

# **The Beginning of The End of Everything**

## **Thirteen Years Ago (A small island in the East Blue)**

“All of humanity has an instinctive fear of the dark.” A deep male voice echoed out across a mostly empty field of swaying green grass. “From birth until death most of us yearn for the light. The thought of being consumed by the dark is a phobia that plagues so many... so much so that entire cultures have sought ways to illuminate not just what they need to see, but every corner of what anyone might see.”

The man speaking was wisened by age, his graying blond hair fell and rose as he gestured towards the moonlit night sky. He was adorned in a tan robe and held a walking stick, both of which also betrayed his advanced age.

“I don’t have much time left.” The wise old man continued to speak. “I’ve tried to teach you everything I can, instill in you what a true man of the sea should be. However... I fear you aren’t quite ready to understand exactly what I’m saying to you.”

The old man looked down from the sky and fixed his attention on the only other living being in this field. A young boy with lush glossy golden hair. His emerald eyes shining against the night sky, staring expectantly at his temporary teacher.

“We’ve only known each other for a few weeks now.” The old man continued as the boy chose to remain silent as usual. “How old are you now, Hikari?”

The young boy held up seven fingers, his ability to speak in question. No one had ever heard him utter even a single sound, not since he was a baby.

“Seven.” The old man turned around and squinted into the night, seeing lights that meant the single town on this island was still quite active as he continued. “When I was your age I was already thrown into a life of panic and confusion. The Marines killed my family...”

The old man paused, but when he looked over at the young boy expecting a sad expression he found a blank one.

“That is ancient history.” A sigh escaped his lips as he continued yet again. “My crew is leaving tonight, I wasn’t going to say anything but I feel I have to. I’ve instilled in you as much as I can, but now we’re leaving in the night without so much as a word to anyone. We were good to this island, right?”

It sounded as if the old man were asking himself this question more than the young boy. He didn't say anything else for a while after, just letting the sound of the wind whipping by surround the two.

"Do you know why I chose to teach you?" The old man asked as he noticed movement off in the distance heading towards them. "It will turn out to be a futile effort, and I knew that from the beginning... Hikari... I feel empathy towards you. It might not be the Marines killing your family, but tonight pirates will repeat similar actions."

The young boy still showed no hint of emotion, even after hearing the old man's words.

"There's a weapon that surpasses any other." He spoke as the sound of footsteps approached. "A mystical fruit that grants the one that eats it unimaginable powers. One of those fruits happens to reside on this very island. It's your misfortune that I heard rumours of your Mayor's prized possession."

Hikari didn't understand much of what was happening at this moment, but when a large group of men wearing matching black pants and vests began to approach he backed up. The rough looking group of men stood at attention after reaching the old man, and one of them stepped forward. The man knelt on one knee and held out an object that was covered by a slightly bloodied white cloth.

Hikari's eyes went wide as he saw the cloth, and despite all of the rough looking men he rushed forward and tried to take it. The old man was amused by the young boy, but with a wave of his hand another of the men dashed forward and clubbed Hikari in the back of the head. He collapsed on the ground in a heap, blood pouring from his head as the pain made him see stars.

"We've secured the Devil Fruit, Captain Sprigo." The still kneeling man spoke up. "There was slight resistance, but we dealt with it thoroughly."

"I'm sure you did, First Mate Kang." The old man said with a chuckle as he removed the cloth to reveal an ornate fruit that was glowing bright yellow. "At last, after weeks of pretending to care about these people we have what we came for. Once we sell this thing to the highest bidder we'll be set for life. I'd eat it myself, but I'd rather not become a hammer for the rest of my life."

The last thing Hikari saw before his vision went black was Captain Sprigo, the man he thought was his friend and mentor. The old man tossed the cloth that was covering the Devil Fruit to the ground where it landed in a pool of Hikari's blood, permanently staining the white fabric red.

## Three Weeks Earlier

"How many times do I have to tell you kids to leave him alone!" A tall portly man bellowed as he started to awkwardly run.

The man was wearing a red and green checkered shirt, and had square glasses threatening to fall off his face at any moment. Wrapped around his arm was a long piece of white cloth, a monogrammed H on it for his first name, Herel. He is the Mayor of the only town on this island, so he thinks of himself as the mayor of the entire island. Right now his priority is breaking up a fight between a bunch of local children.

"That's enough already!" He shouted as he finally reached them, only to double over and take a series of rapid deep breaths. "I...Told you... To stop picking on... Hikari!"

There were four kids in total, one of which was Hikari. The other three had a few scratches, but Hikari was bloody and bruised. The young boy was expressionless, something the Mayor was more than used to by now. Also it was more than likely the reason he was being picked on now.

"Off with the three of you, this is your last warning." Mayor Herel admonished the children as they ran off, but stopped Hikari at the last second. "What are we going to do with you?"

The Mayor looked over the boy's injuries before taking him by the hand and leading him home. The two walked a few blocks before reaching Hikari's house, and when his mother answered the door an angry shout was heard all throughout the town.

"Who did this to my son!?" She screamed with rage as she prepared to race out the door and massacre whoever dared do this.

"Calm down, Maggy." The Mayor said as he blocked her egress from the building. "It's not as bad as it looks. Hikari seems fine to me, we need to work on treating his wounds before you do anything."

"He's right, Maggy." Hikari's father agreed as he walked towards the open door, entering the conversation as he knelt down to check on his son. "Running around town trying to kill some little boys isn't going to do anything but get you locked up by the local Marines."

"Shut up, Nael." Hikari's mother retorted. "You always take Mayor Herel's side! Ever since we were kids under his wing. Our son comes home beaten up more often than not, how can I just sit back and continue to do nothing?"

“We won’t.” Nael said as he walked over to a dresser and opened a drawer, pulling out a first aid kit while continuing to talk. “I’ll find out who is doing this, lord knows Hikari won’t tell us. He won’t even say a damn word.”

“Nael, please.” Maggy said as she walked over and helped her husband treat their son’s wounds. “I don’t know why he won’t talk but that’s his choice.”

“I know, Maggy.” Nael said in agreement as he hugged his son.

Not another word was spoken that night. The Mayor left and the family of three that were still there all went to bed. Unknown to them a ship had made its way unto their shores and in the morning everything would be different.

When the sun rose the first person to leave their house noticed a pirate flag hanging high in the sky at the docks. The flag was adorned with an eyeless Jolly Roger which was attached to a medium sized ship that had tossed their anchor overboard and set up shop overnight. And by shop it was literal. Most pirates who go around to different islands would pillage and plunder, so a sense of dread filled everyone who saw the pirate ship at first. When they drew closer however, they would find a newly constructed outdoor shop with a wide variety of goods.

“Step right up and come see our wares!” An older gentleman shouted as he pointed his cane at the store. “My name is Captain Sprigo, and we are the Blind Desserts crew! We go from island to island trading and selling what we find and get out hands on. Everyone from young little girls to old wrinkled men should step up and take a look. We won’t bite I promise. Well my first mate might.”

As he finished talking another man walked up and scowled at the crowd. The man had auburn colored hair that rose about two inches from his head and ended in frizzled knots. He wore a pair of old western style jeans and cowboy boots, with a black vest and a flintlock pistol at his waist.

“This is my First Mate Kang.” Captain Sprigo said as he clapped his hands together and drew the crowds attention back to the newly constructed store. “Despite my crew members’ unsightly sour face the rest of my crew is quite jovial. Feel free to look around and buy anything that catches your eye. We accept trades too as I mentioned, so don’t be shy in bringing any cool or... Rare... items that might be lying around.”

As the hours passed by nearly everyone on the island made their way to see the store, including Hikari and his parents who were leisurely browsing through some maps.

“Hey it’s that mute freak!” The voice of a young boy rang out through the crowd, getting nearly everyone’s attention.

Hikari was one of the only people who ignored it, despite the voice being directed at him and repeated as it got closer. Eventually Hikari couldn't ignore it anymore, but as he turned around to face his tormentor he saw his mother move faster than ever before.

## **SMACK**

The sound of his mother's palm colliding with the bully's face got everyone else's attention, and just as fast as she had moved a grown man emerged from the crowd with a bright red face and an outraged expression. The man was wearing a torn up grey shirt and shorts, his flip-flops smacking off the ground as he rushed towards Hikari's mother with an angry shout.

"How dare you touch my son!" The disgusting middle aged man drew close to Maggy, but an outstretched foot tripped him and sent him spiraling to the ground.

"Thank you, Nael." Maggy said as she turned to look at her husband.

"It wasn't me." Nael replied as he pointed at the bully's father.

Hikari had been the one to act, and as soon as his target hit the ground the young boy kicked him in the back knocking him down to his stomach. The usually reserved little kid had an enraged expression, and he lifted his leg up to stomp the grown man's head in.

"Dad!" The bully shouted as he tackled Hikari to the ground and began to flail his arms at him in a blind fury.

Hikari blocked all he could, but a few shots got through and bloodied his nose and lip before the bully was suddenly lifted into the air and flung away. The bully tumbled through the air a few times before landing on his father who was still trying to get back up. The two crumpled down together, and when they finally got back up and saw who had acted they backed up.

"Enough with you." First Mate Kang said as he stood up to his full height of eight feet four.

The fearsome looking pirate lifted Hikari up as well, but instead of throwing him he put him up onto his shoulders and finally smiled.

"You're ruining my new friend's good time." Kang said as he stared at the bully and his father. "Get lost."

They were frozen for a moment, but when Kang's frown returned they ran with a very brisk pace.

"Thank you so much." Nael said as he rushed over to Kang and smiled up at him.

“Don’t you ever scare me like that again!” Maggy screamed as she ran over as well and climbed up onto her husband’s shoulders to be eye level with her son. “You could have been seriously hurt...”

“You were a very brave young man.” Captain Sprigo exclaimed as he walked over and motioned for Kang to put Hikari down. “How would you like to be my assistant while we’re here? I could really use some help so we can give this island the best store it has ever seen. My wares are up to par, but with you around I know I could make everyone here a little happier.”

Hikari didn’t say anything, but when the silence had started to become awkward Nael walked over and answered for him with a handshake.

“My son is of few words, but I know he’d be delighted to help you out.” Nael smiled brightly, in direct contrast to his frowning fretful wife. “It’ll be okay, Maggy. Hikari is in good hands with them. I’m a good judge of character.”

### **Three Weeks Later**

“The brat’s out.” Kang said as he stood up and adjusted the pistol at his hip. “About time too he always creeped me out. I have no idea why you took such an interest in him, Captain.”

“He seems to have a lot in common with me when I was his age.” The old man replied as he put the Devil Fruit in his robe before starting to walk away. “I think after all these years I’m growing sentimental. It doesn’t really matter anymore. What about your second objective?”

“The bomb has been planted at the exact center of the island.” Kang replied with a sinister smirk. “All we have to do now is leave, and then boom.”

“We’ll give them till morning.” Captain Sprigo strode faster as he spoke. “Let them see their loved ones one last time before complete annihilation.”

### **3 Hours Later**

Hikari’s eyes slowly fluttered open and a wave of nausea washed over him as he started to cough violently. Blood trickled out, and he grabbed the back of his head to find even more. Even now the young boy didn’t say a word, but the events that had just transpired swam through his head. Once everything cleared up he staggered to his feet and looked around. There was nothing there except a pool of blood and the Mayor’s cloth in the middle of it.

Hikari reached down and picked the cloth up, the dried blood flecked off to reveal a newly red colored fabric. The young boy wrapped the cloth around his arm and started to walk.

Most kids in pain would seek out their parents, but Hikari started to move in the direction of the trampled grass. The pirates hadn't even tried to cover their tracks, and even though the old man thought his pupil wasn't listening he was.

Tracking was a hard skill to master, one Hikari barely had any idea on. An obvious trail was easy enough to pick up on even by a novice though. Broken blades of grass, cigarette butts, and discarded food wrappers littered the way forward. It didn't take a genius to follow it, and this young buy wasn't stupid. He marched along despite his wounds, wincing a time or two as he reached up to feel if the blood had stopped.

After a half hour of walking the young man finally reached the edge of the island where he looked out and scanned the area. He didn't see the pirate's ship, but he did notice a tiny raft that he immediately made his way towards. There still wasn't anyone else awake at this time, but the sunrise was quickly approaching as Hikari pulled up the rafts anchor and started paddling the small vessel. It took every last ounce of energy the young boy had to paddle the raft, but he refused to quit. He paddled and paddled, his arms aching with pain and no ship in sight.

Hikari looked back and noticed that he couldn't see the shore anymore, but that didn't stop him as he kept paddling. Eventually the paddling became too much and just as his arms were about to give up Hikari stopped and let the raft float. A short rest later and Hikari kept rowing, but now the sun was starting to rise. Why was he doing this? Even he didn't understand what drove him forward, but when he finally saw the skull of the Blind Dessert pirate's jolly roger it hit him.

A wave of anger washed over him, his whole body felt like it would explode with rage at any moment. How could he have been betrayed, why would someone he thought he could trust turn on him? To his seven year old mind it was unthinkable, and just as his arms threatened to give out he reached the ship. He didn't see a ladder, but loose planks on the side of the ship allowed him to scale his way up. Every fiber of his body screamed at him to give up as he climbed, the journey so far had taken its toll on him, and just as he thought he couldn't go any further a hand reached over the side of the ship and grabbed him.

"What have we here?" A familiar voice asked as Hikari came face to face with First Mate Kang. "I thought you had really died back there. I guess you're tougher than I thought, but it looks like you'll die if I just drop you back in the sea."

Kang's grip loosened and Hikari began to drop, but another voice cutting through the morning air stopped what was about to happen.

"Let the boy onboard." Captain Sprigo said as he walked over and joined the now gathered crowd. "That's an order, First Mate."

"Fine, Captain." Kang said as he tossed Hikari onto the deck and drew his pistol, aiming it at the young boy's head."

"You seem to have gone through a lot of trouble to reach us." Captain Sprigo mocked Hikari as he looked down at the tiny raft that was now drifting away. "What was your goal though? What could you hope to accomplish even if you caught up with us?"

Hikari didn't answer, he just glared at the grown men laughing at his misfortune.

"That's right you're a damn mute." The Captain laughed even louder before continuing to talk. "We invaded your island and you idiots didn't even see what was happening. We robbed you blind and took your islands only worthwhile treasure."

With that Captain Sprigo took the Devil Fruit out of his robe and waved it in the young boy's face.

"This is why we were on your island." The Captain smirked as he mocked. "You backwater rubes had no clue what you possessed, but we do, and now it's going to go to a good cause. The best cause. Our wallets!"

**AYE!!!**

The entire crew shouted in agreement as Hikari looked from one sinister smile to the next.

"One bite of this and a person will be imbued with power, countless pirates and marines alike have died in search of one of these." Captain Sprigo held the Devil Fruit up high for everyone to see as he spoke. "We'll get top Beli for this and at the end of the day we'll retire and..."

**KRACKA-BOOOOOOM!!!**

The Captain's victory speech was cut off as the island Hikari called home exploded. The timer on the bomb the pirates had set hit zero and with it went everything in the area. The bomb splintered the island into pieces and sent them flying. The explosion was so powerful it nearly reached the ship despite the distance they had travelled. The initial shock caused Captain Sprigo to drop the Devil Fruit, an act which no one on board seemed to have noticed except for three people.

Kang dropped Hikari in the shock of what was happening and he and Captain Sprigo both went for the fruit as it fell. Kang made it first and reached for the fruit, but it was kicked away by one of the ignorant crew members who were still confused.

“Everyone stop!” Captain Sprigo shouted, causing the entire crew to stop moving. “Now everyone find me that damn Devil Fruit!”

“I found it, Captain.” Kang said as he pointed the Captain’s eyesight towards the railing of the ship. “I don’t think you’re going to like who has it though...”

Everyone’s attention turned towards Kang’s line of sight, and eventually they all reached the same endpoint. Hikari was standing there with the Devil Fruit in his hands, and a concerned frown appeared on Captain Sprigo’s face.

“If you hand it over I promise we won’t hurt you.” The Captain said as the crew began inching forward towards the young boy.

Without another thought Hikari opened his mouth and took a big bite of the Devil Fruit. His face scrunched up and he tossed the rest of it into the sea as he spoke for the first time in his life.

“That’s disgusting!” Hikari shouted as The entire crew of pirates leered in disbelief.

Kang ran over and grabbed the young boy by the throat. He was prepared to toss him into the sea before he could activate his new ability, but Captain Sprigo stopped him once again and walked over. He reached into his robe and produced a black metal collar with an intricate looking lock on it.

“Strap this bomb collar on the boy.” The Captain said as he tossed it over to Kang. “We may not have the fruit, but I’m sure someone will still pay top dollar for a slave with a Devil Fruit power. We don’t know what it is, but if the kid wants to stay alive he’ll never know either. Not until he’s out of our hair and there’s Beli in our pockets anyway.”

Hikari looked on at the bomb collar with a renewed disinterest, his whole world had shattered around him. His family, his mentor, they were gone. So too were his tormentors. Yet here were the people who had committed such an atrocious act. How could anything possibly matter anymore?

With those thoughts Hikari went dark. The light faded from his eyes as he succumbed to nothingness. Yet despite him giving up, a trace of light still remained deep inside, one he had no idea existed. One that would no doubt find its way out to help this troubled young boy one day.

“What do we do with him now?” Kang asked as he strapped the collar around Hikari’s neck and made sure it was nice and tight.

“We find the highest bidder and ditch him.” Captain Sprigo said gleefully. “He’s not going anywhere look at him. Besides that collar guarantees his obedience. Until we find a way to sell

him off we'll just keep up our con and mess up some more islands. We have more of those bombs right? Our benefactor has been very generous."

"Captain..." Kang's tone was serious, even when speaking to his Captain.

"Right... right..." Captain Sprigo looked around making sure there was no one unusual onboard. "They do have eyes and ears everywhere."

None of the other crew members understood what the two were talking about, though they didn't seem to care as long as they got to keep making Beli and getting fed. And so it went, they kept wrecking more lives as Hikari helplessly and silently watched from aboard the ship. Captain Sprigo would never risk letting the people see this pathetic young wretch, so that view came from a porthole on the side of the ship. Years went by, until finally we come to the present day where the Blind Dessert pirates had finally found a suitable place to get rid of the burden of a child that had plagued them for years. Now a twenty year old young man, still without uttering another sound.

## **Present Day (The Aqua Belt - Slave Quarters)**

"In you go with the rest of the dirty vermin." A guard sneered as he tossed Hikari inside of a cell and slammed the door shut. "And as for you lot."

The guard walked over to another cell where Captain Sprigo and First Mate Kang were locked up with the rest of the crew.

"You idiots really expected to get paid for this brat?" The guard said as he chuckled. "No see we don't pay you, we make some Beli off these prisoners but we aren't paying third rate pirates like you to bring in treasures."

The guard walked away twirling the keys to the cells around his finger, obviously taking too many cues from the Warden. With that the sound of sobbing and pleading was all that could be heard from the newly captured slaves. Hikari still remained stoic as ever however, he turned to find himself locked away with a large number of other unfortunate souls who would find themselves in another's possession soon enough.

Hikari tried to stand but realized that for some reason his energy was being drained. He felt weak, and the only thing he could think of that could be affecting him like this was his new collar. The Blind Dessert pirates had dragged him here after all these years hoping to make enough Beli to retire, but that plan backfired on them. Once they were locked in here Hikari was fitted with a new collar, one made out of what the guard called Seastone.

"I bet you're laughing at us behind that creepy blank mask of yours, eh boy?" Captain Sprigo leaned against the bars as he spoke, a downtrodden expression on his face. "I suppose this serves us right..."

"We'll get out of here." Kang said as he stared directly at Hikari while cracking his knuckles. "Surely our benefactors will spring us."

"Don't hold your breath, Kang." Captain Sprigo said as he tried to loosen his collar just a little. "We were just pawns, one of many they control on a gameboard we'll never understand. We don't even know who they really were."

Silence filled the cell, and time began to pass by without any of them knowing what was going to happen next. It wasn't long before the Warden showed his face, a flamboyantly dressed man with the name of Buxaplenty.

"That's Warden Buxaplenty!" The Warden yelled at one of the guards who happened to address him the wrong way. "Auction Day is close at hand, all of you need to be ready for what's to come. Over the next week you'll all be inspected thoroughly to ensure that our business is sending out the best merchandise possible."

Hikari paid very little attention to the Warden, he didn't focus on much anymore after all. However one thing he did notice was the disproportionate number of other races in this prison. Minks, Fishmen, different kinds of bird people. He had never seen many of them, and for the first time in years his curiosity was slightly piqued. For all the good that did him, he was still in chains. A metal that seems completely unbreakable to Hikari, and this mysterious Seastone substance that drained his energy kept him in check. So even as he wanted to begin exploring the world outside himself it was now impossible.

The Warden finished his speech and did his own examination of the merchandise. There were a few screams in other cells, but they didn't last long.

"That's right, make sure not to leave any marks." The Warden's voice could be heard. "We don't need any disfigured merchandise."

That week was far from pleasant as the nobles and various rich visitors were handsy and rude, Especially an older woman who took a particular interest in Hikari's luxurious blond hair. That didn't last too much longer though, as things took a turn for the better for the prisoners.

**BANG!!!**

The walls to the slave cells were blown apart, torn down in places, and seemed to just dissolve in others. People were making their way into the Auction house, and as the minutes passed Hikari could hear the sounds of battle intensifying. One by one the prisoners were

released, until finally the door to Hikari's cell was opened. He looked up and a little light started to come back to his eyes, only to be put out immediately as he looked up and saw Captain Sprigo standing above him.

"I was freed first." The Captain mocked as he kicked Hikari down onto the ground. "If not for you we'd have been able to retire years ago. I'm going to enjoy killing you slowly."

Hikari could see First Mate Kang blocking the doorway, and with the Seastone collar still around his throat he was much too weak to even defend himself. The young man resigned himself to his fate yet again, but then a miracle happened. A very bloody miracle.

"Guh..." A low guttural sound emanated from Captain Sprigo's throat.

Hikari watched on in curiosity and horror as his tormentor was suddenly bisected without any prior warning. The already chilly atmosphere became freezing cold as the thud of the Captain's upper body hit the ground. There were screams from some of the still escaping prisoners, while Kang stood rooted to the spot for a number of seconds. The First Mate looked around the room, noticing the large cut mark on the wall right behind where the Captain had been.

The only blood from the attack was the blood splattered on the wall in front of the now dead maa, and if anyone matched it up it would be a perfect fit for the cut mark on the wall.

"You said they didn't care about us!" Kang screamed as he recalled what the now deceased Captain Sprigo had said about their mystery benefactors.

The First Mate moved faster than Hikari had ever seen before, running with his head ducked low trying to escape the madness. Little did he know his Captain's death was nothing more than a stray attack from a man who was on a mission to find his sister. It didn't matter to Hikari either way, the still warm red gore of his enemy soaking into his feet as the rest of Captain Sprigo's blood escaped the vile man's corpse.

The young man reached up and gripped the cloth he had taken with him when he set out after these pirates all those years ago. The Mayor's personal white fabric, stained red with his blood. Then he thought about the escaping Kang, and finally got back up to his feet. He struggled against the power of the Seastone, but still made it outside where his jaw dropped.

Hikari had seen blood and death before, but this was the first time he had ever seen a war. It was unreal to the young man, just how much hatred he would see when he finally thought himself free.

**But this was just the beginning of his adventure,**

**To Be Continued.**