Crossing Paths

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Summary

Perona has been stuck on Kuraigana for too long. After dropping Zoro off at Sabaody, she sticks around to shop and enjoy the sights. One man in particular catches her eye.

Notes

I published the first sixteen One Piece fics posted on this website :D

See the end of the work for more notes

It's not like she fell for the first guy she laid eyes on.

Perona wasn't *that* desperate. She was the Ghost Princess. Former second in command to one warlord of the sea, current housemate to another. She was cute, and could wield her devil fruit against anyone who dared to cross her. As a perfect mix of dark beauty and power, she knew her worth, and desperation wasn't cute.

So no, she did not fall for the first person she laid eyes on in the Sabaody market place, even though she'd been stuck on an island with only a bunch of baboons for company. She did, however, hungrily drink in the forms and faces that made up the crowd, because after two years of living with unchanging company, the flow of people — beautiful people, not zombies, *not swordsmen*— was a feast for her poor eyes.

A tall man in a dark cloak, oozing an aura of mystery. A young woman moving with urgent purpose, the fabric of her dark red dress loose and flowing except where it pressed smooth and tight around her generous chest. Interesting clothes, eye-catching muscles and curves, fuel for fantasies; the building blocks for that imaginary someone who would follow her into the expansive, four poster, canopied bed she'd claimed as her own, and chase away the loneliness of the night.

It hadn't gotten old yet, even after a few days of visiting the shops and wonderfully defunct amusement park. Perona should have done this sooner. She liked the gothic atmosphere her desolate castle gave her, but even she needed to get out sometimes. Even she needed someone to look at or talk to, someone who wasn't one of the two jerks who were more obsessed with their swords than the haunting young woman they shared a castle with. Mihawk and Zoro had proven themselves as boorish and unappealing as the rest of the baboons, in their own ways. Besides, it never hurt to splurge on a few new outfits.

Laughter drew her attention.

There weren't many people who laughed like that on Sabaody, not since it became such a lawless, unwelcoming place. Since Perona had arrived, the most happiness she had heard were low, greedy chuckles and mocking guffaws as another fool was tricked or killed.

This laugh was different.

It rang loudly over the crowd, bright and happy. Carefree, as if the laugher didn't have a fear in the world, despite the danger around him.

It was enough to pique her curiosity. Perona peered through the crowd. There, across the way. A red haired woman was haggling with the bubble bike salesman; beside them, arms piled high the bags and boxes, a man stood.

Perona's breath caught.

He was gorgeous.

Rich brown skin, shining in the sun. Dark coily hair, thick and long.

His back was to her, but even from the this distance Perona could see he was muscular. Not overly muscled and gross like Zoro, but with broad shoulders and sculpted back, no shirt to hide them. Not sinewy or hard looking; he was thicker around the middle, his arm muscles rounded, but it only made him look better. Sturdy and strong but also soft, welcoming.

Physique didn't mean much on the Grand Line, but Perona knew those muscles weren't just for show. He had to be powerful, to laugh like that in the middle of Sabaody.

She wanted to lick his shoulder blades. Leave claw marks down his spine.

He shifted, the muscles of his arms and shoulders rippling as he effortlessly adjusted the pile of bags and boxes he held. He turned some, most of his face still blocked by the pile in his arms, but just enough for Perona to see the side of his face.

And *oh.*

Long lashes, like a sooty crescent brushing his cheek every time he blinked.

Full lips, the curve of a smile.

He glanced sideways, looking out over the market out of the corner of his eye, and his iris was an obsidian pool.

A fantastic body *and* a pretty face? Perona's imagination went wild.

She wouldn't be caught dead in those pants, but somehow he was gorgeous enough that even the tacky yellow fabric didn't seem so ugly. She could fix him, dress him up properly in deep blacks and bone whites. Brocade, lace, or silk — she'd find what suited him best, and then they'd match, two creatures of the night wandering the echoing halls of the castle, dancing in graveyards.

Or she could leave him as he was. His cheery clothes and easy smile, his *brightness*, all the better to contrast her ghostly skin, dark skirts, and the songs of curses falling from her lips. Her shadows would make him shine brighter. His light would make an inescapable abyss of her darkness.

Sun and moon.

Life and death.

They'd be so *cute* together.

The man set his burden down on the back of a bubble bike. He turned, facing Perona fully for the first time, and time stopped when she finally saw the long, *unmistakable* nose.

The air froze in her lungs. Recognition, horrible recognition, filled her. Fragments of memories flashed before her eyes. Roaches and hammers and heart stopping fear. Fear like she hadn't felt in two years.

Her fantasies shattered, breaking and collapsing in one crushing instant.

A scream welled up in her throat.

Him!

It was *him!*

The one person on this sea who truly posed a danger to her. The only one to ever resist the power of her Negative Hollow.

It was that stupid Long Nose!

She knew that he was part of Zoro's crew. She knew, in the recesses of her mind, that he would go to Sabaody, the same as the rest of their crew, perhaps even be on the archipelago at the same time as her. She didn't expect to run into him. She didn't expect him to seem so much happier. She didn't expect that he would grow up to look like that!

How dare he look so good!

Perona choked on the thought. She had thought he was beautiful. She had imagined being with him, wondered how his arms would feel around her.

Perona turned and scurried away, her ghosts lashing out and cutting a path through the crowd so she could move as fast as possible in the opposite direction of her nemesis. Her mind was in a whirl, still caught between attraction and revulsion. Only one thing was certain to her.

She must *never* speak of this to *anyone*.

End Notes

This was intended to be short and funny, but Perona/Usopp really does have potential to be an interesting pairing. They had chemistry during their fight on Thriller Bark. They seemed to really see each other. He can play her psychological games, and he's the one person who can resist her powers (cracking her belief in her own invincibility). She's the one person who really understands the depths of his negativity, something most of his friends either don't understand or refuse to see. I have an idea for a modern au with this pairing that I hope to finish some day

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