

SCENE I

Once upon a time, long, long ago, in a kingdom far far away, Skybeard was born in a distant Sky Island which for many years had went unnoticed. Resting on a multitude of clouds, the island drifted across the world, observing the blue seas from high above. Although the inhabitants weren't angels, they had wings on their backs and went about their daily activities with an aloof happiness. The island depended on many clouds to stay high in the air, but there were four main clouds, called King Clouds, which made the island float. For this reason, the island was split into four districts based on the location and size of each cloud. These four cloud were named Cumulus, Columbus, Colcuttus, and Cululus.

On this island, King Winters ruled the land and upheld the rules all while being compassionate to his people, and was regarded one of the most benevolent rulers seen by the island in over three hundred years. For this reason, King Winters was also named the Three Hundred Year King and was feared by some, but respected and loved by all. The secret behind his success lied in his own talent and the talented people he surrounded himself with. The most mysterious and powerful of these people was the Sorcerer, Sumner, who was also appreciated by the people. The magic he wielded made the Sky Island truly a magical place.

Sumner's magic was present everywhere you could walk. Objects walked around, helping humans do their daily tasks, as if they were truly alive. They talked, felt, cried, shouted, and died. They were in every way humanoid objects and they were attached to humans in a spiritual way. Even the King Clouds whom rested the island on their shoulders had been brought to life by Sorcerer Sumners, and they had generous personalities. The King Clouds served as the weathermen for the island and spoke to the inhabitants about any and all weather coming up ahead. Blown by the winds, they travelled around the Earth countlessly along the same direction as the Earth's own rotation, and ended up back at their original spot every two years.

Life on the island was quaint, and there were little to no problems. Sumner's magic made the island a happy place, and, even though the island received no visitors, life seemed to never become boring or routine. However, there was one big problem which cast a shadow over the land, and it was thirty years after the young prince Sky was born. His father, the current King, was ailing from a sickness which not doctor could cure, nor figure out the cause. Based on his symptoms these experts in medicine estimated that the king had five years left to live. The disease that afflicted the King was deadly, but slow. In the meantime, there was the question of his inheritance, and who would step up to fill the King's shoes, no simple task. Prince Sky, although the only candidate and the Prince of the land, was not what courtesans imagined as the ideal candidate to become King.

Prince Sky, although thirty years old, did not have the presence of mind and the maturity of a future King in the eyes of all the elders and experts of the country. They felt that for a prince, he was neither active enough nor interested enough in politics and in running the country. This was not to say that he was a dishonorable prince who brought shame to the island, but nor was he

the exemplary prodigy that everyone expected, being the son of the current King. The Prince's ideas were simple and naive, and it seemed that he understood nothing of the nature of politics. However, this was his hidden talent. Everything he preached was devoid of any corruption, any sort of complex tactics were gone. In this way, he too, was also a King of the People, someone who could capture their minds and souls.

Sky was a large man with broad shoulders, in excellent physical condition with a muscular torso, chest, and biceps. His legs too, evidenced him as a prime fighting specimen, and fight he did. Sparring and increasing his muscle weight were too things which he deemed very important. He was in top shape, and all the athletes of the country could not compare to him. However, he still had much hard work to do before reaching the level of the superhuman Skypiean warriors. Much hard work. Indeed, as everyone guessed, Sky had no talent for fighting and his body was only in prime physical condition because he had the determination to train every single day, for many hours, honing his skills and making himself stronger. It was perspiration, not inspiration, which carried him forwards.

However, never having asked him his opinions on the subject of ruling, fighting and keeping in shape appeared to the courtesans as being the main focus of the prince, and they felt with all his distractions he would not make a good King. His father, the current King, felt otherwise but decided, wisely as always, that he would keep his mouth shut, because arguing over these matters when the end outcome was so far as five years away was futile. Instead he smiled his usual knowing smile towards the court and stayed put on his throne. The hairs on his head stood up as heard the various opinions about his son. He ruffled his own head, feeling sheepish about the behavior of his son and his eyebrows raised.

The King of the country never wore a crown. He felt that just like everyone else, he was part of the people of the island, and as such, he had no use for fancy, regal clothes. That was one of the differences that such a humble man had with his son. His son, Sky, always wore a thick, red fur cape, showing everyone where he walked that he was the Prince of the country. It was how he had been pampered and raised by the various servants working around him. It was this kind of difference, this sort of detail which further lowered the courtesans' and ministers' trust in the prince to inherit the throne.

For the first time during the meeting of all the courtesans and ministers, the King spoke. When he began his speech, everyone stopped what they were doing, and paid attention to the King's important words. It was not unless something pressing was on his mind that he spoke, and it was this patience that many men looked up to. Therefore, when the King even so much as cleared his throat, the entire room fell silent. "Don't fret about who will inherit my throne. It is talk such as this which detracts from running the country as smoothly as possible. The priority was and always will be the people, after all." There was a long pause and whispers from people who agreed began to spread. "As for my son, he will learn, eventually. Although it may not be the best choice, he will have me as a teacher." he said, his modesty shining through. It was obvious

that with the King as a teacher that the prince would become a fine King. In an instant, the situation was resolved.

However, for the next five years, not much progress seemed to be made. Instead of the King teaching the Prince how to become a great king for the entire country, he instead directed his son to the teachings of the Sorcerer, Sumners. King Winters was absent in his duty towards his son is what many men claimed, but others defended the King's wisdom regardless of his actions and put their faith in their King. Prince Sky seemed to be fascinated with the teachings of Sorcerer Sumners, and in the eyes of the Sorcerer, was progressing rapidly. The old sorcerer, too, was nearing his deathbed, just like King Winters and he was passing on his teachings. Although Sky often wondered why his father would rather he learn about sorcery than about becoming a King, he never dared ask. Soon he would have an answer.

Sorcerer Sumners on one fine day invited the prince into his study and began explaining some much needed things to the thirty three year old man. "As you may or may not have guessed," he began, "my power in fact does not rely solely on magic. In fact, there are many scientific links. I said before that you could not obtain my power until you were done learning about it. That is not the truth. The truth is that before you can acquire my power, several conditions must be met. The first of these conditions is that I, as the previous holder of my powers, must die." Here he paused, intending to begin another speech, but was interrupted by Prince Sky. "And the second?" Sumners chuckled. "In due time, my young apprentice, in due time. For the moment, there are a great deal of other things you must understand before truly grasping the second condition.

"Firstly, the source of my power comes from mystical condiments we refer to as Devil Fruits. These fruits are theorized to have come originally and grow on a single tree, but as these fruits are eaten and the users of these Devil Fruits die, the fruits regenerate at random on any tree in the entire world. One who eats the Devil Fruit gains access to special powers, and sometimes, superhuman abilities. However, this person also incurs the wrath of the sea, and becomes an anchor in water, meaning they cannot swim. There is only one fruit for each power. I know it's a lot to take in, but the main area of interest is that the fruit is the source of my power, it makes you weak to bodies of water, and that there is only one fruit which regenerates upon death of the user."

Sky twirled his blond mustache around his finger as he thought about the facts that had just been presented before him. In a confident voice which conveyed his understanding, he spoke. "I see. You gained your powers through a conduit which was something magical called a Devil Fruit. In order for them to pass through me, you must die so that the fruit can regenerate into another conduit of power, which I will then eat. However, you mentioned that the Devil Fruits regenerate at random on any tree in the whole wide world. This being said, how will you make sure it appears on the tree of your desire?" the prince asked.

The old sorcerer laughed heartily and looked at the prince Sky as if indicating that the young man was naive. "Throughout time, various peoples have attributed things they don't know to mystical powers that are out of their control. That is how superstition, religions, even the concept of magic was formed. The proof of this idea is the fact that I am still around with the title of Sorcerer instead of the title of Scientist. The truth is, I have been working on a device which can manipulate the energies of the 'Devil' inside the fruit and I can make sure it regenerates on the tree of my choice. All I have to do is die within five meters of my device and a nearby tree in order for it to work." Sky was shocked. The old man's words rang true in his mind. Indeed, even he, in the same manner as a mindless sheep, attributed the Devil Fruit powers to magic.

His old mentor, Sorcerer Sumners, had made him see a new light. A new light that would eventually glow and burn darkness, and ravage Sky, but he could not know that for the moment. At the moment, he felt enlightened. He saw that humanoid races, on the Blue and White seas alike, all suffered from a dangerous complex. That complex was the fear of the unknown, something that Sky now strongly believed hindered all races' progress. People labeled what they didn't know with negative connotations and attributed also what they couldn't understand to higher powers out of their reach instead of striving to obtain their own answers. He shook his head. The words had shook him and struck him, and he felt as if he had woken up. They weren't words that would affect his life (or so he thought), but they were an important concept nonetheless.

Finally the fated day came, the day that all the citizens of the Sky Island had been dreading since their conception. King Winters had just passed away, and although all the courtesans were expecting this and warning his Late Majesty, he refused to allocate any time to matters of a successor. He had complete faith that despite his son's lack of education in politics and ruling a country, that he would do a good job. This was because King Winters knew from birth that his son had no natural ruling talent, but he knew his son had a good heart. For this reason, both he and the aging Sorcerer Sumners came up with a plan. With his good morals, and Sumner's powers, Sky could become a fearsome but gentle leader, not as politically intelligent but just as willing to do what was right for his people, with the strength to back his ideas up.

Once Sky had recovered from his father's death, the day of the coronation arrived. Then, it was time for the death of the person most loved in the country second only to the late King Winters. Sumners died next to an apple tree on the day of the coronation. Sky approached the tree after grieving his old mentor, and noticed a strange light green apple with a swirl design which appeared to be etched onto the fruit. Judging by what Sumner had told him, this matched the description of the mysterious Devil Fruits. Sky, eager to carry on both his father's and Sumner's legacy, swallowed the fruit whole. Immediately, his face turned blue and he coughed. The Devil Fruit had been the most disgusting thing the new King had ever eaten, and for a while he wondered if it wasn't just a rotten apple. He didn't feel any different, nor did he have any strange powers. All that had happened was the inanimate objects that populated the land were reduced back to their original state without the Sorcerer's powers to support them. It was one of the saddest times in the Sky Island's history. Two of the most beloved and respected members in

the Island's history had just deceased and the replacement was not someone whom united everybody just yet. The island lived on, but it felt a little dead inside.

The message from the new King Sky was always peace, love, and positivity. He always saw things from two sides. He knew that everyone was born equal regardless of sex, color, creed, and sexual orientation, he knew that. But he was stripped and he was torn down by his soul-searching side that did not know that even if the island was split and didn't have a complete soul, that he should focus on his people, and keeping them and their souls happy and alive, striving for the equality on the island that it had previously under the old King. For these reasons, they called these six months in which Sky had to wait to jump down into the Blue seas below the Downfall of the Sorcerer Prince. The people, in addition to labelling these months as their downfall, referred to Sky as the Prince, for in their hearts, he didn't deserve to be called King, and labelled him as a sorcerer, for his inheritance of the previous Sorcerer's power.

Sky was running around, with the craziest things happening. All he ever wanted to do was spread a message of equality, but when he gained his Devil Fruit powers, all that changed. He knew that only someone who had previously had this Devil Fruit would understand the emotions and emptiness he felt from knowing that the island didn't have soul. He knew deep down in his heart that it wasn't right, and that he needed to get away from it, to solve the mystery of the incomplete island with no soul. In fact, it drained him so much that he appeared to age quicker. His hair and beard grew quicker and quicker until he looked like a savage wrapped in the clothes of a King rather than a royal at all. It was at this moment, his hair having grown out the way it did, that the King Sky earned the nickname of 'Skybeard'.

Fearing Sky's anger, the courtesans made sure that these rumors were extinguished among the higher officials and that the King would never hear of such madness, but of course he did. Wandering among the streets on his own, greeting the people, he heard whispers coming from all around him. Although the nickname Skybeard in itself was not derogatory, it symbolised everything that was wrong with himself. He had let himself go; nothing mattered anymore but managing the country and preparing for his departure. It was as if the entire country had taken a break and was in an intermission period while the King prepared for his descent to the blue sea. For that, they had a plan, a plan that would be revealed to the curious public on the day of the descent, and not before. In all fairness, it was quite a terrible plan.

The reason for Skybeard's unease and the source of his anguish related to his Devil Fruit powers was simple. Before his death, Sorcerer Sumners had mentioned that although the island was supposed to be inanimate, that because it carried so many people it could come alive and have a soul that could be extracted just like a human's. However, Skybeard felt no presence, no soul-related aura coming from the island. When he tried to extract a soul from it he was unable to. It drove him mad. His sanity little by little deteriorated. The question tormented him so because of his old mentor's words. Unlike a mindless sheep, a humanoid who let the unknown stop him from solving his problems and getting answers, he didn't want to attribute the soulless island to magic. He wanted to know the concrete reason, and bring back the soul to the island,

thus solving the problem. The reason he found was that long ago, the Sky Island had been a piece of a larger island which resided on the Blue Sea. He wanted to find this Blue Sea Island to see if the soul resided there, and to bring it back up to the Sky. The location of the island had previously been recorded. All the scientists of the island calculated that it would take six months for the Sky Island to line up with its previous location above the Blue Sea.

It was the time. The time for the big jump; nothing could have possibly prepared Skybeard for this moment. Although at first he didn't appreciate this nickname of Skybeard, now he wore it proudly, and in his final moments he referred to himself as the Soul King Skybeard. That would be his name going down. One last time, he checked his Ball Dial to make sure it was in working condition. Otherwise, he would die on his way down, and his entire mission would have been for naught. He had trained several times for this moment, jumping out from the top of buildings and other various heights, but never had he jumped the hundreds of kilometers necessary to descend to the Blue Seas. The sheer height and the invisibility of any mass of land below would make any man want to turn around, but driven and determined, Skybeard knew he could jump.

Skybeard's jump was to be performed on a large wooden platform, built like a stage, on the edge of the island. The question of an heir to the throne which had been asked six months ago was asked again. A large crowd had gathered to watch Skybeard jump. They were all wondering about the future of their country. The smarter men and women in the island were thinking another thought. "How is he going to come back up?" someone in the crowd asked, to which he received no answer, since no one had one. Skybeard however, had on his usual smirk and twirled his mustache around his beard. Although it didn't show, he was quite nervous. All of the citizens were expecting a final farewell, a goodbye speech. Skybeard would not disappoint.

"Since the beginning of time, men have become obsessed over certain questions. Although I have just risen to the title of King, I know I have disappointed you by departing so swiftly. There were large shoes to fill, the shoes of both King Winters, and Sorcerer Sumners. However, I have not spent these last six months idly." Upon pronouncing those words King Skybeard brought out a parchment which he unrolled before the crowd's eyes. "This is the Testament of Sky. Here are laws which are hereby decreed from today which will make every single citizen equal and bring peace and prosperity to the land. The courtisans, nobles and I have all worked together to make this happen. I brought the ideas, and their genius was able to put this into place."

What Skybeard said wasn't wrong. Although during his six months he was obsessed with preparing his jump, he had also thought of his people and had not neglected them. "These parchments which explain the Testament will be brought to each and every single household promptly. I will be leaving you, but I will be leaving you with something to cherish every day, something that will hopefully make you citizens happy." The crowd, which had been silent until now, erupted into cheer like had never been seen. Equality was something for which King Winters had fought his entire lifetime and had not been able to achieve. King Sky had finished his work, and the people were proud of their departing King. Whether his grand Testament

would work was yet to be seen, but the people which had been terribly depressed since the pair of deaths which had afflicted the country, were now hopeful, and that was all they could ask for.

“And now, without further ado...time to jump!” Skybeard threw the parchment into the air and jumped off. All his training from the top of the castle would now come into effect. The wind blew him every which way as his body was flung about during his freefall. The wind deafened any other noise, and the sheer force of it made Skybeard need to close his eyes. His pace downwards accelerated rapidly and he knew he had to put the plan into effect soon. He aimed below himself and activated the ball dial. A cloud appeared but rapidly descended downwards with the momentum of the dial. However, Skybeard’s calculations had been correct and the cloud cushioned his fall some ten meters above the ground. The calculation of the Island scientists, however, could not have been more wrong.

Skybeard had not landed above the Blue Sea Island. Instead what he looked at below was a light blue building with a strange blue symbol emblazoned on it. He was ten meters above the roof. The building was extremely large, larger than his own castle, and he wondered what this could mean. There were entire civilizations on the Blue Sea? The world, which had previously seemed so small, was now extremely large. His fears were confirmed. A white flag hung from a pole next to him which had five black dots in a cross formation. On the flag were the words “World Government”, an awe-inspiring name to say the least. He looked downwards. There was an overwhelming number of men in white uniforms running around and fighting other men who were dressed in various colors. The commotion made a racket. Many shots were fired. Skybeard knew not of any Blue Sea warriors or countries, but he understood there was a fight going on.

With agility, Skybeard packed up his Ball Dial and jumped onto the flagpole, trying to use it to make his way down. However on the way he slipped and fell through the roof, crashing into a room of the blue building. There, he was met by stares as he had apparently crashed into the main command room, where, around a conference table, several important looking people with white jackets were all gathering around. As you may have guessed, Skybeard had landed in a Marine Base, and was now face to face with five Marine Captains, and three marine Rear Admirals. They didn’t know how he had got there, but immediately, he was mistaken for a pirate. Why? Because Skybeard had landed on this Blue Sea Marine base during an escape by pirates from the marine prison.

“On my word as a marine, how did our soldiers let this pirate up here?” Words such as ‘pirate’ and ‘marine’, which didn’t exactly roll off the tongue, were foreign to Skybeard. He got up, pushing debris off of himself and responded. “Pirate? Marine? What are these words?” But the marines knew not of his particular situation. Several guns were drawn and aimed at Skybeard, who instantly knew of the danger. “Wait! I am not an enemy. Men in white, whoever you are, I come from the White Sea, up above the clouds!” There was a silence, then the marines burst out into hysterical laughter. “Above the clouds? Ridiculous! You’re under arrest!” One of them exclaimed, ignorant of the Sky Islands. Skybeard didn’t wait for another word. He immediately

ran away, shots sounding behind him. Although he would have preferred to ally with the men in white, it looked like that wasn't possible, having been mistaken for a so-called 'pirate'. He escaped on a pirate ship, and looking back on the Marine Base, he thought his journey was off to a bad start.

"What is that crown on your head? Are you some kind of King or something?" One of the pirates on the ship asked. Skybeard let out a wry smile and chuckled. It was true. He had decided to keep on wearing his regal clothes, even as he descended the Blue Sea, and what for? It was true, he wasn't the King of anything. But he couldn't pardon the pirate's insolence, could he? In his anger, he stole the souls of every single pirates there amongst their screams, stealing their lifespans and effectively killing them. No longer the King of a Sky Island, he hadn't landed on the correct Blue Sea Island, and he had no way of finding it since the calculations were so off. He wasn't a King. Or was he? Wasn't he a King of Souls? A Soul King?