

The Sound of the Sea (16+)

??? x Reader Lovestory

Von LadyMalice

Kapitel 5: Ch 1 - 4. A Fateful Encounter

How much time had passed since that very first 'date'? You didn't remember it well. However, you knew one thing. After your 'date'-lesson you lived inside a golden cage. You'd never understood why your grandma controlled you so hard. Yet, you'd never complained. How could you refuse a person who saved your poor life? You owned everything you wanted, right? Well... almost.

With the time flying by sadness absorbed you. Your lust for life decreased with every day. Everything was boring. There were no challenges, no excitement and no variety. You longed for the freedom that you had had back then, at your home island. Every day had been full of adventures due to your explorations on the small islands which actually had been pretty dangerous. Many different animals had lived there and some plants had been moving by themselves. It had been so fun...

Now, you became a decent lady with a honourable attitude. You were restrained, polite and courteous. At school your marks were great. You didn't allow yourself to do misbehaviour or else your grandma would be angry.

You even had a part-time job. In fact, even two of them. It was the only thing that distracted you and gave you hope.

That's where your secret wish became true.

After so much theory of love you concentrated on the important things of life. Your grandma got terrible sick with the years going by. No wonder, she was over ninety years old and according to the circumstances - aside from her present flu - pretty wealthy. But lately she didn't move as much as usually and only stayed in her bed, sleeping mostly. Her health worried you. So you looked after her, you did the most of the household and started to work part-time. Your grandma's retirement pension wasn't very high, so it was the best for you to start to work. Besides the medicine was expensive that you needed for her. She didn't want you to work due to your young age. "It is dangerous", she repeated many times, when you spoon-fed her.

"Don't worry" That was the one sentence you repeated over and over again, assuring that you would be fine. In your opinion you were old enough to decide, if you wanted to work or not. Granted, it was hard to find a job with merely 15 years. The most didn't want to take responsibility for you as you were underage. Fortunately, the most people around here knew you. Some of them were owners of coffee shops, bakeries and bars. After you told them that you needed to work in order to take care of grandma, two of them offered you a small job. That's when you started to work as waitress. First, in the café two streets away from your home. Later on, in the bar at the evening that was close to the harbour. The second job was unknown to your grandma. You knew that she would never allow you to work there, since it was the biggest gamble quarter of the city.

Working as a waitress was fun yet dangerous. Sometimes it stressed you out. The customers tended to be bitchy plus your elite school was already hard enough on you. But sometimes working was the only way to distract yourself from thinking. The first thing on your mind was your grandma. She was the only one left in your life - aside from Kuzan- that you counted to your family. There that Kuzan was almost never with you, you wouldn't rely on him too much. Of course he would always help you, if you asked for help. But you wanted to be independent. He couldn't be always there for you. It was impossible.

Second, you noticed that male human reacted flashier to you than before. There was no reason, though. Nothing about you changed. Due to these reactions you stared often into the eyes of your mirror image, trying to find out what made them react so bizarre. Nothing. You had no clue why they would stare at you. Betimes they even stalked you which gave you the creeps. You had to do something against it. But what could you do? You were a young female with no special abilities nor power. You weren't able to fight, not even defend yourself. Your cheeky, yet comical attitude and your skilled choice of words were the only skills you had to stand your ground. Reading all kinds of books was really helpful now and then, heh.

And... perhaps some of your experience back then at the small islands of Crescent Island helped here and then. Yeah.

There were a lot of times you had trouble with some visitors. It was the same for this evening, when a group of three men stopped you from working properly. Well, you were at the gambling centre of your town. Of course there was scum all over the place. Usually, the bar's bodyguards watched after all waitresses. But this time they were already busy with a group of pirates who refused to leave the bar. You had noticed that the pirates were terribly drunk and ready for a brawl. Unlucky... now you had to deal with these guys. They stank from the alcohol they'd drunk. What a terrible smell...

"Hey, cutie. Let's have a nice chat" One started, grinning and winking at you. The other two blocked your way, so you couldn't pass them. You really hated moments like these. You had to be polite yet you had to be careful that they didn't make a move on you. They were able to do anything, they showed no scruple at all.

Moreover your work uniform - that was worn by every waitress in this bar- provoked man. It resembled a maid-uniform alike to pirate clothing style , yet it was different. Hence the view that was given was very alluring and dirty. By means of your safety and your pride it covered every 'important' body part. So the customers only could adumbrate what was under your clothes. A decent woman would refuse to wear this kind of dress. This outfit was one of the profit factors that your boss abused. The more the customers were attracted by women, the longer they stayed here, the more they gambled away all of their berries. That was the plan of your boss. It worked perfectly.

"I'm sorry, gentlemen" With a sweet smile you tried to edge your way through the men, but they shoved you back. There was no way without getting in trouble, huh? You already met such troublemakers. The first time you were petrified, your boss helped you out and explained you how to manage these guys. The first times you had too much fear... but with the time going by you've gained a lot of courage and even more. "I would love to chat with you, but table no 5 is waiting for their order", you explained and showed them your tray filled with bottles of sake and beer. You playfully balanced them in your hands. It took a while until you've learned it. But now you could even show off a little bit.

"They can wait" The second one with the green, dirty looking cap answered, staring at you with those glowing eyes that you'd seen so much. It didn't happen that often anymore. But still... these louring eyes were haunting you. It was one of those many riddles you had not solved so far. Your thoughts got interrupted. "Come here... let's drink and chat..." He spoke, trying to touch you. But you sidestepped his move, looking for something that could help you. Bad timing... you couldn't spot your boss or any free guard.

"I am really sorry, guys" You tried to sound convincing. "But the gentlemen at table 5 are already impatient. They've waited much longer than you" You smiled and winked at them. "Maybe after my work." You suggested, because you knew that one of the guards would always walk you home, so you were safe. Your boss was a kind, fair man although his character was rough and corrupt. You needed that kind of attitude in order to persist in this... profession. "So, please-

"No" The mastermind of the group took a step forwards. He wrapped his arm around your waist, so that he pulled you close. A sound of scare left your lips but not because of his action. For a moment you were scared you would throw your tray down. Boss hated clumsy workers. If you lost your balance and threw the order on the ground, he would cut your payment. It had happened countless of times, that's why he got pissed. That was so mean... it wasn't your fault that these men were making trouble. You looked up, grimaced at the smell that was coming from his mouth and turned your head away in the end. You hated guys like him touching you... you truly despised it.

"Dear Sir, would you mind letting me go already?" You requested in form of a question. If he wouldn't stop, you would scream for help... there was no other option. The man had other plans to your dislike. He bent over and stroked your chin with his

fat, rough fingers. "Sir, this is not allowe-"

"Shut the fuck up" He groaned in annoyance. "Stop talking. Looking good is sufficient." You blinked confused at his words. Then you noticed that the guy with the green hat got closer, so you were in-between the men. With a hiss you tried to kick the man in front of you between his legs, but the third one stopped you. Oh, great. Was there a reason scum was always on the move in packs? Your confidence left you, as you felt a hand pressed on your mouth. These guys tried to drag you out of the room! Stubbornly you tried to stop them, but they didn't even allow you to move your arms. If the bottles hit the floor, the rest would notice. But you weren't able to do it. '*Shiiit*' You thought, you started to panic a little. Usually another worker of the bar would notice and help you... but this time...

You bit the hand of the man behind you, so he cursed and let go of you. "Let me go, you freak!" But before you could cry out, he pressed his hand back on your mouth. Okay... this was *really* bad.

"Let go of the lady, boys." Suddenly you heard another male speaking. The other three looked towards the direction of where the voice came from. Surprised you turned your head in that direction, so you could see the male.

He was a medium tall, rather attractive man with flamy red hair. Although it was dark you discovered three thin scars on his left eye. He had a henriquatre-beard, as you could see, a black coat hang loose around his shoulders. Beneath the coat he wore a slack shirt that was unbuttoned at the upper side. His knee-length trousers had a green pattern that looked funny to you. You noticed a hilt poking out of his coat, right next to his belt. A light blush was spread across his cheeks. From what you saw you guessed that he was slightly drunk. Altogether he didn't look very imposing nor extraordinary nor strong. That's why the men started to laugh at him.

"Get the fuck out of here.", the leader demanded, pressing you closer to him, so your tray wobbled in your stretched out arms. It must look funny how desperately you tried to save the drinks. You hold your balance although this man dragged you along like some potato bag. Looking up, you sensed something weird in the leader's expression. Was it... fear? Why did he get nervous? "This girl wants to hang out with us. We saw her first" Asshole... he treated you as an object. With a precatory glance you looked at the red haired man, even if you were sure that he would get beaten up.

Against your expectation he returned your glance. He smiled warmly at you, as if he wanted to tell you, that he would help. "If you ask me, she doesn't look like she wants to join your company", the man said, smiling almost stupidly friendly. "Also I heard her saying such"

"No one asked you." The man with the green hat moved towards the redhead. He built up as he tried look dangerous. His dark glance met the redhead's one. He took one bottle of your tray and handed it over to the man. "Here's your drink. Now go.", he ordered. "We will just play a little and let her go. It's her duty that's why the maids are dressed like that, idiot." He turned around, feeling something cold at his neck. After realising that a warm liquid poured down his neck, he hold his breath.

"Don't move" The redhead looked now terrifying. A dark shadow laid on his forehead while his facial expression was dead serious. You didn't see when and how, but the redhead pulled out his sword in the twinkling of an eye and held it against the neck of the hat-man. He even cut him slightly. The bottle of sake was flying in the sky, as you saw. In this moment another man approached you and caught the bottle.

"Captain, what's wrong?" A fat man with a big piece of grilled ham - in his other palm was the sake bottle- came closer and stood right beside the redhead. He wore a white green striped bandanna and with the same pattern a shirt that looked way too small for him. The pair of dark glasses were hiding his eyes. Like the redhead this man didn't look strong or anything. But seeing the redhead mad changed your opinion. His companion however did not. Munching his ham he watched the men who looked annoyed.

"Great, another idiot" The leader growled, although his green hat mate went silent and gulped. He feared the sword, but he feared the wrath of his boss even more. "Take care of them!" The leader ordered. So the green-hat spun around, pulled the coat of the redhead - he tried to grab his arm - and stopped in the movement. The redhead had... no left arm. The leader widened at the sight. Then, he laughed. "Hahaha! What a joke! A gimp is acting all mighty!" His mates also started to laugh, they wanted to support their boss who still didn't let go of you. You winced at the sight, it looked painful to you.

"Captain, shall I shoot them?" The chubby man asked angrily. He stopped eating his ham, taking a step towards the group. But the redhead stopped him from doing so by swinging his sword in front of his pal. This way he silenced the big guy who nodded silently. Afterwards he looked at the men and especially you. He noticed that you were the reason why his captain had trouble. Somehow you felt bad. This got out of hand quickly...

"I repeat my demand for the last time. Let go of this lady or else-" He stated, but got interrupted by the leader.

"So fatty-pig has arrived and you feel strong now? What a joke! I won't take any order by a gimp!" He shouted, but then... "Aah!"

Suddenly you felt a strange aura that spread across half of the bar. You blinked. In these very few seconds you did not see nor understand what was happening. The men around you slowly collapsed. The leader let you go before he hit the ground, where he laid motionlessly. But it wasn't only this man who was affected. Almost everyone collapsed suddenly due to this powerful aura that dashed from the point where the redhead was standing. Baffled you stared at the unconscious men, before you looked up and saw the intense gaze of the redhead. What power you could feel from the gaze alone. Terrifying yet majestic. You had opened your mouth in awe. You felt like you froze up, since you still kept the same position for felt-like years. A very stupid looking for sure. But whatever.

"Captain!" The redhead's mate started to complain. "You overdid it! Why would you

use Haki on this weak idiots?!" Haki? What was the man talking about?

The redhead blinked, then he put away his sword and started to laugh nervously. "Oops. I've got ahead of myself" He grinned sheepishly. "I guess I got angry. Sorry, Lou" Laughing the man named *Lou* sighed heavily. He gave the redhead a playful hit on the back of the captains' head with his meat-stick. "That is NOT funny. How will we explain this?", he complained. "You've done it now! I wanted to drink and eat more... now the barkeeper will throw us out!" The redhead kept laughing and scratching the back of his head. " Relax... you know that I hate guys who harass helpless beauties. Also he almost made fun of you guys, too" With these words he knelt down, picked up his coat and put it back on.

Everyone else - who sat exactly in the other half of the building - was staring at you and those two. Great... now you would get punished for these idiots. Still. You felt thankful... you didn't want to imagine what the guys had originally planned with you. So you kept staring at the redhead who was so unbelievably powerful. Surprisedly you heard yourself talking. "Wow, that was cool" was the only thing that left your mouth while you gazed at him. Your cheeks heated up a little. You turned towards the man, so you could view his looking from tip to toe. He was an old - okay rather mature- man but still attractive. Plus - now that you've seen part of his strength - you were filled with wonder. "Thank you, sir."Unconsciously you interrupted the two weird men talking. At once both turned towards you and stared at you as if you were some... alien? Not again. Okay, now you felt huffy. Why every man looked at you like you were nuts or some strange non-human thing?! You pouted at the men's glances. Gee! You'd defended the drinks of these man so much and this was how they looked at you? You couldn't know that there was another reason why they looked dumbfounded. "What?" you asked annoyed.

The redhead blinked, then he laughed what confused you a lot. "Hahaha! The beauty is a lot stronger than I've believed. What a surprise" He chuckled and seemed more relaxed than before. His friend Lou munched again his ham and took a big mouthful of sake. He remained staring at you. "How unusual" He mumbled, making his captain laugh even more. The redhead took a step towards you. Then he kneeled down a little bit, so you were face to face with him. "I guess you would've beaten them up without my help, hm?" He asked you grinning, he sounded absolutely amused.

You - on the other hand- shook your head. "No, sir. I was honestly in trouble. I cannot fight" you answered bluntly. It was the truth. Why would this man think that you were strong? You looked around you and noticed that some of the other waitresses also lost consciousness. Wait... they did? But why were you fine then? Did the redhead target everyone except for you? But why would he attack the other waitresses? Confused you turned your face back to him. He could see that you didn't lie.

"Oh? What about self-defence?" He sounded surprised. As you shook your head again, he grinned even broader. "Interesting."

Short after the redhead spoke to you, your boss arrived. His face told everything you needed to know. "What's the meaning of this?! Why are my customers lying on the ground?!" He shouted angrily and noticed you with the other two men. "EVANS!", he

growled. He heard his footsteps coming close to you, so you turned around. Before you could say something, he was shouting at you. "Evans, how many times did you cause trouble by now?! What have you done this time, eh?!" You blinked and tried to say something, but what could you possibly say? He would fire you anyways.

"You're the barkeeper?" The redhead interrupted your boss who turned towards the man. First, your boss grumpy gaze met the one of the redhead. Then - unexpectedly - he started sweating. He gulped and stared at the redhead's face. Did your boss know this man? Where from? Interested you watched your boss getting nervous. He took some steps away from the man, so he stood behind you. You felt his hand on your shoulders, as if he was hiding behind you. "Good then" The redhead smirked at the reaction. "I'll take the blame. It's my fault that your dear customers went to sleep"

"R..r...red-haired Shanks..." Your boss stuttered in fear. "W..what a honour that you visit my moderate bar. D...don't worry about it. I'm sure you had your reason" What the hell was wrong with your boss? His hands were shaking. He felt him wince at the laugh of the redhead named '*Shanks*'. "Is... is there something else the matter? H..how can I make up for the trouble you had?"

Shanks grinned, then he pointed at you. "We are still waiting for our share." he explained casually, leant against his friend and put his hand on his hip. "I'd like to be served by this waitress only, if it's possible. Since I've knocked some of your other out, I'll pay for the disturbance of their work." Lou rolled his eyes and went back to his desk where the rest of the crew were waiting. They've watched the whole scene and had fun gossip about the group of men who tried to make fun of their captain. Somehow you felt nervous that he demanded you to serve them. Though you had no fear, after all he had saved you.

"O-of course, Shanks-sama. Evans-chan will gladly serve you and your crew." Your boss told him nervously. Right after he got a bag filled with berry, his eyes sparkled. "Ohh, my anger is over then. Enjoy your evening, master Shanks-sama!" With this words he pushed you towards the redhead who smiled at you.

"Would you mind to serve our order?" He asked you politely although he didn't have to. You nodded, smiled and finally brought them their share of sake and beer. What a strange experience... first, some racketeers attacked you and then you got saved by this mysterious, strong redhead who was your personal customer for this evening. You sighed. Working at this bar caused so much trouble. Still... it was funny. Especially after you got to know his crew members who were very nice and polite towards you. For your taste they complimented your looks way too much. Even the redhead talked about how cute and pretty you looked. Usually you felt bad when you heard such stuff. But this time it flattered you. You enjoyed serving this bunch of weird people.

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After some rounds of running around and bringing them their order, you got dragged on a chair beside the redhead. You blinked at him while you sat silently there. "Is something the matter, sir?" You questioned him. He was obviously drunk. The way he smiled at you told you. Maybe you should stop them from drinking... it wouldn't be

good if they became troublemakers. Yet, you couldn't. The problem was your boss who suddenly treated you like a rare diamond. Since he had noticed that you got along with these guys, he got terribly nice to you.

"May I ask for your name, cute lady?" He asked you as clearly as he could, he already prattled the most of the time. "Evans is not your first name, right?" "Evans-chaaaaaaaan, sakeeee" The sound Lou was making now was stupid. His captain pushed him away and gave him his bottle of sake. "So?"

"My... my name is [name], sir" You introduced yourself. You would really like to know who this man in front of you was. Only due to your boss you knew his name. But you didn't dare to call him that. It would be impolite since he didn't tell you directly. "But the most call me Evans... they know my grandma" You smiled at the thought of your grandma.

Shanks was silent for a small amount of time. Then he reached out for you and gently caressed your cheek. "You really love your grandma, am I right, [name]-chan?", he asked you softly. Strange. Did his attitude change?

"Yeah. She's the only one I have. I take care of her, so I need to work here. It's sometimes rough, as you see"

"What a good girl. You really don't belong into this kind of society" He laughed again, but it wasn't as loud as before. His hand was still on your cheek.

"Uh, sir..."

"Please call me Shanks." He demanded smiling. "I like you, so no more act of courtesy. My crew has also taken a liking to you. Also you're the first girl that withstood my pressure of power. You're extraordinary... I'm not referring to your charismatic charm that is... kind of interesting and unusually strong for a young lady." Woah... that much of information in such a short time. You stared surprised at him, simply nodded and accepted his request. However you did not know what he implied. You needed time to comprehend.

"Shanks-san" He smiled almost tempting as you said his name. Such a handsome man. You looked him right into his eyes which you found so attractive. "I don't understand what you are getting at. It's not like that I am strong or anything. I have no power.. I cannot fight.. or anything like that. I am just an ordinary girl."

"No" He objected. "You are everything but ordinary. Guess why?" You shook your head, so he finally let go of your cheek. It felt cold now. Strangely you missed his warmth at once. "You withstood my Haki. That means your willpower is exceedingly strong. Many brave men pass out or at least get weakened... but you... you stood there like nothing has happened. You don't hide anything from me, right? You're not part of the navy, are you?"

Now you started to laugh. It sounded absurd that a simple girl like you could be part of the navy. What a joke! But... you were really the only one standing beside his mate

in the second half of the pub. So maybe he was telling you the truth? He wasn't making fun of you, was he? You leant your head on your hand that was resting on the table. "Shanks-san, you're making fun of me, right?" At the same time you questioned him, a strange though popped up in your mind. He wasn't a pirate, was he? "I don't think that a marine-officer would voluntary work here. Here are way too many pirates and other criminals... it would hurt their pride as an officer."

"True", he sighed. You could see that he was trying to figure you out. "No part of the navy then." Shanks observed you, grinned and took a mouthful of sake. "Although I was convinced that you go undercover here." He hiccupped almost cutely, while he took another bottle of sake. He was a heavy drinker... he couldn't be possibly serious about his own words. Right? "[name]-chan, what is your dream?"

In this moment you heard Lou talking, so that you couldn't answer him. "Captain, stop flirting. She's underage.", he babbled. "Another share of beer, please, [name]-chan!"

"Sure" You stood up, as Shanks got a hold of your wrist. Astonished you blinked. "Is something the matter?"

"Don't go" He almost sulked. That redhead... You laughed at that behaviour, since you knew, that he was simply drunk. "I'll be back in a second. Just getting some more of sake, right?" He sighed, nodded and let you go, almost staring angrily at his friend.

"You've got some guts there, Lou. I'm not flirting with this little girl." Shanks hummed. "I just feel... the same willpower... the same aura ... the very same like Luffy's one. She's strong... or rather will become strong."

You didn't hear anything, but still it made you wonder why this man was so interested in you. Obviously it wasn't because of your looks. It was something else, that concerned your abilities. With a shrug you got some more bottles of beer and sake. Easily you balanced them on the tray in your hands. As you looked around, you saw that the most customers were gone by now. The passed out one's got dragged out by the guards who finally were free again.

Gee... they could be so unreliable. Maybe it was really time to learn how to defend yourself. You'd already thought about learning how to battle... at least self-defence. As you asked your grandma for permission, she was totally against it. '*Girls shouldn't fight. You're boyfriend will protect you.*' she told you, though she shared the same opinion in consideration of self-defence. Yet she didn't want you to take any lessons. It was so annoying. You weren't a fucking princess... you wanted to battle and to dirty your clothes like everyone else! That sucks!

"There you are! Beer, sake , beer!" You smiled cutely and put down the tray, thereby the men reached out for the bottles. "Yay!" They cheered. Hopefully they wouldn't start to sing... the most were awful singers.

"[name]-chan, come here and take a seat! Let's continue our coze" Shanks patted on

the chair next to him. Since you didn't mind, you did as he wished. It seemed that Lou and he stopped discussing about you. "Sooo, what's your dream for the future?" He asked again, grinning widely at you.

You didn't answer right away. Perhaps because you did not know what your dream was. No... actually you had a dream. A simple dream. Thinking you put your hands on your lap. "It's not a real dream... I just wish for... one thing." You told him. A small smile of yours followed. "I wish for that I can travel all over the sea... I want to explore different islands... get to know other cultures..." You looked up, stared at the ceiling and sighed. "But it's impossible for someone weak as me... plus I'm a girl." You closed your eyes. Your wish was simple yet so dangerous. Since the pirate era had begun, it was almost impossible to travel safe around the world. "In the end, I only wish for a peaceful life with my grandma." Yeah.. that's what you told yourself. It was better not to have high hopes for some impossible dream.

Shanks was irritated by your answer. On the one side you desired freedom and adventures. And on the other side you apparently wanted to keep this quiet, peaceful life with no danger. Even though you denied that it was your true dream, he knew it better. After some moments he crossed his arms. "What's wrong with your dream?" he asked you, "Why do you believe that you cannot go on a journey? Being female doesn't affect anything."

You blinked and looked confused at him. "Shanks-san, I barely can defend myself and I have duties. Also I need to take care of-"

"No offense, [name]-chan. But your grandma can't stop you from living your own life, furthermore she won't be always with you. Why not reach out for the stars, if you see them?"

"..." His intense gaze confused you even more. Why was he so intrusive? "If I would do that... If I would explore forbidden ground... people would get hurt again. If I do not listen, then...", you mumbled in thoughts. First, you heard your grandma's telling-off in the back of your mind. Second... bitter memories. A while ago you'd started to blame yourself for your damn curiosity. Perhaps the gods of Crescent Island had punished you for your crude, stubborn act... for your intrusion of their holy islands. Who knows.

Shanks watched you as you were lost in thoughts. He had already noticed your conspicuous attitude was rooted in some deep, dark experience. Even though you were merely a teenager, your behaviour and way of thinking were the one of an adult. Before you actually acted, you deliberate about whether it was right or wrong. You didn't giggle like some stupid silly girl, when someone hit on you. To Shanks it looked like you were giving the most guys the cold shoulder, not showing any interest in them. That fascinated him. Because you seemed unshakable and proud in your pace. No one could reach you. Luffy had also always shown that headstrong attitude. It was almost funny to see it again. It was so rare. In addition he had witnessed something that you didn't realise yourself. He would observe you more. "You are afraid of following your dreams?"

Not aware of his mind you nodded. "I.. guess I am. I... I am afraid of meeting someone

again. That person did terrible things." You didn't want to tell this stranger the story of your life, although you trusted him. You clearly didn't get why. He could be a fearsome pirate, right? Still... you saw some kind of hero in him. You weren't able to see him in a bad light. Moreover he awakened some forgotten feelings inside of you. The lust for adventures... he seemed to experienced a lot of them. You envied him.

Shanks smiled and patted your head, that caused you to blink in surprise and to blush. "Don't envy me, stupid", he laughed heart-warmingly. "There is no reason to be afraid of chasing your dreams. If you want to, just do it. No one can stop you. At least, if you come of age" He winked at you. "I don't know who this person is, whom you fear so much and the reason for it might be justified, but don't let your fear stop you from trying things." Your heart made a jump, his words caused an unknown, warm feeling. What... was this? "[name]-chan. Follow your dreams."

"But...I can't..."

"No but. It doesn't matter what the others say nor think, as long as you are happy." Did he see you through? Did he know how much you longed for the sea? How big your desire for adventures was? You've always loved it as a kid... but since you'd lived under your grandma's rules, you'd given up searching for adventures, so that your life got ordinary and boring. Fooling around with your friends and sneaking into forbidden quarters was no comparison to your little explorations back at Crescent Island. You missed the feeling of freedom. Although you loved grandma, she had put chains on you, so you wouldn't get lost. Blinking, you gulped and stared at the ground. Shanks spoke again."So I am right?"

"I don't want to disappoint the person who saved my life. I only live thanks to her... If I would chase my dreams and leave... No. I can't do that."

"What a waste" Shanks sighed and played with a strand of hair of yours. "You're strong, [name]. You're destined for something big... I'm sure of it" Somehow it pissed him off that someone actually hold your true potential back. Someone had chained you, so you couldn't unfold your true strength. Your charismatic looks were only a tiny part of the whole figure. After he had kept tabs on you for the whole evening, he noticed your potential and that hidden resolution. He wanted to see more of it. This incredibly determination that you shared with Luffy. Yet, you didn't allow yourself to want more from life. Shanks stared at you slightly unsatisfied. He wanted to free you from these chains. He wanted to see you spread your wings and fly... The thought of meeting an older, stronger you excited him. In the era of pirates and clash of powers almost everything was possible. You could grow so big.

"Sorry." You mumbled. There was no reason for apologizing though.

Shanks knitted his brows in confusion. Why would you apologize? You weren't at fault that you got trammelled. What was it? Shanks narrowed his eyes. He could see a unknown aura around you, but it was insulated. Then he noticed your bracelets which you twiddled with. The shape and the material looked so familiar. Though the quality was exceptional. What an expensive exemplar of...

"Shanks-san?" He looked up, into your - for him - pretty eyes that looked so hypnotizing. There was something strange about you. Why would a girl who attracted men be such a honest and cute person? He saw the purity in your eyes, they didn't lie. Yet, you were alluring. He had noticed that his crew watched you with a certain eagerness. Shanks felt why they reacted this way. He however did not, although he confessed that he found you cute.

"[name]" Shanks returned your gaze. You got confused because you didn't understand what he was thinking. He sounded serious. "Do you want to be free? Freed of your burden... of your fears?"

You blinked in confusion. What was he talking about? Suddenly you felt insecure about your trust towards him. You feared that he could actually understand you. He was that one man in this frustrating city who didn't look at you like they wanted to - like everyone tagged it- fuck you. Quickly you pushed away his hand. "Sorry..." You repeated, "Sorry, Sir. I am very confused by your words. I should go" You needed to go. Now. So you stood up and tried to leave. You felt big fear. That redhead was a bad person. He had to be... why would he seduce you with sweet liars about freedom and living your dream? It wasn't possible... you couldn't act as you pleased. You always were watched by someone... someone controlled you. You needed to act like a doll, so he wouldn't come for you. That terrible face that haunted you... all these chains... these strings and... that other shadow which you recently started to see in your dreams. You panicked.

Shanks stopped you from moving. A frown on his face. You tried to free yourself, but he pulled you close, directly into his arm that held you now. His embrace was strong yet gentle. You tried to push him away, but you failed. Instead of fighting back, you grabbed his shirt and held on tight. Tears rolled down your cheeks. It had been the first time since two years that you actually shed tears. If they asked you for the reason, you wouldn't know. You had held back your tears for so long. It was so frustrating to watch the others who were free. They weren't obliged to behave and listen to anyone.

Pirates were bad guys, they were criminals. Nonetheless, you envied them for their freedom. It didn't matter that they were outlaws who were chased by the marine. It didn't matter that they hurt others. Of course it wasn't good, but watching these disgusting people frustrated you. They enjoyed their life. They could act as they pleased. If it hadn't been for this monster who had destroyed your homeland, you would've been a happy, free girl who would've explored all seas. No rules, no chains... no obligation.

"Sshh" He went softly, "sshh" Gently he caressed your back. You could feel his chin on your head. You were confused by this man. His act scared you, but the thought of being understood comforted you. "Sorry. I put too much pressure on you. Don't be angry with me" You shook your head. No... you held no anger towards him. You would rather call it fear. He was the first one who noticed that something was wrong with you. (Kuzan knew, too. But he didn't do much against it, since he had been busy for the most time) How was this redhead able to read you like an open book, although you merely spent time together? "Don't hold your tears back." he whispered softly

into your ear. "I can sense the weight on your shoulders" You sobbed, but didn't say a word. It was embarrassing to cry in front of others. Shanks however embraced you in the way no one would see it. Probably it looked weird to the rest. You couldn't see his mates, but you heard them laughing and babbling about random stuff.

After some time you pushed Shanks away, so there was space between you. His glance rested on you, as you rubbed your eyes and felt ashamed. How weird... a stranger understood you better than your own grandma who wanted the best for you. Now that you'd remembered what you longed for, you felt worse. However you felt better after you cried a little bit. You lifted your head and looked into his eyes. He was smiling. You hesitated, then you returned his smile weakly. "Do you feel better?"

"A bit. Thank you" You whispered, your voice was raspy.

"I see" Shanks leant on the table beside him. "I guess life gives you a hard time." You nodded, slightly insecure about what he actually wanted from you. "Mind to tell me?"

"Shanks-san."

"Yeah?" He grinned in his stupid, but lovely way.

"Why are you so interested in me?" you asked him without hesitation this time. You wouldn't tell him your story, if you didn't know what his plan was about. He might lie, but you were convinced to tell the difference. If he lied, you would turn him down in an instant. Otherwise you considered to tell him. He seemed to be a good guy and he exuded an interesting warmth. You liked it, because you felt safe.

Shanks rubbed his chin, took his bottle of sake and drank a dram. After he put the bottle down, he sighed. "Why, huh?" He smiled benignly. In the next moment he touched your chin, lifted it and stared into your eyes. "I want you to join my crew."

You blinked. "What?" Disbelief reflected in your eyes.

"Is that enough of a reason, to get to know you?"

You gulped and stared at him as if he was mad. There was no reason for him to want you to join. Scepticism was spread across your face. Was this a trick to lure you into some kind of trap? It's not like it was so special for criminals to gain trust and later on: abuse their victims. Honestly said, Shanks didn't look like that kind of guy. Hence you trusted him somehow, even if your grandma told you not to listen to strangers. Especially such a handsome one. His crew looked also nice to you. They didn't hear their captains demand, so they went on drinking and laughing.

"You're a weirdo" You replied bluntly after not answering for so long.

Shanks paused. Next he laughed. "Better than being boring, right?" Yeah, he was right with it. Being normal implied living a boring life as you did. Damn it. "[name]-chan,

come on"

"There's no way, that you're being genuine here." You poked his nose with your fingertip. "Nasty man. You don't think of bad things, right?"

"Why is everyone thinking that I'm hitting on you?" He sounded almost annoyed. "You are cute, but my interest is dedicated to your hidden strength and potential" He hummed, whereby he drank.

"The most do." You answered honestly. "I don't know why, though."

Shanks grinned like he knew what you were talking about. "So you really don't know, huh?" He took your irritated look as a yes. So he softly grabbed your wrist and pulled your hand towards him. Surprisingly he began to play with your bracelets. Why did he look so happy? This man was a walking riddle, so confusing! "I really want to free you from your chains." He whispered somewhat keen. "Only a free spirit can grow strong."

You watched his playful manner as he touched your skin. He held your hand by reason of playing with those two rings which you couldn't get rid of. They didn't disturb you anymore. No, you really liked them, although it was annoying your grandma insisted on always wearing them. Some of the girls did even envy you for the rare looks. "Why... why do you think that I am chained?" you asked him quietly.

Shanks snorted. He answered your question with one of his. "I suppose your grandma gifted you these nice bracelets?" Due to this question he seemed to know something that you did not.

"Yes. They are lucky charms. They will keep away evil from me" If that man was going to make fun of your grandma or even indicate that she was a bad person, you definitely would slap him. You wouldn't endure bad talk about the person who saved you. It didn't matter that she pressured you and limited your freedom. It was her right to do so, wasn't it?

Shank's eyes narrowed at your words. He knew that it would be hard to convince you, yet he wanted to try. "I argue that they aren't" He started. "Or rather: These charms aren't there to protect you but your environment."

This time you stopped short. First, you wanted to answer him back, but then... you remembered that situation years ago. You remembered men around you who had these glowing eyes before they suddenly collapsed. Sometime later you had followed them into the deep dark of unconsciousness. It was true that you didn't faint as often as before, right after you carried these bracelets. You stared at the rings. The pearls which Shanks fiddled with shimmered in the weak light of the torches. In a sense he was right. Didn't you hear your neighbours complaining about your creepy impact?

"S-so what?", you stammered, by now your confidence in your grandma wavered. Still, you didn't trust him blindly... but he gave you reasons not to believe every word your grandma had told you so far.

"I state that these bracelets limit your will and hold back your true power." He went on with his reasoning. "Can I ask you something?"

"You already did..."

"Haha, true. Can you swim?" His glaring gaze almost pierced you. Again, you got irritated by his question and manner. What was he getting at?

Since you knew that your swimming skills were the worst, you thought about saying no. But then... "I can swim." He stared confused at you. "But I must admit that I am a very bad swimmer. It looks... stupid, yet I can." With these words Shanks scratched the back of his head, staring at you and saying nothing. This reaction made you smile, because you guessed he would react that way. There was no reason to worry, it was the truth, wasn't it? Back at the islands you'd swum a lot.

"Interesting" He mumbled. Suddenly he grinned broadly and pulled you a little bit closer. "Please, join my crew! It would be an enrichment to have you on board of my ship!" The glint in Shank's eyes showed his enthusiasm. To your ignorance he saw a promising, sleeping power inside of you. He wouldn't let you go, before you truly refused him.

"Hell no." You huffed. "I have no reason to join a bunch of drinking weirdoes. There are only male members, right? It's not very inviting."

"Ouch, that hurts my feelings" he joked, still touching your bracelets which made you nervous. "But I assure you that my friends wouldn't try weird moves on you. They are good, reliable guys."

"... who knows" Sitting there and watching him play with your belongings, you got impatient and restless. You really wanted to understand him. What was he trying to tell you? "Hey... I know that they look great, but I won't give them away"

"You really want to keep them so bad?" He asked you grinning. "Or do you desire freedom?"

"So you're telling me that this bracelets are in my way?"

"Yes."

"Why do you think so?"

"Because you can't take them off by yourself." In this very second that he spoke you froze. How could he know? Why was this man right with so many things?! By your reaction he knew that he was correct. "Interesting." he mumbled again, sounding absolutely excited.

"How do you know so much about me? You looked at me and..."

"I can sense it" he interrupted you, while he veered towards you. "I observed very

interesting traits which you don't see yourself. Let me tell you, it comes with experience and age." That sounded sane. His aura revealed his strength and experience. You could feel it, too.

"You are a bad guy, aren't you? I am not allowed to trust any criminal nor pirate." you mumbled with a sigh at the end. Rules were rules. Breaking them would mean that you would get into lots of trouble.

Shanks didn't allow himself to get mislead. He would get his answer. Still, it was strange that you repeated these words.. these rules all over again. He already was positive about your grandma being part of the marine. Or at least, there was someone else that worked for the world government. This expensive piece of jewellery was rare. "Some name me as the devil... some as the hero. I suppose, it'll only work, if I am a good guy right?"

You wanted to point out that it was cheating to cover up his true self. But... you liked the idea of avoiding the most important rule by saying that he wasn't a criminal. At the latest by now you knew that he was one. Why would your boss fear him otherwise? "That... could pull through"

"Your dream is to explore the seas right? You can come with me and follow your dream."

Your heart tightened by the though. It was dangerous... but... but you liked the idea of leaving this forsaken place. This town was corrupt and boring anyways. You didn't see much of it, but you heard a lot. It was enough to make you want to leave. "You don't know me... you're confusing something there."

Shanks sighed. "You're so stubborn... but that's good. You need to be headstrong in order to reach whatever your goal is" He let go of your wrist that you directly pulled back, rubbing it. The feeling that was left behind tickled and burned. He was strong. This man was so strong. You could sense it.

"Of course, why would I let some stranger manipulate me?"

"Then why is your saviour allowed to manipulate and form you as she wishes to?"

You held your breath and weren't able to answer anything. For some brief moments your temper get ahead yourself, so you showed your true self. That inner rebel had slept for so long... was it time to change it? Didn't Kuzan encourage you to do whatever you wanted to? He promised you, to take the blame, if you broke rules, right? "She wants the best for me..."

"If that's the best, why did you cry then?"

"Stop it already!" You shouted and tensed up. "I know that you're freaking right! You dumbass read my face!" Clenching your fists you trembled a little. "I try very hard to refuse your offer, since I've longed for a opportunity like this. But I've promised never ever to trust any pirate since they've destroyed my home-island!"

Shanks started to laugh at the sudden outburst. But it ended as sudden, as he heard the last spoken words. "Mind to tell me finally about yourself?"

Annoyed you rolled your eyes. To Shank's displeasure you stood up and left. Some minutes later you came back. You did change your working uniform to your casual clothes, there your shift was over and you preferred looking like an ordinary girl than a bitch. However you brought another share of drinks and food. You sat down next to Shanks, who started to smile and took another bottle of sake. He was pleased that you got back, you saw it in his eyes which you tried to avoid. You felt weird staring into them since you've experienced that unbelievably strong energy.

"It's a long story, I hope, you won't fall asleep. If you do, I'll punish you." You told him defiantly.

Shanks smirked and nodded. "Fine by me. The night's only began. There's lots of time to tell your story."

"Okay, then..."

Time went by as Shanks and his crew listened to your story. At first, only Shanks paid attention to your speaking. But after some time his crew noticed the glint in his eyes. They knew what it meant for them. So they had no other option than listening and trying to see what their captain saw. You had a hard time retelling your past, although it wasn't for the first nor second time. Your heart hurt. Talking about these cruel being awakened memories in front of your eyes. Even now nightmares haunted you. Maybe you would never be able to let it go...

Shanks' facial expression changed with every sentence. He didn't expect that your story was far worse from the ones, he had heard so far. It seemed unreal that you were such a kind person with no hints of anger nor hatred. You loved being alive. You loved it so much that you let yourself get chained, as long as you had a home where you could live. At least it was his conclusion of your current state of life. He listened to you with mixed feelings. However he didn't show any pity. He guessed that you wouldn't want to see that. His crew thought different, because some stared at the poor girl and had - funny - small tears in their eyes. Big, scary men who cried. What a bunch of dorks...

After you finished, you took a sip of your drink and sighed. Every time you thought or talked about your past a depressing feeling crept over you. Would this ever change? Would this scary grimace ever disappear? Again you sighed heavily. A moment later you looked up and noticed the stare of the redhead's crew. "We are sorry that you went through this!"

"Ah, it's okay. It happened so many years ago... I need to go on", you replied, feeling unpleasant. You didn't want any pity... these sad eyes remembered you of the one's of...

"[name]-chan, you said, that you took your grandma's last name, because she has adopted you. Why so?"

That was a good question. You didn't know yourself, since you didn't care about it. "She mentioned no reason." you answered honestly, "I guess that she wanted me to forget about my past as much as possible. My family name is a rare one."

"Would you tell me?"

You nodded smiling. "My name is [name] -..." A loud noise overrode your voice, so Shanks' crew and you yourself couldn't hear your words. Shanks however did. His eyes widened a little. Or was it caused by the light's shadow play? Since it happened so fast, you were confident that you imagined it. Also he looked absolutely cool as he grabbed another bottle of sake - wow, where did all of that alcohol disappear to? - and drank it completely up.

"I agree. It's not bad that your guardian changed it." He admitted, not showing what he was thinking. "So... assumed Joker would try to find you, he wouldn't be able to. That is the reason."

You shivered of the sound of this forsaken nickname. You feared that man and Shanks understood it. "Y-yeah... but.. there is no reason for him to... to search for me, right?"

Shanks didn't answer. For the first time he looked away. "Since he killed everyone there, there is no reason to start the search." What a weird answer... you weren't sure what you should think of it. "It explains a lot about you, though. As for your potential he would have a reason."

"Do I really have so much power as you say? Is that the reason, why some neighbours hate me? These bracelets didn't change anything about their attitude towards me..."

Shanks smiled, but the dead serious glint in his eyes didn't vanish. "In my eyes, you have. Other might see... some danger."

"Danger? Why so?" Confused you blinked. You were harmless, so why would they fear you? Male people stalked you... while many female held antipathy towards you.

"You possess some interesting abilities. They are untrained though."

A strange feeling rose inside of you. You felt excited about the thought of training these unknown abilities. If you truly owned some hidden power, you actually could explore the sea! "I... I want to train.. but I'm not allowed to. Grandma said that it would be bad manners for a girl."

Shanks smirked as he realised that he had won the fight. Your interest was awakened, so he could obtain this crude, hidden diamond. "I know someone who could train with you.", he told you. "Also you would be able to leave this island. That's what you wish for, right?"

You lowered your sight and put your hand on your heart. You truly longed for the freedom... for the sea. The last time you felt seawater was at your date with Kuzan. He allowed you to go to the beach while your grandma did not. She didn't want you to be near the sea. It was so weird... some of her rules were so frustrating and unjust. Was it really okay to be selfish here? Kuzan did say he would take responsibility, if your action was legal. "I... I really want to hit the road... I don't want to live the rest of my life here... this island is no good."

Shanks grinned and reached out his hand. "Do you want me to free you?"

You nodded shyly.

"Then you will have to meet my demand. Join my crew." He said thrilled, you sensed his excitement.

At first, you lost your way. But after reflecting on every word and his actions, you'd made up your mind.

"Please take good care of me, Shanks-san." you asked him, answering his question. You looked into his eyes. "I am neither strong nor good at anything.. but I will give my best not to be a burden."

Shanks' expression changed, so he looked scary and evil. His grin made you shiver. As he took your wrist, he again pulled it towards him. With a unbelievable joy he embraced your bracelets and crushed them. To your surprise small bolts leaped from the pressure. Confused about his action you felt energy dashing through the room. An old feeling emerged that you had missed for a while. You couldn't describe it nor you knew what it was. But it was back... you felt lively. Slowly you pulled back your hand and stared at the point where your bracelets usually dangled. You weren't angry that he destroyed them... no, it disburdened you.

"That's a nice aura there." He smirked satisfied at you. "So, [name]-chan. You will come with us and explore the sea"

"No way." You answered and crossed your arms. "I cannot leave my grandma behind."

Shanks groaned and was somewhat annoyed. He honoured you for your acceptance of responsibility, but it was way too much. "How about a deal... a promise then?"

"A promise?"

"Yes. As you reach your full age, I'll come and get you. So until then, you will take care of your grandma, search for caretaker and you will receive a special training. There will be no reason for you to be afraid of being a burden or helpless."

"You would wait for so long?" Your eyes widened at the thought. It would truly prove how serious he was.

"Yeah, I would. As long as you will join my crew. Although... I wouldn't be angry, if you didn't I just want you to see you happy" He told you smiling warmly.

"Shanks-san..." You smiled and felt happy about his promise. He was really a good guy. "Thank you.", you whispered and kissed him briefly on his cheek. "If you would do this for me, I would never ever forget it."

Shanks blinked and blushed a little bit. As he had already been red due to his drinking, one barely could see it. You were really cute.. and this tempting charm did no good, since it was stronger than before. He felt like his crew stared at you even more. He would train these idiots not to react to this lady. Otherwise they would have lots of troubles, not only with him. "Yeah, you're welcome, [name]-chan", he answered.

"Uhm... Shanks-san... I really need to go back. If she finds out, I'll get into trouble. But I will return tomorrow."

"No worries. We won't leave this island so fast. We have... some business to take care of." He explained. "Just leave me a note, where I can find you. We will handle the rest."

"Of course!" You got some paper and a pen, scribbled down the information and gave it to him. After you said goodbye, you ran home.

After you left, Lou and Yasopp watched their captain who grinned madly and was unbearable happy. "Why did you ask a small girl like her to join the crew?" Lou asked, visibly confused about his captain's decision. "I confess that she's cute and charismatic, but..."

"Trust me" He demanded amused yet serious. "This girl will have a huge impact on the future era of pirates." With these words his crew stopped questioning his decision and set out for their ship.

You - on the other hand - were almost at home. For the first time you felt excited and happy about feeling alive since you'd lived here. Humming you jumped from cobblestone to cobblestone on the pavement. You giggled and spun with spread arms. So your wish would become reality. If this man held his word, you would finally leave this place. Freedom and adventures awaited you. You were so excited about the idea of leaving that you forgot your daily problems. You even ignored what trouble would await you, if someone found out. But you didn't care. You would do whatever you wished for!

You'd never felt so free for this whole time. This evening was like a miracle that you've waited for.

"Shanks-san... I wonder who he really is" You mumbled to yourself, as you reached the door of your grandma's house. Well now, first some sleep and then it was time to make plans for the future!