

A Warlord and his Princess

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Kapitel 2: A Warlords Protection

The morning at the castle was really quiet. Zoro was already outside training on his own while Mihawk and Perona sat at the table and ate their breakfast together in silence. They had bagels for breakfast that they have prepared together in the kitchen before. The warlord had a classic simple bagel with cheese. Peronas bagel was filled with a really tasting strawberry marmalade munching it pleased. She liked cute things and she loved sweet things. Deserts, cakes, marmalade – she could not get enough of this.

-Flashback-

Some weeks ago Perona mentioned that she would love to have some sweets for their meals. Until then their meals only consisted of vegetables, cheese and meat. Mihawk gave her an annoyed side eye, mentioning that it was not healthy for her to eat something like this und brushed off the topic. With that result Perona was not happy but she did not want to anger the warlord too often, as she was just starting to get along with him a little bit better. Which is why she was really surprised the next time Mihawk came back from his supply run. As usual Perona was waiting in the kitchen because of her curious nature to check the bags he always brought with him. When he arrived that day with a lot of bags, he put them on the kitchen table and pulled out a much smaller paper bag. He offered it to her without a word and proceeded to store everything he purchased into the kitchen cupboards. In the beginning Perona was a bit baffled, when he gave her that bag. Mihawk usually never bought something only for her. She opened it and looked inside, smiling widely and giggling in joy about the content. Inside the bag was a big chocolate cookie fresh from the bakery as it seemed. A proof for her, that even though sometimes she was annoying to him, he really did pay attention. She broke off a small piece and tasted it. Closing her eyes shortly, enjoying the cookie. Good lord it tasted so great. "Thank you!", she told him full of delight and smiled the happiest smile she has. Mihawk only looked shortly in her direction while sorting some the supplies into the upper cupboards: "There are more in the larger bag but don't eat them all at once." Perona was not sure if she could become any happier at the moment. She had a look into the other bags that are currently on the table and did not only see cookies, but also different kind of marmalades and other sweets. Perona clapped her hands in joy in front of her chest and giggled. She could not resist and flew as fast as she could to him, more like smashed into him, and hugged him tightly from behind – arms around his stomach. "Thank you so much!" Mihawk, who was not prepared to be assaulted like that, needed to put one hand in front of him on the kitchen counter to assist his stability and not to fall over. He froze in his movements and did not really know what

to do. Simply looking in front of him. How could that woman make such a fuss out of a simple chocolate cookie? Perona laughed shortly, feeling his uneasiness and let go of him. Then she stood beside him with her small paper bag in her hand and broke off another piece holding it in front of his nose: "Here. Taste it." Mihawk raised his eyebrow sceptically. "Come on. It won't hurt. It is really great!" He sighed almost non audible and took the piece with his right hand. He inspected that small pastry and ate it. It was way too sweet for his liking. Absolutely nothing he would buy for himself. He stared with his golden eyes into her face and saw her still happy expression.

Today he had learned two things about Perona.

First thing: She was pretty easy to please with sweets.

Second thing: She was a hugger when she was happy.

After some seconds she turned and floated out of the room humming a pretty melody. Mihawk looked around in the room and sighed for the second time this day. At least she could have helped in emptying all these bags.

-Flashback-

Since then Perona was a bit more tolerating regarding the distanced character traits of the owner of the house. He has shown her that he pays attention to her even if he does not always approve of her actions or needs. In his special way he cared for the two people living in his home. She was taking another bite of her bagel as she heard a messenger seagull chirping outside on the balcony. She watched Mihawk standing up and going outside to get the newspaper delivered by the bird. He came back with a slightly larger paper stack compared to most other days and Perona was wondering, what it could be about. But she needed to be patient because he was the first one to read the daily newspaper. (Not that she cared most times what was in there.) She would ask him afterwards if he could summarize the latest event in the world – as usual. "Huh", he scoffed at the newspaper while reading the first page. That caught her attention and she redirected her gaze from her bagel to him. "What's up?" Mihawk was silent for another minute – obviously finishing the article he was just reading. Then he shortly looked to her and then back to his newspaper. "It mentions the events of Marineford again." That made Perona listen up: "What? Why now? It was already months ago." "It states that Gecko Moria is dead. Fallen during the battle of Marineford." "WHAT?!", Perona shouted. She floated hastily to Mihawk and ripped the newspaper out of his hands. He stared at her and observed her reaction. She floated before him, newspaper in hand and read the whole article not knowing what to think of it. For a long time she considered the possibility of Morias death, but having it written in the newspaper was something entirely else. Tears started to escaped her eyes. Perona raised her left hand to cover her mouth and to suppress some sobs as she continued with the article. "I keep wondering. Last time I saw him there he was still alive", Mihawk added. Perona read the article a second time. Trying to fully understand every information that was hidden within it. "But why would they lie about it in the newspaper after all this time if he was not dead?" Perona was not able to say anything or answer his more rhetorical question. More and more silent tears were coming out of her eyes and she tried not to simply cry out loud. "Maybe it is just a benefit for the government. Now they are able to spread bounties on his remaining crewmembers and they can pursuit them again." This led him to the point he was originally planning to make. "Which means that the marine will also place a bounty on your head." Perona looked at him in disbelief. That was something she totally forgot until now. She never had to worry about the marines because she was protected by Moria and his title as a warlord. But now the newspaper confirmed that Gecko Moria

was dead and she was a wanted woman. She handed the newspaper to Mihawk with a quiet "I need some time to think" and floated out of the room. He decided to leave her alone and continued with the second page of the newspaper. There was the big heading he expected. //Marines in pursuit of Gecko Morias former crewmates.// Below the currently assigned bounties on the assumed living members were written. Ghost princess Perona: 200.000.000 Belly.

The next days Perona was pretty quiet. She often spent her day in the garden and the two men decided to leave her until she came to them, ready to talk again. They could understand her struggle, but it was not like they were able to give her the comfort she needed. Before the newspaper Perona was able to have at least a little bit of hope that maybe Moria was still alive and she would at some point see him again. But now that little bit of hope within her was destroyed and she had nothing to go back to. No crew, no father figure. She was basically alone now. One afternoon she was sitting on a little park bench she had cleaned with the help of the humandrills and sighed deeply. What should she do now? It will be only about one and a half year until Zoro leaves this island to go back to his crew. He always had the plan to leave this island again and rejoin the straw hats. After that it would only be her and the warlord on this island. Perona never thought about what she wanted to do. Did she really want to stay here forever? She really liked the place and grew fond of the owner, whether he liked it or not. But would she be happy here? Would Mihawk still tolerate her when his student left? It was so hard to read him sometimes and she was not sure of the answer to this question. All this thinking the last days was really getting in her head. She desperately needed something sweet from the kitchen. So she stood up from her bench and walked into the direction of the castle. She did not notice the marines waiting at the entrance of the castle until it was too late to escape their gazes. "Ghost Princess Perona!", shouted one of the marines, "By the order of the marines: You are under arrest." Perona cursed about her own stupidity. How could she let her guard down so easily? She took her fighting stance, summoned some of her hollows and was ready to fight these stupid marines off.

At the meantime on the mountains of other part of the island Mihawk and Zoro were training again. They clashed their swords and practiced on Zoros defence. Most of the hits the younger swordsman was able to block but for some of them he was too slow and Mihawk dealt some cuts to his unprotected body. "Keep focussing Roronoa", the warlord shouted at his student and dealt another hit. When Zoro stumbled backwards Mihawk shortly took some steps back to grant the younger man some moments to gather himself and stand up straight again. "Your defence is still in dire need of extended training." Then a silhouette on the horizon caught his eyes and he looked towards the approaching ship. Zoro followed his gaze and saw the ship too. The sails showed the symbol of the marines. "What are they doing here?", Zoro asked his mentor. Mihawk reflected previous and upcoming events affecting his affairs with the marine but he was not aware that the marines required his assistance. If so they would have sent a messenger bird as usual. This could either mean that he was being visited by some higher ranked marine officer or ... Perona. "You stay here until the ship leaves again", Mihawk instructed Zoro, "I don't want to deal with them knowing one of the straw hats is currently residing in my castle." "Don't you need my help with them?", Zoro asked. "You forget that I have certain immunities with the marines as a warlord." With that he left and tried to get as fast to the castle as possible. When he came closer to the main entrance, he already heard the marines shouting "You are under arrest." Mihawk did not recognise one of the marines on his doorstep so in

combination with what he saw before him, he was right with his assumption. They are looking for Perona and the other crewmates of Gecko Moria. When he reached the group of people he asked with a low and slightly threatening tone: "To what do I owe the pleasure of your visit?" The marines turned around and were quiet for some moments. So far they had not noticed his presence which gave him the advantage of short surprise moment. Mihawk used the time to take his place next to Perona - still ready to fight - who glanced at him and seemed unsure of what to do and what would happen. "I did not receive any information of marines coming to Kuraigana." He stared at the marines with a cold look and crossed his arms in front of his chest. Silence. It was obvious that the present marines were afraid of the warlord. It took the officer in charge some moments to gather enough courage to take a step forward and to answer Mihawk.

"Dracule Mihawk. We are here by the order of the world government and the marines to arrest the remaining crewmembers of Gecko Moria. We received a hint that her", he pointed to Perona, "is living here and we came to get her." The warlord was still staring at the men in front of him, unfazed by the weak officer. He knew that if he wanted to, he could take them all out at once. But in his head he debated the question, why they knew that they had to look here for Perona. She never accompanied him to any meetings or supply runs. When was he so careless on his trips that he mentioned her stay here? "With Gecko Morias death she has lost her immunity of a warlord and we are allowed to arrest her", the officer in charge took a pair of sea stone handcuffs from his second in command and looked from Perona to Mihawk and made another step forward into their direction, "I would appreciate if you would assist us in doing so." Perona got even tenser with the movement of the officer. She stretched her right arm in front of her and wanted to send the first hollow into the direction of the officer. The marines grabbed the shaft of their swords as they saw Perona getting ready for a fight. Mihawk next to her, calm as ever, put his left arm in front of Perona as to stop her in her doing and calmed the situation: "She still falls into the jurisdiction of a warlord." That made Perona listen up and she looked up to him a bit confused. The marines also eyed the warlord sceptical and before they could ask about it, Mihawk proceeded: "She belongs to me now." With his right hand he grabbed the hilt of Yoru on his back without drawing it out: "Pursuing her means picking up a fight with me." Mihawk could not exactly pinpoint the moment he made the decision to give her the safety of his name and title. In the beginning he thought she was an annoying intruder who came to live in his castle while he was away participating in the battle of Marineford. She was loud, had the habit to intrude his privacy when he wanted it the least. With time he got accustomed to her and the other swordsman living under his roof. Mihawk would also go so far as saying he kind of enjoyed their company – though he would never admit it out loud. Maybe it was also the fact that she had recently lost the only thing she could imagine close to a family and he felt sorry for her. And if keeping her safe for now means officially taking her under his wing then he would do it without hesitation.

They were still standing like before. On one side Perona, held back by a grim looking Mihawk and on the other side the marines who were surprised upon hearing the statement of the warlord. They were looking at each other, lightly mumbling, and then focussed on their commanding officer, who was still evaluating the scene in front of him. The marine officer knew that with this statement he could not do anything against Perona. The warlords were working in favour of the world government and the marines and in return they were given certain immunities

concerning their piracy including a crew under their name. The marine officer cleared his throat. "I am sorry for the misunderstanding. We did not know that she is part of your crew now." Technically there was no crew but Mihawk did not want to have a longer discussion than necessary. He relaxed now and crossed his arms again in front of him. "Our job here is done", the officer turned to his men, "We will leave now." With that he was the first to go into the direction of his ship. The others soon followed.

In the beginning Perona could not believe what has happened right before her. She still tried to progress the last minutes and soon felt relief growing inside of her. She let out a deep non-audible breath and closed her eyes shortly – glad that the whole situation was over now. The marines did not look like a big deal and she was sure that after some time she could have won against them. But it was by far easier with Mihawks diplomatic approach. Which led her thoughts back to the man. Perona looked at him and saw him still staring after the marines, reassuring that they really were leaving. The sword master has just given her the undebatable protection of his warlord title and she was thankful for that from the bottom of her heart. He was known to not mess around with him and to be working alone. Never having a crew on his own. Now at least the last part changed. She smiled lightly, unsure on how to approach him and what this means now. And there was still that nagging question in her head that she needed to address and get a real confirmation. "Hey Mihawk", Perona started, waiting for any reaction on his side. When the warlord tilted his head a bit in her direction, she gathered her courage and continued: "After Zoro left Kuraigana. Can...Can I still live here?" Mihawk raised his eyebrow slightly. He thought that after the encounter with the marines it was clear as day and did not need to be discussed further. The warlord turned around and now stood in front of her, looking into her face. "You can call this place your home as long as you please." Hearing this confirmation, she smiled widely and jumped over to him in joy, hugging him tightly around his torso "Thank you. Thank you so much for everything!" Mihawk could not help himself. A small smirk sneaked its way on his lips and with only his right hand he loosely (more or less) returned the hug, patting her upper back a few times. Perona let go of him and looked him in his golden eyes: "That also means that there is no reason for me to not accompany you on your next shopping trip!" He raised his eyebrow again. Was that really the first thing that came into her mind? Well, he could not deny it now, except if he wanted to have his peace. But it would not hurt having her with him the next time. "You can come with me the next time", he agreed, "But I also want you to start training with us." Perona pouted. "I want you to grow stronger now that you will be associated with me." She sighed: "Fine." Together they went inside the castle. Perona floated into her room while Mihawk went for his study room to do some paper work and drink a glass of wine. After that day he was in dire need of it.

The next morning when Perona appeared for breakfast in the dining room only Zoro was eyeing her sceptical. She was wearing a black long dress with white sections designed in a gothic style. On her head she wore a black hat similar to Mihawks but instead of only one side covered in white feathers and her hat was decorated with white flowers all the way round. "Since when are the two of you wearing matching outfits?"

Some days later the newspaper made it official. The bounty on Perona's head was frozen and it was declared that she was now part of Hawkeye's crew.