Flickering Light

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Flickering Light

by Rooks_Rook

Summary

The other running to his death, so blinded by rage and self-loathing that he doesn't realize the damage he is doing to the family he still has.

To you especially.

Life was nothing but a blur of passing days and repressed memories.

The same things repeating day after day masquerading normalcy as a way to stop the truth from destroying you all. There were still laughs and good times between your family but they all felt dulled and performative by the pressing weight of the two missing commanders.

One dead, killed by someone he thought was his crewmate, his friend, his ***brother.***

The other running to his death, so blinded by rage and self-loathing that he doesn't realize the damage he is doing to the family he still has.

To *you* especially.

Despite Ace having joined relatively recently in comparison to a majority of the other members of the crew including yourself, he was able to worm his way into your heart quicker than anyone else was able to. You’re not sure what drew you to the flaming idiot but ever since the first day he showed up on the Moby desperate to kill Pop’s you knew that he was going to be your big brother whether he liked it or not.

And that's what you did, much to the rest of your siblings dismay. It's not that they thought Ace was going to hurt you, they just didn’t want you around such a “bad influence”. You would have argued because a big portion of them were just as bad or worse than Ace when they first got on the ship but you were too sted fast in your goal to waste your time with that.

Everyday you would go up to him when he was having one of his moping episodes on the deck or some place else on the ship and you would just talk about everything you can think of.

The weather, the ship, a book you read, music, the sea, anything that you think might catch his interest. Most days Thatch would join you in this effort bouncing a conversation back and forth as Ace sits between the two of you looking like a mad puppy. The other commanders

and members of the crew would sometimes join as well but they never talked to Ace as much as you and Thatch did.

Slowly but surely Ace started actually talking back, holding an actual conversation inside of just telling you to leave him alone in the nicest way he could. He told you to fuck off once and that almost led to Marco letting him drown in the sea after throwing him overboard so he leant his lesson very quickly to not be mean to you unless he wants to be abandoned in the sea. Ace was never planning on it anyway, you're just a little kid and it was a heat of the moment thing that he regretted but was to up his own ass to actually apologize for.

His responses were still dull and dismissive but the two or three word responses that weren't related to his confusing goal was a win in your book. Soon he was talking about the things he liked to you and even started to talk about his younger brother who sounded like someone you would love to meet especially with how cool his devil fruit was.

Ace was still trying to kill Pops and was either passive aggressive or straight up aggressive with a big portion of the crew but he was softening to you and Thatch.

It continues like that for two months.

You chipped away his walls bit by bit with some help from the rest of your family and eventually he finally gave in and let Pops' adoption bug win.

The next two years were some of the most fun you have experienced. Your family finally felt right, it felt complete, it was like nothing could go wrong in your mind because how could it?

Your entire family was some of the strongest people in the world so even if someone got captured by the marines or hit by some weird devil fruit you knew it would be fine, they would be saved in no time because everyone on the crew cared for each other and would never let anything bad happen.

Of course that was just the naive thought of a sheltered child.

Evil is hiding everywhere and even the most trained and experienced eye can miss it.

Teach proved that the day he killed Thatch.

The day he made your entire world start to cave in on itself.

Your bubbly brother who would always sneak you as many extra snacks you wanted no matter what Marco says about it lay dead on the floor of the kitchen.

The kitchen you, him, and Ace would spend hours talking when you couldn't sleep for one reason or another.

The kitchen that used to bring joy every time you entered made you feel sick at the thought of even going near it now.

Its baffling how quickly something so sweet can be distorted and malformed by one person's actions.

Teach was one of your brothers that you never truly got close to. Not from the lack of you trying, no he just didn't seem to enjoy being around kids as much as your other older sibling did.

But you still thought you knew him enough that you could read what type of person he was.

It really wasn't the case and you despise yourself for not noticing.

But, the thing you truly don't and never will understand is why he didn't just ask Thatch for the devil fruit. If he knew Teach wanted it you have no doubt inside your mind that Thatch would have handed it right on over no questions asked.

He *is* **was** just that kind of person.

Your world was shattering around you when Thatch died and the only thing you wanted was to be held by Ace, to be told that this was all fake and just another one of your nasty nightmares and that Thatch was awake in the kitchen making cookies.

But that didn't happen.

Because he left.

He left just like Thatch.

And he's gonna die like him too.

You don't understand why this is happening.

You don't understand why he would just leave like that to find Teach himself.

You don't understand why he wouldn't stay with your family so you can track the bastard down together.

Did he not want you anymore? Was he mad at you? What did you do wrong?

Nothing.

Nothing is what so many of your siblings told you but you know they're lying.

This is all your fault.

You grew up surrounded by all your siblings and father you're meant to notice when one of them is acting odd.

You always do.

Always.

And they know this.

They know you see every little change in their mood and do your best to figure out what's wrong.

So they have to blame you.

It's your fault any of this happened.

That's why Ace left without saying goodbye.

He knows it's your fault.

You keep yourself locked in your room only coming out to eat, use the bathroom.

It's the only thing you can do to shelter yourself from the resentment and blame they would send your way.

All actual conversations you have with them are just you asking for information on Ace.

They don't tell you of course.

Haruta says you shouldn't be worried about it. That they can handle it and you should focus on yourself.

They try to get you to talk about anything and everything but you don't.

You don't deserve to talk and laugh with your family while one of your brothers is dead and the other one is going to get himself killed.

You don't know how much time has passed, it's all one big blur when the new finally comes.

You were right.

Hes gonna die

Hes gonna die and its your fault.

For the first time since Thatch died you are fully aware of what's going on around you. Everyone is scrambling to prepare.

You're gonna help save him!

You can make up for all of this if you do that!

They leave you on sphinx.

They leave you.

On sphinx.

Why did you think anything else would happen?

They all blame you.

Why would they let you help?

You'd just mess it all up.

You would get in their way.

You would be the reason Ace dies.

It's for the best to leave you here. Out of the way, not causing them any problems.

They'll save him.

They'll save him and come back here and you will be able to apologize to all of them for not being smart enough to realize what Teach was going to do, you can apologize for letting Thatch die, you can apologize for all of this.

Your family can be whole again as soon as they get back.

You know it will all be fine.

It has to be.

Or your entire life was meaningless.

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