

Rydan's Backstory

Part I

Somewhere on a tropical island at the far end of the Grand Line, where the sun beat down relentlessly onto the green-leaved palm trees, a teenage boy was leaning against a trunk, just away from the beach, where toppling, green-tinged waves crashed over the shoreline. It was a particularly violent day; There was an impending storm coming straight for the island that day, leaving most of the villagers in their homes or scurrying to finish up any last minute market trips and such. Light rain had already begun to periodically patter down into the roofs of the houses, most of it coming down on the westward side of the island. But the last time that had happened was thirty minutes ago. The skies became as clear as ever, quicker than they had been filled with clouds and water droplets. Thunder boomed in the distance, warning of the incoming tempest.

Rydan pushed himself from the tree and glanced at the sky. Far off, he could see dark clouds accumulating and flashing occasionally with lightning. Stepping off the grass, and moving away from the cluster of trees (a forest), he kicked at the sand with his feet as it trailed away into the air, carried off by a gust.

"Looks like I should be heading back home," Rydan lamented morosely. "Father's going to be worrying about me if I don't come back soon. Tch, dammit, I would have appreciated some time alone."

Out on the waters, as he eyed the area closer, he could see two sizable ships floating atop the waves, flags whipping with the wind. Rydan sighed. If only he could be like them, with no obligations or responsibilities. No parents to boss him around, oh, how he would love it! His father was a reasonable but strict man with an intolerance level of zero. Sometimes he dreaded going home, just because he was afraid that his father and brother would get into an argument like they always did. Not quite daily, but often, his brother would speak out against his father, who would turn things into a much bigger hassle.

Early in his life, Rydan had always aspired to be a pirate, since the young age of seven. His older brother and younger sister both shared the same idealistic dream, with his brother undoubtedly being the highest influence on these thoughts, persuading the other two siblings that this was the greatest route to go with their lives. As pirates, they would have more freedom than at home, although their father lorded over the quaint tropical island that they lived on. Rydan's family held much prestige in their location, so money wouldn't have been a problem. However, as time went on, this dream appeared less and less realistic.

Still, Rydan looked up to his brother, even though he was the one that put this stupid, silly thought in his mind. It was the closest thing Rydan could call a friend. A person who could comfort him when he felt alone.

It was getting to around mid-day, and the storm was approaching, so Rydan made his way home. Through the relatively empty streets, he finally made it to the highest point in the city, atop an enormous rock that the entire city was built upon (Although, it was much, much nicer than a rock, and it could hardly be told that it was one by looking at it aside from the cliffs). With apprehension, Rydan slowly pushed the door open, peering into the open corridor that lay ahead of him. He heard footsteps as he stepped in, and knowing who they belonged to, he exhaled sharply. His father, dressed in his usual clothing, came into view, with a clear look of disappointment on his face.

"I told you not to go out as the storm was coming," Rydan's father, otherwise known as Lord Valos, told him. "I'll let this go, just this time, but only because the storm didn't arrive as early as it was expected to. You're lucky, you know, this is supposed to be some rather violent weather."

Rydan stayed silent, before saying, "Sorry, father."

His father nodded. "Good. Now go, your meal is ready for you. We were wondering where you were, when we sat down to eat together. It's really a shame that you missed it."

"Whatever," Rydan said in his mind. Rebellious, sure. He would admit to it in a heartbeat.

"You could've been attacked by pirates, Rydan," his father scolded yet again. "I've seen a lot more than you think I have. Don't trust those foul fiends. They've raided villages and murdered lone children before. This would be their perfect moment to strike, in a chaotic time like this. You can't go wandering around like that when the streets and beaches are so empty."

Even though he didn't want to admit to that, Rydan knew he was right. Nodding, he traveled down the hallway and up the stairs, to his room.

Now, that same night, the cyclone raged on. By now, the sun would have been setting, but it was blotted from sight by the intense, whirling dark clouds and strikes of lightning. Every thirty seconds or so, a loud crash of thunder would resonate through the sky, shaking the whole village. His father hadn't lied about the intensity of the storm. This was a nightmare to live through. But Rydan wanted to see the waves of the sea, at the beach, up close. He could see the ocean from the view in his home, through windows, but he wanted to go and see it at close range, to watch the water slam upward, downward, and tumble over. He knew his father was asleep, so he could sneak out...His mother might have been awake, but as long as nobody actually saw him leave, he could pretend he had been back in the house the entire time, right? Besides, it would only be a quick trip, to there and back. Aside from the distance, he would only stay about five minutes.

Rydan figured that it couldn't be that dangerous. So the teenager decided he would go and take a look, and then be back before anyone could notice that he was gone. They had a large house, so it would be hard to check every single room thoroughly for him. Rydan knew

that there wouldn't be any pirates out at this time, now that the winds and rain were actually here. It would easily send their boats to the bottom of the sea within minutes.

He walked down the stairs, careful not to make too much noise, and down the halls, unfastening the latch to the door, which he pushed open, closing it behind him. The torrential downpour was already soaking his dark hair and clothes. The wind whipped rain into his face, obscuring part of his vision. Otherwise, he could see rather clearly, and any idiot could see that the whole town had been scrubbed clean. Rydan began to walk along the wet road which took him down the mountain and to the beach.

When he finally arrived, he could see the waves had ravaged the shore. Anything within a ten meter radius of the water had been completely swept away, including a massive rock that Rydan had seen earlier and sat on, watching the sea. The ocean slammed into the sand, spraying the whole area with water. Rydan was suddenly regretting his decision to come down here. It didn't seem like such a good idea now. But what better did a sixteen year old know?

It was then that he spotted it. Staying close to the trees (probably a bad idea, seeing as lightning bolts were quite literally surging through the sky, even gaining a reddish color at times), Rydan saw a strange looking fruit at the base of a palm tree. Covered in swirls, and colored a light brown shade. It looked to be edible, so Rydan, curious, picked it up and examined it. Despite the weather conditions and such, it seemed to be in perfect condition. No blemishes or bruises covered it, so Rydan figured he would take a bite to see if it tasted alright.

Bad idea.

Rydan almost instantly spat the fruit out, as one of the most HORRIBLE tastes he had ever experienced flooded his mouth. This thing tasted like crap! Why had he thought it was a good idea to taste something he had no knowledge about!? Rydan irritably cast the remainder of the fruit into the ocean, which swallowed it up. On the bright side, Rydan realized that he had a more than adequate throw. But that didn't matter. Wait a minute...Rydan wished he could have taken a closer look at the fruit he had eaten, because if there was one thing he remembered vividly, it was the many stories about pirates who had attained devil fruits and ate them, obtaining magical powers from some sort of devil of the seas. He didn't remember the full story, but he did know that the fruit he took a bite out of did resemble some sort of devil fruit. He even felt himself strengthening on the beach, with some sort of will implanted into him...But what would his power be?

That question was answered as he felt the sand beneath him shifting. He watched in amazement as he lifted his hand in front of his face, and the flesh began to crumble into the grainy substance. It reformed after a few seconds into his normal hand again. Simply in awe, Rydan wondered what else he might be able to do with his newfound powers. Perhaps head for the New World, like his life-long dream had been! He'd always wanted to live in the New World, but his parents warned him against it because of danger. As long as he got better with his abilities, though, he could totally do it!

It was then that Rydan realized how long he had already taken.

He had to get back home now, now that he had seen the waves, which were actually now appearing dark blue-purple because of the clouds. Rydan ran this time, since he was going uphill and it would take longer.

"I thought I told you earlier," Rydan's father said sternly. "You were not supposed to go outside. Look at you now, you're all wet! And not to mention dirty..." It was true, for Rydan had fallen twice on his way back, tripping over things in his haste to return home. "Go. You won't be joining us for dinner. I'll think of a proper punishment later."

"Father..."

"I don't want to hear it."

"He's right," his mother chimed in. "You were told, and you went against it anyway. Take this as a lesson."

Part II

One night at dinner, Rydan decided to pose the question to his father. "Father, why do you think pirates are bad people? I get that they do horrible things sometimes, but not all of them are that way...Right?"

"They're all the same," his father stated bitterly. "One's just like another. They're called pirates for a reason. They're in defiance of the law, and because we're in the Grand Line, we're surrounded by them. Thankfully, the town has a defense, and we've only been attacked a couple times. Usually by one or two ships, but most pirates don't bother coming down here. So we just get left alone. Either way, they're scumbags. Just looking to kill and do whatever else for money, for prestige, hell, even just for the sake of claiming a victory. There's some scary stuff out there in the pirate world."

Rydan's mother looked at him sternly. "Now, now, not all of them are terrible. But I'd say quite a number of them are aggressive, hostile people. It's best to stay away from their type. Personally, I would be ashamed if one of you chose to become a pirate." At this, each of them felt their heart sink slightly. "Since we're the ruling family here, it would get all over the place, and we'd be labeled 'traitorous to our bloodline', defamed, slandered! The population would rebel. No, it's best if you all stay at home, or at least don't affiliate yourself with pirates."

"But," Kuriel began. "Why's that such a dishonor? Why would people rebel? Tons of islands here have a pirate population, pirate leaders, and they accept pirates. We're in the Grand Line, for goodness' sake."

"Typically, pirates are looked at as scoundrels. Criminals. It would be different if the island was inhabited by pirates, but it's not. People here aren't in support of those things. At least I don't think. Considering the only experiences with pirates that I know of, though..."

Rydan broke in. "Well, how can you just assume that? I've seen plenty of pirates who've just come in here to get a drink or stay for a bit, or whatever. You just haven't seen it. A-"

This time, Rydan was interrupted by his father. "That is enough. Quite enough. No son of mine will ever become a pirate. I won't allow it as long as I live. And if you do, I will disown you for bringing a scourge upon this family." Rydan grit his teeth at the final sentence. His father was a good, but stubborn man. Nothing could convince him, and nothing ever would.

Part III

One month later.

"Get up, Rydan!" his sister insisted. "Look outside! There's fire! Come on, come on! Rydan! We have to get out of here!"

Rydan groaned as he stretched out and leaned away from his bed. He set both feet on the floor, and groggily gained his balance before shooing his pestering sister from the room. He had fallen asleep with his clothes on, so he didn't need time to get dressed. The clouds above the town were tinted red, the same red as the entire sky. It was only then that his sister's words registered, as she came running back into the room and tugged on his arm. "Come ON!"

Rydan glared at her. "Why the hell are you in such a hurry? Why do I need to get out of here? What's the rush?"

"Rydan, the town's on fire!"

He couldn't believe his ears until he checked the window. True to her word, the houses were bathed in flames which cast a scarlet light upon the entire area. People were running through the streets, screaming, and at the shore, several ships bearing the black flag were floating atop the water. As he looked closer into the--

"COME ON!"

His sister was relentless this time, and dragged him from the room, having the advantage due to Rydan's sleepiness (he was especially tired today) and his lack of will to actually resist. "Wait!" Rydan shouted. "Let me grab my sword!" Making a dash for his weapon, tearing himself from his sibling's grip, Rydan grabbed hold of his katana, which was conveniently laying in its sheath on his room's table, and slung the holster over his shoulder. "Let's go."

The entire house was already emptied. Rydan's brother was presumably out, fighting, if this really was a pirate raid; No matter how much they really did aspire to take on the role of a pirate, they would defend their family and hometown from invaders. He had heard about conspiracies between the town's small group of revolutionaries and a band of pirates, but firstly he didn't even know if those rumors were true, and secondly this was much more than a band! If his eyes weren't playing tricks on him, there was at least four ships close to the island.

Luckily, his family was, aside from being the highest ruling power, known for being descended from a long lineage of swordfighters, meaning that to keep up the tradition, each male in the household was experienced in using a bladed weapon due to hard training. A bunch of pirates would be a challenge, but it wouldn't be anything they didn't know how to deal with. Right? He sure hoped so.

When they kicked the door down to reveal the outdoors, Rydan's worst fears were confirmed. Pirates slashed civilians down in the streets, and the known revolutionaries (he could tell because some of them had been placed on wanted posters throughout the town) added to the carnage and killing. Rydan unsheathed his katana, despite his sister's protests.

"No, I have to fight for our town. Our family," Rydan said as a final word before abandoning his sister, who screamed behind him. "Just stay here, I'll be back for you!"

Every way he looked, there was either burning homes, pirates, or terror-filled civilians. Even as he ran through the town, he was conflicted. What he most wanted to do was find his family, but what about the others that were dying by the second at the hands of these nasty, vile pirates?

Finally, as if by a miracle, he saw his brother and father, fending off against a wall of pirates who were slowly closing in. There seemed to be at least seven of them, meaning they were very much outnumbered. But his father owned a wazamono grade sword, which, against these ordinary seafarers (albeit savage ones), would do him quite well. Rydan's brother was simply very skilled with his weapon, more so than Rydan at the time could ever hope to be. This, though, was just too much for two people to handle.

"Father! Kuriel!" Rydan cried out. Both of them momentarily turned to sea Rydan before batting away their opponents' weapons, gaining a couple of new scars in the process. "Rydan!" exclaimed Kuriel. "What are you doing here? The town isn't safe! Get out!"

Growling, Rydan leaped in, uppercutting with his sword to slash at one of the pirates, who stumbled back in surprise, a long and deep wound blossoming into existence on his body. The pirate snarled, spinning their blade sending it crashing into Rydan's. The clash, creating a sound of ringing steel from contact, continued for a few seconds before Rydan kicked the pirate in the stomach, causing his opponent to stumble. He brought his katana upward, and then plunged it into the pirate. With a scream of pain, the pirate went down.

"Heh." Rydan looked at his downed opponent. "That wasn't...that hard."

A roar of laughter suddenly resonated through the crowd. All of the pirates on the street, fighting his family, stopped to glance up at the hulking, tall figure wearing a navy blue coat. His malicious, fiery eyes examined them as he too unsheathed a sword, decorated with simple designs on the blade. The pirates all took several steps back at the sight of this intimidating man. Another man was at his side, albeit slightly shorter (the first was at least 6'2"), wearing a scowl of contempt that was equally as scary.

"Argh," said the second man. "Cap'n, these here are the rulin' family of this rat's nest. Scoundrels, I tell ya. All of the bunch. Fill 'em up with some holes if ya will, I'm beginnin' to get thirsty." The leader of the revolution's scowl turned into a sick smirk.

"Hmm, they definitely are skilled, if they can hold off against seven at once. I don't mind a tough battle, a challenge is nice every once in a while," replied the first man, who Rydan could only assume was the leader of the pirate band, seeing the way the pirates backed down. "Three o' ya? Easy. More'n three when you count the other villagers, but they've got other problems to deal with. This place'll be razed to the ground when I'm done here, and you all will lay among the dead."

"Not if I see to it that you're one of those corpses," sneered Rydan's father.

Another laugh. "Lord Valos. And his sons, what were their names again?"

The revolution commander continued looking as smug as possible to annoy them. "Kuriel and Rydan. Both rather skilled swordsmen, I must say. Ain't that so? Your whole family was formidable. But today, that shan't continue for any longer, cause your whole family'll be dead." Ignoring the looks he got from all three of them, he continued, "Hey, where's the girl? They had a daughter too, I swear, but she ain't here."

"Where she is, is none of your business," Rydan said. "So are you two gonna just sit there and talk, blabber on a bit more, or are you actually going to live up to your fame and fight?" He spun his katana around. Kuriel followed him, taking a couple steps forward.

Kuriel nodded. "That's right. Why don't you two do something rather than boast about how 'easy' it'll be to kill us? Go on and do it if you're so excited, maybe you'll learn a thing or two about our family's proficiency with swords! We'll kick your ass harder than your gang of rats will get kicked out of this town!"

Gnashing his teeth, and frothing at the mouth, the captain also stepped forward. "We'll see about that. For now, keep your mouth shut before it makes promises you can't keep."

The first slash was so fast that Rydan could hardly even see the movement. The captain of the pirates had burst forward and swung his sword in a swift motion, causing a blur, and a strike...appeared in the air? It appeared as if he was slashing the air itself rather than Kuriel, who was flung onto the ground by the attack.

Rydan's father ran forward, bringing his sword up to combat the captain's, in the meantime saving his brother's life. Rydan swiped at the captain, drawing blood from his side before he was viciously kicked away, also falling to the ground. Given another second, the Lord of the

town had endured two waves of compressed air, seemingly ejected from the other sword's slashes. His arm was now bloodied, and vigorously cut up.

He helplessly watched as the man, at a rather intense speed, dashed forth and impaled Rydan's father with the sword, releasing an expulsion of some sort, which made blood spurt from the wound, which widened from the force. The captain removed his sword, watching the corpse fall at his feet.

"..."

Kuriel tugged on Rydan's sleeve. "No, Rydan. We have to get out of here. But we're trapped...I don't know what we can do."

Rydan shoved Kuriel out of the way, and, testing his devil fruit powers that he had practiced for some time during the month before this event, turned his fist, and slowly his arm into sand. Landing a punch to the captain, he did not expect a tremor, although a VERY small one, to unleash its energy into the captain, who was caught off guard, and sent into the wall of a burning house, which crippled inward due to the weakened materials giving in. The revolutionary commander started toward them, but out of nowhere came Rydan's sister, leaping onto his neck.

Grunting in annoyance, the revolution commander grabbed Rydan's sister, and slammed her into the floor, raising his sword into the air to finish her off, though blood from her head was already pouring onto the path. He brought his sword down at the same time that Kuriel and Rydan both skewered him with theirs.

The commander fell to the ground. Whether he was dead or not, they didn't know. But his sword was still left in Rydan's sister's chest, covered with the blood of an innocent girl.

Kuriel frantically reminded Rydan, "Hurry up! I know she's dying, but if we don't hurry, we'll be dead meat as well. We can jack one of those pirate ships or something, or a merchant ship! We just gotta get out of here!"

Rydan's sister looked up at her brother. "...Rydan...M-Mother...She's dead." she burst into tears, coughing up blood at the same time. "Be careful, okay? Follow your dream and become a pirate, like you wanted to. Do it for me, just don't become like these guys..."

Suddenly, stirring was heard as the debris from the crippled house was lifted, and the (relatively) unscathed pirate lord stood to his feet. Kuriel shoved Rydan forward. "GO!"

Both of them ran for their lives, hearing the stampede of pirates behind them. They were the highest family in the town, and if they were all dead, then there would be nothing remaining of the family, which was what the revolutionaries and pirates seemed to want. Kuriel and Rydan had luckily both retrieved their swords from the revolutionary commander, withdrawing them from the wounds. But now all that mattered was getting to the shoreline. Their father, mother, and sister were all dead, and now that Rydan thought about it, it would have been a wise idea to take his father's sword as well, though the last place he saw it was in the other hand of the pirate lord.

The familiar water came into view, now swathed in a crimson color due to the flames and the setting of the sun. Even though this was a completely different location from where he got his devil fruit, it was still a sight that he enjoyed. This time, there were wooden docks above the water, with merchant ships ready to set sail. They ran (jumped) down the steps, now in a relatively clear area of the dock where trees did not block the view to the sides. The closest ship to them, tethered by a rope to a post, seemed farther and farther away as they neared, ironically. Kuriel hacked at the rope, cutting it cleanly in half, and the two boarded the vessel, hearing the chanting of pirates just behind them. Fire began to lick up at the trees, spreading faster and faster and faster by the moment.

Somehow, as if the gods had answered their prayers, the ship began to move, pulling away from the docks. The ship was bombarded by hurling projectiles, including flaming and explosive bullets. But holes in the ship would not be enough to stop its travel.

Once they were out of reach and out of range, the firing stopped. They could still see the burning island, but no pirate ships had tailed them.

Rydan was already second-guessing his desire to be a pirate, but then he remembered his beloved sister's final words to him. It had been a dream, a dream that he had shared with her...Bringing back fond memories of the times they had together...He simply couldn't just give up now.

Besides, he had always wanted to see the New World. Now he would be able to, if he ever got that far. And maybe one day, he would be able to avenge his family against this wretched pirate crew that had assaulted his home, reducing it to smoldering ash. There was still hope for him and Kuriel. No matter what happened, he would remember his sister's wish. And one day, he would be a pirate.

Part IV

So there were good pirates, as he had believed before. Ones that didn't raid towns in their spare time and pillage, loot, kill. Rydan had become one of those, long after his journey aboard the merchant ship. He joined a crew named the Apocalypse pirates, after he and Kuriel had parted ways. It all seemed like a couple of weeks, but Rydan had been with Kuriel for almost ten years before deciding to take his own route. His brother had sailed toward the New World, supposedly. Rydan had no idea what became of that. But he knew it was something he wanted to do, eventually. So they would probably cross paths, despite the Grand Line being very expansive. Fate would bring them together again, though, right? Besides, now that Kuriel too was a pirate, he was bound to hear of some great feat he had accomplished at a point.

He never went back home. Rydan didn't even know what became of his home, except that it was probably overrun by villainous pirates. The last memory he had of the place was the dancing crimson flames high above the city, and the sounds of screaming from it.

But all was fine now. He still intended to fulfill his sister's wishes and become a great pirate in the near future. Years out on the sea had already taught him that he was unable to swim any longer. He unfortunately learned that the hard way when he had to be pulled out of the water by Kuriel, back onto the merchant ship. It was embarrassing, because Kuriel had known that Rydan was a decent swimmer before he had gotten his devil fruit. Rydan did explain the devil fruit and its power to Kuriel later on, who was rather amazed. But the two were apart now, and Rydan hated thinking of him now that he was gone. It only brought back memories of the others who were gone and no longer with him. His sister, his mother, and his father.

He knew his father would not approve of this. But he was sure that if he had known his sister's dying wish, he would encourage Rydan to take this path as well. So Rydan did not feel any regret for what he was doing. The city would not shame them when it was a graveyard. It would mourn them. And even if it did reject them for piracy, it wouldn't matter.

He would do this for all of them, he would avenge them upon the seas. Ryden would never forget the fallen, and his dead family.

He would never forget his sister.

End