit of a News Coo?"

Issho just laughed harder. "Aw, don't get after him, Rocinante. He's just worried about his grandfather!"

"Either way he should be more respectful to his superiors." Tsuru sniffed in disapproval.

"Lady-" He looked at the Calm field surrounding them in mild annoyance before he just flicked the woman off.

That had Kuzan laughing too as she spluttered indignantly.

Corazon stood up quickly. "Let's start on dinner, shall we, Law-chan?"

Law smiled lazily. "Of course, Tou-san. We don't want to insult our guests by making them wait."

"You're doing something right with that kid, Taicho." Kuzan said in amusement.

Corazon just made a cross between a groan and a sigh. "This is why you get into so much trouble everywhere, Law-chan."

"She has no right coming into our home and demanding things from me." He muttered angrily. "She's superior in only one respect-she is better at dying."
"That's not nice."

"I'll be nice to her when she earns it." He wriggled out of the man's arms and went to go get the fish from the fridge.

"You're just taking out Tou-san leaving on them." Corazon said in disapproval as he brought out the dishes they'd need.

"So?" He asked, but before the man could chastise him, he huffed and reluctantly said, "I'll be...civil..."

Corazon's bright smile was worth it, he supposed. But then he noticed something.

"You don't even have any sleeves, how did you catch on fire?!"

~~~rp~~~

Dinner was relatively peaceful as the adults made idle chatter while Kid and Law bickered over the amount of food they were eating. They both thought the other should be eating more but neither wanted more, so they were comparing their schedules and the pros and cons of a heavy breakfast/dinner for one's health.

Neither noticed Penguin and Killer sneaking food onto their plates during the argument.

A typical dinner.

But then they were leaving and Law didn't want to let him go. Penguin was crying into the man's leg, arms and legs wrapped around the limb tightly with Kid mirroring him on the other. But no matter how hard they cried, none of them asked him to stay. They just wanted to postpone the inevitable for as long as possible.

Only Momo, who had come for moral support, allowed the Admiral to free his legs. Killer was stubbornly not lifting a finger to help, arms crossed as he sulked a few yards away.

"Come on, Law-chan, they've got to get going." Corazon said as he tried to pry the older boy away from Sengoku's neck.

"Teeth." Momo warned just before Law tried to bite the man's hand.

Sengoku rubbed Law's back. "Come on, Law-chan, the year will be over before you know it."

Law cried harder. "I'm not ready!

"You'll never be ready, buddy." Corazon said gently. "Sometimes you just need to let go."

"NEVER!"

After another minute of fruitless prying, Sengoku sighed and grabbed him by the scruff of his neck, pulling him away. Corazon capitalized on Law's loosening grip to pry him away and secure him in his own arms, where he and a similarly trapped Kid struggled to get free.

Sengoku put a hand on Corazon's head. "Keep an eye on them Roci. I'll call once I'm back at HQ."

"Be careful, Tou-san. We love you." He told him sadly and the kids cried harder as the man boarded the ship docked beside Kid's.
Within minutes, they were gone.

Momo picked up Killer, Maki secure in her carrier, and said, "Let's go, boys. You need to go to school and Roci and Law-chan need to get to bed."

Reluctantly, they began to calm down and remained subdued on the way up the lift.

Being kids sucked at times like this.
Chapter 43

It took five days and two calls over the Den Den Mushi for them to perk up again. The first thing Law did when he felt better was find a relatively flat stone to smooth out. He made sure it was still sturdy before carving three words into it, giggling to himself the entire time as he imagined the man's face when he figured out what it said. He wondered if the man would even be able to before brushing it off as unimportant. It made him smile and that was all that mattered.

He intercepted his father's News Coo and with a bit of money, bribed it to take the stone to Issho. Then he went home and promptly forgot about it as he got ready for school.

~~~rp~~~

"So Issho tells me he got a letter from you, Law-chan."

"I don't know what you're talking about." Law said as the others gave him exasperated looks. "Why would he think it's from me?"

"It's a two foot by one foot, two inch thick slab of stone with 'I'm watching you' carved into it." Sengoku said dryly.

"How very thoughtful of whoever created it. The man's blind, you know." He said with a small smile.

"What'd he say?" Corazon asked wearily.

"He's propped it up in his office so it's the first thing visitors notice. We think it's raised his intimidation factor by twenty percent."

"Why do you have to pick fights with everyone you meet?" Killer asked Law, just as weary as Corazon.

"You have no proof that it was me." He protested.

"You literally told us you'd submit it in writing to him by carving it in stone!" Kid scoffed, torn between amused and incredulous.

"Circumstantial evidence. Won't hold up in court." Law said easily.

"...dude."

"Dude."

"Just admit you sent it!" He exclaimed in annoyance.

"I didn't." Law brushed off.

"We all know you did!"

"I don't care what you all think you know."

Kid growled in frustration.

"Whether or not he sent it," Sengoku interjected calmly before it could devolve into a brawl. "I think it's safe to say he enjoyed it. How are you boys getting on in your training?"
Law let them talk about both the scholastic and social drama going on in Whale forest as he sharpened his blade. It'd been getting a lot more action lately since they had started classes on basic swordsmanship. He had to think of a way to keep it strong enough to join him on his voyages in the New World.

He wouldn't be getting Kikoku again unless he was REALLY lucky. He wasn't one to rely on luck.

"What about you, Law-chan?" Sengoku asked.

"Sicilian-ya keeps throwing me down the pit." He said in immediate irritation. "Every time he says it's because I was being too soft—but I wasn't even doing anything!"

"What's the pit?" Corazon asked curiously.

"Exactly what it sounds like." He sighed. "About twelve feet in diameter, it's got smooth walls of stone that makes climbing up difficult even for other Minks. It's about a twenty foot drop I guess and he throws us in to 'toughen' us up." He growled, tail flicking angrily. "Seriously, I'll be doing our reps, same as everyone else, and he'll just grab me and chuck me in! Getting out isn't even a problem anymore, but it's so tedious when I could be improving my form!"

"Has anyone else figured out why he might be doing it? Another instructor, maybe?" Sengoku asked.

He scoffed slightly. "Their best guess is Rodney-ya's. He thinks because of the estrogen in my blood, my mere scent is 'soft' to the jerk waffle. But Carrot says that if that was the case, the other girls would be targeted just as much as me. So I think that he's just fond of me and compensates for that by pushing me to get stronger. Still annoying."

"Could be." Corazon said with a smile. "You're so easy to love."

Law went red, mortified. "Don't say things like that to my face!"

"I didn't. I was looking at the Den Den Mushi."

"SAME THING!"

"Anything outside of class?" Sengoku asked in amusement.

Looking away from his father as he rubbed at the red in his cheeks, he said, "I was propositioned again today. She didn't take it as well as Windy-ya did when I turned her down."

"WHAT?!" The other four exclaimed in shock.

He shrugged in disinterest but was careful not to give names when he said, "She tried to convince me I owed her for something or other. When I still said no, stuff happened, she's in the hospital now. Inuarashi-ya lectured me FOREVER about fighting outside the gym since the blood'll contaminate the aquifers so now I gotta clean it out."

"He's making you-" Penguin began in outrage only for Law to cut him off.

"No, I offered so he'd shut up."

They all sighed in exasperation.

"So which hospital?" Kid asked.
"Shut up." He replied without heat. "But anyway, so that's what happened. That isn't the interesting part though. So I've been smelling some weird stuff ever since I was crushed by Redbeard, right? I thought it was just, like, olfactory hallucinations since I'd just replaced a third of my brain so I disregarded it and it went away. But today after the whole lecture thing, I smelled it again and decided to follow it."

"Of course you did." Killer said wearily.

"Shut up, Carrot was with me." He huffed and they let out relieved sounds. "ANYWAY, so WE followed it into the swamp where we found one of Redbeard's men changing back from a MOUSE. We followed him into the swamp where two or three more survivors had set up camp and listened to them talk about poisoning the aquifers since the man had heard Inuarashi-ya's rant and after we learned they were the only ones left, Carrot let me practice my shambles technique on them and I combined them with some large fish that live there."

"Why the fish?" Penguin asked curiously.

Law shook his head with a small smile. "After assuring they were completely attached to the fish bodies, I tossed them in and watched them flounder." He laughed at his own pun. "But they got the hang of it and long story short, there are now fish with human heads swimming in the swamp so don't eat them."

They all gaped at him in shock.

He blinked at them in confusion. "What?"

"That's...a bit cruel, don't you think?" Penguin asked a bit hesitantly.


"But...couldn't you have just killed them?" Kid asked with a frown.

"Death would be a mercy I am no longer able to give Redbeard's men." He replied calmly.

"Psychopath." Kid scoffed.

"Dude, they're alive."

"Suffering."

"Healthy!" He exclaimed hotly. "Unlike Annie and unlike we would be if I hadn't decided to follow the scent! So excuse me if I didn't think death would be a strong enough punishment for people so willing to murder innocents! Do you know how many times people have fucking poisoned me, you got a TASTE of that agony in Mangrove-"

Suddenly his face blanked and he calmly got to his feet.

"Where are you going?" Corazon asked worriedly.

"You're right." He said calmly. "I shouldn't make it personal. I'll end their suffering."

Kid used his powers to pull him back by his sword before he could leave the room. "Whoa, hang on a sec." He leapt off the couch and went to grasp his arm. "Do me a favor real quick?"

Law narrowed his eyes at him before asking, "What?"
"Check your hormone levels. If they're normal—yeah, go kill the fishdicks. But if they aren't, let's talk about this a bit."

His first instinct was to refuse, which—okay, red flag. Frowning, he created a room.

"Son of a bitch." He growled in frustration as he began removing the excess and leveled the production out again. "I fucking hate puberty."

"So...hormones?" Corazon asked sympathetically.

"The freaking estrogen, man, I don't even—it just sneaks up on me." He said in irritation.

Kid patted his back sympathetically. "Sorry you're PMS-ing, dude."

"I'll cut you." He growled.

"Bitch—"

"Boys." Sengoku chided.

Both settled down and Law wiped his blade with the cloth to remove excess oil before sheathing it again. "Okay, so I MAY have, in some small way, been a TEENSY bit vindictive in dealing with the intruders."

"Just a bit." Corazon replied. "Wanna come back over here?"

He immediately complied, letting him draw him up onto his lap and wrap his arms around him. Kid sat back down next to Killer on the other couch. "Talk about what exactly?" He asked the redhead.

"Why did you react like that?" Penguin asked. "Was it because they were going to kill us or because poisoning is obviously a sore spot for you?"

Law thought about it for a moment. It was true that he hadn't been very cruel in any sense since coming back (except when he made sure each of the Nobles from Mangrove had enough asbestos in their lungs to develop their own ailments once they'd left, but he'd been sure not to get caught) and he considered what had brought it out now.

Tension from that stupid bint. "I guess I was already in a mood because of that chick...I don't owe her fucking anything, it's not MY fault—" He cut himself off before it turned into a rant none of them needed to hear. "Anyway, so yeah. Plus the poison thing, I was angry and I was thinking of all the assholes that have tried this before and I was scared too, because goddamn, why is fate so fucking set on killing everyone I—" He cut himself off again. There it was, the root of the problem. He glared at his sword, trying to calm down because he'd gotten his revenge. It would never be satisfying though. "If I hadn't decided to follow that scent, how many would have died before we figured it out? I'm only thirteen, how many could I realistically save even if we found out in time? There are five hundred plus people on this island, not to mention Zunisha-sama herself—what if SHE got sick?!" He started to panic.

Corazon immediately began to calm him down. "Easy, Law-chan, easy. You stopped them, remember?"

"And dude, you can locate and remove all cancerous cells in someone in seconds without them even knowing it was there in the first place." Kid scoffed. "What's poison to that? The moment the first person fell sick, you'd be on the case in a heartbeat and you'd figure it out just as quickly."
Don’t sell yourself short."

Law blushed slightly at the high praise, comforted by the reminder that yeah, he’d come a long way from struggling to heal bruises. He might not be as skilled as he once was, but he was enough for that possibility.

"Now admit you sent the damn tablet." Kid huffed.

"Never!" Law exclaimed, which was technically an admission of guilt but Kid tackled him furiously anyway.

The heavy subject was dropped and they went back to talking with the quiet Admiral.
"TIME TO TRAIN!"

Letting out a war cry, Law abandoned his forms to attack the Vice Admiral with all he had, only vaguely hearing his classmates' shouts of confusion and alarm. Law could tell that he'd improved since the last time the old man had attacked him, but he was a child.

Five minutes later, he was down.

"Still weak as a newborn! Have you trained at all while I was gone?!!" Garp demanded angrily.

"Fuck you." Law growled furiously before sinking his teeth into the man's leg.

Yelping, Garp grabbed him by his neck and held him in the air. "That's no way to speak to your Oji-chan! FIST OF LOVE!"

Dazed by the hit and soundly beaten, Law was in no position to protest as he was carted off by the crazy old man.

"Should we…help him…?" Danny asked Rodney uncertainly.

"That's Monkey D. Garp, pup. There's nothing we could do." The Mink replied solemnly. He looked at his partner, who had stars in his eyes. "In any case…you should be more worried about yourselves."

They all rued the day Garp arrived on Zou.

~~~rp~~~

After the others were roused and also beaten to a pulp by the Marine, Garp didn't throw them off Zunisha's back. What he DID do was dump them in the darkest depths of the swamp where all but the strongest Minks were forbidden to enter. They found out why within seconds of the man leaving.

There were creatures there. Not Mink and not animal, the group had no idea what they were. They moved as fast as lightning but silent as shadows until they shrieked liked banshees to disorient them while attacking and the four's reflexes were the only thing that saved them from painful deaths as they struggled to get away. They eventually reached the boundary and creatures didn't follow. So turning, the quartet fled, returning to Kurau severely injured and terrified out of their minds. Garp gave them three hours of rest before he was on them again. Then it was right back to the heart of the swamp.

They battled for three days and Penguin was the first to break down under the onslaught of the monstrous creatures that attacked them with innumerable limbs, too many shadows, mouths full of teeth.

Kid was next to fall, followed soon by Killer and Law was alone. The creatures circled him, hidden in the shadows too dark for even his eyes to pierce, waiting to see if he'd fall too. With the air heavy with their anticipation and his family's terrified sobs, he felt something in his chest snap. Letting out a piercing cry almost like a panther's, he amplified it with his Haki and the startled creatures stumbled back as he lunged at them.

He attacked with teeth and claws, heedless of the injuries they gave him as he pressed them away.
from his family—his babies. He had to protect his babies and these creatures were hurting them! He lost all sense beyond his need to protect and the ferocity of it kept the creatures at bay. He bought his babies time to recover with blood.

Suddenly, they stirred and Law was at their sides in an instant, immediately herding them towards the boundary. "Run." He grunted with his limited awareness. "Don't look back." He ran with them for a while, but the creatures were closing in again.

Letting out that piercing cry, he met them and gave in completely to his instincts. Time passed oddly for him in his haze. Everything began to blur together and it only felt like ten minutes later that the others returned for him. They faced the fearsome creatures and Law saw there would be no more running away. They fought until the creatures submitted to their greater strength and retreated.

Purring, Law licked at a wound on his shoulder—one of the many bleeding sluggishly.

"S-Sencho…?" Penguin began hesitantly. "Th-they're gone…you can stop doing that now…"

Law ignored him as he grabbed Killer who was closest and began licking blood off of him. He was covered in wounds too. They all were. He created his room to start healing the gashes and bites.

"Ow, ow!" Killer exclaimed in shock, trying to shove him away. "His tongue's gotten rough!" It was like pushing at a wall, but thankfully Law seemed to have gotten the point because he'd started licking more gently, purring louder.

"I don't think he knows he's doing it." Kid said as he walked over to start cleaning away the blood covering Penguin using a rag and their canteens.

"It's scaring me…" Penguin admitted quietly, watching warily as Law forced Killer to sit down allowing him to tear away the rags that used to be his pants legs.

"Then exposure will do you good. You know he'd never hurt you." Kid chided gently.

Killer shifted so that Law could lick at the gash on the outside of his thigh, the flesh knitting back together like a film in reverse. "What's he doing?" He asked curiously. He was so glad that he didn't have fur or it'd take forever for the boy to get the blood out. Not to mention how agonizing it'd have been.

"You know that feeling you get when Sea Kings are about to go into a rage?" Penguin asked. At his nod, he continued, "Well, Sencho's giving off something worse. The feeling of a Sea King whose young are in danger." He shuddered in fear as tears spilled from his eyes. "They're the scariest creatures you'll ever face. They'll attack and attack unless you take them down, but even unconscious and half dead they'll continue their assaults. Even my family, who faces Sea Kings during their most aggressive season wouldn't dare fend off young Sea Kings even if it meant losing our entire stock cuz of how ferocious the parents get. We've learned to recognize that sensation and retreat, but I can't run from Sencho…he's my Tou-san…"

Killer paused his grab for Law's head as the boy licked at a deep wound on his ankle that would have needed stitches if Law didn't have his room. "I thought that's coming from those creatures… Law's giving off that feeling?"

Penguin nodded.

"Then we're safe…" He said in relief as he fell onto his back only to wince when he realized Law hadn't gotten to those wounds yet. As if reading his mind, Law made him turn over and Killer was
asleep in seconds.

"Law would never hurt you, Gene." Kid told him softly. "YOU are his young, remember? Take comfort in that feeling."


Kid kept the fact that Law was completely unconscious to himself and kept an eye out for the Shadowmen. Maybe he wouldn't kill Garp after all. The crazy bastard had reminded their softened baby hearts that if it moved, it could die. The Shadowmen would never scare them again because of that knowledge.

He felt himself being pulled back and realized Penguin was now sleeping, curled up against Killer. He was suddenly aware of how cold he was as the taller boy encased him in his arms, surrounding him with a too-high body heat. Did he have a fever from this god-awful swamp? As the repetitive action of Law licking him dragged on, he found himself succumbing to the comforting purrs and he too fell asleep.

With his cubs sleeping and their wounds treated, Law kept them in a close pile and curled up on top of them both to keep them warm and be in a prime position to protect them if he needed to. The creatures were still out there watching him, waiting for him to falter so they could strike. Shadows flickered as if by flame and he bared his teeth in a snarl and they vanished again.

Without the action keeping his mind focused, time skewed again. All he knew was that suddenly the solid shadows were farther away and lighter. Hearing approaching footsteps, he let out a snarling growl in warning and they paused.

A feline chirp had his growl cutting off and he realized he recognized it. He let out a rolling meow that had them coming closer.

"Law-chan?" Pedro asked as he leapt down from a tree and into Law's line of sight. He looked alarmed and raised his hand to his mouth to whistle sharply.

Footsteps began coming from every direction and Law panicked, letting out a piercing cry before he lunged at the jaguar Mink.

Pedro didn't fight. "Law-chan, it's okay. It's just us." He told him and Law jerked when he felt the Haki surrounding him, the Mink's will trying to impose calmness.

It was working until Law sensed someone nearing his cubs.

"Everyone, stay away from the kids." Pedro ordered calmly as Blackback went docile beneath the feral child. They realized they were frightening him and moved to one side of the clearing, sitting down.

No longer surrounded, Blackback's Haki began to take effect and Law relaxed.

"What was that man thinking?!!" Lily asked angrily as they took in the many injuries still littering the boy's flesh. "We told him specifically not to go anywhere near the swamp while training the boys!"

Pedro took the child from the gorilla Mink, chuffing quietly and smiling when he got a loud purr in response.

"Why's he so feral?" Bamboo asked as they watched Pedro lick the wounds clean. The compliancy of the boy was far more concerning than the wounds.
"There are many plants in the swamp that give off spores and scents that can affect the mood."
Roddy replied as he plucked at a vine strangling one of the trees. It had large purple flowers that
glistened with nectar. "This one, for example, feline Mink are especially susceptible to. It can
cause anxiety and induce feelings of despair, paranoia, and anger. I suspect that Law-chan wasn't
at his best to begin with due to Garp's interference not allowing him the time to keep his hormones
in check. Coupled with the upheaval from the flora…"

"…he shut down." She realized with a grimace.

Suddenly the air became about ten times lighter and Pedro stood with the now-unconscious boy in
his arms. "Grab the boys, we need to get them to the hospital. Law-chan is burning up."

Blackback roared at the approaching creatures and began beating his chest as the others quickly
gathered the children. The rest of them aided him in covering their retreating comrades.

The week-long search for the missing boys was finally put to an end.

~~~rp~~~

Law slept for two days as the toxic blood he'd ingested from the creatures filtered from his system.
The boys stayed with him the entire time, playing cards and hardly saying a word to anyone as
they waited for him to wake up. They wouldn't say anything about their stint in the swamp to
anyone and were worryingly subdued from the whole experience.

They were just glad Garp had left after dumping them in there the fourth day.

When Law woke up, they only knew because the card house they were building on his chest
topped over.

"You're awake!" Penguin said happily before he hugged him tightly.

Purring sleepily, Law licked him in greeting before rubbing their heads together. "How was
school?" He asked as if it were a normal day.

Kid and Killer shared a look before Kid said, "We didn't go. You're in the hospital, man."

THAT woke Law up and he created a room before growling in annoyance. "Poison again…?
Jesus Christ this is becoming a habit." He removed what was left in his body, noting he now had
an immunity to it. "I had no clue those creatures even lived there. We're collecting a sample."

"Only if we can watch the autopsy." Kid immediately replied.

"Sure. Take away the unknown, take away the fear." He hummed before starting to heal the
wounds all over his body.

"So how much do you remember?" Killer asked as they watched him focus on his injuries.

"Up until Pedro-ya calmed me down." He replied absently. "But I must have been high or
something because the memories are blurry, colors too bright—almost like a dream."

"More like a fucking nightmare." Kid muttered. "I've never been so damn terrified in my life."

The others made sounds of agreement.

"On the plus side though, we learned that if it can move, it can be killed." He continued brightly.
"But we also learned, 'don't bite strange creatures unless you want to be laid out for two days while you wait for the toxins to filter out.'" Penguin huffed into Law's shoulder.

They laughed in amusement and the door suddenly slammed open revealing Corazon, who was out of breath and panting as he looked at them with wide eyes. A large grin bloomed on his face when he saw Law. "You're awake!" He shouted and Law found himself being hugged within an inch of his life.

~~~rp~~~

"So you're alive, I see." Sicilian said as Law entered the gym the next day.

"Of course I am." He scoffed. "It'll take more than the Shadowmen to kill me."

"Shadowmen?" Danny asked curiously.

By the time class started, he'd properly traumatized his classmates with the true story about what lurked in the heart of the swamp. Due to it being a prohibited area to all but the strongest warriors, like Law none of the kids had known about the Shadowmen.
After they returned to their schedules, not much happened. Law went to school, reluctantly spent time with his friends and on the weekends, he avoided the town like it was the plague, not wanting to deal with the possible reactions of his other classmates. He made excuses and though he knew they knew what he was doing, he still denied their pleas to go with them.

He didn't have to deal with their rejection until the two months ended.

But the months passed quickly and too soon it was time to return to the night shift. He said farewell to the Day Class and went straight to bed once he got home, resting for more classes that night.

Penguin was ecstatic about Law returning to their schedule, but Law didn't want to deal with reactions yet. He wasn't ready. He missed his friends so much and the chance of rejection kept him subdued the entire walk to the Academy.

The other three chatted excitedly, but didn't expect him to pitch in and as the Fortress came into view, Law made sure his hat hid his eyes, keeping his gaze on the ground ahead. When he entered the Academy, he was completely unprepared for the dogpile as the others tackled him with cries of "LAW-CHAN!"

He was speechless. "You…you missed me?" He asked in confusion. He didn't understand.

"Of course we did, idiot!" Windy exclaimed. "You've been gone forever and then you were in the hospital again cuz your crazy uncle dumped you in the swamp after almost dying and then—and then—" She started to cry and he awkwardly patted her on the back.

"I'm okay."

"Save the chit chat for after class!" Pedro called. "Line up!"

Everyone reluctantly let go of Law and got ready for the lessons.

-DP-

Despite the warm welcome he'd received, he still tried to bow out of going with them to the restaurant after school.

"But you gotta go!" Maggie protested as she and Windy tried their damnedest to drag him to the bar by his arms.

"We've got so much to catch you up on!" Windy exclaimed.

"And we want to hear all about your time there! Were there any cute guys?" Dory asked with a giggle where she was pushing his back with Laura.

"Ooh, what were the girls like, were they nice to you?"

"Do we gotta bash some skanks?"
"Seriously, the guys tho!"

Law sent his brothers a pleading look, but they were all too busy laughing at him with the other guys. He growled in frustration only to be startled when the girls all squealed.

"Oh my god that is the cutest—"

He was in hell.

"Let's hear him purr!"

Somehow, they knew exactly where to pet and despite his ferocious struggles, he was no match for all of them.

They never actually made it to the restaurant, but a couple guys went to the bar and got drinks and food for everyone so it didn't really matter.

Chapter End Notes

this is a small chapter, but I wanted to give you all SOMETHING after half a year. I'm keeping hiatus on the summary because my updates may be sporadic, but as I told you all, this story is NOT abandoned. I've just been having computer troubles and zero drive to write…the overall story will not be completed because I've lost all inspiration, but this is still journal 4 out of 9! Maybe as I upload it I'll get some ideas, but we'll just have to wait and see.

Next chapter will have one of the major plot points occurring, so look forward to it!
Chapter 46

Chapter Notes

warning, there are some mature themes in this chapter. Candid talk of sex and vague descriptions :)

Though their schedules remained the same, there were some changes that occurred over the next few weeks; mainly the days they left the school and kept to just the four of them. Often it was spent sparring and exploring, but sometimes they just hung out together, helping each other with personal projects. In Law's case, some of those hours were just spent keeping to himself in their company. It was a lot like the time they spent with Corazon at night, but outside.

It was one of those days and they were hanging out in Whale Forest, taking shelter under the trees. Law was going through his notes on the examinations he'd been performing every week, trying to find any complications or side-effects from the surgery. He was laying across Kid and Killer's laps, the duo using his back as a table while they bickered over the designs of some device. Penguin was toying with a small hand-carved flute, trying to get a good tune from it.

It was peaceful and quiet but Law didn't notice as he went over his results. Anger and annoyance and uncertainty filled him and caused his tail to flicker, immediately giving away his agitation.

"What?" Kid asked.

Law realized what'd happened and immediately stilled the limb. "Did I say something?"

That got the other two's attention and Kid became a lot more interested. Damn it. "Come on, what?" he asked again.

Well…they'd find out sooner or later... "I'm warning you now, if you laugh, I'll confiscate your tongue and store it in vinegar."

Grimacing, Killer said, "Just get on with it."

"I noticed my mink has been spreading." He said with a sigh. "I estimate that it will cover the bare patches by the end of our stay here. And..." He hesitated a second before continuing reluctantly, "While I was examining my skin to see how exactly it's doing so...I realized stromal tissue growth has become abnormal and the adipose tissue accumulation..." He rubbed at the bridge of his nose, tail starting to flicker again. "I'm going to have to start wearing shirts."

Penguin's hands clapped to his mouth to stifle his shocked gasp as he stared at Law with wide eyes.

"...in English, please?" Killer requested.

"I'm developing breasts."

They let out startled sounds before Kid suddenly shoved him off their laps and onto his back so he could look. "What the fuck? You're turning into a chick?"
Law smacked away the hand poking the barely noticeable swell of fatty tissue that would be…his breasts. Jesus Christ. "No. I'll still have a dick and Last time I checked, I don't have a uterus or ovaries so I am still firmly male." He said in irritation.

"I mean looks-wise." Kid scoffed as he instead cupped Law's face with both hands. "Come to think of it, you look softer around the jaw and eyes…"

A hand on his stomach had Law purring as Killer said in surprise, "It is spreading. When did that happen?"

"It's so white…” Penguin said in delight as he started to nuzzle the soft fur.

"You barely noticed?" Kid asked in amusement.

"It used to be an off-white though." Penguin defended. "Like cotton. But now it's more like snow."

Law purred louder at that. Snow white was his favorite color. "Yes, it's softened my facial features. I don't know how much they'll be affected, but I'd expect a slightly effeminate look at the very least." He scratched at the mink already growing beneath his chin and sighed. "This freaking estrogen, man. If it weren't so sneaky, I could have stopped this."

"Why stop it?" Kid asked curiously. "I have it in good faith that chicks dig havin' their stuff rubbed. Don't care for it much myself, but you got that hedonist vibe goin’ on."

"At least without the reproductive organs you won't experience menstruation." Killer said optimistically.

Law hummed at Killer's words but gave Kid an irritated look. "I already explained that I don't like sex."

"It's not sex, dude. Seriously?"

"I'm gone." Penguin said with a blush as he picked up his flute.

Killer quickly stood as well. "Take me with you."

They watched the duo leave in confusion before refocusing on each other.

"I'm tellin you man, you gotta at least try some of the tamer stuff." Kid continued. "It's not all fucking. You should know this by now."

"I never cared for creature comforts." Law replied with a frown. "I had too much stuff on my mind. I like hugs, that's all I know."

Kid rubbed a hand down his face. "O~kay…this is going to be difficult. First off, we need to find someone that's willing to practice with you—"

"Practice what?"

Both looked up at Windy, who had apparently left the bar with Jake.

"Everything sex except actual sex." Kid replied and Law pulled his hat over his face as he went red. "Chick and a dude so he can see if he dug one more than the other."

"I volunteer!" The antelope girl said excitedly.
"Jose might be interested in trying stuff." Jake said, scratching at the base of the antlers growing from his head. The moose mink was just finishing his own adulting phase but his antlers would continue to grow for five more years.

"Don't scratch those." Law chided, hearing it. "I thought Jose was strictly into females."

"Dude, hate to break it to you, but you look hella female." The boy scoffed. "You're lucky you don't give off the pheromones or everyone would be diggin' you." He laughed at the disgusted look Law sent him.

"Are we talking at the same time here?" Windy asked thoughtfully.

"That wouldn't work." Kid denied. "You'll distract each other from him and if you half-ass it, he could think stuff sucks forever."

"Why don't you do it?" She asked.

"Absolutely not." Law immediately denied. "Blood or not, he's my baby brother and I refuse to let anyone touch him in that manner until he is at least eighteen."

Kid rolled his eyes but didn't argue. He understood that—he felt the same way about Penguin and Killer. "And anyway, we'd fight too much even if that weren't an issue."

They all agreed about that.

Windy skipped over and smiled at Law. "Well come on. You can ask Jose another night then."

Panic surged through Law. "R-right now?"

She giggled. "Don't worry, Law-chan, I'll be nice."

Kid smacked Law's stomach. "Go on. I'll keep the young ones occupied."

"Isn't Killer older—"

"Stop stalling!" Windy laughed as she grabbed Law's hands and yanked him to his feet.

"But my book—" he began to protest, but she ignored him, dragging him away.

"My parents won't be home for a few more hours." She said as they ran through the milling crowds. "But since we aren't doing anything, that won't be a problem anyway."

A minute later, they were in her room and she was pushing Law down onto the bed, straddling his lap. "The most basic thing to try will be kissing. Have you ever done that before?"

Swallowing thickly, he shook his head wordlessly.

She smiled and nuzzled his cheek. "That's okay. It's real easy."

A new sort of lesson began and he found a world of possibility opening up to him.

-DP-

He enjoyed the petting the most, but kissing was a close second. He found no real preference between Windy and Jose—it all felt nice, but the way Jose took control of the kissing was… interesting. But what really sold him on the physical intimacy was the empowering experience of driving them to the brink with a simple touch. As a doctor, he knew exactly where to touch to
elicit the strongest reaction...he knew where to lick, where to bite to have them succumbing to the weakness of their own bodies, giving them the best orgasm they'd likely ever achieve.

Inevitably, word travelled fast. Thankfully no one propositioned him, but they did ask for tips.

Their social dynamics were weird.

"What's the main reason you don't like sex?" Kid asked one day while he and Law sat on the roof, Killer and Penguin playing cards on the balcony.

"Why are you so obsessed with this?" Law sighed as he rolled over onto his stomach.

"Because it's not right for someone to not enjoy sex." He huffed. "I just wanna make absolutely sure you're gettin the most outta life, man."

Law frowned to himself. "There's nothing wrong with not wanting sex."

He huffed again. "Okay, maybe not, but I still wanna make sure we cover all the bases. What if you find out when you're sixty that all this time you coulda enjoyed your body more but you didn't know how?"

He could see the boy's point. So he decided to answer his first question. "I've tried it, twice. One male, one female...for educational purposes. The female...obviously, I couldn't get an erection, so that one ended with a slap to the face." He ignored the boy's growl. "Apparently, she wasn't very good at the petting thing now that I've got Windy-ya as a comparison. Her nails, man. Ouch." He closed his eyes as Kid reclined against his back, using him as a pillow. "As for the guy, everything he did hurt."

"Let's stop right there. It was obviously a shitty partner." Kid said. "Sex should never hurt unless it's from overstimulation. How far did he get?"

Law huffed a laugh, tail flickering lazily. "Not very. After he just shoved it in, I cut his dick off and shoved it down his throat."

"Wait! No-no prep or—or anything?" Kid asked in shocked horror.

"A couple fingers."

"How big was he?"

Law shrugged lightly. "Above average. I heard they were better at it."

"First of all, that's a myth. Size doesn't matter." He said. "Unless the dick is like, two inches then yeah, bigger is better." He waved it off. "Anyway, above average—that needs three fingers and a ton of lubrication, man. At least. Prep should take about twenty to thirty minutes to be completely painless and always use lube. Always. Even if it's that two-inch dick; trust me. You can't rush this type of thing, man. Too many complications can happen with anal shit. When you're eighteen, we gotta find you someone to give it to you properly. I did it once—wasn't really my cup of tea, but the guy was good."

Law hummed. "This has been informative. Thank you."

"Yeah, yeah. You're welcome. Someone should really write a book on the subject."

He chuckled. "I can see that becoming a best seller."
Kid nuzzled the mink on Law's back and gave a sigh the older boy immediately recognized as impending sleep. "It's all about visualization…"

Smiling, Law began to purr and…there. The yawn and final gust of breath.

Curling up, Law decided a nap wasn't such a bad idea and closed his eyes. He drifted off in no time.
He kept track of the growth and when it started to become obvious that it wasn't just from the weight he was gaining from the steady meals he was getting at his parents' house, he knew he had to take action. It was pretty simple getting a shirt and though he still didn't like it, the shirt was the most comfortable he'd found to date.

"What's with the shirt, Law-chan?" Baki asked curiously at dinner.

"Nothing." He yawned as he tried not to fall into his breakfast.

"Is that mine?" Corazon asked in surprise as they all noticed the garment.

"No." He lied.

Confused, Corazon looked at the kids, but they were studiously looking at their food.

"Boys…" Momo began softly. "What's going on?"

The younger three hunched over slightly in an entirely conspicuous manner.

Law looked as unflappable as ever. "Nothing. Can't a guy wear a shirt without getting interrogated?"

The adults shared confused looks.

"Do we need to get out the umeboshi?" Baki asked reluctantly. "You know we don't like lying."

"Did you get a tattoo?" Momo asked suspiciously.

Law looked at her in surprise. "No."

That one was completely honest.

"Then take off your shirt." She ordered.

Now Law was hunching down too. "No."

That shocked the adults. "Excuse me?" She demanded angrily. "Young man, you can take off that shirt or you can tell us why you're wearing it. Those are your only two options."

The boy sunk lower in his seat, hat hiding his eyes. He didn't respond.

"One," Baki began to count causing Law to flinch. "Two."

Law muttered something.

"What was that?" He asked suspiciously.

What little of the boy's face they could see was red. "I said…I'm developing breasts from the estrogen."
Corazon put a hand to his mouth. "You're sure?"

Law gave him a look that had him smiling sheepishly. "Yes, I'm sure. I've been documenting its progress for the last month but it's started to become noticeable."

The other kids continued to eat, pretending there was nothing going on.

"Do you need anything yet?" Momo asked. "Is it just that? Or are you going to have the monthly issue as well?"

Baki and Corazon suddenly found their own food very interesting.

"No." He said with a blush. "I'm still a guy. I just…I'm starting to look like a girl…" He rubbed his face wearily and figured he should've realized they wouldn't let it go. "Windy-ya bought me some stuff…but this was the only shirt I liked."

"Whatever's comfortable." Corazon said warmly. "I won't miss it."

Law gave him a shy smile. "Thank you."

After a moment, Baki asked a little too loudly, "So how's training?"

The subject was dropped.

-f-f-f-f-DP-f-f-f-f-

The effects became even more noticeable as the weeks passed. His waist had narrowed, his hips widened, and the mink was starting to completely cover his face. Only patches near his nose and forehead remained uncovered and he was constantly seeking out scratches from his family. They didn't like rubbing his face much, but they'd get used to it just like everything else.

He had to formally apologize to Jake for getting after him about the scratching because it was maddening. He couldn't even imagine antlers.

Thankfully, his face developed more as a human's than a Mink. Longer lashes, a smaller nose, and thicker lips. Coupled with his wider eyes and softer jaw, he could easily be mistaken for a girl and too soon it was time for a new dilemma…

Jeans, skirts or shorts?

"Skirt means underwear." Penguin immediately pitched in.

"But jeans will be uncomfortable since you don't like it messing up your mink." Killer countered. "Same problem with shorts, though less than jeans."

"Skirts would make it easy for shitheads to grope you though." Kid protested.

"But on the other hand, you'd be freaking adorable!" Penguin said brightly.

"What lengths are we talking?" Killer asked.

"Mid-thigh, I suppose. Since jeans are out." He replied.

"You're not dressing like some whore!" Kid immediately exclaimed.

"Excuse you!" The girls exclaimed in outrage.
"Y'all are trying to get laid, chill out." Kid brushed off, getting furious looks from them.

"I want thigh length." Law cut in smoothly before conflicts erupted.

"Ugh, we'll be beating off perverts constantly!" Killer groaned. "I vote jeans."

"Second that motion."

"But guys!" Penguin protested. "Think of all the cute combos! Jeans are so limited in fashion!"

"You need to stop reading his magazines!" Kid growled.

"Girls get groped in jeans too, y'know." Maggie scoffed as she brushed her hair. "Nothing we wear will protect us from perverts."

"Yeah, that's what our fists are for." Laura agreed.

"And hate to break it to you, but he'll be catching eyes anyway. His mink is so beautiful." Dori sighed and the other girls did as well.

Law preened slightly at the praise, happy.

"Ugh." Kid groaned. "So, skirts or shorts then? Skirts hide weapons better."

They were all shocked by that realization.

"Oh my god, he's right!"

"What have we been doing we could have so many more weapons!"

"We can hide make-up too! A purse that can't be snatched!"

All the girls gaped at Windy before they all let out delighted squeals and ran off.

Law cocked his head to the side. "So…skirts."

The other two sighed in resignation, all three nodding.

-f-f-f- D.P-f-f-f-

Corazon nearly had a heart attack when he saw him the next morning. He and Baki both had to get some air as the full extent of Law's development was revealed by the bikini top and short skirt.

"Oh kitten! You look so beautiful!" Momo cried as she hugged Law tightly, rubbing their cheeks together. "You should grow your hair out too! Oh, it'll contrast so nicely with your mink! And look! Oh Baki, Roci, bring the camera den den mushi!"

"Law-nii-chin pwetty!" Maki exclaimed as the woman began to coo again and fawn over him.

"My son is my daughter." Corazon said dazedly. "I'm going to have to pulverize so many perverts…"

"Do you have to show so much of your mink?" Baki asked weakly.

"Yes." He replied.

The Mink buried his face in his paws. "You're only fourteen!"
"WHAT?!!" Kid, Killer, and Corazon yelled in shock.

"When was his birthday?!!" Kid demanded furiously.

They looked at the calendar on the wall.

"Three weeks ago?" Law said in confusion.

"Why didn't you tell us?" Corazon demanded. "We could have celebrated!"

Oh. "I don't celebrate birthdays." He replied. "Never have."

"Never?" Kid asked in shock. "Why not?"

"It's against my religion."

"You're religious?" Penguin asked in interest.

"Partly. I'm not getting into it." He replied.

They were silent for a moment.

"Is that why you get so annoyed at parties?" Penguin asked curiously.

"People waste so much food and drinks during parties." He said in disgruntlement. "In my culture, you eat until you're full then give the rest away or put it up for later. Excessive eating and drinking is just gluttony."

"Wow, you are such a downer." Kid scoffed. "Remind me to uninvite you to all future parties."

"When was I invited?"

"Shut up."

Law giggled in amusement.

"Can't we still celebrate?" Corazon pleaded. "We're all so glad you survived another year!"

Law's ears pressed back against his head. "Do what you want, I don't care."

"Well tell us what not to do so you can enjoy it too!" Kid protested.

"Why when it'll just bore you?"

Kid growled and Law noted that he was getting really good at the sound. "Jesus Christ, it was just a joke, don't take it so hard!"

Law made a face at him and smiled when Maki giggled and copied him.

"Sencho, come on. It would be nice showing you we're happy to have you." Penguin pleaded.

He gave a put-upon sigh. "Fine, whatever. I already covered the drinking and eating. That's both greed and gluttony. We'll also need some sort of sport to combat sloth—"

"So basically countering the seven deadly sins?" Baki asked curiously. They'd never questioned why he didn't want parties.
He nodded. "Lust and envy I can counter by giving you all gifts."

"But this is about you." Killer protested.

"I'm glad you're alive too, shithead." He scoffed, flustering the boy. "Pride…I suppose doing something nice for the community. And wrath…I guess I'll just do the prayer chain. Everything else I can do myself, so don't worry about it."

"We'll start planning." Momo said cheerfully as she picked up Maki. "Now it's time for you boys to head to school."

"Right, bye!" The kids called as they went to go get their things and soon they were on their ways to the Academy.

They held the party that weekend and Law had a lot of fun. Surprisingly, so did the others. He gave them their gifts and was happy they liked them because he put a lot of effort into every one. For Penguin, Law gave him the schematics for an instrument they'd heard in Skypeia that he vaguely remembered the boy had liked. Kid he gave a set of tools that he reinforced like his staff. For Killer, he made him a mask similar to what he'd worn as an adult but child-sized. Corazon he gave new sunglasses because he was the reason the original pair had been lost during their six-month journey. Baki got a new set of goggles to help him identify distant ships better and Momo got a new set of hairpins he'd crafted himself. Maki he gave a hand-sewn doll he'd stuffed with cotton and given a simple dress. It lacked any features and had a hat instead of hair.

"Why didn't you give it a face?" Kid asked as they watched the delighted girl hug it tightly.

"A few reasons." He said with a smile. "First and foremost is equality. All people are the same in the eyes of the gods and we believe they should be treated as equals. If a doll has no face, it's free of identity." He shrugged a bit self-consciously. "In our religious teachings, we are forbidden from creating graven images or idols which means no created object should be an accurate representation of the human form. Second, we're back to vanity and pride. As sins, anything that encourages these things are forbidden. Photographs, dolls, illustrations—creating something with a human visage creates an ideal image of the human form and could encourage children to model themselves after such an image." He smiled slightly. "Obviously, as a doctor I sometimes have to disregard such rules, and some of our teachings are rather outdated. But there's no harm in keeping a few traditions alive."

"You've never actually told us what religion you practice." Penguin said.

"To give it a name would be to impose it on others." He replied with a bright smile. "And that would be a facet of pride. No one religion is more right than others."

"I never pictured you as the religious sort." Killer mused, observing him thoughtfully.

He became solemn. "I fell. I fell for a long time. I turned my back because I was angry and afraid. But life is about making mistakes and learning from them."

"You're so adorable!" Corazon cooed as he grabbed Law and pulled him onto his lap, crushing him in a hug. "You're so wise for a cute little cupcake!"

"I'M NOT CUTE DON'T SAY THINGS LIKE THAT!" Law shouted angrily, struggling to get free and the heavy subject was dropped.
If anyone is interested, I made a drawing of Penguin's mom trying to teach him how to talk. It's sideways for some reason but I can't fix it

Just add them to thefoxnine dot tumblr dot com forward slash

post/156516386230/penguins-mom-teaching-him-how-to-talk-based-on

Just remove the space
The day of their departure came upon them far too quickly. None of them were ready to leave what had so easily become their new home. They were down to days, preparations for their journey almost complete.

"I'm not ready. I don't—I don't wanna leave." Kid said anxiously as Law licked his face.

"I'm not ready either." Law said with a purr as he rubbed their cheeks together. "But we have to be supportive for Tou-san."

Kid whined and buried his face in Law's chest. Law began to purr even louder and started to groom his hair instead.

A thwack had them looking up just in time to see Penguin's fist slam into Nekomamushi's chest, sending him stumbling back. They started cheering for the little bird and he continued his assault with vigor.

Five minutes later he was pinned, but the grin never left his face.

"I knocked you back with one punch. You promised I could pet you."

Nekomamushi laughed and lifted him up to his face. Everyone was amused when Penguin had him on his back and purring up a storm in no time.

They were really going to miss it here.

They loaded the last of the provisions for the long journey to Dressrosa as Momo handed Law a Den Den Mushi. "You boys keep in touch. I expect a call every week."

Law tucked the snail under his hat and hugged her tightly. "I promise, Okaa-ya!"

"We'll find a photo Den Den and send pictures!" Kid promised as he hugged her next.

"And we'll send letters too because we can." Killer said quietly as he was pulled into an embrace. He wasn't as big on affection as the other three and the two captains had a bet going on about when he'd start fighting hugs at all.

"Oh, I'll look forward to them! Be safe, I love all of you!" She said warmly.

Penguin was the only one that didn't blush or look away as he responded in kind.

"—and we can visit at least once a year, I'll have vacation time." Corazon was telling Baki as the duo exited the ship.

"Sounds like a plan. We can celebrate everyone's birthdays with one giant party—Law-chan's used to us ignoring that particular thing."

"It's my religion, not yours. It's fine." Law said in exasperation. "This is why I don't talk about it."

Baki licked Law's cheek and chuckled when he went to go hide behind Momo. "Anyway, everything's ready to go. You all finish your goodbyes?"
"Yup." Penguin replied cheerfully before he was launching himself at the Mink. "We'll miss you, Hijiji-san!"

Smiling, Baki licked his cheek and nuzzled him. "We'll miss you boys too. Take good care of Roci, okay?"

"Oi." Corazon protested.

"Always!" The other four said firmly.

After a few more minutes of Law telling his little sister goodbye, they boarded the ship and waved goodbye to the trio on the dock as Corazon took them out to sea.

Zunisha let out a trumpeting sound in farewell and Law smiled happily. She'd look after the tribe.

"Get over here, Trafalgar! I wanna nap!" Kid called and Law rolled his eyes before heading over. His reluctance was an act—he loved being their pillow as much as they liked using him as one. Penguin immediately curled up with his head pillowed on Law's shoulder as Kid and Killer rested their heads on his soft stomach. They had to get back into a daytime schedule, but for now, they could nap.

-f-f-DP-f-f-f-

"So where are we gonna be stationed, Tou-san?" Law asked as he curled up on the man's lap, Kid taking his turn at the wheel. Penguin and Killer were in the crow's nest, keeping their eyes peeled for trouble.

And probably cuddling by the low pitch to their voices. Law glared at the awning covering the navigation deck.

"A town in the East Blue called Cocoyashi." The man replied. "A friend of mine will be setting us up. Please wait at least a month before doing anything life-threatening."

Law purred loudly at that and snuggled against his chest. "No promises, but I'll try."

"That's the best you'll get." Kid scoffed in amusement and Corazon nodded in resignation.

They settled back into their training schedules easily enough and Law began to practice sensing ocean dwellers with his powers (almost like sonar) but the feeling of the sea kept putting him to sleep. Usually one of the others would wake him up relatively quickly and he'd try again, but it was still a tedious weakness.

At least he didn't have any trouble falling asleep at night because of it, but awake or asleep, the two-week voyage to Dressrosa passed far quicker than any of them expected.

"Are we going to visit Yuki-chan, Sencho?" Penguin asked.

"She probably won't recognize me," He replied as they disembarked. "But yeah. We promised, didn't we?"

"While you boys do that, I'll start stocking up on supplies." Corazon said. "If I'm done by noon, let's meet for lunch at the Starborn Café."

"But Ojii-san, she'll wanna see you too!" Penguin protested.

"Yeah, we can restock after lunch!" Kid sided with him. "Come on!"
After a moment's hesitation, the man chuckled and gave in. "Oh alright."

Cheering, Penguin and Kid each grabbed one of his hands and dragged him forward.

"Watch your feet!" Law called after them as he and Killer followed at a more sedate pace.

"Too late." Killer chuckled as all three fell. The boys just giggled and resumed dragging the amused man to his feet before continuing to run.

-f-f-f-f-

"Law-nii-chan!" Yuki yelled and immediately threw herself at Law's legs.

Law was honestly surprised. "You recognize me?"

"Yes! I missed you! And Kid-nii-chan and Killer-nii-chan and Pengy-nii-chan!" She cried happily before looking around. "Where's Birdy-oji-chan, Cora-oji-chan?"

The kids giggled at Sengoku's nickname while Corazon chuckled. "He had to go back to work, but he says hello."

"I didn't know you were a girl." Yuki's mother noted as they sat down for tea.

"Why are you all furry?" The dad asked only to get an elbow in the ribs from the mother.

Law smiled in amusement as his brothers snickered. "A lot of people don't notice. Before puberty, gender can be very confusing. As for the fur...I was very sick."

That made the other's stop laughing.

"Oh, you poor dear. I'm so sorry." The mother began fawning over him, buying the half-lie and the potential crisis was averted.
They explored the city while Corazon restocked, the man not giving them a choice in helping or not. Law would have had fun if he weren't spending most of the time dodging grabby hands trying to pet him or grab his tail.

They were on flower hill to get away from the grabby people when Law heard a voice call, "Lawland! Lawland!"

Turning, he was surprised by a light purple-haired Dwarf jumping into his arms. He recognized the white hat. "Cotton-ya?"

The Dwarf was crying uncontrollably, babbling about witnessing the battle at the execution and how they had watched him die via the Visual Den Den Mushi. How she gave her life avenging his death.

"Why would you do that? You are one of Mugiwara-ya's."

"When we were almost decimated by Blackbeard's subordinates, it was Lawland that came to our rescue!" She shouted. "Luffyland couldn't come but while we understand, if not for Lawland we would be dead!"

"So you repay me by dying anyway?" He chided as he nuzzled the Dwarf affectionately.

"When did you save her people, Sencho?" Penguin asked curiously.

"Not long before Mugiwara-ya was scheduled to be executed." He replied before asking, "Cotton-ya, do the others remember too?"

She shook her head quickly. "No! But I've told them everything! The Tontatta Tribe are your willing allies, Lawland!" She leapt out of his arms and began pushing at his legs. "Come on! You must all meet the Tonta-chief!"

"We can't go too far; our father will become worried." Killer told the girl.

Cotton's hands flew to her mouth as she looked at the trio. "Lawland's Cora-san is here?!" Then she began waving her arms excitedly. "AH! You're Lawland's brothers?!"

"I'm his Ace of Hearts, Penguin." Penguin corrected with a smile.

That was too much for her little heart to take and Law caught her as she fainted.

He was smiling in amusement. "Such wonderful little people. Always so enthusiastic."

"But why'd she faint at Penguin's name?" Kid asked in confusion. "Your crew was badass, but not that level."

"Cotton-chan has told us many tales of the great Heart Pirates."


"Lawland-sama." The chief greeted back.

"Ah—wait, -san is good. Or just Law." He told them with a frown. "What stories has she been
telling you? I haven't been a Lord for a long time. Don't—"

"Cotton was right! He's so modest!" One of the Dwarves cried and Law was tackled by the little creatures, protests falling on deaf ears. Cotton woke up and began eagerly regaling the curious trio about 'The Great Lawland-sama'.

He had never been so embarrassed in his life as the trio returned them with their own stories of his latest exploits.

-ffff-

"You were a lord?" Killer asked as they returned to the ship, Cotton sleeping under Law's hat. She'd insisted on tagging along.

Corazon popped up at the railing of the upper deck and Law went red, ears pressing flat to his head. "What? Law-chan was a lord?"

God… "Yes." He reluctantly said.

"When?" Penguin asked, baffled.

"In Flevance." He sighed. "Being the child of the best doctors in the North Blue had its perks."

"No wonder you act like you've got a stick up your ass." Kid scoffed.

"Kid." Corazon chided immediately.

Law glared at the boy before turning away and ignoring him as he headed into the ship.

"It was a joke!" Kid shouted after him, huffing when he didn't get an answer. "Such a bitch, man."

Corazon sighed as Penguin ran after his captain. "Are you all ready to leave?"

"Yeah." Kid replied as he went to go join him and Killer went for the crow's nest. "Law brought a Dwarf with him."

"A Dwarf?" Corazon asked in surprise. "One of the Tontatta Tribe?"

"You know them?"

The man grimaced. "They probably wouldn't be too happy if they find out I'm a Donquixote."

"Why?" He asked curiously. "Somethin' special about your family?"

The man rubbed his neck. "I—uh, never told you, did I? I used to be a Celestial Dragon."

Kid gaped at him. "But you're a good guy!"

"We got kicked out when I was eight because my dad wanted to live with the commoners." The man replied with a blush.

Kid stared at him unblinking for an uncomfortably long moment. "What's that gotta do with the Dwarves?"

"Dressrosa was our kingdom. 500 years ago, the Dwarves came to Green Bit and my ancestors enslaved them. I'm so glad the new Monarchy is taking care of them all." He looked over at the
retreating docks a bit wistfully.

"You used to live here?"

The man nodded. "I nearly died here. It's where we were nearly stoned to death for being Celestial Dragons."

"Jesus Christ and you just waltz back in?" Kid demanded, horrified. "No wonder Trafalgar's batshit crazy! He learned it from you!"

Corazon laughed. "Oh no, he was crazy before he even met me! Have you heard how he joined my brother's crew?"

"Ooh, blackmail!" Kid giggled eagerly and he hopped up next to the steering wheel. "Tell me, tell me!"

Smiling, the man did.

-f-f-f-f-

Cotton didn't seem concerned when she heard Corazon's name. She was too busy fangirling about 'Lawland's Cora-san'. They got along very well as the man told story after story of Law's youth.

If Law refused to pull any punches during training, well, it was their own damn faults for laughing at him. Despite their guest though, nothing much changed during their voyage back to the Red Line.

"You knew he was a Celestial Dragon?" Kid demanded as they worked on dinner.

"Yeah."

"Why didn't you tell us?"

"Wait, let me guess. Slipped your mind?" Killer asked dryly.

Law ignored them, doing his damndest not to give away how sore that subject was. He resorted to one of the prayers for patience.

"—I mean, bein' one of those self-entitled shitheads from the upper-class like you is bad enough, but he's from like, the ultimate shithead family! Not that it really changes anything. You're still an overgrown kitten and he's a giant klutz-puppy, but it would've been nice to know!" Kid continued to babble and Law wanted to punch him so hard.

He began saying the prayer out loud, forcing his mind to focus on the words and not his brother's voice.

"Hey, I'm trying to talk to you, Trafalgar! What language is that?!"

When Law continued to ignore him, Corazon replied, "It's the language of the Ancient Tribes. You won't believe how much the World Government wants it to be an extinct language." He pet Law's head and made him stumble over one of the verses. "Was this language common in Flevance, Law-chan?"

Law gave up. "We were forbidden from speaking it outside of the church, but yeah. We all knew it."

"Why were you forbidden?" Killer asked curiously.
"It's a holy language to us. A privilege that would lose its power if everyone knew it." He sighed. "Maybe one of our ancestors knew it would bring the government down on our heads. I don't know. History wasn't considered something important in our religion. As long as you are kind and good, what does your past matter?"

"How did your people fare against pirates?" Kid asked incredulously.

Law blinked and thought back. "Well, actually. We were a neutral town without a Marine base, so as long as they were on their best behaviors, they let them stay in the port town. My mom and dad took me with them on slow days to treat anyone that was hurt."

"Really?" Killer asked in interest.

"Hey, tell us about your family." Kid said.

Law turned off the stove. "First, go get Penguin. It's done."

"I'll get him!" Killer said before he ran from the room at a speed that told Law he was as eager to hear the stories as the others.

They started setting the table with food and drink and over dinner, Law told them about his family. The others did the same and it was a nice bonding session as they got to know each other a little better.
The ship coating at Kaguragi Island took the usual three days, but then they were through the Red Line. They almost got capsized by a school of spider sharks but Law and Penguin managed to fend them off. As they sped away from the sinking figures, though, they encountered a bit of a problem.

"So many legs... so many teeth..." Kid was traumatized by the entire ordeal.

"Nii-san, can you...?" Killer gestured towards where Kid was curled up in the corner, Cotton doing her best to soothe him but nothing was working.

Amused that the boy's arachnophobia persisted even after everything they'd faced, Law smiled and nodded, heading over. He sat beside him and pulled him into his arms, purring comfortingly as he nuzzled and licked his face. It took less than a minute for the shaking to stop and Kid began to breathe easier.

"Lawland-sama is so amazing!" Cotton exclaimed in awe, causing Law to blush slightly.

"Overgrown kitten." Kid muttered.

"Minkless ape." Law shot back as he nuzzled his cheek.

The boy chuckled. "Shut up."

They settled back down as Cotton giggled and Law decided it was time for a nap. It would take them some time to get to Fishman Island.

-f-f-f-f-

"Law-nii-san!"

"Why am I always seen first?" Law asked, baffled, as Don tackled him with a hug. But then he smiled and nuzzled the boy. "Hey Donnie. How've you been?"

The boy pulled back. "I've been great! Hi, Kid-nii-san! Killer-nii-san! Penguin-nii-san!" he looked around and waved. "Hi Cora-oji-san!"

The man waved back. "Hey there, Donnie!"

"Ah, watch out!" Penguin shouted, but was too late. The man tripped over a loose stone on the walk, landing in a heap. They hurried over, but he was already picking himself up with a chuckle, brushing off the dirt and a few loose pebbles.

"I'm okay." He assured them cheerfully.

Donnie giggled. "You guys haven't changed a bit."

"I like to think I'm a little taller." Law said with a grin, getting laughs from the group. Then he hummed and said, "Oh hey, let me introduce you to a new friend." He lifted his hat, revealing Cotton. "Cotton-ya, meet Donboshi. Donnie, this is Cotton-ya, she's from Dressrosa."

"Hi!" They greeted each other eagerly, looking delighted to be meeting someone new.
Then Donnie asked curiously, "Isn't it hot under there?"

"No. All the heat goes out Lawland-sama's ears." She replied.

"Does it really?" Killer asked in interest.

Law's ears pressed to his head. "So what's happened since we saw you?" He asked and they let the subject slide away. They headed further into town, helping Corazon shop as they caught up.

Then Law yelped as his tail was grabbed and he scrambled up Corazon to kneel on his shoulders, snarling at the laughing Fishmen as his tail swished angrily despite the pain.

"Did you just touch my daughter?" Corazon demanded, leaking killing intent that had them sobering.

"Just wanted to see if it was real." One of the Fishmen defended.

"Who you callin' a 'thing', shithead?!" Kid demanded in immediate fury. "C'mere, lemme pull your fuckin' whiskers, bitch! See if they're real!"

Killer and Penguin had to hold him back from tearing the Fishmen new assholes.

"Leggo of me!"

"Kid, don't pick fights! We don't wanna be banned from visiting again!"

"No one hurts Lawland-sama!"

They looked over to see that the two Fishmen had been beaten to a pulp by a furious Cotton.

"Amazing!" Donnie said in awe.

Corazon began smoothing down the fur of Law's tail, jolting in surprise when he bit him. "Are you okay, Law-chan?"

Licking his lips, he said, "Sorry. They freaking broke it, man." He drew it onto his lap and created a localized room, starting to heal the delicate bones.

"Seriously?" Donboshi asked in shock.

"Whatever, it's fine." He sighed.

"It's not fine! The broke your bones!" He denied furiously.

"And Cotton-ya broke theirs. It's fine, we're good." Law replied. "Come on, we're visiting Suki-chan, aren't we? Let's go." He leapt back down from Corazon's shoulders and caught Cotton when she leapt into his arms. Then he grabbed Kid's hand and dragged him away, the others reluctantly following.

-f-f-f-

"So is that 'sister' thing gonna stick?" Penguin asked as they rested after training.

"It'll be easier than dealing with awkward questions." He replied with a shrug. "I'll be correcting some of the changes so I'll be more guy than girl, but it has to wait until after puberty to avoid
damaging anything."

"So, you'll stop bein' a twig, then?" Kid asked as he and Killer collapsed on either side of the duo.

Law shrugged. Who knew?

"Cuz you should put on some weight."

Law was exasperated. This wasn't the first time his weight had been brought up. "We've already been over this. I'm healthy—"

"You're totally underweight though. What are you, 120?" Kid cut him off.

"125 and either way I am at a perfectly normal range for someone my height."

"Maybe in Twig-Town Flevance, but in the real world—"

"Excuse me?" He cut him off in outrage. "Are you questioning my doctoring abilities?"

"Bitch, no! You're missing the point!" Kid said in frustration.

"You want me to gain weight." Law said mildly. "How much, exactly?"

"I don't know. Let's just feed you until you don't look like a good breeze'll knock you over." Kid huffed.

"When did you become the momma bear?" Law scoffed as he stood up. Before Kid could do more than splutter indignantly, he continued, "Fine, but you'll have to get creative with our menu. I won't eat more than my fill."


"Killer-san, can I fight Lawland-sama this time?" Cotton requested.

Killer flopped back down. "Feel free."

As they got into position, Law prepared himself to have his ass handed to him by the Dwarf and wasn't disappointed. The Tontatta tribe were very fierce warriors.
Chapter 51

After three days of playing and exploring the island with Donnie and Suki, they prepared to leave for Saboady.

"Ew ew ew ew ew!" Law exclaimed as the resin crawled up his legs and they laughed as he hit the deck.

Donnie giggled as he landed beside him. "Hey, we got you all presents. For saving us and stuff."

"You're welcome." Law said as he got to his feet. "But you didn't have to."

"We wanted to." Suki huffed.

"It's nothing really big anyway." Donnie said. "My Ojii-sama wanted to give you a baby Kraken."

God, the sheer amount of work a Kraken would be to care for made the all laugh nervously.

"You can heal piercings with your powers, right Law-chan?" Suki asked as Donnie took out a box. "Cuz these hafta go through bone."

"Through—" Kid's question trailed off as he looked at the revealed bars of silver and a strange stone that shone like starlight with brilliant flecks of every color shimmering at the heart. It was pretty. "Er…which bone?"

They wriggled their webbed fingers at them and Donnie said, "It's our version of rings. But they can also double as brass knuckles when they heal properly. They're permanent."

"I'm not denying your gift," Killer began, "But why not get us regular rings?"

"These are special!" He said brightly. "The stone is called the Heart of the Mountain—the only stone of its kind found to date. Only the royal family are given these and by giving it to you, I'm claiming you guys as family!"

They were touched by his happy declaration and Law created a room so that they could put them in painlessly. He also ensured they grafted properly to the bone and wondered if he should tell the others he'd strengthened their skeletal structures like his nails…

…nah.

Donnie handed the last one to Corazon. "This one's for Sengoku-oji-san. You're meeting him at Saboady, right?"

"Yup." He confirmed.

"Do you think he'll accept it?" He asked self-consciously.

Corazon considered it. "I don't see why he wouldn't."

The boy brightened happily. "Great! Now Suki-chan got you all stuff too!"

Law would have a hell of a time balancing everything out if people kept giving him things.

"I kind of feel bad. We don't have anything to give you." Penguin said sheepishly.
"Don't be silly, this is us repaying our debt!" Suki told them cheerfully as she began tying bracelets around their wrists. With scales, polished pebbles, and what looked like carved bone, they looked very cool.

"Wow, these look awesome!" Kid exclaimed happily. "So we can punch someone's lights out with the Heart Stone and the last thing they'll see is our little mermaid slapping them in the face with her tail!" he pretended to punch Killer and the bone carving clinked against his mask.

Penguin and Law giggled as Killer smacked his arm away, Suki and Donnie smiling in amusement.

"Thank you very much. Both of you." Corazon said warmly before he pulled them both into a brief hug. "We'll be coming back through once I've got some vacation days stacked up, so we'll be visiting again."

"We'll see you then!" They said brightly before giving their farewells and jumping back to the dock.

The boys waved their goodbyes as Corazon guided the ship away from Fishman Island and then they were on their way.

-f-f-f-

They wandered the park as they waited for Sengoku and had fun on all the rides. It was loud and cheerful and busy as ever. They got caught up in the rush, but all of them noticed the eyes following Law.

"Carry me on your shoulders, Tou-san." Law ordered his father, who immediately complied.

"Don't you want to go on the rides?" He asked as Law got situated.

"No, I'm tired." He lied as he pillowed his head on Corazon's hood, tail wrapping around to settle against his leg in case someone tried to grab it. "You guys go ahead.

"Okay! Come on!" Kid said as he pulled Killer towards the bubble wheel, Penguin following close behind.

Law watched them go, ears drooping slightly. This would be his life now, always on edge and waiting to be kidnapped or molested. He couldn't break skulls or he might get a bounty before he was strong enough to fend off bounty hunters. Might as well let the kids enjoy their freedom fully even if he couldn't.

"Lawland-sama is so selfless!" Cotton exclaimed suddenly, startling them both. "Staying with Cora-sama so his family can have fun!"

Law went red. "Cotton-ya—"

"Is that true, Law-chan?" Corazon demanded in concern.

"No! Can't a guy rest without being interrogated?!" He exclaimed in annoyance.

"Then why is Lawland-sama so tired?" Cotton asked in confusion while Corazon just frowned harder.

"I'm not!" He protested.
"Boys?"

Law turned and the topic flew from his mind as he leapt at the Admiral. "OJII-SAN!"

"Tou-san!" Corazon greeted happily as he too glomped the man.

Sengoku chuckled and hugged them back. "Where are your brothers, Law-chan?"

"On the bubble wheel!" He informed him. "Before we forget, Tou-san! Donnie and Suki-chan's gifts!"

The man accepted both and tapped the ring curiously once Law pronounced it fully healed. "It feels like an extension of my bone. What a strange sensation…"

"HIJIJI-SAN!"

The man was nearly knocked off his feet when Penguin tackled him in a hug, followed quickly by Kid and Killer.

The man greeted them all with a happy smile and they immediately began telling him excitedly about their trip from Zou.

Law let them talk, holding onto Corazon's coat as he kept an eye out for danger. They even took care of Cotton's introduction for him.

"Well come on. I bet you're all starving." Sengoku said and they headed back into town.

-f-f-f-

It was odd being around people of average height. Law hadn't realized just how much he'd grown. He already capped his old height, now 6'4 and he hoped he wouldn't grow much more—he was already taller than most of the people on Saboady. What had he been so worried about? He was clearly spending too much time around giants like the Minks and Corazon.

"Any progress on your sword, Law-chan?" Sengoku asked as they watched the other kids play in the arcade.

"Not yet. I'm still searching for a material stronger than steel." He replied, but seeing the Admiral had given him an idea. "Although I've got a few ideas. I'll let you know if they don't work out."

"And if they do, work?"

"Then that's none of your business." He sniffed, causing them to chuckle in amusement.

"How about you, Tou-san? What have you been up to?" Corazon asked and they listened to the man talk about dealing with revolutionaries and upstart pirates with delusions of becoming king.

When he received his first bounty, he'd tell them about his goal to become Yonko.

Someone sat down beside Law and a hand immediately went to his thigh. Law caught the wrist in a crushing grip that had the man grunting and lifted it away from his mink. There was a crack as the bone snapped and the man cried out in pain.

"You bitch!" The man growled, taking out a knife.

Quick as a snake, Law snagged the weapon and flipped it into a down-facing position before embedding it into the asshole's thigh.
Nevermind, he was totally strong enough to handle bounty hunters.

He stood up. "I'm going to check out the arcade."

"Have fun." Corazon said cheerfully and he realized neither of them had noticed the exchange.

Smiling fondly, he said, "I don't know how either of you have made it this far."

He left before they could ask and found Kid playing Cotton at air hockey while the other two watched curiously. They'd be fine, so he went to one of the gambling tables.

Time to hustle some perverts.
Chapter 52

His go at the gambling tables was successful. With new gold hoop earrings piercing the back bottoms of his ears, an elaborate emerald and diamond pendant, 200,000 berries, and a nice pack of cigars, he lit one up as he returned to the others.

"Nice." Kid said when he saw him. "Guess you won?"

"Yup." He looked around. "Where's Penguin and Killer?"

Cotton leapt back to her spot on Law's hat. "They went to the bathroom, Lawland-sama."

He hummed. "We should probably rejoin Tou-san and Ojii-san soon."

"Yeah alright. Let's wait for them." Kid agreed and went to lean against a table, Law joining him and they watched the door to the bathroom.

Ten minutes passed and Kid asked, "You don't think…?"

Law was at the bathroom door in a flash, slamming it open. "Penguin?! Killer?!" He sniffed the air, ignoring the smell of the bathroom and found their scents leading to a blank section of wall.

He kicked it in revealing a tunnel.

"Oh no! Killer-sama and Penguin-sama have been taken?!" Cotton asked in dismay and fury.

"I'll go tell—"

Law grabbed Kid by the shirt. "No you don't. No one goes anywhere alone."

Kid shrugged. "Let's go get our brothers back."

They entered the tunnel and Law took point, tracking the smell despite the relatively straight path. Who knew how many fake doors they had? Both had their bo staffs ready and Cotton was watching their backs.

Coming across a body of water, Law growled.

"Chill, bitch. There's a boat on the other side." Kid scoffed and raised his hand. The boat began gliding smoothly back towards them.

"You're getting good at targeting single objects." Law noted with a smile as they climbed in.

"Thanks. Now help me paddle."

Soon they were at the other shore and Law sniffed the air, catching the scents again and resuming their journey. Just like he feared, it led to a hidden door and they nearly passed it. Stopping, he sniffed carefully and smelled fear, pain, anger, and tears. Growling, he kicked it in and took down the sentry before they could sound alarm.

Stripping them of any valuables, they tied him up with his clothes before continuing forward. This tunnel was longer and they walked for nearly twenty minutes before the smells got stronger. The rough stone became proper masonry and it was more like a hallway as they followed the torches.
Voices reached his ears and he went to look out a vent.

"We're at the auction house?" Kid asked in surprise.

"Looks like we're taking care of it ahead of schedule." Law hummed as he resumed walking at a faster pace.

They exited into the bowels of the auction house and immediately began taking down the men without collars. Then Law created a room and cut through the cell bars. "We're looking for our brothers. One's wearing a blue and white strapped mask, the other a hat that says Penguin.

"They're already up for auction." One of them said.

Law switched the collars onto the guards and sent the others to the tunnel they'd come from. "When we start kicking their asses, you all get out of here. Kid." He said before running towards the stage.

The auctioneer's voice reached them. "Now this next item is a little house special—a two for one deal! Two strapping young men, perfect for household chores!"

"I don't think so!" Law snarled as he leapt at the man, forgoing all weapons to sink his teeth into his jugular.

"Sencho!" Penguin cried in relief, falling to his knees.

"Get those things off them!" Kid shouted at Law as he yanked him off the screaming man.

Law switched the collars onto some strategic people in the crowd and pulled the pins. The explosions killed several people and injured a majority of the rest. Letting out a piercing cry, Law leapt onto an approaching guard, effectively mauling him before he was forced to use his sword as he was outnumbered.

They were nothing compared to the Minks. Too slow, too stiff, too...human. Even the ones in armor fell quickly to his staff.

Then someone grabbed him from behind.

"Get your filthy hands off my daughter!"

Corazon was suddenly there and Law's captor went down along with the man's comrades.

More explosions came from the back as the previous slaves escaped in the melee and the chain reaction had the walls of the stage collapsing, revealing the cages.

"Law-chan, we've been worried sick!" Corazon said as they worked together to take down guard and guests alike.

"They stole Penguin and Killer." He replied. "We had to track them down before their captors were alerted they'd been found out."

"When we realized you'd been taken, we went to the Marine base. There we found out about the auctioning house. After we cracked a few dozen skulls, we organized them to apprehend everyone involved. No one will get away."

"There are slaves I will need to identify. We released them and told them to run when we started our operation." He told him and the man nodded.
When the last man was down, the six met back up and Law caught Cotton when she leapt into his arms. "Stay still Penguin. Killer." He ordered before he got rid of the soaring dragon tattoos, also healing the few injuries they'd sustained.

"Let's go." Corazon said as Law released his room.

"Hai."

Outside, they found guns poised to shoot.

"Hold!" Sengoku ordered before he walked over. "Boys, are you alright?"

"Yes, sir!" they told him and he scooped all four of them into a hug.

Penguin started crying again.

"They were taken through a secret tunnel in the bathroom of the arcade." Law told Sengoku as he wriggled free. "Kid, Cotton, and I tracked them through the underground tunnels. We would have told you, but an operation like the one they were pulling off, they would have been alerted that they'd been found out and relocated immediately."

"That or ambush the search party." Kid added.

"Might've even collapsed the tunnels on top of us."

Sengoku sighed. "I don't like that you went in alone, but you successfully rescued your brothers. Anything else before we take everyone into custody?"

"We freed the people being put up for auction and they were probably caught by you." Law replied immediately. "I can pick them out."

Sengoku stood, holding both Killer and Penguin. He nodded, so Law created a room, sliding his hand down his staff as he said, "Scan." He found all the people with dragon marks and brought them forward.

"Gather the rest and place them into custody!" Sengoku ordered his troops. "there are more inside, I want a headcount by nightfall!"

Saluting sharply, the Marines got to work.

Sengoku and Corazon began taking names and Islands of residents from the former captives as Law removed the marks of slavery from their backs. From Fishmen to Giants, there was a diverse crowd waiting to have arrangements made for a safe return home.

As they entered the third hour, Law went to go sit on an abandoned bubble bike and rested. His hands were shaking from overexertion and he wondered when his stamina would get back to acceptable levels.

"I'm sorry."

Looking at Killer, Law immediately pulled him closer and nuzzled his neck. "For what?"

"I should have paid better attention." He said and Law realized it was guilt he heard in the other's voice. "If I hadn't let my guard down, neither of us would have been taken."

Law pushed the mask up so he could see Killer's eyes as he said gently, "It's not your fault. Kid
and I let our guards down too. We all should have known better knowing they'd managed to take two Fishmen.” He licked away mostly dried tear tracks and the younger boy all but melted into the comfort. Purring, Law pulled him into a warm hug, offering physical comfort. Then, after giving them a few minutes, Penguin ran over to join Killer and Kid leaned beside Law on the bike, keeping a sharp eye out as the adults took care of the cataloguing.

"How you doing, Cotton?" Kid asked the Dwarf between him and Law.

She kicked her legs. "I'm okay. Just…surprised. Humans enslaving humans?"

Kid hummed. "Humans are like a plague. It doesn't matter if you're a dog, rats, human—they don't discriminate on what they'll destroy."

"Not all humans, though!" She protested. "Lawland-sama's family is so nice!"

"That doesn't mean we haven't done bad things ourselves."

"But you're nice now." She replied. "That's all that matters."

Smiling, he rubbed her head affectionately, knocking her hat askew.

"Hey!" She tackled him, knocking him off the bike. Somehow they managed to pop the bubble and all three let out startled sounds at the sudden free-fall.

Killer was the first one to start giggling which got the others to laugh as well and some of the tension left their shoulders.

They'd survived another ordeal together, this time with no life-threatening injuries.

"I never realized how rough it is in the New World." Law said suddenly, looking at the chaos surrounding them. "Life or death fights became so…normal."

"Yeah, I think we overreacted about being taken." Penguin said sheepishly. "Just a bit."

"We'll have to be careful though." Kid said. "We can't be lured in by Paradise. We'll be returning to the New World one day for good. We need to become strong enough to survive."

"Well said, Kid-sama!" Cotton said brightly. "I'll make sure you do it!"

Killer rested more fully against Law. "Just for today…I'm gonna be weak."

Law rubbed his back soothingly, pulling him onto his lap. "You can always be weak with me, Otouto."

Blushing, the boy snuggled closer and Law purred harder as he nuzzled his neck. They settled in to wait for the adults and night fell quickly. Penguin leaned against Law's side with a yawn and within moments, he was asleep. Killer followed soon after and Law smiled when he felt Kid starting to lean beside him.

Cotton leapt up onto Law's head and said, "I will watch your backs, Lawland-sama."

"Thank you, Cotton-ya." He replied as he wrapped his tail around Kid's waist. The slight nudge was all he needed to fall against Law's arm and without any other nudging, he too curled up against Law's side, asleep in seconds.

Things finally started wrapping up around midnight and Law looked up when the adults returned to them, picking up Kid and Penguin.
"Sorry about the wait, Law-chan. You ready to head to the hotel?" Sengoku asked as Law stood up carefully, Killer in his arms.

"Yeah." He yawned. "Removing so many slave marks pushed me to my limits…"

"Slave marks?" Corazon asked in confusion.

"To brand slaves as less than human, they're given a mark called the hoof of the soaring dragon." He replied. "Suki-chan and Donnie had it and so did Yuki-chan and Kobe-chan. Maki-chan didn't, probably because she had too much fur. That or it was those pirates that stole her." He shrugged.

"You always find the worst in the world…" Corazon said sadly.

"That's because the world is rotting." He replied matter-of-factly. "But don't worry. The King is coming."

"The king?" Sengoku asked warily. "The Pirate King?"

Law giggled. "Yup."

"Who is it?" Corazon asked curiously.

"I won't ruin the surprise." Law said cheerfully. "You'll just have to wait and see."

He wondered if the boy would remember him. He hoped not or the boy would never let him escape. Plus, the shock on his face when Law eventually revealed himself to be one of the Yonko he'd have to get through would be priceless.

Corazon and Sengoku shared worried looks when the teen began to giggle a tad maniacally. For their sanity, they decided to blame sleep deprivation.

Denial was their best friend with this devil-child.

-f-f-f-

They had to leave the next day, but none of them wanted to. They put it off for as long as they could, but around noon, Kid felt a storm coming. They had to go.

"We'll miss you, Hijiiji-san!" Penguin said as he hugged the Admiral around the neck. "We'll call you every day! We love you!"

Sengoku smiled at the boy's babbling and rubbed his back. "I love you boys too. Take good care of each other and I'll see you when Roci gets enough vacation days."

Law coaxed the boy into letting go and smiled at his grandfather. "Call you soon, Ojii-san."

Killer pulled Kid free of the man's leg. "Be safe, Ojii-san."

They boarded the ship and Corazon directed them out to sea as they waved to the Admiral.

"Training then?" Law asked as he strode back towards the cabin.

"I'm always up for training!" Kid exclaimed before he attacked Law.

Shrugging, Killer asked Penguin, "Wanna fight?"
Penguin answered in the form of a tackle.

Chapter End Notes

Phew! That's the end of journal four and the first two pages of journal five! I can't believe it's already been so many chapters...this is 52, right? And nearly 90,000 words! Crazy.

Thank you all for the reviews and favorites! You're making my entire year! There were a few things you guys said that I wanted to address here:

Yes, I know I've left hiatus on the summary. Knowing myself like I do, the moment I take it off, the creative juices will stop flowing and it'll be another year before I update lmao

LAW WILL NOT LOOK LIKE A GIRL FOREVER. It's just until he gets through puberty and then he'll start correcting it. I'm going to be posting concept art—don't judge me, they're not great, I know—on my tumblr. I'll be posting the link below and while some of them weren't actually a part of the story, I still used them as inspiration.

HE WILL BE VERY HANDSOME THOUGH, BUT HE ALREADY IS SO THAT'S NOT AN ISSUE! Lol, just picture adult Law with way more meat on his bones and a bit more curve to his waist.

Here are the urls to the concept art pieces. Just add them to thefoxnine dot tumblr dot com forward slash (Sorry about the broken links)

Female Law2: post/156745692190/female-law-2
Tiny Penguin: post/156745985610/tiny-penguin
Random Law images I played with: post/156745958955/messing-with-law
Tiny Law: post/156745922100/tiny-law
Rough sketch of original patches of mink: post/156745797460/design-for-mink-patches-1
Tail contemplations: post/156745817670/tail-contemplations
Rough sketch of patches of mink2: post/156745846305/mink-patches-design-2
Possible height comparison (Law and Corazon): post/156745661650/height-comparison-law-and-corazon
Attempt to find out where cats would pierce their ears: post/156745619595/where-would-cats-pierce-their-ears
Not all inspiration has to do with the story (My friend's OC and Naruto with my OC
in the middle fighting fangirls off so she can enjoy her date…and I can take all the pictures…): post/156745903700/my-friends-oc-naruto-and-my-oc-in-middle

Haha seriously, not my best work—I drew them with pen so mistakes were permanent. Poor things look deformed.

I'll post links as I go, I don't want to spoil anything, but the male sketch is for sarge1130 :) relax, bro
"Oi! Nearing the Clam Belt!" Kid shouted.

Law walked to the bow of the ship and sat on the figure head, nerves causing his hands to quake as he took deep breaths.

"For the record, I don't like this." Corazon said as he paced anxiously.

"Just like we practiced, Sencho!" Penguin called from beside him.

Closing his eyes, he began to focus. He concentrated on his breathing and the ocean around them, picking out the Sea Kings and letting their killing intent register in his mind. Then, just as they entered the Calm Belt, his eyes snapped open and the air grew heavy, sending them all to their knees.

"It's working!" Killer called from the crow's nest where he was looking through the spyglass.

"Full speed; ETA ten minutes!" Kid called to them and they braced for the jolt as he shifted into the final gear, Penguin holding onto Law just in case.

They sped through the waters, Killer calling down when he spotted Sea Kings retreating but beyond him, they remained silent to allow Law to concentrate.

When they exited, it was at the edge of a giant whirlpool, but Kid and Killer got them around it without any trouble. When they were a good distance away, Law released the violent Haki and fell onto the deck in exhaustion.

"Sencho, are you okay?" Penguin asked in alarm, putting his hands on his back.

"Bein' a Sea King momma must be exhausting…" Law muttered into the floor before giving in to sleep.

"How long'd he manage during practice?" Corazon asked as he picked him up carefully.

"Only two minutes. Probably cuz none of us were really in danger." Penguin replied. "I wonder where he even got the ability? None of the other Minks gave sign of it and we've gone through a few invasions."

Corazon nuzzled Law's wild hair as the boy picked up his captain's hat. "Law-chan is so mysterious."

Kid scoffed loudly from the navigation deck. "Please. That overgrown kitten is an open book."

"Since Sencho is unable to defend himself, it is my duty as a heart pirate to challenge you in his stead, Captain Kid!" Penguin said hotly.

"Heart pirate?" Corazon asked him curiously.

"You heard nothing!" Penguin huffed before he ran towards Kid, who quickly locked in their course so he could meet him halfway.
"I'll help you, Captain!" Killer shouted before he jumped from the mast, tackling them both to the deck.

"Not helping!" Kid grunted and the other two giggled in amusement.

Smiling, Corazon carried Law to the crib, now converted into the only comfortable seat on deck. He laid him down and noted Cotton had nabbed the cap from the brawling trio. "Thank you, Cotton-chan."

She smiled brightly at him. "You're welcome, Cora-sama!"

He patted her on the head before sitting down beside the chair. "What do you know about Law-chan's plans, Cotton-san?"

"Lawland-sama will become a Yonko." She replied immediately, happy. "He'll pave the way for Luffyland!"

"The Pirate King?" he asked. Wasn't Garp's grandson…

…nah. There was no way Law could have ever met the boy. Nevermind that man guarded his grandson's location as jealously as a dragon guarded its gold.

"Hey Tou-san?" Kid asked as he popped up beside him. "Can we go to Logue Town?"

"Sure!" He agreed immediately and clapped his hands. "Why don't we take the long way to Conomi Island?"

"ADVENTURE!" Penguin shouted excitedly. "Gather up all of the crew! It's time to ship out Binks' brew—"

Kid and Killer both brightened and immediately joined in, "Sea wind blows, to where? Who knows! The waves will be our guide! O'er cross the ocean's tide, rays of sunshine far and wide! Birds they sing of cheerful things in circles passing by!"

Corazon listened curiously, the tune familiar but the words weren't ones he knew. Even Cotton was humming along beside him.

"Bid farewell to weaver's town! Say so long to ports renown! Sing a song, it won't be long before we're casting off! 'Cross the gold and silver seas, a salty spray puts us at ease! Day and night, to our delight, the voyage never ends!"

Cotton joined in now and Law stirred, starting to hum along. "Gather up all of the crew! It's time to ship out Binks' brew! Pirates we eternally are challenging the sea! With the waves to rest our heads, ships beneath us as our beds, hoisted high upon the mast, our Jolly Roger flies!" They were now yelling more than singing, but their enthusiasm went a long way.

"Somewhere in the endless sky, stormy winds are blowing by! Waves are dancing, evening comes, it's time to sound the drums! But steady men! And never fear! Tomorrow's skies are always clear! So pound your feet and clap your hands till sunny days return! Yohoho, yohohoho! Yohoho, yohohoho! Yohoho, yohohoho! Yohoho, yohohoho~"

"Gather up all of the crew," Law sang softly in the sudden lull, staring up at the few straggly clouds. "It's time to ship out Binks' brew. Wave goodbye but don't you cry, our memories remain…our days are but a passing dream, everlasting though they seem. Beneath the moon, we'll meet again, the wind's our lullaby."
Grinning widely, the others resumed singing, "Gather up all of the crew! It's time to ship out Binks' brew! Sing along and play a song for all the oceans wide! After all is said and done, you'll end up a skeleton! So spread your tale from dawn till dusk upon these foamy seas! Yohoho, yohohoho! Yohoho, yohohoho!"

As they continued the refrain, Law curled up on his side, tail wrapping around him as he purred contently. When Corazon began rubbing his ears, sleep reclaimed him almost immediately.

"Pierced ears?" He asked in exasperation as he examined the double gold hoops in each ear. If the boy's hat didn't always push his ears down, he'd have noticed much earlier.

"Can't take your eyes off him for a second." Kid snickered as he separated from the still singing duo. "He won a few games of cards at the arcade."

"He never was one to need permission." Corazon said ruefully. "Still, warning would've been nice."

Kid hmphed. "Adults, man. They don't pay attention at all." He moved to sit near Law's knees and kicked his legs. "If it weren't for the mink, he'd probably have tattoos by now too. He's a real punk, y'know?"

Corazon chuckled. "Yes, I'm aware. He began running his hand along the spotted fur and sort of wished the patches were back. His little boy had changed so much, he almost couldn't see who he used to be. Then he looked at Kid, who was watching the dancing duo and noticed how much all three had grown as well. Killer was nearly as tall as Law with Kid close behind. All but Penguin had lost most of their baby fat and he made a mental note to make more fattening meals.

Smiling, he rested his head beside Law's as Cotton went to join the duo below and closed his eyes, listening to the rushing waves and feeling the ocean breeze. They should start taking their time…the days were passing far too quickly.

Chapter End Notes

Ah, chapter 53…sorry about the wait, guys, I lost the journal for a while. But no worries, I found it!

Okay, just a couple things…the Slave Brands…okay, I wrote this before I did proper research on the markings, so every slave gets the hoof of the soaring dragon just cuz they're slaves.

Next, updates will be sporadic at best. I've started a new job working at the college I go to and it's basically wake up at 5, get home at 6:30 so I am worn out by the end of the day. I can't make any promises and I'm also starting to upload another story (lovingly titled stripper!AU on the journal covers) about-dundUNDUN! Stripper!Law! lol nothing graphic, not much actual stripping going on. It's mainly about how his entire life revolves around his jobs (Doctor Trafalgar by day, Doctor Heartstealer at night :D :D :D :D) but Ace and Sabo, his best buddies in the entire universe, decide to hijack him for Thanksgiving and nothing is ever the same. It's only three journals long so far, I kinda lost inspiration there too. I've got a KidLaw story that's eight journals long, but it's ridiculous so I'm debating on whether or not to post it…
Anyway, that's enough chatter. Time to post this baby and then I'm off to dreamland!
They docked in Logue Town the next morning and restocked on fuel and supplies before Corazon led them to the execution platform.

"Wow!" Law said in awe. "Can we climb it?"

"No, it's a historical landmark, buddy." Corazon chuckled. "Let's get a picture to send the others."

He had to crouch in order to get them and the platform in the shot and then Law demanded the man get his own picture to send. After that, they explored the island, surprised how relaxed the atmosphere was. It was warm, the breeze was perfect, and everyone was mostly friendly. Even in the North and South Blues, every island had an underlying tension, like a trap waiting to spring.

The place was dangerous.

"You seem to grow more beautiful every passing year, Torao-kun."

Looking up quickly at the name, Law saw the unmistakable form of Nico Robin. "Nico-ya." He greeted with a warm smile, reaching out to take her hands in his usual greeting and kissing each cheek. "You remember me?"

"I have a feeling all of us will." She told him with a small smile. "The Poneglyphs I've deciphered have hinted at something like this happening."

A lead! "Is it just my limited contact or is it centered around me?"

She hummed, reaching out to stroke the mink of Law's face. "I couldn't tell you. I've yet to find any others that remember. I'm searching for Sanji-kun, but he doesn't seem to be here yet."

"Didn't he have that floating restaurant?" He asked, thinking back.

"The Baratie. No, it doesn't appear to be built yet." She sighed. "How did you come by this mink?"

They sat down on a bench and Law told her about the incident with Redbeard on Zou. She in turn told him about her arrival in Paradise and her search for answers.

"The world went wrong." She told him solemnly. "I don't know how it was activated, but the Pluton weapon wiped out the timeline we had been in. Perhaps it is simply luck that you were able to save your father; that Captain Kid and his First Mate ran into you; that your marksman is alive."

"I don't believe in luck." He replied.

"No, I don't suppose you would." She said with a smile as she pulled him into her chest, setting his hat on the bench with one of her blossom hands as she began stroking his hair.

It felt amazing and Law leaned into her, purring loudly.

"Oh, that is too cute." She chuckled, but he was too distracted by her hands to be embarrassed. Unlike the others, she had no hesitation about rubbing Law's face and he was in heaven.

"HEY! What are you doing to my—oh." Kid went from furious to happy. "Hey there, Robin."
"Hello, Captain Kid. Killer-san. Penguin-san." She greeted before looking up at Corazon. "I don't believe we've met."

He held out his hand, not even blinking when she used a blossom hand to shake it as he smiled warmly. "Hello, I'm Donquixote Rocinante. It's a pleasure to meet you…Robin, was it?"

She smiled back and nodded. "Donquixote? Any relation to a Doflamingo?"

"He's my brother."

Her eyes widened slightly before she smiled a bit more sincerely. "It's a pleasure to meet you as well."

Law sat up and rubbed his face. "He's my Tou-san. He stole Kid and Killer too."

"Adopted. With papers signed by an Admiral and everything." Corazon protested.

She giggled slightly. "I see."

"Oh, hold on." Law said, looking around. "Cotton-ya, where did you go?"

"Here, Lawland-sama!" She said as she popped out from one of the bags Corazon was holding. She saw Robin and let out a delighted squeal. "Robiland!" She leapt into the woman's arms.

"Cotton-chan? What are you doing with Torao-kun?" She asked as she hugged the little creature.

"She decided to tag along after she found us on Dressrosa." Kid replied as he took a seat beside Law.

"I owe Lawland-sama my life!" She said fiercely.

"No you don't." Law immediately replied only to be ignored as usual.

Robin smiled at her. "Take good care of him, Cotton-chan."

"Yosh!" She leapt to Law and nestled in his wild hair.

"What are you doing in the East Blue, Robin-san?" Penguin asked curiously.

"I'm looking for my wayward husband." She replied. "You haven't happened to hear anything about Sanji-kun, have you?"

Penguin considered it before shaking his head. "No, sorry."

She hummed. "Then I will make my way to the North Blue and trace him from there." She stood and brushed off her leather pants.

"Be careful, Nico-ya." Law said.

"You as well, Torao-kun." With a wave of farewell, she walked away.

"Torao?" Kid asked Law.

"Mugiwara-ya is unable to pronounce my last name." Law replied calmly. "His crew tends to follow his bad example."

"Who is her captain?" Corazon asked as he took her vacated seat, Penguin immediately climbing
"Some punk named Luffy." Killer replied. "Isn't he from the East Blue?"

"Yeah, but I can't remember where. I don't think he ever said." Law mused before shaking it off, careful not to dislodge Cotton. "So what'd you all get?"

"I got sunglasses for all of us." Kid said brightly. "We can make it a family thing! Here!"

Law accepted the sunglasses and his heart nearly exploded from his chest. They were heart-shaped! Putting them on, he smiled. "Perfect."

"Hey." Killer said, getting their attention. "We're becoming pretty well known. We'll have to wear disguises so we won't be recognized." He put a pair of sunglasses over his mask. "There. No one will know it is me."

They all cracked up laughing and Kid snatched them back when he'd recovered enough. "You're obviously the exception." He huffed.

"We can paint glasses on his mask!" Penguin said cheerfully, wearing his own shades on the bill of his hat. "I'm a good painter! Can I do it Killer?" He pleaded.

"Sure." He agreed readily.

The boy cheered before jumping off Corazon's lap. He ran, snagging Killer's hand as he said, "Let's go find some paint!"

They were gone in an instant.

"What else did you get?" Law asked as he looked back at them.

Corazon spoke up. "I know you don't like wearing clothes, but winter is coming this way. I got you all some winter stuff just in case." He took out a coat and Law's eyes went wide as saucers.

"Whoa, are those feathers?" Kid asked curiously as Law accepted it. They were as sleek as fur and spotted like a snow owl near the bottom of the sleeves and the hem where it got fluffy and wild.

"I find feathers hold in more heat than fur." Corazon replied.

"It's so white..." Law said quietly, staring at the article. "This is from Flevance..."

"I-is it?" Corazon asked, startled.

Nodding his head, he buried his face in the sleek plumage. "I guarantee you that you will never see a purer white. Even the snow looks grey when next to objects treated with Amber Lead."

"It is pretty bright." Kid noted. "Should you be touching it?"

Law created a room. "It's not enough to make me sick, but I'll lock it in." Just in case. Then he stood and pulled it on.

"How come your hat doesn't look grey?" Kid asked as he handed it over.

Cotton jumped as Law put it on his head and resettled on top when she landed. Law replied, "The Largha seal it was made from was already contaminated with Amber Lead. Since it was a natural bleaching occurring over a number of decades, it isn't toxic anymore."
"Oh, Law-chan, you look beautiful." Corazon said happily as he took out a snail. "Let's get a picture for Momo-san."

Doing a peace sign, Law stuck out his tongue playfully as it chirped.

"You'll need to make a hole for your tail." Kid noted once the man put it away.

"Don't rush me." Law huffed as he took out a scalpel and used his room to make a hole for the appendage, snaking his tail through and hemming it around it. The coat now felt much more comfortable around his body.

"Your powers are still freaking weird, man." Kid said as Law put the blade away.

"You'll be amazing with Observation Haki." Corazon said brightly.

Oh, he already was, but his family didn't need to know all of his secrets. Best keep that to himself.
"Can we get something to drink? I want milk."

Corazon immediately got to his feet. "Of course, Sweetheart. Let's go."
Chapter 55

The next island they reached was the first of five on their way to Orange Island. It was a small, self-sustaining island with only about three hundred people according to Corazon’s intel and it specialized in swordsmasters.

“Shimotsuki village.” Corazon said as he pointed towards the small town.

They looked down at the docks as Kid slowed the ship and noticed a few people already gearing up for a fight.

“Idiots. As if they could last against us.” Kid scoffed as he lowered the anchor and locked the controls.

Law ran for the edge of the ship and leapt over the rails, Penguin a step behind. He landed without a sound on the wood paneling and straightened as he took out his sword. “Who here claims the title of the greatest swordsmaster?” He demanded.

“Does the kitty wanna play?” One of the men taunted causing his fellows to laugh.

Law swung his sword as he created a room and the man was sliced in half.

Lengthwise.

“You have five seconds, vermin.” Law purred dangerously.

“Y-you’re lo-looking for Isshin D-Dojo.” The terrified men said as their friend gurgled out as much of a scream as he could with only half a throat. “M-m-ma’am!”

Corazon dropped down from the ship next, catching Kid and Killer. “Law-chan, don’t torment the locals. Put him back together, please.”

Huffing, he said, “He can pull himself back together. This kitty doesn’t play games.” Then he directed at the group, “Show me to the dojo or I’ll leave you like your friend here.”

Corazon gave a fond chuckle and patted her shoulder as he passed, him and the boys heading over to rent the spot for the night.

Penguin and Cotton stayed with her as she followed the terrified group through the streets, attracting stares and whispers as the villagers watched them pass by.

“Ooh, Sencho, I’m gonna go look in that shop!” Penguin said excitedly, pointing at a curiosity shop.

“Can I go too, Lawland-sama?” Cotton asked eagerly.

“You don’t need my permission, Cotton-ya.” He chuckled and the Dwarf quickly caught up to the younger boy.

Suddenly a boy stumbled in their path and pointed at Law angrily. “YOU!”

Law blinked down at the strange child and noticed the color of their hair. “Ah, Zoro-ya.”

“I’ve been looking for you!” He exclaimed. “Do you have any idea how much your loss hit
Luffy! You took the coward’s way out! Trafalgar!

Law glared at his escort. “Go away.”

They quickly obeyed.

He crouched down in front of the shorter boy and took off his sunglasses to look him in the eyes. “While I regret dying before I could see Mugiwara-ya become King, it was not my choice. In case it slipped your feeble child mind,” He poked him in the forehead lightly, smiling, “I was murdered.”

“Only cowards die!” He shouted hotly, smacking Law’s hand away.

“No, Zoro-ya. Only cowards fear death.” He countered, reaching up to stroke the boy’s sweaty hair back. He must’ve been training.

Something in his eyes shifted, almost…broke. “But we missed you, Torao…”

Oh, his heart. He pulled him into a bear hug, careful not to crush him. “I missed you too, Zoro-ya.”

The boy clutched at him a bit desperately, but his breathing was even as he pressed his face into her shoulder. But after a minute, Zoro pushed him away. “So you’re gonna challenge the old man, huh? Do me a favor?”

“What?” He asked curiously.

“Don’t tell anyone you’re a guy. They’re all sexist pigs.”

Law grinned widely as he stood up and set his hat on the boy’s head. “You got it.”

Zoro grinned back and took his hand, pulling him towards the woods.

To Law’s surprise, they got there a minute later and he saw a girl taking down her opponents with ease. “Is she the swordsmaster?” He asked Zoro, causing the crowd to look at them.

“Zoro-kun, who is your friend?” A middle-aged man asked from where he knelt at the sidelines.

Law’s tail flickered in irritation. “My name is none of your business. I’m looking for the swordsmaster of this island.” He directed the question to the girl. “Are you the swordsmaster?”

“Not yet.” She said. “The only one left to defeat is my father.” She gestured at the now-standing man.

“What is it you need with me, young miss?”

Law drew his blade. “I wish to fight you.”

“Your sword…” Zoro said in surprise before shutting his mouth.

“Do you accept my challenge?” Law asked as she handed the sheath to Zoro, approaching the man.

“I cannot fight a woman.” He said.

“Then you will die.” She replied simply before leaping to cover the remaining distance, sword slicing harmlessly through empty air as he dodged. Her next strike bit into the flesh of the man’s
stomach and he finally drew his blade. Law grinned. “Finally, now we can fight.”

That said, he was on him in a flash, their blades sparking with each clash, the man’s chipping with each block. Another swing of her blade was barely dodged and Zoro made a sound of amazement, obviously sensing the devastating attack before it sliced through dozens of trees, alerting the others.

It would take her a minute to be able to do another one, but in the meantime, she easily backed the man into a corner. Then, the blade shattered and Law pressed his to his neck. The man hadn’t landed a single hit and she made a sound of disgust. “Two minutes? What did I expect from the East Blue?”

Zoro grabbed her coat, stars in his eyes. “Train me, Torao!”

Chuckling, he ran a hand through his wild hair and said, “When you can defeat her, THEN come and find me.” He looked the girl over. “She should surpass him soon. What is your name, swordswoman?”

“Kuina.” She replied, also looking at Law with stars in her eyes. “You’re so strong!”

“I’m only fourteen. I’ll be even stronger as an adult.” He said as he sheathed his blade, resting it against his shoulder. “Zoro-ya here…is like a brother to me. You need to stay stronger than him, Kuina-ya. He’s got one hell of a drive, you need to keep him in his place.”

“Oi!” Zoro protested. “My place is on top! I’m going to become the strongest swordsmaster in the world!”

“Over my dead body!” Kuina said hotly. “I’m going to be the strongest swordsmaster!”

“You’ll have to get through me first.” Law said in amusement. “But the greatest swordsmaster in the world is Dracule ‘Hawk-eye’ Mihawk. Remember that name. he’s the one you will need to beat if you want to achieve your goals.”

“You’re not even a swordsmaster.” Zoro huffed.

“Then you should be able to defeat me blindfolded with one hand tied behind your back.” Law replied as she poked him in the forehead.

Zoro smacked her hand away. “Stop doing that!”

Grinning, Law took his hat back before putting on his sunglasses. “Well, I’ve wasted enough time here. Want to meet my father, Zoro-ya?”

“I thought you were an orphan.” Zoro said in confusion.

“Yup. But my Tou-san adopted me.” He held out his hand and the boy took it. “His name is Donquixote Rocinante, but call him Cora-san. He sort of abducted Kid and killer too, so now we’re siblings. Penguin found us in the South Blue and Cotton-ya found us on Dressrosa and decided to tag along.”

“One big crazy family then?” He asked. “Wasn’t that Mingo-bastard’s last name Donquixote?”

“They’re brothers.”

His eyes widened. “So that’s why…it makes so much sense now.”
“Does it?” He asked with a smile.

“You never told us why you hated him!” Zoro huffed.

“I don’t. Doffy still took me in, protected me…he’s just sick.” He said quietly.

Zoro grunted. “So Captain Kid, huh? How’d that happen?”

Happy for the topic change, Law told him all about their narrow escape from Doffy and the clusterfuck on Mangrove.

“SEEENCHO~” Penguin called from a few blocks down, waving excitedly as he ran towards them.

Law caught his tackle-hug, having to let go of Zoro’s hand. “Penguin. Zoro-ya found me.”

Letting go, the boy grinned at Zoro. “Zoro-san! You look so cute!” He began pinching the boy’s cheeks.

“GAH! GET OFFA ME!” It devolved into a playful brawl.

Cotton jumped onto Law’s shoulder. “Zoland is so energetic!”

Law smiled, nodding. “How was the shop?”

“Very interesting, Lawland-sama! We found material to make furniture for my room!” She said happily. “And Penguin-sama says he’ll sew me some clothes like yours!”

“That’s cool, I’ll help.” She said with a smile.

The little Dwarf cheered happily.

Penguin leapt to his feet, a grumbling Zoro following suit. “You finished your fight already, Sencho? It’s only been thirty minutes!”

He shrugged. “This IS the East Blue.”

Penguin frowned, hands on his hips. “We’ll probably be climbing up the walls by the time we return to the New World then.”

“The New World?” Zoro asked in surprise. “You’re already there?”

“We lived on Zou for a year.” Law replied. “We’ll be going back to visit in about a year.”

He hummed. “That’s cool. Where will you be the rest of the time?”

“My dad’s a Marine Commander. We’re gonna be stationed at a Marine base in the Conomi Islands.” He replied.

“Marine Commander?!” He exclaimed in shock. “You hate Marines!”

“Only most of them.” He chuckled with a smile. “Tou-san is different. He tried so hard to save me —without him, I’d be dead.”

“Why?” He demanded.

Law was startled. “Mugiwara-ya never told you ANYTHING?” He scratched his chin. “There
was this stuff my hometown mined called Amber Lead. It was toxic, but no one realized it until people started to die. Stuff happened, I only had three years to live so I joined Doffy’s crew to take as many people with me as I could...but Cora-san never gave up on a cure being found. Eventually he got me the Ope Ope no Mi and I was able to save myself.”

“I like him already.” He said firmly.

Law smiled. “Well you’re about to meet him.” He raised his hand in greeting to his father as the man made his way over.

Zoro’s eyes went wide. “Wow, you’re tall.”

The man gave him a sheepish smile. “Hello. What’s your name?”

“Roronoa Zoro.” He replied, holding out his hand to the man. “You’re Cora-san?”

“I prefer Roci, actually.”

“Sure thing, Cora-san.” He replied easily.

Corazon gave Law an exasperated look. “You do this on purpose, don’t you?”

Law gave him an innocent smile, cocking his head slightly. “Do what, Tou-san?”

“So...cute...!” Corazon choked out, clutching at his chest.

“I am NOT!” He exclaimed hotly, ears pressing flat against his head as his tail swished furiously.

“Yeah you are.” Zoro replied.

“Growling, Law began to pinch his cheeks. “Take that back!”

“No!” He grit out as he reached up to pull Law’s ears in retaliation.

Penguin giggled at their antics as Corazon picked them up by their collars, trying to separate them.

“Boys, come on, don’t fight.” He chuckled. “Law-chan, weren’t you going to fight the swordsman?”

They let go of each other and Law huffed. “I already won. They’re just not on the Grand Line level.”

“I don’t see why you thought they would be.” Kid said as he and Killer walked up.

“You!” Zoro shouted furiously as he pointed at the redhead. “I’ve been looking for you!”

“Do I know you, Pipsqueak?” Kid asked with a scoff as he bit into his sandwich.

Law and Corazon both gave him a disgusted look.

“I’m Zoro you rust-for-brains BASTARD!”

Kid laughed. “I know, mosshead. The fuck you want?”

“I wanna kick your ass! You made my captain cry you asshole!” He raged.

“This captain goes down with his crew. I won’t apologize for that.” Kid said flippantly.
“You’re just a coward!” He shouted back, struggling to get free.

“What did you call me, shitty swordsman?!” Kid demanded furiously, Killer holding him back from attacking the still-suspended boy.

“Boys, please. Whatever happened, it’s in the past.” Corazon said wearily.

Law kicked his legs idly, wondering why he was still being held up. This conversation didn’t concern him. Creating a room, he switched with Penguin who pouted at him but didn’t alert the oblivious Marine.

Blowing him a kiss, Law went to go explore the shops for some new shoes. The ones he had now were a bit too small.
He found himself being attacked by Zoro and Penguin, the duo working together to get him to the ground. It wasn't until Kid and Killer joined that they succeeded.

“Cotton-ya!” Law sighed into the dirt but the dwarf just giggled. The little punk was supposed to be watching his back as he adjusted both his feet to the new heels and his shoes to his feet. It was consuming work. At least they hadn't snapped the thin heels.

“What are you doing, Sencho? Don't be anti-social!” Penguin exclaimed.

“Yeah, we're supposed to hang out with Tou-san!” Kid added.

“And you'll be leaving soon so you gotta train me too!” Zoro huffed.

“We can make it a group training session.” Killer said with an audible smile.

“You'll have to get off 'er first, kids.” Corazon said in amusement from where he held all of their bags and the group reluctantly released him.

Law got to his feet and brushed himself off.

“Why the hell do you need heels?” Kid demanded as he was forced to look up higher than usual.

“Have you ever gotten a heel to the face?” He asked with a smile. “It hurts.”

“So will those in an hour.” Zoro said. When the others looked at him in surprise, he said easily, “Nami and Robin complain a lot about it.”

“That's what I was taking care of.” Law said and he poked Cotton's head playfully. “This little punk was supposed to keep an eye out for anything that could interrupt me.”

She shoved his hand away. “Family and friends don't count!”

He rolled his eyes.

“I know a place we can train.” Zoro said eagerly. He took Law's hand and began to drag him. “This way!”

Luckily Law had just enough practice walking in the heels that he didn't fall flat on his face. He'd need to reinforce them though. A broken heel wasn't something he wanted to experience after his own female crewmates complaining about it.

And he could channel Electro through them too! How had he never thought of this before? Now he just had to learn how to channel through his legs. It shouldn't be too hard.

They stopped in large field and Law took in the area. Just a grassy clearing.

“Will you end up in someone else's battle, you'll have to switch opponents.”

They all brightened up that. It was brilliant!

Someone cleared their throat and they turned to see Kuina. She looked determined. “U-um, would it be alright if I watched?”
“Watch? That sword of yours sharpened?” Kid demanded, seeing the blade at her side.

“Always.”

“Then you can join us.” Penguin said brightly. “Hi, I'm Penguin! I'll fight you!”

“Are you a Swordsman?” She asked curiously. “My name is Kuina.”

“Nope! But I fight Sencho all the time.” He said as he brought out his bo staff.

She quickly drew her own weapon and they began to clash.

“Let’s go over there, Zoro-ya.” Law said, jerking his head towards the other side of the clearing and they left the others to divvy themselves up.

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“So, you're from the Grand Line?” Kuina asked in awe over dinner.

“Actually, I’m from the North Blue.” Law replied.

“Me and Killer are from the South Blue.” Kid said.

“I'm from a kingdom in the New World called Dressrosa.” Corazon said brightly.

“Me too!” Cotton told her happily.

Penguin grinned. “I come from an island in the North Calm Belt.”

“The Calm Belt?” She asked curiously, interested.

“What's that?”

“Strips of ocean that separates both halves of the Grand Line from the Blues.” Corazon told her. “The North Calm Belt separates the New World from the North Blue.”

“They have no current, no weather, no wind or clouds.” Penguins said cheerfully. “And the belts are teeming with Sea Kings making it so treacherous, even the Yonko would hesitate in crossing it.”

“Wow! And you live there?” She asked in awe. “Do you have to be a pirate to go to the New World?”

“No.” Law denied. “You can be a marine, a bounty hunter, or just a traveling swords master. And if you get strong enough, no one can stop you.”

“But... as a woman, will I even be taken seriously?” She asked quietly.

“Listen, Kuina-ya.” Law began seriously, turning to look her in the eyes. “There are sexist pigs everywhere that will look down on you, ask how you could ever amount to anything because of your gender. They will laugh at you, taunt you, even try to molest you. You know what you have to say to them?” The girl shook her head and Law bared his teeth. “Nothing. You cut those fuckers to pieces and move on. The world is better off without them anyway.”

“Yeah, man, you don't owe them anything.” Kid agreed easily. “But you should know that going down that path will get you a wanted poster. So you better be damn sure you're ready before you take off.”
She nodded determinedly and the heavy subject was dropped.

They slept in a hotel that night and the next morning Zoro saw them off at the docks.

Law hugged him tightly, purring as the boy clung to him anxiously. “Remember not to mention me to your Captain. I want to surprise him in the New World.”

Zoro nodded and reluctantly let him go. “Be safe, okay, Torao?”

“Always Zoro-ya.” He stood up and boarded the ship, the group waving as Corazon started them towards the next Island. They would reach it about late afternoon so after locking their course, Corazon got them training again.

The next island had nothing of interest to Law so he just followed Corazon as the group wandered the streets. The people were friendly, the air was light, and no one tried to molest Law, which was nice. A quiet peaceful day...

... so of course, that night the town was raided by pirates.

Happy for the distraction, the kids leapt into the fray without a second thought and within five minutes of beginning the raid, it was over.

“I changed my mind, Tou-san.” Kid pouted as he poked a downed man with his staff. “Let's go back to the Grand Line.”

Corazon sighed. “Sorry, kiddo, but my placement isn't up to me. It was either here or being stationed at Mariejois.”

All four recoiled at the very thought.

“Here is good.” Law said with forced cheer and they quickly agreed. They probably would have killed a Celestial Dragon and become Public Enemies number 1 through 4.

Corazon smiled in amusement and they headed back to their hotel as the Marines finally arrived.
The next island they landed on was just as pleasant as the last and they mused that it was just a facet of the East Blue. Compared to the North and South Blues it was pretty monotonous.

They found ways to enjoy it anyway. From exploring to fishing, they played together as a family and Law felt content. Despite the lack of action, it was nice to just relax for a while. He spent most of the time leaning on or against Corazon, tucking up against his side to keep warm as they watched the kids play. Island by island, it was smooth sailing with clear skies and clearer waters. The sunshine made it hard for him to stay awake but the kids never let him stay asleep long, dragging him here and there from shops to other places of interest.

But then suddenly a few islands later Corazon pushed him away whenever he moved closer. At first, Law brushed it off as him needing arm room, but after the fifth time, he realized the man just wanted him away.

It was a terrible blow to Law. Corazon had always been so grabby and over-affectionate that Law seemed to have let himself slip too far. He became too comfortable with the closeness and now the man was burn out.

Fuck. Law was 14 years old! He couldn't act so clingy anymore.

Taking the hint, he distanced himself, no longer initiating the physical affection even amongst his brothers. He limited that to ruffled hair and forehead pokes as well. He could do this. He could be an adult.

No matter how much his heart hurt.

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They reached Orange Island a week after entering the East Blue and were greeted by the entirety of the Marine base personnel.

The quartet hung back slightly, watching their clumsy, cheerful, overgrown puppy of a dad transform into a Marine Commander. It was a bit jarring to be honest and Law felt Kid leaning into him, almost as if he was afraid.

That knocked Law out of his mild stupor and he put a hand on Kid and Killer’s shoulders as he asked, “Tou-san, is there somewhere we should wait for you to conclude your business?” He kept his voice calm and even, not giving away his nervousness as unusually serious burgundy eyes turned to him.

“Right.” He said and pointed to a Marine. “Take them to where we will be staying before making your way back to base.”

The Marine saluted. “Yes. Donquixote-taicho!”

Law gave his brothers a slight push before taking the lead and following the strange Marine.

The island seemed to be mostly forest and as they walked through town, Law felt many eyes on them. He tensed when Penguin suddenly jumped onto his shoulders and the other two were quick to take his hands. They must have been more concerned than Law thought. Great, the next few
days were going to be tense as hell. Maybe he could head it off with training.

Near the edge of town, they stopped in front of a small house that looked like they’d need to share a room. It was two stories and the paint was faded and peeling, the yard overgrown, and Law noted the steps were broken.

“The kitchen is fully stocked and the stove is functional. Please do not leave the house until your father returns.” The Marine said before he ran off.

After a moment, Law released both boys’ hands to go push the door open. It was clean at least and they began exploring.

One kitchen with chairs to seat six and a living room made up the entirety of the first floor while the second floor had two bedrooms, a bathroom, and an office.

Compared to their house on Zou, this was a dollhouse.

“We get bunk beds?” Penguin asked in awe as he leapt up to the top bunk of one. “I call top!”

“Have it.” Law said in disinterest, surveying the small room tiredly. He missed his family on Zou. “Come on, Cotton-ya, let’s set up your bed on the dresser.” He said cheerfully as he swept over.

“I’m gonna go see what we can make for lunch.” Kid said and quickly left the room.

“Penguin, why don't you and Killer go help?” Law asked. “We’ll join you once this is set up.”

“Yosh! Let's go, Killer!” Penguin said excitedly, dragging the boy out.

“At least one of us will feel at home.” Law sighed as they began setting it up.

“You don't like it here, Lawland-sama?” She asked in confusion.

“I will eventually.” Law replied. “But right now, it's new and it...suddenly everything is changing... But I don't think I'm ready.”

“Things like this you'll never be ready for, Lawland-sama.” She replied wisely. “But you just gotta pretend until it's real. Think of it like a game! I do!”

“You’ve felt like this before, Cotton-ya?” He asked in concern.

“I was very scared leaving my tribe behind.” She told him. “I spent so much time hiding from you big people, that I was very scared. But I tell myself that I'm making me stronger to protect Lawland-sama! And wherever you are, I know I'm safe, so when it all became too much, I just had to come to you.” She said brightly. “And now it's not so scary anymore. At least I'm not alone.”

Law pulled her into a hug. “You never have to be afraid with me, Cotton-ya. I'll always take care of you.”

Cotton giggled. “I know! And I'll take care of you too!”

Feeling a bit better, Law helped her finish her room before they both went down to join the others. Law kept a smile on his face as he talked and laughed with them, but still his heart ached. He would just need to get used to it.
They didn’t stay at the house, instead exploring both their new yard and the surrounding forest. They had fun together and Law was in a much better mood as they returned to the house.

It immediately changed when they found it dark and quiet.

“He's not home?” Kid asked with a frown.

“Well, he did just take command of an entire Marine base.” Law said easily. “He’ll probably be pretty busy for the next week or so.”

“Should we go ask if he's coming for dinner?” Killer asked uncertainly.

Law wasn't sure if they were allowed to bother the man at work, but if it was just a brief visit—“I don't think we should all go though. It'll just be a distraction to the others.”

“Then we'll start on dinner.” Kid said. “You can go.”

“Okay.” He agreed and headed back outside. He didn't bother with the paths, following the feel of his father’s Haki.

The Marine base was just like every other base, if a little shabbier. It looked like it had been abandoned. Entering, he walked through the halls until a Marine stopped him.

“You shouldn't be here. I'm going to have to ask you to leave.” He told him.

“No.” He brushed him off and continued to walk.

A hand grabbed his arm.

“I wasn't giving you a choice. Leave now or you'll be charged with trespassing.” The man growled, trying to look intimidating.

“I'm here to speak with my father, Cadet.” Law growled, killing intent spiking. “Release my arm or I will take it from you.”

He sneered back. “Your father doesn't have time to listen to your whining. He's a very busy man—” Law punched him square in the face, sending him flying down the hall.

“I said to release me.” He said annoyance before turning on his heel and continuing down the hall unimpeded by the other Marines.

Finding his father's office, he knocked on the door.

“Come in.”

Law pushed the door open.

“Law-chan, what are you doing here?” Corazon asked in surprise.

“Are you going to come home for dinner or would you like me to bring you some?” Law asked calmly.

Corazon ran a hand through his hair, hood on the desk half-buried in paperwork. “I don't think I'll get home until late. I already ate with the others in the mess hall, so I won't need anything. Thank you, though. How's the house?”

Law was saved from answering by a Marine coming in with a stack of folders. “Then I guess we'll see you tomorrow. Goodnight Dad.”
The man was already focused on his paperwork and Law sighed as he left. He used the walk back to push aside his emotions so that when he told the others, he could keep them from being too upset with smiles and energy.

He was already exhausted.
The next morning, they found dishes in the sink but no Corazon. A note told them all he had to get on his paperwork and that he'd see them for dinner.

“We're not going to see him at dinner, are we?” Cotton asked quietly.

“Of course we will.” Law denied. “He told us he'd see us for dinner, didn't he?”

She brightened and nodded.

“We should start fixing the yard up.” He said as he looked out the window. “And the house.”

“How? We don't have a lawn mower.” Kid pointed out with a frown.

“No, but we've got blades, don't we?” He asked. “We can use it to practice the control of our swings.”

“We should pull the weeds first, nii-san.” Killer said.

“That's going to take all day!” Kid protested.

“We can make it a game.” Law decided. “The person that pulls out the most weeds can choose whatever they want for dinner.”


Law gave a theatrical sigh. “Fine.”

Cheering, the group got started on breakfast, plan for the day set.

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Killer won, so they went out to get the ingredients for ramen before getting started on making it.

Penguin checked the clock. “Sencho...Oji-san is late.”

“He probably lost track of time.” Law said optimistically. “I'll go get him.”

“Be careful, Lawland-sama!” Cotton said cheerfully, the others not looking up from their tasks.

Law set off once again for the Marine base. This time no one tried to stop him and he was soon knocking on his father's door.

“Come in.”

Law pushed open the door. “Tou-san, dinner is about ready.”

The man looked up at him and surprise before he grimaced. “Look, I'm sorry buddy, but I still have so much work to do. I don't think I'll be home till late again.”

“Dad, the others haven't seen you since yesterday morning!” Law said quietly. “You just moved
us around the world to an ocean we’ve never been to before in a house that will need a lot of elbow grease to be called a home! They need you to remind them that they're not alone here.”

“I can't. Law-chan, I have so much work to take care of right now. And they’re not alone, they have you.”

‘But I'm not enough!’ He wanted to scream. ‘I need you too!’

“Head on back before gets too dark.”

“Yes sir.” He said quietly before turning and walking out.

He didn't want to see the abandonment settle on their too young faces. They'd all been through so much already, lost so much… he couldn't add to that. He wouldn't.

“Dad couldn't come. There was a raid the next Island over by some pirates and they needed reinforcements. He's got to arrange the transport of the prisoners and the reports on the incident, but he says he loves you and will see us when he can.”

The lie worked even though it burned in his throat and they began talking excitedly about the incident. He was relieved that the crisis has been averted and easily chatted along with them through dinner and the cleanup. They all got washed up for bed and almost as soon as their heads hit the pillows, they were out cold.

Using his room, Law returned to the kitchen and started to cry. He made sure with his room, but this sorrow was real and felt very close to grief.

He may have been an adult once, but right now he was a kid. He wasn't ready to stop being a kid, but he had no choice. If Corazon couldn't balance his job and their family, Law would have to pick up the slack until he could.

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The next few days passed by similarly. Law would keep them distracted with housework or training and as the time without seeing Corazon stretched on, he added more and more to the lie, doing everything in his power to get them to believe it.

But it could only go on for so long.

“Tou-san, please, it's been a week!” Law said as he paced the office. “I know you're busy!” He cut in before Corazon could protest. He's softened his voice and his stance, trying not to be confrontational. “This is the longest we've ever gone without you, Tou-san. I know the base needs you, but we need our father!” He was practically begging by now. He didn't know what to tell the others if the man said no. “Please, just—just one meal...!”

“When I'm in this uniform, I'm not a father. I am a captain and I have responsibilities.” Corazon said sharply. “You need to learn some independence, Law. I can't carry you around forever.” He looked down at his paperwork. “Now go on. I need to get this done by tomorrow.”

Law’s eyes fell to the floor where he saw Corazon’s hood beneath the desk, probably unworn for the last week. With a wordless room, he brought it to his hand as he turned and left.

“There was a backlog of paperwork because of the attack. He can't come home yet.”
Fuck being an adult. As they entered the second week without their dad, Law started hugging them again. He needed them to hold him together or he would fall to pieces.

Lying started to get easier as time went on and after a while they stopped asking, but he could tell that they still believed him. They just...resigned themselves to not seeing him.

It both relieved and killed Law when that happened because they would never know that Corazon —no, Rocinante abandoned them, but he was all alone in his misery, so it hurt too.

He started buying cigarettes. He knew it was purely mental, but they helped steady him and he found he could smile easier when he had one in his mouth.

“Aren't you a little young to be smoking?”

Law looked over to see a woman with burgundy hair in a strange style buying cigarettes. She had to be twenty-eight at the least.

“Aren't you a little old to still be in your rebellious phase?” He shot back without any real heat.

“You look like you could use some vitamin C.” She said, ignoring the insult. “Why don't you buy some tangerines? They're good against scurvy.”

“I can't.” Even if he wanted to. “I need to get started on dinner.”

Purple eyes flicked down to Law’s empty ring finger. “Siblings then? How many?”

“Four.” He replied as he tucked the carton in his coat and started walking away.

The woman followed. “Where are your parents?”

“Working.” He said shortly.

“Mm. Working or working?” She asked.

“Mind your own business!” He said angrily, feeling defensive.

“Easy. I'm just asking.” She said calmly. “I got two girls myself...they're handful, I can't even imagine four. How about I help you out with dinner?”

“Thanks, but I don't need help. I can do this.” He said stubbornly.

“What are you, fourteen? Fifteen?”


The woman snorted. “Kid, I've seen minks before and there ain't no way in hell you're older than 15.”

Law growled, ears pressing flat to his head.

“So how about you let me help and I won't tell every merchant in town that you're too young to buy cigarettes?”

He had no choice.
They stopped by the woman (Bellemere)’s house to pick up some fruit and her daughters.

Familiar brown eyes stared up at him distrustfully. “Bellemere, who's the cat lady?”

Bellemere smacked the girl lightly. “Behave! This is Law. Her dad's working late so we're going to help with dinner!” She shoved some supplies into Law’s arms and picked up others. “Law-chan, meet my daughters Nami and Nojiko.”

“What kind of name is Law?” Nami scoffed.

Law gave Bellemere a wan smile. “I see what you mean. I think she'll get along fine with my brothers.”

“Come on then.” She said brightly as she led the way out.

Law followed wordlessly before taking the lead.

“You live here? Bellemere asked in shock when she saw the house.

“Hey, who's the lady?” Kid demanded from the roof they were working on.

“Bellemere. She blackmailed me into helping with dinner.” He called back up. “How's it going? Need help?”

“Nah, we got it.” Killer replied. “If Kid would stop taking my freaking screws!”

“I'm not!” Kid exclaimed indignantly before Penguin and Cotton's giggles revealed the real culprits. “You little—!”

There were crashes and laughter and yelps.

“Don't fall off the roof!” Law said in amusement. “I'll call you when it's done.”

Killer waved in acknowledgement, so he led the trio inside.

“Wow, this place hasn't looked this great in years.” The woman said in surprise. “Who did your parents get to fix it up? I might hire them to work on my house.”

“We did it.” Law replied as he began to unload the bags. “We don't have much to do around here, so I've been trying to keep us all busy. If you've got the supplies, we can do repairs and stuff.”

“Can we go help them on the roof?” Nami asked.

“Sure, but be careful, okay?” Bellemere warned. The two girls ran out. “So, what are we making?”

“Kid won the de-shingling, so cabbage rolls and,” he glanced through the gathered ingredients. “Chicken fried rice.”

“My specialties!” Bellemere said cheerfully. “But what about fruit and dairy?”

Law scratched his neck. “We had to buy the new shingles so we're a bit short on cash until Saturday. I used the last of the milk to make ice cream for them but it won't be ready till tomorrow.”

“You look like you need some calcium.” She said, looking Law over.
“I’m fine. I’m not that young.” He scoffed.

“All right, so,” She changed the subject and they chatted lightly throughout the preparations.

When the food was out and the kids were digging in, Bellemere asked, “Are your parents running late?”

“Tou-san’s always late.” Kid huffed. “He doesn't get home till after we've all gone to bed.”

“He's very busy.” Law defended. “He's got lots of stuff to do, that place was a dump.”

They accepted that easily.

“Yeah, I bet he's short-staffed because of that attack a few weeks ago.” Penguin said sympathetically. “The paperwork must be a nightmare.”

“What attack?” Bellemere asked in confusion.

“Off Mango Island!” Kid said excitedly. “Didn't you hear? Law says they were attacked by Grand Line pirates!”

“Oh!” She said in surprise. “Oh, I thought you were talking about the one that happened last week. It was just some bandits that stole a fishing boat, but they still managed to do some heavy damage! Your dad works in the Marine base then?”

“He's the captain.” Cotton corrected proudly.

“Really?” Nami asked. “Bellemere was a commodore before she quit.”

They all looked at the woman in surprise.

“Why’d you quit?” Killer asked curiously.

The woman ruffled the two girls’ hair. “I found these troublemakers and decided I'd rather be a mom.”

The girls seemed both embarrassed and pleased by the admission and Law smiled a bit wistfully.

Dinner continued with the kids praising Rocinante and grandly revealing that their grandpa (great in Penguin’s case) was none other than Sengoku the Buddha. Then talk moved to the disaster at Mangrove Cove, the event that started their crazy family.

A few games of cards was all it took for the kids to be knocked out and they carefully took the boys up to their room, Law setting Cotton onto her bed and tucking her in as well before heading back downstairs to share a glass of orange juice with Bellemere.

“There were no attacks on Mango Island.” Bellemere said quietly. “Hasn't been in twenty years.”

Law looked at his tea, not replying.

“Why’d you lie to them?” She asked gently.

He took a moment to respond. “I had to. I couldn't do it.” He said, voice breaking. He tried to fight, but tears filled his eyes and he tilted his head so that his hat would hide it as they spilled over. “I couldn't break their hearts. He’s choosing work over us and I... I don't want them to know!” He lost the fight, curling in on himself as he broke down.
Bellemere immediately moved to wrap an arm around his shoulders. “You can't hide it forever, Law-chan. This will kill you.”

“I can't let them know! Cor—R-Rocinante was supposed to be—to be forever!” He choked out. “They've all lost so much. I don't—I don't know how much more they can take... But I d-don't want them to feel like-like this…” He fist the coat above his heart.

“You're making yourself sick. Your fur is dull, Law-chan.” She said sternly. “You need to talk to your father.”

“He's not my father!” He seethed in sudden anger. “My father would never stay away for a day, much less a month! I don't know who that man is, but he's not my father!”

“Oh, Law-chan, don't say that!” She said in a pained voice.

He slammed his fist on the table nearly knocking over the glasses. “I did talk to him about it, okay?! Three weeks ago!” He exclaimed. “I practically begged him to come for-for just-just one meal...! To see them, tell them he loves them still and that—that—” He couldn't continue, crying too hard as he curled in again, forehead pressing to the table as he whined.

His heart hurt and everything was just too much. This all started because Law was too clingy. He'd driven a wedge between Rocinante and the others. If it wasn't for him...

...maybe the solution was easier than he thought.

He sat up, staring at the worn table as the tempest died down. “I'll just have to try a different approach. You're right, I can't just give up.” He said determinedly.

He thought over their last encounter and knew what had to be done.

“That's the spirit!” She said happily. “But-tomorrow. It's pretty late.” She mused.

Law stood up and walked her to the door after the woman collected her girls. He hugged her tightly. “You be safe on your way home, okay?”

“Always! I'll come by tomorrow, alright?” She asked.

“He phrased it,” He said and watched her head out before shutting the door quietly. Taking a breath to release the tension from his body, he went to check on the others.

Still deep asleep. He watched them for a few minutes and wiped away a stray tear. It was time to stop crying and fix things. He made sure they were all properly covered and kissed them each on the foreheads. No matter their ages...they had become his babies and—

He returned to the doorway and took one last look, smiling at how at peace they seemed. “I love you.” He said quietly, blowing out the last candle. “I'm sorry.”

Picking up one of the seastone cuffs and putting it in his pocket, he headed downstairs where he placed his belongings in a neat pile on the table, jewelry and all, leaving him in just his skirt and top. He put on his shoes at the door and headed in the opposite direction of town, going deeper into the woods than they'd been so far. It was loud with all the bugs and animals but he was alone.

He always ended up alone.

Mind blank, he walked for some time until he came across a brook. He followed it and where the water came from in a hill, there was a cave. He entered the water, the cold not registering as he walked over and got on his hands and knees. It was a tight fit, but he was barely skin and bones
and managed. A few kicks at the entrance sealed it shut and as the water levels rose, he reached into his pocket and slipped his hand through the cuff. The weakness came immediately and coupled with the water now cascading over his shoulders, he fell unconscious.

Chapter End Notes

Hey guys sorry about the hiatus but I've just been super unmotivated. I've seen all your reviews and I want to thank you all for the support even while I was MIA. But I've learned all about the speech to text that I have available on my phone and it's helped a lot. All I have to do is read my work out (which is embarrassing with all the curse words) and then edit after in Word.

Now to answer a couple reviews:

Falling right side up-- thank you for sticking with the story I know it's a weird concept but I think pretty much every author goes through this phase at least once. But I'm trying not to go too overboard so hopefully there will still be a lot of family moments. I can't stop all these changes because it just feels like a natural development but I hope you can still enjoy it anyway.

Sarge1130-- I never did answer your question about the slave marks... To be honest I couldn't remember how they got them when I wrote this so I just figured all the slaves had them. But now I know it's just the ones that were owned by the world Nobles. I'm not going to change it though so for this story just assume all the slaves have the marks! It helps my plot LOL

And here it is! The chapter that's been giving me the most trouble. I'm sorry about leaving a little cliffhanger, but I had no good place to stop so…enjoy! :)

“Guys! Get up! Now!” Penguin shouted as he burst into the room.

Kid and Killer jerked upright.

“What?” Kid demanded.

“It’s Sencho! I can't find him anywhere and all his stuff’s on the kitchen table!” He exclaimed in terror.

“What stuff?” Killer asked as they got out of bed.

“His coat, hat, jewelry...everything!” Penguin said anxiously.

“That lady!” Kid growled. “We fell asleep with her in the house!”

“Why would she just leave the stuff though?”

“It doesn't matter! We have to find him!” Penguin shouted and with Cotton's help, they tracked down the woman's house.

“Where’s Sencho?!” Penguin demanded as he slammed the door open.

“Law-chan? Why? Is she missing?” She demanded as she lowered the shotgun.

“I woke up and went to get cereal and all her stuff was on the table!” Penguin exclaimed. “You saw her last, what did you do to her?!”

“Nothing! We talked a bit before I brought the girls home.” She said has she turned off the stove.

“What did you talk about?” Killer asked.

“Well… your father.” She said reluctantly.

“What about him?” Kid asked in confusion.

She hesitated and Penguin began to leak killing intent as he glared at her. “You can talk freely or I will rip it out of you.” He growled.

Visibly fighting herself, she finally said, “Mango Island hasn't been attacked by anyone in nearly twenty years.”

It took a moment, but then it sunk in.

“Then why hasn't Tou-san come home?” Kid asked, looking hopelessly confused.

“I don't know.” She said solemnly. “But she said she was going to talk to him today, try again. Maybe she's with him.”

They allowed themselves to hope. “Where is the Marine Base?”

“I'll take you.” She said then she shouted, “I'm leaving money on the table, go out to eat!”

“Okay!” The girls called and she led the way out of the house at a run, the others keeping pace.
When they saw the Marine base, it looked as good as new. Had Law lied about it too?

They entered and swept down the halls teeming with Marines until they found a door with ‘Captain’ emblazoned on it. She shoved it open.

Rocinante looked up from his paperwork, surprised. He was alone. “Belle? What are you doing here?”

“Your daughter is missing.” She said shortly. “When was the last time you saw her?”

“Missing?” He looked back down. “She'll turn up. She always does.”

“This is different!” Penguin said angrily as he slammed Law’s hat on the desk. “She left everything behind! Weapons, coat, jewelry, hat, glasses… everything!”

Rocinante picked up the hat. “She's done this before.”

“Af— After nearly dying and Baki rejecting her!” Kid exclaimed. “Get off your ass and help us find her!”

“Mind your tone!” Rocinante snapped.

Penguin suddenly slammed his fist onto the desk, cracking it in half before he kicked Rocinante with enough force to send him through the wall. He was on him before he even stopped sliding, crackling black energy swirling around his palm held a centimeter from Rocinante’s face.

“Find my Sencho or I will sink this entire island into the sea.” Penguin said softly, normally blue eyes black as pitch.

Rocinante looked dazed and he didn't fight being pinned down. “Penguin...? What—” He looked around. “Where are we?”

“Do I look like I'm playing games?!” Penguin snarled as he slammed his fist into the ground at Rocinante’s head. Immediately the ground split and they heard the distant roar of water.

He yanked the wide-eyed man forward by his collar. “Find Sencho Now.”

“Law-chan is missing?!” He asked in alarm, sitting up.

“Hold up.” Kid said, tugging Penguin away from the man. “Tou-san, what's the last thing you remember?”

“We were in Cherry Cove watching the street performers doing tricks.” He replied.

Penguin gave him a shocked look. “That that was three islands ago!”

“Plus a month.” Kid said grimly.

“Forget that!” Rocinante said. “Law-chan is missing?”

“I was the last one that saw her.” Bellemere said with a frown. “She told me she was going to come talk to you today about you abandoning them for work.”

“I'd never abandon them!” Rocinante protested.

“This is the first we've seen you in a month.” Killer said quietly.
The man gave him a horrified look. Then he shook his head. “Not the issue right now. We need to find Law-chan and quickly. Could she have been kidnapped?”

“They wouldn’t have left her stuff on the kitchen table.” Penguin denied.

“Cotton-chan, can you feel her Haki?” He asked the dwarf.

She shook her head, crying. “I can't feel Lawland-sama at all!!”

He stroked her head. “Don't panic, don't panic. We'll find her. Take me to where she was last seen.”

Taking his hand, they led him to the house and he looked it at the objects on the table.

“This is how you found them?” He asked.

Penguin shook his head, rearranging them into a neat pile and capping it off with the spotted hat.

“Deliberate.” He said to himself, looking around the room. “Who was with her?”

“Me.” Bellemere repeated.

“Which way is your house from here?” When she pointed, he went outside and looked around the ground. Heel marks leading the opposite direction. “This way.”

They followed him as he tracked a seemingly random trail of broken twigs and crushed grass until they came across a dwindling creek.

He touched the sides of the ravine. Still wet. Then went to the source and began pulling the stones. As the flow picked up, the rest were swept away revealing a small cave.

Crouching down, he peered in and saw a heeled shoe. He reached in and got a good grip before he started pulling him out. A weak kick had him sighing in relief. “Law-chan, come on, baby. You need to come out.”

All he got in response was a hiss before he got his leg free and drew further in.

He was quick to get a hold again, arm almost completely inside. “Law-chan.”

A growl before sharp teeth sank into his arm.

Hissing slightly in pain, he tightened his grip. “Penguin, can you fracture this cave so we can get her out?”

Penguin didn't even hesitate. It crumbled to rubble revealing their absolutely soaked brother, teeth still lodged in Rocinante’s arm.

“Kairoseki.” Bellemere said, pointing at Law’s wrist.

Penguin ripped it off her wrist and threw it far away from them, eyes wild with terrified realization. “No. No no no no no no no—”

“Easy, buddy.” Bellemere said gently as she caught him by the shoulder, pulling him into a hug.

Kid and Killer were rooted to the spot, staring down at the feral boy with wide eyes.

Suddenly Law bit into his own leg and Rocinante quickly pinned him on to his back, getting a
snarl in return and she swiped at his face, nails leaving deep, bloody trenches. He barely reacted, shushing her and releasing a soothing pulse of Haki while Cotton staunched the bleeding of her leg. “Easy. Easy, baby. I got you.” He murmured to her gently, stroking her with his free hand. “It's all right. Come on, baby, I'm here now.”

Her growls weekend as the Haki started to take effect and she relaxed. But just as he was about to move back, she surged forward to bite him only to be shoved back down.

It continued like that for ten long minutes before she stopped trying to get away.

As Rocinante gathered her up in his arms, Cotton jumped onto his shoulder and said, “Lawland-sama’s full of bad stuff, Cora-sama! They are making her very sick.”

“Bad stuff? What kind of bad stuff?” Kid asked, seizing the thread.

“Her body is making her sick.”

“Hormones.” Killer said. “She hasn't been regulating them.”

“Maybe I can clear her head again.” Kid said anxiously, hurrying over to Rocinante and reached up to her head. “Lemme...check—”

He felt for the charges given off by the neurons and his eyes filled with tears as he said, “I can do it. Hold on to her Tou-san.”

Law jolted with a yowl and he grabbed his head in agony. “Ow! Fucking—”

Penguin began to cry harder as they all relaxed slightly.

“Lawland-sama, you need to get rid of the bad stuff.” Cotton said anxiously. “While you still can!”

Law created a room and fixed his head. “B-bad stuff? What bad stuff…?”

“Your hormone levels, dude. They went nuclear.” Kid said solemnly.

“Holy—” He quickly began removing the excess. “How the hell did they get so high? And why am I so cold?”

Kid and Killer shared a look before Killer asked, “What's the last thing you remember, Nii-san?”

Rubbing her head, Law tried to think past the fuzzy feeling clouding his mind. “I remember...putting y'all to bed with Bellemere-ya...but then...nothing.”

“Let's get you back to the house and cleaned up.” Bellemere said. “Then we can try and figure out where your memories went. Your dad's missing about a month of his own.”

“Last he remembers is Cherry Cove.” Kid said as Penguin leapt up into Rocinante’s arms to hug Law tightly.

Law immediately hugged him back, thinking. Cherry Cove...that was when the man started pushing him away! “If I've only lost the last few hours, that means the culprit is on the island.”

Corazon tightened his arms around her. “Let's get to the house quickly.”

They led the way back and near the door, Law smelled a familiar stench, but she held her tongue. They made her take a hot shower before anything else and it took nearly 30 minutes to get the
smell of algae out of her fur.

“Seriously what the fuck Penguin come help me!” She exclaimed in frustration. “I can't get my back!”

Penguin entered the shower and took the shampoo, starting to work it into the fur on her back.

“Why are you taking so long?” Kid demanded impatiently.

She raised her middle finger above the shower curtain rod. “I freaking hate the smell of algae. It's so disgusting.”

“Your face is disgusting.”

“My face is beautiful!” She growled.

“Your mink doesn't count.”

“Don't make me smack you.” Law huffed.

“You couldn't smack the broadside of a barn.”

Law grabbed one of the conditioner bottles and chucked it at Kid. “Why are you even in here? Can't a guy get some privacy?” She demanded.

“You lost your privileges.” Killer replied instead.

“Why?”

“Shut up.” The three younger boys said.

“Don't do that, it's creepy.” She huffed. “What’d I do?”

“Nothing.”

“I said shut up.”

“It never happened.”

Law looked at Penguin but while the hat hid his face, she could feel the wild energy crackling just beneath the surface.

She huffed again but dropped it. When she turned the water off, one of the boys handed her a towel and she wrapped herself up before Penguin opened the curtain.

“When did you lose so much weight?” Kid asked in a pained voice.

Law looked down at herself, but couldn't see anything different than what she usually looked like. “I...didn't?”

“You're skin and bones, kid.” Bellemere scoffed from where she was leaning against the door jamb. “That coat of yours hides too much.”

“I'm fine.” She brushed off as she created a room to get rid of the excess water. With a wordless Shambles, she was dressed in clean clothes, healing her leg while she thought about it.

Penguin grabbed her brush and began brushing her fur. “You are very thin, Sencho. I don't like
“Then I'll gain some weight.” She brushed off, catching him and starting to lick his face. “You need a bath too.”

Kid took the brush as Law kept Penguin in place and took over the brushing.

“You're pretty quiet, Roc.” Bellemere noted.

“I'm just trying to wrap my head around this...” The man said quietly. “I've lost an entire month. Who took care of the kids while I was gone?”

“Lawland-sama took care of us, Cora-sama.” Cotton told him brightly. “Even though we missed you, we were happy.”

“But not Nii-san...” Killer said quietly.

Law pretended she hadn't heard him. “Don't worry, we'll figure out what happened. Whoever was here didn't bother covering up their scent, so I'll be able to track them down.” She pushed Penguin towards the stall. “But first, you guys need to get cleaned up. You're rank.”

“That can wait...” Kid began to protest but Law gave him a look that had him reluctantly heading for the sink to wash his face and brush his teeth.

As Killer joined him, Law slipped past the two adults and headed downstairs where she got started on making breakfast.

“Where are your kids, Bellemere-ya?” Law asked as they followed her in.

“I gave them money to go out for breakfast.” She replied as she lit a cigarette. “We had to find you.”

“I gave them money to go out for breakfast.” She replied as she lit a cigarette. “We had to find you.”

“Where was I?” She asked, creating a room to heal Corazon's face.

“We tracked you down to a brook.” Corazon told her. “There was a small cave where the water came out that you had closed yourself into with a Kairoseki cuff.”

Law paused mid-reach for the spices for the eggs. “That's sloppy. I clearly wasn't thinking straight.” She hummed as she grabbed the salt.

“Clearly.”

“Law-chan, I'm very concerned.” Corazon said. “What terrifying power could make you leave the kids?”

“One that needs to be destroyed.” She replied flippantly.

Kid ran into the room, hair still dripping as he sat at the table.

“Have you reported the incident to Ojii-san yet?” She asked as she tossed Kid a hand towel.

Corazon began patting his pockets. “That's odd. I don't have either of the den den Mushi on me. And where's my hat?”

Leaving the bacon to fry, Law went to where her coat was folded on the table and reached into the pocket, taking out the red hood. She tossed it over before heading to the fridge to get drinks.

Crap, they were out of milk. Seeing orange juice, she set it on the table and returned to the stove to
resume cooking.

“Why aren’t your brothers helping you, Law-chan?” Corazon asked as they watched her work.

“They took care of fixing the roof yesterday while I went out to get a few things.” She replied.

Kid frowned at her in confusion but didn’t comment on how she’d been in charge of every meal for the last month.

Killer came out next with Penguin and Law started to serve the food. Before filling her own plate, she began putting her belongings back on to get them off the table and wondered vaguely why she hadn’t taken them with her. Maybe to warn them something was wrong? None of this made any sense and it annoyed her. Finally though, she served herself some food and began to eat.

After a minute or two, she noticed none of them were eating much. “Stop playing with your food and eat.” She chided.

“M’not hungry.” Kid protested immediately.

“You don’t see me skipping meals, do you?” She demanded. “That’s no excuse to waste food.”

“Load of good it’s done you.” He grumbled but obediently started eating properly.

“I think we’re all just a bit eager to bring the culprit to justice.” Bellemere said calmly.

“Yes! No one hurts Lawland-sama and gets away with it!” Cotton said angrily.

“The sooner you finish the sooner we get the sucker.” She replied and they started eating more enthusiastically.

They left the dishes in the sink to soak before Law searched for the scent trail. Catching it, she began to follow it, the others only having a bit of trouble following her.

When the Marine base came into view, she slowed to a stop and growled low. “I know who it is. I broke the fucker’s nose that first day because he wouldn’t let me see Tou-san.”

“Just his nose?” Corazon asked in mild disapproval. “A broken hand is more inconvenient.”

“I was trying not to cause trouble.”

“Oh we’re way past trouble now.” Penguin growled. “I call dibs.”

“Aww, what?” Kid pouted angrily.

“They’s the rules, kiddo. But you guys can chip in if he tries to escape.” Law said easily and the trio was pacified. “Room.” She created it just large enough to surround the base and though it took a few moments, she located the target. “Good, he’s busy. Tou-san, can you keep us all in a Calm Field until we’re in position?”

“Sure, but this is a lot of people to cover. Try not to make any excessive noise or it could break.” He warned and they all nodded.

As soon as it was done, Law led the way into the building. Through hand signals, they got into position around the dining hall and she gave Penguin the signal.

The boys sprung forward over the heads of the other diners and nailed the target with his bo staff, sending him crashing towards a wall only for Killer to knock him back with a roundhouse kick.
Penguin slammed his fist into the man's head creating a crater as the table and floor compacted from the force.

“Everyone, get out of the way.” Corazon ordered as he strode over.

“Donquixote-taisa, what's going on?” One of the men asked as they all obeyed.

“This man has attacked me and my family. He nearly killed my daughter.” He said angrily as he grabbed the unconscious man by the collar of his shirt and lifted him up. “Who the hell is he?”

“I will fetch his portfolio.” One of the men said.

“Killer, accompany him. No one leaves this base until I have answers.”

“Hai, Tou-san.” Killer said obediently before he too had his bo staff out.

Law took out a cigarette and lit it. “Don't worry about killing him. I'll keep his body functional.”

The man grinned a very familiar grin and Law felt most of the remaining tension drain away.

“Good. Because I don't think I'll be able to control myself once we start.”

The Marine and Killer soon returned. “There's no file on him, Captain. We've been infiltrated!”

“That's not a good start, Tou-san.” Kid noted.

“To be fair he was compromised before we arrived on the island.” Law defended easily.

“Don't defend me when I'm at fault, Law-chan.” Corazon chided before refocusing on the man he held. “Let's find out who the hell you are.” He grabbed the man's partially healed nose and wrenched it out of alignment, causing him to wake with a pained scream.

The next hour was pretty dull. Watch one torture, you've seen them all. They found that the man was from Cherry Cove and had seen Law during the festival. Deciding he wanted her, he started to chat with Corazon, but was met with violence when he asked how much for the night. So he used his devil fruit to steal that protectiveness from him. He knew it would drive a wedge between them when it made the man rebuff any physical affection as superfluous and planned to be there to ‘comfort’ Law. But he found out they were leaving the island and followed them. He'd been quick to infiltrate the Marines in the chaos and used his devil fruit to keep Corazon from questioning his lack of papers as he waited for Law to break from the pressure. But after a month, he got impatient and tried to speed things along by heightening all her negative emotions.

The reason they forgot was because once he released them, they wouldn't go after him if they didn't remember.

Law was both impressed and disgusted. “That's an awful lot of trouble to go through for one chick.” She calmly approached where the man lay bloody and broken from the torture it took to get all that information. “I don't know whether to feel impressed or disgusted.” She drew his face up as she looked into his eyes. “But you tried to hurt my little ones.” She dug her nails in causing deep furrows. “And for that, I'm going to skin you alive.” She took out her sword and carefully reassembled it. “Everyone—get out.”

“I want to watch.” Kid protested.

“Not this time. Wait outside.”

Corazon began herding the boys out. “Let her have this one, kiddo. She deserves to let loose for
once."

That got them cooperating and they had the Marines cleared out in no time.

Law waited until she felt Corazon’s Calm Field before getting started. The man's screams were like music to her ears.
She tucked the devil fruit into her coat as she exited the room an hour and a half later. "Here." She said, holding up the Den Den Mushi to her father. "He had taken them to prevent anyone from interfering."

Corazon immediately activated both.

Momo's immediately began screaming as the woman raged at him about ignoring all of her calls and making her sick with worry.

"Someone stole the snails, Momo-okaa-ya." Law said calmly as the woman stopped for breath. "We've only just located them."

"And you didn't think to send a letter?!" She demanded furiously.

Law took the snail back and gestured for the boys to follow as she said, "Sorry, but a lot's been going on. In between the theft and settling into a new home, we haven't had much time."

Momo sighed. "I'm just glad you're all okay. How are you settling in? Tell me about your new house!"

Together they updated the woman on the house and the work they needed to put into it to make it livable. She left it to the younger kids since they could honestly say nice things about their time there.

She hung up pacified and comforted.

"Why didn't we tell her?" Penguin asked Law as she tucked the snail under her hat.

"Some secrets need to die with the culprit." She replied as she began walking back towards Corazon and Bellemere. "Either way, she is my mother and I won't have her worrying over something that has already passed."

Though reluctant, they allowed it to be dropped.

Corazon was just finishing telling Sengoku about their information gathering when they returned. "Hey, boys. How's Momo-chan?" He asked.

"Glad we've settled in well." Law replied. "Hey Ojii-san."

"Hello, Law-chan." The man greeted. "Your father just finished telling me about the last few hours. How about you tell me about the missing month?"

"Tou-san was obsessed with work, so we kept ourselves busy with house and yard work." She replied.

"You can give me details or I won't call off Garp."

"You sent GARP?!" She asked in alarm.

"Rocinante refused to answer the phone, so yes."

"He won't listen to you anyway!" She exclaimed. "Damn it, you guys aren't fed enough to deal
with him! Back to the house!” She ordered, starting to herd them out.

"Actually, if I make it a direct order, he can't disobey." Sengoku's voice calmly pierced through her panic. "I've been promoted."

"Congratulations. So?" She asked.

"So as Fleet Admiral I can restrict his liberties if he disobeys."

"But he's a Monkey…” Kid protested. "Once he gets somethin' in his head, he's like a dog with a bone."

"How many Monkeys do you know?" Bellemere asked curiously and the three youngest looked away tellingly.

"If all else fails I've got blackmail." Sengoku added.

Law brought the snail to her hand. "Okay fine. Tou-san, you need a shower and the rest of y'all need to eat." She said before using her room to leave the base. In a few moments, she felt like she was far enough away to ask, "Where do you want me to start?"

"The beginning." He replied and if this weren't so serious, she'd have rolled her eyes.

"I guess it started around cherry cove." Law began, climbing up to sit in a tree. She leaned back against the bark. "While we were there, he started pushing me away when I tried to hold his hands and stuff, so I thought he just wanted some space for a bit. I - I mean, I guess I've been kinda clingy since we left Zou…so I didn't really question it. After a few days of it, though, I stopped trying altogether. But that's whatever." She brushed off before the desolation could set in. "We got to Orange Island without any major calamities, so it was a freaking miracle. We were greeted by Marines and Tou-san had one take us to our new place—total crap by the way. We've only just made it really livable but it's kept us busy—anyway," She cut herself off. "We explored the house and yard—we've got a good amount of space for a garden and the kids loved the bunk beds, so that was cool. We explored until dinner when I went to get Tou-san, but he said he had too much work to do and that he wouldn't be back till late. Which we understood, but then he left before breakfast and the next time I asked him, same excuse…" She trailed off, reluctant to admit it, but… "I didn't want them to know he was choosing work over us. They – I refused to see that. So I lied to them. Made up some story about an attack on Mango Island and kept that up to cover his excuses for the next week or so. But they know how Marines work and clean up only takes so long. I tried again. Practically begged him to come home—just one meal. To let them know he wasn't abandoning them. That he still—"

She was getting too emotional. She took a deep breath and cleared her throat before continuing.

"Anyway, basically he said that I needed to grow up and that when he was wearing that uniform, he wasn't a father." She looked down at her furry hands. Her mink was dull. She felt sick. "So I told him he was being held up by a backlog of paperwork. Eventually they stopped asking, which was… Better, I suppose. And I made sure to keep us all busy fixing up the house, mixing it in with training so they'd stop complaining about it. Games too. Winner picks dinner that night and so on. Things settled into a bit of a routine and after that—" She shrugged. "Not much detail that matters there, I guess, unless you want a play by play of us cleaning the yard?" She asked sarcastically.

The man scoffed lightly. "No, Law-chan. Go on."

She hmphed. "Well, yesterday Bellemere-ya caught me in town and blackmailed me into letting
her help with dinner -"

"Blackmail?"

Law pretended she hadn't heard. "Which went pretty well, her girls got along with the others—
though Nami-ya has a bit of an attitude. There were fights, arguing, but no bloodshed—which
was a minor miracle. They were all out cold by nine thirty. I'll definitely be inviting them over
more often."

The old man chuckled and she smiled slightly in surprise. She scratched her chin. "After that
though… I don't remember anything. Next thing I know I'm in Tou-san's arms soaking wet with
Penguin crying and the others staring at me like I killed their dog. You know the rest, probably."

"Tell me anyway."

Huffing, she did. About the damn suicide watch they had her under, making breakfast, tracking
down the stench of the culprit to the Marine base and immediately recognizing it as the Marine
that tried to stop her from seeing Corazon that first night—belatedly telling the man about the
confrontation and how she’d broken his nose before resuming her report.

She paused when she came to the part where she told the others to leave. "He hurt my babies."
She said softly, feeling that wild Haki just out of reach. "He tried to take me from them. He
made me hurt them." It was hard, not giving in to that rage. To that fury.

"Law-chan?"

The man's voice drew her further from the rage and she forced herself to focus. "I made sure he
regretted it, but there could never be enough pain to excuse what he'd done. I gave it my best shot
though." She got a lazy grin, scratching her chin. "I'll spare you the details. Can't have you
stealing my ideas, Gensui-ya."

The snail gave her a wry smile as he said, "I think that's enough, Law-chan. Thank you. I'll call
Garp off and then I'll call after dinner."

Terror filled her for a brief instant before she fought it back and said easily, "Sure thing, Ojii-san.
Talk to you then."

Pressing end, she closed her eyes against the burn of tears as the solitude pressed in on her.

"Nii-san?" Looking down, she saw Kid standing at the base of the tree, looking up at her. "Are
you okay?"

Her first instinct was to lie. To protect him from her instability and maintain the illusion that she
was a perfectly functional adult. But she could see it in his eyes that he was waiting for the lie and
knew that would hurt him more than the truth.

Sliding out of the tree, she fell to her knees and hugged him tightly around the waist. "No…" She
whispered and just like that, the tears started to spill.

Kid hugged her back just as tightly and to Law's surprise, began to release a charge that made
every ounce of tension leave her body, serotonin levels increasing to make her feel better.

And for the first time in a month, she began to purr.

Suddenly it was Kid crying and Law shifted so that she was holding him. Continuing to purr, she
started to give him a bath. The action soothed the both of them and the loneliness dulled to a mild
It took a few minutes for the boy to calm down, but when he was barely sniffling, listening to Law's heartbeat, Law said, "I'm sorry. But I never would've gotten that bad without that fucker. Maybe I would've had a few breakdowns eventually, but I would never ever abandon you like that. You are all my babies and I love you."

Kid started crying again. "I-I can't—I can't lose y-you again, N-Nii-san! I can't!" He sobbed.

"You won't." She said gently as she took out the orange fruit with green swirls to show him. "You guys are gonna help me bury this in a place where no one will ever find it."

Sniffing as he rubbed his eyes with his sleeve, Kid nodded. "I—I love you too, N-Nii-san…"

Smiling, she nuzzled his cheek affectionately before picking him up when she stood. "Come on, let's get back to the house."

Burying his face in her neck, he nodded and held on the she began to run.

... RDP RDP RDP...

Hey guys, thanks for the reviews! I had no idea there were so many mistakes left in here! I laughed at a lot of them so I hope you found them just as funny. I think I got them all and I'll try harder next time to do it beforehand. Thank you for your patience while I figure out this new process and I hope you'll continue to help me catch any mistakes!

And as you can see I've switched over to female pronouns. That's because after the trauma he went through, it's sort of clicked in Law's head and that's what he's been using. Not so much consciously, but, well, it's complicated.

I hope to update soon, but good news! We've started on Journal 6 of 8! Or was it 9? I don't know we'll see LOL

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!