

A Warlord and his Princess

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Kapitel 10: Of saying Goodbye and Farewell

"The next time we see each other I will take that title of yours."

"We will see."

Today was the day Zoro reunited with his crew again. Two years have passed since Kuma sent him to Kuraigana and he started his training under Mihawk. The potential, the warlord had seen in him the first time they met, was confirmed by how far his student's skills had improved during his stay.

The three travelled together to the direction of Sabaody Archipelago. Mr. Williams was generous in his offer to borrow them one of his smaller ships, as the coffin boat was not able to carry all of them for this long distance.

The original plan was to send Perona and Zoro alone. He was not needed to accompany them and other things regarding Marine orders required his attention, but a week before they left, Mihawk received a call from Shanks, stating that he will travel to an island close to Sabaody for two reasons:

First: See Luffy and his crew off from the distance.

Second: There was a rumour that Blackbeard wanted to make a move on that island and get in contact with some of the corrupt Marines.

The mentioning of Blackbeard spotted close to Sabaody was reason enough for Mihawk to not let Perona leave on her own, which is why he accepted Shanks' request to meet him at that island.

The coffin boat was attached on the back of the ship with a large rope. They brought it with them, as Mihawk wanted to leave them a bit earlier. "I will join you after I finished my business with Shanks", Mihawk said, addressed to Perona and jumped on his boat. He gave his student one last look, who watched him with his arms crossed and a grin on his face. Then he looked at Perona who waved at him with a smile. He took a seat on his throne-like chair and headed into the direction of the island.

The Red Force was the first thing Mihawk saw when he arrived at the harbour. It was by far the biggest ship docked on this small island and recognisable without the well-known jolly roger. When he reached the harbour with his boat, he hopped onto the bridges with easiness. Knowing his friend and his crew, the tavern was the first place he would look for them.

The village was quiet and peaceful. Some people walked through the streets to enjoy the light summer breeze or went shopping. There was nothing close to suspicious around here. Was Shanks information about Blackbeard really correct?

The tavern was close to the harbour and when Mihawk entered, he already saw the red-haired Yonko with his most trusted crewmates seated on a round table. Of course, Shanks already noticed his friend when he entered, which is why he shouted a

loud: "Hey Hawkeye! How nice of you to join us."

Mihawk rolled his eyes at that comment. "It's not like you gave me much of a choice." "Come on, old friend", Shanks grinned, "Sit down with us." Mihawk took Yoru out of the mounting of his jacket and leaned it onto his chair, to be able to sit down. "Tell me what you know."

Shanks slid over a small empty sake cup and filled it with the bottle on the table. "Drink something." "We are here to talk business", Mihawk replied flatly, but accepted the cup and drank the sake.

"You know that Blackbeard is after the devil fruits", Shanks started, "You told me that Gecko Moria already confirmed it. But what we did not know is that he is selling the ones, he does not want to himself, to the Marines for a high price." "To the Marines?", Mihawk asked, "Why would he work for them?" "In return they give him free reign in his piracy", Shanks answered. "Which is kind of what we have for the warlords, except he is not one of them." "Exactly!", the red-haired pirate confirmed. "And let me guess: Only selected higher ups are aware of that." Shanks nodded. "My last information was, that he is currently snooping around the Sabaody Archipelago to look for the next devil fruits." "Do you think he knows, that the Straw Hats are reuniting these days?" "Possible. But how would he know?" "On our way we passed many Marine ships. At first, I was wondering, if this was only a coincidence. If the Marines know about today, then Blackbeard should have that information too."

"Hey handsome", the waitress came over with a serving tray below her arm and a small notepad in her hand, "If I were you, I would leave Blackbeard alone. He is a creepy fellow." She pulled out a pen from the pocket of her skirt and looked at them again. "Do you want something else to drink?"

"What do you know about Blackbeard", Mihawk asked, ignoring the question from the waitress. She shrugged her shoulders in disinterest. "Not much. He was here yesterday with a neatly dressed guy and kept on blabbering how he wanted to go after some monkey." "A monkey?", Shanks raised his eyebrow and looked over at Mihawk, "She means Luffy. He knows that they are there. His crew has four known devil fruit users."

"Shit", Mihawk cursed, "Then he is already there."

Perona.

Mihawk stood up and put Yoru on his back. Even if he was only one island away - how could he be such an idiot to let her go on her own, when Blackbeard was around. He could have assumed that he would be after the Straw Hats. And when they left before they made contact, then Perona was all to herself. If Blackbeard found out that she was on Sabaody as well he would make a move on her.

"Meet me at Sabaody", Mihawk said while walking to the door. He needed to get there as fast as possible.

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Zoro's destination was Shakky's Rip-off Bar. He did not know, if the Sunny was still where they left it two years ago or where the crew would meet, so this was the best starting point. Perona agreed to accompany him, until they were close enough for him to not get lost again.

It took them more time to get to the bar than any normal person would need. Even if it was only a straight way with a stoned path and signs directing to the bar, Zoro had his problems with his orientation. On various occasions Perona needed to use her hollows to block him from wandering off.

As they stood only 50 metres away from the bar, Perona could be sure, that he would

find the house. She turned to him and smiled. "I guess this is goodbye then." Zoro nodded. "As much as I hate to admit it, but I guess I will miss you, mosshead", Perona laughed, "Take care and make sure to become stronger. I want to hear a lot of stories when we see each other again." "You can bet on that", Zoro ruffled Perona's hair and she pouted on that action, tried to push his hand away and muttered something like Don't! You idiot. "Don't annoy that old man too much", he added, "We don't want him to kick you out." "Oh", Perona smiled knowingly, "I think we will be just fine." Zoro raised an eyebrow on that comment, but decided to leave it at that. She gave him a quick hug and grinned. "Goodbye." "See you, ghost girl." He turned and went in the direction of the bar. She watched him go and only left when she saw him step inside – just in case.

"So, what do I do now?", Perona brought her hand together behind her back. She did her job and Mihawk told her he would come here. "Might as well use the time for a shopping trip." She giggled to herself. Perona headed back into the direction of the town. The way was nice and lead along the cliff, where one had nice view over the sea. That was the moment she saw two large pirate ships. The first one under the jolly roger of the Thriller Bark Pirates and the second one she could not identify. Not that she cared, when she saw the first ship.

"Moria-sama is here!", Perona exclaimed in joy. Now she had a new target. She wanted to find him and say hello, tell him about everything that had happened since their last encounter and listen to what he had experienced since then. She used the bit of observation haki Mihawk has shown her to check, if Moria was on his ship, but was not able to sense him there, which meant, that he was already on the island. She focused on the direction of the village and there he was: Not far away from her and running into her direction.

Moria must have sensed her too, why would he run into her direction, if he hadn't? Perona turned into the direction and waited, looking forward to their reunion.

He just came over a small hill and looked terrible. She paled. "MORIA-SAMA!", she shouted and flew over to him as fast as she could.

Moria never felt worse. His whole body was covered in bruises, cuts and other kind of wounds and he was glad he made it this far. He just hoped that he got rid of his persecutor. When the former warlord heard his name, he looked up and saw Perona some metres ahead. "Shit. What is she doing here?" He could not believe his eyes. Were the rumours true? Was she here because the Straw Hats were back together? And where was that stupid Hawkeye. Why did he leave her alone?

Too many thoughts were in his head, as his 'daughter' plunged into him and hugged him. "I am so glad to see you!", Moria winced on the sudden contact. Perona let go of him only to inspect his wounds. "What happened?" That brought him back out of his stupor. Moria grabbed her by the arms, stared at her with a stern face and said: "We need to leave as fast as possible! Blackbeard and his crew are here." "WHAT?", Perona asked. "He killed Hogback and now he is after m..."

A gunshot ringed in her ears.

Moria's eyes widened in front of her. He coughed up blood, that fell on her dress. Then his lifeless body slumped down, halfway falling onto Perona, who barely caught him but the size of his body made her stumble backwards and fall to the ground, with his upper body on her angled legs.

She froze in her motions. For a second the world stood still and Perona tried to process what had just happened. One second, she was happy to see her old captain again and the next she had his limp body in her arms. Perona looked at him and saw a

big gunshot wound in his back. Absentminded she touched it and felt the warm blood on her fingers. She shook her head, tears formed in her eyes and tried to wake Moria up without success.

"Zeeehahahahahaha", a loud laughter out of the direction Moria came from, "Today is a lucky day. So many weaklings that want to give me their devil fruits." Perona looked over and saw Blackbeard walking casually towards her.

Perona growled. She was furious. She freed her legs from Morias body and stood up.

"How dare you!", Perona yelled at him, which only made him laugh a second time.

Perona knew that she was no match for him. Blackbeard was by far stronger and more skilled compared to her. But running was also not an option for her.

Where should she run to?

Zoro and his friends could already be on their ship, she did not know where it was located.

Mihawk was not here.

Blackbeard would be able to find her in the woods, Moria already showed that he was not able to escape.

And her ship was not fast enough to outrun his.

The only possibility was to fight him and delay her death.

Perona unsheathed her sword and flew towards him. He was fast enough to draw his own sword and block her attack. Their swords clashed.

Blackbeard laughed again. "Zeehahaha. Let's play a bit before I kill you."

Their swords clashed again, and again, and again. With the last strike he pushed with enough force, strengthened by armament haki to push her about 20 metres away. This bought him enough time to draw his gun and aim at her. She already flew at him again, when he fired his gun three times at her.

Perona was able to dodge the first bullet. The second bullet striped her left arm which made her stumble and the third one hit the left side of her thigh. She fell to the ground and yelled in pain, as she got hit by the third bullet.

"You are weak", Blackbeard stated flatly. He walked over to her - slow but steady.

Perona looked at her thigh and inspected the wound. It was only a flesh wound but it hurt like hell. She hissed, as she touched it. Then she focused again on her opponent, as he came closer. "Negative hollow!", Perona, still on the ground, raised her hand and released a hollow. It flew over to Blackbeard only to bounce off of his chest. His armament haki making it impossible for it to go through. "Shit", she cursed and sent another hollow. Again, without success.

Perona floated upwards, not wanting to put pressure on her leg. She raised her sword again and attacked him one more time.

Blackbeard easily dodged her attack with his sword and in the same swift movement he grabbed her neck and held her high above ground.

"You are as weak as your captain", he said in disgust, "No wonder your crew died so fast."

As Perona was grabbed by him, she let her sword fall to the ground and grabbed his arm with both hands. She tried to wiggle free, as the air was forced out of her lungs due to the pressure on her throat. She kicked with her legs, not reaching him. Desperate to get free from his grip.

"Pathetic", with his free hand Blackbeard pressed his fingers into her wound on her leg, causing her to cry in pain. "Does it hurt?" He laughed.

Black dots formed in her vision due to the pain. Behind him she could - more guess than - see other men coming towards them. All of them with a shabby look and

laughing at the scene. It was his crew.

Shit.

Was this the way she was going to die? Even her former captain was not able to stop Blackbeard. How could she survive this situation.

She closed her eyes.

Defeated.

A tear ran down her cheek, as she tried again to break free.

They say that in your final moments your life passes by. You are reminded of the good and bad things of your life. See the faces of the loved ones.

For Perona, the only thing she felt in this moment was a huge wave of air, that separated her from her opponent and made her fall to the ground.

Wait. What?

She opened her eyes, as another person jumped right in front of her.

Mihawk.

"Hands off of her", he was furious. He stood with her back towards her, facing Blackbeard. Yoru in his right hand only waiting for the next move.

Perona felt relief inside of her. He was here. She was no longer alone. And she was alive.

"Hawkeye. How nice of you to join us", Blackbeard said, "We were just having a good talk."

"Retreat", Mihawk threatened.

"Do you believe you are in a position to make demands?", Blackbeard laughed again, "Do you really think that you have a chance against me and my crew?"

Mihawk stared at Blackbeard and at the crew in his background. And evil grin on his face. "Yes."

A short pause.

Blackbeard looked at him, startled by his self-confidence.

"But I am not alone."

What Blackbeard did not notice until now, was that Shanks and his most trusted crew members stood a bit away and watched the whole scenery in front of them.

"If you want a fight, then you can have it", Mihawk said, "You will lose."

Blackbeard ground his teeth. That was not how he had planned this day to end. Originally, his focus was on the Straw Hats. He had gotten the information of his arrival on Sabaody from his Marine contacts. When he saw Moria, it was a nice addition to his plan and Perona's devil fruit would have been just the cherry on top.

A fight with Mihawk, Shanks and his crew was nothing he desired. He knew, that combined they were stronger than him.

"You are in luck", Blackbeard stated, "I don't want a big fight. We will leave." With that, he turned, commanded his crew to leave and went back to his ship.

After Mihawk was sure that Blackbeard had left for good, he put Yoru back on his back, turned to Perona and knelt beside her. "Are you ok?", he asked, voice soft and calm now, hiding his inner turmoil.

He blamed himself, as reality hit him hard. If he had interfered only some minutes later, she would be dead. And it was his fault for leaving her on her own while knowing that Blackbeard was around here. He inspected her wounds and his gaze fell onto the large flesh wound on her thigh, that was still bleeding: "We need to put pressure on it to stop the bleeding."

Perona just sat there and watched the confrontation in front of her. She was not able to progress anything at the moment. Her mind was blank. It was over. She looked at

Mihawk, as he knelt in front of her. He said something which she did not really understand due to her spacing out. She even forgot the pain, she felt. Glad, that he found her in time.

Perona threw her arms around him and hugged him tightly. She nestled her head into the crook of his neck and enjoyed the contact. "You came", she whispered, relieved. Mihawk loosely put an arm around her. "Of course," he answered in a similar hushed tone and gave her a comforting kiss on the top of her head, "But we need to treat your leg, before you lose too much blood. Let's get you to the ship." Perona nodded on that statement. She let go of him and tried to stand up, but was interrupted, as Mihawk put his arms around her upper body and her legs and lifted her to carry her himself. "Just put enough pressure on your leg." Perona hummed in approval. She put one of her arms around his neck to support her to not fall down and the other was pressed on the wound on her thigh.

In the meantime, Shanks had walked over to them: "We will take care of Moria."

Mihawk nodded. "Take him to Kuraigana. We will bury him there."

"We will. Ben and Yasopp will accompany you on your ship."

Both of them knew that Mihawk and Perona would be fine on their own on the little ship if both of them were in perfect condition. With Perona's hurt leg the support from the red-hair pirates was necessary to steer the ship properly. "Thank you."

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As soon as they were back on the ship, Mihawk and Perona retreated to a small cabin to treat her wounds, while Ben and Yasopp attached the coffin boat on the back of the ship.

It took them five days to get back to and Kuraigana.

The first night Mihawk and Perona did not leave the cabin. When her wounds were treated, all the emotions from the day hit her. The joy of seeing her former captain, his death, her near-death experience. She let it all out, overwhelmed by the events of the day and cried bitterly in Mihawk's arms as they sat on the bed, cuddled under a blanket. He caressed her hair and her back, whispering soft words of comfort, as she could not stop herself from shaking. After a long time of mourning sobbing and crying, she fell asleep in his arms.

When Perona woke up the next day, she still felt the deep loss in her heart, but starting from today, she wanted to be stronger. She could not always hide in a room and cry over the death of her former captain. Moria would not like to see me like this, she told herself. She looked around to see that Mihawk was no longer in the room. She assumed that he was helping Ben and Yasopp. Perona stood up, still wearing her partly torn and dirty from yesterday, and changed her clothing to a simple shirt and a short skirt. She could not wear tights yet, as her wound on her leg still hurt and the bandage needed to be changed regularly. She combed her hair, tied it into two ponytails and exited the room. The sadness was still written all over her face, but helping outside was the first step to getting better.

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On Kuraigana, on the backside of their castle they prepared a small grave for Moria. While mostly Mihawk, Shanks and Ben prepared the grave and buried the body, Perona was tasked to design the tombstone. As a base she used one of the larger stones from the city ruins and carved Moria's name, date of birth and date of death in it. Below all she added a stylised version of the jolly roger of the Gecko Pirates. The men brought the tombstone to the grave and Perona collected some flowers to add on top.

When they finished the grave, they stood in silence in front of it for some minutes and paid their last respects to the deceased captain and former warlord. A silent tear escaped Perona's eye. She was still sad, that she had lost her father figure but the last days surrounded by friends made her feel better. She smiled lightly, thinking of all the good memories with him, as she took Mihawk's hand in hers for comfort.

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Shanks and his crew stayed for one more night. They celebrated one more time before they left to their next stop. Together they drank and laughed all night.

The next morning came and Mihawk and Perona accompanied Shanks and his crew to the shore, where his ship was docked. Perona hugged the pirate emperor and his most trusted friends with a big smile in her face and thanked them for everything they did the last days.

All in all, Perona was happy. When she came to Kuraigana two years ago she would have never imagined her stay to be like this. She may have lost one of the most important persons in her life, but she also gained valuable new friends. And a boyfriend. She giggled to herself, as she side-eyed Mihawk.

They said their goodbyes to each other, but before Shanks left, he could not suppress a "I hope you invite me to your wedding!" with a big grin on his face.

Mihawk rolled his eyes at that statement.

Perona laughed.

They watched their friends set sail and soon, the Red Force disappeared at the horizon.

For the first time, the two of them were alone on this island.

"Now it is just you and me", Perona said.

"Don't drive me mad, woman", he answered.

"Aww. I bet you would like it", she hummed in a sweet voice.

Mihawk grabbed her hand and pulled her to him, planting a kiss on her lips. "Maybe."