

A Warlord and his Princess

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Kapitel 1: A Princess and her Chores

It took Mihawk, Zoro and Perona almost half a year to warm up around each other. Well – at least as warm as it could get around these three.

Mihawk loved the peace he had when he spent his time alone on the whole island. Now he just enjoys the silence when the others are either sleeping, training or doing whatever they did at daytime to stay away from him. Most of the time he was not training Zoro, preparing meals or working in the garden he spent reading the newspaper and drinking some of his favourite red wine.

Zoro on his side started to wake up early to have most of the day for training to become stronger. The day often started with running some laps around the island to get better stamina. Then he would have some sword fighting and hand to hand combat sessions with Mihawk or the humandrills and after that he always did some work out for his muscular strength. He could feel becoming stronger by each week and he felt proud of what he already achieved.

And then there was Perona. In the beginning she hated everything that required her to physically work in and around the castle. After all – she was basically a princess (even though Mihawk and Zoro did not seem to accept the fact). She was not royal by blood but her former captain and somehow father figure treated her like one. Every day she slept in and only woke up when Mihawk and Zoro were already outside and training. Then she did her morning routine in the bathroom and went downstairs to grab something to eat, decided to explore the castle or watch the two men during their training.

That was until one evening when they sat together for dinner and the owner of the house raised a topic much to her disapproval: "You know, ghost girl, if you want to stay and live here, you also need to contribute to our daily living." Perona on her seat put down her fork and looked straight at him: "WHAT?!" Mihawk stuck his left index finger into his left ear as she shouted at him. "Why do I need to? And do not call me ghost girl. I have a name!" He lowered his hand again. He simply looked at her and continued with a calm voice: "You are living under my roof, eating my food and do nothing all day. Even Roronoa is helping out."

"I am your guest!"

"You are basically an intruder."

"Rude!"

Zoro watched the two with a brow raised sceptically. He could only agree with his mentor in that matter.

"I want you to help me out with the garden and the kitchen."

"Sure. You think because I am the woman here, I should do the typical woman things?"

Do you also want me to clean your clothes for you?"

"I wouldn't mind."

Perona crossed her arms before her, blew up her cheeks and mumbled some non-audible insults. "I am a princess. I do not need to work."

"Then maybe it is time for you to get down from your high horse and learn how to act like a normal person. Not some silly brat."

That triggered her and she exploded furiously. "WHAT DID YOU CALL ME?!", she started floating above the table and into Mihawk's direction. When she was directly in front of him, she raised her right index finger onto his chest and tipped it with every word she said as to make her point clear: "I am not a silly brat you arrogant grumpy man!" The swordmaster was not really impressed by that action and continued with a low voice: "The why are you acting like one?" Perona floated a bit higher to not touch the table with her feet and put her hands on her hips. Face filled with anger to be insulted like that: "Am not! Idiot. I won't tolerate you talking to me like that." And with that she stormed out of the dining room. While exiting she could hear Mihawk saying "Tomorrow at 8 in the garden." With a last loud blow she shut the door to the dining room behind her.

When she left the room, it was silent. Mihawk finished his dinner and Zoro emptied his glass of wine. "I guess this means that she is not willing to help out", commented Zoro, "Guess it will be only the two of us doing all the work." "It seems like Moria spoiled her pretty much", Mihawk answered, "But she will come around. Don't underestimate her." Zoro raised his eyebrow again: "Why do you believe that?" But Mihawk decided to end the conversation at this point. It already cost him enough nerves to talk to Perona so he simply reached for his glass of wine and emptied it: "It's your turn to wash the dishes." With that Mihawk stood up and left the room.

On the other side of the castle Perona was sitting on a chair in front of her mirror and combed her hair with fast movements. "He called me brat." Another brush. "That damned idiot" Another brush. "How could he?" Another brush and another and another. Then in her rage she threw her hairbrush with a quick motion onto the next wall and halted for a moment. The worst thing about the whole situation? Mihawk was right and she hated it. Perona really behaved like a small child and she knew it at the moment their conversation took the wrong turn. She was never known to have a good or calm temper. She really could explode within seconds if something happened, that she did not like or was unable to process. Perona tried to calm her breathing and then her anger subsided and made place for something else. Sadness. She had felt it on some evenings when she was all alone in her room without her bear or someone of her crew to talk to her. A silent tear found its way down her cheek and another one followed. Nobody was ever so harsh to her in words. Of course she struggled with violent assaults from her opponents and sometimes she also took some pretty bad physical hits when she was unprepared for battle. But never has anybody hurt her emotionally. Moria always kept her safe and ensured she had everything she needed. Treated her like the princess she soon felt to be like and she never needed to give something in return other than her loyalty. On Thriller Bark she had her pets or the zombies do all the work and never needed to make much effort to have a meal or take a bath. But Moria was no longer there – probably dead. Thriller Bark was destroyed. Kuraigana was her new home. And she really liked it. Yes - the residents could be kinder and definitely a lot cuter but she didn't mind them. Zoro was fun to watch and Mihawk gave her the safety of his home. Perona wanted to stay here for the time, the warlord would allow her to stay. She stood up and slowly went to the wall where her

hairbrush was lying. She bent down, picked it up and went back to sit on her chair. She looked at herself in the mirror. Eyes slightly puffy and red from the tears. "So uncute", she mumbled. But then she made a decision: Tomorrow she was going to show them what she was made of. Nobody will call her a brat again. With that she went to bed, cuddling with one of her self-made stuffed toys and fell asleep pretty fast.

The next morning she woke up early. It was not really bright outside and it was hard for Perona to get up before her normal wake up time, but she needed to prove it to herself and mostly to Mihawk and Zoro that she could help if she wanted to. So she quickly went in front of her closet to check, what she should wear. "Ok the garden. What do I need there." Perona rummaged through her clothes. "Something comfy but also something cute." She decided to wear a simple short black skirt and a black t-shirt showing her bellybutton. Some tights and higher boots to match her outfit. Afterwards she got ready in the bathroom and gave herself one last look in the mirror. "Perfect." She smiled widely. She had a look at the clock and saw, that it was already 8. "Shoot", Perona cursed. She opened her door and flew out of her room, down the stairs and almost bumped into Mihawk who was standing at the bottom of the stairs with his arms crossed and looking in her direction. "Woops", she was able to come to a stop before crashing into him. She floated shortly before him and then let her feet touch the ground. Standing in front of him. "Good morning", she greeted him and smiled shyly. Perona was wondering, why Mihawk was dressed in his battle clothing including his hat and his sword Yoru on his back. "You decided to show up, ghost girl", he commented emotionless and started to walk into the direction of the garden. Perona was standing still for a moment as he already went away. She tried not to flip out about the rude greeting and inhaled and exhaled deeply. Then she followed him but could not suppress a "I still have a name" addressed to him. "Why are you dressed in your battle outfit when you wanted my help in the garden?", Perona asked when she caught up with him. "You are working in the garden. I will be training with Zoro the whole day." "Oh", she tried to hide a little bit her sadness in her voice but was not sure if she succeeded. Perhaps Mihawk also did not notice it because who knows if he even is aware of such an emotion. Perona thought she was spending her gardening session with him today. Yes – he really was quiet but then at least she had some kind of company. Someone to talk to and who she knew he was forced to listen, even if he did not answer her.

The garden itself was not something she would have called beautiful or well taken care of. Most times they bought their supplies from the neighbouring islands and were not in need to grow something on their own. No wonder that wild plants and flowers were growing in this area. "I want to cultivate the garden again so we have our own vegetables and don't need to go on supply runs so often", Mihawk explained when they arrived in the garden area, "On my last trip I bought some seeds for zucchini, cucumbers and tomatoes. We start with these." He went with her to the small gardening house and showed her the gardening equipment, seeds and explained how to plant them in the correct way. "The way you arrange the plants is to your liking, as long as the plants are able to grow." Perona let her eyes wander around the wild area where she needed to work. "And I should do this all on my own? This will take ages to finish", she exclaimed. "It's not like you have something better to do in the house", Mihawk simply stated and looked at her. "Why are you so rude?", she asked angered. "Why are you only seeing the bad side of this? You are able to contribute to our daily life and you get to chose freely how to design the garden." Ok he got a point. She could imagine this place being in a good shape with all kinds of

useful and maybe also other cute plants. Back at Thriller Bark she had her wonder garden. It was not close to useful but it was cute. All of her pets were there and it was a nice place to spend. But this here? This required a lot of physical work - something she was not used to. "I will check on you in the afternoon", Mihawk turned around and started to walk away, "I will be training with Zoro on the mountains on the other side of island." Perona shortly looked after him and then redirected her view onto the garden in her responsibility. She sighed deeply, taking her sweet time to think of how to start with this mess. "Seems like it would be the best to remove all the weed first." With that she grabbed a spade and started digging to remove all the plants with their roots. The plants were collected in a medium sized basket. When it was halfway filled, she carried it to a place outside of the garden to empty it. Somewhere here she planned to create a small compost. But this needed to be her second priority. When Perona walked back she checked her progress, she sighed again. "I will never finish this alone." Then she felt like someone was watching her. She raised her head and looked around to see who it could be. In the beginning nobody was to be seen. "Oke. No need to get spooked. You are just alone on this part of the island and there is nobody here." She collected herself, took her spade in her hands and proceeded with her work until the next basket was halfway filled. When Perona went to the compost she heard some rustling behind her. Quickly she turned around and saw two humandrills behind her. "Oh shit", she froze in her movements and let the basket fall out of her hands. What were they doing here? The humandrills usually never came close to the castle, because Mihawk was here and they were afraid of him. Then it dawned on her. Mihawk was not even close to her. That stupid swordsman was on the other side of the island tormenting Zoro who knows how. She was by herself. Perona watched the two humandrills who were also standing still and they started staring at each other.

"What do you want?", she dared to ask, "I do not want to fight with you." The two baboons looked at each other questioning until one of them walked straight into her direction. Perona was alarmed and went some steps back. "I really do not want to harm..." Then she stopped as she saw how the first baboon took the spade in front of her and tried to articulate with her. Blabbering something not-understandable for her while pointing on the utensil in his right paw. Perona stared at them, wondering what he tried to tell her. She started smiling when the humandrill stuck the spade into the ground and mirrored her movements from before. "Do you want to help me?" The baboons started cheering and hammered with their paws on their chests. "Ok!", Perona exclaimed excited. "You can start by doing, what I did before", she ordered the first baboon with the spade. Afterwards she looked at the second baboon still standing a bit further away: "You come with me. We will prepare the ranking assistance for the vegetables together." With that said the second humandrill walked eagerly into her direction and together they placed some poles along the already prepared ground and mounted steel wire between them.

In the afternoon around 5 Mihawk decided to end the training session for today. Zoro was already wounded pretty badly from their training while Mihawk himself was not really affected or even so much as panting. "We should head back", Mihawk put his sword on his back and looked into the direction of the castle, "It will get dark soon and we will need about half an hour to go back." Zoro sat on the ground trying to catch his breath: "And check on Perona. Hopefully she did not blow up the garden." The warlord did not comment on this remark. He somehow had the feeling that there was more to that woman than appears on first sight. He could not believe that Moria

assigned her as one of her fleet commanders if she was just that annoying brat she used to act like since she set foot on this island. Without any further action Mihawk started walking back and Zoro silently followed him.

When they arrived back at the castle and went to the garden, the warlord did not expect to see what was before them. He expected Perona to maybe have done some progress in removing the weed or maybe planted the first seeds. But not only that. She was responsible for tilling even a bigger surface than he expected to see and almost finished planting all the seeds. In the back of the garden Perona was floating around and not only two but for humandrills were working below her. The baboons were finishing the wiring around the poles and Perona ordered them around to make the wiring higher or lower, checking the knots and commenting if they are doing a good job. Out of instinct Mihawk put his right hand on the handle of Yoru on his back. As he did, the humandrills froze in their doing and felt the change of the atmosphere around them. The baboons looked in the direction of the warlord and seemed to be in fear again. That was the point where Perona also noticed the new arrivals. Mihawk with his hand on his sword and Zoro staring unbelieving at the garden. She smiled widely and floated to them until she was right before the two men. "Relax, Hawkeye", she scolded him as she was flying a bit around the two men in joy, "They are here to help. Seems like it is good for a change if you do not have to constantly live in fear." With that she lowered down on the ground and stood next to Mihawk - looking expectantly between her achievement and the warlord. Mihawk loosened the grip on his sword and let his gaze wander around the garden again. "It is good, isn't it?", Perona asked full of excitement, "Though I made a deal with them, that we will share the food as a return for their assist." Mihawk slightly nodded and a small smirk came upon his lips. Then he turned around and decided to go back into the castle. While leaving he commented her with a short: "Good job, Perona. Tomorrow evening you will be helping me in the kitchen." Then he left. Perona stood still and looked after him. "He said my name", she whispered. This was the first time the warlord addressed her with her first name. Normally he would only refer to her as "Ghost girl" or "woman" combined with a not so nice character trait of her. After processing it she jumped as high as she could and raised her arms into the air cheering. "YAY!!" It was just a small praise from Mihawk but it felt like a really big step in her stay here.