

# Pebbles on the water surface

Von Hermionechan90

## Oneshot

Chance meeting  
Ace Interlude

Ace felt like bouncing, he had successfully finished the first solo mission Pops had given him and now he couldn't wait to see the crew again. It had been a long month away after he had spent so much time with them before, oh well he would see them soon. The only thing left before reaching them was crossing under the red line and searching around Pops territories, so no big deal.

While he raced over the water surface something on his right side caught the black haired pirate's attention... was that? Yes it was a ship wreck.

Curious he changed direction and raced to the broken planks and sailing cloth still swimming on the water surface. Circling the wreck he noticed something bright red shining on one of the planks. Taking a closer look he recognized it as hair, with a quick movement of his raft he had changed the direction of some of the planks to gain better access to the person holding onto the wood plank.

It was a kid!

He couldn't be older than thirteen, maybe fourteen a red head with nearly knee long hair and a nasty sunburn from what he could see. After the boy didn't answer to his calls Ace checked for a pulse, which was weak but steady to Ace's relief and so he lifted the unconscious child from the wood.

The kid weighed nothing and fit easily into his arms while he navigated out of the wreckage, he would have to make a detour to a bigger city, preferably with a Marine Base. You could say what you wanted about the Marines, but they were undeniable good at helping lost people home.

So Ace spent the next few hours fretting over the still body in his arms, he even stopped every thirty minutes to slip the boy some water to counter attack the dehydration and sun stroke. Furthermore Ace arranged the boys face against his shoulder to prevent a worsening of the sunburn.

Twenty minutes before his arrival at the closest port the boy stirred in his arms.

## Hyperion Interlude

Moaning Hyperion opened his eyes to quickly shut them again, the sun burned in his sensitive eyes and his head was pounding, what happened? And where was he? Oh right the ship wreckage, he should have listened to his cousin and taken one of the Marine ships.

"Hey there, finally awake?" a deep but friendly voice asked from above him.

Hyperion was unsure what to say so he just nodded his head slowly, keeping his eyes closed. The voice above him seemed to hum and then he felt the arms that were carrying him tightening around his body and searching for a better grip.

"We will arrive in fifteen to twenty minutes, try to relax until then." the man who was carrying the red head said.

That was also the last what Hyperion heard before he drifted back into a light sleep.

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He awoke nearly an hour later on a bed in a dark room. Hyperion noticed that his throat felt uncomfortably parched while he curiously looked around the dark chamber. After noticing the slightly open bathroom door Hyperion made his way there to quench his thirst.

A quick glance into the mirror showed him a tired and pale face with a red blotches on his forehead and cheeks that strained uncomfortable, great he had the mother of sunburns.

Still looking in the mirror he froze when he heard a door open and close. Hyperion turned around and saw a tall man standing in the middle of the room, searching for him presumably. The red head cleared his throat and the strangers face became relieved when he finally found him standing in the bathroom door.

"There you are, feeling better? I had a doctor look at you, you need a lot of rest and should take it easy the next few days, but he didn't find anything dangerous. Oh and I'm Ace by the way." babbled the stranger, Ace, while he walked over to a table with a duffel bag on it.

"Hyperion", the young World Noble answered.

To be honest Hyperion wasn't sure how to proceed, even if the man seemed to be quite friendly he couldn't be sure about his real motives.

## Ace Interlude

Ace searched in his duffel bag for the sweets he had picked up from the grocery while he watched the boy covertly out of the corner of his eye. He seemed skittish and

wary, not that surprising given the situation. Really it was just common sense to be suspicious of complete strangers and in addition the boy was beautiful, with even more striking eyes than he had imagined. A lot of people would have tried to force themselves on the boy were they in the same situation. Luckily for him Ace didn't believe in non consensual or underage sex, no matter how alluring and beautiful he found the younger male.

Triumphal Ace pulled the bonbon package out of his duffel bag and offered them to Hyperion after he took one for himself. He watched as the younger boy hesitantly took one out and sucked on it while he didn't let Ace out of his sight.

Taking some steps back Ace let himself fall onto one of the two beds in the room and said, "I hope you feel better Hyperion. Today it's already too late but tomorrow I will bring you to the Marine station so that you can find your way home."

Said boy just nodded and visibly relaxed while he grabbed another one of the sweets and slowly sat down on his own bed.

### Hyperion Interlude

Hyperion had always had a sweet tooth. He was relieved that the black haired male in front of him didn't seem to have any illicit motives. After some more minutes of comfortable silence the red head finally found the courage ask the black haired man a few questions.

"How did you find me?" Hyperion asked while he tilted his head to the side.

Ace snorted as answer, "Pure luck to be honest, I just caught sight of the wreckage out of the corner of my eye and decided to take a look, which was your luck."

Nodding in agreement Hyperion chewed on his neither lip, "Nobody else survived, did they?" he asked slightly subdued.

Hyperion had liked the old merchant and the two retainers that had travelled with him. That was one of the reasons why he didn't accept the offer of the Marine Admiral Monkey d. Garp to travel on his ship.

Ace eyes became slightly softer while he shook his head and said, "No, you were the only one I found."

Nodding Hyperion looked down on his hands that were slightly bandaged and the two fell into silence before Ace laid himself down completely and said in gentle voice.

"We should sleep; you had an exhausting day behind you." Ace said into the half dark room.

Agreeing with this sentiment Hyperion burrowed himself under the covers and fell into a fitful sleep.

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The next day Ace accompanied the red head to the doors of the Marine Headquarters, where he just wanted to say good bye to the younger male when angry shouts came from the courtyard.

"Hiken no Ace! Pirate scum in the name of the World Government you are hereby arrested!!!" a Marine captain shouted.

"Oh crap. Sorry gorgeous I have to go!" Ace laughed.

With a last wink in Hyperion's direction Ace ran at full speed back to the port, laughing manically while the Marines followed him.

"... Hiken no Ace. I will remember this name." Hyperion mumbled to himself as he finally entered the Marine base.

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Two years later

"My deepest apologizes my Lord but it seemed like will have to change our course of direction to the next island after Banaro." the middle aged servant said to his master.

Hyperion frowned and asked slightly confused, "And why is that so?"

"We just got word that Blackbeard and Hiken no Ace had a battle on the island and completely destroyed the town and port.", the serve looking man further explained.

The head of Hyperion's staff was glad to have such an understanding and fair master, most of his colleagues in the service of the other World Nobles; either were treated like trash or lost their heads some years into the service because they displeased their master in some ridiculous way.

Hyperion's eyebrows rose at what he had just heard.

Ace... he had followed the news about his saver since the day two years ago when he left him in the care of the Marines.

Hyperion was so immersed in his thoughts that he nearly missed the next sentence.

"Thankfully Hiken no Ace could be apprehended, he is now on his way to Impel Down.", the retainer continued.

What? NO Hyperion couldn't let that happen, abruptly he stood up, "We are changing course."

"My Lord?" the incredulous captain asked from behind the head of staff, their master wasn't known to make such unscheduled changes.

"I want you to intercept the ship with Hiken no Ace on board, now if you will captain!"

Hyperion said somewhat impatient.

"Ahh yes of course my Lord!" and with that the captain hurried out of Hyperion's chambers and gave orders to change the course.

Hyperion made his way down to the treasury where his money and gold was stored nearly 1.000.000.000 Beli. That should be enough after all Ace's bounty was 550.000.000 high.

Calmed by the reassurance that he had enough money to buy Ace's freedom he walked back up into his rooms where he took out a little chest and opened it with the key that dangled from his neck. Inside were the documents that marked him as World Noble and the most recent bounty of Ace.

Smiling softly the red head traced the picture of the pirate, he was handsome and Hyperion had to acknowledge that he had developed a major crush on said black haired man ever since he took care of him two years ago.

And now he had a chance to repay him.

They caught up to the Marine ship two days later and after signaling it to stop, Hyperion went on board. The captain of the ship was thankfully one of the sleazy kind; corrupt and cruel. It took Hyperion only a minute to convince him that he wanted the famous pirate as a pet and to hand over Ace for 600.000.000 Beli. To keep up appearances Hyperion ordered the Marines to keep the Sea stone cuffs on, but to hand him the key as well as Ace's belongings.

#### Ace Interlude

Ace was numb, this time he really did it, fucking Teach handed him over to the Marines instead of killing him, great abso-fucking-lutely great. He would have to find a way to escape from this ship because the moment he reached the Marine Headquarters or Impel Down there would be no escaping anymore!

Thinking furiously about a way to get out of those damnable Sea stone cuffs Ace at first didn't notice the approaching Marine squad and the captain of the ship.

"Well well, Hiken no Ace, it's seems to be a lucky day for you, or maybe not. I just made the most satisfying business deal in my life, you must have caught the eye of this World Noble for a long time because you see he didn't even bat an eyelash and paid 600.000.000 Beli for you becoming his pet. Have fun!" the captain taunted the pirate cruelly.

Ace's face became white at those news, to be a slave to a World Noble was the worst fate any pirate could think of, other than being imprisoned in Impel Down. Thinking frantically about a way to escape Ace was dragged through the Marine ship and onto the other bigger one where he was led to richly furnished chambers and his seas stone cuffs were attached to a steel ring on the side of the big bed.

Oh god NO!!! Ace was close to hyperventilate while he looked furious around for a way to break the cuffs. He felt how the ship began to move and listened as light footsteps came into his direction. Ace steeled himself, he wouldn't show any fear, the least to a fat World Noble!

## Hyperion Interlude

Hyperion opened the door to his chambers and took the sight in front of him in. Ace was close to his bed and looked like he had been through hell, open wounds littered his body, there were dark shadows under his eyes and he was caked with dirt and grime. He looked like an abused animal, ready to strike in its defense.

Hyperion was furious, how could they treat Ace like that? The young World Noble closed the door behind him and walked up to the black haired pirate.

"Hello Ace, do you remember me?" he asked gently while he fished out the key to the man's handcuffs.

Ace couldn't believe his eyes; this wasn't a fat old guy who had a perverse interest in his body; no that was the little boy that he had rescued two years ago! Oh well not so little anymore, downright gorgeous to be honest, and he was a World Noble? Oh the irony!

The boy walked closer and after greeting him he fished the key to Ace's cuffs out of his pocket and opened his cuffs. As soon as his skin wasn't touching the sea stone anymore he felt his powers rush back, Ace couldn't stop the slight relieved moan that escaped his mouth while he rubbed his wrists.

Hyperion suppressed the shiver that wanted to run down his back when he heard that moan from the older man and swallowed discreetly before he took him by the hand and led him into his bath room.

"Take a shower and than a hot bath, it will sooth your muscles and I will send for some food while you clean up.", he gently advised while he pulled a big fluffy towel from one of the cupboards.

Ace was overwhelmed, a few minutes before he had thought that he would be raped and spend the rest of his life in the clutches of a fat man who took what he wanted from his body and now, now he was free from the blasted Sea stone and the little World Noble in front of him seemed concerned for his health and would even feed him!

"I... why are you doing this?" he couldn't help himself but ask, this was surreal!!!

Hyperion couldn't help but smile while he answered, "Ace, you have rescued me two years ago, have been nothing but kind and concerned and even took care of me without expecting anything in return, and now I have finally the opportunity to repay my debt to you."

And with that he left the bathroom and made his way to the kitchen to order a lot of food for the starving pirate.

After Ace had finished his bath and felt frankly like a new man the two ate the vast amounts of food that had been sent up. Well Ace ate most of it, Hyperion just nibbled on some rice with sauce but mostly kept to the chocolate dessert. The two talked

about mundane things to distract Ace from his ordeal and also about their travelling route, Ace wanted to go back to Banaro island to pick up his raft.

In the early evening Ace retired to the adjourning guest room, he fell asleep shortly after eight pm and slept nearly twelve hours to make up for the sleepless nights he had the days before.

The next few days the Whitebeard pirate spent with Hyperion and told him a bit about his days as a pirate captain and the rocky start he had with his current captain. He had Hyperion in tears from laughing so hard about some of the stories. Ace enjoyed making the seventeen year old beauty laugh and smile, it made him feel giddy.

On the third day they arrived back at Banaro island, Ace hoped that Striker was still there.

Sailing closer to the devastated island, they saw that the port was barely functional and the city behind was a ghost city, it seemed as if the citizen had packed there still intact belongings and had fled to other islands. They decided to stay a bit away from the island so Ace took a rescue boat to reach the port.

During a quick search of said port, Ace found his raft lying turned over on the water surface. Glad that it hadn't been damaged he hoisted it up and turned it around. Returning to Hyperion's private ship he attached Striker to the anchor chain before he climbed on board to say goodbye to the petite male.

Hyperion felt a bit sad, he had enjoyed his conversations with the pirate, nobody had ever treated him like Ace, completely blunt and straight forward but he pulled himself together and gave the black haired pirate a shaky smile.

Ace sensing the sadness, engulfed the younger male in a quick hug and told him that he had enjoyed his time with him and how he was thankful for the rescue. Hyperion just giggled in response before his smile became more genuine.

That smile again, good damn does that little tease even know how beautiful he is? Making a split decision Ace bent down and pecked him quickly on his lips before he jumped with a cheeky "Sayonara gorgeous!" from the main deck onto his raft and sped in direction of Sabaody Archipelago, leaving a bewildered Hyperion and an enraged crew behind.

Six months later

Maverion mansion

How could this happen? This one sentence repeated itself over and over again in Hyperion's head while he watched passively as his inheritance was loaded onto the slaving ship along with the money from the selling of the manor that had been in his family's ownership for nearly two hundred years.

The only thing left was his dignity, this so he swore he wouldn't lose no matter what happened! And so he held his head high while the slavers led him into the darkness of the slaving ship.

Marine Base close to Water Seven

Ace had a shit eating grin on his face while he walked through the Base, making Marines lose their composure was so much fun, but firstly he would have to get those sea maps.

Walking calmly down a long corridor with fake maps in his arms he nodded to the Marines passing his way he couldn't help but burst into a happy jig inside his head. Marines could be so obvious, you only had to put on one of their uniforms and the cap and they would think you were one of them.

He was about to turn around the corner when he heard two Marines gossiping.

"..., I didn't think that THAT was possible!" one of the Marine's said incredulous.

"Me neither, but it seems that not even World Nobles are save from being enslaved by more powerful World Nobles. Pity, from what I've heard the boy was one of the few of his ilk with an ounce of decency. None of the Marines that have had business with him, had ever complained about him and now this..." the other male answered him.

"Yeah, it seems as if beauty is a downright curse when it catches the attention of a certain kind of World Noble. Rumor has it that none of Lord Hibashi's slaves last more than a year before they are broken beyond recognition..." came the shuddering reply of the younger of the two sailors.

"Fucking bastard somehow bribed the High Court; everybody involved knows that those accusations about supporting the rebellion are complete bull. That bastard just needed some excuse so that the World Noble status of the boy didn't protect him anymore... God damn it and he is such a pretty little thing. See that, it was taken a few months back at a high society meeting. His name is Hyperion of the Maverion family, no immediate family, just some second cousins twice removed." the marine said while he held up a newspaper clipping.

"God damn... he really IS gorgeous! He may be even more beautiful than Boa Hancock! Look at those eyes; I have NEVER seen such a brilliant green in my life!" the younger Marine said pityingly.

During listening to the conversation Ace had become rigid, it couldn't be.

With his face schooled in friendly expression he rounded the corner and asked, "Who is gorgeous?"

"Oh man, don't scare us like that! For a moment I thought it was the Lieutenant!" the younger one of the Marines complained.

"Sorry, sorry. So who is gorgeous?" Ace asked dismissively.

"That exWorld Noble, you know the one that was tried for treason and will be sold as slave in three weeks at the Sabaody Archipelago as punishment.", the burlier of the two answered him and with that he held up the picture of Ace little live saver.



Crap Hyperion was in deep trouble.

With a few platitudes Ace left the two gossiping Marines and fulfilled the task for which he had come here and whisked away the sea maps. On his way out he didn't even tease the Marines with his sudden appearance inside their headquarters but made a straight beeline to his boat.

There the first thing he did was massage his nose bridge while he thought over the possibilities to free Hyperion. It would have to happen before the slavers reached Sabaody Archipelago, after that he wouldn't have a fighting chance against the Marine Base there, especially not with a civilian to protect.

Resolute Ace grabbed the Den Den Mushi that he had started to carry around with him since the Blackbeard incident; he had to make a call to Pops so that they wouldn't worry with him being delayed.

Two weeks later

It had taken longer than Ace had hoped to find out about the slaving operation that had Hyperion in their grasp. He was now speeding to reach them before they would arrive at the Sabaody Archipelago.

Ace thanked whatever god had given him the idea of commissioning a bigger fire operated boat, for his longer solo missions or times when he had to take a few crew members with him. It would ensure a quick getaway to the New World for Hyperion and him because it could be coated with a bubble and withstand the underwater currents in comparison to his smaller raft.

Steam had a sail just like Striker, the only difference was that the mast and sail could be retracted thanks to the fact that the mast was made out of hollow steel pipes in various sizes so that it would nearly vanish in the deck. Bellow deck the Steam could hold up to fifteen people; Ace had decided to forgo extra cabins there so when he moved bigger object the walls weren't in the way. He only had some hammocks and a few chests under deck, secured safely on the walls and the floor.

Ace finally found the slaving ship a day out from the Archipelago. When the black haired pirate caught a glimpse of the massive ship the sun was already going down and it seemed like the captain had decided to anchor for the night.

The Whitebeard Commander waited patiently until it was nearly pitch black to move the Steam closer to the giant three-master. With practiced moves he connected the Steam and the steel hulk of the slaving ship with an on one end melted steel pole. Throughout the years as a pirate Ace had thankfully perfected this method of entering a ship quietly. He couldn't remember how often he had freed comrades and allies from the Marines or cleaned out a merchant ship without them realizing until the next day.

With a quick jump he hung on the outer railing of the ship and listened for noises before he carefully moved first his small duffel bag and then himself on deck. Ace stayed undiscovered thanks to the chests and barrels fixed besides the railing. The

Whitebeard pirate made his way unhindered to the main entrance that led under deck and vanished in the black and grey corridors where the darkness was only interrupted through widely spaced oil lamps.

Ace knew from experience how inattentive seamen were as soon as they completed their duties. Most of them wouldn't look too closely if he passed them in the hall ways and as long as he moved like he belonged here they wouldn't give him a second glance and carry on with their own businesses.

This was also the case at that evening and Ace arrived unhindered and undiscovered in the slave part of the ship. They had made it even easier for him with labeling that particular section of the ship, Ace could only smirk, this was as close to an invitation as he would get.

From then on he had to be more careful if they took their profession half as serious as the Marines not everybody would be allowed in this level. It took Ace nearly an hour and two close calls until he finally found the place where Hyperion was held.

It was an only cell, quite spacious and in comparison to the rest of the ship downright clean. One side of his prison had floor length prison bars so that his capturers could make sure that the slave was still here. After watching for a while Ace deduced that the patrol came by every thirty to forty minutes but would only throw a quick glance at the cell before turning around and vanishing back into what Ace assumed to be a guard room.

The moment the slaver vanished back into his room again Ace crawled out behind the wooden crate in the corner and walked silently to the prison cell. He could see the eyes of Hyperion getting wider and wider the closer he came before the red head broke out into a grin.

Ace couldn't help himself and said, "Fancy meeting you here, what do you think about me whisking you away to the New World.", while he hold onto two bars.

Hyperion moved off the bed and close to Ace before his small hands touched Ace's through the bars.

"Ace, what?... How did you find me?" he asked incredulous.

"Heard about you being sold as a slave in one of the Marine Bases close to Water Seven. It took me awhile to find out which slave ring had you. Sorry for not coming sooner." the black haired pirate couldn't help but encase the smaller hands of the younger boy while he apologized.

Hyperion swallowed and said in a slightly choked voice, "Thank you." It seemed as if his ordeal had taken a toll and the small exWorld Noble looked close to crying.

Ace panicked "Hey, hey calm down Hyperion, it's going to be fine, seriously I'm getting you out of here as soon as possible! Please don't cry!" the last sentence was said pleading.

Hyperion could only smile weakly and nod before he continued, "I... could we take something with us? You see that door across us? It's the loot room and it contains most of my family's treasure and all the slavers income from selling people. I heard

them talking about it. I... please there are some mementos in there that I want to take with me!"

Ace smile had slowly turned into a grin while Hyperion spoke, as if a pirate would turn down gold and treasures. He took a look at the door, seemed like it was reinforced and had...

Wow it had six locks! Somebody was paranoid! Well it wouldn't help them because Ace had already found the door to the room beside the treasury, opening he confirmed his suspicions, it was a broom closet, for something better he couldn't have prayed and slowly a plan formed itself in Ace head. With a smile he returned to Hyperion and informed him hastily about his idea before the pirate set to work.

Ace slipped inside the broom closet and carefully closed it from inside than he began to free the wall that separated it from the treasury. He then heated his hands up until they would cut through the wall like butter. With some careful maneuvering he cut a nearly door sized opening and made his way inside the room. It was dark and crowded and Ace stumbled a few times before he reached the door and flicked the light on.

He had hit the jackpot. No really Ace wasn't sure he had ever seen so much gold in one place. Chest after chest filled with gold, jewelry, precious stones and paintings and Beli, dear good there were sacks full with Belis!!!

Everything was labeled and placed in separate piles. He could tell exactly what belonged to Hyperion and what they had received from other slave buyers.

Recovering slightly from his awe Ace got back to work, he knew he had to hurry to get this treasure and Hyperion out of the ship and after that he would have to put as much distance between them and the slavers because they would be PISSED as soon as they discovered their missing cargo, both human and monetary.

With the same care that he had taken for the wall between the broom closet and the treasury he melted a path through the adjoining rooms until he had reached the outer hull. All of the rooms had been either empty prison cells or storage rooms.

Putting his ear to the hull he could feel the small vibrations the waves made against the ship, the slave level was very close to the water surface. Thankfully the room was quite high and so Ace just had to get a ladder to reach the height where he could melt a way out of the ship and to freedom.

Once the opening was big enough to put his head through Ace searched for his boat. Luckily for him it was only a few meters away from the original hole. Ace just followed the cargo room to the area where his ship was and melted first a small and then a big enough hole so that he could jump over.

Back at his ship he opened the drop and moved the hammocks and chests to the far end and carried the crate with the apples and water bottles up on deck for their later usage. Then he made his way back into the slave ship and started to carry the chests onto the Steam.

In the end it took Ace nearly three hours to quietly squirrel away the content of the treasury inside the slave ship. The Steam was loaded completely up and Ace had to even put some of the chests on deck. The height of the water line gave Ace some

concerns but he shook his head, the engineer that had designed and built the craft knew that Ace would have to transport a lot of weight sometimes and had made it extra sturdy; it wouldn't sink as long as he was careful to not overload it.

The black haired pirate finished with his task around two am in the morning and he knew that he had to hurry up to make a save getaway with Hyperion. Thankfully he had prepared in advance and in the duffel bag that he had brought with him was a long red haired wig that he had bought in a costume shop on one of the islands that had lain on his path while he was closing in on the slave ship.

Ace waited for the next round of the prison warden before he slipped back out and to Hyperion's cell. There he melted a prison bar out of the wall and handed Hyperion the wig. Said exWorld Noble arranged the pillow and blanket so that a quick glance would fool anybody into believing that the red head was sleeping in the bed with his back turned to the door.

After Hyperion slipped out of the cell, Ace put the prison bar back into the place and then led the younger male through the melted pathway to his ship. On the way he put the melted out parts back into the walls to further confuse the crew. Thanks to the Mera Mera no Mi there would be no edges left that would give away that he had melted himself through the walls and the now orange and white glowing metal parts would have cooled down enough in two to three hours to not be visible anymore, so with any luck there would be no signs how and especially WHO had done this and with any luck nobody would follow them.

On board of the steam Ace sat sail as silently as possible, just as he had approached the slave ship with the sail to avoid attention with noise; he now used the same technique to get away just as silently. At moments like this he was unbelievably glad that he had let himself be talked into the sail part of Steam. Ace had at first not seen reason for why he would need an independent sail if he could just use the steam function of his boat, but both Marco and Izo had outvoted him and so he had grudgingly commissioned the boat with a sail.

Ace sent a wry glance at the metal casing under the captain's seat and shook his head, the hissing of the, specifically for him created steam engine would have drawn instant attention and also been visible from a good distance in this kind of predawn darkness.

So the two sailed in silence for the first forty minutes until Ace was sure that they had put enough distance between them and the ship to fire up the engine. The moment the ship was running at full speed something broke in Hyperion and he began to silently cry. Ace who had been expecting some kind of emotional breakdown just put a blanket around the smaller male and pulled him closer to his body and held him the rest of the way to the Sabaody Archipelago.

Ace had the Steam running as fast as it could with the weight it carried and didn't let himself break his concentration until they reached the Sabaody Archipelago unbelievably fast five hours later.

It was seven am when they arrived and the port was just coming to live when Ace bribed one of the mechanics to coat their ship first. Thankfully this only took two hours because of the relative small size of the ship. Ace used the free time to stock up on food and water. The black haired pirate was really tired, he had already forced himself to stay awake for nearly twenty hours by sheer will and now the narcolepsy

was trying to win the upper hand. Frustrated the son of the pirate king gritted his teeth, he would force himself to stay awake until they had reached a specific underwater current that would carry them directly to the New World without any stopover at underwater isles like Fishman Island.

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It took Ace another hour until he had reached said water current he was searching for, and the moment the pirate was assured that they wouldn't stray from the path anytime soon he fell promptly asleep in the middle of the deck. Hyperion beside him smiled at the exhausted pirate, Ace had explained to him that they would be somewhat save as soon as the ship entered the current. Bringing up all of his courage, the red head laid himself beside his rescuer and then tugged his blanket around both of their forms and joined Ace in the land of dreams while the Steam was carried further down into the sea.

The two awoke three hours later when the ship streaked dangerously close to one side of the current, Ace adjusted the position and five hours after that they resurfaced in the New World.

Ace couldn't help but laugh while he enjoyed the fresh wind, his rescue mission had been executed without a hitch and the treasure that he had acquired on the side had with one stroke extinguished all worries about money for an eventual retirement. Not that Ace hadn't had some money already on the side but this would ensure that Ace would never have to worry about money again.

They arrived in the afternoon at Yukiryu; the winter island was the first island in the New World and belonged to the red haired Shanks. This meant that Ace and Hyperion would be relatively secure for a short time, long enough to recuperate from the stress and lack of sleep.

After securing the ship somewhat hidden in a frozen bay that Ace had melted open, the pirate led the exhausted exWorld Noble to the port village and paid there for a hotel room with two beds. As soon as the two exhausted fugitives sank onto the bed they fell into a deep sleep.

A few hours later Hyperion was the first to wake, Ace was still in a very deep sleep and so he didn't notice when his little charge left the hotel room and made his way onto the streets.

The little red head was hungry but he didn't want to disturb his pirate companion for something so mundane. Furthermore Hyperion was curious about the task of shopping for food. It had been very rare for him to be left to his own devices, there had always been somebody who would take care of his needs and so he had never had to buy himself something so mundane like food. He wanted to try on his own, now that he was free of all etiquette and personnel.

For this purpose Hyperion took some of the Belis from Ace purse. The pirate had told him it was okay to take as much of the money as he wanted, after all it was partially his. While the red head kept wandering through the streets he remembered the conversation they had concerning the gold on the ship.

When Hyperion wanted to give him his gold as thanks for his rescue Ace had just

laughed and stopped his babblings, he then told him how he had cleaned out the slavers complete treasury and that while Hyperion's own gold and Belis made up about seventy percent of the pile, he still had made a killing thanks to the rescue mission. It seemed as if Ace was more than happy with the money the slavers had hoarded through their other sales.

Hyperion's musings were interrupted by a delicious smell that came from one of the small vendors on the side of the street. A middle aged man was roasting what looked like chicken on sticks. Unconsciously Hyperion moved over.

The man smiled kindly and asked if he wanted a portion yakitori to go, Hyperion could only nod silently. He then handed over the asked amount and bit into the first piece of meat. A moan escaped him and he vigorously attacked the sticks even more.

It was heaven!!!

While he walked away from the stand Hyperion barely registered the red faced vendor that seemed to flinch and turn redder with every moan he made.

The red head was so preoccupied with his food that he missed the gaggle of teenagers and young adults that suddenly found him very interesting. Normally his radar would have already screaming but with all what had happened he still was to emotionally exhausted to really pay attention to his surroundings.

So when he suddenly was surrounded by grinning and blushing males and squealing females his eyes widened in shock and he couldn't stop the little squeak that escaped him when one of the more bold men grabbed his hand. No one had ever dared to touch him without permission!!!

Inwardly panicking Hyperion frantically looked at a way to escape the male that was towering over him and stripping him with his eyes. Before the young exWorld Noble could even protest, the arm was removed from his person by a considerably thicker and more scarred arm.

"You are making him uncomfortable." a deep voice stated in a scary calm tone.

In seconds the group was disbanding and hurrying along.

Hyperion could only blink surprised before putting his head in his neck to look at the man towering over him; the male was probably in his late forties or early fifties and had some serious muscles, his face was weathered from the sea with a mane of silver streaked hair, scars all over his body and a serious aura around him.

"Thank you." Hyperion simply stated while he curiously took in the person in front of him.

The pirate, because nothing else could he be took a closer look at the face and the long, long red hair and a small amused smile turned his serve looking face into that of a handsome man in his thirties.

"No problem, little fox. You are not from around here are you?" the elder male more

stated then asked.

Hyperion just shook his head in confirmation.

Another sigh escaped the pirate, "Where are your companions then?"

"He is still sleeping, and I was curious." Hyperion explained somewhat sheepishly.

A rather amused snort was his only answer before one of those giant hands landed on his shoulder and the man tugged him into the direction further away from the hotel.

"Well until he awakes I will introduce you to my captain and keep an eye on you, little noble children shouldn't wander around by themselves here." the pirate stated dryly.

Hyperion stiffened somewhat, but when the male didn't say anything else and his instincts also didn't scream at him to get the hell out of here he relaxed and said, "My name is... was Kuroyhou (panther) Hyperion, it's now just Hyperion."

"Benn Beckmann.", came the answering grunt.

The man then fell silent and just the warm and somewhat reassuring hand on Hyperion's shoulder kept him aware of the others presence, it was quite curious. Benn led them out of the village and up a mountain to a cave; they could already see and hear the fire and ribald laughter of other males.

Their entrance wasn't noticed until they nearly stood right in front of the biggest fire in the cave, the red headed man in front of them choked on his beer when he finally noticed the two of them.

"B-Benn???" came the incredulous question of the white eyed Akagami no Shanks.

Hyperion had recognized him instantly from the wanted pictures, since meeting Ace he had taken some extra care to also memorize the major players in his world.

"Hey there captain, I thought I would bring you your long lost love child." the older man answered dryly.

Around him the men burst into laughter while they took in Hyperion's vibrant as fire hair and compared it to their captain's, who sputtered and flailed at Benn's statement before he pouted and walked closer to the youngest male in the cave.

"He is just as much a pretty boy as you are captain!" a voice shouted from somewhere in the back of the cave, which started a new round of laughter.

Shanks pretended as if he hadn't heard anything and stared at the small male in front of him, "Hello there, koneko-chan. How old are you?" the red haired captain wanted to know.

"I just turned eighteen... just so you know, our hair may look similar but I inherited it

from my mother." Hyperion stated seriously.

That sent the pirates around them once more into stitches; they even had tears running down their cheeks.

"Aww the captain got rejected by his love child." the obviously drunk blonde with the star cape laughed.

"Shut up Yasopp." the annoyed captain said, while it was clear to everyone that he was pouting, "Ignore those idiots. You are eighteen, well, well, well, that means you can drink legally speaking, come on, come on, have a beer with us.", the one armed red head shouted while he put said arm around the younger, smaller and most important more delicate of the two.

Curious Hyperion followed the boisterous red head, he never had anything stronger than a sip of champagne or white wine and he only had heard of beer and never had seen it before.

He tilted his head at the yellow fluid with the white foam on top before he tentatively took a sip. The beverage tasted pleasingly bitter and so Hyperion took another sip, this time bigger. His eyes wandered back to the two older pirates that watched him curiously. The pirates around them had clearly lost interest and went back to their boisterous games.

"What?" Hyperion asked confused at their gazes.

Benn sighed before he asked plainly "You have never drunken alcohol before have you?"

Hyperion just shrugged and honestly said, "Just some sips of wine and champagne, but yes I wasn't allowed, my governess always kept me away from it."

"And you weren't curious?" Shanks asked incredulous.

"A bit yes, but I had other things to do then try to sneak alcohol."

"Like what?" Shanks asked now more than a bit curious.

"Taking care of my family's investments." Hyperion told truthfully.

"So why are you here of all places then?" Shanks couldn't help but ask.

Hyperion sighed deeply, "I was too pretty."

The red haired pirate winced slightly while he took in the male in front of him, yeah he could believe that.

"Ah... shit. Well forget it kid, here drink some more, it will help you." Shanks tried to distract the little red head in front of him.



"Shouldn't you say that alcohol is not a way to solve my problems?" the exWorld Noble wanted to know curiously.

"Who the hell told you that kid, alcohol is the answer to EVERYTHING!!!" Shanks laughed loudly before he topped up Hyperion's glass.

It didn't take long for Hyperion to feel woozy before his head suddenly landed in Shanks lap and he sank into the land of dreams, surrounded by the heat of the red haired Yonko. He distantly noticed how something was put across his body and a warm hand stroked through his hair.

XXXXXXXXX

When Ace awoke and noticed that Hyperion wasn't in the hotel room he nearly had a heart attack, more than a bit worried about his innocent charge Ace asked around the village about his red haired companion. The answers he received were less then encouraging, a big, scarred man had taken him away was the only thing that everybody could agree on, but that had happened some hours ago. The black haired pirate was now nearly in a full panic when he saw Shanks ship in the port and instantly relaxed, the chance was high that some pirate of Shanks' had found Hyperion wandering around and had taken him to his captain. As far as Ace knew none of Shanks' crew could resist a cute and vulnerable kid like Hyperion and would instantly go into protector mode.

So somewhat reassured Shanks turned around and made his way to their favorite haunt, a cave in the nearby mountains and really the moment he entered the cave he could already see Hyperion. The young exWorld Noble was curled into a loose ball of limbs with his head on Shanks thigh and securely wrapped in Shanks' captain cape.

"I see you have met Hyperion", Ace grinned while he looked fondly at the younger male.

Shanks looked surprised "Oh, is he with you? Ben rescued him from being harassed by a group of hormonal youths in the town." he said while he poured Ace some beer.

Ace frowned and looked concerned, "Shit, I should have told him to not go outside alone."

Shanks nodded at that, "Why is he with you? He isn't a fighter and too naïve for the New World to survive here on his own. He should be somewhere in Paradise or even one of the Blues if he needs to be out of sight."

"Yes, normally I would agree with you but Hyperion here is an exWorld Noble, some richer old guy wanted him as a pet and somehow discredited him, I rescued him from a slaving boat two days ago.", Ace explained while he sat down across from Shanks and beside Benn, who nodded at him.

At that Shanks' eyes went wide and Benn raised his eyebrow, "ExWorld Noble??? Well

he is a lot prettier than the majority of that lot but how the hell do you know him then, or did you just decide to free him on a whim?"

Ace grinned sardonically, "He saved my life... well I saved his life and then he saved mine but anyway..."

Shanks nearly blew his beer through his nose at that, "Saved your life???? How the hell did such a tiny slip of boy save your life???"

Ace sighed and looked in the air before he continued, "You know that I went in search of Teach after he nearly killed Thatch and stole his devil fruit? Yes well, we clashed at Banaro island and I got creamed thanks to his Yami Yami no Mi, and instead of killing me like any decent pirate, that fucker handed me over to the marines!!!"

Now Shanks sat down his beer and looked grave, Benn's features had also turned cloudy, this was one of the worst breeches of the pirate code they had ever heard of. Handing a fellow pirate over to the marines was an absolute no go!

"That bastard..."

Ace could only nod his head while he looked grimly into the fire that burned before him, "I was already on my way to Impel Down when a World Noble ship stopped the path and Hyperion bought me from the captain. He brought me back to Banaro so that I could pick up my raft and make my way back into the New World.", Ace looked affectionately at the sleeping and slightly purring figure across the fire who had buried himself into Shanks cloak.

"He is adorable, but don't tell him that, he get's huffy about it", grinned Shanks while he stroked through the smaller red heads hair, something about the tiny male brought the protective instincts of all three pirates to the surface.

Said red head woke up an hour later to the loud laughing of Shanks and Ace while Benn just shook his head about their antics. He was encased in the big black cloak of Shanks and had his head buried into said pirate captain's side. Slightly embarrassed he sat up and rubbed the sleep from his eyes, his head was pounding dully and he had a slight headache.

"Hello there sleepyhead, feeling better?" Ace asked amused from the other side of the fire, Hyperion nodded while he yawned and stretched, "Good, does that mean we can continue? Or do you want to stay another day?"

"No it's too cold." Hyperion whined while he tugged himself deeper into the black cloak.

The three pirates chuckled at that and floored their pints. After that Ace and Hyperion said their goodbyes to the elder men and made their way back to the village after Hyperion gave Shanks his cloak back. To ward of the cold Ace let his core temperature increase until he was a walking furnace, Hyperion close at his side.

They boarded their ship and made their way to the open sea.

Ace there switched to his eternal Lock Pose, a close guarded secret of the commanders who were rumored to be able to find their main ship no matter what. What most people didn't know was the fact that the Moby Dick had a special reinforced bow; the stone coating on the inside of the giant ship was very rare and created it's own magnetic waves and so they were able to create eternal lock poses for the ship.

After checking in which direction the Moby Dick was Ace took a slight detour to a cluster of cliffs and small rocks barely visible over the water surface close to his pops main islands.

He had found this particular place after he had played hide and seek with one of the bigger Sea Kings in the New World shortly after his initiation as a Whitebeard pirate, he had been dead on his feet at that time and had just wanted to rest and recover a bit before fighting that monster. So Ace had raced into the dangerous coral reef that had sunk more than one ship and was normally avoided at all costs because the water gauge was only three to four meters deep. He had collapsed on one of the bigger rocks barely able to tie his boat and had slept for half a day.

When he woke up he had found himself by the mouth of a cave that led under the water line, curious he had jumped down into the vast cave expansion under the water surface and had followed it a bit. The conclusion, it was nearly completely dry and the moisture that was inside came mostly from the rain outside.

In the last three years he had reinforced the walls and ceiling with molten rock coatings until it was only half of it's original size but a lot sturdier and less likely to give into the pressure of the water.

Ace had started storing his loot here after he had found a good sized rock to camouflage the entrance and exactly that he would be doing now with Hyperion's and his treasure.

Ace had decided earlier the day while he talked to Shanks that Hyperion was his responsibility and that he would continue to take care of the petite male. Ace doubted that Hyperion would fit on the pirate ship, as much as he loved his brothers some were quite stubborn in their ways and would make Hyperion's life hard for being a World Noble. No, he would have to find a nice home on an island for the red head but first he would have to introduce him to Pops and Marco.

Three days later they arrived at his hiding place and while carefully stirring the boat through the deadly labyrinth he explained to the green eyed beauty why it was better to keep gold and treasure away from the other pirates. He did it as in not to invoke jealousy and greed in his friends and comrades; it was also a longstanding practice for the smarter pirates to have a secret hideaway for their loot to serve as insurance for their inevitable retirement.

Hyperion had just smiled at that and helped him with carrying the smaller boxes down into the cave. Ace ignited the coal pits he had stationed throughout the cave for a better light.

Hyperion stopped and stared at the vast tunnel in front of him with what looked like melted stone shelves running along both sides. There were already a considerable big amount of gold and jewels inside.

"You have amassed a lot of loot, do all pirates have so much?" asked Hyperion curious while he put the jewelry box with the diamonds on the shelf closest to him.

"No not really, most pirates are pretty poor but that's because they don't save it up and just squander it on alcohol and women. I'm just a lot better with managing money thanks to my days as pirate captain. I save half of it up and hide it here, the rest I use to buy alcohol and the things I need." Ace explained readily while he put down a crate with gold bars.

"... and women?" asked Hyperion curiously.

Ace just grinned at that arrogantly, "Honey, I have never paid for a woman or man in my life."

Hyperion blushed at that sweetly while he busied himself with arranging the boxes in front of him.

After they had carried in half of the treasure Hyperion had found the courage to speak again, "What is going to happen with me now?" he asked in a small voice.

He had never thought about what to do with his life, until now he had just lived in his manor and the companies his forefathers had invested in had replenished the money he had spent, he had only adjusted small things at the investments but left rest as it was but now it was different, wasn't it. Slightly despairing he looked at the pretty necklace that had been his mother's favorite before the accident, a diamond and rubies collar.

Hyperion was surprised when strong, warm hands encased him from behind.

"Don't worry, I will take care of you." Ace said into his ear as he slowly stroked up and down on his arms.

Suddenly choked up Hyperion turned around in those strong hands and put his own dainty arms around the warm and comforting body. Breathing in the smell of sea, bone fire and male Hyperion knew somehow that everything would be alright, as long as Ace was there. They stood for some time like this before continuing with the unloading of their precious cargo.

After they had finished with their work they sat down and ate some of the food Ace had bought on the Winter Island, while Ace asked curiously about Hyperion's life until now.

He was informed about his dead parents and how he had been brought up by retainers and a governess since he had been eleven years old, the home schooling and etiquette training as well as horseback riding and business training. Ace whistled at that and asked jokingly if he had any free time for hobbies while growing up. At that

Hyperion confided in him that he enjoyed cooking, especially sweet dishes.

That brought a shine into Ace eyes and he told him playfully that this was excellent because he loved to eat. Hyperion laughed at that and smiled that cute little smile that had made Ace breathless in their other meetings and had haunted said pirates dreams for nearly three years.

Ace couldn't resist, he bent down and captured Hyperion's lips in a long but relatively innocent kiss, he didn't want to frighten the red haired beauty in front of him.

Hyperion gasped at the sensations and when Ace pulled away he followed him to keep the warm pressure against his lips, it felt good and nothing like the short smack that he had received after freeing Ace, it felt, it felt warm and save and like Ace. Ace chuckled slightly at Hyperion's antics and became more forward, he angled their mouths slightly and opened his, which Hyperion copied. Growling at that eager behavior of the younger male Ace drew him into his lap and then slipped him some tongue.

At first Hyperion was a bit tense at the foreign feeling but soon relaxed and let Ace play with his tongue and gums, this sent shivers down the red head's spine and made his shoulders tense and relax in rapid succession until Ace broke away from his mouth and started to kiss along his jaw and down his neck.

When Ace hit a certain spot directly above the hollow near his collar bone, Hyperion jerked and let lose a moan. The exWorld Noble hadn't known that he was that sensitive at his neck area, he bit his lip to try to prevent further embarrassing noises but didn't really succeed in this endeavor. Hyperion was quite sure that that stupid pirate was smirking self satisfied at the fact that he couldn't keep any control over his vocal cords.

Desperate for something, be it more or less contact. Hyperion couldn't stop himself from moving back and forth on Ace's lap. This brought forth a desperate moan from the pirate who grabbed his hips and stilled his movements while he hid his face in the hollow of the red head's neck and tried to calm his breathing.

After the pirate had collected himself a bit he looked up at the disheveled looking younger male with the red, slightly moist lips and promptly hid his face again. God damn it, he was twenty one years old and normally could control himself quite well but this little vixen drove him crazy without even trying! Ace chuckled while he stroked along Hyperion's back and buried his hands in the long soft hair that fell around him like red silk.

Tentatively Hyperion buried his own hands in Ace's relatively short hair and asked unsure, "Did I do something wrong?"

Ace laughed slightly pained and shook his head carefully, "No you didn't do anything wrong, Hyperion... you drive me crazy, I love how you feel and react and I'm not sure how much my self control can take until I snap and take this further than you are ready for."

At that he had moved his head until he was connected with his interlocutor at their

foreheads. Ace left hand wandered up and stroked along the chiseled cheekbone, relishing in the soft warm skin, free from any blemishes or scars.

Hyperion's eyes went wide as an answer and he said, "Oh, but I like what you were doing to me, you can take this as far as you want."

This forced another shudder from Ace, whose muscles were twitching and tightening under his skin. That god damn tease!!!

"DON'T, just don't continue that trail of thought or I really will take you right here on the rocks!" Ace said desperately, while he willed his awakened erection to lie down again.

Of course the first person in his life with which he wanted to take it slowly would test his self control like that, thought Ace sardonically while he reigned in his desires. With a quick but gentle move he placed Hyperion on the rock he had sat before and stood up while he stretched his arms and took the weather in. There was a storm coming and they would want to be as far away from the dangerous reef as possible when it hit. Turning around to inform his companion this, he noticed the small pout on those sinful lips and couldn't hide a slight smile in return.

Feeling more than curious Ace asked Hyperion, "Why are you so eager of having sex with me?"

Inwardly Ace winced, okay maybe that had been too forward and was about to apologize, when he was interrupted by the red haired exWorld Noble.

"I like you and I trust you, I never had a person I could rely on completely to take care of things and do them without a thought about backstabbing me. Even my teachers and personnel had had hidden agendas. Additionally as soon as I turned fourteen and hit my growth spurt I had to be careful about which men and even women I was alone with, they wouldn't have stopped like you did. You keep showing me again and again that I can trust you and rely on you. That's why I don't have any problems with advancing our relationship so fast." Hyperion stated frankly while he didn't let Ace out of his sight.

Ace was stunned, he hadn't expected such a straight forward answer and to be honest he felt quite flattered that Hyperion trusted him with himself.

Suddenly the ex-Noble looked unsure, "It is a relationship, isn't it?"

With a quiet smile he walked closer and kissed the younger male on the forehead and said smiling softly, "Yes sweetheart, it is.", before he took his hand and led him to the boat to leave the island.

Whitebeard's crew

On the next day they made their way in direction of the Moby Dick because the boat was now a lot lighter it sped through the water and they had crossed nearly double

the amount of miles in the time that they had spent the days before when the boat was weighted down.

When the Moby Dick became visible on the horizon, Hyperion became noticeably tense while they sped to the ship. Without a side glance Ace grabbed Hyperion's hand and brought it to his lips.

"Everything is going to be alright, trust me, Pops and my brothers won't hurt you." the black haired pirate reassured his tense partner.

Nodding and having his fears a bit alleviated Hyperion took in the giant ship with wide eyes, he had never seen such a giant moveable object, whoever had designed and built that must have been either a genius or crazy; or maybe both.

They heard shouts and calls from the deck high above them while Ace calmly docked his boat onto to one of giant steel rings which looked like they were made specifically for Ace's boats, his other boat Striker was also there.

After finishing his task Ace grabbed Hyperion and lifted him bridal style into his arms before he started to jump up on what looked like protruding iron steps until he landed safely on the railing.

The black haired pirate grinned broadly at his brothers and called out so that it was hearable on the whole deck, "Hey guys I'm home, did ya miss me???"

Loud shouts and cries came from the crew while they welcomed him back. With a quick step he was on the deck and carefully set Hyperion down, conscious about not pulling on his hair. Ace noticed Marco coming from his right and grinned at the blonde older pirate while he moved Hyperion in front of Marco for inspection.

Said green eyed beauty had been busy in taking in all the people on deck and was now looking with big eyes up at the blonde phoenix, he was even taller than Ace. Hyperion took in the blonde haired pirate who had a lazy facial expression and chicken hair, what an interesting person!

Marco did exactly the same, his eyes travelled along the petite form, lingering on Ace's arms that held the boy before moving up to the beautiful face and the big and astonishingly clear green eyes. The Commander had to hand it to Ace, he clearly knew how to pick them, this boy in front of him must be one of the most beautiful sentient beings he had ever met. And Marco had met a lot, sky people, mermaids and of course humans, hell even Boa Hancock would look just average beside the little red head.

Said boy cocked his head to the side and then smiled a sweet smile before he said, "Hello, my name is Hyperion, it's nice to meet you."

The smile let him look even younger and to be frank absolute adorable, Marco smiled slightly back and nodded before he said, "Likewise, the name is Marco. Come on you two, Pops is waiting."

And with a quick glance and nod to Ace he led them to the captain chair in the middle

of the ship.

Ace had tensed palpable while Marco had examined Hyperion; a lot depended on Marco's verdict. When he saw the glance and small nod in his direction Ace couldn't help himself but relax and grin. It seemed as if Hyperion had passed the first inspection.

Ace had had a feeling that Marco and Pops would like Hyperion but he hadn't been completely sure, now the introduction to Pops wasn't that big of a problem anymore thanks to Marco's reaction.

The first word that came into Hyperion's mind after he saw Whitebeard was of course 'big' shortly followed by 'loud' when the captain's laugh boomed over the deck.

Marco, who had taken his place on the left of Whitebeard, leaned casually against the railing by the nurse desk while he watched Hyperion's reaction to the captain of the ship. Marco had to stop himself from grinning like a Cheshire cat. He didn't think it was possible for those gem eyes to get even bigger but he was proven wrong, they could. Hyperion looked like a curious kitten from his view point. Jozu who sat on the other side of Pops sent him a questioning glance which he answered with a telling nod. Said third division commander relaxed and took the little enigma in front of them in.

"I'm home Pops!" Ace grinned while he greeted his captain, still keeping a reassuring hand on Hyperion's shoulder and giving it a short squeeze.

"That I see, so you have rescued and you brought your little life saver here, well then come here boy, I want to take a look at you!" came the deep voice from Whitebeard while he watched curiously the ex-World Noble before him.

He was a tiny thing, even slimmer and shorter than most of his daughters were, although the lack of bulk could be attributed to his youth and civilian status but even then he was easily two heads shorter than Ace, two and a half than Marco.

Though his stature was kind of disappointing to the pirate captain he still had to give the boy credit. Whitebeard didn't feel any fear from the boy, just curiosity and maybe a bit apprehension, which was expected really. The boy seemed to have good strong nerves, well let's test those he thought amusedly while he watched the boy. The dainty creature walked slowly in front of him until he stood only a few meters away from his right foot. Whitebeard had to hide the amused smirk, he had been right, the boy was tiny, the red head was barely a head taller than his knee!

Whitebeard threw a quick glance to Ace. His son was slightly tensed, huh how interesting, the red head seemed to have wiggled himself into Ace's affections and brought the second Division Commanders protective instinct to the front, very, very interesting.

Making a split second decision Whitebeard moved his hand faster than Ace or any other of the pirates could react and had the red head sitting in his palm and in front of his face, the small boy weighed absolutely nothing. He slowly lowered his hand onto his upper thigh while he held his hand steady so as not to jostle the boy too much.



Checking with Haki the aura of Ace's little ex-World Noble, Whitebeard was astonished to feel just surprise and funnily enough delight. Edward Newgate now took an even closer look at the facial expression of Hyperion. The eyes were giant while they took in the captain's face and upper body.

The boy then opened his mouth and said in a slightly high but clear voice, "Good evening captain Whitebeard, I'm Hyperion."

Well, it seemed like he had manners to complete his balls of steel, what an interesting boy!!!

"Gururararara, you have balls boy, I have to give you credit for that, so what do you want to do now that you are in the New World?" the old pirate captain asked.

Whitebeard was curious about that because as World Noble he had probably never worked a day in his life. But before the boy could answer Ace was suddenly right between his knees looking concerned up to Hyperion and answered for him.

"I already promised that I would take care of him Pops." Ace said resolute, his eyes never wavering from the redhead in Whitebeard's hand.

Curious and curiouiser, had his son a crush? Why yes it seemed so and the red head in his hand didn't seem to fare any better with the adoring way he glanced down to his son, well ,well well, wasn't that an interesting development. With a quick glance to Marco his suspicions were confirmed. The blonde first Division Commander wiggled his eyebrows into the direction of the two and had a decidedly mischievous grin on his lips. Ace would have to endure some teasing in future, oh well at least now he understood why Ace had been so vehement about saving this particular World Noble.

"Well then, it seems we are in the need of a party!" Whitebeard decided.

Approving shouts could be heard all over the deck while he leaned forward and slightly lowered his hand so that Hyperion could jump onto the deck. Whitebeard watched amused as the green eyed beauty didn't get a chance for that and was picked right out of his open palm by Ace, who then slowly combed through the long hair while he led his little crush below deck.

Whitebeard chuckled while he watched the two disappear and then turned to Marco, Haruta and Izo and told them, "Now I understand that you are eager to tease him about his little red head but let's wait a bit until the party begins, let's give him a breather before the teasing begins."

Whitebeard's statement made Haruta and Izo pout, while Marco just chuckled and agreed before he said, "It is too bad Thatch isn't here yet, he will be disappointed about having missed this opportunity!"

Marco was more interested in this relationship than he let on, after all this was his younger brother for which he only wanted the best. Another reason was that a part of his brain was dancing jig finally he wasn't the main target for teasing and pranks

anymore. Even if he was used to it as the so called "oldest" brother, a breather from the unholy attention of the more mischievous part of the crew would be quiet nice.