

A Warlord and his Princess

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Kapitel 3: Getting Stronger

Since the last incident with the marines Mihawk insisted that Perona was also attending some of their training sessions. Of course he did not want her to become a sword master. That was Zoros and his part, as she never failed to mention. But if it was necessary Perona should be able to defend herself also with a close combat weapon of her choice. Aside of Zoros training Mihawk made a plan that included Haki training and weapon fighting sessions. She was not yet able to keep up with Zoro, that is why in the morning he started with her and her training and the second half of the day was reserved for the training of his potential rival.

Today was another day of weapon fighting training. As Perona was not yet in possession of her own weapon, the two of them were only fighting with thick wood sticks. The beginning was more about fighting stances anyway. In their last sessions they have already had some basic lessons about stances, countering and feet movements. It was pretty hard for Perona in the beginning as she had never really practiced anything in that matter. Good thing for her was that she was in fact a fast learner and a better student than Mihawk has originally expected. The large balcony of the castle served as their training ground. It was flat and smooth – perfect for starters who only needed to focus on the technique without the fear of stumbling upon stones or roots. Perona and Mihawk stood on the balcony. Facing each other, sticks in their lowered right hands and only so much distance, that they could easily cross their toy weapons. The pair was already training for three hours. As the basic stances were now known to her, they were mainly focussing on very slow fighting sessions. He wanted her to counter his movements. “Raise your weapon”, Mihawk ordered her and readied himself already to start the next round. “Again?”, Perona muttered, “We have been on it for hours.” “Your opponent is not waiting for you to be in top form”, he replied. “You are such a meanie when it comes to training”, she grumbled and got into her fighting pose. As soon as she was ready, Mihawk already crossed his wooden stick with hers. Then he changed the angle of his stick, taking two steps to the right and crossed it again with hers. The warlord watched every move she did and continued attacking her slowly. In between he commented with a simple “Good” or corrected her footwork. To try startle her, he aimed directly with the tip of his toy weapon onto her upper body. “What?”, Perona squeaked, jumped to the side and crossed her toy sword as best as she could. Mihawk stopped in his position. “Left foot a little bit more backwards”, he eyed her posture, “turn your upper body a bit more to the left.” Perona did as he said. Or at least tried to as she mixed up left and right. “I said left”, he told her. Then he put a bit more pressure on his weapon, moving it sideways to Peronas stick and left her stumbling. In the result she lost her balance

and fell on her butt. "HEY!", she exclaimed. "Otherwise you will lose your balance." Mihawk looked down on her, smirked a bit and offered her his free hand to get up. "Yeah, yeah, I know. For you this is funny", she grumbled and grabbed his hand with her left hand and stood up. When her feet were placed firmly on the ground, she raised her toy sword without a warning and attacked the warlord, trying to go with the advantage of surprise. Mihawk raised his eyebrow questioning and dodged every one of her attacks with ease. "COME ON!", she shouted frustrated, "How can you not even stumble or make one silly mistake." "Haste never is a good trait in a fight", he simply commented. After some strikes he decided to end her little charade by using her own unbalanced steps to send her backwards on the ground again. There she was lying like a little bug on her back. Frustrated she kicked and beat the air around her as she was lying there, mumbling curses into the direction of the sky. "Did you really think you could land a hit?", he asked standing next to her watching her little tantrum. "Aaargh", Perona lay flat with her back on the ground, spreading her arms and legs away from her and stopping her movements for a short moment. Then she directed her furious gaze at Mihawk and pointed with her outstretched arm and her index finger at him: "YOU! ... Why do you need to be so damn good in everything? It sucks on my end." On that Mihawk could not help to chuckle softly. "Yeah sure. Just laugh, you stupid arrogant sword freak", she muttered grumpily, lowering her arm again to rest it on the ground next to her. "Why am I doing this to myself again?", she asked more rhetorical than serious, "This is your thing. Not mine." Mihawk, who was patiently listening to her little outburst, decided to interfere now or he would be caught up in her self-pitying for much longer: "Because I want you to be safe, even when I am not around." He did not want her to explore and debate the meaning behind that sentence so he directly added: "Let's call it a day. You have done well today." He offered her his free hand to help her stand up again. Perona eyed him with furrowed eyebrows, let out one last annoyed breath and accepted his help in defeat. As she stood on front of him, her hand still in his, she honestly looked at him and gave him her sincere "Thanks". "You're welcome." With a short glance at their still connected hands, she retracted hers, trying to hide the little blush on her cheeks. Mihawk did not seem to notice or at least he did not mention anything. "Well, I will go inside then", she said. The warlord only nodded at that comment. He took both of the toy weapons and put them on the side for their next training session.

In the evening after a small chat with Zoro about the day in the dining room, she decided to go into her room and rest. After the training with Mihawk, even though it was not nearly as intense as his exercise with Zoro, her muscles were a bit sore and she was really tired. She was simply not used to physical exhaustion. Now that she was training almost everyday Perona needed her well-deserved beauty sleep. On her way to her sleeping room she passed the study room. The door was a little bit opened so she could see that the candles were illuminating the room. Seemed like the owner of the castle was still working at that time of the day. Perona did not really think about it further and simply wanted to go to her room, as she heard Mihawk's voice from behind the door: "Come in." For a second she stood still as she did not really expect to be called into his room. Then went to the door and opened it, so she could walk through. "Hey. How can I help you?", she asked as soon as she was inside, closing the door behind her again. So far she has never entered this room. Mihawk always made sure to keep his two guests out of his more private chambers. When she was inside Perona could not help but to examine the room.

It was larger than she had imagined. The walls on her left and on her right were full

with book shelves. Behind her on each side of the door a large plant decorated the room. The remaining space was also used for storing books on smaller racks. In front of her Hawkeye was sitting on his desk. A lot of papers in front of him, on the left side was his den den mushi and on the right side was a candleholder. Behind him were two large windows. Mihawk looked up from his papers, that he was studying before and pointed her to the guest chair in front of him and his desk. "Take a seat." Perona did as she was asked to and at the same time Mihawk stood up and went to one of the book shelves to his right. After a short look he found what he was looking for and grabbed a medium sized book. Then he returned to the desk and gave it to Perona. She watched him questioning and took it from him. "You know. I am more into romance stories. I doubt that this is what I would be reading", she tried make a light joke unsure of what she was supposed to here. Then she eyed the cover of the book and it stated "Devil fruits – known wielders and abilities". Before she could ask a question Mihawk already started to explain: "I remembered I had this in my collection." He went back to his chair on the other side of the desk and took a seat. "I believe that you may not be aware of what power the devil fruits bear. It could help you improve your skills and understand the potential threat of the opponent's powers." "Oh really", she opened the book and browsed through some of the pages until she found the pages addressed to her very own horo horo no mi. She expected it to maybe include one or two pages, as previous wielders are also mentioned, but there was far more included than she would have imagined. "I did not know such a book existed." Perona never thought about widen her abilities. Everything she know about her own devil fruit she figured out by herself. When the moment was right, she felt like an internal push that she could be able to do something specific. And then she knew exactly what she needed to do. Having such a book could really help her in trying to understand much more. "Thanks." Mihawk just watched her as Perona was scanning some of the first pages to get a general overview. "I also wanted to tell you, that tomorrow I need to run some errands", he proceeded and then made a short pause. On that Perona looked up again. Some errands? She tried to not get her hopes up. Since she landed here, she was not allowed to come with him to the surrounding islands and cities. He wanted nobody to know about his two guests. It was always too risky with the close contact to the marines. But now it was official that she was in fact Mihawks partner in crime. The only reason for her to stay behind was gone and the only other reason she could think of was that the warlord did not like her company during his trip. So she dared to ask the only question that was currently occupying her mind: "Can I come with you?" As an answer to that Mihawk simply nodded. Seeing that Perona smiled widely, tapped her feet wildly on the ground, held the book tight to her chest and squealed happily "YES! When do we leave?" "Tomorrow after breakfast", then he returned his gaze to the papers in front of him. "Oke...Oke", she got up from her chair and started floating above it, "I need to prepare. See you tomorrow!" Perona flew to the door of the room, opened it and without looking back she exited the room. She needed to check all her stuff to decide, what she needed to buy tomorrow. Oh this would be great. When she left, the warlord raised his head to watch her go. He smiled a little. "Weird woman."