

A Warlord and his Princess

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Kapitel 5: A Woman's Struggle

It was this time of the month and Perona felt like shit. Usually when she was on her period everything was ok but once or twice a year she had bigger problems. Her whole body was sore, her back and neck were tense and she had a bad headache. For two days she was barely sleeping because the pain of her lower abdomen was really giving her a hard time. Additionally her mental health was suffering from the constant rain outside. "I hate it", she whimpered as she was cuddling her teddy bear on her bed, body curled up under her blanket. Soon it would be over, but for now she needed to go through with it.

At least now she was able to buy her lady utensils like tampons on her own. The first months she was not allowed to accompany Mihawk on his trips she needed to ask him to buy everything. The first time was the hardest. He has asked both her and Zoro if they needed something special when he went on his supply trip. She has written everything on a small paper, as she did not want to say it out loud. Before he left, and when Zoro was not around, she handed him the small paper and her face became as red as a tomato. It was so humiliating for her to ask someone, who basically was a stranger to her at that time, to buy her the tampons she needed. Mihawk never minded. He always brushed it off with a "It is normal for you to need this." and always brought her everything she wanted. But for her it was embarrassing.

When the first day of her period came, she always stopped the harder workout and decided to chill and work in the garden or lay down in her bed depending on her state. She knew that in worst case her enemies did not made exceptions just because of her well-being, but this was Kuraigana and nobody ever came here to visit, let alone to fight. The two men always left her alone if she did not come to them by herself and it was good to have the solitude when needed. But right now she was craving for someone to just tell her everything would be alright. At Thriller Bark Perona had Kumashi or one of her other pets when she longed for physical comfort. When she was lucky sometimes even Moria gave her a short hug. Here she had nothing to give her comfort except for a stuffed teddy bear.

It was already way past dinner, which she had skipped, and she felt her belly rumbling. She was getting hungry. Perona sighed, got up after some minutes, went into the bathroom to the toilet and afterwards she headed downstairs to grab something small to eat.

Mihawk was sitting alone on a large couch in the dining room. His back was resting against the backrest and his legs were placed on the couch leisurely. On the small table next to him stood a bottle of his favourite red wine and a glass filled with it. He was enjoying his free time reading a book about the history of the New World and the

fallen kingdoms, when Perona entered the dining room with a small plate in her hand. She sat down on one of the chairs and ate her dinner in silence.

To say that Perona was annoying the last two days was an understatement. She was in a foul mood and when Mihawk asked her what was wrong with her on the first day, she just snapped at him. That is why he decided to leave her alone until she was ready to talk to him. Out of the corners of his eyes he watched her sitting at the table. She hunched at the table, dark rings below her eyes and sometimes caressed her belly absentmindedly. When Perona was finished with her dinner, she sighed silently. It seemed like she was debating what she should do now. Mihawk pinched the tip of his nose and let out an annoyed groan. "If something is the matter just speak, woman." He did not want to go on with this charade of her ignoring everything and her constant sulking. Perona looked up as if she did not notice Hawkeye sitting on the couch and her mood got worse in a high rate. "I am sorry to disturb you!", she shouted angry. "Are you on your period?", he asked straight-forward. "Don't ask such a thing!", she yelled, "This is embarrassing!" She crossed her arms in front of her and pouted. Why did he ask her that? It was a topic she was barely able to talk to with another woman. How could she even be able to talk to him about it. It was just something that every woman has to struggle with and men were so inconsiderate and blind about the women's period. "You don't know how it feels like, when your body is hurting the whole time, everything is so tense and you are not even able to sleep well", she started her little outburst. It seems like the lack of sleep and her bad temper had gotten the upper hand on her and the words just bubbled out of her mouth. "I hate it! Everything takes double effort and sometimes you just want to cry without a reason." Mihawk directed his gaze at her. He rubbed his temple as he could feel a headache starting to take over. He was not really in the mood for her small tantrum but at least it seems right now that she wanted to talk, or let out all her collected anger and frustration from the last two days. "Sometimes I feel so alone", Perona proceeded. Her voice getting softer and lower. "As if nobody could help me and it is frustrating to bear this pain alone." And sometimes I just want to be hugged tightly – she continues in her head but did not dare to express this out loud. A silent tear escaped her eyes but before it could get worse, she heard Mihawk asking "Have you finished your little theatrical interlude?". Perona went silent and she did not dare to look at the owner of the house. He must think of her as a pathetic little girl and she did not want to see the disapproving look in his eyes. Mihawk sighed, sat up straight, legs down from the couch. "Come here" he simply stated. Perona looked up, surprised by the sudden order and looked at him. His face was neutral. There was no sign of mock or condemnation in his features, as he pointed to the place next to him. She was debating with herself, what she should do. She could leave and try to simply forget what happened tonight or she could just go over there and get done with whatever he wanted to do. She still feared that he would laugh at her for her little show. He was a proud man. But she did not see a hint from him, that this would be the case. After some thinking she decided to float over to him and took the place on the couch next to him. Perona ensured that she was at a safe distance to him as she was unsure of what he wanted. She tilted her head towards the direction of the ground and waited for him to make the next move. Suddenly she felt two strong hands on her shoulders. At first Perona tensed at the contact. Oh no. Please. She did not behave that bad that the warlord needed to punish her. Then she felt light pressure on her shoulder blades and her neck and understood, that he was only massaging her sore neck. Oh yes. This felt so good. Perona thought she knew exactly what she craved for but only now she

comprehended the extent of her need for contact. She automatically relaxed under his slow and steady movement. Perona closed her eyes and enjoyed the caretaking. After some quiet minutes Mihawk stated calmly: "You know that you can always come to me if something troubles you." He suppressed the small comment 'Even without making a scene before'. "Hmmm~", was the only thing Perona was able to answer. One or two minutes later she added: "Why is it that you are good in everything you do?" He chuckled lightly upon that question but did not answer her. Soon she felt a bit tired and her eyes began to get heavy. Perona's body felt more at ease now. The massage really did wonders to her sore body.

The warlord was not sure why he felt so light-hearted around her today. He really despised the last two days of her being out of her character and he really had the urge to help her. He wanted to see her happy. It was nice having her around. Being with her made him forget everything that was going on in the world. Mihawk noticed her sleepiness and decided to go one step further. Fortunately, the couch was wide enough for two people to fit on it. He leaned over, put one arm behind her back and one arm below her upper thighs and lifted her next to him on the couch so that she was between him and the large backrest. During the movement Perona squealed shortly in surprise. She was completely lost on her thoughts and did not see that coming. "What?" She looked at him, wondering what he was planning. Mihawk, who still had his right arm around her back, used his other arm to grab the blanket in front of him to cover both of them with it. Perona could only watch and feel the blush that was forming on her cheeks. He pulled her into a horizontal position, his back directly on the soft mattress and let his head rest on the slanting armrest of the couch. With his right arm below her back, he hugged her even tighter to himself so that she was now halfway on top of him and halfway still on his side. Her face lay on his chest. "You said you were tired before", he told her, "Try to rest a bit." Perona was frozen in her movement. This was the first time she was so close to someone other than just for a hug. Her heart was beating wildly and she hoped he could not hear it. 'How could he think that I could possibly sleep in that position?' Perona thought. At first, she did not dare to make even the smallest move. Breathing seemed impossible too. It did not help that he was almost shirtless, wearing that white buttoned-down shirt he always wore in his free-time. And damn that man was well-built with muscles. For a moment she closed her eyes to gather herself. She did not ask for this. He offered his comfort freely and she did not force him to do anything. Perona processed the last minutes and decided that she could very well be bold too and use the given situation. With one deep inhale and exhale she shifted closer to him. Perona placed her right arm above his chest to cuddle him even tighter and nestled her nose more into his chest. This moment felt so good and right in every way. She loved it. It was like all her worries were blown away and it was just them at this moment. She began to feel relaxed again in this position and sighed low and content. To give her further easing Mihawk started to caress her hair softly with his left hand. They lay like this for some moments. It was quiet and they were simply enjoying their time together. Then Mihawk's mind came back to the discussion he had with Zoro the other day about Morias crew. "May I ask you something?" Perona, who was more used to his direct way of addressing topics wondered, what made him hesitate. "Of course." He was not sure how to address the topic. He wanted to know what she has trusted Zoro with. But asking directly would give away that he had some minor information from the younger man. So, he decided to formulate the question in another way. "If it was possible, would you go back to Moria and the rest of your crew?" For her that

question came out of nowhere and she was irritated why he would ask her something like that. Gecko Moria was dead. There was no way that this scenario would ever happen. That's also why she never thought about it. Mihawk interpreted her hesitation as denial. After all this time it still seemed to be a topic she did not wish to discuss. "I'm sorry. You do not have to answer." "No...", Perona interfered to erase all the wrong thoughts. She tilted her head so she could see his face out of the corner of her eyes. She wanted to see the expression on his face but as usual it was neutral. She could not read the motivation behind that question. "It is just... Moria is dead. And I never thought of this scenario since then." Mihawk nodded slowly and expected this to be the answer to his question. Perona was quiet for some seconds. She was deeply in thoughts as it was not that easy to answer. "I owe Moria much", she started to explain her indecision. "When I was a child and I had no place to be he took me in and gave me a home." She made a short break, trying to find the right words. "He was good to me, but ...". She paused again, which made Mihawk listen more careful. "He never gave anything for free." Mihawk furrowed his brows upon that statement. "Oh god that sounds wrong", Perona chuckled slightly embarrassed. "Not that way you maybe imagine. But he wanted proof of his crew's loyalty." Lost in thoughts she started to draw circles with her right index finger on Mihawk's chest. "After I joined his crew, he took part of my shadow into his possession... For reassurance." She highlighted the word reassurance by forming quotation marks with the fingers of her right hand. Then she proceeded with the circles on his chest and paused again. "You know that he can control everyone like a puppet when he is in possession of the shadow." The words hung heavy between them. At the time she offered his shadow to him it seemed like the best decision. She did not plan to leave Moria and his crew so she had nothing to fear. She was always loyal to him and he never made use of his devil fruit powers against her will. Mihawk remained silent. He wanted to give her time to talk about everything she wanted, granting her the comfort she desired. "When I was with him, it always felt right", she admitted, "I did not know anything else at that time. I felt like I had everything I wanted until the straw hats made a mess out of my home and Kuma sent me away." In her head she replayed the day her life changed completely. She had spent a nice day in her wonder garden when she was informed by a zombie that a weird pirate crew arrived on Thriller Bark. It was not the first pirate encounter on their island. Moria's crew had fought off a lot of pirates over the years and she expected the day to be same like the others. Boy was she wrong. The notoriously depressed Usopp proved to be her natural nemesis and when she wanted to flee, she did it not like she planned to. Then she came to Kuraigana. Alone in the beginning and then in company of Zoro until Mihawk arrived. "When I first saw you, I feared that you would just kill me on sight", she remembered their first meeting on the island he called his home. "Moria hated you. He always complained about your stupid arrogance when he came back from a meeting. 'Compensating something else with that huge-ass sword.'" As she recognized that this comment could take a very wrong turn she quickly added: "His words. Not mine." On that remark he chuckled shortly. Hawkeye knew that the other warlord was never pleased when they met at the same place. He could always see it in his face, but Mihawk never cared: "I must admit that the feeling was mutual. But that is not enough reason for me to go after his stranded crewmates." "I know that now", Perona replied. She yawned. All that deep conversation was tiring and her body was already exhausted from the last two days. She closed her eyes and snuggled a bit closer to him. "But to sum it all up: No. I would not like to go back, if I could. Maybe I would have a guilty conscience about

leaving after all he has done to me. But whether you like it or not", she yawned deeply, her voice getting lower with each word, "I like you. If you don't kick me out, then I will stay here." Mihawk was silent. As he felt her sleepiness, he looked down at her and watched her fall asleep while caressing her hair. Her face became soft and her breathing even. Mihawk was glad to hear these words from her. In the beginning he was afraid that he overstepped her boundaries by declaring her alliance to him in front of the marines. Listening to her explanation before the warlord could now be ensured, that she never felt forced by him. His mind wandered to the conversation before. If Gecko Moria was still alive and he wanted to make sure that Perona came back...This could become a real problem. He would need to keep a closer eye to the news these days. As he watched her sleeping form in his arms, Mihawk decided to never let her go back to Gecko Moria. Perona belonged to him now and he would let all hell lose if the other warlord wanted to take her from him. With one last look at her, he grabbed his book with his left hand from the table next to him and went back to reading. The warlord would let her have some rest before he brought her upstairs into her room. Fortunately Zoro was already in his room. If the younger swordsman suddenly entered the dining room, he would not hear the end of it.