

A Warlord and his Princess

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Kapitel 9: Sneaking Around

Perona's heart stopped and her thoughts ran crazy. Her mind had to play tricks with her, or was this really happening? When she saw that lily above their heads, she thought for a second that she was going to die out of embarrassment about her own thoughts. Her eyes wide open in surprise, as Mihawk kissed her.

Since that one evening they spent together and while she was in the comforting sheets of her bed she sometimes wondered, how it would be like – how it would feel like to share a kiss with him. Now that it happened Perona could not really process it. She blushed heavily. And that ass, oh what a beautiful ass indeed, used her own words against her.

The fact that this was her first kiss did not help her gain some self-confidence. During her time with the Thriller Bark pirates the only contact she had was with her crew, her pets and the zombies. When they were on a tour, they only used the time to fight against others. There was no time for emotions out there. And when she set eye on a beautiful man, she had the glare of her captain and father in her back, that would basically scare everybody away.

Now Perona was caught in this situation, overwhelmed by all the emotions she felt at once. She did not even realise that it was over and that Mihawk gave her some time to collect herself, until he softly caressed her cheek with his thumb. When she met his eyes, face as red as a tomato, his thoughts about her insecurity were confirmed, hoping that he did not go too far. The warlord did not have any problems with showing physical affection. Over the years he had spent some nights with women, whenever he felt like it. But that was the only thing he did. Never had he gotten attached to any of these women or wanted to have a deeper relationship with any of them, being the lone wolf he was.

When Mihawk first saw Perona on his island he found her annoying as hell and they could not have been more different. Over the months he was forced to live with her under the same roof, he saw that she was indeed a strong woman and not the child she displayed at first sight. He grew fond of her and he wanted to get to know her more. For the first time in his adult life, he had the urge to keep a woman by his side and protect her with all means necessary. Mihawk caressed her cheek and decided to give her time and wait for her to say something or make next move.

Perona absentmindedly touched her lips with the fingertips of her right hand and soon realisation hit her. He made the first step and now he was waiting for a response. Mihawk gave her the decision on how this would go on. When she first met the warlord, Perona was scared that this was the last face to see before she died. He was frightening, stoic and emotionless. The complete opposite of what she liked to

call cute. When she got to know him better, she learned that he was not one to show his emotions of affections with words. His small gestures were the ones that showed her, he really cared for his surroundings. Being on the receiving end she felt special and sooner or later she began to like him and enjoyed his company.

Perona wanted this. She wanted to kiss him. And she wanted to have him for herself. Seeing him and feeling his touch on her cheek gave her the necessary courage to lift her hands up, her left one on his cheek and her right hand to the back of his head, to pull him towards her and kiss him again. Butterflies spread in her belly as she felt his lips moving against hers upon returning the kiss.

Mihawk put his free hand on her back to pull her closer to him, motivated by her taking the lead in their actions. Perona even went one step further and placed herself on top of his lap with her legs on each side of him, not caring about her blanket that fell to the ground. She wanted to be as close to him as possible and she wanted to feel him against her. They shared a passionate kiss, releasing the pent-up feelings they had.

After some time, not that they were able to tell how long it lasted, Perona moved her head back a little bit and leaned her forehead against his. She tried to slow her racing heart and calm her breathing. If someone would have told her this morning, that today she would have a heated make-out session with Mihawk she would have laughed at him, thinking this could not be possible. Perona smiled and looked at him. His face, usually unfazed and neutral, was soft. His piercing eyes were halfway closed and he tenderly stroke a hair strand behind her ear.

"I wanted to do this for quite some time now", Perona confessed smiling. Mihawk did not know what to say. Not really comfortable with words to express what was going on inside of him. So he did the only thing he could think of right now. Mihawk pushed her head back slightly to be able to give her a light kiss on her forehead and pulled her against his chest. He enjoyed having her cuddled against him. She lay her head onto his shoulder and closed her eyes.

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They agreed to see where their affections would lead them and to keep this relationship, that was still developing, to themselves. Whenever they had time alone, while Zoro was outside training or already in bed, they spent their time together. Sometimes they would simply sit next to each other and talk about their past. In other occasions, when Zoro was out of sight and Mihawk went to go help him with his training, she would give him a quick peck on the cheek with a "Goodbye and don't torture him too much".

One lazy morning, after the three of them finished their breakfast, Zoro went outside to go for a swim. Mihawk told him, that he will soon join him and then they would train his conquerors haki. The owner of the house was reading the newspaper as usual in his chair and drank some tea. Perona waited until Zoro was out of reach and then she floated over to Mihawk and plopped onto. She put her arms around his neck and let her arms wiggle over one of the armrests (and over one of his arms, as he was still holding the newspaper). She gave him a quick kiss accompanied with "I want a proper good morning" and grinned at his raised eyebrow. "Seems like someone is a bit needy this morning", he readjusted his left arm, that was currently stuck under her legs, and lay it on top of her to hold his newspaper again. "Yes – but you like me anyway", Perona laughed.

Another evening they almost got caught by Zoro, who came back from the shower to help out preparing the dinner. Perona was cutting the vegetables and behind her

Mihawk was roasting the chicken meat in the pan in front of him, the spatula in right hand. Annoyed, Perona put away the knife and turned around to Mihawk. She crossed her arms and pouted: "Why exactly do I have to make the hard work, while you are just standing there watching the food get ready?" He turned to her and rolled his eyes on her statement. "Because", he went over to her, put his hands on the kitchen counter on each of her side and trapped her between himself and the counter. He lowered his face to her level and whispered into her ear with a low and deep voice: "You would just let the food burn." Perona blushed at the sudden closeness. He chuckled shortly and pulled her to him to give her a passionate kiss. Then he sensed Zoro almost entering the room and in a swift motion he was back at the frying pan, cooking their food.

When the younger swordsman entered the kitchen, he was irritated to see a heavily blushing Perona cutting zucchinis and tomatoes.

However, there was one line they did not cross since the festival. They had their separate rooms and they never visited the other in their chambers. It is not like they had agreed on something like that or talked in general about sleeping arrangements. The only benefit to this behaviour was that if Zoro accidentally passed one of their rooms, he would not start questioning, why there was not only one but two persons in one bedroom. So, when Mihawk was in his room this evening, ready to go to sleep he did not expect to hear a light knock on his door. He could already tell that it was Perona who was waiting on the other side. The question was: Why? She already went to bed some hours ago and by now she should be soundly asleep. Only dressed in a pair of briefs he opened the door a bit to reveal a shy looking Perona in her long, pink plush pyjama. Quickly she came in and Mihawk closed the door behind her. "What's the matter?" he asked, a bit irritated about her behaviour.

When Perona knocked on the door she believed it was a good idea. She had a bad dream and woke up because of it. When she remembered it, it was hard to suppress the tears that sneaked their way into her eyes. Since Perona and Zoro landed on this island almost two years have passed, which means that Zoro would leave soon to join his crew again. And when he grew even stronger, he would challenge Mihawk again to a duel about the title of the world's strongest swordsman. For a few days she had reoccurring nightmares. She dreamt about a future fight between Zoro and Mihawk and the younger one would win, leaving Mihawk to die. Perona sat up straight in her bed and felt the urge to see him and reassure herself, that he is ok. She floated over to his room and knocked.

When Perona entered the room, she soon recognised that this was a big mistake. She looked at him only for a short time and averted her eyes as she saw him almost naked in front of him. Her cheeks flushed at the look. Perona has never seen him in only his shorts and she tried to avoid to look at him at any cost. She fidgeted with her fingers and tried to form any kind of sentence but the image of his almost naked body kept coming back into her head. She felt like a silly little girl.

Mihawk was not able to interpret her actions so he stepped closer to her, cupped her cheeks with his hands and forced her to look at him. "What is wrong?" Perona inhaled and exhaled shortly and then answered with a low voice: "I had a bad dream." He did not know what to reply. Really – a bad dream? This is the reason for her to come to him at this late hour. Either this was a stupid and childish reason or there was more to it. Mihawk lay his right arm around her and pulled her in a comforting hug. With his left arm he caressed her hair. "Do you want to talk about it?" Perona put her arms around him and snuggled into his chest. She was silent for a few moments then she

explained: "Now that Zoro will leave soon I have always the same dream of you losing your fight against him." She hugged him even tighter while telling him and a few silent tears escaped her eyes.

Mihawk wondered why her head came up with these thoughts. The younger swordsman was by far not ready to challenge him into a worthy fight. And even then, he would give him a hard time. As she really seemed to struggle with the topic, he decided to try and lighten up her mood: "You know, even if he becomes a worthy opponent. To challenge me means that this knucklehead would need to find me first. Given his orientation skills this will take forever." Perona chuckled lightly about this comment.

When she loosened her grip on him to be able to look him in his face, he saw the few tears on her cheeks. Mihawk wiped them away with his left thumb. "Is it ok if I spend the night here?", he heard her ask more mumbling than clear, "I am not sure if I can go to sleep alone right now." "Sure", he nodded.

His bed was large enough for the two of them to easily fit in. Mihawk was the first to lay down on his side. He lay on his side and held up the blanket for Perona. A bit unsure on how to act, she joined him in bed and lay stiff on her back with a good distance between them. What was she supposed to do now? Her thoughts were interrupted and as if Mihawk could hear her inner struggle he lowered the sheets above them and in one movement pulled her towards him with the arm, that was formerly holding the blanket. "Oh my god he is spooning me" She thought and the colour of her cheeks became even darker. How was she supposed to fall asleep, when her back was pressed so close to him?

But Perona could not deny it. To her it felt great and she liked it. The warmth of his body was comfortable and the cuddling gave her the assurance she needed: That he was safe and he was with her. Perona felt completely loved, when his arm, that was not hugging her, caressed her hair and she felt his lips on the back of her head. Her eyes grew heavy due to the late hour and the comfy position she was in. "Sleep tight, princess", was the last thing she heard before she fell asleep in his arms.