The End of the Circus: A Tale of the Yizibajohei  
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Mature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Archive Warning:</td>
<td>No Archive Warnings Apply, Choose Not To Use Archive Warnings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category:</td>
<td>F/F, F/M, Multi, M/M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fandom:</td>
<td>うる星やつら</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship:</td>
<td>Hermione Granger/Pansy Parkinson, Ginny Weasley/Luna Lovegood, Harry Potter/Tom Riddle, Tendou Akane/Fubuki (Kantai Collection), Daniel Jackson/Sha're, Buffy Summers/Angel, Moroboshi Ataru/Other(s), Tariko Katabarbe/Inada Mizuhou</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Character:       | Moroboshi Ataru, Lum, Benten (Urusei Yatsura), Oyuki (Urusei Yatsura), Miyake Shinobu, Mizunokoji Asuka, Fubuki (Kantai Collection), Yamato (Kantai Collection), Nagato (Kantai Collection), Akebono (Kantai Collection), Ryujou (Kantai Collection), Bismarck (Kantai Collection), Warpsite (Kantai Collection), Ark Royal (Kantai Collection), Hutsuyuki (Kantai Collection), Graf Zeppelin (Kantai Collection), Uzuki (Kantai Collection), Shimakaze (Kantai Collection), Prinz Eugen (Kantai Collection), Jed Bartlet, Josh Lyman, C. J. Cregg, Harry Potter, Hermione Granger, Pansy Parkinson, Ginny Weasley, Luna Lovegood, Tom Riddle, Albus Dumbledore, Amelia Bones, Saul Croaker, Brent Ross, Admiral Fujita Hiroshi, Asakura Kazumi, Tendou Akane, Gosunkugi Hikaru, Saotome Ranma, Buffy Summers, Faith Lehane, Xander Harris, Willow Rosenberg, Angel (BtVS), Spike (BtVS), Drusilla (BtVS), Rupert Giles, Gambier Bay (Kantai Collection), Samuel B. Roberts (Kantai Collection), Hood (Azur Lane), Tirpitz (Azur Lane), Scharnhorst (Azur Lane), Gneisenau (Azur Lane), Roma (Kantai Collection), Z1 Leberecht Mass (Kantai Collection), Z3 Max Schultz (Kantai Collection), Kasuga "Osaka" Ayumu, Mihama Chiyi, Takino Tomo, Mizuhara "Yomi" Koyomi, Suzumiya Haruhi, Jody Crowley (Bible Black), Todo Yuki (Bible Black), Hitotsubashi Yurie, Saegusa Matsuri, Saegusa Miko, Shijo Mitsue, Mr. Gen (Kamichu!), Inca Mummy Girl (BtVS), Abraham Lincoln, The Undertaker (Professional Wrestling), "Stone Cold" Steve Austin, Roman Reigns, Seth Rollins | Tyler Black,
The End of the Circus: A Tale of the Yizibajohei

by Pyeknu

Summary

Based on "The Doctor Is In" that appeared in the late Anime Addventure. Throughout the universe, there is ONE planet that is feared above all others, so feared that many civilized races are afraid to speak of this world's name, much less speak of its remarkable inhabitants. The Oni have great reason to fear "They Who Must Never Be Named"; 270 years before the Tag Race with Earth, the Oni were nearly annihilated by the Children of the Forge after an
invasion attempt that went awry.

The greatest fear Redet Lum has is actually confronting a native of Yiziba, most of all the Trickster of the Show, Tuyuki, the face of the "Mother of All Fight Scenes" that became the core image of the darkest moment in Oni history. Little does she realize her "Darling" is in fact the newest incarnation of the Trickster of the Show...and is executing a plan started ten years before to seal off Earth from alien encroachment. The Oni and their allies soon realize that despite the power the people of Yiziba weld, their interest in Earth may actually be the best thing one could ever ask for. Especially when Lum remembers how Tariko Katabarbe (born Moroboshi Ataru) once saved her LIFE...!

The universe will never be the same again!
A Far Different Day in Tomobiki

Chapter Summary

Ataru has gone missing from his house. Naturally, Lum goes into a panic. So why is Ten preparing to leave Earth...?

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The Tomobiki Ginza, a Thursday afternoon in late November after school...

Sitting at a window booth in Tampopo's Rāmen and Beefbowl Bar, Moroboshi Ataru could only smile in amusement as his hearing picked up the grumbling of several people from outside the front door. A glance into the main street of the shopping district in this part of Nishitōkyō revealed the core members of that moron's brigade calling themselves "Lum's Stormtroopers" as they scanned around, looks of righteous outrage on their faces. Shaking his head, he turned back to his tea as he waited for supper to be prepared. It had been child's play to ditch his so-called "wife" and evade her latest attempt at trying to cook for him. If Redet Lum — Ataru refused to use that stupid patronymic version of her name, "Lum Invader", when he thought of the warlord's daughter — hadn't realized by now that she simply couldn't cook, nothing he could do would ever persuade her. Having had to deal with all the Oni's eccentricities since she lied to him about their being "married" at the end of the Tag Race over a year ago, Ataru knew that once Lum fixated herself on something, you needed an anti-matter bomb to shake her out of it.

And while their "relationship" had been amusing and quite stimulating in many places, it was time to forever skip this stupid scene and get on with more vital things.

"Oi! Ataru! Where you are, a-ho?!"

Oh, joy! There was Lum's cousin Redet Ten on his rubber ducky-shaped hoverscooter floating over the street as he scanned around for his "cousin-in-law". Wonder what he'd think if he learned the truth of what happened between Lum and I in the Tag Race, Ataru mused as he concentrated, intensifying the metaphysical notice-me-not screen he placed over the restaurant owned by one of his few true friends in this pit of chaos, Kamekichi Tampopo, to ensure the Oni child wouldn't be able to spot him even if Ataru was relaxing at a window seat. Considering how much Ten (as he preferred to be called given what his full name "Jariten" meant in Japanese) cared for Lum — an admirable trait in the end — Ataru knew that if he learned that Lum's claim of marriage over the child of Moroboshi Muchi and the former Yamaguchi Kinshô was illegal under the laws and traditions of her people, he would probably still accept it. Given how much the spoiled brat loved to cause trouble, then claim innocence of it...!

He sighed. No, no sense in blaming Ten for wanting attention. Being the son of a widowed firefighter who had a visceral hatred of arsonists like the one who set the conflagration that killed her...
husband — and her son later developed combustive halitosis capabilities — it was no wonder that the effectively orphaned child acted like he did. In her attempts at trying to insert herself into every aspect of Ataru's life, Lum pretty much elected to be a normal high school student at Tomobiki Senior High School, which wasn't ultimately necessary save for things like history and geography courses to learn the local lay of the land; in the Urusian education system, Lum was effectively ready to either join the Union Defence Forces or move on to some form of university. That left Ten pretty much all alone in the Moroboshi home...and while Kinshō was happy to dote on him — like she had done to Lum to the complete detriment of Ataru — she didn't do anything at all to instill some sense of proper self-discipline in the poor kid. The results of same had been seen on several occasions since he came, especially when it came to one poor swallow who had eaten some space candy and wound up the size of Gojira!

Oh, speaking of which...

Ataru snapped his fingers.

****

The Moroboshi home, that moment...

"Ooh! I wish I never had him! Where is that stupid...?!"

KLONK!

A scream escaped Moroboshi Kinshō after a fair-sized cinder block was smashed on her head, driving her into the floor of the kitchen of the Moroboshi home. As blood began to leak from her nose from the impact — unlike her son Ataru, she had not experienced the hellish physical punishments he had endured whenever things had got out of control and people blamed him for it regardless of whatever caused it — an envelope fluttered down onto the floor beside her.

"Okā-san! You okay?!

Redet Lum flew into the kitchen, then stopped, gaping at the site of her mother-in-law knocked out on the floor thanks to a cement cinder block. A glance around the room revealed no point of origin for the moulded bit of stone and mortar, which caused the Oni to blink in confusion. Hearing Kinshō groan as she tried to pick herself from the floor, Lum then saw the envelope. Kneeling down, she picked it up, seeing there was nothing on it. Curious — she was quick to suspect some strange entity had teleported the block in and dropped it on her mother-in-law’s head — the warlord’s daughter opened it to pull out a single sheet of paper. Before she could unfold it to read, Kinshō moaned, "What...?"

"Someone dropped that cinder block on your head, Okā-san," Lum helpfully said as the older woman shook her head clear. "It delivered a message."

That made Kinshō freeze as she robotically turned to look at the block of cement nearby. As an icy vise of fear snared her heart, she snared the letter from her future daughter-in-law, then opened it.

Message from your son:

GROW OLD AND DIE ALONE!

By the way, that's 2,427 times you've said 'I wish I never had him'.

Your friendly neighbourhood Coyote

P.S. Tell the Oni that her "husband" knows of the lie now.

Kinshō shuddered, then she screamed in mortal agony, jets of tears shooting out of her eyes,
"WHO'LL TAKE CARE OF ME WHEN I'M OLD AND GREY?!"

Lum blinked, then she glanced at the message...

...before she paled as the postscript leapt out at her.

"Darling...!"

****

The End of the Circus: A Tale of the Yizibajohei
by Fred Herriot

With characters and situations created by Regina Magia and Dr. Tempo. Some scenes written by the 17th Immortal and Dr. Tempo.

C&C by Rose Ash.


Based on characters and situations from Bible Black, created by ActiveSoft; Mahō Sensei Negima!, created by Akamatsu Ken; The Seventh Carrier, written by Peter Albano; Azumanga Daioh, created by Asuma Kiyohiko; Koihime Musō, created by BaseSon; Kamichu!, created by Besame-múcho; Mass Effect, created by BioWare; Spaceballs, directed and produced by Mel Brooks, written by Mel Brooks, Ronny Graham and Thomas Meehan; Alpha Flight, created by John Byrne; Cyborg and its associated television series, created by Martin Caidin; MegaMan, created by Capcom; Men In Black, created by Lowell Cunningham; KimiKiss, created by Enterbrain; Colourful Kiss, created by Giga; characters created by Marvel Worldwide Inc and its predecessor organizations, first founded by Martin Goodman; Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter, written by Seth Grahame-Smith; My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic, created by Hasbro and DHX Media; Black Lagoon, created by Hiroe Rei; Kantai Collection, created by Kadokawa Games; Maria-sama ga Miteru, created by Konno Oyuki; 2001: A Space Odyssey, created by Stanley Kubrick and Arthur C. Clarke; Sayonara Zetsubō-sensei, created by Kumeta Kōji; Read Or Die, written by Kurata Hideyuki; the Indiana Jones and Star Wars series, created by George Lucas; Zenkoku Seifuku Bishōjo Grand Prix, created by Lyceen; characters created by World Wrestling Entertainment and its predecessor organizations, founded by Jess McMahon and Toots Mondt; MC Gakuen, created by Mizuyū Kei; Sherlock, created by Steven Moffat and Mark Gatiss (based on Sherlock Holmes, created by Arthur Conan Doyle); RWBY, created by Monty Oum; Ryū ga Gotoku, created by Nagoshi Toshihiro and published by Sega; Captain Marvel (AKA Shazam), created by Bill Parker and C.C. Beck; Sweet Valley High, created by Francine Pascal; the NOël series, created by Pioneer LDC; Harry Potter, created by Joanna K. Rowling; the Super Real Mahjong series, developed by Seta; Azur Lane, created by Shānhái Mānjū and Xiāmén Yōngshǐ; Kongdonggyŏngbiguyŏk JSA (Joint Security Area), produced by Shim Chaemyŏng and Yi Ŭn and directed by Pak Ch’ān’uk (based on the novel DMZ, written by Pak Sang’yŏn); The West Wing, created by Aaron Sorkin; Danganronpa, developed by Spike Chunsoft; The War of the Worlds, created by Greg Strangis (based on The War of the Worlds, written by H.G. Wells); Urusei Yatsura and Ranma 1/2, created by Takahashi Rumiko; Battle Royale, written by Takami Kōshun; Sūzumiya Haruhi no Yūutsu and its sequels, written by Tanigawa Nagaru; Sister Princess, created by Tenhiro Naoto and Kimino Sakurako;
Mary Poppins, created by P.L. Travers; The Guns of the South, written by Harry Turtledove; normalman, created by Jim Valentino; Buffy the Vampire Slayer, created by Joss Whedon; Dial "H" For Hero, originally created by Dave Wood and Jim Mooney, with follow-on stories by Marv Wolfman and Carmine Infantino, based on characters created by multiple fans; Stargate SG-1, created by Brad Wright and Jonathan Glassner; and Mai-HiME, created by Yoshino Hiroyuki and Sunrise.

Also including characters and situations from Urusei Yatsura: The Senior Year, created by Mike Smith and Fred Herriot.

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Tomobiki, the Moroboshi home, after dawn on Friday...

A tired yawn escaped the preschool-aged Oni-Urusian boy as he lifted himself to sit at the side of the kotatsu his best Earth friend had placed in the middle of the bedroom of the man who had saved the planet from invasion by the Union of Uru the previous October.

My last day on Earth...!

Rubbing his eyes clear, Redet Ten then smiled as a cup of hot tea was placed down before him by the giant mi-ke cat ghost that had moved into the Moroboshi home the previous December, much to Ten's personal delight and the constant annoyance of the person whose room this actually was...

...even if it hadn't been used by the child of Moroboshi Muchi and his wife for over eleven years.

"Dōmo, Kota-chan! How are you feeling?"

Kotatsuneko sighed. Taking the silent communication from his friend, Ten nodded before sipping his tea. He quickly noted that his cousin hadn't slept in her futon; no doubt, she had stayed on her ship in orbit a kilometre above the Moroboshi home in a vain search for her now-missing "husband". Who no doubt had slept in his new home on Ōmure-jima off the coast of Odawara in the Sagami Sea south of Metro Tōkyō itself, spending the first night of true freedom from the madness that haunted his and his effective twin sister's life for over a year, not to mention being united at last with twelve wonderful and near-perfect younger half-sisters, plus get a chance to be with the girls his sisters approved of as potential girlfriends, beings who had been literally reborn thanks to the youngest of the sisters and an ancient weapons project that predated the Dawn of Power by several thousand years.

"Yeah, it's kinda sad. I'll miss you."

A smile crossed the cat-ghost's face before he took a puff of his pipe.

"Yeah, I'll miss Ataru, too. And I really wanted to get to know Tariko-onē-chan and all the sisters, too." Ten sipped again from his tea as he heard movement downstairs indicating that Ataru's mother was now up and preparing breakfast. "I just wish it didn't have to happen THIS way. But if Chikage-anekun is right about those spirit oni and everything else that was trapped in this town when those mean creeps trapped Tariko-onē-chan here, turning her INTO Ataru like that..."

A nod answered him...

"WHAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!

Ten jerked on hearing that howling shriek from downstairs, then he smirked.
"MY MONEY! HOW DARE THEY TAKE MY MONEY AWAY FROM ME?! I WISH I NEVER HAD HIM!"

KK-KLONK!

"Honey, stop shouting like that! The neighbours will start to complain again!"

Hearing the voice of his cousin's would-be father-in-law, Ten groaned before turning back to his tea...then a churlish smile crossed his face. "Taeim letam...!" he whispered.

Let the Show begin...!

****

Dear Diary,
Today is my last day living on planet Earth.
I'm really relieved at that fact. Much that there were a lot of fun things to do since I came here to check up on Lum-chan last fall, I know now that it's best for all of us to go back to Uru and let everyone here in Tomobiki go on with their lives.
Especially Ataru.
Much that I still find it hard to believe how DIFFERENT Ataru became after that whole thing with Queen Elle that finally got Ayumu-onēchan in to rescue Tariko-onēchan from being married to Lum-chan, I guess this is just for the best.
Too many people have been hurt since we started living here.
Even by me.
Much that I was really scared living close to Mom after my flame-breath developed, I never really realized how much I ended up hurting people because I just didn't understand how things really worked on this planet.
I'm glad that Tariko-onēchan's sisters understood what was going on.
Now that they'll be together with her and Ataru, things should be alright.
I just hope Lum-chan will understand...

****

The Moroboshi home, after breakfast...

"...do this to me after all I've suffered for him?! I wish I never had him!"

"If you don't like it, go get a job."

"PAY ATTENTION!"

"Ooh! That stupid Darling! Where is he?! I'll zap him black and blue when I find him! He's probably chasing after some girl again...!"

"Can't you find him, Lum-chan?!

"No, Okā-san! All the tracers I put into Darling's clothes were on his desk when I tried to track him down after I saw he moved all his stuff out!"

"ARGH! I BET IT'S THAT COW THAT DID THIS...!"

"Honey...!"
"WHAT?!

"Okā-san's been dead for five years...!"

"IT'S STILL HER FAULT! AND YOUR STUPID SON'S FAULT! I WISH I NEVER HAD HIM!"

KK-KLONK!

"OKĀ-SAN!"

Ten groaned as he secured his riding helmet in place, then slipped himself onto his duck-shaped hoverscooter, now parked on the front lawn of the Moroboshi home. Ignoring the shouting from Moroboshi Ataru's parents and his cousin as they looked over the various legal decrees that declared the Terran tag race champion an emancipated adult and not obliged to honour any claim of marriage to the warlord's daughter from Uru, he powered his scooter on, then allowed the anti-gravity systems to lift it into the air before he gunned the drive thrusters forward to go on one final flight around town.

Avoid the area of the Ginza after nine o'clock, Ten. Don't go near the borders of the town around that time, either. Stay close to the school...

Remembering the warning from the second-oldest of Ataru's half-sisters — and the wisest of them all in Ten's eyes even if she was kinda creepy and gothic — the firefighter's son from Onishuto turned to head towards the town park north of the grounds of Tomobiki Senior High School. He knew that the papers officially removing Ataru from the roster of students at that place of education would be found by the secretary as soon as she came into work. Much that Kotatsuneko did suspect that the elderly principal of Tomobiki High would instantly raise a snit after seeing those papers, the young Oni hoped that the older man wouldn't make noise about it. Even if he was annoyed by all the weird incidents that had haunted Ataru for over a year, the Principal also knew what might happen if Ataru found some way to permanently escape the school. Given who and WHAT Ataru's sisters were...!

Ten giggled as he looked down, quickly noting the stream of students making their way towards the rustic Taishō-era schoolhouse a few blocks away. Spotting some of his favourites such as Miyake Shinobu, the young Oni sighed before he blinked back tears that were forming in his aquamarine eyes. Much that he knew that this was the best thing for both his cousin and the people of Earth, it hurt...!

"Ah! Aria's umbrella!"

Ten gasped on hearing that beautifully accented voice, then he looked around...

...before squawking on seeing a pink umbrella lifting high into the air thanks to a sudden gust of wind. Gunning his hoverscooter's engines, Ten raced off after it, catching the runaway portable canopy before it drifted way out of anyone's reach. "I got it!" he whooped out loud before moving to collapse the umbrella, then he looked down to see where the second-youngest of Ataru's sisters was now...

"Oi! Ten-chan! Down here! Down here!"

Ten looked at the park, then he smiled as he gunned his machine towards the ground and the group of five young women standing there...
Tariko-onēchan's half-sisters are all so neat! And like Tariko-onēchan, they're all Gifted thanks to the Great Crystal of Power on Yiziba, the Forge of the First Race where the Power Jewels were made.

Yeah! I can say the name of the "scary place" and even the name of the "scary people" without being afraid. That's thanks to Ayumu-onēchan when she came to the Onishuto Cathedral back in April (Earth-time) to rescue Tariko-onēchan — when she was magically frozen as Ataru — from being married to Lum-chan.

Much that Tariko-onēchan and Ayumu-onēchan do care for Lum-chan — after all, it was because of them that Lum-chan would never have lived as a cripple even if Lum-chan refused to get a Gift and be like Lady Danu over two centuries ago during the last decades of the Imperial Age — they're more worried about Earth.

I just wish that the dorks that made Tariko-onēchan forget about living on Yiziba before the Tag Race would have realized that.

Even if it would have scared Lum-chan and her dad, Earth would be safe from invasion by the Ipraedies or the Seifukusu. They're not so dumb as to take on the Yizibajohei!

Especially given what Tariko-onēchan was going to become...

****

**Tomobiki town park...**

"Ohayō, Ten-chan!"

"Ah! Cute alien boy cheeky!"

"Yotsuba-chan, stop that! You already have enough pictures of Ten-chan!"

"Ten-chan got Aria's umbrella..."

Hearing that from the ten year-old girl with the glittering silver-blonde hair tied in four buns at the base of her skull — with long wavy bangs falling from her temples down almost to her waist — Ten smiled as he parked his scooter in hover mode, then floated off to hand the umbrella over. "Here ya go!"

As most of the other younger sisters now surrounding him cheered, Aria des Beauchamps smiled, her royal blue eyes glistening. "Kusun...!"

****

This is Aria Claudia Jeanne Michelle des Beauchamps, from Paris.

Wow! Why is it people from France always stick so many names on their kids?! Like I said, she's Gifted. That means she's a metahuman, like the people who worked with Earth's Power Jewel Warrior back during their second world war. She got her Gift from the Great Crystal of Power, which means that even if Aria-nēya is only ten — she had her birthday at the start of the month — she has memories of many past lives that were preserved in the Great Crystal that stretch all the way back to the darkest age on Yiziba, the Dawn of Power.

Even if a lot of people in the Federation and all our neighbours are scared of the Yizibajohei thanks to what those Imperial dorks tried to do to Lady Danu after the Tag Race she lost against the local champion, Aria-nēya shouldn't scare anyone. After all, she's a trofikinetic!

That means that she has the psychokinetic power to literally turn any bit of organic matter into edible food for people to eat.

Aria-nēya told me that her first-self — the first person to use the power of her Gift — was able to
keep people fed during the aftermath of the Dawn of Power, a really bad time there they call the 'Starvation Times'.
How bad was it?
Well, before the Dawn of Power, Yiziba had two billion people living on it. At the end of the Starvation Times and the start of the Great Show of Life, the population dropped like an asteroid to six hundred million!
Even if remembering her first-self's life makes her really sad, Aria-nēya is really proud of the fact that she could stop people from starving.
Though Aria-nēya normally concentrates on making sweets.
That's why on Yiziba, she's called Tamkuo, the Candy Lady.
But since people on Earth wouldn't understand that name, she makes use of the French term Douceâtre when she has to go into costume.
Even if she really doesn't do fight scenes, she's always around to help people calm down after there's a bad disaster.
Like this Voldemort dork that's starting to cause trouble again among the magicals in the United Kingdom like he did over a decade ago.
I hope Tariko-onēchan's friends there can handle that creep...

****

"Hai!"

Ten gushed as Aria psychokinetically produced a beautiful kimchi lollipop out of the nearby soil, handing it to him. "Ah! Arigatō, Aria-nēya!"

Aria smiled as the Oni took the offered treat, then began to eagerly lick it to get the necessary spices into his body since most Earth cooking didn't give him the right nutrients Urusians needed.
"Kusun..."

"Ah! Ten-chan's sad!"

Ten looked at the sandy-haired eight year-old standing close to Aria, a look of understanding on her face. Like the other sisters who had come here today, they were in their normal civilian clothing in lieu of their very form-fitting Yizibajoheii battlesuits. Showing that right now would pretty much spoil the surprise, especially when one factored in Lum's childhood "friend" Aruka Ran. A quick glance towards the main street that passed down in front of Tomobiki High some blocks away revealed said rose-haired Seishin-Urusian teenager calmly walking down the street as she greeted classmates, a normal mix of air-headed playfulness with the simmering calculating eyes of someone who liked hurting people on her face. The other sisters were quick to notice, then they looked in that direction.
"Poor Ran-san," Saeru Hinako breathed out, her own amethyst eyes glistening with sympathetic tears. "How could her mama do all those awful things to her like that? Didn't she see how bad Lum-san behaved?"

"Doubtful," Susumu Marie, the eldest of the half-sisters of Moroboshi Ataru and his twin sister/other-self Tariko Katabarbe present, said with a shake of her head, her grey eyes flashing with repressed anger at the idea of her dear brother being targeted by Ran in her quest to avenge herself on Lum.

Ten nodded as he slurped his lollipop...

****

The youngest of Ataru's sisters is Saeru Hinako. She's from Niigata.
A lot of Ataru's sisters were raised by their mothers and stepfathers in their family homes even if it didn't become apparent until very recently as to what happened when the mothers were magically
enticed to go to Ōmure-jima; sleeping with Ataru's dork dad to create baby girls to give the Moroboshi Clan potential new matriarchs. I'm glad that Hinako-onētama's stepdad understands. She's not that much older than me; Hinako-onētama just had her eighth birthday in August, right when everyone in Tomobiki had to deal with that memory-thing that was under Mendō's stupid cherry tree which tried to make everyone in Tomobiki forget Lum-chan ever existed. She really wanted to celebrate her birthday with Ataru and Tariko-onēchan and the other sisters on Ōmure-jima, but had to help out in getting the Niphentaxian creeps in and around Tomobiki off the planet and back to Phentax Two where they belonged, not to mention remove that 'last solution' that dork Ōgi put in the town's Ginza to make sure that the 'great evil' would never succeed in overcoming his precious 'goddess', Lum-chan.

I bet that Hinako-onētama sure helped out in dealing with those creeps. After all, she's the Living Spirit of Innocence, Lomroerbem.

On Earth, she uses the Japanese term Suiki instead of calling herself "Pureheart". Hinako-onētama's a cosmic metahuman. That means her power could reach out beyond the range of a planet if she really pushed herself. But since she's pretty young still and hasn't really grown into her Gift, she can only affect people in a range that could cover all of Metro Tōkyō if she really went all-out.

And what does her power do?

Wow! You'd be amazed at what Hinako-onētama could do with her Gift!

She can make bad feelings go away, stop people from feeling stressed or depressed, remove any sort of 'evil' taint from anyone close to her — did you know that she has the power to bring a vampire back to true life with just a KISS?! — and just make people remember being in more innocent and nicer times.

No wonder she feels sad for Ran-chan.

Yeah, Lum-chan sure did a lot of bad things to Ran-chan...

****

"Oh, don't worry about it, Hinako-chan," Marie said as she adjusted the straw hat she had placed over her long raven hair, styled in a French braid down to her waist. Even if she had been cured of her respiratory ailments when she was Gifted four years ago, the teenage special agent of the Kokuritsu Kokkai Toshokan in downtown Tōkyō — she often worked to keep away other metahuman agents from trying to pilfer Japan's national library of any "special" publications, especially if said agent came from the special operations division of the British Library in London — she suffered from lingering hypochondria; she normally wore heavy shawls even when the weather was warm. "Even if Lum-san's heart is going to be badly shattered today, Ran-san's pretty much secured Rei-san's heart."

"Yeah, doing that through the guy's stomach really does wonders, doesn't it?" Yotsuba Dunn mused as she glanced at the passing students, a critical look crossing the half-English teenager's face.

Ten nodded. "I'm sure all the restaurant owners in town will be happy," he mused before slurping his lollipop. "Especially Tampopo-san." He perked as something came to him. "Um, what do you guys think might happen once Ataru moves down to live on Ōmure-jima? Will she go down there, too?"

Marie shook her head, her reading glasses sparkling as if in reflection of her own amusement. "No, Ten-chan, she'll just move on and find another abused child to dote on as her 'special customer'. After all, Aniue-sama will have Shirayuki-chan to cook for him from now on. He won't ever be starved."

"Or be poisoned!" Eigo Kaho mused. "Kaho sure wishes Lum-san will finally learn how to cook."

"Hina wants that, too!" Hinako added.
Susumu Marie comes from Hakodate on Hokkaidō. She's one of the sisters who's suffered the most because of what was going on with Tariko-onēchan's family here on Earth while she was living on the northern continent of Yiziba on her quest to get pretty girls Gifted.

Marie-anéesama was born with chronic bronchitis, which kept her bedridden for years; she had to do most of elementary and junior high school from her hospital bed. It's a good thing she was really smart. Not as technologically smart as Rinrin-aneki, but Marie-anéesama is the smartest of all the sisters.

After all, it was Marie-anéesama who discovered who were all of Tariko-onēchan's sisters living in Japan over the last couple of years.

Sadly, she lost both her mother and stepfather in an auto accident about four years ago. Fortunately, the special trust Tariko-onēchan's late grandmother put into place for her other granddaughters was able to see Marie-anéesama treated until she got Gifted as the Paper Sorceress, R'behim. Here on Earth, she uses the Irish term Leabharlann to address herself. Given how much she loves books and loves to put herself in a library to read, that makes sense.

Even more so because Marie-anéesama is a chartikinetic. That means that she's a psychokinetic who can manipulate paper or any other form of wood products to create anything she wants, even synthetic beings that would be as human to the touch and feel if she pushes herself. Because of that, she ended up working for the National Diet Library as a freelance agent, protecting the secret and magical stuff inside its restricted sections from being pilfered by magicals or metahumans who'd want that knowledge. Crazy as this sounds, she often ends up fighting against agents of the British Library, who have seemed to forgot that the days of their empire ended decades ago.

Which is really sad since Marie-anéesama is good friends with the British Library's best field agent, another chartikinetic — not from Yiziba — who's half-English just like Yotsuba-anetchama is.

"Ten-chan! What are you doing here?"

Everyone perked on hearing that concerned voice, then they turned to watch as Ataru's former girlfriend came up to join them, she accompanied by the tomboyish "heir" of the Hamachaya. "Ah! Shinobu-onēchan! Ryūnosuke-san!" he called out as Miyake Shinobu and Fujinami Ryūnosuke came to a stop before them. "I'm just meeting up with some friends I made after the Pseudo-War, just before Oyuki-chan came and took Lum-chan and Ran-chan back to Uru! They came to see Ataru."

They blinked. "Why would they want to see Moroboshi?" Ryūnosuke asked, doubt flooding her voice.

"Maybe because we're his half-sisters and we've become more of a family to Ani-chama than those dorks he was born from," Yotsuba dryly noted.

That made the older girls gape in shock...

Yotsuba Nemain Dunn is from London, of course. And she's best friends to Britain's two smartest people, Mycroft and Sherlock Holmes. Yeah, the fame of Earth's best detective sure got out throughout the Galactic Federation and all the neighbouring states. I know that Nassur-chan would like to get a chance to work with Sherlock-san
in case some bounty that Nassur-chan has to chase to Earth winds up in London. Though with Taro's friend from California, Miss Elizabeth Wakefield, about to close off the whole of the inner part of the Sol system from trespass from anyone from the Federation powers, that shouldn't be too much of a problem. I hope.

Anyhow, Yotsuba-anechama got the urge to be a detective like Sherlock-san became some years ago all the way back when she was MY age — she's thirteen now — long before she was Gifted to become the Master Interrogator, Nyuusyo'o. Like Marie-aneuesama, Yotsuba-anechama uses an Irish term for her battle name on Earth, Bleachtaire. This makes Yotsuba-anechama a high-level telepath and empath, which helps her in sniffing out lies whenever she investigates a crime. Which is way better than what her first-self was like before the Dawn of Power. Back then, that creep had been a military intelligence officer in one of the nasty dictatorships on Yiziba who loved to really rip secrets out of prisoners' minds. I'm glad that Yotsuba-anechama doesn't do that unless you really make her mad!

I still snicker every time I remember what Marie-aneuesama told me after that stupid 'pseudo-war' in August about a competition Yotsuba-anechama had with Sherlock-san when it came to investigating a crime that Jim Moriarty creep tried to unleash to drum up customers for his 'consulting criminal' business.

'Consulting criminal'?! Maidens, that's really weird! According to Marie-aneuesama, Sherlock-san won.

But I think Yotsuba-anechama intentionally lost to Sherlock-san. I think she's got a crush on him. Don't tell her I said that, please!

****

"You're...Ataru-kun's...half-sisters...?!)"

Shinobu looked as if she had just lost the last element of her innocence.

"Hai, Miyake-san, we are," Marie answered as Ten quickly sensed that Hinako was reaching out with her cosmic empathy to keep Ataru's former girlfriend calm enough in the face of such a shocking revelation, which was just a first step towards things that would completely wreck the worldviews of many in Tomobiki when it came to its most infamous "resident". "We're actually just five of TWELVE such sisters to both Aniue-sama and his TRUE twin sister, Taro-aneuesama."

"Moroboshi has a twin sister too?!)" Ryunosuke demanded.

"Checky!" Yotsuba asserted with a nod; she was using her own empathy to back up what her youngest sister was doing. "Turns out that Obā-chama hated Ani-chama's and Ane-chama's mother so much, she didn't trust them to make the right choice as to who would marry Ani-chama. Since Sakuya-chan — she's Ani-chama's oldest half-sister — is now the Matriarch of our clan, what she says goes. Since Lum-san lied to Ani-chama when she said they were married last October, Sakuya-chan said that she wouldn't recognize their 'marriage', no matter what those dorks living up the street from here think!"

Shinobu recoiled; even if she was feeling quite calm, such harsh terms used to describe Ataru's parents were never heard from ANYONE. "I assume it's Ataru-kun's father who's also your father, right."

"Checky!"

That made Ryunosuke moan. "Shit! He got it from his fa...URRK!"
That was thanks to angry glares from the sisters. "You shouldn't have said that, you dumb tomboy!"
Ten warned as he crossed his arms, outrage crossing his face.

"Ryūnosuke is no girl!" Aria hissed before turning her back on her. "Kusun!"

As a tsunami of guilt warped across the tomboy's face, Yotsuba snorted as she crossed her arms. "Yeah! Can't understand why Ane-chama thinks this lunkhead is worthy of being Gifted! Way she stumbles about all the time, we should LEAVE her in her father's tender 'mercy'!"

"Indeed, she has much to learn about what being a real woman is all about," Marie stated as she caked Ryūnosuke in a pile of mud from the scornful look the young metahuman librarian was now giving her.

"Oh, Marie-chan, stop that!" Hinako protested. As Ten tried not to smirk at the "good cop, bad cop" routine the sisters were now playing on someone who interested Tariko Katabarbe very much, the Spirit of Innocence added, "Ryūnosuke-san doesn't understand what being a girl's all about! As long as she lives with that dork dad of hers, she'll never learn what it means! Onē-tama wants to save her from that, just like she's saved hundreds of girls since she moved to Yiziba...!"

A blood-curling howl of bone-chilling fright echoed through the air!

Everyone blinked, then they turned to see a wide-eyed orange-furred ushitora — the form Redet Lum's former fiancé Seq Rei often took when he got upset — standing nearby, caught in the middle of trying to seize some bentō from students wearing the uniform of Onigakkō Public School. As Rei wildly looked around, wondering who had spoken the dreaded Scary Name, Marie sighed. "I've got this."

She concentrated as her clothing instantly melted and morphed into a beautiful dark red-and-black plaid jumpsuit with a halter-top design and exposed sleeves, it topped with a black pouch-filled belt and black buccaneer boots. Her glasses morphed into a perfect set of black-frame safety goggles. A open book viewed from the bottom served as her primary identification symbol above her cleavage. As Shinobu and Ryūnosuke gaped at the sight of something that hadn't haunted Terran society since the Second World War, the Paper Sorceress gestured with both her hands, allowing a stream of liquid-like paper to leap out of the ammunition pouches on her belt. As a crowd of people came over to watch what was going on, Marie sent one stream to snare the wailing tiger-cow around the waist as the other stream morphed into a massive spatula. A second later, said spatula began SPANKING the transformed Rei on the butt, causing him to howl with pain and embarrassment at such an act while others watching this all cheered. As Marie's sisters all laughed at what she was doing, Ryūnosuke could only goggle in disbelief at such a display of power while Shinobu looked a little conflicted; much that she knew how much Aruka Ran liked the man, Ataru's old girlfriend had once been attracted to the frontier pilot based out of Toshitto before his gluttony turned her away from him. To see him humiliated like this...

"HEY! HOW DARE YOU ATTACK REI-SAMA?!

As running footfalls heralded the arrival of Rei's would-be fiancée, Yotsuba sighed as she relaxed herself. "Yotsuba will take care of her!"

Her own clothes then morphed into a jumpsuit design matching Marie's, though Yotsuba's came with silver epaulettes that stuck out from her neck, they complete with frilly fringes that covered her deltoid muscles. Her uniform was matte black overall with a dull silver belt — lined in pockets — and boots. On her chest was a human eye symbol embossed with what looked like a target icon. As the Master Interrogator moved protectively in front of Kaho, an outraged scream escaped the rose-haired Seishin teenager as she whipped out her personal anti-fortification missile launcher, her pretty
face morphing into her birth form with tapered ears and fanged canines. "DIE!" she screamed as she aimed at Marie.  

«YIZIBA!»  

Silence.  

More silence.  

Still more silence.  

Then...  

A now-frozen Ran turned ash-grey as she seemed to teeter before she collapsed onto her knees, her weapon dropping off to one side. As people gasped on seeing one of the known aliens residing in Tomobiki be brought down by that incredible shout they heard in their brains, Yotsuba marched over to place herself directly in front of the quaking Ran. The rose-haired girl blinked before her chestnut eyes went as wide as saucers before she turned to look up into the face of a girl younger than her with wavy sienna hair tied in twin ponytails at her temples, her face pierced with now very cold caramel eyes.  

"Aruka-beni..." Yotsuba then purred with a much more mature cant to her voice as she leaned down to glare into the other girl's eyes. "You KNOW how much I can make you TALK..."

Ran shrieked as her bladder let go, then she collapsed unconscious on her back. As the crowd gasped on seeing her taken down, Yotsuba winced, waving the air over her nose. "Pew! You stink, umale!"

Seeing that, Kaho looked to the east. "AYUMU-CHAN! WE NEED YOU!"

A human-sized flash then appeared behind Shinobu and Ryūnosuke.  

"O-ha!"

****

Eigo Kaho is from Kyōto.  
She's Tariko-onēchan's third youngest sister; she turned eleven back in January.  
Kaho-onēchama is one of the really lucky sisters; she's always been loved and cared for by her mom and stepdad even if she only recently learned that she was actually the daughter of Ataru's dork father. She's really genki, always willing to do anything to show her love for people she cares for. She really liked it when she learned about Ataru and Tariko-onēchan, then moved down to Ōmure-jima back in the summer so that she and the other sisters could be there for Ataru when he left Tomobiki once and for all and put everything here behind him.  
Kaho-onēchama is a little clumsy at times, but she really tries when does things like cheerleading or play sports. She's lucky that her teachers in Kyōto and down on Ōmure-jima understand she just wants to do her best.  
She only recently got Gifted as the Maiden of the Parade, Tyuohuo Nokuoti. On Earth, she goes by the battle name Baton Dancer.  
Kaho-onēchama is a ki mistress, but since she's a little young, she uses a focus for her powers. In her case, she makes use of a marching baton, which allows her to focus her energy to make an honest-to-goodness sabrestaff — yeah, just like what you see Darth Maul use in The Phantom Menace! — to duel people with. That's not a normal thing for ki masters on Yiziba to do. One of the people that Tariko-onēchan helped get Gifted from America years ago, a really nice guy named
Xander Harris — he's **Suoti; Hyena** as he would be called on Earth — focuses his power through his fingertips to make long ki claws that can cut through almost anything!
I guess that when Kaho-onēchama grows up, she could do the same thing.
I know Ataru's going to encourage her really good!

****

"Ah! Ayumu-chan!" Hinako cheered.

Shinobu and Ryūnosuke turned around as a rather spacey-looking girl their age walked up to join them, she dressed in casual civilian clothing composed of a skirt, blouse and shawl. "Hey, Hinako-chan!" Kasuga Ayumu called out as she raised her hand in greeting. "What's going on? Lucky thing that we all got school off today! If Kaho-chan called out to me when I was in class...!"

"Kaho knows, Ayumu-chan!" Kaho asserted, then she waved over to where Yotsuba was standing over the unconscious Ran. "But Ran-san's being stinky!"

The brown-haired native of Wakayama near Ōsaka blinked before she focused her brown-grey eyes on the alien teen at the feet of one of her best friend's little sisters, then she shook her head on seeing that Ran's seifuku skirt was quite soaked. "Oh, man! Yotsuba-chan, what did you do to Ran-chan?!"

"Yotsuba was making the stupid umale realize she can't fire an ANTI-TANK WEAPON in the middle of a residential zone, Ayumu-chan!" Yotsuba sternly replied as she looked at the older girl. "You know she's almost as bad of a shot as that space-biker idiot Lum knows! Given what her anger issues are like, Yotsuba's sure people in town wouldn't want to be hurt by this umale!"

"Hey! Ōsaka! How the heck did you just APPEAR like that?!"

People turned to see a rather handsome young man standing at the stone fence marking the park's borders. Ataru's sisters instantly recognized him as Mifune Hideyuki, a former classmate of their sibling from before April, when he was moved into Ran's homeroom on everyone advancing to the second year of high school. Before anyone could ask what was going on — the fame of the girl often nicknamed "Ōsaka" by her peers at Azuma Senior High School in nearby Itabashi had spread far and wide thanks to her being best friends to the most famous high schooler in Japan alive today, eleven year-old Mihama Chiyo, the first person in Japan to advance FIVE SCHOOL GRADÉS due to the sheer level of her intelligence! — Aria humphed as she looked away from Hideyuki. "He is not a nice boy!"

As Hideyuki gargled on hearing the Parisian's denouncement of him, the other sisters all gave him disapproving looks. "He's just as dumb as those creeps who always pick on Onii-chama because they want to take Lum-san away from him!" Kaho snorted as she looked away from the older boy. "Yeah, you gotta be really, really, really dumb to not know Ayumu-chan's real name!" Hinako added. "Hina really, really, really doesn't like what Tomo-chan always calls her!"

"True," Marie stated as she allowed her paper sculptures to disperse, sending Rei smashing head-first into a handy rock to knock him out. As many boys seeing this whooped on seeing the "walking beef-and-noodles shop" brought down like that, she added, "How on Earth Ayumu-san got a nickname like 'Ōsaka' when she was born in Wakayama and spent primary school in Kōbe utterly escapes me."

"DAMN IT, ŌSAKA! JUST BE ŌSAKA!"

As everyone looked around for the source of that shout from Ayumu's hyperactive classmate Takino
Tomo, the native of Wakayama looked to the east, eyes sparkling with mischief. "Tomo-chan, how can I just be Ōsaka?" she called out. "Marie-chan's right! I was born in Wakayama and raised in Kōbe!"

As an outraged scream echoed from the direction of Itabashi, Yotsuba moaned. "Oi, Tomo-baka! Volume, huh?! They can hear you over in Diagon Alley!"

"O! WHO YOU CALLING A BAKA, DUNN?!"

"No nookie with Ani-chama!" Yotsuba then sing-songed.

Silence.

More silence.

Still more silence.

Then...

A pained wail echoed over the scene. "Nookie...!"

«Tomo, shut up please!»

Marie moaned. "Arigatō, Yomi-san!"

«Anytime, Marie-san!»

Shinobu and Ryūnosuke blinked, then they gazed at Ayumu. "Um, Ōsaka-..." The former then caught herself. "Um, Ayumu-san, are you a mystery man, too?!"

That made Ayumu blink before she chuckled. "Oh, no, Shinobu-chan! There's no mystery men on Yiziba! We're just metahumans!"

"Show them, Ayumu-chan!" Hinako urged.

"Hai! Hai!"

A brilliant flash of energy then encompassed the girl, causing people to blink before the radiance faded, revealing her now in a slate-grey uniform of the exact same cut as Marie's, with white belt possessing just two pockets on her hips and white boots. A white lemiscape insignia was on her chest over her cleavage. Once the transformation of her clothing was complete, Ten whipped out a megaphone, flicking it on. "Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls, children of all ages! The Great Show of the Free Planetary State of Yiziba proudly brings to you the one and only Infinite One, the First Child of the Forge of the Seekers, the Goddess Who Walks Among Men...INFINITY!"

Ayumu blinked as a sweat drop appeared in her hair while the younger sisters cheered and Marie and Yotsuba shared an amused look...

****

Ever since I learned about what Tariko-onēchan was trying to do to protect Earth from invasion, I always wanted to do that for Ayumu-onēchan!

And why not?!

Sure, Yizibajohei are the scariest people in the galaxy, even more so than the Seifukusu, the Ipraedies, a lot of Yehisrites and those stupid Goa'uld COMBINED!
Especially when you consider how powerful Ayumu-onēchan IS!
Why do you think people call her 'the Goddess Who Walks Among Men'?
She's the TOP reality warper on Yiziba!
Hah! You thought that magicals are powerful?! Uh-uh! They're practically 'slights' in Yizibajohei eyes when you compare them to her!

Whenever Nodim — that's how Infinity is said in Yizibajohei — goes, people tread VERY CAUTIOUSLY around her!
Given that she's said to be powerful enough to REBOOT the UNIVERSE if she lost control over herself, it's a smart thing in the end!
Still, Ayumu-onēchan and her past-selves have all been really cool and laid back people. They gotta be given that they're as close to the textbook definition of a major deity that can exist in this Universe. Not even the meanest 'demons' or other interdimensional critters like what Xander-onii-chan and his friends in that Sunnydale place always have to fight want to mix it up with Ayumu-onēchan.

Besides, even before I actually met her after that whole stupid thing about Lum-chan being married to Tariko-onēchan back in April, Nassur-chan told me about the several times that Ayumu-onēchan really broke the mould when it comes to being the Infinite One in comparison to all her past-selves COMBINED!
Before Tariko-onēchan began her quest to get pretty girls Gifted, Yizibajohei always believed that everyone has to stand up for themselves. After all, their first-selves managed to survive pretty much on their own during the Dawn of Power and the Starvation Times. Save for the Nameless — they're people who don't allow themselves to 'resurrect' through the Great Crystal of Power even if they become metahumans from all the mesonium radiation in the planet's biosphere; one of them became Tariko-onēchan's mother after she moved there — even a basic concept like 'community' really never developed as people sought to live on their own.
That's part of the reason people elsewhere hate the Yizibajohei. They all live in a state of perpetual ANARCHY!
But when it comes to Ayumu-onēchan, she'll surprise you a lot.
Just like her best friend Mihama Chiyo-onēchan found out last April.
Wow...!

****

"Uh...Ten-chan...?"

"Hai...?"

"Please don't do that again," Ayumu pleaded. "It's too blah...!"

The young Oni quickly nodded. "Poor Ayumu-chan," Hinako breathed out.

"TEN-CHAN!"

Ten yelped on hearing that frightened shriek, then he looked left and up...

...before he squawked as a wide-eyed Lum flew down to snare him in her embrace. Before she could make contact, Kaho grabbed the young Oni away from his cousin, dodging away enough to allow Lum to fly head-first right into the ground! As people winced and the teenage boys from Tomobiki High all screamed out on seeing their favourite classmate wind up in an accident like that, Ayumu blinked. "Gee, Lum-chan! I'm sure Nassur-kun taught'cha how to fly better than that!"

"Lum-san's so scared of Yizibajohei that she forgot to stop herself!" Hinako stated as she gazed with concern at the stunned Oni...
...who squawked as she bolted up, her head — with a face now quite dirty and streaked with grass stains — then snapping to and fro as she seemed to quake in the wind. Seeing that, all the natives gaped in disbelief. "Holy shit!" Ryūnosuke hissed out. "She IS scared to death of those people!"

"Do you blame her?" Shinobu asked.

"Huh?! What do you mean, Shinobu-san?"

"Don't you remember seeing the wreckage of the old part of Onishuto when we were forced to stay there for a couple of days after Lum tried to force Ataru-kun to marry her?" Shinobu asked. As the tomboy nodded on being reminded of that — she had joined Class 1-4 back in mid-February, then moved on to Class 2-4 at the start of April, a little over a week before the encounter with Queen Elle — Ataru's former girlfriend then added, "I asked one of Invader-taisa's crew about their encounter with the Yizibajohei. It was SUCH a traumatic event in Urusian history that people like Lum are sleep-trained to understand what happened when they're even younger then Ten-chan!"

The "heir" of Hamachaya hummed as she considered that, then she blinked as she stared at Ten. "Hey, how come you can say the name of that place, Jariten?! When people on Uru talked of that place, it was 'You Know Where' or the 'Unspeakable Place'. How come you're able to say 'Yiziba' like that?!"

"Oh, Ayumu-onēchan did that to me after she rescued Ataru from being forced to marry Lum-chan after that whole thing with Elle!" Ten immediately explained, waiving to the Infinite One in emphasis.

"WHAT?!"

Everyone turned as Lum spun around to glare murderously at the living goddess nearby...then she turned as grey as stone on seeing her uniform. "Now, Lum-chan...!" Ayumu then began, her voice sweetness and light...even if her eyes now sparkled with barely restrained malice. "You're not going to do something DUMB, are you?" she asked as she calmly crossed her arms. "Well...?"

Lum was now as white as a sheet, she slowly moving to back away from the other girl while she waved her hands in a warding gesture, obviously in a vain hope of stopping the current incarnation of the most powerful metahuman to rise on Yiziba from hurting her badly. As all the boys seeing this began to croak, moan and sob on noting that the seemingly invincible warlord's daughter from Uru was about to soil herself in the presence of the spacey native of Wakayama — for reasons that still hadn't sank into them — a growling voice then echoed from the street close to Hideyuki, one which made the sisters all groan. "Oh, spare us, PLEASE!" Marie snarled. "Ayumu-san, if you wouldn't mind...!"

"YOU BITCH! HOW DARE YOU THREATEN LUM-SAN LIKE...?!!"

Ayumu snapped her fingers.

"...THAAWWWWNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNN
"Now, Ayumu-san, PLEASE don't put them through their death scenes!" Marie pleaded, which made Lum gargle as she spun around to note there were two more of the Unspeakable Ones here today. "Remember, His Eminence declared a fatwā when it comes to Lum-san's 'fan club' here in Tomobiki."

"Yeah, yeah, Marie-chan..."

**KK-KLONG! KK-KLANG! KK-KLONK! KK-KRRANG!**

Everyone winced on hearing the sounds of people's skulls hitting something very hard and metallic from the direction of Tomobiki High School, that echoed with the crunching noise of wood being shattered and gasping yelps of four certain boys nearly getting their spinal columns crushed from being dropped head-first into the school clock tower and smash into the old bell that was contained in the very heart of that structure. As a faint gonging noise then echoed from that direction, many of the girls again howled with laughter on seeing Lum's most passionate supporters being put down like that while many of the boys like Hideyuki cringed at the idea of facing the wrath of someone like Kasuga Ayumu. As Lum collapsed to her knees in horror — not to mention disbelief on seeing how LITTLE people like Aisuru Satoshi and his friends were being supported by their peers — Ten was snickering. "Oh, Maidens! Wait until those lifeless dorks back on Phentax Two learn what you just did to their...!"

"**TEN-CHAN! DON'T TALK ABOUT...!**"

**KK-KRACK!**

All the boys present screamed in horror on seeing that a **cinder block** just smashed down on Lum's head to knock her out! As a barely-recovered Ran gaped in shock on seeing her childhood "friend" smacked down low like that — even if a frightened chill ran down her spine as memories burned into her brain back in her childhood about ONE of They Who Must Never Be Named who did something like that during the near-apocalypse called "the Mother of All Fight Scenes" that nearly destroyed all life on planet Uru twenty-seven decades before as a "joke" came back to her! — most of the girls began to appear hopeful that this "encounter of the third kind" would see the aliens that had haunted their lives for a year driven off the planet once and for all time. As Hinako and Yotsuba — not to mention Ayumu, who also was telepathic atop her galaxy-level reality warping powers and inherent omniscient meta-senses that gave her the ability to know anything no matter which planet, time period or dimension had attracted her interest — quickly sensed, few girls attending Tomobiki Senior High School really liked Redet Lum despite their depending on the warlord's daughter for several things, least of which to keep Moroboshi Ataru in line. In spite of that particular issue, they really didn't care for Lum, mostly due to the near-universal attraction many Tomobiki High girls — not to mention their peers in nearby schools in and around Nishitōkyō — possessed for one Mendō Shūtarō. As had been seen many a time over the last year or so, the scion of Japan's wealthiest family was just as willing to claim Lum for himself, which miffed Miyake Shinobu many times when she dated him before his planned engagement to the younger daughter of his clan's chief rivals, Mizunokōji Asuka, was announced in mid-March. And given that almost all the other boys at school also lusted for the warlord's daughter, the chances of any girl who might want to pursue one of her male peers for a date were well to the left of "nil".

And that state of affairs had effectively begun when Lum followed her "husband" into Class 1-4 a little over a month after she first came to Earth.

"Ah! Ani-chama! Yah-hoo!"
That made the sisters' heads snapped over. "Onii-tama!" Hinako cheered.

"Nii-ya!" Aria gushed.

"Aniue-sama!" Marie breathed out in delight.

"Onii-chama!" Kaho echoed her sister before she blinked, then she whooped in delight. "Ah! Onii-chama is having his date with Jody-san!"

People blinked, then they spun around to gaze south...

...before gasping on seeing the most despised resident of Tomobiki step out into the open. As many blinked on seeing that Moroboshi Ataru wasn't dressed in his school gakuran, they then gaped on seeing the incredibly beautiful blonde Western girl appearing to be his age now at his side, one of her arms looped around one of his. As Shinobu instantly felt a flush of jealousy rip through her body on seeing that the man she still loved deep down was paying obviously close attention to another woman, the other girls just gushed as they took in such an image. Like Marie, Yotsuba and Ayumu were dressed now, the adopted native of Royal Leamington Spa in England's County Warwickshire — she was actually a native of the Isle of Anglesey off the northern coast of Wales — was in a battlesuit, overall black with dark ruby lines of runes shaped like Chinese characters in nine-fold script running down the sides of her body to the top of her deep burgundy boots; a matching belt was wrapped around her waist even if no symbol was on her chest. Draped over her shoulders was a matching hooded black cape that went to her ankles, it trimmed in the same sorts of runes that trimmed this woman's battlesuit. Her hair was a shaggy bobcut that went to her shoulders, with glittering turquoise eyes piercing out of a face that seemed far more mature than what her physical age would have projected.

"DARLING! WHAT ARE YOU DOING WITH THAT...u-urk!"

As the boys seeing this all croaked on seeing Lum nearly soil herself thanks to the lethal stare that was being fired her way by Ataru's companion, many of the girls found themselves grinning as they began to think that this was the woman who just put the warlord's daughter down low. "I would suggest, Miss Redet, you keep a civil tongue like your wonderful cousin is doing right this instant," she said in a voice that was pure West Midlands. "As you were effectively warned yesterday afternoon when my friend smashed in the head of that worthless piece of genetic refuse Ataru now sees as his mother only in GENETICS, he's fully aware of that LIE you spouted last October after you put him through ten days of solid humiliation just because he supposedly 'didn't do his homework'." Scorn dripped each of the woman's words as Lum rapidly began to shake her head. "Oh, no! Don't you dare try to LIE you way out to this one, you foolish child! The universe doesn't revolve around you! It NEVER has! And if you have to watch your culture be subjected to the Mother of All Fight Scenes AGAIN, it will be YOUR fault!"

As Lum and the recovering Ran gargled in horror on hearing THAT threat, Ataru took a deep breath. "Ayumu-chan, if you wouldn't mind, could you please teleport Seq-san and Aruka-san off the planet?" he calmly stated as he gazed on his true oldest friend. "Liz is about to close the system to outside intrusion. I can get Onē-san to teleport my so-called 'wife' and her cousin back to Onishuto."

"Sure, sure!"

Ayumu raised her hand, then snapped her fingers...

...and a gasping Ran and a howling Rei — not to mention their spaceships and all of their belongings — disappeared for the last time from Earth!
As the crowd gasped, Lum shuddered. "Darling, I don't know what these monsters told you, but...!"

"YIZIBA!" he barked.

Her voice instantly melted into a howling scream as she collapsed to the ground, tears flowing down her cheeks. As many of the boys started to bellow in outrage on seeing Ataru move to verbally frighten her to death, Ayumu gestured with her hand...which saw a shield rise at the park's boundaries, keeping the warlord's daughter's "fans" from charging in to get her vengeance. As many of the girls then laughed in delight on seeing the boys helplessly smash their fists into something that wouldn't give way, Shinobu shook her head before she gazed at Marie. "What priest were you talking about, Marie-san?"

The metahuman librarian perked. "What do you mean, Miyake-san?"

"What priest released this fatwā you just told us about?"

A cruel smile then crossed the younger woman's face. "His Eminence, Khalīfah Abū Bakr al-Baghdādi," she clearly called out, pronouncing the Arabic syllables as crisply as if she was a native of that region. As Shinobu's eyes went wide with horror, Marie looked towards the crowd of moaning boys who were being prevented from defending their favourite classmate's honour. "Who currently is in charge of Dawlat al-'Irāq al-'Islāmiyya." As people stopped in confusion on hearing that term, a cruel smile crossed her face. "'The Islamic State of Iraq'. Affiliate group to al-Qā'idah in that country." As the crowd then croaked on hearing that this particular priest was an actual ALLY to the maniacs who had launched attacks on America and other nations in hope of removing all Western influence from the Middle East over the last two decades, Marie shook her head. "You can guess what they decreed last October when those four fools Ayumu-san just sent into your school clock tower decided to go forth and effectively betray all of humanity for THIS creature!" She contemptuously waved at Lum, who winced; she herself had known of the maniacs who loved to use Islam as an excuse to kill people.

"Before you idiots decide to blame this on Ani-chama, here's a news checky!" Yotsuba added as she glared at the boys. As they shuddered while the metahuman detective used her empathy to make them pay attention and not fall back on normal responses in situations like this, she added, "Ani-chama was CLEARED of any fault concerning what happened last year! As Shinobu-san here can confirm, it was all provoked by Megane and his nerds, then they shoved off all the blame on Ani-chama's shoulders when that hack got his buddies down here to start stealing oil!" She waved to her brother's old girlfriend.

"LIES!" That was Koi Shinjin, the most passionate fan of Lum in Class 2-4 below the Stormtroopers. "ALL LIES! IT WAS ATARU'S FAULT THROUGH AND THROUGH! TELL HIM, SHINOBU!"

"IT'S TRUE, YOU STUPID, SELFISH FOOL! I WAS THERE!"

Hearing Shinobu's snapped reply, all the boys gaped at her while all the girls began to hiss at each other. "Oh, by the way, Miyake-san," Ataru said as he reached behind him to pull out a leather-bound book the size of a hotel bible. "I seriously think both you and Fujinami-san really need to see this."

Both girls perked on hearing that, they they turned to look at the tome in Ataru's hand...even if Shinobu had winced on hearing her old boyfriend address her by family name, which he NEVER did to any woman. Noting what it was by seeing the title on the front cover, Lum gargled. "NO...!"
Everyone gasped on seeing yet another cinder block having smashed the warlord's daughter down. As guilt then crossed Ten's face, Shinobu blinked before she reached over to take that book out of Ataru's hand. Seeing the title in both Japanese and a strange script which reminded her of the Devanagari alphabet used in India and neighbouring countries, she blinked. "'The Book of Lum'?"

"Look at the index," Ataru advised.

Shinobu blinked as she did what he bade, then she stopped, her eyes shooting out of her head in disbelief. "'THE BOOK OF THE SINFUL DOUBTER, MIYAKE SHINOBU, FORMER BELOVED OF THE GREAT EVIL'?!" she shrieked before she then noted another entry. "'THE BOOK OF THE HOLY FRIEND TO THE BLESSED LIVING GODDESS REDET LUM, LADY FUJINAMI RYŪNOSUKE'?!"

"WHAT?!!" Ryūnosuke screamed; she had moved over to look over her friend's shoulder to see what was going on. "'WHAT THE FUCK IS THIS SHIT, MOROBOSHI'?!"

"Copies of your diaries."

Silence.

More silence.

Still more silence.

Then...

"What...?" Shinobu gasped as she and her friend stared in disbelief at Ten.

Both winced on seeing his eyes flood with pained tears. "It's true! That creep Ōgi and his morons on Phentax Two think Lum-chan's a living GODDESS! Megane and his creeps and Mendō are her 'holy apostles'; I'm the 'holy cousin'; Sakura-nēchan, Cherry-san, Ryūnosuke, Benten and Oyuki-chan are the 'holy friends' and Ran-chan and you are the 'sinful doubters'. They even declared Ataru the 'great evil', their devil!" He waved to Ataru in emphasis. As the sisters all shook their heads, Ten then waved to Hinako. "What's Hinako-onētama gonna be?! The 'wicked sister' or something like that?! Huh?!!"

"Try as they might, they couldn't stop the mass copying of people's diaries that interested them...until we were able to expel the last of them off the planet during the Pseudo-War," Ataru added. "While I won't judge what the accuracy of your 'books' are, ladies, you can see it for yourself. Try as Ten and Aruka-san and everyone else affected by this insanity could to make someone plead to the lunatic who STARTED this madness to put a STOP to it, he simply wouldn't listen. What's worse, since he became the leader of the most powerful ally the Urusians could ever hope for, it was decided in Onishuto that a policy of APPEASEMENT way worse than what the Allies did to the Nazis before the Second World War would be followed with them!" He nodded to the dazed Lum. "She was ordered by her father to say NOTHING about this, even to ME!" He shook his head. "And she wonders why I HATE her at times?"

As Lum croaked on hearing that, Shinobu shuddered as a brilliant battle aura formed around her. "You...!" she growled as she stared at her former rival. "You...!" she hissed as she dropped the Book, her hands grasping for something nice and heavy so she could beat down the selfish monster that had ripped apart so many lives over the last year and more in mad pursuit of her "darling".
"Need this?"

That was Ataru's companion, who just conjured a very massive iron weapon shaped like a croquet mallet. Grabbing it, Shinobu snapped "Thank you!" before she charged at her formal rival, taking a swing that would have impressed any of the great baseball sluggers...!

**KK-KRACK!**

"**PEG OUT!**" Yotsuba screamed as the howling warlord's daughter was sent flying into the sky to the south towards Tomobiki High School.

"**DAMN YOU, MOROBOSHI ATARU, YOU BASTARD! SAVE LUM-CHAN!**"

On hearing Shinjin's enraged howl, all the boys bellowed before they raced off after their favourite classmate...just as the resounding sound of Lum's skull smashing into the clock tower echoed in the distance, that accompanied by a chorus of screams and wails from those Tomobiki High boys who were already on the grounds. As Ten winced on hearing that and the girls seeing this all whooped in delight on seeing Lum brought down low, Shinobu dropped the mallet before she spun and raced off towards her house. Before Ryūnosuke could go after her, she found *The Book of Lum* thrust into her hand.

"Tell her parents!" Ataru snapped. "They need to know everything!"

"And check the sky in about an hour!" Yotsuba added. "You're gonna LOVE that!"

The "heir" of Hamachaya blinked before she nodded. Moving to race off, she then stopped, looking at Ataru's sisters. "You're lucky, man," she whispered.

With that, she was off. Watching her go, Ataru smiled. "You'll be that way very soon, Ryū-chan," he whispered as his companion hugged his arm.

The sisters and Ten all snickered on hearing that...

*To Be Continued...*

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**WRITER'S NOTES**

This story is another attempt at writing something concerning the *Yizibajohei* (pronounced /ˈjɪzɪbəˈhɛɪ/ in the International Phonetic Alphabet), which I first introduced in *The Doctor Is In* storyline when the late Anime Addventure website was active. For those who don't know about these beings, think of the *Levramites* from Jim Valentino's parody comic maxi-series *normalman* and you get the right idea, though my interpretation isn't meant as a straight-up parody; there are very dark implications as to how the Yizibajohei are governed. For those continuity buffs, this story is set near the end of the *Yatsura* and *Ranma* manga series (before the "Boy Meets Girl" storyline in the former and the Saffron arc in the latter), during the time of *Order of the Phoenix* in the *Harry Potter* timeline, near the start of the third season of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, the fourth season of *The West Wing*, during second year as the characters of *Azumanga Daioh* experienced same and just before the start of the *Mai-HiME* anime series; those series will be the effective "anchor" stories of this work. For those personages from World Wrestling Entertainment, their timeline is the same as it was in real life. As I've done before when I've included *Yatsura* characters in my stories, the influences of *The Senior Year* are heavy; including in this are the names I've devised for *Yatsura* characters like the members of *Lum's Stormtroopers*. Notes about other series included in this story will be referenced...
to in these notes for your convenience.

A nod of thanks to Regina Magia and Dr. Tempo at the SpaceBattles website for inspiring this story and writing a few omake to it. I also acknowledge The Sage of Toads, whose stories Sempai and Sensei also helped inspire certain elements of this storyline.

For this chapter:

Tampopo's Rāmen and Beefbowl Bar and its proprietor Kamekichi Tampopo were first introduced in my first ever lemon story, The Galatea Syndrome. I brought forth this concept since I simply can't believe that Ataru's luck is so bad that there isn't ANY sort of place in Tomobiki where he can get away from the people who wish to influence his life in one way or another, especially Lum.

The common belief now that Lum's "family name" is "Invader" is not proven by the Yatsura manga. I don't believe Takahashi-sensei actually created a sort of clan/family name for Lum or her relatives. The clan name "Redet" was taken from one of the early fanfics written on the Yatsura characters, Just A Dream and its sequel Still Dreaming by Lew Burton. That was one of the series that influenced a lot of things in The Senior Year for both Mike Smith and myself.

Fans of Sister Princess will know that each sister has a different way of addressing their big brother (the player in the game, Minakami Wataru in the first anime series, an unnamed elder brother in Sister Princess Re Pure). Naturally, they modified their form of address to speak of Tariko Katabarbe on learning of her. Out of respect for the sisters, Redet Ten elected to use the forms of address the sisters use for Tariko for the sisters themselves. Of course, the family names used for the sisters here in this story are the ones I devised for them in Lonely Souls and other stories I used the sisters in.

The Senior Year character and situation notes: The Ipraedies Empire and the Imperial Houses of the Seifukusu Dominion were two of the antagonistic races that appeared in the series, as was the Union of Phentax Two; the Ipraedies were first mentioned in "Benten's Story", the Seifukusu in "Surprise, Darling! You're A Father!" and the Niphentaxians were hinted at in "Final Cinba" before appearing in "What Price For Love?". Mifune Hideyuki is a character from a side story to the series yet to be published. Lum's old combat teacher Nassur first appeared in "Revenge of Memory"; he was the series' second main male character after Ataru. Koi Shinjin first appeared in "Lum's Lesson".

As I've done with other alien languages I bring into my stories, I use a character encoding system to create words in Yizibajohei. Basing it on the Japanese translation of terms (or the on'yomi reading of Chinese characters if Japanese translations of terms is in katakana), it goes like this:

A and Y remain the same

**VOWELS:** I=E and O=U (the Ō, which is the Hepburn Romanization of either おう or おお, would be interpreted as it is in hiragana)

**CONSONANTS:** K=T or CH, G=D, S=R, Z or J=L, N=M, H or F=B and P=W

As a way of tossing in a "unique" sound into the language, I encode the consonant element of the "shi" (し) sound into Yizibajohei as "R'B", which is approximately pronounced /t̩rʔb/ in the International Phonetic Alphabet when it starts a word or is in the middle of a word after a consonant. The glottal stop between the first and second consonants would be a syllable break and the vowel before the "r" would be a sound like the onomatopoeia for a car engine idling, but uttered very briefly. Note the vowel would be dropped if the "r'b" combination appears in the middle of a word.
after a vowel.

Note however that there are times when the glottal stop is not indicated in writing this set of sounds as note the way the adopted name of Tuyuki (Tariko Katabarbe) is spelled in this story.

Translation list: Douceâtre — Sweet; Leabharlann — Library; Bleachtaire — Detective; Beni — Yizibajohei honorific suffix meaning "princess", normally used for women who are not Gifted; Umale — Same/Sameness; Fatwā — A religious decree or judgment by an Islamic scholar; Khalīfah — Caliph.

Yes, the friend Ten writes of when he speaks of Susumu Marie is Yomiko Readman from Read Or Die.

Yotsuba Dunn would meet Sherlock Holmes and his brother Mycroft Holmes well before the start of the Sherlock television series.

For those who know the hentai game/anime Bible Black, this is set during the time of the original anime series well before the climax of the series on Walpurgisnacht. However, I bring characters from Bible Black: New Testament such as Josephine "Jody" Crowley into this storyline.

As this story starts in late 2012, the organization first founded by Abū Bakr al-Baghdādī in Iraq has yet to transform into its well-known incarnation as ad-Dawla al-'Islāmiyya fil-'Irāq wash-Shām (the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant), short-formed as Dā'ish (in English, ISIL). Such a transformation wouldn't occur officially until the April of the following year.
The Circus Folds the Tents

Chapter Summary

Now that Lum knows that "They Who Must Never Be Named" are on Earth, what happens next...?

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Triton, the Royal Palace in Kōri City, the 7333rd Orbital Day in the Fifth Cycle Post-Migration from Home, the sixth hour...

"What just happened, Pukaze?"

For the crown princess of the Kingdom of Neptune whose citizens were now forced to live in exile on its largest moon, the information which had just been relayed to her was nothing short of horrible.

"It's true, Oyuki," the slightly older version of Oyuki in the militaristic kimono-like uniform worn by the Kingdom's warriors breathed out. While both were outwardly as calm as possible as was always demanded of Neptunian society, they were now very frightened of the implications of what was now occurring in their own solar system. "Starting at midnight Greenwich time on Earth, some sort of shielding system went active at the orbit line of Ceres, which makes starship warp drives and power dynamos detonate the instant they try to make a close slingshot pass of Sol to proceed to Gomiana or Toshitto. Up to now, over a dozen ships have been destroyed." Here, the older woman bowed her head in clear shame. "We have no idea what happened to the crews or passengers."

As the others in the Royal Neptunian Defence Force in the room stared wide-eyed at their marshal's declaration, Oyuki shook her head. "Who could do such a thing, cousin? Even if someone has that type of technology, the sheer scale of covering the inner part of the solar system is too much..."

"My Princess."

Both women turned as a middle-aged man came into the room, moving with very uncharacteristic haste. "What is the matter, Minister?" Oyuki asked.

The minister in charge of the Central Warp Chamber bowed. "My Princess, I bear horrible news," he declared, his voice quivering with barely-controlled panic. "An intricate software virus has now been inserted into the Warp Chamber's programming which removed all Earth destinations from the targeting sensors that allows you to visit your friend at her husband's home. When we attempted to send snow to Earth as we normally do, it was actually delivered to Mars. As Oyuki and Pukaze both gasped on hearing that, the minister added, "When we tried to teleport a sherbet to Earth, the poor creature..."

His voice then broke as tears filled his eyes. "What happened?!" Oyuki demanded, shocked to see
such a disciplined man cry in public like that.

He gazed misty-eyed at his future queen. "The creature was sent into the Sun!"

Shocked gasps escaped the room. "Wh-why?" Oyuki stuttered, her voice breaking on hearing such a horrifying declaration. "Who's doing this...?"

Before she could demand more, a beeping noise echoed from one station. The technician responded, then she perked before looking over. "My Princess, Lady Ran is signalling. She says it's urgent."

Oyuki blinked. "Put the signal through the main screen."

"At once, My Princess."

The main view screen clicked on, revealing to Oyuki's sharp eyes a frightened child in lieu of her sometimes-sweet, sometimes-psychotic friend. "Ran-chan?" Oyuki asked. "What is the problem?"

"OYUKI! YOU GOT TO PASS THE WORD ON! " Ran shrieked. "THE YOU KNOW WHOS ARE ON EARTH! THEY GOT DARLING TO BECOME ONE OF THEM! WE'RE ALL IN DANGER!"

Stunned silence filled the room as people exchanged shocked looks.

Neptunians as a whole prided themselves on their emotional control in public.

Such had won Oyuki admirers in Japan for her stoic calm even in when she was forced to deal with things that would make other people scream their guts out.

However, even they had limits.

THIS was it!

"WE'RE DOOMED! THEY WHO MUST NEVER BE NAMED ARE OUT TO DESTROY US!"

As all the people in the room began to howl in mortal terror, Oyuki sank to her knees as the possible explanation of what was going on sank in.

"Daturie...!" she croaked.

Oh, yes.

Only ONE being in the local cluster could have done this.

The Wise Genius of the Circle of Thought.

The Academician...!

****

Tomobiki, approaching Tomobiki Senior High School, minutes before first bell...

"Moroboshi-kun! Why on Earth are you NOT in your school uniform?!"

Hearing the voice of the elderly administrator who was in charge of what was essentially the most infamous school in the world, Moroboshi Ataru sighed before he gazed in veiled amusement at the
Principal. Accompanying him was his date, the woman born Josefn ferch Marc Mônnewydd and commonly known by the English name "Josephine Crowley", not to mention five of his sisters whom he met in the town park a half-hour earlier when they had got together with Redet Ten in preparation of the day that all aliens from the Galactic Federation states remaining in Tomobiki would be expelled from Earth once and for all. A quick glance to the school's clock tower revealed a rather large hole in one side of the structure by the clock, indicating where Ataru's would-be "wife" and his four chief "rivals" for Redet Lum's hand in marriage had been sent flying through the roof thanks to his true oldest friend and his would-be girlfriend from the month or so before the Tag Race.

By now, everyone who had been Gifted thanks to the Great Crystal of Power on Yiziba had donned their battlesuits in preparation for a fight scene, which showed off their bodies quite well. As Suiki, Saeru Hinako wore a snow-white jumpsuit with silver belt and boots, a red heart symbol on her upper chest; she had flowers in her pig-tailed hair which helped project an innocent and pure aura to other people. Aria des Beauchamps wore a blue uniform with gold belt and boots matching the colours of the Ancien Régime of France when she acted as Douceâtre; she had a gold-trimmed blue demi-cape with hood drawn over her long silver hair. As Baton Dancer, Eigo Kaho was in a dark blue suit with gold piping on the sides, frilly gold epaulettes with braid at her shoulders, gold belt and boots in her uniform, crossed marching batons on her chest; her handy baton was in hand and ready for action. Floating close to Susumu Marie and Yotsuba Dunn was Ten, who was grinning madly as he noted the crowds of people acting like it was the end of the world on the front lawn of the school, many boys crying at the fact that their favourite schoolmate was now in the nurse's station after suffering a concussion thanks to smacking head-first into the school's bell thanks to her old rival Miyake Shinobu...whom, as Yotsuba told Ataru earlier, was now at her family home as her parents Toshoba and Kimiki — along with Fujinami Ryūnosuke — were getting an uncensored introduction to *The Book of Lum* and the warped "church" created in the name of the warlord's daughter from Uru on a planet named Phentax Two.

"Why Kōchō-sensei, weren't you told?" Ataru innocently asked.

That made the older man perk. "What do you mean?"

"As of this morning, I'm no longer a student at Tomobiki High School."

Silence.

More silence.

Still more silence.

It was SO silent, one could hear crickets chirping.

Then...

"HE'S GONE! WE'RE FREE! WE'RE FREE OF HIM! LUM-CHAN'S OURS!"

As the boys whooped in delight on hearing that declaration — as Ataru knew all too well, the acoustics at the school could easily snare one's voice and project it at the most inconvenient moment to see people hurt — the sisters and Ataru's date all shook their heads. Ignoring the celebration now breaking out among his former peers, Yotsuba patted her brother's shoulder. "Don't worry about it, Ani-chama. As soon as our friends in Iraq finally get it in gear and send a *suicide bomber* over to this place, these stupid umale worshippers won't be pumping all that noise pollution to bother good folk from now on."

"Indeed you're right, Yotsuba-chan," Marie added as the Principal's eyebrow twitched ominously,
his skin paling as he interpreted the potential threat that was about to descend on his precious school. "It's not Aniue-sama's fault that those four so-called 'stormtroopers' actually put DEATH MARKS on all their peers at this place with that fool stunt they pulled last October."

"No great loss. In the grand scheme of things, their deaths will matter not a whit," Jody said with an amused tone as she crossed her arms, her eyes slightly glowing with the cosmic levels of magic she commanded. "Indeed, given the sheer STENCH of all the umale that haunt this old schoolhouse, it would actually be a wonderful deed for HUMANITY to see them all killed off."

As the younger sisters snickered, the Principal just gazed wide-eyed at his now-former pupil, horrified that Ataru seemed to be going along with this...

****

Dear Diary,
Seeing Ataru and his sisters finally put down that creepy old principal was nice! After all, given the stupid 'physicals' he loved to land on Lum-chan and all the others like that 'obstacle course swim meet' from a few months ago, not to mention that raid on that girl's middle school near here last month...!

Well, now that he's learned what those terrorists in the Middle East are planning to do to the school and the idiots inside, he's gonna get a smack down on his butt that'll probably send him to the nearest hotel with the rubber walls.

No great loss.
Oh, forgot to write about Jody-san!
Josephine Crowley is the actual granddaughter of the one normal person on Earth who got as close as possible to understand the concept of magic without actually being magical than anyone else in Terran history. She was born in 1940, which makes her seventy-two years old...but thanks to Tariko-onē-chan helping her get Gifted, she now looks like she's seventeen.

She's even an actual duchess over in the United Kingdom, inheriting a major seat in their magical parliament. The Queen even knighted her for services to the nation before she officially became the Duchess of Anglesey; that's an island off the coast of Wales, where her magical school, Meridiana, is located.

Jody-san was Gifted to become the Monarch of the Shadow Court; on Yiziba, she's called Tadi Bolem, which translates to 'Lady Shadow'. She's got powers that nearly match Ayumu-onē-chan in many ways even if she's not a real cosmic meta like Ayumu-onē-chan and Tariko-onē-chan.

The Shadow Court are the magical masters of ebony mesonium, which make them capable of using very destructive magic which some people call 'dark'. Jody-san calls it 'cleaning out the dead flesh of Existence' which allows new things to grow.

Oh, forgot! Years ago, Jody-san even helped fight that creep Voldemort. Her group, the Argentium Astrum, did way more damage to Voldemort's people than any other group in Britain who wanted that creep gone.

Hopefully she'll help out now that creep's back...

****

"Oi, Ataru-kun! Why the heck aren't you in uniform?"

Ataru perked, then turned left to see a group of thirty-six women, all second-year girls, approaching from the direction of the Hinan Apartments, a set of high rises that sat on the east side of town near the border with Nerima. "Oh, Okano-san! Minna-san! Good morning to you all!" He waved to the celebrating students inside the school grounds. "Apologies for the impromptu party here, but everyone's celebrating my leaving this place once and for all."
"What?!" a tall, slender redhead with green eyes gasped. "You're leaving?! You actually found a way to get out of this loony bin?! How can WE do that?!

All the sisters and Jody laughed on hearing that. "Well, I can't blame you for wanting to get out of this place, Shimizu-san," Ataru noted, which made the sisters nod. The woman who had spoken to him was Shimizu Kaho, a former alumnus of Ekō Girl's High School in Kanagawa, which had been destroyed the previous summer thanks to a terrorist group, forcing the students to disperse to other schools. All of the former Class 1-B from Ekō Girl's High had elected to come as a group to Tomobiki High School, believing it to be a "quiet" place. They were soon VERY disappointed...even if they had been able to effectively avoid the crazy shenanigans which haunted Ataru's life since his "wife" came into it. "I would really suggest you guys move elsewhere as soon as possible, though."

"Why's that?" Okano Yuka asked as she crossed her arms. The heroine of the Ekō Girl's High School attack was one of Kaho's two childhood best friends. A shorter girl with shaggy dark red hair in a taper to mid-neck and amethyst eyes behind reading glasses, she was the second-most smartest student in school behind the only declared lesbian currently in Class 2-4, Tsuruya Rumiko. "By the way, why are you girls dressed in those jumpsuits?"

"These are our battlesuits, Yuka-san," Hinako said as she twirled around. Seeing that, all the girls gasped in delight as the gentle empathic aura the Spirit of Innocence projected all the time washed over them. "Hina, Hina's sisters, Ayumu-chan and Jody-san are metahumans." As the Ekō alumni gasped, she added, "We just can't wait for Onii-tama to become one, too!" She waved to Ataru in emphasis.

The girls blinked. "Ataru-kun, these are...?" one girl began.

"My half-sisters, Sanokura-san. Same father, different mothers," Ataru answered as he gazed in amusement at Kaho's and Yuka's other best friend, Sanokura Emi. The daughter of a celebrated enka performer, the raven-haired girl with the blue eyes was a track star atop being a well-gifted pianist. She also dabbed into martial arts; when her old school was under siege, she was able to defeat some of the terrorists using some well-placed roundhouse kicks before she got her friends to safety.

"Legally, we'll all be Moroboshi soon enough," Yotsuba jovially added. "Now that we got Ani-chama out of this zoo, he can come attend school with us."

"YOU WILL NOT LEAVE, MOROBOSHI-KUN!"

Everyone turned to the Principal. Before the sisters could shout the dumb old man down, a girl's voice hummed from nearby. "Oh...what the heck was it that Steve-san always likes to say...?"


"Ah, got it!" Sukeyama Sakuya then declared as she snapped her fingers. While Tenhiro Haruka giggled in anticipation, the eldest of Ataru's half-sisters pulled out a megaphone, then walked onto the school ground. "HEY, BOYS!" she called out through the device, causing all the boys to stop and look her way.

Instantly, hearts appeared in their eyes. "What a babe!" one man exclaimed.

"She's the babe of babes!" another declared.

"If she was elected president, she'd be Babe-raham Lincoln!" a third gushed.
"It's so good to be young and alive!" a fourth crooned.

As the sisters giggled and Jody shook her head, the tall and well-shaped woman with the long caramel hair done in twin ponytails to her hips and eyes of glittering amethyst smirked. Unlike the others, she was dressed in hip normal clothing that showed off her killer legs perfectly. "Hey, boys! If you want to beat this old fool here apart from all the stupid 'physicals' he forces on you that THREATEN your lives every time he pulls that, give me a 'Hell, yeah'!"

"HELL, YEAH!" all the boys instantly howled.

Sakuya then waved to the now white-faced Principal. "So what's STOPPING you?!

"GET HIM!"

The beat down that followed was QUITE epic, causing Ataru, his other sisters and Jody to nearly fall on their butts laughing while Ayumu shrugged...

****

Sukeyama Sakuya is the oldest of Ataru's half-sisters. She's from Kyōto. She's also one of the sisters that suffered the most because of what Ataru's late grandma did to make sure his dork mother couldn't hurt the Moroboshi Clan.

Sakuya-onēsama was born the December after Ataru was born; her mom was a professional model and her stepdad was a banker. They had a normal life in Kyōto until her stepdad died. Then something really weird happened, making Sakuya-onēsama's mom move to Ōmure-jima — where everyone now believes they were actually conceived — and literally ABANDON her at Welcome House, a youth hostel located on the north side of the old part of the island overlooking the reclaimed lands the Americans created after the Second World War to make a naval base. No one's seen Sakuya-onēsama's mother since! That really hurt her a LOT!

However, she was also one of the first of Ataru's younger sisters to be Gifted. Again, as with the others, no one has any idea how Gift crystals wind up on Earth without being put back into the Great Crystal of Power like it SHOULD be done! Man, it's no wonder Miss Margo really HATES what goes on!

Still, Sakuya-onēsama really lucked out in that case. She became the Healer of Men's Hearts, R'buoho; here on Earth, you call her 'Courtesan'. She's one of the most powerful empaths on Yiziba, with the ability to manipulate men's minds to make them stop doing fight scenes all the time and find nice girlfriends so they could have kids. Believe me, she was really happy to learn about Ataru and Tariko-onēchan.

Not to mention her other half-sisters, too!

I really hope she'll be okay from now on...

****

Ataru suddenly perked as his "girl radar" instantly locked on something flying at him from somewhere to the south at quite the clip. "Oh, no...!"

Jody looked herself, then quickly dodged clear to safety as the other sisters all pulled back from their brother, that action making Yuka and her friends blink.

"TE-...I-...TO-...KU-...SA-...MA-...!"

People glanced into the sky...
...then they looked down to see Ataru now flat on his back, his head and upper chest covered by the white-trimmed grey split-skirt of a woman about his age and height, though she was slender in build. Possessing long haze grey hair in a stringy ponytail that went past her hips and smoky grey eyes behind glasses, she had a giddy look on her face even if her cheeks feel flushed. Gazing at her, Sakuya took a deep breath. "Ami-chan, do you REALLY have to do this...?!

"I assume no undergarments, Sakuya-chan?" Haruka mused as she gazed knowingly at her sister, her voice flecked with the strong middle German accent she acquired from all the years she had lived with her stepfather and late mother in Düsseldorf.

"It's Ami-chan, Haruka-chan."

"Ah...!"

"MOROBOSHII!"

People turned to look towards the school...

...then they backed away as a snarling shrine maiden and school nurse charged out, a look of righteous outrage on her well-shaped face. As boys watching this all grinned in anticipation, Sakurambō Sakura yanked a ki mallet out of nowhere, ready to smash the younger man now trapped under Ashikaga Ami's body into lower Earth orbit. "YOU PERVERT! HOW DARE YOU TEACH THIS POOR GIRL...?!!"

KK-KLONK!

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KK-ZZAP!

The sisters all ducked as a bolt of pure starlight punched out from somewhere to Ami's left, flying over her head to rip right into Sakura's midsection, causing her to scream out in agony as she was flung back right into the stairs leading into the front entrance! As all the boys on the school grounds cried out in horror on seeing their favourite teacher literally shot down like that, Hinako, Aria and Kaho plugged their ears while Ten shook his head. "Boy, you sure can be DUMB, Sakura-nēchan!" he moaned, making Yuka's friends stare in disbelief at the firefighter's son from Uru; they had seen the many times Ten doted on the school nurse, treating her like a favoured relative.

"Aria doesn't like it when Akemi-chan swears," Aria moaned. "Kusun!"

Eigo Kaho nodded. "Kaho doesn't like it either!"

"Neither does Hina...even if Hina understands why Akemi-chan hates people," Hinako added as something flew out of the sky to land on the front walkway.

People gaped on noting the newcomer was dressed as Ataru's sisters save Sakura and Haruka were; a form-fitting halter-top jumpsuit with no sleeves. White overall, it came with blue belt and boots, a symbol on her chest appearing to be a stylized 曙 kanji in blue with white piping. She was tall and slender like Ami was, but had bright orchid-shaded hair tied in a side ponytail to her knees from over her right ear, a pair of blue eyes peeking out of a face that was now twisted in a disgusted scowl. As the boys on the field began to back away from the newcomer, Ashikaga Akemi crossed her arms.

"You wanna repeat that, you shitty excuse for a priestess?!!" A snort escaped her. "Priestess AND school nurse?! You call that 'Shintō', you fucking reject from a porn flick?!" As the boys howled in outrage on hearing that brutal insult from her, all the girls started to laugh. Like how they viewed Redet Lum, they really didn't care at all for Sakurambō Sakura given the effect she had on all the boys. "That ain't the Shintō that I know of, bitch! Believe me, MY knowledge of the divine is WAY
better than yours could EVER be! Why don't you go crawl over to one of those all you can eat joints you and that shitty useless uncle of yours love to raid all the time?! I'm sure someone's going to STRANGLE your jabroni ass sooner or later! It'll make this town actually SMELL better since you won't be FARTING all over the place with all the food you scam off Ataru's shithead parents and everyone else in town!"

With that, she spun around and walked away, leaving Sakura a wreck on the stairs, grey eyes spiralling as a pained moan escaped her. As the boys gaped at Akemi in total disbelief at the fact that this girl had just given a verbal assault to Sakura like NOTHING they had ever heard from anyone else before, their female peers — especially ones seeing this from the west-side windows of the classrooms — exchanged looks before one senior whooped, "THREE CHEERS FOR AKEBONO-SAMA!"

"BANZAI! BANZAI! BANZAI!" other girls screamed out.

Noting that, the three youngest of Ataru's sisters blinked as their pulled their fingers from their ears. Seeing Akemi shudder as a bloom of angry ki started to form around her, Haruka shook her head as Ten floated to her side. "Are you still trying to teach Akemi-san how to behave, Haruka-anegimisama?"

"Regrettfully, it is a failed effort, Ten-chan," the beautiful girl with the raven hair in a high ponytail and the deep amethyst eyes lamented...

****

Tenhiro Haruka is actually from Düsseldorf in Germany. Despite growing up in that town, she's about as perfect a Japanese girl — a 'yamato nadeshiko' as they say it here — as one can be. Haruka-anegimisama's stepdad works for Nippon Steel. He's also a very good martial artist...and like some of the other sisters' stepdads, he didn't really mind in the end when he learned that his 'daughter' was his stepdaughter. Given how much her mother really loved and cared for her, I'm sure that Naoto-ojisama just felt happy that he had a daughter to love and care for. It was a good thing, especially after Sakura-obasama was killed in that awful automobile accident on one of the autobahn when Haruka-anegimisama was just six.

Poor Haruka-anegimisama!... Still, it turned out all for the better. After taking a couple years off for bereavement leave, Haruka-anegimisama's stepdad took her out on a martial arts quest, just like Saotome Ranma went on with her dork idiot of a father that finally got her changed into becoming Hayashi Kanami thanks to Tariko-onēchan. After getting back to Düsseldorf, Haruka-anegimisama continued to practice in things like the naginata, the bō staff and the gunsen to keep up her skills. That helped her a lot when she got Gifted as the Quarterstaff Mistress, Kaeku. Haruka-anegimisama picked the French word Fauchard to use here on Earth. I figured she'd pick a German word...!

Anyhow, she's a telepath and empath, but not really strong; Haruka-anegimisama's real Gift is the battle knowledge she gained that was descended from one of Yiziba's most ancient martial arts forms. And her battle staff was made by Benten's own twin sister Kamen. I wonder what Benten's going to think when she finds out about Kamen...

****

"Um...Ami-san?"
Ami perked, then she looked up at Ten. "What is it, Ten-chan?"

"Don't you think Teitoku would like to breathe sometime today, Ami?" Akemi asked as she crossed her arms, a knowing smirk crossing her face.

Nonplussed, Ami blinked for a moment, then she screamed as she bolted up and away from her beloved admiral, her skirt drifting up high enough to show nearby witnesses that YES, she didn't have underwear on. As boys seeing this from nearby fainted while bloody Old Faithfuls exploding from their noses, Okano Yuka looked down to see a red-faced Ataru appearing ready to pass out from holding his breath so long. As Marie knelt and tapped him on the nose, the air exploded from his lips in a relieved sigh. "I'm trying to get AWAY from having multiple girls chase after me...!" he then rasped.

Silence.

More silence.

Still more silence.

Then...

"HE REJECTS THAT GIRL?!"

That was one of the boys from Class 2-5, Kanzaki Ryūha. While not a member of the Stormtroopers, the raven-hair lad was always one who openly supported Lum in everything she did concerning her "husband". As other boys' eyes shot out of their skulls in disbelief on hearing that admission from Ataru, one of Ryūha's friends, Hikawa Shin'ya, screeched, "IT'S THE END OF THE WORLD!"

The boys then launched into massed hysterics, many wailing in fear while others began to run around in circles like chickens with their heads cut off screaming that Doomsday had come. As the sisters and their companions sweat-dropped on seeing this, Akemi walked over to help Ataru get back to his feet. "Boy, those shitty traitors to humanity really need to get a fucking clue at times, eh, Teitoku?"

A moan escaped him. "Akemi-san, how many times must I ask you to NOT call me 'Teitoku'??" he moaned as he gave the pretty girl supporting him a weary yet caring look, making her blush. "Much that I understand why'd you're tempted to do that, I'm NOT in the Navy!"

Akemi playfully stuck out her tongue...

...then she blinked as someone seized her free hand. "Ojō-sama! You must reject Moroboshi! He's a moron! He's a lech! He'll give you...UURKKKK!"

Everyone tensed on seeing Mendō Shūtarō looking like a deer caught in the headlights of an oncoming Shinkansen when Akemi glared murderously at him. "WHY — ARE — YOU — FUCKING — TOUCHING — ME — YOU — SHITTY — ASSHOLE?" she then icily demanded, biting off the words one at a time.

All the sisters, Ataru, Ayumu, Jody and Ami immediately drew back, with Haruka pulling Ten clear of the battle zone. Seeing that, Yuka and her friends scrambled to safety as Akemi snared the scion of Japan's richest family by the neck, then she slammed her boot into his abdomen, LIFTING him by impact force into the air. As girls in school native to Tomobiki screamed in horror on seeing their favourite peer being treated like this, the boys gaping in adoration; like the girls felt when it came to Redet Lum and Sakurambō Sakura, the boys as a whole had no use for Mendō Shūtarō whatsoever.
In the virtual blink of the eye, Akemi then swung around to perform a perfect sitout three-quarter facelock jawbreaker!

"STONE COLD STUNNER!" Koi Shinjin screamed.

As a geyser of blood exploded from poor Shūtarō’s nose and mouth from the impact, Akemi whirled around, standing to her opponent's right front while her arm snared him around the neck, she ducking her head under his right armpit. The suddenness of the grab nearly pulled the poor man's body apart due to whiplash, which made his fans seeing this scream in horror as they immediately realized what was coming next. The boys whooped and yelled in delight as Akemi literally FLOATED into the air, angling herself over the surplus Steyr 1500A staff car the scion of Japan's richest family used to travel to and from his home for school. Before someone could plead to the orchid-haired girl to stop, she fell forward, directing her current target's back right at the command car's hood...!

KK-KKANG!

The front end of the car literally EXPLODED from the impact!

"ROCK BOTTOM!" all the boys seeing this howled.

Fortunately, no one was hurt; Ayumu had quickly thrown up a deflection shield to prevent heavy hunks of torn metal, burst tires, spraying oil and gasoline and chunks of the engine that burst from the impact of Akemi hitting the vehicle with the force of a dropped I-beam. As Shūtarō's fans in school wailed in horror as they imagined how badly he had been injured — a quick glance over told Yuka that Akemi had pretty much protected him from the worst of the impact even if he bumped his head hard on the vehicle's shredded hood — the boys blew off the roof of the school as they screamed their delight.

"AKEBONO COMBO!" Yotsuba screamed out.

Another thunderous roar escaped the boys, drowning out the girls' sobs. As the former Ekō Girl's High alumni laughed at the sight of the suave fool being brought down low — to the shock of all their peers, NONE of them ever cared for the man! — Haruka shook her head while Sakuya doubled over laughing. She was quick to recover herself, handing the megaphone to Akemi as she jogged over to get it. The orchid-haired teen then walked back to place herself in front of the fallen scion of Japan's richest family. As she gave him the finger with her free hand, Akemi shouted through the megaphone, "And if a shitty merchant's brat like you ain't down with that, I got two words for you...!"

"SUCK IT!" all the boys bellowed out on recognizing the favourite taunt of one of World Wrestling Entertainment's most controversial wrestling stables.

Laughter filled the air as the Ekō alumni shook their heads in amusement while the girls native to Tomobiki sobbed at what just happened...!

****

Nearby...

"Um...I believe Moroboshi-sama may not be in any mood to meet with you today, Waka-sama," the masked stagehand servant to Shūtarō’s younger sister warned.

Seeing what had just been done to her brother at the hands of the garishly-dressed girl who called Moroboshi Ataru "admiral" for some odd reason, Mendō Ryōko was trying desperately NOT to
show any form of panic in the face of what was becoming a very DIFFERENT day than the young heiress of Japan's richest fortune could have begun to imagine even with her past experiences with her brother's hated rival. She and her escorts had come here after rumours began to fly thanks to the Kuromegane about Ataru having a strange encounter with metahumans of all things! "Um...that is a good point..."

«Heed it, Ryōko.»

The very theatrical sophomore who currently attended Seiran Girl's High School in nearby Kodaira beyond the western border of the family estate awked on hearing that ice-cold voice echo deep in her mind. Looking around like a panicking mouse sensing a nasty predator coming her way, she then squealed in fright as the darkness in the alley they had been hiding in morphed before a woman in a hooded white cape with red crucifix-like insignia on her shoulders appeared, an icy smile on her face that made the quite sadistic Ryōko instantly realize there were WORSE things in the neighbourhood.

«If you don't, be warned: We will DEFINITELY hold a grudge.»

The newcomer — all Ryōko could see was a well-tailored horse riding suit with black blazer and knee-length skirt, a plaid waistcoat, calf-high dress boots, a white ruffled shirt with a red tie bearing a white Gothic cross, bangs of lavender hair peeking out from under the hood — walked by the hidden heiress of Japan's richest family and her bodyguards as if they were mere gnats not worthy of her attention. Ryōko tried not to soil herself as a chill seemingly worse than the Arctic in mid-winter flowed past her...

...before the grenades she had hidden in her palanquin all exploded!

****

The front gate of Tomobiki High School...

People gasped on hearing those multiple concussive blasts echo from a nearby alleyway, then they looked over. "Chikage-chan!" Hinako called out, waving.

Ten perked. "Ah! Chikage-anekun!"

Cheers whooped from the other sisters as the woman in the flowing cape came over, the hood falling away from her head to reveal well-styled lavender hair in a bun at the back of her head, two flowing bangs framing her hawkish face down to her breasts, a pair of cold yet warm royal blue eyes peeking out of her face. She appeared to be Ataru's age. "Ya, Ani-kun. Minna. Having fun?"

Ataru looked around Hirosaki Chikage to see the semiconscious Mendō Ryōko and two of her bodyguards crawling out of the alley, they entwined with the shattered wreck of the palanquin Shūtarō's sister often used to travel around in. "By the looks of it, you had some fun as well, Chikage-chan."

"She was about to annoy us, Ani-kun," Chikage stated as she stopped close to her brother, with Marie shifting over to stay close to her. "Given what Akemi just did to the Witless Wonder over there, I believe she was going to strive to alleviate her boredom on the remainder of us since we put her main target into the cockpit for the foreseeable future." Ignoring the laughter from the Ekō Girl's High School alumni and nearby boys on hearing her call Shūtarō THAT, she added, "Since we're in the midst of performing the final garbage day when it comes to our unwanted visitors from abroad..."

"How long do we have anyway, Chikage-chan?" Eigo Kaho asked.
"Five more minutes."

"Glad you can keep track of it, Chikage-chan," Ayumu then noted. "I always have trouble remembering these sorts of things."

The sorceress of Ataru's sisters smirked. "The curse of Infinity, Ayumu."

"Yeah, you can say that again...!"

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Hirosaki Chikage is the only one of Ataru's half-sisters from Tōkyō itself. Told you she was really creepy and scary at times. Then again, she's the granddaughter of one of Japan's most powerful magical warriors, who actually once served under the famous 'Dark Lady of the Orient' that liberated all of Asia — and by extension Africa and many places in Oceania and the Americas — from European magical control in the Wars of Liberation that happened alongside the Second World War and the First Metahuman War.

Ever since she learned the truth that her late stepdad Tomohisa wasn't her real father, Chikage-anekun's been investigating who her true father was, finding out back in March when she met Hinako-onētama during Easter break from school — she goes to the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry in Scotland — and learning that it was Ataru's dork father who was her real father. Not to mention learning what Nagaiwakai-obāchan did to make sure there were enough 'spares' beyond Sakuya-onēsama to take over the Moroboshi Clan.

Especially with Tariko-onēchan living on Yiziba all those years.

You personally ask me, I think Chikage-anekun would make a much better matriarch than Sakuya-onēsama. It's not because that I don't think Sakuya-onēsama can't do it. It's just that Chikage-anekun has got a real level head. She has to be given what she became Gifted as after her first year at Hogwarts. She's the Dark Heart of Pure Chaos, Nosyo'or'bem. Here on Earth, she calls herself Dragonheart.

Atop being one of Yiziba's top magicals — who is NOT affiliated with either the Shadow Court under Jody-san or the Cosmic Mage Guild under Tariko-onēchan's friend Rose Potter — Chikage-anekun also has cosmic-level omniscience like Ayumu-onēchan has. Given that Chikage-anekun believes she's been resurrected many times over during the last couple of millennia — not to mention her taking four trips into OTHER DIMENSIONS during summer vacations after she started Hogwarts — she's got to be a person who can take even a solar system exploding before her without panicking.

Anyone who wants to try to hurt her Ani-kun will know PAIN. I just hope she can help Lum-chan now...

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"M-m-Moroboshi...!"

Ataru perked, then he looked over before sighing. "Sakurambō-san, do you think you should be moving around after Akemi nearly ripped your body in half?" he asked as he crossed his arms...even if Ashikaga Ami was holding one of his limbs as she gave the swaying school nurse a disgusted look. Much that he didn't care for the part-time shrine miko, he knew how much the boys would riot if she was permanently crippled. Not that he wouldn't mind seeing the lifeless fools beyond the school gate beaten down for their inability to see the world as it really was, he didn't care to see any of them killed.
Sakurambō Sakura gargled before Kanzaki Ryūha and Hikawa Shin'ya moved to steady her; unlike most of the guys attending Tomobiki High, neither boy was willing to take advantage of the older woman. Chikage sighed before snapping her fingers, materializing a chair behind the older magical; once they saw what had happened, Ryūha and Shin'ya were quick to guide Sakura over to sit down. As the nurse tried to shake her head clear, Ashikaga Akemi shook her own head. "Fucking stubborn bitch, isn't she?"

Aria looked over, a pout on her face. "Akemi-chan, don't swear."

"Oh, leave her be, Aria-chan," Yotsuba noted before she gazed at the Ekō alumni standing there. In the background, the bell announcing the start of homeroom period rang off, but none of the students on the lawn — to say anything of the still-dazed Principal laid out on the walkway behind Sakura — moved to go into class; given the shattering nature of the events of the last half-hour, this was way too important, especially with the fact that Moroboshi Ataru was leaving.

Classes were nothing in comparison to an event like THIS!

Before Sakura could say anything, the metahuman detective from London cleared her throat, then she stared at Yuka. "Yuka-san, you saw what happened when Ani-chama met up with Ami-chan here, didn't you?" she announced, having produced a microphone from nowhere while metaphysical speakers blared out her words over the school grounds. "Did Ani-chama in any way, shape or form, do ANYTHING to molest Ami-san when she did her version of the Thunderhips Flying Takedown?"

As Sakura awked, her cheeks turning incredibly red — How the devil did she know what I called that back when I was at Kitatōkyō High School?! the nurse mentally demanded — the flame-haired heroine of the Ekō Girls High School terrorist attack from Edogawa in the east end of Tōkyō shook her head. "No! When Ami-san came out of nowhere, she called out 'Teitoku-sama' before she did that flying frankensteiner manoeuvre of hers to drive Ataru-kun back-first into the ground, her crotch shoved right into his face. It was a miracle he didn't suffocate! Hey, why didn't YOU stop her, anyway?!"

"She's as strong as Akemi-chan is," Yotsuba provided.

Eyes locked on Akemi, then they glanced to the nearly-destroyed command car nearby, with Mendō Shūtarō still unconscious within the wreckage of the engine block. "Er...r-right!" Yuka said as sweat appeared in her hair while some of her friends laughed. "I take it she does this often with Ataru-kun."

"Hai, since she met him back in the summer when Ani-chama was taking a well-overdue vacation from this place," Yotsuba declared.

"WHAT?!"

That was the Principal, who had just surged to his feet to glare intently at Ataru, he miraculously recovered from the severe beating he got at the hands of his students moments before. As an angry aura forming around him, Marie then sternly declared, "He's not a student here anymore, Köchō-sensei! You can stop that now." She then exchanged a knowing look with Chikage before she thumbed her older sister. "Shall I ask Chikage-chan to get her friend to EXORCISE your precious 'Kota-chan'?"

The elderly school administrator screeched in horror as he nearly turned to stone from that threat, which would deprive him of one of his few friends. He shook his head before glaring at Ten. "Young man, what are you doing?! Kota-chan's your friend! How can you stand there...!"
"He's floating, you blind idiot!" Yotsuba cut in.

As many of the Ekō alumni and some of the boys watching this laughed, the Principal spun on the metahuman detective from London. "Now, see here, young lady! You should be in school now...!"

"Got the day off to bring Ani-chama home!"

"MOROBOSHI-KUN IS NOT LEAVING!"

"You have no right to decree that, sir."

He spun around to stare at Haruka. "Young lady...!"

His voice turned into a panicked shriek as the German-raised teen's clothes morphed from the stylish Western-pattern civilian clothing she came to town with into the red-trimmed white jumpsuit of the Quartermaster Mistress, her glittering bō staff appearing in her hand as a blazing energy blade emitted from one end to make said weapon a naginata. In an instant, the blade was pointed at his throat. "I believe, Ten-chan, you wished to say something more to this lout," Haruka commented.

"You bet I do," Ten snarled, bursts of flame emitting from his mouth. "You old creep! I don't know why Kota-chan likes you given how much you love to HURT your students all the time!" he snapped, making the Principal awk in disbelief. "I can't believe the Parent-Teacher Association actually LIKES the idea of a creep like you being the principal here! Onsen-sensei cares way more for all the students here than a nutcase like you!" Here, he pointed to the gruff vice-principal and current homeroom teacher for Class 2-4, who had just marched out the front door to get all the students on the lawn into classes. "Oji-chan was WAY more impressed with Onsen-sensei than he ever was with you!"

As the stocky brown-haired man with the brooding eyes blushed at that compliment from the firefighter's son, many of the students on the lawn nodded in agreement. "Jariten's right!" Ryūha snapped as his peers all whooped in support. "Onsen-sensei may be strict, but he's fair! He had no choice but to go along with the 'physicals' because he'd lose his damn JOB if he tried to fight it!"

That made Onsen Mark balk. "Kanzaki-kun...!"

"Onsen-kun! Make Moroboshi-kun go to class right now!" the Principal then demanded. "He'll have detention for a MONTH for not being in uniform!"

"I can't do that, Kōchō-sensei," the vice-principal then declared.

"WHAT?! WHY NOT?!"

"Because Moroboshi-kun's been declared an emancipated adult for all the CHILD ABUSE he's suffered at the hands of his fool parents, thus he has no legal obligation to attend either this school or any other school!" Onsen declared, making all the students gasp in surprised disbelief at that statement. "Given that and given the fact that he actually LIVED on that Yiziba planet until he was TRAPPED here before the Tag Race, separated from his own TWIN SISTER like he was just to appease all the aliens, it's no wonder that he wants out of that damned house and out of this damned town!"

Silence.

More silence.

Still more silence.
"THOSE ARE LIES!" the Principal screeched.

"WAIT!" Ryūha snapped. "Ataru, you actually LIVED on ANOTHER PLANET?!"

"Yes, I did, Ryūha," Ataru affirmed as a pained look crossed his face. "After I got tired of listening to that YŪJO I once called my mother...!"

"HOW DARE YOU INSULT YOUR MOTHER LIKE THAT?!" the Principal roared.

KK-KRACK!

The elderly school administrator had now been plowed face-first into the ground thanks to a large CINDER BLOCK of all things smashing down on his head! As all the students gasped at such a sight, the sisters turned to the south before Hinako whooped with delight. "Ah! It's Onē-tama! Onē-tama!"

"Yah-hoo! Ane-chama!" Yotsuba screamed out, waving.

"Ohayō, Aneue-sama!" Marie calmly called out.

"Onē-chama!" Kaho cheered. "Ah! Onē-chama's here!"

"Nē-ya!" Aria gushed. "Aria needs to make a sweet for Nē-ya!"

"Ohayō gozaimashita, Anegimi-sama!" Haruka said with a deep bow.

"About time you came for your grand entrance, Onē-sama!" Sakuya jeered.

"Ya, Ane-kun! Ready for the big moment?" Chikage asked.

"To end the latest Mother of All Fight Scenes we did back in June?" the slender yet feminine obvious **fraternal twin sister** to Moroboshi Ataru said as she came up to join her siblings, making all the students gape in shock at the sight. "Oi, Chikage, I need some theme music here! You mind?!"

"Hai, hai," the metahuman arch-mage sorceress declared, raising her hand.

"HOLD IT!"

Everyone looked at Ten. "What is it, Ten-chan?!" Hinako asked.

The firefighter's son giggled before he floated over to Akemi. "Um, Akemi-san, can I borrow that?" he asked, pointing to the megaphone in her hand.

She blinked, then handed it over. "Go for it, kiddo!"


Chikage's fingers snapped...
...unleashing a heavy guitar riff over the grounds, making people in neighbouring houses peek out their windows as they wondered what was going on...

...before everyone gasped on seeing Tariko Katabarbe's whole body began to glow.

*In the skies above the Isle,

Aces in exile prevail...!

The ground then shook slightly as people gasped on seeing a total of seven buildings — the centre one rising from somewhere in the town Ginza with six others forming a hexagon-shaped circle around it — suddenly surge into the air just as a giant space-warp began to appear far overhead. As everyone watching this cried out in shock at such an incredible display, Ten gaped in horror as it finally hit him, his hand dropping the megaphone as he turned sheer-white...

"A starbase self-destruct device...?!!" he croaked...

****

The Miyake home, that moment...

"Holy FUCK! Who's DOING that?!!"

As Fujinami Ryūnosuke and Miyake Shinobu's parents Toshoba and Kimiki gaped in shocked awe at such an incredible display — which simply outdid ANYTHING that had happened in Tomobiki since the Tag Race over a year before — Ataru's former girlfriend was seated on the living room couch, staring with tear-filled eyes at the damned book that had been shown to her not an hour before.

A tome containing some of the most PERVERSE "religious" words she ever read.

A tome based on the DIARIES of her and many of her acquaintances and friends.

A tome that was the core theological guidebook to a "faith" that — according to the note that had been stuffed into *The Book of Lum* by Susumu Marie before Ataru had handed it to Ryūnosuke for Shinobu and her family to see — had ultimately seen MILLIONS slaughtered...

...all in the name of a "living goddess" named Redet Lum.

*Dear God, it's no wonder Ataru-kun hates her now...!*

Sniffing, Shinobu set the Book aside as she rose from the sofa and walked over to gaze out the window, looking up as the buildings being yanked out of town were sent flying at escape velocity through the huge space-warp now over the Kantō plains, it leading to a point in deepest space where a virtual SEA of alien starships — many shaped like the flagship of Redet Invader when he came to Earth to invade the planet the previous October — in some sort of anchorage near a planet. As flashes of explosions winked in and out on the planet's surface, the buildings were sent flying into the formation...

...before the one in the centre detonated in a titanic blast!

"Oh, shit...!" Ryūnosuke hissed. "What the fuck is Moroboshi doing?!!"

Shinobu sighed. "Getting rid of Lum, it seems."

Her parents blinked, then Kimiki sighed. "Thank God...!"
The Moroboshi home, that moment...

"No...no...no! He couldn't have...!"

As Moroboshi Kinshō watched in horror at the sight of THOUSANDS of what appeared to be Urusian starships being WIPED out by whatever it was that had been in that building just torn out of Tomobiki, she heard hissing from passersby as they pointed up into the sky, wondering what was going on.

Ataru's mother KNEW what was happening.

It was something she had dreaded for over a year now.

Something that was about to crash down on her from a direction she KNEW couldn't be fought off by her future daughter-in-law...

Not if what the people in Division One of the Public Security Intelligence Agency told her about the planet her stupid boy had exiled himself to for ELEVEN YEARS was anywhere NEAR the truth...!

"I wish I never had him...!"

KK-KLONK!

A moan escaped the woman after a cinder block smashed into her head...

Dear Diary,

*What the heck was that moron Ōgi thinking of, anyway?*!

*Oh, right, forgot...*

*That idiot CAN'T think!*

*Thank the Maidens for Tariko-onēchan...*

Tomobiki High School...

"How powerful WAS that thing?!!" Kanzaki Ryūha demanded.

Susumu Marie sighed. "Five hundred megatons of TNT, Kanzaki-san."

Silence.

More silence.

Still more silence.

Then...

"**WHO THE HELL PUT THAT THING HERE??**!" Ryūha then shrieked.

"Here."

A book was handed over to him by Hirosaki Chikage. "*The Book of Lum'?!*" he wondered aloud.
"The full explanation is in a letter folded inside it," the arch-mage sorceress declared before she raised her hand, middle finger and thumb pressing together. "But first...!"

**SNAP!**

Everyone perked on hearing her snap her fingers...

...then they jolted as a gong sounded from somewhere just as the sky overhead darkened to a cloudy night, a moaning Gregorian-like chant accompanied by trumpets and other instruments then echoing through the air. All the wrestling fans among the crowd were quick to sense whose music it was.

"No way...!" a wide-eyed Hikawa Shin'ya gasped.

"I thought that was all just a wrestling gimmick...!" Shimizu Kaho croaked.

Ryūha turned to stare wide-eyed at Chikage. "He's one of YOU?!"

"He is," the arch-mage sorceress declared...

...as a space-warp appeared on the north side of the school grounds, making students cry out in awe and delight as lightning seemed to crash down around the very tall and muscular man now stepping out of the warp, dressed in funeral black from neck to toe, a wide-brimmed stetson hat covering his head of long stringy black hair that framed a rugged face barely covered with a well-trimmed moustache and goatee, his ultramarine blue eyes now glowing with what seemed to be infernal fire. The clothes he had on under his normal ankle-length overcoat composed of a black jumpsuit in the same pattern worn by Tariko Katabarbe, her sisters and their friends, emblazoned with a dark purple T-shaped symbol over crossed spikes with points down on his muscular chest, black belt and boots finishing the ensemble.

By then, Tariko had walked up the walkway to place herself right before the just-arrived phenom's path. "**Ruodeuto...!**" she hissed in Yizibajohei.

"**Tuyuki...**" he growled in an echoing voice that made everyone shiver.

She pointed at the old willow tree at the northwest corner of the property. The phenom raised a gloved hand, sending out eldritch lightning to literally destroy the tree with one blow. As students and staff ducked from the fragments, a pained bellow escaped the smoky mist that formed from the tree's destruction, it then morphing into the shape of an elderly man in a white cloak.

"**A yōkai...?!**" Koi Shinjin cried out in disbelief.

With a shift of the hand, the new arrival sent the screaming spirit right into the space-warp. As people who could see what was going on gazed into that chasm between worlds, they then shivered on seeing HUNDREDS of dark creatures within, all tied down by glowing black chains that seemed to be burning them alive. Before anyone could summon the courage to ask what that warp actually led to, Tariko then pointed towards Sakurambō Sakura. As the boys all screamed in horror on seeing that Ataru's sister was now targeting their favourite teacher, the phenom then raised his hand in a grasping motion.

Sakura cried out as energy lashed right into her back, yanking out the ghostly image of what appeared to be an older version of her dressed in samurai-like armour, reminding everyone seeing this of Lum's best friend from the planet Fukunokami. "Sakura-sensei was POSSESSED?!" Ryūha exclaimed.
Another yank saw the shrine miko's guardian angel banished from Earth forever, which made everyone scream in relief as Sakura slumped back down on the chair that Chikage had created for her. Just as people began to wonder what was to happen next, an aged voice bellowed, "EVIL SPIRIT! BEGONE!"

"Oh, man...!" Okano Yuka moaned as a diminutive monk charged out of nowhere, his shakujō held high to bash away the evil monster now in everyone's midst.

The phenom then spun around, snaring Sakurambō Hayao by the neck. In an instant, the ghostly image of what appeared to be an elderly Buddhist monk in more classical robes was pulled out of the man everyone knew as "Cherry", then contemptuously tossed into the horrible pit that his niece's guardian angel had just been banished to. Seeing this, everyone moaned. "Figures that Cherry was possessed, too!" Ryūha then muttered under his breath, shaking his head.

"That's not the last one to be dealt with today, Ryūha," Chikage warned. People gazed her way. "Who else, Hirosaki-kun?!" Onsen Mark demanded.

The teenage arch-mage sorceress pointed at the nurse's station. Seeing that, everyone then paled. "Oh, kami, NO! Please, not HER...!" Shin'ya cried out.

Tariko snapped her fingers...

...making a diagnostic bed appear on the lawn between her and the phenom. As the boys screamed in horror on noting the newcomer's next target was Redet Lum herself, her cousin Ten cried; he hadn't been warned about this by anyone! Tariko raised her hand as the phenom approached the unconscious warlord's daughter, creating a shield around the scene to prevent some foolish idiot from interfering in a very necessary task while also bringing Ten over into her arms so he could be close to his cousin while the newcomer did his grisly work. As many boys began to weep, the phenom snared Lum's neck...

...then he yanked out what looked like some red-skinned version of her with very deformed facial features, longer horns and canines that seemed like tusks. As the creature screeched in outrage as it tried to lash out at the impudent mortal with the power of a major god, Tariko's eyes glowed, a battle aura that made people step away from her forming around her body. "I do not forget, bitch...!"

By then, Sakura had recovered enough to look at the scene. Her eyes were now wide with disbelief and horror. "Ibaraki-dōji...?!" she croaked, shaking her head in sheer shock.

"I do not forgive...!"

As the writhing creature tried to spin around and grasp the alien girl that had been her effective host for over a year, a lethal smile crossed the face of the Trickster of the Show as an aura making her seem like a male version of herself appeared in the screeching oni's eyes. "...and I always win the fight scene!" the woman born a man named Moroboshi Ataru then snarled. "Get rid of her, Mark!"

"With pleasure, Tariko," the phenom declared with a smirk...

...before he casually pitched the wailing Ibaraki-dōji right through the portal. As all the boys seeing this screamed out in delight and Ten cried out in relief, the space-warp then closed...but not before those who could directly see into it saw that the evil creature that had possessed the school's most popular student for what had to be a long time being lashed down by writhing black crystalline chains, making her screech in helpless outrage as she felt her very life force drained from her. Once
the warp closed, the dark clouds overhead dispersed, revealing a sunny morning in this suburb of Tōkyō.

"LUM-CHAN IS FREE! BANZAI!" Shinjin screamed out.

All the boys instantly chanted the salute three times as everyone else seeing this applauded what just happened this morning; no matter what one's feelings were concerning Moroboshi Ataru's "wife", no one wanted her to be possessed by one of the great spiritual oni of Japanese classical legend. Nodding in acceptance of that gratitude, the phenom gazed on Ten. "When you go home, Jariten, warn her parents of what happened," he declared, making people fall silent. "Until the planet is cleansed of those creatures that would do aliens harm — and until your own leaders learn that arcane concept called 'civilized behaviour' — this planet will be FOREVER sealed from you and your allies."

As the boys gasped on hearing that declaration, Ten nodded. "Hai...!"

"Also tell your uncle that Clause Ten of the Tag Race Treaty is now in effect for the next TWO HUNDRED YEARS, Ten!" Ataru called out from the main gate.

"N-n-NO...!"

Everyone spun around as Lum tried to surge out from under the covers...

...then she screamed out as her horn buds were telekinetically yanked out of her skull, making her flop down onto the diagnostic bed as those conical bits of cartilage flew into Tariko's outstretched hand. As she walked up to place Ten on the bed beside his cousin, she then glared down at her would-be "wife". Lum's eyes went wide on seeing the white uniform with the black belt and grey tabby striping lining both sides of the body and outer legs of the Trickster of the Show, her black coyote's head insignia over her cleavage declaring loud and clear to the warlord's daughter who and WHAT this being was. Tariko then leaned down to tenderly kiss Ten on the forehead, he giving her a grateful smile in return.

"N-n-no...Darling...no, please...help me...!" Lum then hissed out.

Hearing the panicked denial in the voice of her would-be "wife", Tariko glared at her, her eyes glowing with fire, which made Lum squawk in horror as the memories of people who had faced this woman's past-self in the Mother of All Fight Scenes twenty-seven decades ago flashed through her mind.

"Ah! Hime's in time!"

Heads snapped over...

"Shirayuki-nēsama!" Ten called out.

Jogging up to them from the main gate was a slender girl of thirteen, dressed now in a black blouse with a white cooking apron. She had beautiful mauve hair in a lob with the fringes curled in at her shoulders, part of it secured with a headband tied in a cat ear bow. Deep purple eyes peeked out of a kind face, one that was instantly recognizable by almost everyone there. "That's Osamu Shirayuki!!" Marubeya Momoe, one of Mendō Shūtarō's many fans in Class 2-4, called out from the windows of her homeroom.

"The Chef Princess of Nagoya?!" her best friend Gekasawa Kumiko demanded.
As people began to excitedly chatter away, Shirayuki then came over to hand a small picnic basket to Ten. "There you go, Ten-chan!" she proudly declared as the young Oni gushed at the sight of yet another of Tariko's and Ataru's half-sisters. "Hime made some nutritious food for both you and Lum-chan to eat once you get home! You tell Lum-chan's parents what happened! Desu no?!"

"Hai!" Ten said with a determined nod.

"NO...!" Lum croaked out.

Snarling, Tariko leaned down to grab her would-be "wife's" hair to smash down her head on the diagnostic bed. As Shirayuki backed away from the scene, the boy-turned-metahuman girl then leaned up to glare intently into Lum's face, making her cry out in mortal terror. "«Remember this, Lum...»" Tariko snarled in accented Urusian. "«I was the one who tagged your horns in the Tag Race!»"

Lum's eyes nearly popped out of her head as she saw the ghostly image of the man she loved with all her heart appear around this nightmare holding her down. As Ten shook his head sadly, Tariko raised her hand, showing the horn buds she had telekinetically yanked out of her would-be "wife's" skull.

"«And I know the difference between a tag race tag and a marriage tag!»"

"NO...!"

KK-KRUNCH!

KK-KRUNCH!

A mindless howl of pain escaped the warlord's daughter as the source of her powers was shattered into tiny bits by this creature. As the image of Ataru faded from Lum's vision, Tariko leaned back. "Karen will be there for you as soon as she can, Ten," she then declared, raising her fingers. "Stay safe!"

"Dōmo, Tariko-onēchan!" Ten said.

And with a snap of the fingers...

...Lum and Ten vanished from Earth for the final time!

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The Moroboshi home...

A moaning Moroboshi Kinshō gasped as a flash of light made her look up...

...then she screamed in horror on seeing that her would-be daughter-in-law's scoutship had just vanished from its orbit over her house.

"NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO0OOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO0

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Tomobiki High School...

Stunned silence had fallen over the scene as people took a moment to absorb the incredible events...
that they just witnessed, something that seemed the complete antithesis of the world-shattering events
the previous October when all of humankind finally learned they were not alone in the universe. As
the boys looked torn between grateful that their favourite schoolmate had been freed of some evil
yōkai’s possession and heartbroken on noting that the metahumans in their midst had effectively
BANISHED her from Earth for the rest of her life, the girls all exchanged stunned and delighted
looks.

"She's gone...!" Okano Yuka breathed out.

"We're rid of her...!" Shimizu Kaho moaned.

"No more aliens...!" Sanokura Emi added.

All the girls who had just witnessed everything contemplated that...then they exploded in wild cheers
as they shared hugs and laughed at the idea of being free of the insanity that had rocked Tomobiki
for over a year. As many of the boys began to sob at the fact that they wouldn't get any support from
their peers towards getting Lum back on Earth, the phenom that had banished Ibaraki-dōji from this
planet nodded before he turned away, summoning another space-warp to teleport out of Tomobiki.

"DAME DESU NO!"

He jolted to a stop, slowly turning as a sweat drop appeared in his hair to see a mad Osamu
Shirayuki glaring at him. Before he could protest anything, a large picnic basket was produced out of
nowhere and thrust into his hand. "Your wife told Hime that you weren't eating properly, Mark-san!
You take that and make sure all your friends eat properly before your matches tonight! Desu no?"

"Ah...ha...y-yeah! Th-thanks, Shirayuki!" he muttered as he took the basket in hand.

In a flash of light, he was gone, heading back to the United States. As the students and staff stared in
awe at how much the current incarnation of the Great Chef of the West, **Syuosekuo**
("Küchenchefin"), had stared down the likes of the phenom who effectively commanded the
Yizibajohei version of the deepest pit of Hell Itself for all spirits and alien invaders from other
dimensions, Shirayuki turned and snared Tariko Katabarbe by the arm, yanking her towards the main
gate. "Hey! Shirayuki!"

"Dame desu no, Nē-sama!" her younger sister snapped as she glared at Tariko. "Hime made a big
breakfast for Nē-sama and Nii-sama to eat! We're going to have a picnic in the town park so you can
rest after helping free poor Lum-san of that mean oni! Now march!"

Hearing that, all the sisters brightened. "Ah! Hina wants Shirayuki-chan's breakfast too!" Saeru
Hinako called out as Shirayuki yanked Tariko through the gate.

"Kaho wants breakfast!" Eigo Kaho called out.


"Let's go eat!" Sukeyama Sakuya then bade.

The sisters, Moroboshi Ataru and his date, the two teenager girls who saw him as their "admiral" and
Kasuga Ayumu headed off the street towards the town park, leaving behind a group of bewildered
staff and students. After a moment, Kanzaki Ryūha stared at Sakurambō Sakura. "Did we SEE that,
Sensei?!"

"We did," the nurse and shrine priestess declared, standing up as the chair that Chikage conjured for
her vanished. "Unlike the end of the Pseudo-War, this is definitely a permanent change for all of us."

"Some won't like it," Onsen mused.

"I think that now, Mark-kun, Moroboshi and his sisters clearly no longer care."

The vice-principal grimly nodded as the people around them shared worried looks...

To Be Continued...

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WRITER'S NOTES

In The Senior Year, Mike Smith and I postulated that the Neptunian people as led by Oyuki couldn't have lived on Neptune itself since it was a gas giant planet. These days, Oyuki's people live on Triton, the eighth planet's largest moon. Since Triton is tidal locked on Neptune, its "orbital day" would be measured as one whole orbit around the planet (equal to 5.877 Earth days). A "year" in the eyes of Neptunians would be one solar orbit around the Sun (164.8 Earth years/60,182 Earth days). Thus, the total number of orbital days would average 10,240 "days" (with adjustments for the local equivalent of leap years, of course). Because of the moon being tidal locked to its mother planet, most settlements on Triton would be located on the side facing away from Neptune to get exposure to the Sun.

The Senior Year character and situation notes: Pukaze first appeared in "Mie's Story". The Thunderhips Flying Takedown flying crotch-first frankensteiner attack was first shown in "The Return of Kōsei Ryōki". Sakurambō Sakura's alma mater, Kitatōkyō High School, first appeared in "Sakura's Class Reunion". Ōgi on'dai-Zkuhsbagh first appeared in "What Price For Love?".

In Bible Black: New Testament, Jody Crowley is identified as being the granddaughter of Aleister Crowley (1875-1947), the founder of Thelemic thought. However, New Testament is set in the same year as this story is set. Given that Jody is clearly magical, I factored in both the universes of Harry Potter and Mahō Sensei Negima to make her mother be the short-lived Nuit Ma Ahathoor Hecate Sappho Jezebel Lilith Crowley (1904-06); and yes, those are her full names. I would have it that Nuit was kidnapped due to showing high magic by a predecessor dark lord to Tom Riddle (Voldemort) in the years before World War One; as I wrote in Magic and Canada, this was the time of "Chaucer's Rebellion" against the Ministry of Magic. Once rescued by the aurors, Nuit Crowley would show acute signs of rhabdophobia (a fear of wand-wizards), thus would be invited to Negi Springfield's alma mater, the Meridiana Academy of Magecraft in Wales, thanks to the influence of Albus Dumbledore through his then-teacher Nicolas Flamel. After graduating, Nuit would marry the descendant of the Duchy of Anglesey, Meridiana's representative seat in the pre-1700 Wizard's Council. As noted in Part One, Jody was born in 1940, attending Meridiana on an advanced course from 1946-56.

Translation list: Ferch (name) — Literally "daughter of (name)", this is a Welsh patronymic; Argentium Astrum — Literally "silver star", this is one of the potential translations for the name of Aleister Crowley's first spiritual organization founded in 1907, A∴A∴; Teitoku — Admiral; Fauchard — A type of polearm used in Europe from the Eleventh to the Seventeenth Centuries CE that resembles the Chinese yānyuèdāo (also known as the guāndāo) once used by the famous warrior leader Guān Yū; Waka-sama — Young Master/Mistress; Yūjo — Prostitute;
Küchenchefin — Lady Chef of the Kitchen.

The NOëL series of video games were created by Pioneer LDC before the turn of the millennium as the dating simulation game craze started up in earnest in Japan. I've always liked these characters even if they didn't get any sort of serious exposure in the wake of such popular games as the Tokimeki Memorial series, much less Sister Princess. Like I did with other video game characters, I discovered girls like Okano Yuka, Shimizu Kaho and Sanokura Emi when I was teaching English in South Korea between 1996-2005 through art books done on the series. For those who do know of NOëL, the events of this story occur after the third game, Mission On The Line; I just changed the time of that story to the first year of high school for Yuka and her peers in lieu of third year as it was done in NOëL 3.

Yes, girls introduced here like Ashikaga Akemi and her sister Ashikaga Ami are the shipgirl versions of the Imperial Japanese Navy destroyers Akebono and Amagiri as they're depicted in Kantai Collection, though they are aged up to late teen years in this story. The names given to them are the human names I devised for them in stories like A Girl's Name and The Seventh Shipgirl that appear at this website and at both SpaceBattles and Sufficient Velocity.

Kanzaki Ryūha and his friend Hikawa Shin'ya were characters created by Depecheion in follow-on snippets of shorts I wrote at the Anime Addventure.

The yōkai of the willow tree that was exorcised in this part first appeared in the Yatsura manga story "Terror of the Willow Ghost" (manga chapter #127). Sakura's and Cherry's guardian angels appeared in the manga story "The Big Game" (manga chapter #11). Marubeya Momoe and Gekasawa Kumiko first appeared in the manga story "Even Though I Wait For You" (manga chapter #27); their family names are my invention.
Chapter Summary

Ryūnosuke learns about Tariko meeting her far in the past, Karen goes to Uru to explain why it was foolish for Lum to hurt her Onii-chan and Shinobu reunites with her first lover.

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The Tomobiki town park, two hours after breakfast...

"Goshujin-sama, Shirayuki-sama and Shirayuki-onēsama made a nutritious breakfast for you to enjoy before you go on your date with Josephine-sama," the beaming teenage girl in the maid's uniform said as she curtsied to Moroboshi Ataru and his current date Josephine Crowley. They were seated at one of the kotatsu that had been teleported over from Ōmure-jima for everyone in Ataru's extended family to use to enjoy the large breakfast created for them by Osamu Shirayuki with the help of her near-namesake Fukushima Shirayuki; blankets had been laid out on the ground to protect everyone's clothing. "Namiko hopes Goshujin-sama will gain enough energy for his date with Josephine-sama."

Gazing at her former boyfriend, Miyake Shinobu blinked on seeing the embarrassed look on his face while his current companion was trying not to giggle too much at his flustered appearance. Everyone who had been at Tomobiki High School an hour before when Redet Lum was expelled from Earth had dressed down from their form-fitting battlesuits so they didn't draw too much attention to themselves; given how many people living in town these days had taken to the warlord's daughter from Uru, no one wanted to deal with the hassle of Lum's "fans" causing them trouble.

Never mind what people's reaction would be on learning that the "cancer of Tomobiki" had thirteen honest-to-goodness SISTERS — including a TWIN SISTER of all things! — who acted more as a proper family to him than his parents Muchi and Kinshô ever did.

Why in God's name didn't I really take notice of that before? Shaking her head, Shinobu blinked as Fujinami Ryūnosuke's hand gently came down on her shoulder and gave it a warm squeeze. Smiling at her true best friend to reassure the tomboy that all was well, she then gazed back on the gathering of sisters and friends. That Ataru's father had been manipulated by his late grandmother Nagaiwakai to serve as genetic donor to create would-be heiresses to the matriarchy of the Moroboshi Clan of Mutsu — the only major family in Japan administered as such despite how the Mizunokōji Clan of Musashino ran themselves these days — made his former girlfriend shake his head at how WEIRD this whole day was becoming. Never mind the horrifyingly embarrassing revelations about the existence of a "church" meant to worship Lum as a living goddess...with the wonderful "bonuses" of denouncing Shinobu as a "sinful
And the last thing...

That her ex-boyfriend was actually ONE-HALF of the being born Moroboshi Ataru before he migrated to Yiziba eleven years ago to escape a growing abusive environment at home, being made by his grieving adopted mother to become a GIRL at age six, letting her grow up as such.

Tariko Katabarbe.

Not to mention FORCE said boy-turned-girl to become the future incarnation of one of the most feared and respected of all Yizibajohe.

The Trickster of the Great Show of Life...!

Tuyuki...!

*The Nightmare of the Mother of All Fight Scenes*, Ten-chan called her, Shinobu mused, remembering that megaphoned shout from the firefighter's son an hour earlier when Tariko arrived in town to properly divorce Lum before sending her back to her home planet...after a certain phenom from America came over and cleansed her of being POSSESSED by a spiritual oni native to Japan! *There's definitely no way that Lum or her friends will ever come back, even if Tariko-chan goes back to live on Yiziba full-time. With so many people Gifted now, the Urusians wouldn't DARE risk a replay of that disaster...!*

As Ataru nodded his thanks to Ashikaga Namiko before he and Jody dug in, footfalls heralded the approach of the sixth of his half-sisters. "Shinobu-san, Ryūnosuke-san, daijōbu desu no?" Shirayuki asked as she gazed at them. "Didn't you enjoy the breakfast Hime and Little Hime made for everyone?"

Both Tomobiki High sophomores jolted, then they laughed. "Oh, yeah, we did!" Ryūnosuke said as Shirayuki sat down across from them. "Sorry about that, Shirayuki-san. We had our own breakfast before we moved to get to school right around the time we found out about you guys and that 'church'." Remembering that, the "heir" of Hamachaya then sighed. "You sure they're all gone?"

"Desu no!" Shirayuki assured them with a nod. "When all of you were being made to fight that silly Memory thing under the Tarōzakura in August, Hime, Hime's sisters, Nē-sama and our friends around the world got rid of the rest of those observers and freed all their slave assistants, then Ayumu-chan used her Infinite Wave to send them all back home." She waved to Kasuga Ayumu, who was seated at a nearby table with a couple more of the strange girls that had come with Itō Mamoru from Ōmure-jima, all of whom — save Namiko — called Ataru either "Teitoku" or "Shirei-kan" for some weird reason. Shirayuki then sighed. "Hime's just sad that we couldn't take that bomb away from town until today."

"Why couldn't you do that?" Shinobu asked.

"Well, when Hime and everyone went to beat up those silly Niphentaxians back in June, Haruhichan — she's the Weaver, a reality warper like Ayumu-chan, but she has the power of altering timelines and making pocket dimensions — grabbed the bomb from the Ginza here...but from
"TODAY, not the sixth of June!" As the two Tomobiki High sophomores nodded in understanding, Shirayuki sighed. "So..."

"Temporal paradox," Ryūnosuke concluded. "Don't say anything more, Shirayuki-san. We get it."

"That's also the reason that Ataru-kun acted like he did after he was trapped here even to yesterday, you mean?" Shinobu added.

"Desu no! Nii-sama is really sorry about that, but what could you do in the end? Lum-san had her own time-travel tech and if she suspected that something really strange happened to Nii-sama, she could have gone back in time to investigate and put a stop to it. Haruhi-chan would have been forced to do something really bad to stop her, which would have blown open the whole secret of people like Hime to the Urusians before Elizabeth-san could get her shielding system in place."

Ryūnosuke asked, "Who's this Elizabeth girl?"

"Elizabeth Wakefield-san. She's from Sweet Valley in California, near Los Angeles." As Shinobu and Ryūnosuke perked on hearing that, the metahuman chef from Nagoya added, "She's the Academician, the smartest person on Yiziba. Even since she learned of what happened to Nē-sama and Nii-sama, she's worked to get that system going, but she needed time to get it fully set up."

"Sweet Valley?!" Ryūnosuke trilled before she looked over to her best friend. "Hey, Shinobu-san, doesn't Nishimura Tina-san from our class come from there?"

"Hai, she does!" Shinobu affirmed with a nod. "Would she know this girl?"

Shirayuki hummed, then she pulled out a device the size of a paperback novel from her skirt, it looking like a rectangular piece of black quartz with a glittering diamond on the front. Placing that device on the table, Shirayuki tapped the diamond, which created a teleportation effect off to one side, making a beautiful silk-bound book the size of a large art collection volume appear beside it. Turning the book around, Shirayuki then held it up to allow her new friends to read the title.

"'The Book of Pretty Girls'?!!" both Shinobu and Ryūnosuke read aloud.

"Desu no!" Shirayuki said with an amused smile. "This is Nē-sama's special book where she writes about all the girls she helps get Gifted. All the people who were Gifted thanks to the ones Nē-sama found are listed here too in the annex. Nē-sama also has a 'Pretty Girls to Be Helped' list here, too."

Hearing that, the older girls exchanged surprised looks, then they gazed over to where Tariko herself was seated with Sukeyama Sakuya, Hirosaki Chikage and Tenhiro Haruka at another table. "Even if she grew up a girl, she's still a guy deep down," Ryūnosuke noted with a wry smirk.

"That's understandable," Shinobu mused. "Most Yizibajohei Gifts resurrect cross-gender. Tariko-chan's last-self — her mother's old lover — was a man, so that's why Ataru became Tariko-...!"

"Oh, my!"

Both looked at Shirayuki. "What is it?!" Ryūnosuke demanded.

The chef put the Book down, then turned it around to allow the tomboy to read what was written there. Blinking in disbelieving shock on seeing 藤波竜之介 at the top of Page 100, she then scanned what was written there in a somewhat childish scrawl. A moment later, tears appeared in Ryūnosuke's brown eyes as she then read aloud, "'I met Ryūnosuke-chan when she was freezing outside her mean papa's tea shop on the shoreline south of Beppu. She was really, really, really cold since it was still winter even in Kyūshū. Every time she told her meanie papa that she was cold, he..."
As silence fell over the scene while other people gazed over, the tears flowed down her cheeks as her heart swelled on realizing that a girl of about her age had been quick to see through the disguise that Fujinami Fujimi always pushed on his "heir". "I beat the mean man up and took Ryūnosuke-chan back to the cabin to let her be warm and give her something to eat; she looked really thin to me. Even with Mama being really sick, she told me that Ryūnosuke-chan would be a three-star because of all the things her mean papa does to her all the time, telling her that she's a boy when she's really a pretty girl and hurting her really bad when she tries to make people see that she's really a pretty girl. I'll make her a special cake for her when I can, but I don't want her to be reported missing back on Earth."

"Sorry I couldn't get back to you then, Ryū-chan. Mama died right after I met you and after I got over it, I went back to Beppu to find you..."

Ryūnosuke gazed at Tariko, who had come over on seeing that her sister had brought the Book to Earth, then she nodded. "That's probably when Oyaji moved me to Chōshi."

"Yeah," Tariko admitted as she sat down while Chikage came over to join them and Sakuya and Haruka began chatting with each other. "As you'll know now, I couldn't remember meeting you earlier when we met again in February with Lum, Shinobu-chan and Mendō. By the time I could recall what I promised I'd do for you, I had other issues on my mind." She smirked. "The offer's still there."

Ryūnosuke blinked. "What could I become?"

"The thing that Ane-kun was ultimately denied in the end, Ryūnosuke: Full choice as to how your destiny will evolve," Chikage answered as she sat between her older and younger half-sisters, mentally willing a cup of tea to float into her hand. "The mechanics of Gifting are quite easy to understand. Once your body is prepared to absorb the mesonium from the Seeker's Forge in the pre-Gifting process, your mind will start interacting with the Gift seeds of those who have yet to return in the current generation. Given your strong desire to become a woman in fact as well as name, you'll automatically be latched onto those seeds which are meant to return as a female. There are several possibilities Ane-kun and I are aware of, but I won't spoil things for you. You deserve an unbiased choice in the end. No matter what..." — here, the metahuman arch-mage sorceress smirked — "...you'll finally overcome the handicaps that your father has forced on you and be what you were always meant to be all along."

That made the tomboy blink before she gazed on the granddaughter of one of Japan's most respected magical warriors. "I take it you didn't get that chance."

"Sadly no," Chikage admitted. "All of us had the luck — or the ill-luck if you wish to see it that way — to find Gift crystals bearing the seeds to give us our powers on our own; there was no one like Ane-kun to come along and help us choose our own destiny. As to why those specific Gifts were given to us, I can't say; there is definitely someone behind this. Those agencies who monitor this sort of thing are trying to trace who it is down; this is as close to Gift thievery as one can get."

"It's someone from Yiziba?" Shinobu asked.

"Or someone Gifted by the Forge from Earth."

"Why?"

"One big reason got the Last Checky out of this place an hour ago."
That was Yotsuba Dunn, who came over to join them, accompanied by Susumu Marie. "Lum, you mean," Shinobu then concluded, crossing her arms.

"And her fucking entourage!" Ryūnosuke spat out. "Oi, Yotsuba-san, you know how this Ōgi's creeps managed to get copies of our diaries to make that stupid 'bible' of theirs?! I don't care for people to be nosing into my diary and I SURE don't care that my words got twisted around like they did, but how...?"

"Automated probes controlled from the major observation posts in town," a new voice then hailed, making people look over as a smiling girl about the same age as Shirayuki and Yotsuba came into the park, dressed in a green qípáo-like dress with surplus Army combat boots on her feet, welder's goggles perched on top of her bowl-cut dark brown hair. "Don't worry, Ryūnosuke-kun. They were shut down when we came to clear the town out of those lifeless jerks back in August."

"The whole Phentax system was temporally sealed off since June by Haruhi to make sure no one outside the system found out what we did to them on D-Day," Tariko added before she looked to her genius sister. "You having Mecha-Rinrin keep an eye on Isaac's place, Rinrin?"

"Hai, Aneki!" Hatoyama Rinrin, granddaughter of one of Japan's foremost experts in artificial intelligence from Osaka, declared as she sat between Tariko and Ryūnosuke. "Isaac-kun and his crew are coming back tomorrow, so I can concentrate more on my own stuff now that he's finished on Remnant."

"Who's Isaac?" Ryūnosuke asked.

"Isaac-san made Hina's Kasa-tama!"

Eyes turned as the youngest of the sisters came over, hugging her own umbrella, a delighted smile on her face as she sat beside Yotsuba. "Your umbrella, Hinako-chan?" Shinobu asked, shuddering as she felt another wave of the cosmic level of soothing empathy from the Spirit of Innocence.

"Hai! Isaac-san came to Hina after Hina became Suiki, then gave Hina Kasa-tama so she could float around in the air around the world and see all the really, really, really neat places Hina couldn't see if she was still normal!" Saeru Hinako declared as she held her umbrella up. It then snapped open, allowing her to levitate into the air a bit before she willed herself back to Earth.

The two Tomobiki High sophomores gaped. "Wasn't that dangerous?!” Shinobu asked.

"With Hinako's powers, not even the most vicious child molester could bring himself to harm her," Chikage explained. "Though she doesn't do it as much as she started to do this spring just past when she found Fujiko's living kami off the coast of Guadalcanal just beyond the area of Ironbottom Sound."

Hinako winced. "It's not Hina's fault, Chikage-chan!"

"Relax, Hinako, I know."

Shinobu blinked before she looked over to where Fukushima Fujiko now sat. A genki girl of about the same age as Ashikaga Akemi and her sister Ami, she had dark brown hair in a stubby ponytail at the back of her skull and warm brown eyes peeking out of a face that was similar in general shape to the other Fukushima sisters — there were seven — now in the park enjoying breakfast even if the third sister, the hime-cut raven-haired Fukushima Hatsue, was snuggling under one of the kotatsu with only her head sticking out beyond the edge of the blanket shielding her from the slightly chilly morning air.
"Ironbottom Sound...?" she repeated the name of the part of the infamous "Slot" dividing two sides of the Solomon Islands from Bougainville to past Guadalcanal and Florida Island. "Guadalcanal...?" Her eyes then widened as a possible explanation for this struck her. "You mean she's the...?!"

"The living kami of the destroyer *Fubuki*, second of name, built at the start of the Shōwa era at the Maizuru Naval Arsenal and sunk in the Battle of Cape Esperance in 1942 during the Guadalcanal campaign," Chikage finished. "Another mystery facing us. How were the first generation of battle dolls that were created by the second Doctor Destructo reactivated, then teleported to Earth to merge with the living kami of lost warships whenever Hinako's powers focused on them."

Shinobu and Ryūnosuke blinked. Both knew now that after Tariko and Ataru had been separated in the wake of the encounter with Queen Elle, the latter's soul had been placed in a synthetic humanoid body known on Yiziba as a "battle doll". Created by Kasuga Ayumu's first self, these were meant to absorb the souls of children who died before they got Gifted, thus give them a running chance to be Gifted; this was prompted by the death of that Infinity's child thanks to a nasty battle — "fight scene" in Yizibajohei parlance — where too many bystanders got hurt. While not truly metahuman on the scale of Tariko, her sisters and their friends, they were tough enough and durable enough to survive on a world ruled by all-out chaos to get to one of the many Caves of the Future — places where people could directly touch veins of the Great Crystal of Power that had seeped to the surface — and be empowered to protect themselves. Thinking on that, Shinobu was quick to remember that after that whole thing with his other "fiancée", Ataru had become practically superhuman in avoiding things whenever it suited his purposes.

*And realistically resist Lum's attempts at controlling him,* she mused to herself with a smile, wondering what her old rival was going through, having learned she "married" her race's ultimate NIGHTMARE!

"What's the difference?" Ryūnosuke asked.

"Prior to their being Gifted through the Forge, Fujiko and her sisters and half-sisters had the standard FISS-type powers, plus force blast projection abilities strong enough to equal the Tsar-bómba itself in effect," Chikage answered, making the two non-Gifted girls present wince. They knew that "FISS" was an acronym meaning "Flight, Invulnerability, Super-Strength and Super-Speed"; it was actually the translation of the Yizibajohei acronym *Benokuku* (short for *Betuo, Nokite, Kuoduo ku Kuoruto*). What such implied was an impossibly-strong person with matching physical invulnerability and the ability to survive in hostile environments like the depths of the seas or the near-vacuum of space, plus the ability to fly and run at supersonic speeds in any environment; characters such as Superman and Captain Marvel in American manga were at base classic FISS-types.

As was Kasuga Ayumu's classmate, Takino Tomo.

"It must have been disorientating for them," Shinobu then concluded, wondering how Sakurambō Sakura would take to the idea of these "shipgirl" metahumans formed from the living kami of warships that had been sunk during that horrid conflict.

"Yeah, it was bad at times, but we helped them," Rinrin noted as she pulled out a much larger version of the device that Shirayuki had used to bring *The Book of Pretty Girls* here. As Shinobu perked before reaching for the Book to scan through the index, then read some of the entries, the current incarnation of the Technological Sorceress of the East, *Kamluo* ("Schmiede"), added, "Especially when Aniki came down to the island after he and Aneki learned of us in the summer."

As Shinobu and Ryūnosuke nodded at that — both then remembered that since that incident, Ataru always disappeared somewhere on the weekends, vanishing so effectively that Lum couldn't begin to find him no matter how hard she tried; even better, Mendō Shūtarō's attempts at helping the warlord's
daughter from Uru flopped thanks to his people's overall incompetence — Rinrin added, "That's why everyone calls Aniki 'admiral' or 'commander'...except for Namiko-chan there, who calls him 'master'."

The younger sisters snickered as Tariko shook her head...

****

*Outside Onishuto on planet Uru, that moment (local time: Two hours before supper)...

"HE DID WHAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAT?!"

"He divorced her."

Silence.

More silence.

Still more silence.

Then...

"I'LL KILL HHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHIM...!"

"Mother of All Fight Scenes."

Shocked squeals escaped Redet Lum's parents Invader and Chim on hearing the most FEARED phrase in the local cluster, they then making warding motions with their hands while they both stared wide-eyed at Redet Ten, who was still enjoying the nice kimchi lollipop Aria des Beauchamps made for him on Earth. Osamu Shirayuki's basket of food sat on the table. Ten's cousin was on the couch nearby, curled in on herself as she sobbed with a mixture of terror and grief at the fact that she had been so easily removed from Earth by the current incarnation of a being that was the ultimate nightmare for all the citizens of the fourth world of Oniboshi. One that she supposedly MARRIED of all things!

Such fear was with VERY good reason.

The Mother of All Fight Scenes — a month-long orgy of destruction that made the rebellion against the Imperial Houses of the Seifukusu Dominion to the inspin of Earth centuries before (or the Union Revolution that wrecked the Urusian Empire decades afterwards) seem tame in comparison — had been unleashed by about five hundred Named metahumans of the third world of Kaeyu. One of them — in that incarnation, a man — was in his first life a stage comedian from one of the liberal nation-states on the western equatorial continent. Having encountered the then-incarnation of Yiziba's true first metahuman, he became as powerful as the God Who Walked Among Men when he was Gifted over two sagas ago at the start of the decades-long holocaust known these days as the "Dawn of Power".

The incarnation of the Trickster of the Show at the time of the first encounter between the Urusian Empire and the Free Planetary State of Yiziba twenty-seven mini-series ago — who had been part of the rescue party sent from that planet to ascertain the fate of the then-Tempest, born Redet Danu of Uru — had been vicious when it came to dealing with local lords, brutalizing many while humiliating all adult females of the major ruling families. With his actions, the "lessers" among the serfs and slaves of the Empire lost what little respect they had for their "betters", ultimately creating a
fertile breeding ground for supporters of the Union Revolution five decades later. He was the man who had burned the fear in all Urusians alive at the time when it came to saying "Yiziba" or "Yizibajohei" in public; people who did that got heavy blocks of stone smashed down on their head, which was quite fatal in many cases. Ever since those dark days, the living face of the bloodiest chapter of history burned into the minds of all Urusian children was that of Haddoro Hamee, the fifteenth Tuyuki of Yiziba.

"Ten!" Invader snarled. "This is no time for a joke...!"

"Ataru's a Yizibajohei."

Lum shrieked in agony as Invader and Chim both screeched in fright on hearing That Word escape the young boy. "Hai, it's true!" Ten affirmed, glad that he could use the "scary word" to keep his relatives in line so necessary explanations could be made. Given what the current incarnation of the Master of the Dark Gaol of the Great Crystal of Power, Ruodeuto (the "Undertaker"), had to do to remove the spirit of the second-most powerful spiritual oni from Japanese legend out of Lum's body before she was sent back home, who knew what sort of mental condition his cousin was in now.

After a moment of rather amusing hysterics in Ten's eyes — *I'm so glad that Ayumu-onē-chan got that brainwashing out of me after she rescued Tariko-onē-chan, the firefighter's son from Onishuto mused to himself on seeing that* — Invader recovered.

"HOW?!!" he demanded. "HOW IN THE MAIDEN'S NAMES DID HE BECOME ONE OF THEM?!"

"When you tried to force Ataru to marry Lum-cha, Ayumu-onē-chan — she's the current Infinity — came to rescue him since Yizibajohei don't get married!" Ten paused as another chorus of screams escaped his relatives. After a moment, he added, "But because Lum-cha was made to abuse him so much since he was Yizibajohei..." — again, another pause to wait out screams from the others — "...thanks to all the creepy spirits in Tomobiki that Mister Undertaker had to take out of her before Tariko-onē-chan sent her back, Ataru had to become a BATTLE DOLL! Besides, Yizibajohei can't mate with non-Yizibajohei!"

Again, another chorus of screams escaped his relatives as Lum's wails nearly shattered the windows of the raised home that the Invader family had made for themselves at the borders of the Terrible Swamps west of Uru's capital city. Ten relaxed himself as he slurped his lollipop. Much that he hated to force this on his uncle and aunt, there was a part of him who was secretly gleeful that they were being compelled to listen to him this time around. Given the fact that they never tried to help Ten's mother Redet Jon overcome her grief from his father's death years ago — not to mention their willingness to ignore so much when it came to Lum after she announced she was married to Ataru even if she originally did it to get away from Seq Rei — making the grownups scared made him feel quite satisfied.

After a moment, Lum surged up with a determined look on her face, reaching into her seifuku top. "I'm going back in time and save Darling from those monsters...!"

"Haruhi-onē-chan's going to stop you, Lum-cha!" Ten called out.

Invader gaped. "Who's that?!!"

"R'buttoo."

More screams from Lum's parents as the warlord's daughter herself turned VERY pale on hearing the Yizibajohei word normally rendered in English as the "Weaver". Known more commonly on that
world by the tag line "Mistress of Time and Space", she was the second-most powerful reality warper on that planet, just below the Infinite One herself in rumoured overall capabilities. While supposedly not powerful enough — according to the legends surrounding the Weaver relayed by the Vosians — to literally create a new Big Crunch and Big Bang to "restart the Universe itself", she could literally create and seal off alternate timelines, traverse dimensional walls, actually destroy micro-dimensions such as the various spiritual realms that formed around planets thanks to the synergy of faith creating "gods" and "demons" (if they weren't actually alien or interdimensional invaders in disguise) and could sense the use of time travel devices such as Lum's spacializer with ridiculous ease.

"No...!" Lum moaned, then she shuddered as anger overcame her. "DARLING NO BAKA! HOW DARE YOU DO THIS TO ME?! YOU JUST WANT TO GO CHASE PRETTY GIRLS...!"

**KK-KLONK!**

Her parents shrieked as a cinder block dropped out of nowhere to smash Lum in the head, sending her falling face first into the hard floor of the living room! "I hope you realize that Tariko-onēchan can still hear you, Lum-cha!" Ten snapped at her.

"Ten! Why in the Maidens' Names didn't you say anything to us about THIS?!" Invader demanded as he wondered how his peers in the Union Congress would react to THIS. "You know it's standard procedure to report ANYTHING the You Know Whos do on Earth! Much that you seem to like some of them...!"

"Temporal paradox."


"Well, when Ataru, Tariko-onēchan, Ayumu-onēchan, Haruhi-onēchan and all their friends went to Phentax Two to have a Mother of All Fight Scenes with those dorks six months ago, Haruhi-onēchan discovered that there was a **starbase self-destruct device** buried in Tomobiki thanks to that moron Ōgi!" As Lum's parents gasped in outrage on hearing that, the young man added, "But it was a big fight scene when they wrecked the Army of Lum, so Haruhi-onēchan was phasing through time when she snared the bomb...which came from TODAY, by the way!" On hearing that, Invader and Chim shook their heads in mute horror.

They had immediately realized that if that bomb had gone off, most Terrans would be dead right now and any hopes of allying with the Urusians would be dashed forever. And while the effective destruction of the lunatic "faith" made in their daughter's name by Ōgi o'tndai-Zkuhsbagh a decade before had long been a secret wish of theirs, the effective destruction of the Niphentaxian military machine — the most powerful combat force in the Galactic Federation of Planet-states — spelled dark days ahead for the alliance, especially given the strong enmity between many of its members and the Ipraedies Empire which was spinward and outspin of all the Federation states.

"What did they do with Ōgi?!" Chim asked.

"He got taken to Vos by Karen-onēchan for trial because of the bio-bombing six seasons ago, Auntie," Ten said with a delighted smile. "Believe me, after hearing of what Ōgi created, Karen-onēchan was happy to take the creep to Nassur-cha's father!"

"Who's Karen?!" Invader demanded.

Ten hummed, then he whipped out his megaphone again, tapping the volume down before calling into it, "**Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls, children of all ages! The Great Show of the Free**
A bouncy synthesizer and drum riff then echoed through the air in a beautiful fanfare before a lovely young woman's voice sang out...

Mada suki-shi nemui mabuta wo kusuguru,
Umaretate no hikari suteki na asa...
Ude wo kumi nagara hōbatta popcorn,
Daisuki na anata no yumi wo mita...

Nē imagoro dokode nani wo shiteiruno...?

"Oh, my, Ten-chan! That was such a nice introduction!"

Ten spun around as Lum and her parents shrieked at the sight of the very pretty sixteen year-old teenager standing close to the couch her would-be sister-in-law was now crouching behind, an amused look on her very shapely face as her caramel brown eyes sparkled with a mixture of mirth and dark glee. As the natives save Ten nearly soiled themselves on seeing that Tanenobu Karen was in the black jumpsuit with the golden belt and boots and the golden quill insignia on her chest — with matching gold-trimmed black hooded cape slung over her shoulders — of the Herald of Fight Scenes, Gar'be ("Embassy"), the native of Okayama near Hiroshima whose stepfather was a serving diplomat for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs politely smiled as she focused on the older people in the room. "Now, Captain, Mrs. Invader, I don't think you'd want me to call in some friends of mine to make you behave, do I?" the nominal "roving ambassador" of Yiziba asked in her normal cute and innocent voice, one that was quickly sensed by the others to possess a core of solid neutronium.

As the older people gargled before rapidly shaking their heads, Karen gazed intently at the woman whose coming to Earth harmed her beloved older sister so badly...even if it ultimately gave her an older brother along with an older sister. "Now, Lum-san, you're not going to do something rash, are you? After all the things Mark-sensei just did for you in freeing you of that horrible spirit's possessing you for a year, you're not in command of your facilities. I think you should sit..." In a flash, Lum was sitting on the couch. "Arigatō," she then said with an approving nod.

"M-m-Madame Emb-bassy, wh-wh-what brings y-y-you here...?" Invader stammered out as he tried to regain some sense of self-control.

"Oh, nothing much," the brown-haired girl with the long braids streaming down from her temples and bangs cascading over her forehead and flowing down to her waist said with a cheery smile. "Other than to make sure you didn't hurt Ten-chan here after Ayumu-san was so nice as to remove that horrible brainwashing from his mind. Honestly, why do you people do that to yourselves, anyway?" As the older people both blushed on hearing the genuine concern in Karen's voice as she asked that, she added, "Much that I realize our past-selves back during the latter mini-series of your silly empire were quite rude — though rightfully so given what happened to your kinsman Redet Danu at the hands of her parents and the security authorities here after she married the Rampage of the time and was Gifted as Tempest — we're not interested in starting something silly now. After all, given how you were bullied by those fool Niphentaxians when that stalker Ōgi started that stupid 'church' of his, I think you'd be very relieved that I sent him to Ninsur-ojisan and have him tried for mass murder, not to mention remove all the thugs he sent to Earth to spy on good people there." Her eyes hardened. "And their DIARIES as well? I'm sure Ten-chan here will appreciate it a lot that his words can stay private from now on."
Dear Diary,
Well, I'm back home with Lum-cha's parents and Lum-cha, safe and sound. Just like Tariko-onēchan promised me she'd do.
Now comes the HARD part.
I have to convince Uncle Invader that having the Yizibajohei on Earth is probably the best thing to happen for the Galactic Federation.
After all, those dork Ipraedies and those snotty Seifukusu are just as scared of 'they who must never be named' as everyone else is.
Save the Vosians, the Yehisrites and the Noukiites, of course.
And the Hustari too, I think.
Fortunately, as Tariko-onēchan promised, Karen-onēchan came to help out.
She's Gar'be, the Herald of Fight Scenes; that translates as 'Embassy'.
She's a telepath and empath, one of the strongest on Yiziba. Atop that, she's also the top polyglot on the planet; she can speak any language that she encounters after a quick meeting with a representative of any race or culture just as good as if she was a native.
Even better, her neat stepdad, Ambassador Tanenobu Hideyoshi, is a senior officer of Japan's foreign ministry; after she got Gifted, Hideyoshi-ojichan taught Karen-onēchan all the tricks of being a good ambassador to other people.
I'm glad that Karen-onēchan's stepdad was able to accept her even after she found out the truth about her parentage.
I'm sure that Hideyoshi-ojichan is moving right now to make things really rough for Ataru's dork parents so they'll leave him alone from now on.
Until Ataru finally gets Gifted himself, he's kinda vulnerable in Yizibajohei eyes, even being a battle doll of all things.
Karen-onēchan herself is very genki and really loves both Ataru and Tariko-onēchan very much. Even if the other sisters have good qualities, I think Karen-onēchan is probably the best sister of the whole lot.
Don't tell the others I said that, though!

"Here you go."

Invader blinked before reading the title of the big book that had just been teleported in by Karen for him to see. "'The Book of Pretty Girls'?!" he read aloud.

"This is Onē-chan's personal log of all the people she's gone to help get Gifted as a way of protecting Earth from alien and interdimensional invasion," the younger woman explained as the captain scanned the index. As Lum came over to see herself, she nearly froze as the Herald of Fight Scenes sent her a warning look to not do something rash when it came to her sister's most precious possession. "It has three parts: The Main Index, the Annex List and the 'Pretty Girls to be Helped' list of potential future candidates to help be Gifted. Please look at Page Two."

Lum's parents blinked in surprised confusion, then Invader turned to the page in question. Gaping in shock on seeing リーデット・ラム written at the top of the page in katakana, he immediately scanned what was there, grateful that he had been sleep-trained to understand Japanese when the final plans for the Tag Race the previous year were made. After a second, a volcano of outrage then exploded around him, making his wife and daughter both back away from him as he glared murderously at Karen. "SOMEONE PUT A POWER DAMPENER ON MY LITTLE GIRL?!"
he snarled, causing Chim to shriek in outrage and Lum squawk in horror. "**WHO DID THIS?!**

"Ganzo dai-Louc."

Silence.

More silence.

Still more silence.

Then...

"Why...?!" Invader snarled as he fought to keep his temper under control, the outrage he felt now at what could have happened to his precious little girl when she was just a CHILD — hadn't Karen's sister and the Infinite One of all people came to save her — trying to overwhelm him.

"I believe Lum-san had her encounter with Ōgi in the woods here about two weeks prior?" the younger woman then asked as one of her eyebrows arched in amusement; the entry in the *Book* had the date and time of the encounter in both Yizibajohei and Galactic Federation standard measurements, so it was easy for Lum's parents to conclude when this happened. As they moaned on hearing that, Karen added, "Ganzo-ojiichan then saw her as a target of opportunity. Since he knew how his people acted when a 'great awakening' occurs and since allies of his back home warned him this might be the one movement that would unify the planet under a very immature boy's control as the 'Founder of the One True Faith', he felt it vitally necessary to destroy its foundations by crippling your daughter for life."

The others in the room winced on hearing that as Lum dropped like a stone into a chair beside the table. As Chim began to weep, Invader started to snarl out a dozen dockyard curses that made Ten instantly blush and Karen herself shake her head in amusement even if she found it quite vulgar to listen to herself; then again, given that she lived at the same place Ashikaga Akemi lived, she was used to crude military profanity. After the large warlord got that out of his system, he then reached over to squeeze his daughter's shoulder in reassurance, which made her gaze up at him before she nodded. "I don't remember this..." Lum admitted, shaking her head in denial.

»**Allow me, then...**«

Everyone perked on hearing Karen's voice echo in their minds, then images appeared that cast them back over eleven years in time...

****

*West of Onishuto near the Invader home, an hour after supper (Earth date: Wednesday 25 April 2001, 03:12 UTC [Tōkyō time: Wednesday 25 April 2001, 12:12 PM])...*

*A wailing cry echoed through the Terrible Swamps.*

*It was the sound of a child who had her innocence taken away totally.*

*Someone who — at the young age of six — just learned what sort of real monsters there were in the vast Universe beyond her own world.*

*Someone who would never have a normal life again.*

*A girl who had been crippled for something she simply didn't understand.*
"Hey! Ayumu-chan! Can you see who's crying?!

As the shuddering Redet Lum perked on hearing that strangely-accented voice, she blinked on hearing a girl call back in a voice that sounded Urusian. "Nah! I can't see her, Tariko-chan! Hey!" she called out. "Who's crying?! You okay?!!"

Lum sniffed, then she looked over...

...as a girl her age that looked almost Fukunokami — save for normal ears one would find on an Ellsian — walked out from behind a big tree. As she looked around for a moment, she then stopped on seeing the wet-cheeked Oni warlord's child seated on the ground near another big tree, dressed in her normal tiger-striped pinafore. On seeing here, the newcomer walked over to stand close to her, kneeling to stare intently into Lum's eyes. "Hey! You see a girl who's been crying really bad?" she asked before she blinked on noting the fresh tears welling in Lum's green eyes. "Hey! How come you're crying?"

"I think she's the girl we sensed all the way back from the cabin, Ayumu-chan."

Lum turned...and then blinked on seeing another girl the same age as the girl who just approached her. She was also Fukunokami-like — with Noukiite-type ears — with shaggy brown hair and brown eyes on a rather plain face. Noting the girl that had just come up to her also had brown hair and eyes, Lum then sniffed. "Are you siblings?" she quietly asked, glad that she had a universal translator put into her mind so that she could understand the strangers' words.

"Well, we could be," the first girl answered. "But Tariko-chan had to leave home because his parents were dorks. My parents are on Earth. Why are you crying?!"

Lum blinked — though a small part of her was surprised to realize these two children were Terrans; far as she knew, the nations of Earth couldn't send people beyond the orbit of their moon in manned ships — then she began to weep as she pointed at her neck. The newcomers looked...before they gaped on seeing the black collar around her neck with the small power unit there, an ominous red light flashing right under the Oni's chin. "A power-dampener?! Who the heck put that on you?!" the second girl with the shaggier hair demanded as she reached over to jab her index finger into the metal of the collar.

Lum gasped as the collar broke into two pieces and fell to the ground beside her. She looked to both sides of her to see the shattered sections of the collar that had just wrecked her life on the ground. Remembering what she learned in galactic kindergarten concerning the use of power-dampeners on an Oni child, Lum then blinked as fresh tears appeared in her eyes, then she started to cry again.

The newcomers blinked in surprise at that reaction, then the first girl peered intently for a moment, her eyes glowing slightly with a powerful fire. After a minute, she then nodded. "Oh, I get it!" As the other girl looked at her, she said, "Some real meanie put a power-dampener on Lum-chan here to take her powers away because she's so young," she said in a voice that spoke of a strange level of maturity that made Lum stop as she stared in confusion at her. "Cause her powers haven't had the chance to mature properly, she can't fly and can't hit people with electricity."

The other girl look horrified. "Taking a Gift away?! Only Oblivion has the right to do that!" She then stared at Lum. "Hey, Lum-chan! Did some guy dressed in a black uniform like mine and having a black symbol like Ayumu-chan's got on her..." She then stopped as something came to her. "Hey, wait a minute! Oblivion wouldn't use a power-dampener! He IS a power-dampener!"
"What do we do?"

"Can you zap her with an Infinite Wave?"

The first girl hummed, then she reached over to tap Lum's arm. The Oni gasped as SOMETHING powerful surged through her from that contact, making her body spark as just-suppressed bio-electrical powers flared back to full strength and she was able to leap into the air and float there. "I can fly!" she yelped as she started to zip around the tree as fast as a six year-old girl from Uru could go.

The two newcomers nodded in delight...

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The Invader home, today...

"NO! DARLING'S A BOY! I SAW IT! DARLING'S A BOY! HE CAN'T BE A GIRL!"

"And when exactly DID you see Onē-chan as a boy?"

"WHEN I WENT BACK IN TIME AND TRIED TO MAKE HIM STOP CHASING GIRLS!"

"YOU DID WHAT?!"

Lum awked in embarrassed horror as she felt her parents stare in outrage at her while Karen and Ten shared a secret smile. "Young lady, there is a REASON that we DO NOT license spacializer use beyond legitimate historical studies of our race's history before the Seifukusu Occupation!" Invader snapped. "I was proud of you for learning how to make one on your own in middle school, but you have NO RIGHT to change history like that!" As Lum ducked her father's angry glare, he then turned to Karen. "I assume this is when Madame Weaver got involved."

"Honestly, we didn't know what was going on with Onē-chan in Tomobiki from when she was trapped there and forced to be Onii-chan a month prior to the Tag Race until when Ayumu-san saved her in April when you tried to force a marriage between her and Onē-chan," Karen then explained. "And yes, even if she was born a boy, Onē-chan is a GIRL!"

"DARLING'S A BOY!" Lum shrieked.

"Are you acting like Ryūnosuke-san's father now, Lum-san?"

Lum gargled at that crude comparison, then she wailed as she slumped on the table, burying her face in her arms. Sighing, Karen used her telepathy to make her go to sleep, thus help her recover from what just happened in Tomobiki. Noting that, her mother nodded in gratitude while Ten breathed out in relief. "Please look at the Preface of the Book to understand what happened to Onē-chan," Karen bade.

Invader blinked, then he turned the pages to look at the written words in the page before the main table of contents. Noting the words in beautifully scripted kanji and kana, he blinked before he read aloud...

To Those Who Will View This In the Future,
I am Ayone Katabarbe, a woman who lost her beloved Haroga'a Hame'e, the twenty-seventh Coyote of the Great Show of Life, in a terrible fight scene two seasons ago. The pain of such a loss made me do something very rash.
But will no doubt allow my planet to finally recover from the Dawn of Power and the infernal
sameness that overcame our people in the wake of that terrible time when the first incarnation of the Circle of Thought — ultimately out of very good intentions — ended up locking our people into the Great Show of Life.

In grief over losing my lover, I travelled to Earth, the home of the Keystone Power Jewel Warrior, the Lady Deannette Raeburn of the Dominion of Canada, to seek out a child I could adopt as I never got to chance to bear my lover's child.

Doing so, I visited the great habitation of Tōkyō, where I encountered a crying boy named Moroboshi Ataru.

Said boy had been hideously abused by a verbal attack from his mother Yamaguchi Kinshō, stating she actually wished she never gave birth to him. Even among the Named back home, to treat a child like THAT...!

Naturally, I offered a chance for the child to live somewhere better where he could be loved and appreciated.

Understandably, he took it.

In my agonizing grief, I ultimately destroyed a family. And gained a child.

Naturally, given the harshness of life on Yiziba...

"I'm blocking that imprinted response, Captain," Karen then said as Invader stared wide-eyed at her. "I can't remove it; only a reality warper like Ayumu-san can as she did to Ten-chan here after the wedding. Please, go on."

Invader slowly nodded his thanks, then plunged back into the preface...

Naturally, given the harshness of life on Yiziba, I wished to make sure that my new child could survive on this world.

So I did something I believed my lover would approve of.

I pre-Gifted our son with the seed my lover once bore as Coyote.

The next day, I was made to recall one thing about Gifts from the Great Forge.

When a seed literally resurrects in a new body, it most often does that cross-gender.

In effect, my son became my daughter.

When I realized this, I apologized most profusely to 'her'...

Yet to my surprise and delight, she gladly accepted what happened.

She later confessed to me that there had been times when her birth mother had been more kind to her — if such a creature could EVER be kind — yet also wished for the chance to have had a daughter in lieu of a son.

Still, I fear that my daughter will never be able to relate to her birth parents ever again, especially now that she bore the Gift seed of Coyote.

I did do one thing properly as the elders of my habitation have always wanted to see happen given the sameness now possessing the Named of our world: I made sure that my daughter would not have to fully allow the Gift seed to take her and make her the new Coyote until she was mentally and physically ready for it.

She accepted that with ease once she saw some of the Named duel each other in a fight scene in Habitation One.

Because she is now a girl, my daughter also elected to get a new name.

She chose 'Tariko', which in her native language means 'child from outside the village'; here on Yiziba, it's said 'Kasetu'.

**Tariko Katabarbe.**

I know that deep within her mind, my lover is looking at this and smiling.

Once she fully adjusted to being a girl, she then vowed she would go forth back to her home planet, find pretty girls — whom Tariko always admired and cared for when she was Ataru — and help them be Gifted so that our power can protect Earth from the many threats surrounding it from near
and afar.
Hopefully, all those who will soon be listed in The Book of Pretty Girls will also follow in my
daughter's path and not let the Gift take them right away.
For this will benefit Yiziba as much as it will Earth.
And hopefully other worlds out there.
To those who read this in the future: Please understand that Tariko is young yet wanting to help you
better your lives in a way that will make sure you, your blood relatives, your friends, your
habitations and your race will benefit.
You do not understand the TRUE threats to our Universe as we Yizibajohei do.
Especially the threat of the Healer of Destruction.

Batae Erba.
The First of the Gifted.
The Chaos Bringer.

The End of All That Is.
If he or she rises again, nothing will ever be the same.
Be well, all of you. I doubt I will live long enough to see those new friends of my daughter embrace
their new destiny, but I believe all will be better in the seasons and series to come.
May the Eternal Spirits of the First Ones watch over you all.

"Ataru grew up as a GIRL...?"

That was a wide-eyed Chim as she stared in disbelief at their guest. "Hai, Oba-chan," Karen
responded. "Onē-chan lost her mother a year after that was written. But she always went forth to
Earth — and other planets as your daughter now remembers — to help people. Many accepted her
offers. Many others refused; we all believe in full freedom of choice. Then, a month before you and
your daughter came to Tomobiki, Oji-chan..." — here, she gazed on Invader — "...someone trapped
Onē-chan in that horrible town, brainwashed her into forgetting Yiziba and all her friends, then
transformed her back into being a boy, forcing her to live with 'his' birth parents. I know for the fact
that Onē-chan's birth mother went along with it in hopes of embezzling the inheritance our late
grandmother left for her. Given the rules of how our overall clan run themselves, that woman was
hoping to force a marriage between Onē-chan and some pliable woman so she could get that money
because Onē-chan was legally underage in Japan. First, it was Miyake Shinobu-san. Then..."

She gazed on the sleeping Lum, sympathy in her eyes. "I KNEW we shouldn't have made any deals
with that creature!" Chim spat out.

"She won't hurt Tariko again, will she?" Invader asked.

"Now that Onē-chan's Gifted as Tuyuki? What do you think, Oji-chan?"

Hearing that, the large warlord blinked, then he roared with laughter. His wife and nephew soon
joined in as Karen giggled in delight. No matter how vicious the Trickster of the Show had been
nearly three centuries before, the core of her/him was always that of a comedian who loved to play
pranks on chosen targets to bring them down and make them humble. Yes, as a reality warper,
Karen's elder sister was a dangerous being. But given Tariko's obvious good and honourable
intentions...!

Invader then caught himself. "So what's this that Ten here said about my baby being possessed while
she was in that town?!" he then asked.

Karen sighed. "We don't know the whole story, but we are investigating this now, Oji-chan. This is
what we do know at this time..."
On Ōmure-jima, off the coast of Odawara in the Sagami Sea, an hour before lunch...

"The 'island of promises'. Strangely named."

"Perhaps, Shinobu. But people who come here to get away from the hustle and bustle of life on the mainland do rediscover their centre and make better lives for themselves once they have the mental strength to do so. Despite all the changes our American friends unleashed here after the Wars of Liberation and the Greater East Asia War, the island still seems to do that to people." Here, Hirosaki Chikage gazed in amusement at Miyake Shinobu. "Even you."

"You're enticing me to get a Gift," Moroboshi Ataru's old girlfriend mused.

A tired sigh escaped the metahuman arch-mage. "I'm afraid you'll have no choice in the manner, Shinobu. You're already pre-Gifted."

Silence.

More silence.

Still more silence.

Then...

"How...?!" a white-faced Shinobu demanded.

Chikage sighed as she waved the other woman to follow her down First Street West — all street names on "Promised Island" were spoken of and written in English, a legacy of the American move to fill in land to the north of the old island to make a naval base for them to use — towards a large youth hostel nestled into the side of Stargazer Hill, with a chapel to the left as the viewer approached it and a large rotunda to the right overlooking the old sea wall. A torii-like gate hovered at the end of the street before the front lawn began, it saying on a placard PROMISED ISLAND — WELCOME HOUSE in Rōmaji and katakana. Right now, a small group of the "shipgirls" reborn from the spirits of the living kami of Imperial warships from the late world war were doing exercises close to the rotunda, with an embarrassed Ataru seated beside a lawn table with an umbrella overhead, his "personal servant" Ashikaga Namiko — the reborn spirit of the Ayanami-class destroyer Sazanami which had been sunk by the American submarine USS Albacore at the start of 1944, Shinobu now knew — standing close behind him, ready to serve her "master" with whatever he might desire.

"Remember the party you had at Marubeya Momoe's home a week before the Tag Race started?" Chikage asked as she gave the other woman a knowing look.

Shinobu considered that, then her cheeks went nuclear as she recalled the morning afterwards. "Oh, Jesu Cristo, no! I had SEX with Ataru?!"

"In truth, you had sex with Ane-kun when she was forced to play as 'Ani-kun'. The spells used to transform Ane-kun back into a boy were that thorough, just as Hayashi Kanami's Jusenkyō curse made her a true girl in body as it did in her mind." As Shinobu nodded — everyone in Tomobiki had heard of "Nerima's Week of Hell" at the end of May when the person born Saotome Ranma fully cut ties with his family, fiancées and so-called "friends", then legally became a girl and had her named changed to "Hayashi Kanami" before disappearing, ensuring that none of those who wanted "her" could follow — the arch-mage added, "Even though you were saved from becoming pregnant by the
Dragoness' spell that blocks Yizibajohei from having children with non-Yizibajohei, the amount of mesonium in Ane-kun's body was enough to begin the pre-Gifting process once his seed was injected into your womb." As Shinobu shuddered at that cold observation, Chikage added, "That is the source of your ki boosted strength and your growing invulnerability. Have you noticed that in recent times when Lum had her oh-so-wonderful temper-tantrums, you were not as affected as Ani-kun was?"

Ataru's former girlfriend — should she really say "former" now that Ataru was effectively free of his "wife" once and for all, especially with Mendō Shūtarō now promise-bound to marry Mizunokōji Asuka? — hummed before she nodded. "Hai, that's true. My pastor believed it was God's gift to me to allow me to survive all that madness." She then smiled. "In a way, he was right. God gave me Ataru to give me strength even if he forced Ataru to ultimately be what he wasn't."

"Yes, it does serve many people's purposes to have both an Ani-kun and an Ane-kun," Chikage stated as they walked through the gateway onto the front lawn of Welcome House. "In that, we strangely both have to thank Lum and Venerable Sakurambō for providing the ingredients to allow that to happen. Hai, they were both hurt badly after Ayumu rescued Ane-kun from Onishuto to let the Gift take her and Ani-kun was reborn in the Doll House. They got the chance to deal with that anger thanks to some wonderful fight scenes that came after that." She winked at Shinobu. "Believe me, Shinobu, you'll never have to worry about Elle de Rosenbach ever again. Ane-kun made sure she wouldn't launch an intergalactic war in hopes of gaining more 'cute boys' to put into that refrigerator of hers in Baran."

"Oh? What did she do?"

"She teamed up with Margo Black, the woman who became Doctor Death back in 2005 after she had been raped by her stepfather." As Shinobu croaked on hearing that — she knew that the Herald of the Final Darkness, Litronie Erba ("Doctor Death"), was seen as the worst heel ever to live on Yiziba...even if the elder daughter of the Vermonter-turned-Georgian veteran of the First Gulf War now living with her twin sister in Savannah was an "anti-face" in this incarnation — the metahuman arch-mage added, "They went to Baran. Margo mercy-killed all the Cute Boys who were placed there to stave terminal illnesses before Elle's madness overcame her. Seeing her do that drove Elle into a coma. Ane-kun teleported the Cute Boys who were imprisoned against their will back to their homes, then threatened Barbara de Esterchild — she's Elle's nanny as you'll remember — with a Mother of All Fight Scenes if they tried to make any moves towards Ani-kun, then they went home. An effective flawless victory. Hopefully, the Royal Senate on that planet will elect a more stable person as their next Rose Queen."

"They have an elected monarchy?"

"Hai." Chikage then smiled as they approached Ataru. "Ya, Ani-kun."


Ataru gave them a shy smile in return while Namiko curteyed to them. "Chikage-sama. Shinobu-sama. Would either of you like some tea?" the latter asked.

"Some of Marie's mixed cherry tea if you can?" Chikage asked as Shinobu nodded in agreement; she liked sakura-cha, so this sounded interesting.

"Hai. Excuse me please, Goshujin-sama."

With another curtey, Namiko raced into the rotunda. A glance at the windows to the left of the main doors revealed a large kitchen, where Osamu Shirayuki was now with Sukeyama Sakuya preparing...
lunch for everyone. As Chikage conjured up chairs for her and Shinobu to relax in, Ataru gazed worryingly at someone he still deeply cared for even if some of her past actions over the last year made him often think of her as being much a monster as his would-be wife was at times. "You okay?"

Shinobu returned his look, then she smiled. "How long is this date of yours with Jody-san anyway?" she asked, making Chikage chuckle.

"It'll be short," he admitted. "These days, she lives in Kyōto where she disguises herself as a student at a private school near the Imperial Palace, the Shimogyō Academy. She's helping the Eight Magical Commanderies trace down a very dark medieval tome of magic called the Bible Black." As Shinobu scowled on hearing that title, Ataru added, "It was created during the time of the Crusades by descendants of lilin who once served Duke Agares, the Dark Lord of the Eastern Realms of Hell and one of Lucifer's most loyal servants." Ignoring the gasp of horror from his former girlfriend, he said, "The Bible Black reappeared about twelve years ago in Kyōto after being missing for centuries, where it was supposedly used in a demon-summoning attempt by students of Shimogyō on Walpurgisnacht in 2001; that ended up killing over two dozen people. Jody hopes to find it and destroy it before it kills again."

"Jesu Cristo...!" Shinobu breathed out. "Does she need help?"

"She's getting it already thanks to a new friend that fell head-over-heels for her when she started classes there; you know how it could be at times between girls." As she nodded, Ataru then winked at her. "She's an old friend of yours, by the way."

Shinobu blinked on hearing that, then she gaped, "Tōdō Yuki?!"

"SHINOBU-CHAN!"

Gasping, Ataru's old girlfriend spun around...

...then she squawked as a dark-haired missile nearly speared her with a hug, sending them both tumbling on the ground nearby. As Ataru and Chikage both laughed on seeing that, Shinobu felt her lips being devoured by the lips of who was realistically her first true lover, Tōdō Yuki. A native of Tomobiki who got the chance to attend Shimogyō after her father moved to the old imperial capital city when work for Mitsubishi demanded his transfer to a new office, the champion swimmer had long brown hair tied into twin ponytails at the sides of her temples with crimson ribbons and gorgeous dark blue eyes that Shinobu had always found insanely attractive. It was that attribute which drove Ataru's old girlfriend into experimenting sexually with Yuki before the latter moved to Kyōto the spring before the Tag Race. By her actions now, Yuki hadn't forgot a single thing about her first true lover.

"Ah! Cute lovers checky!"

Camera flashes went off. "YOTSUBA!" Ataru snapped.

Shinobu and Yuki awked before they stared in annoyance at Yotsuba Dunn, who was poised nearby with a camera in hand, raised and ready to take this passionate Kodak moment. Before the former could protest, the latter winked at her before she tilted her head to gaze at the camera lens while sensuously kissing her old lover's lips. The metahuman detective cackled as she snapped off more pictures, which made Shinobu sigh before allowing herself to reciprocate Yuki's actions. Nearby, the shipgirls had stopped their exercises, many of them beaming in delight at the fact that a beloved friend of their admiral's former lover had reunited with her. "THAT'S THE STYLE, SHINOBU-SAN!" Fukushima Miyuki, the tomboyish brown-haired girl who had been the kami of the fourth of
the Fubuki-class destroyers (from which her given name was taken...even if it was now written differently), whooped in delight as she jumped up and down in celebration.

Banzai cheers followed, which made both Shinobu and Yuki blush madly at such a show of delight from the warships-turned-teenage metahuman girls. Footfalls then heralded the arrival of the youngest of Ataru's sisters. "Ah! Shinobu-san and Yuki-san are back together again!" Saeru Hinako gushed as both girls blushed madly at the presence of the living Spirit of Innocence; much that the native of Niigata obviously liked the idea of people who loved each other expressing themselves publicly like that, they were getting close to the point where the clothes would start coming off and things would get very intimate...which was definitely NOT the thing to do in the presence of an eight year-old girl!

"Hinako, can you sense if Memory is trying to affect Shinobu's memories?" Jody then asked.

As Shinobu paled — when she had met Hinako a few hours earlier, the false memories of her being together with Moroboshi Ataru in the eleven years he had actually been missing from Earth had begun to be peeled out of her mind — Hinako leaned down to place a hand on her forehead. Said hand glowed slightly as the Spirit of Innocence reached into the older girl's soul, then she hummed before making a banishing motion with that limb. "Curse, curse...GO AWAY!" she bade, her voice echoing with the cosmic power that she commanded as it washed through Shinobu's mind to clear out the uncertainty that had haunted her since that fateful meeting in the town park near Tomobiki High School.

Shinobu gasped as something seemed to sear right through her very soul, her strength failing for a moment. Yuki was quick to support her as a pained moan escaped Shinobu, then she shook her head, blinking several times. "Don't force back the memories, Shinobu," Chikage bade as she and Jody moved to stand close to her, with some of the shipgirls shifting themselves over to form something of a protective shield around their spiritual admiral's old girlfriend. "Memory understands that the memories which created it are in many ways false. Anyone who recovers their true memories deprives it of power, so it will try its best to maintain its hold on your soul until your proper Gifting."

Hearing that, Shinobu shuddered as she felt a storm of doubt flood her before the memories of that cleansing wave of empathy from Hinako chased it away. Shuddering as it dawned on her that the being everyone in Tomobiki all believed had been finally dealt with in August was still moving to influence people's minds — and possibly worse, make dreams become real again, thus potentially necessitating another Pseudo-War — she took a deep breath. "How bad is it really, Chikage-san?"

Chikage sighed before she exchanged looks with Jody. "You want to handle this?"

"She's still very precious to Yuki," the adopted West Midlands native noted. "It's best I bring her to my scrying chambers. The distance between Kyōto and Tomobiki will lessen the effects of that thing."

"So it's a working date, you mean," Ataru noted as he came over to join them.

Shinobu blushed. "Gomen..."

"Don't apologize," he soothed as he knelt beside her, placing a warm hand on her shoulder. "Hai, we helped this along by doing that to you, but the real blame lies with the idiots that loved to play around with people's memories, never mind what they did to us." As Shinobu nodded — the "us" was clearly a term Ataru used to describe the time when Tariko Katabarbe had one single soul before an alien lollipop and a cursed cake caused a permanent fracture — he winked again. "You'll be free of the madness that haunted all our lives beyond what came down on us thanks to Lum and her entourage. Hopefully, you'll stay very strong as well, which will definitely keep things safe for you
and your family."

Hearing that from him, she smiled. "You're the one that was willing to marry me when that happened."

"Of course I was," he said with a wink. "Much that we know how desperately you've wanted to have a normal and safe life, you have to admit now..."

"It's no longer in the cards," she admitted as she reached up to squeeze his hand. "I have always and will always love you, Moroboshi Ataru," she breathed out as Yuki's hand reached over to cover theirs. "I'm glad you were safe on that other planet even if you were forced to grow up as Tariko Katabarbe." A wry smile then crossed her face as she gazed knowingly at him. "Given how that horrid woman and her husband treated you when you were forced back into that house before Lum came — even if your real mother forced the destiny of Coyote over you like she did — Yiziba was the planet and culture you really needed to grow into what you are now. Not that THING that Lum was ready to chase after."

"Hopefully she'll be able to get something better for herself," he admitted as a wan smile crossed his face. "Despite her naïveté and her desperation to be away from what her life was like on Uru — especially factoring in Ōgi and his friends — she is a good person."

"You arranging something for her?"

"We did a few months ago," he admitted with a wink.

Shinobu laughed. "Oh, Megane and his fools would lynch you if they heard that!"

"They're about to face their death scenes thanks to Khalifah al-Baghdadi and his friends," he warned, an even look then crossing his face, which made Shinobu shudder deep down. "According to what Sakuya-chan sensed earlier today, they're nowhere willing to repent their support of Lum even when it comes to hurting everyone all around them. Never mind their unwillingness to admit their own wrongdoing from last October; it struck us as strange that Satoshi found out how to summon a space taxi like that when that sort of knowledge didn't exist ANYWHERE on Earth until that point. We don't waste energy saving people if they don't want to save themselves from their stupidity, Shinobu."

She considered that, then she sighed, shaking her head in clear disapproval. "They've been warned. It's on their heads if they don't heed it. I'm as tired of them as you are." She then moved to stand, helping Yuki up at the same time. "So, why don't you show me Kyōto?"

Everyone turned to look...

...then they saw Ashikaga Namiko standing by the table where Ataru had sat earlier, a tea service with multiple cups on the table now. Noting that, everyone then snickered as they exchanged looks...

To Be Continued...

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WRITER'S NOTES

Translation list: Goshujin-sama — Master; Shirei-kan — Commander; Kasa-tama — Mister Umbrella (in Hinako-speak); Schmiede — Forge/Workshop; Cha — Vosian/Yehisrite version of
the Japanese "chan" suffix honorific and meaning the same thing; Walpurgisnacht — Night of (Saint) Walpurga, always held on 30 April each year; DNTK — Short for Dai-Nihon Teikoku Kaigun ("Navy of the Greater Japanese Empire"), the official name of the Imperial Japanese Navy; Chūsa — Navy commander/Army lieutenant colonel/Air Force wing commander.

The KanColle shipgirls introduced here as well as those indicated to be present, with their honorary ranks and their human names (including those introduced in the previous chapter):

Fukushima Fujiko-chūsa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan Fubuki [DD-153])
Fukushima Shirayuki-chūsa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan Shirayuki [DD-154])
Fukushima Hatsue-chūsa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan Hatsuyuki [DD-155])
Fukushima Miyuki-chūsa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan Miyuki [DD-156])
Fukushima Mayako-chūsa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan Murakumo [DD-157])
Fukushima Itsuko-chūsa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan Isonami [DD-161])
Fukushima Urako-chūsa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan Uranami [DD-162])
Ashikaga Ayako-chūsa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan Ayanami [DD-163])
Ashikaga Shikuko-chūsa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan Shikinami [DD-164])
Ashikaga Ami-chūsa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan Amagiri [DD-167])
Ashikaga Sayako-chūsa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan Sagiri [DD-168])
Ashikaga Otsune-chūsa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan Oboro [DD-169])
Ashikaga Akemi-chūsa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan Akebono [DD-170])
Ashikaga Namiko-chūsa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan Sazanami [DD-171])
Ashikaga Shiori-chūsa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan Ushio [DD-172])
Akamatsu Tsukiko-chūsa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan Akatsuki [DD-173])
Akamatsu Himeko-chūsa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan Hibiki [DD-174])
Akamatsu Ikue-chūsa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan Ikazuchi [DD-175])
Akamatsu Inoue-chūsa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan Inazuma [DD-176])

Note that in real life, Imperial Japanese Navy warships rarely made use of hull classification symbols and hull numbers and there was no ship prefix like THG, which is short for Tennō Heika Gunkan ("Warship of His Majesty the Heavenly Sovereign"). The hull numbers assigned here were based on a listing of all vessels of the same type in order of entry of service from the first of their kind as reported in Wikipedia. Thus THG Fubuki is the 153rd destroyer built by or for Japan.

Note that in the case of THG Hibiki, since she was turned over to the Soviet Union in the wake of the Second World War and renamed ÊM Véryñj, Akamatsu Himeko has a Russian-form name, including patronymic: Khimeko Khagémiovna Akamátsu; the patronymic is chosen in salute to her first captain at the time of her commissioning in the Imperial Japanese Navy, Lieutenant Commander Ishii Hagemi. As an aside, the ship prefix ÊM is short for Êskádrennykh Minonóstsev ("squadron torpedo boat"); neither the Soviet Navy at the time of World War Two nor the Russian Navy today makes use of a universal ship prefix, but type prefixes that indicate what the named warship actually is.

The Senior Year character and situation notes: Moroboshi Nagaiwakai was first mentioned in "Sakura's Class Reunion" and first appeared in "Tag Race Mark Three". The Confederation of Vos was pretty much introduced with Nassur in "Return of Memory" and remained a source of issues throughout the series. Nassur's father Ninsur was first mentioned in "Nassur's Story"; in the universe of this story, he survived the Battle of Colony Forty and eventually reunited with his son. The Royal Kingdoms of Yehisril first appeared in "Ancient Ties". The Imperial Dominion of Noukiios first
appeared in "Arrive Reiko-chan". The Republic of Hustaros first appeared in "Dakejinzō's Story". And issues concerning the Rose Kingdom of Elle (first introduced in the movie Only You) were first noted on in "Incredible Shrunken Lum" and served as an interesting background plot for future stories in the series.

Noting the different spelling of the family name "Hamee" from Lum's memories and what was written in The Book of Pretty Girls. An orthographic reform introduced by the Nameless like Tariko's adopted mother Ayone Katabarbe came into vogue where repeated vowels are pronounced as they are individual syllables instead of extended sounds like in Japanese. Hence, the old pronunciation of Hamee is said as /hɑ'-'meː/ in the International Phonetic Alphabet while the modern pronunciation is said as /hɑ'-'me-ɛ/ and written "Hame'e" in Latin script.

Nishimura Tina is one of the characters from NOël 3.

Isaac Thomas (Doctor Renaissance), created by Dr. Tempo, first appeared in the short story The Deadliest Woman Alive. The story of his training students will be covered in future omake.

The concept of "FISS" was first introduced by cartoonist Aaron Williams in his series PS238.

Ten's mother Redet Jon (her name is my invention) first appeared in the Yatsura manga storyline "My Mom the Firefighter" (manga chapters #160-161).

The translation of the first lines of Tanenobu Karen's theme song "Daisy Bouquet" (first released in the image album Sister Princess: My Sweet Twelve Angels in 2001) as shown here:

Mada sukoshi nemui mabuta wo kusuguru,
Umaretate no hikari suteki na asa...
Ude wo kumi nagara hōbatta popcorn,
Daisuki na anata no yumi wo mita...
Nē imagoro dokode nani wo shiteiruno...?

(A newly-born morning light
Tickles the still-sleeping eyelids; such a wonderful morning...
Arm-in-arm, we stuffed our mouths with popcorn;
I had a dream about you, my beloved...
Hey, where are you and what are you doing now...?)

Yizibajohei time measurements, from longest to shortest: Saga — Millennium; Series — Century; Mini-series — Decade; Season — Year; Story(line) — Month; Episode — Day; Act — Hour; Scene — Minute; Frame — Second; Shot — 1/100th of a second. The lengths of time they represent would be roughly the same as on Earth.

Ganzo dai-Louc was first introduced in various stories I wrote in the Anime Addventure when I strove to introduce a figure similar to the famous American abolitionist John Brown (1800-59) when it came to the Avalonians, bioroid versions of the Sagussans I first introduced in The Senior Year; the Avalonians first appeared in "What Price For Love?".

The issue concerning Lum trying to change Ataru's behaviour in the past was noted on in the Yatsura manga story "Down The Right Path" (manga chapter #83). The term "spacializer" to describe such time-travel devices was coined by Mike Smith in The Senior Year.

Margo Black (née Margo Chapelle) is the "evil twin" that appeared in the Sweet Valley High novel
series. She first made her appearance in *The Morning After* (book #95), she would move to murder and replace the main star of the series, Elizabeth Wakefield, in the novel *The Evil Twin* (book #100). She would later make an appearance in the second Magna Edition of the series, *Return of the Evil Twin*; this is where Margo's sister Nora Chapelle was introduced. Given how pretty rough-shod both of them had been treated to make them evil in those stories, I felt both Margo and Nora needed a chance to really shine and be good people...even if their past still darkens their very souls.

The **Eight Magical Commanderies** is my name for all the regional **Magical Associations** of Japan as introduced in *Mahō Sensei Negima* combined. Each association bears the proper name "Imperial Magical Commandery" (in Japanese, *Teimajutsu-gun*). The one Jody Crowley would associate with the most is the **Kansai Magical Association** (*Kansai Teimajutsu-gun*; in short, **Kanmagun**) as led by Professor Konoe Eishun, father to one of Negi Springfield's students, Konoe Konoka. Of course, the magical government for the region around Tōkyō is the **Kantō Magical Association** (*Kantō Teimajutsu-gun*; in short, **Tōmagun**), administered by Konoka's grandfather Konoe Konoemon.

**Tōdō Yuki** is a character from *Bible Black: New Testament.*
Girls Get Gifted

Chapter Summary

Ryūnosuke meets her favourite wrestling hero and becomes a true woman at last while Akane remembers her first meeting with Tariko (thanks to Hinako's help)... just as two new shipgirls suddenly appear...!

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Tomobiki High School, the nurse's station, an hour after lunch...

"LIES! ALL LIES! HOW DARE THAT BASTARD ATARU DO THAT TO LUM-SAN...?!

KK-KLONK! KK-KRUNCH! KA-POW! SMASH!

Wincing on hearing the cinder blocks smash down on the heads of Aisuru Satoshi and his closest friends/allies, Sakurambō Sakura took a deep breath. "Arigatō, Tariko-san," she said as she toasted Tariko Katabarbe with her cup of mixed cherry tea, glad that her half-sister Susumu Marie had hooked the Trickster of the Show on such a wonderfully soothing drink. "I suspect that Shinobu-san and Ryūnosuke-san will soon depart, joining Rumiko-san and Chigaiko-san to go elsewhere."

"Actually, Rumiko told me she'll stay here," Tariko noted, which made the others at the kotatsu stare wide-eyed at her; along with Kotatsuneko, there were Onsen Mark and Sakura's uncle Sakurambō Hayao. Nearby, the core members of Lum's Stormtroopers moaned after once more being knocked unconscious thanks to a Terran-born Yizibajohei. "Yeah, she's had no luck in finding a nice girl to settle down with, but her parents have good jobs and they don't want to move. Even if the morons behind us have death marks on their heads thanks to the idiots in Iraq, my friends there might stop them before they do something stupid here. I won't defend them, but their parents don't deserve the pain."

Onsen blinked before his eyes widened. "The Angels of Darkness! That was YOU?!!"

"Hai!" Tariko asserted. "They're actually distant allies of my family here on Earth. As a group, they were the Asāṣīyūn, descendants of the disciples of Hassan-e Sâbbâb; he was actually a student of that death cheater that taught Aunt Dean all her marital art skills in the last series."

As wry smirks crossed the others' faces on hearing the reality warper call the Immortal Master a "death cheater" — something that was universally loathed among Yizibajohei as a whole — she added, "But since bin Lâdin's idiots started flexing their muscles in that part of the world, they managed to turn the Ḥashâshîn — you'll know of them as loyal 'fans' of the Asāṣīyūn — into going after them because Maryam and her friends are all WOMEN!" She paused to sip her tea as the others snorted in amusement. "Hence, I got in there and got them Gifted. Now they're having a tonne of fun making life very difficult for al-Qā'idah."
"Hopefully, it will be enough," Cherry noted. "What of the issues of people having their memories altered before you were trapped here and forced to revert back to your birth gender, child?"

"That's a point," Onsen warned. "I still find it impossible to believe that you — as Moroboshi, of course — actually lived on another PLANET in all those years you were on this quest, Katabarbe-kun."

"That'll come," Tariko promised them. "I can sense there was a lot of ebony mesonium planted around town to reinforce whatever was done to everyone here. We'll need Margo Black to deal with it."

"And she is?" Sakura wondered.

A smirk crossed the younger woman's face as she made a dramatic wave of her hand. "The one who caught and compromised to a permanent end — quoting John Cena, of course — Usāmah bin Lādin!" A wolfish smile then crossed the reality warper's face. "Doctor Death!"

The others in the room gaped on hearing that dark declaration...

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_The clock tower, that moment..._

"Thank you so much for effecting the repairs here, Tsuruya-kun."

Gazing at Nanase Mariko, the school secretary and administration officer, the slender woman in the off-grey Yizibajohei-pattern jumpsuit with the pouch-lined black belt, black boots and the stylized lamp of learning insignia on her chest — not to mention protective safety goggles over her eyes that glittered with computer readouts — nodded in understanding. "You have no problem with me turning this into a personal laboratory of sorts, Nanase-san?" Tsuruya Rumiko then asked. "Given that my family live in an apartment and that I don't have any space to set up my own workshop like my friends have..."

"More than understandable," the older woman said as she waved Tomobiki High's only declared lesbian down. "I doubt Köchō-sensei will be able to do much now that he's so round the bend concerning Moroboshi-kun's final departure from this place to be with his sisters on Promised Island. I was able to process Inu-kun's transfer to Kibina High School without issues." A wry smile crossed Mariko's face. "Though the girl's basketball team will notice it soon enough."

"Don't blame yourself," the raven-haired woman with the dark brown eyes said as she waved her now-gloved hands to direct the nanites she had injected into the surrounding wood and steel to reinforce them to the strength of high-tensile tungsten, thus making the school building invulnerable to any known form of terrestrial attack; given the many times Tomobiki High had been wrecked over the last year, Mariko definitely agreed to Rumiko's proposed modifications once the current incarnation of the Careful Planner of the Circle of Thought, Timlem (the "Sage"), brought them up earlier during the furor over Redet Lum's final removal from Earth and her "husband's" final departure from Tomobiki. "The power of that curse that made us forget Chigaiko-chan's name was wedged right into the very structure of this building by the witch that created that spell last century. Fortunately, Chikage-chan's promised me the necessary wards that I can fit into the building to make sure there's no more victims of that curse while that idiot is still alive and wanting to make trouble for people." In this, the secretary knew, the smartest high school student in Japan was referring to the alumnum known more commonly as the "Red Cloak" who appeared at a Hallowe'en party the previous October shortly after the Tag Race. "If I can get a sample of that fool's blood, I can easily seal the school off from him ever coming back."
"Thank the gods for that favour," the older woman said. "Given that classes are pretty much up in the air now and that the weekend's coming on, how soon will all this be finally completed, Tsuruya-kun?"

"Give me until tomorrow morning."

"Fair enough. I'll write a note excusing you from classes just in case."

"Dōmo."

With that, Mariko stepped out of the belfry. Watching her go out of the corner of her eye, the third of Yiziba's most legendary polymath hyper-geniuses smiled before she got back to work installing the base components of her central computing systems, which would allow her to keep in touch with her sisters in the Circle of Thought near Los Angeles in the state of California and just outside Sankt-Peterbūrg in Leningrādskaja Ĭblast'. Once that was done, Rumiko could then move to replicate Elizabeth Wakefield's, Tat'jána Chapáeva's and Isaac Thomas' work in creating her own spaceship so she could jaunt to and from Yiziba, plus aid in the defence of her birth world against those aliens who certainly would NOT approve of the Yizibajohei sealing off the inner part of the solar system from outside intrusion. Because as soon as that selfish bitch Oyuki finally clicked into the fact that it was "they who must never be named" who just sealed off Earth from all contact by races of the Galactic Federation and their enemies, she would be raising Cain all over the local cluster to restore things to "normal".

Sheesh! What a bunch of selfish, self-centred idiots! the daughter of one of Nissan's senior executives mused to herself as she began a general diagnostic of one system. They'd be spitting and screaming for war if some of the idiot stunts they pulled here happened on their planets! What the hell makes them think that we'd react differently?! Thanks to those rimrae umale from Phentax Two, everyone out there knows about things like Star Wars! Do they expect us to just IGNORE all the lessons taught in that story when it comes to real 'close encounters of the third kind', especially after that stunt Megane and his fools pulled with that space-taxi last fall?! Not damned likely...!

"Rumiko-chan!"

Rumiko looked over as the hatchway opened, revealing the head and shoulders of one of the other girls from Class 2-4, bentō in hand. "You forgot to have some lunch," Marubeya Momoe admonished.

Smiling in thanks at the tomboyish girl's actions, Rumiko tapped the side of her goggles to command the diagnostic to keep going automatically. She then slipped off her gloves before walking over to sit at the table there as Momoe placed the bentō down. "Dōmo, Momoe-chan!" she breathed out. "So how's the mood in the class? The boys still in denial over The Book of Lum?"

"Unfortunately," the raven-haired beauty with the brown eyes who had been voted second-most prettiest girl in Class 1-4 the previous November just after Mendō Shūtarō came into their lives mused as she sat down, an amused smile on her face as she unwrapped the bentō. "Koi, Nishijima and Wada especially; they're now trying to rally all the Stormtroopers' friends into supporting them. They're flatly convinced that it's another of Ataru-kun's tricks to drive Lum out of his life once and for all, plus deny their chance with their 'sweet Lum-chan'." Disgust flooded the belfry deck as she said that. "Still, a lot of the guys in our year have seen the Book. They're just disgusted at the idea that Lum and her friends were BULLIED by their leaders to go along with whatever this Ōgi maniac wanted! I hope you guys really did him in when you hit this bastard's home system back in June."

"Oh, we did, Momoe! Damn straight we did," Rumiko said with a proud smile as she recalled that battle in the only tri-star system in the galaxy where most of the planets were inhabitable. She, Inu
Chigaiko and Moroboshi Ataru had been absent from classes all week when the sixth-eighth anniversary of the Battle of Normandy came around; the specific day for that battle had been suggested by President Josiah Bartlet to Rumiko's new friend Elizabeth Wakefield to better honour the final liberation of the Niphentaxians' bioroid slaves from their masters. Of course, Momoe fondly remembered that week as the time that Lum and her supporters in Tomobiki found out they were ultimately helpless when it came to forcing her "husband" to bend to her will; try as all of them could — even with Lum's technological advantages — they couldn't find a single trace of the man until the following Monday.

Momoe perked as she recalled something else. "Oh, by the way, Ataru-kun's mother is downstairs in the principal's office right now with some parents from the local PTA. AND Kuribayashi-sensei, too!"

That made the other woman blink. "That old gunslinger?! What's he doing here?!"

"What else? Kuribayashi was called in by Baka Tō-san and his friends to come teach at the school after it started to become really obvious to everyone that Ataru-kun was pulling away from Lum over the last month or so. It really scared a lot of people in the PTA, especially when they saw that all the normal attempts at keeping Ataru-kun down weren't working, especially with his disappearing from town every weekend. Was he visiting his sisters when he did that? Where did he go?"

An even look responded. "Is that for you or is that for Tendo Nabiki?"

Silence.

More silence.

Still more silence.

Then...

Momoe sighed. It was an open secret at Tomobiki High School that the popular sophomore served as a local bookie for the infamous middle daughter of the Tendo Clan of Ōizumi in nearby Nerima. While her peers had done their best many times to make Tendo Nabiki leave Momoe be, the associate member of the infamous "Wrecking Crew" threatened in return to sic Saotome Ranma on them if they continued to butt in on her "business transactions". Of course, said threat turned hollow when Ranma disappeared from Nerima just before D-Day — no doubt to participate in the Mother of All Fight Scenes against Lum's "most faithful" — but given the total refusal of all of Ranma's old family, would-be fiancées and rivals to accept his/her official switch of gender and name to "Hayashi Kanami" (thus making all claims of marriage on him/her void) and her leaving Nerima once and for all, it was only a matter of time before Nabiki began drawing on people's strings outside her home ward to get back atop the game.

"For me," she admitted. "Much that I'm grateful for Ataru-kun and Tariko-chan for chasing Lum off the planet — which keeps Mendō-san safe in the end — I'm just curious. Something tells me that Ran-..." — here, she caught herself — "...um, Kanami-chan will come back to deal with Nabiki and the rest of those dolts in Nerima soon enough. Sure, she's called me on occasion since May to get updates on events here in town, but she hasn't made me run bets or anything like that." She then sighed. "Still, as soon as news of what Tariko-chan did to Lum gets out beyond Tomobiki, Nabiki is going to be VERY curious. Is there some way Kanami-chan can come back now to get her off my back?"

"I'll call her and ask," Rumiko promised...
...before the thunderous noise of glass being shattered echoed over the air, that followed by the sounds of a car crashing! As both girls perked on hearing that, a very heavy guitar riff thundered over the scene, matched with a steadily beating drum...

*Step up 'cause you're the next one in line for the kill!  
You don't believe me but I'm betting that you will...!  
Stand up! I'll let you live a little bit with  
The pain that I bring you know it's only the beginning...!*

"Oh, gods! What's HE doing here?!" Rumiko demanded as she moved to look outside.

A wild screaming cheer then echoed from both inside and outside the school...!

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*On ground level...*

"IT'S STONE COLD!"

Students in the yard and peeking out of the west wing classroom windows howled and whooped on seeing another legendary wrestler from the United States march proudly onto the grounds as if he was about to enter the ring at WrestleMania defending his championship. Those screams then went wild on seeing that the native of Texas was dressed in a Yizibajohei-pattern jumpsuit that showed off a well-muscled body for a man in his twenties. Noting that, some wrestling fans found that peculiar as they knew the man born Steven Anderson was approaching his fiftieth birthday. On remembering how the great phenom from America that graced their school hours earlier looked as he was when he premiered in what was then called the World Wrestling Federation, appearing younger than people saw him as these days when he performed, people began to hiss among each other as they tried to postulate what had made the six-time heavyweight wrestling champion so young. Still, that strange visual dichotomy didn't stop a chorus of hearts appearing in the eyes of many girls — even among the female teachers who were seeing this from their classrooms and the staff lounge — at the sight of the rugged bald man with the dark moustache and goatee, especially with the fact that his jumpsuit was coloured in multi-tone shades emulating the scales of a western diamondback rattlesnake from his native state...

...which ironically reflected well with his Gift as the Lethal Viper of the South, *Tuone'e* (the "Rattlesnake"), a ki master of considerable power who could kill thanks to his "finger fangs" that could rend solid materials up to and beyond the strength of tungsten and depleted uranium — not to mention most forms of mesonium — into nothing more than fragments.

Before he could get far, a screeching voice bellowed from inside the main door. "YOU BRING MY IDIOT SON BACK HERE, MONSTER...!"

**KK-KRACK!**

People outside turned to look...

...then they screamed with laughter on seeing that a cinder block had been dropped down on Moroboshi Kinshō's head from somewhere! "Thank God I didn't have to give that banshee a fucking stunner," Steve Austin muttered under his breath as people gathered around him, he raising his hands in the two-fist salute — without the raised middle finger, of course — of his ring persona.

Another wild cheer answered that salute from the students, who were streaming out of classes to get closer to the famous wrestling star, they accompanied by some of the teachers. "Mister Austin,
welcome to Tomobiki High School!" math teacher Hanawa Mitsu — he was the former homeroom teacher for the previous year's Class 1-4 — called out in accented English as he offered his hand, which the Texan took to give him a firm shake. "What on Earth brings you here today?!"

"Came here to look in on a couple people my good friend Tariko took interest in over the last decade, son," Steve answered in near-flawless Japanese, which made all the people around him gasp in delight even if some smirked on hearing those words spoken in a clear Texan accent. "Anyone seen Fujinami Ryūnosuke anywhere around these parts this morning?"

"Um...Ryūnosuke-kun didn't come to classes this morning, Sensei," Gekasawa Kumiko answered.

"Steve!"

Everyone looked up to the clock tower. "Yo, Rumiko!" Steve called back.

"There she is!" Rumiko called out, pointing to the front gate.

The Texas Rattlesnake perked before looking in that direction...

"HOLY FUCKING SHIT! YOU'RE LIKE TARIKO-SAN, SENSEI?!

...then people whooped as a grinning tomboyish girl in a black gakuran — with the jacket open to reveal her undershirt...which didn't mask the dark grey sports bra she had — race onto the property. Before she could come up to her favourite wrestler to shake his hand, the Principal himself suddenly appeared in front of the "heir" of Hamachaya. "Fujinami-kun! Where have you been, young man?!

As people quickly noticed Ryūnosuke's battle aura start to form around her at yet again being called a "boy", the elderly school administrator then snarled, "And where is Miyake-kun?! She should be here as well!"

Ryūnosuke quietly replied, "Well, to paraphrase anyone from Yiziba as Sensei here, Rumiko-san and Tariko-san will confirm, Shinobu-san and Ataru are having a nice long nookie scene right now with Ataru's good friend Jody-san and her lover Yuki-san! Hell, it might all the way to an all-out pillow scene!" As Steve whooped in laughter on hearing that and many of the students gaped as their minds quickly interpreted what those phrases actually meant, she added, "Given they've got a year to catch up on now that umale bitch Lum is out of our collective fucking hair and that rich fool Mendō’s engaged to that idiot Mizunokōji..." — she ignored the groans from many on hearing the tomboy disparage the school's most popular students so publicly at that — "...I'm sure that when the nesting urge hits Shinobu-san, she'll be having kids with Ataru soon enough!" She then hummed as many of the students gasped on hearing what could soon happen. "Soon as he gets Gifted, of course!"

"He's engaged to marry Lum-chan!" one boy screamed out.

"No, he's not! Not even under HER planet's laws!" Ryūnosuke snapped back as her hands started to glow, which made Steve's eyes go wide in surprise.

"What do you mean?!!" another boy demanded.

"Duh! Tagging an Oni's horns for marriage in a tag race ain't allowed, dipshit!" she snapped, making many boys moan on hearing of how easy it could have been to land Redet Lum for themselves. "The only time Ataru ever tagged Lum's horns was in the Tag Race! That's it! Any claim she had about her being married to him is a bunch of lies!" A snarl then escaped her lips as the hands glowed even more brightly. "Not that the fucking umale doesn't come from a race of LIARS in the first place!"
"Kid...!"

Ryūnosuke blinked as she looked in confusion at the visitor from America. "Wh-what is it, Sensei...?"

Steve pointed to her hands, making her look before her eyes went wide. "What the FUCK...?!" she called out as she raised her hands, making others gasp at that impressive sight. "Mamoru said this don't happen right away! How the fuck am I getting Gifted NOW?!"

"I've seen it happen loads of times before, Ryū-chan."

She turned as Tariko walked through the crowd, followed by Cherry and Sakura. As the school nurse and part-time miko drew out her ōnusa to do a magical scan of the tomboyish "heir" of Hamachaya, the Trickster of the Show mover to grasp her former classmate's hands to peer at them with her own meta-sight. "Damn! I guess that brief visit to the cabin actually started the pre-Gifting process for you! The healers in the village near the cabin did give you something to eat."

"With the necessary meson put into her to link her to the biosphere, you mean," Steve noted.

"What does that mean?" Kanzaki Ryūha demanded as the Principal shuddered in anger at the fact that he was being IGNORED by all his students as they concentrated on the issue with Ryūnosuke.

"Tariko here took the kid to Yiziba ten years ago after she beat the shit out of her fool old man because he was making her FREEZE in the middle of FEBRUARY on the damned SEASHORE during a BLIZZARD!" the visitor from America snarled, making many of the students gasp in horror as they stared wide-eyed at the tomboy. As some then glared resentfully at the Principal — it was well-known that the elderly school administrator gladly supported what Fujinami Fujimi always thought about his "son" — Steve added, "She was malnourished, had been through a ton of beatings and didn't have the fucking right clothes for being a GIRL! Tariko got her to the village near where she and her mother lived on Yiziba, then the healers got at her to fix her up. She obviously ate the local food, which has meson in it. Once Tariko's sister Mamoru gave her a slice of the black forest cake Tariko makes to get people pre-Gifted, something inside the Forge must have locked into her right away."

"STOP THIS NOW!"

Everyone stared at the Principal as all of Ryūnosuke's body started to glow like the Doctor's did in Doctor Who when regeneration was about to begin. As many of the students started to back away on sensing a noticeable heat radiate from the tomboy — making her clothes begin to smoke — Sakura hissed in disbelief at the sheer strength of whatever kami was now starting to fuse with the school's most tragic student. "This one particular spirit has wanted her for a long time...!"

"Yeah, kinda figured that out sometime ago..." Tariko said with a smirk.

"You can sense this sort of thing, child?" Cherry asked.

"Having done this for as long as I have, Cherry, you get a spy lens about these things quickly enough..."

"Oh, yeah...!"

As people gazed on a now-grinning Ryūnosuke as her brown eyes began to brightly glow with power, the Principal shuddered, pointing at the tomboy. "STOP THIS NOW! YOU HAVE NO RIGHT TO...!"
A wild laugh of delight escaped the "heir" of Hamachaya — the fate of which now really no longer mattered to her as the flood of her new self's memories began to overtake her, the joy of learning at last what being a woman (even if she'd be a Yizibajohei one) overcoming her — as she spread her arms wide, her clothes combusting as the radiance from her body became blinding, making people turn away.

"DON'T LOOK AT IT!" Steve shouted, making others spin away.

As Ryūnosuke's clothes were burned away, she licked her lips.

"Taeim letam...!"

A second later, an Akira wave-like bubble of energy exploded from her...

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Kyōto, a block from the Shimogyō Academy, that moment...

"Eh?!"

Moroboshi Ataru jolted, then gazed on his former girlfriend. "What is it?!"

Miyake Shinobu blinked for a moment, then her eyes teared. "I think...I just felt something wonderful happen to Ryūnosuke-san...!"

Jody Crowley and Tōdō Yuki gazed intently at her for a moment, then the latter stared at her sempai. "Jody-sama, what does this mean?! I want Shinobu-chan to get a good Gift, for heaven's sake...!"

"Relax, student," the mistress of the Shadow Court declared as she squeezed the younger girl's shoulder before she peered intently at Shinobu. "It means that she'll have quite a powerful psionic ability with whatever is trying to lock in on her now. Let's get inside the house, then I can get her into the scrying room so I can see how badly that creature under the Tarōzakura has hurt her!"

Shinobu grimly nodded as she followed the others into the traditional family house that the Duchess of Anglesey had rented out with the help of the Kansai Magical Association while she resided in Japan...

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Tomobiki High School...

Nesu...TOLOSE!

Everyone gasped on hearing that booming voice echo over the skies again, then they slowly opened their eyes to see that the area around them wasn't being bathed in blinding light. As many breathed out in relief at not being blinded, they turned to look at Ryūnosuke...

...who was now clearly something much MORE!

"Whoa! Cool suit, Ryū-chan!" Hikawa Shin'ya then whooped.

"Damn! You're gonna be our resident mystery man now, Ryūnosuke-chan?!" Mifune Hideyuki asked.
"OI! THAT'S 'MYSTERY WOMAN' TO YOU, MIFUNE!"

"HOW DARE YOU BE OUT OF UNIFORM, FUJINAMI-KUN?!"

As many of the people there shook their heads at the Principal's obvious stupidity on challenging someone who clearly had a lot of buried anger inside her — and was now a METAHUMAN as her smoky grey uniform with the gunmetal grey belt, boots, tabby cat-like striping on the sides of her body and the black badger's head insignia on her chest over her considerable cleavage now showed — a snarl escaped the newest incarnation of one of Yiziba's deadliest ki masters. "Oi, Baka Jijii...!" Ryūnosuke snarled as she slowly turned to glare at the older man. "Can't you fucking tell I'm a GIRL...?!!"

Her boot slammed hard into his gut, doubling him over as she lunged over to snare his neck with both her hands, planting that on her right shoulder...

KK-KRACK!

"STUNNER!" all the students whooped as the transformed Ryūnosuke dropped down on her butt to deliver a vicious neck-breaker right directly onto the Principal's throat, making him painfully rasp as his windpipe was nearly crushed from the impact!

Seeing this, Steve nodded in approval. "Good one, kid!"

Hearing that made her beam before she sighed. "Need my own finishing manoeuvre!" she noted as she rolled back up as the Principal fell over, grasping his neck. "Ain't fair to steal your shtick, Sensei!"

More laughter filled the air as everyone moved to ignore the gasping school administrator. "Ne, ne, Ryūnosuke-chan, what did all that mean, anyway?!" Sugihara Nara, one of the tomboy's classmates from Class 2-4 and Class 1-4 before April, then asked. "All the words that were said...?"

"Who was that, anyway?!" Nishihara Ikue, another girl from Class 2-4, asked.

"That was the Conservator, Ikue-san," Ryūnosuke answered. "Some people on Yiziba say it's an actual person. Some other people say it's just the very soul of the Great Crystal of Power when it calls out when someone gets Gifted." She smirked. "'Tene lomher'buo' means 'You're ready' or 'It's time'. That's the warning to tell someone the Gifting is starting. 'Nesu' means 'behold'. That declares the Gifting is done. And 'Tolose' is my battle name. It translates as 'wolverine' here."

"Hey! We got our own Wolverine now! That's cool!" Hideyuki called out.

Laughter echoed over the grounds. "Well, can't really use that name here on Earth," Ryūnosuke then lamented. "Dorks in Marvel Comics might get upset over it." She then hummed. "What could I use...?"

"Try Carcajou," Tariko proposed. "It's French Canadian for 'wolverine'."

The tomboy blinked, then she nodded. "That's got some style!"

"THREE CHEERS FOR CARCAJOU!" Kumiko then screamed out.

"BANZAI! BANZAI! BANZAI!" all the other students toasted her with raised arms.

As Ryūnosuke laughed on hearing that, a moaned voice echoed from the direction of the main doors.
"Give me...my money...back...!"

Hearing Moroboshi Kinshō grunt that demand as she slowly picked herself off the steps, Tariko sighed before she perked as Ryūnosuke patted her shoulder. "I got this one, Tariko-san," the latter said.

Sensing the approach of one of the people that had kept her idiot son in line until he found some way to escape, the older woman smiled in gratitude. "Oh, Ryūnosuke-kun, there you are...!"

**PSSSHHEEW!**

A horrified scream escaped her as foot-long ENERGY BLADES shaped like the adamantium-coated bone claws used by one of the most popular American anti-heroes known burst out of the tips of all the fingers of Ryūnosuke's right hand save her middle one, making a "V" shape under her chin to sear against her cheeks. "Want me to draw the middle one out, slut?!

That made Kinshō awk in horror. "Ry-ry-Ryūnosuke-k-k-kun...!"

That made the younger woman see read.

"**FOR THE LAST FUCKING TIME...!**"

**KK-KKKRUNCH!**

The tomboy snared the older woman and did a side slam, smashing Kinshō's head into the steps!

"**I'M A WOMAN, YOU BLIND BITCH!**"

"And she can say it as a woman, too," Tariko calmly quipped to Steve.

As the retired American wrestling star laughed while crossing his arms, students nearby backed away from such an awesome display as Ryūnosuke grabbed Kinshō by the hem of her blouse...then with an overhand pitch, sent her flying on a mortar shot right back to her family home!

"**NOW GET OUTTA MY SCHOOL, YOU MONEY-GRUBBING PROSTITUTE!**"

"**FUJINAMI!**"

Ryūnosuke spun around, her splayed claws soaring right at Kuribayashi Sanjurō's face!

**KK-KKACK!**

"**GET THE FUCK OUTTA MY SCHOOL, YOU DISGUSTING PEDOPHILE!**"

As the distant sound of a body smashing through the roof of the Moroboshi house several blocks away echoed in the air, the metahuman hunter pulled the badly-hurt roving substitute teacher — who just got his face smashed in by a ki enhanced punch — clear of the school building, then spun around and with a shot-put pitch, sent him flying to the east in the direction of Nerima!

"**HE'S A PEDOPHILE?!**" Kumiko then gasped, making all the girls present shriek.

"Yeah!" Ryūnosuke snarled. "I actually saw him go on a DATE with LUM of all people!" As the boys cried in horror, the tomboy then asked, "You guys want to have something to do with that?!"
"HELL, NO!" many of the guys roared out.

"WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING, YOU FOOLISH BOY?!

PSSSHHEEW!

Once again, someone else was caught by Ryūnosuke's ki claws at the neck. "You wanna say that again, Baka Oyaji?" she quietly growled as she glared into the foolish man's eyes.

"Otō-san...!"

Everyone turned to see a fuming Marubeya Momoe standing behind her trapped father Marubeya Nobukoto, an aura of rage forming around her. Seeing how incensed his daughter was, the leader of the Tomobiki Parent-Teacher's Association sputtered, "Now, M-m-Momoe-chan, you h-h-have to understand! Th-th-this is the only w-w-way to keep that lech M-m-Moroboshi...!"

"Mallet, Momoe-chan?"

Seeing the large steel mallet just being handed to her by Tariko, Momoe smiled. "Arigatō, Tariko-chan," she declared as Ryūnosuke pulled back.

WHAM! WHAM! CRUNCH! SMASH! KA-POW! KK-KLONK!

Everyone winced on seeing Momoe's father now smashed into the concrete stares, a pained moan escaping the broken man as his daughter handed the mallet back to Tariko. "Now THAT, the asshole had coming to him," Ryūnosuke mused, nodding in satisfaction.

The others sighed. "We got us our own Hibari Kyōya now," Hideyuki mused as he gazed on his friends.

"Is that so really bad?" Shin'ya asked...

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Namimori (east of Nagoya), Namimori Middle School, that moment...

"AH-CHOO!"

"Ah! Are you alright, Hibari-san?!"

The school's "demon prefect" moaned before he glanced around the hallway. "I sense a superior carnivore having just risen to bite rude herbivores to death!"

Hearing that, Sawada Tsunayoshi nodded in understanding...

****

In Nerima (six kilometres east-northeast of Tomobiki High School)...

"Oh, damn...!"

His whole body now ached as if he had smashed into a brick wall.

Which was understandable.

Smashing head-first into the concrete fence surrounding Fūrinkan High School at terminal velocity
from several hundred metres up would do that to anyone.

And Kuribayashi Sanjurō wasn't a martial artist.

Like...

Damn! What the HELL did that stupid boy DO to me?! the substitute teacher wondered as he tried to extract himself from the hole his body had made in the outer wall of the school grounds. He created those weird glowing things out of his fingers...and then...!

"Hey, you!"

Hearing that voice with its weird mix of Japanese and Hawai'ian, Kuribayashi blinked before he groaned. "Oh, hell...!" he spat before turning to look up into the face of a loon who was principal of his school.

A school Kuribayashi had vowed NEVER to work in again.

"What are you doing breaking the wall of the Big Kahuna's school?" Kunō Godai asked as he held up one of his special barber shears.

Kuribayashi's head dropped in defeat. I need to retire...!

****

Fūrinkan High School, inside Class 2-4, that moment...

"Didn't that guy just fly in from Tomobiki, Dai?"

"Damn sure looked like it, 'Roshi. Wonder what made Tariko-san so upset that she'd give flying lessons to that idiot."

"It might not have been Tariko-san, though."

Humming, both Bosabosa Daisuke and Chanpatsu Hiroshi exchanged knowing looks, then they gazed out the windows once more to see a man they now recognized as Kuribayashi Sanjurō — one of a run of many substitute teachers that their principal had employed at the school to help with discipline before he chanced on Ninomiya Hinako — fighting it out with the "big Kahuna". "I doubt Kanami would want to come close to this town anytime soon. She's having too good of a time over where she is now."

"True, true..."

"Oi! You idiots know where Ran-chan is?!!"

Both men blinked before they gave Kuonji Ukyō a look that made the chef from Ōsaka balk as she stepped back from them. "Even if would know such a person, we wouldn't tell a monster like you where he may be," Daisuke then declared in a voice so full of scorn, it nearly buried the okonomiyaki chef under a pile of mud and dirt that made her classmates back away from her.

"Didn't you hear?" Hiroshi then coolly wondered. "Saotome Ranma doesn't even legally EXIST anymore! All claims of 'marriage' to whatever poor sod that name got stuck on are all wiped out!" He moved to sit down. "So why on Earth aren't you going back home, Kuonji-san? With you not being forced to marry anyone anymore, your so-called 'honour' is intact and you can start dressing like a proper girl again." He then gave her an amused look. "Or do you LIKE being a guy?!"
Many of the girls in the classroom openly winced on hearing that admonishment from the two boys who had been as close as one could get to the would-be heir of the Saotome-ryū of Musabetsu Kakuū-ryū before his final departure at the end of May...when, in an act that still had people throughout Nerima screaming their guts out in denial — as Ukyō herself still did even if it became apparent that she and her would-be "rivals" weren't getting their way this time — that person severed all legal connections to his parents Genna and Nodoka, had himself literally "adopted back" into her father's clan, the Hayashi family of Inari-chō over in Taitō, openly declare that his "proper" fiancée Tendō Akane and her family had no honour whatsoever concerning the fact that they ALL knew about a certain nasty secret Ranma's most powerful rival fought desperately to keep from his fiancée...

And then, with the ultimate slap in the face to everyone...

...Saotome Ranma legally "died", replaced by Hayashi Kanami.

A girl in MIND and BODY, no thanks to the hidden power of Jusenkyō.

And given that Kanami proved to be too powerful for the likes of her "grandmaster" Happōsai and the Nūjiézú elder Nū Kělún no matter what the multi-centenarians pulled to corral their "student"...!

Things had clearly changed in Nerima after the "week of hell".

Case in point: All the men currently attending school.

Regardless or not if one had been part of the "Horde of Hentai" who had been mustered by the principal's son Kunō Tatewaki the previous April when it came to seeking Tendō Akane for a date after besting her in battle, the boys' attitudes towards Kanami's would-be fiancée and all those that hung around her dipped way down in the wake of the Week of Hell. That was mostly thanks to learning that Akane's elder sister Tendō Nabiki ran a website concerning the so-called "Nerima Wrecking Crew" which gave out embarrassing details about all the martial arts prodigies that lived in the ward to anyone interested in learning them. Through that, the boys learned that Akane's pet piglet known as "P-chan" was actually the cursed form of her fiancé's chief rival, Hibiki Ryōga, all thanks to the wanderer actually blundering into Jusenkyō itself the very day Ranma was effectively cursed to become Kanami late the previous winter. Soon learning thanks to Ranma/Kanami that Akane's father Sōun and eldest sister Kasumi also knew about Ryōga's curse — yet had simply done NOTHING to try to protect Akane's virtue from a man who had vowed from the very beginning to do anything to destroy Ranma's happiness — the boys instantly turned their backs on those who supported Akane and her entourage, which had made things very frosty at Fūrinkan High since Kanami departed to places unknown at the start of June.

Of course, even if Kanami had actually gone forth to tell her friends — who had also been briefly her lovers when she confided to them certain truths after the Week of Hell began — where she currently lived, Hiroshi and Daisuke told her to keep quiet about that.

Given that Kanami's would-be "wife" from the mountains of China, Nū Shānpú, was well-versed in her tribe's considerable grimoire of herbs and other natural medicines which could be used offensively on any of their perceived enemies, it was just being prudent.

There was no way she could learn secrets if said secrets simply weren't known!

And given the tale Kanami and her "mirror clone" — who had been given true life thanks to a friend of Kanami's from Itabashi and had been adopted into her "true" family as Hayashi Kikuko — had gladly force-fed the "Blue Thunder" as a way of denying Nabiki any hope of influencing things by manipulating the delusional kendō-ka into bringing the Kunō fortune to bear on the matter...!
As Daisuke and Hiroshi moved to take their seats — it was afternoon study hall for Class 2-4 — they ignored Kanami's so-called "real" fiancée, who was seated off to one side, now surrounded by several friends such as Asano Sayuri and Tokoro Yuka. As the girls gave the boys resentful looks at yet another public move to try to shame Akane in support of what had to be the craziest lie yet to emerge because of Akane's obligations to her family and to the Saotome Clan — Hiroshi and Daisuke knew Sayuri simply loathed Ranma/Kanami while Yuka was more a hanger-on than one willing to make her own decisions — the boys relaxed as they moved to get some studying done while Ukyō returned to her seat...

KK-KKRANG!

The whole school building violently shook from the impact of something very hard on the yard close to the main walkway, knocking people off their feet and out of their desks to spill all over the floor! As everyone moved to protect themselves while some of the overhanging lights collapsed onto the desks above them, a weak "Poi...!" accompanied by a mewling "Oyo...!" echoed from outside close to the main gate. Instantly, Hiroshi was on his feet and looking out over the front lawn...

"Okay...!" he breathed out. "We have visitors."

Other people got to their feet and looked outside themselves to see what was going on. "Two girls in a very familiar model of jumpsuit, one cute brunette and a very foxy blonde," Daisuke mused, as calm as his friend. "I thought they were keeping the fight scenes AWAY from this place."

"Wait...!"

"Huh?"

"Look at what's on their chests, Dai."

Daisuke looked...

...then blinked as both women — appearing to be their age — slowly picked themselves out of the deep ruts they just made in the front yard after flying in from the south, moving to brush off their jumpsuits from the dirt that got rubbed in when they crashed. As a scream in the background indicated that Kuribayashi Sanjurō managed to pull clear of the principal and was now running away from Fūrinkan High as fast as he could go — Kunō Godai himself had been smashed into the branch of an overhanging tree, obviously by the girls' hitting the ground — Daisuke was quick to see stylized kanji on their chests above their cleavage. The beautiful tomboy with the curly chestnut brown hair and the matching eyes in the dark green jumpsuit with white belt and boots trimmed in green piping had a stylized睦月 in vertical reading format, coloured white with green piping, all over a white crescent moon on her chest. The rather foxy-looking blonde with the burning eyes that matched her companion's wore a black jumpsuit with white belt and boots with red piping on the belt and the boot flaps, a white夕立 also in vertical format with red piping, all emblazoned on a red wolf's head insignia on her chest. As both newcomers shook their heads, Hiroshi read, "'Mutsuki'. 'Yūdachi'. Dai, you get a funny feeling...?"

"Hai...!" Daisuke sighed as they shared looks before nodding.

"HINAKO-CHAN!"

A blinding flash of energy then made everyone — save Kanami's friends as they shielded their eyes just in time from that burst of teleportation energy — scream out in shock.

Both men breathed out on seeing the smiling girl floating outside the window, now in her white "fighting" jumpsuit, holding Mister Umbrella up; Daisuke and Hiroshi were both glad that the New Yorker who made that flying device made sure that it wouldn't allow Saeru Hinako to let go of it when she was flying well above a safe landing altitude. Before anyone could say anything more, a growling child-form teacher stormed over, her handy five yen coin ready for action. "You little delinquent!" Ninomiya Hinako snapped as she glared at the little girl. "How dare you float up...?!"

"Curse, curse, GO AWAY!"

Another blinding flash of light filled the room as people screamed out and covered their eyes, that accompanied by their teacher's pained scream as the Spirit of Innocence lashed out with her empathy to literally burn away what was locking her older namesake down like it did.

Opening their eyes, they turned to look...

...then they winced on seeing their teacher — now as a very curvy adult, many of the boys were quite pleased to note — smashed head-first into the retaining wall on the inner side of the classroom, having plowed over Tendō Akane and her closest friends thanks to the whiplash that saw the ki manipulations unleashed on their teacher years ago by the grandmaster of Musabetsu Kakutō-ryū fully torn away by the power of the Spirit of Innocence. As Saeru Hinako breathed out on noting yet another person was cured of a very bad problem, she gazed on Kanami's best friends. "What's going on?"

"Excuse me, poi!"

Hinako blinked. "Poi?"

"Poi!"

The youngest of Tariko's sisters turned around...

...then she blinked on seeing two girls about the same age as her Onē-tama now floating behind her, friendly smiles on their faces as they gazed expectantly on her. Noting their dress and the stylized kanji on their jumpsuit tops — which was never done with anyone who inherited a Gift directly from the Great Forge of Power — Hinako blinked several times before she read the names, then she moaned. "Oh, no! Hina did it AGAIN!" she breathed out, slapping her forehead with her hand.

"I take it these are two more 'shipgirls', Hinako-chan?" Daisuke wryly asked.

"Hai! ONĒ-TAMA!"

A flash of light — one that wasn't so blinding — caused a girl in an off-white jumpsuit with black belt and boots to appear behind Hiroshi and Daisuke. "What is it, Hinako-chan?" Tariko then asked before she blinked on seeing who was floating behind her. Taking a deep breath as she muttered to herself that it was definitely going to be one of THOSE days, the Trickster of the Show then crossed her arms. "Hinako-chan, what did we ask you to do when Ataru went back to school?"

"IT'S NOT HINA'S FAULT, ONĒ-TAMA!"

Sensing she was telling the truth, Tariko sighed. "Okay, I'll handle this," she declared. "YOU TWO!" she barked at the two ladies now floating behind Hinako. "GET IN HERE! FRONT AND CENTRE!"

"HAI!" / "POI!"
After Hinako climbed through the open window to get inside the class, the two older girls followed, then they formed a line of review in front of Tariko. Snapping to attention, they gave her salutes which would definitely have passed muster at the Imperial Naval Academy at Eta-jima in the days before the Greater East Asia War; knowing what these two girls actually were, Tariko wasn't surprised on seeing that.

"Shiratsuyu-class destroyer Yūdachi, Second Destroyer Division...!" the blonde began.

"Mutsuki-class destroyer *Mutsuki*, Thirtieth Destroyer Division...!" the brunette then announced.

"...RETURNING TO COMBINED FLEET HEADQUARTERS FOR NEW ASSIGNMENT, TEITOKU!" both women then barked before lowering their arms.

Silence.

More silence.

Still more silence.

Then...

Tariko sighed before she put her fists to her hips. "Did either of you sense it when destroyer *Fubuki*, first of her class, then assigned to the Eleventh Destroyer Division, was revived this spring just past when my sister here was touring over the Solomon Islands?"

"Hai!" both girls chanted as if they were fresh recruits at Eta-jima. Meanwhile, people in the class busied themselves helping their friends recover from that ki burst that exploded from their homeroom teacher after Tariko's sister had touched her. Not noticed by others in Class 2-4, many students and teachers from other classes were peeping into the room to see what was going on, chief among them being Tendō Nabiki and her flunkies; Tariko was quick to note that the second daughter of the patriarch of the Tendō family of Ōizumi wasn't doing anything to help her sister recover from being bashed down by her teacher's body. The brunette then added, "We felt it when someone very nice came along and floated over where *Fubuki* sank north of Cape Esperance back in Shōwa-jūnanen, then this strange power came out of nowhere to take her spirit away and totally remove her wreckage from the ocean floor. We wanted that done to us as well, but that nice person didn't come to us...

Both then tensed on hearing Hinako sniffle. "Hina's sorry...!"

"Relax, Hinako. Not your fault," Tariko said as she waved her sister down before she turned back to the newcomers. "So what did happen when you became this?" she then asked the two shipgirls that had been reborn as battle dolls by whatever power was sending them to Earth, waving to them.

The blonde nodded. "Well, we kept wishing and wishing to be like Fubuki-chan! After all, we felt how poi she was after your sister came along and salvaged her! Then just five days ago, we felt our souls be pulled out of our wrecks and put into these bodies!" She waved to herself, then indicated her companion, who nodded in eager confirmation. "At first, we really didn't feel very poi because we got turned into this! After all, we were WARSHIPS before we were sunk! Who would expect us to become human beings, much less human GIRLS?! Then after we we floated up to the surface and floated into the air — It's so poi being able to FLY like the warriors of the Thunder Companies, did you know that?! — we then heard this really loud voice say something we couldn't understand..."

"'Tene lomher'buo'?!" Tariko quoted.

"Poi!" the blonde said, nodding. "Then we felt really strange for a moment — That's when we got
these cool suits, by the way! It wasn't poi when we got turned into this and wound up NAKED of all things! — and then this voice called out 'nesu' and said some really strange names before we felt really poi! Next thing we knew, we felt the urge to go look for our sisters. I found my sisters...

"I found all of mine except Yūzuki-chan," the brunette added.

"Then we came here when we realized we needed to report to Fleet Headquarters."

"But we nearly collided with some airplane flying south of Tōkyō Bay."

"And landed here," the blonde finished, blushing. "Sorry for the mess!"

"Ah! Tariko-san!"

Tariko looked over. "Hey, Tatewaki! Sorry for interrupting classes!"

"Pah! Pay it no mind, oh Great Mistress of Chaos!" the regal-looking kendo team captain declared as he came over to take her hand, bestowing a kiss on it. He then turned to take Hinako's hand in his own, bestowing that a kiss; such made the youngest of the sisters giggle in embarrassment. "Lady Hinako! Seeing what you just did to my fool father's hideously-cursed teacher, I know you've come this day to breathe new life to this pitiful excuse of a school!" As Hinako blushed at that compliment, he turned to gaze upon the newcomers before his grey eyes widened in surprise before he courteously bowed to the just-returned destroyers-turned-teenage girls. "Mutsuki-hime! Yūdachi-hime! This poor land is truly all the brighter by your blessed return to these shores! I'm sure when Tariko-san informs Tennō himself of this great event, he will call upon the Kami Themselves to grant you and your sisters the good lives you've gained, as They have done to your fleet mates now living with Lady Hinako and her sisters!"

"Is there an admiral there, Tatewaki-san?" the brunette hopefully asked.

"Indeed there is, oh Blessed Angel of the New Year!" the kendō-ka said, making her blush madly at being called that. "Tragically, he turns out to be a severed soul-fragment of the Lady Tariko Katabarbe of bright Yiziba, the Forge of the First Race of the Universe, now standing here with us today, having been moulded by dark traitors to all of humanity to become that much maligned Moroboshi Ataru!" As the students around them gasped on hearing that, Tatewaki then waved to Hinako. "Fortunately, the living Spirit of Innocence and Joy gracing us now with her divine presence and her beloved sisters — who are also Lady Tariko's sisters — gladly welcomed the poor man when he was allowed to truly live his life as his own person after he was saved by that most foul Queen Elle last April by the Goddess Who Walks Among Men herself as their own beloved elder brother!" As Hinako cheered on hearing that, Tatewaki waved to the open window. "Ask your own valiant fleet mate herself, of course!"

People's heads spun around...

"FUBUKI-CHAN!" the newcomers screamed.

The just-arrived Fukushima Fujiko screamed in surprise as the other shipgirls literally mowed into her with hugs that could crush a mountain, sending all three tumbling down on the floor. As the boys all whooped at the reunion of three of the veterans of the Guadalcanal campaign from 1942, Kuonji Ukyō snorted as she crossed her arms. "Figures that lech Moroboshi had some-...!"

KK-KRUNCH!

"Hah!" Tatewaki snapped after the okonomiyaki chef from Kansai was smashed down thanks to a
falling cinder block. "Again you LIE to yourself concerning the truth of your so-called 'fiancé',
Kuonji Ukyō! Why do you not see the TRUTH?!" he demanded. "As I've said again and again since
she escaped the grasp of the foul thief and the insane witch he married, 'Saotome Ranma' was but a
CURSE forced on the beautiful Hayashi Kanami by her fool sire who was glad to do ANYTHING
to make his perverse 'man upon men' to force on fair Tendō Akane here!" He waved to the still-
unconscious sophomore he got a crush on over a year ago, now being tended by a shuddering Sayuri
and a quiet Yuka. As the other girls moaned on seeing how well the delusional kendō-ka had been
taken by that obviously crazy story about what had gone down with their old classmate in the late
spring, Tatewaki added, "But fret not! Thanks to Lady Tariko here, dear Hayashi Kanami is forever
free of the dark machinations of her honourless thief of a father, her insane lunatic of a mother and
that disgusting troll that dares call the Untameable One his 'student'!" A bonfire of ki then exploded
around him as all the boys whooped. "Truly, the Kami Themselves have blessed such a wonderful
circumstance!"

Tariko sighed. "Making work for me again, Tatewaki?"

He stopped. "What do you mean?"

"That shyster out in the corridor?"

He turned to see Nabiki standing at the window, nowhere close to where her sister had fallen. To
everyone's amusement, she now looked like a deer caught in the headlights of an oncoming
Shinkansen at being called out by that thanks to this unknown relative of Tomobiki's most infamous
resident. "Ah, forgive me, Tariko-san..." He then perked. "Ah! Fret not, oh Grand Lady of Chaos! I,
Kunō Tatewaki, have the one means by which to bring such a foul creature down!"

Tariko's eyebrow arched. "Oh? How so?"

"By mentioning one particular fact of life on your adopted homeworld, of course."

"Oh? What's that?"

"THAT MONEY DOES NOT EXIST ON YIZIBA!"

Silence.

More silence.

Still more silence.

Then...

Nabiki looked now as if her own sister just brained her with a ki mallet. As the others watched totally
spellbound, her face cycled in a weird chorus of looks that got people to yank out cell phones so they
could take pictures for future blackmail purposes; ever since Hayashi Kanami had left school,
whatever influence the so-called "ice queen of Fūrinkan" had when it came to her peers had
significantly dropped into the sub-basement. As laughter filled the room and the hallways from that
sight, Nabiki seemed to swing around on one heel before drunkenly staggering away, weird sounds
escaping her in a funny chorus that reminded Tariko about one particular Bugs Bunny cartoon when
the rabbit himself got smashed in the face by a flying I-beam thanks to a cranky construction team
supervisor that ripped apart his home burrow while building a new skyscraper in the city. "Damn!
Didn't even need to use the old dropped block trick on her," she then said, nodding in appreciation.

More laughter filled the air as the boys in the classroom gave Tatewaki a banzai cheer at his putting
Nabiki down like that. Watching this from nearby, Fujiko grinned in delight while her old fleet mates
blinked in confusion. "Poi! What's all this about, Fubuki-chan?" the blonde then asked.

Fujiko sighed. "One of the many things about becoming human that make it all worth it, Kodachi-chan!"

Tatewaki blinked, looking over. "'Kodachi'?"

"Hai!" the reborn lead of her class of destroyers said before she waved to the reborn Nightmare of the Solomons. "Hamamoto Kodachi," she said, making the blonde blink in confusion before Fujiko waved to the older destroyer-turned-teenage girl. "Kisaragi Mutsuko. Our admiral chose those names for us."

The newly-named Mutsuko and Kodachi blinked before both of them blushed. "That's poi!" the latter then declared, nodding in acceptance.

"Oyo! Mutsuko's blushing!" the former said as she clapped her cheeks.

"Ah! Mutsuko-chan talks like Hina!" Hinako whooped. "Hina likes!"

"Um...Tariko-san..."

Everyone look at the principal's son. "What is it, Tatewaki-san?" Hinako asked.

A pained look crossed his face as he gazed intently at the Trickster of the Show. "Tariko-san, must your brother have named Yūdachi-hime here after my twisted sister?"

Kodachi's hair tufts then perked. "Poi...?"

"It wasn't intentional," Tariko assured him.

He breathed out. "Hai..."

"I...know you...!"

Everyone turned...

...then people blinked on seeing a wide-eyed Tendō Akane slowly rise from where she had been knocked down, she staring with both confusion and recognition at the Trickster of the Show. Seeing that, Hinako blinked as her own meta-sight clicked in for a moment, then she gasped. "Oh, no! Who did that to you, Akane-san?!" she said as she walked over, placing a glowing hand on the young martial arts prodigy's forehead. "Hina will make it better! Curse, curse...GO AWAY!"

Aken screamed out as her whole body exploded with ki, blinding everyone...!

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The Tendō home, that moment...

A violent explosion ripped through the dōjō, disintegrating it in a flash of energy and flame! The shock wave of the blast slammed into the home of the Tendō Clan of Ōizumi, causing the contents of the kitchen to be punched through the wall into the living room and nearly crush the people there...!

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Fūrinkan High School...
As everyone shook their heads to clear their vision, they turned to look...

...then they gaped in wide-eyed awe on seeing the aura of once-contained power that had exploded from Akane's body began to retract back into her. As the nude woman — whose exposure made many boys grin in delight on seeing the once-most popular girl in Fūrinkan High School that way — then found herself cloaked in the dark red jumpsuit with the black belt, boots and gauntlets of one of the most powerful FISS-types to ever live on Yiziba, a whistle through the air made both Tariko and Hinako look up. A flash of light exploded over Akane's head, producing a massive war hammer complete with a handle that was almost as tall as the young martial artist herself. Reaching up with one hand, the transformed Akane smiled as her best friend landed perfectly into her palm, then she made a twirl with it before she gazed upon the the other metahumans in the room, all of whom were grinning...or in the case of Kisaragi Mutsuki and Hamamoto Kodachi, were gaping in confusion at such a display.

"What the HELL happened to me, Tariko-chan?" Akane then snarled.

The Trickster of the Show took a deep breath as she rubbed her hair. "Looks like someone played around with something they shouldn't have, Akane-chan. Sorry about that! I thought from what Kanami-chan told me what was going on here after she allowed the Gift to take her back in May that you were holding back because you didn't know she herself was in the Book! Only when she slugged you into the river the day before she left town did she sense what was going on!"

That made the current incarnation of the Hammer of Passion, \textit{Imdo ("Cremisi")}, moan. "Joys of ebony mesonium!" she said before blinking as something came to her.

"What ails you, Tendō Akane?!" a joyous Tatewaki — who had nearly screamed out in delight on seeing that his "fierce tigress" was \textit{Gifted!} — demanded.

A growl escaped the reborn hammer warrior as her eyes glowed. "Baka Jijii...!"

"What?! Happōsai?!" Daisuke demanded.

"No! That piece of lazy garbage I have to call my 'father', Daisuke-kun!" Akane snarled. "How much do you know of what Tariko-chan's been doing?!!"

"Kanami-chan told us everything," Hiroshi offered as he indicated himself, then Daisuke. "That mirror-clone of hers from April was pulled out of Mirror Mansion by Ayumu-chan! Kanami-chan adopted her as her own sister Kikuko; she filled Sempai here on it."

Noting Tatewaki nod in confirmation, the Hammer of Passion sighed. "Good! No need to recap the script in that case!" As Tariko, Hinako and Fujiko grinned on hearing that idiom escape the lips of the "heir" of the Tendō-ryū, Akane took a deep breath as she stretched herself, making the boys goggle on seeing that well-formed body move under the leather-like battlesuit she wore, the black war hammer insignia on her chest above her cleavage flaring. Noting that, a smile crossed her face. "Much that I appreciate the good looks, guys, I hope you realize that I'm really not in the mood for pillow scenes!"

"Not that I blame you, Akane-san!" Tatewaki declared before bowing his head deeply to the woman who had once been the object of his affections. "I only give a thousand sincere apologies for my boorish behaviour last year before poor Kanami-san came here in her cursed form! Given how beautiful you are as the Great Kami of the Seeker's Forge turned you into when Tariko-san came...!!"
"Help me make sure the idiots back at the house don't cause me issues and I'll call it even."

"Done!" The senior kendō-ka then took a deep breath. "May I strongly recommend you seek out the Lady Hasegawa Chisame or the Lady Asakura Kazumi who both now attend the tranquil Mahora Academy as soon as possible, Akane-san. The former is the wise and all-seeing Nexus and the latter is the all-reporting Windtalker. They will show you the heinous truth of the foul Hibiki Ryōga's perversions concerning your very person since he came into your life last year and how he took advantage of poor Kanami-san's naïveté to make her promise not to reveal his own disgusting curse to you!"

That made her blink before she hissed, "P-chan...!"

"It's all on Nabiki's website, Akane-chan," Hiroshi warned.

"Right..." the Hammer of Passion breathed out. "Selfish idiot knows I don't care for computers...!"

She took a breath. "Might have to commit sororicide along with the act of patricide I'm thinking of now!"

"My family will be pleased to remove the bodies, of course," Tatewaki immediately offered.

"I might actually take you up on that, Sempai. Now, who are these three here, Tariko-chan? They feel like battle dolls, but their ki's nearly at Ayumu-chan's levels!"

Everyone gazed on Tariko, then looked at Fujiko and her companions. "They're kantai musume, Akane-chan," the Trickster of the Show stated. "Kami of warships from the recent world war who somehow got resurrected as first generation battle dolls by someone using Hinako-chan here as a guide of sorts!"

Akane gazed on the smiling pre-teen standing there, then she blinked. "You normally don't go for people being Gifted so soon!" she said as she pointed at Hinako.

"She's my half-sister."

That made the raven-haired woman blink before she sighed. "Your grandmother?"

"Fortunately so," Tariko said with an amused wink.

Akane laughed, then she gazed once more on the shipgirls, all of whom braced themselves to attention to allow their admiral's friend to inspect them. "Cute...!" she purred, making Fujiko, Mutsuko and Kodachi blush madly as she turned to walk out of the room. "Anyhow, have to go bash heads now...!"

"Akane-chan...!"

That was a wide-eyed Sayuri, who had been shocked into silence on seeing her friend transform like that. She winced as Akane walked out of the room without acknowledging her. Seeing that, Tariko smirked. "Hyator'bete lu'uem..." she muttered as she waved Hinako to follow her. "Oi, girls! Let's go!"

"HAI!"/"POI!" the three shipgirls called out as they ran after them.

A snap of Tariko's fingers saw her powers restore Class 2-4 to normal, making the girls scream out in shock and disbelief while all the boys whooped in delight...

To Be Continued...
**WRITER'S NOTES**

Translation list: **Asāsiyūn** — Literally "people faithful to the foundation (of Islam)"; **Ḥashāshīn** — Literally "users of hashish"; **Rimrae umale** — Literally "copycat same", this is a term used to describe people who replicate the social and technological standards of other societies as the Niphentaxians have often done with the Terrans; **Ōnusa** — A wooden wand with shide (zigzag paper streamers) used in Shintō rituals; **Spy lens** — Yizibajohei term equivalent to the terms "inner eye" or "sixth sense"; **Tennō** — Heavenly Sovereign, Japan's head of state; **Recap the script** — Yizibajohei idiom equivalent to the concept of refreshing someone about past events; **Hyator'bete lu'uem** — White noise.

_Yatsura_ character notes: **Tsuruya Rumiko** is my name for the woman who looks like Takahashi-sensei who appears in early manga episodes of _Yatsura_ such as "Food Fight" (manga chapter #106). The **Red Cloak** appeared in the manga story named after him (manga chapter #41). **Nishijima Hiroshige**, **Wada Keisuke**, **Sugihara Nara** and **Nishihara Ikue** were characters that appeared on the "relationship chart" Miyake Shinobu drew up in the anime story "Goodbye Season" (anime episode #64); Nara's and Ikue's family names and Hiroshige's and Keisuke's given names are my invention. **Kuribayashi Sanjurō** first appeared in the anime episode "Oh, Lonely Teacher! Kuribayashi-sensei Appears" (first half of anime episode #16). **Hanawa Mitsu** first appeared in the manga story "Private Tutor" (manga chapter #48).

_**Kibina High School**_ is the same school that appears in the dating simulation game _KimiKiss_. In the universe of this story, I set the town west of Shūnan on the Inner Sea coast in Yamaguchi Prefecture.

_Leningrádskaja Óblast’_ is the name of a federal subject (a first-level national subdivision) of Russia located in and around the city of Sankt-Peterbúrg (which was called "Leningrád" in Soviet days). In effect, an óblast’ (which could be translated as "province" or "region") is the equivalent of an American state or Canadian province, but doesn't have a high level legislative autonomy from Moskvá as a "republic" such as Chechnya would within the Russian Federation; ethnically, an óblast would be mostly populated by Russians while republics would be populated by other nationalities.

_Ranma 1/2_ character notes: The family names of Saotome Ranma's best friends in Fürinkan High School, **Hiroshi** and **Daisuke**, first appeared in Eric Hallstrom's fanfic _Ranma and Akane: A Love Story_; I'm unaware if Eric was the one who created those names. The given name to **Principal Kunō** and the family names to Tendō Akane's best friends **Sayuri** and **Yuka** are my invention, not to mention my use of the family name Ņǚ for Kělún (Cologne) and Shānpù (Shampoo). As noted above, **Hayashi Kikuko** is "Mirror Ranma-chan", who appeared in the "Copy Ranma" storyline (manga chapter #s 367-370).

The **Thunder Companies** were first introduced in _The Seventh Shipgirl_. In my stories, they were the primary metahuman fighters for Imperial Japan during the Second World War.

The Bugs Bunny cartoon Tariko thought of when Tendō Nabiki got the shock of her life concerning no money existing on Yiziba is **Homeless Hare**, released in 1950 under the Merrie Melodies banner and directed by Chuck Jones.

Both **Hasegawa Chisame** and **Asakura Kazumi** would be in the third year of middle school at the Mahora Academy in this story.
Shipgirls, Shipgirls, Shipgirls!

Chapter Summary

With nearly two whole classes of destroyer shipgirls arriving at the sisters' doorsteps, Rinrin does an experiment...and helps provoke the return of the world's most famous battleship...!

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Ōmure-jīma, Welcome House, an hour before supper...

"We're sorry for intruding upon you all like this. Please treat us well."

The group of twenty-one teenage girls in the two models of Yizibajei fighting jumpsuits with the kanji of their old ship names on their chests all deeply bowed to Tariko Katabarbe and her sisters (save Tanenobu Karen) in the middle of the rotunda at the old seaward end of Welcome House.

"PLEASE TREAT US WELL!" the assembled destroyers-turned-metahumans of the Mutsuki-class and Shiratsuyu-class chanted, echoing the words of the first of the latter class, Hamamoto Miroko.

At the head of the round table the sisters used when they had meals, Sukeyama Sakuya bowed her head in turn. "Be welcome here, great warriors of Tennō," the Healer of Men's Hearts and the effective matriarch of the Moroboshi Clan of Mutsu then declared ritually, making the newly-arrived shipgirls stiffen. "Know within the whole of our lands, you will know peace, safety, honour and love."

"On behalf of my fleet mates, I accept your welcome in the spirit it was given, Sakuya-himesama!" Miroko, the one who rose from the kami of the destroyer Shiratsuyu herself, replied with a deep bow.

As wild cheers filled the rotunda's main dining hall, people then broke up to greet the newcomers individually. As Sakuya herself moved to direct the new shipgirls over to people such as Tenhiro Haruka (who normally handled etiquette lessons) and Susumu Marie (who was in charge of teaching the shipgirls about recent history), a visibly-annoyed Hatoyama Rinrin groaned as she got up from her chair, then walked out of the dining room, heading for the stairs to her third-floor apartment. Noting this, both Tariko and Tendō Akane followed her. "Don't complain about this, Rinrin-chan," the Trickster of the Show said as she and the Hammer of Passion followed the Technological Sorceress of the East up to her bedroom. "If the spirits of these ships desperately want to return, they'll return. Whoever is shipping the battle dolls here clearly wants to help them be human."

Another groan escaped the Ōsaka native. "I'm just worried that some idiot's going to start screaming about violating war graves and all that, Aneki," Rinrin mused as they walked past the second floor landing. "We're lucky Tennō understands that what Hinako-chan did wasn't intentional. What
happens if it's an American ship whose kami gets turned into a shipgirl? Say *Arizona* for example?"

Tariko and Akane both winced. "That would be a shitstorm to see," the latter mused, a touch of a growl in her voice indicating she was now experiencing that wonderful joy that hit Terrans-turned-Yizibajohei called "Post-Gifting Shock", something that should have washed through her shortly after she was Gifted in the summer of 2003 in the wake of her mother's death. "No wonder you tried to get Hinako-chan to stop," she commented as they finally reached the third floor.

Walking to their right, they passed Tariko's normal guest room to the door to Rinrin's bedroom. Once inside, they did a quick left turn into the neighbouring apartment, which the young genius had converted into her personal laboratory; since the Moroboshi Clan owned Welcome House through the Inshin Group — the small keiretsu that controlled one of Japan's largest independent banks, Toranoseishin Finances, with operational headquarters in Tomobiki — there was no need to worry about extra rent charges for family members living there. Once in the warmly-lit space that served as the 'Technological Sorceress' sanctum sanctorum, Rinrin walked over to her main work station, sitting down as she keyed on her personal computers. Tariko and Akane took a seat in the sofa set to one side.

"Still, I wonder how is it that the living spirits of warships of all things are able to come back to life like that," Rinrin then mused as she lowered her goggles over her eyes to scan the recent data transfers from fellow polymaths such as Isaac Thomas and Elizabeth Wakefield. "Yeah, Shintō beliefs do state that a warship has a kami within it, but to actually give it LIFE like that...?"

"Chikage told me that she sensed there was extra mesonium lining the hulls of those warships whose wrecks she inspected during summer vacation," Tariko noted. "Not just Japanese warships, but other ones. Even those warships whose hulls have been stripped down by metal salvagers in the East Indies still have mesonium deposits in the sea floor there. You get anything from the folks in Mahora about what those nuts in the Black Dragon Society were doing beyond what Negako knows?"

"Nah, Aneki, not a thing." Rinrin then hummed. "All warships, you said?"

"Indeed so."

"Hey, Chikage-chan!" Rinrin called out, clearly not bothered by the arrival of Hirosaki Chikage, who just teleported in. As the Dark Heart of Pure Chaos sat in a nearby chair, her younger half-sister got back to work scanning things. "Oh, Isaac-kun sent a message. He's hoping that you can spare time to help the people from Remnant get over what they just went through there with that war they had to fight. Given what you learned thanks to your trip to the Galactic Republic and training under Anakin-kun..."

"It'll have to be on the weekends; I don't want to spend too much time missing classes at Hogwarts," the metahuman arch-mage answered...

...before a beeping noise echoed from her skirt. Reaching into it, Chikage pulled out a crystalline personal administrative assistant device, then placed it on the side table beside her chair before tapping the crystal on top. "Hirosaki," she called out.

"Hey, Chikage! How are things with your brother?!!"

Chikage chuckled. "Quite fine, Pansy. Anything interesting happen in class?"

A snort escaped the young heiress of the Noble and Ancient House of Parkinson of Keerford near Liverpool, who was now relaxing in one of many unused classrooms within the ramparts of Hogwarts; thanks to a noticeable drop in enrolment ultimately because of the Blood Wars over a
decade before, the number of students attending the United Kingdom's wand-magical school were still in the process of recovering. Fortunately for the people in Welcome House, the PAA came with a universal translator function which allowed them to understand each other even if Pansy herself could speak Japanese (though with a noticeable accent). "Not today. Professor Sprout was able to keep Um-bitch off her case because you went home for 'compassionate reasons' for the weekend," Pansy Parkinson said as her smoky grey eyes twinkled in amusement. "She's starting to get curious around you."

"Understandable. I'm a 'half-blood' by your standards and I happen to 'revel' in living in the 'muggle' world, which violently offends her sensibilities thanks to what her fool father did after he left her mother and brother hanging like they did after it was discovered the brother was a nimmmib. A good thing my grandfather found out the truth of her ancestry through friends in Gringotts; it would be something to use against her if she gets too nosy about things. How are things between you and Hermione?"

The woman who was the current incarnation of one of Yiziba's more darker reality warpers snorted. "Um-bitch is totally clueless about the fact that 'Mione and I are soul-bonded," Pansy noted as she gently shifted her raven hair around; her image was being projected in three-dimensional format over the PAA's central crystal for the others to see. Chikage knew it was time for breakfast over in Scotland, but Pansy had recently begun to exercise her pureblood rights to dine away from the rest of the crowd on occasion to deal with "family business"...which was just her excuse to get away from the crowds so she could spend quality time with her normal-born lover from Crowley near London. Of course, Albus Dumbledore had winked at such a thing once he learned of Pansy's soul-bond with Hermione Granger; given the support Pansy's parents and older brother Michael obviously gave to Voldemort — Chikage knew the senior from Ravenclaw had taken the Dark Mark the summer just past — keeping a bond with a "mudblood" secret from the pureblood fanatics was definitely vital for both young women.

Fortunately, Dumbledore didn't know Pansy's OTHER big secret...

"She's starting to crack down on people because of what Neville reported in the spring when Tom had his resurrection party," Chikage noted before sipping her tea. "Has she got to Hermione yet?"

"With her being Gifted? The couple of times she tried, Um-bitch got a mild case of spattergroit!" Pansy reported with a grin. She knew that Chikage did her best to keep herself informed of gossip inside Hogwarts, but even the Hufflepuff exchange student from Tōkyō didn't know everything. "People think it's the Weasley twins who did that to her. At least McGonagall has been able to keep Um-bitch away from Fred and George; even if they're 'blood traitors'..." — her voice dripped in scorn on saying that hated term — "...they're purebloods and their father's place in the Ministry is pretty solid, especially since he has support from Neville's grandmother and a few others."

"True."

"So what's happening on Promised Island? Did those umale get sent back home?"

"Took the Last Checky — quoting Yotsuba-chan — this morning our time, Pansy-chan," Rinrin answered on her sister's behalf. As Pansy laughed — the second child of the current Earl of Keerford just adored Yotsuba Dunn, the first of Chikage's half-sisters to be discovered by the granddaughter of one of Yomigawa Tsukiko's most well-respected warriors — the technopath then sighed. "Sadly, we got more kannmusu drop in on us just a couple of hours ago. That makes forty so far!"

"What's causing that?" Pansy demanded. A cross-house research group coordinated by Hermione at the start of summer vacation when the news of what Saeru Hinako had accidentally unleashed in the spring was now looking at possible magical sources of the levels of mesonium which had been
inserted into warships during the Second World War which ultimately allowed the living spirits of said ships to return with the help of whatever was now controlling the first generation of battle dolls on Yiziba.

"Honestly, Pansy-chan, none of us know. Fortunately, we got the room here to take them all in, but someone outside Japan's going to take notice of this sooner or later. If it isn't some scrap metal dealer in Indonesia wailing 'Hey, where's our shipwrecks?!' to the government for it to leak to the media, it'll be those guys from Microsoft who loan out the Octopus to explore the wrecks."

"Fortunately, it's late autumn up near Iceland now, so the quest to recover the bell of Hood is being held off," a new voice declared as Yotsuba Dunn herself came into the room. "Checky, Pansy-chan!"

"Hi, Yotsuba! Anxious to get back to London soon?!"

"Nah!" the metahuman detective said as she moved to sit behind her half-sister as Rinrin typed away. "Mycroft wants me to help coordinate with Marie-chan about keeping those dolts in the British Library away from private magical collections here in Japan. Konoe-kōchōsensei and the leaders of the Eight Commanderies are raising a snit about their agents always sticking their noses where they don't belong. Thank God that it wasn't Yomiko-san. Marie-chan really likes her."

"Thank Merlin for that small favour. By the way, Chikage...?"

"Please come over when you're released for Hogsmeade weekend tomorrow. You two can help us with the new kids and you can get the chance to meet Jody."

That made Pansy's eyes widen in awe. "JODY CROWLEY?! Are you serious?!"

"Very. She's been in country for a year seeking out the Bible Black."

The young English magical heiress' jaw dropped. "The Bible Black?! Not even Riddle dared to try to track that thing down! How...?!"

"I doubt Tom would have taken interest in it, Pansy," Chikage said with a churlish smile as the others in the room giggled. "It's ultimately a tome of tantric magic! Would something like THAT help that oh-so-delightful death cheater in conquering the world?"

Pansy blinked, then she smirked. "No!" A giggle escaped her. "Oh, shit! All the girls in the castle are going to be SO jealous! Me meeting Jody Crowley?! She's the one Riddle was REALLY scared of!"

"I assume the boys are getting more concerned about Tom wanting to recruit them."

"They are."

"I'll do a tarot reading on that, then tell you the results when you come."

"Appreciated. See you tomorrow."

"Oyasumi!" Rinrin and Yotsuba chanted as Chikage cut the link.

The metahuman sorceress sighed as she rose, walking over to the closed window to open the shutters and gaze out at the western coastline of Ōmure-jima beyond the slopes of Stargazer Hill, focusing on the small seashore cottage where all of them had been conceived over the last two decades. "When do Rose and Thérèse intend to make their move on Tom, Ane-kun? The sooner he's gone, the better."
"Thérèse should have finally assimilated the last of those soul fragments that idiot created by now," Tariko noted. "Definitely before Christmas."

"Excellent. Much that I understand why many in Britain would prefer for that particular apple cart not to be turned over so things remain stable to recover from the Blood War, Tom's return is going to hurt friends. If Rose didn't have that prophecy over her head, I'd deal with him myself."

"Prophecy'?!" Yotsuba snorted, crossing her arms. "You ask Yotsuba, Chikage-chan, it's just a stupid excuse for old fogies to brush off their responsibilities on the new generation. Like the two twerps in Nerima did to Akane-chan and Kanami-chan all the time."

Akane perked before she nodded. "In that, I agree. Hard as it is for me to believe, I find myself accepting Kanami now as Kanami and not as Ranma!"

Chikage gazed at her. "During the weekend, I'll do a full scan of your body to see what exactly it was that helped your father suppress your Gift like that."

"Appreciated, Chikage-san."

"You want to call your sister and tell her where you are?" Rinrin asked.

A snort escaped the youngest daughter of Tendō Sōun. "No. Since they all knew about 'P-chan', they can stew. I'm sure Nabiki is still out of it thanks to what Sempai did to her." She gave the others in the room a curious look. "Don't tell me that Kikuko-chan actually did pillow scenes with the man!"

"Guy thinks with his glands, remember?" Rinrin asked.

A moan answered the technokinetic. "Don't remind me..."

"Something wrong, Rinrin-chan?" Yotsuba asked.

"Ah! I'm still bugged over the idea of more shipgirls showing up as first gen battle dolls, Yotsuba!" Rinrin muttered. "I'd swear Destructo was behind all this." The room instantly chilled on her mentioning THAT battle name. "Mark-san wouldn't know a thing since his first-self never helped create them to fight off the Goa'uld all those sagas ago, plus he didn't know where they were hid."

People hummed...before a voice said, "Perhaps an experiment is called for."

Heads turned to the doorway leading to Rinrin's bedroom...

...where a smiling silver-haired teenager stood, she dressed in the normal white-and-blue seifuku that had been chosen for her and her sisters after they had manifested themselves as living women over the previous year. "Himeko-chan..." Rinrin trilled on seeing Akamatsu Himeko standing there. She then blinked as she recalled what had happened to this particular shipgirl. "That's right! Hinako-chan was able to get you 'salvaged' after Inoue-chan and Tsukiko-chan cried about you not being there...!"

"Da," the woman who was the living kami of the second of the Akatsuki-class destroyers, Hibiki, replied in Russian as she walked over to place herself before Rinrin. She then added in her cutely-accented Japanese, "We're all hoping for a cruiser to return and serve as our current fleet leader, Rinrin Mútovna. Since Khínako Mútovna won't go out to find another of our fleet mates to help bring back, we need to find one that isn't seen as a war grave like the others would be seen as."

"Who do you have in mind, Himeko-chan?" Yotsuba asked.
A smile crossed Himeko's face as her ice blue eyes sparkled...

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An hour later, in the dining room...

"PRINZ EUGEN?!"

"Hai!" Yotsuba declared as she waved to the three-dimensional projection of one of the most famous cruisers in history, that being displayed by Rinrin's large field PAA. As the destroyers-turned-teenage girls gasped in awe on seeing the beautiful three-dimensional image of the third of the Admiral Hipper-class heavy cruisers that turned out to be one of the luckiest ships of the old Kriegsmarine during World War Two, the metahuman detective added, "This particular exercise is called, in salute to her first mission in 1941, Operation: Rheinämmerung; 'Dawn on the Rhine'. Our objective is to see if the living kami of Prinz Eugen can be embodied as a battle doll as you had happen to you. We were able to do it with Himeko-chan here because of her bonds to her sisters. Let's see if we can do this to someone who has no real bond to any of you people here because she is not Japanese."

The assembled shipgirls gasped in awe at what the sisters were planning. "Would the Americans mind if we take her hull away, Yotsuba-chan?" a voice then asked.

Everyone stared at Akamatsu Inoue. The living spirit of the last of the Akamatsu-class destroyers Inazuma, she seemed the living personification of how "moe" was seen in Japan even if she was physically the same age as Sakuya or Chikage. The true pacifist of all the shipgirls, the beautiful girl with the caramel hair tied in a small ponytail at the crown of her head and a pair of matching eyes was someone ALL the sisters adored, especially the younger of them. "Quick history lesson, Inoue-chan," Rinrin then answered. "Kwajalein Atoll is no longer under American ownership. As of 1979, that whole part of the old South Pacific Mandate has been an independent nation, the Republic of the Marshall Islands." As the others in the room nodded, the technokinetik added, "Yeah, the Americans provide military forces for self-defence and still pretty much controls Kwajalein Atoll where Eugen sank..."

The main doors beyond the entrance to the dining room opened. "Taidaima!"

The sisters and the shipgirls all cried out in delight as Moroboshi Ataru walked into the dining room, looking somewhat embarrassed even if he did seem refreshed. "Oi! Onii-sama! Where's Shinobu?" Sakuya asked as he moved to sit down beside her to Yotsuba's left.

"She's staying with Jody and Yuki-san in Kyōto for the time being," he said as he stretched himself before looking around. "Where are Karen and Shirayuki?"

"Shirayuki's cooking. Karen's on Uru keeping an eye on Lum, Ani-kun," Chikage answered. "The word is getting out. Last call from her stated Oyuki's father went to Onishuto to confer with President Lana."

A chuckle escaped him. "Good...!"

"You're...our admiral...?"

Perking on hearing that unfamiliar voice, he spun around...

...before gaping on seeing nearly DOUBLE the number of shipgirls that had been living in Welcome House than there were around lunchtime, a group of eleven in dark green-and-white seifuku with sweaters plus a group of ten in black-and-white seifuku. No doubt, Rinrin had created the new
uniforms to allow the shipgirls to be told apart by class; the girls of the Fubuki-class wore blue-trimmed white seifuku, the Ayanami-class girls wore brown-trimmed white seifuku and the Akatsuki-class girls wore uniforms similar to the Fubuki-class girls but had thigh-high socks. After briefly glancing at Saeu Hinako for a moment, he moaned. "Okay, how the heck did THIS happen?" he wondered.

"We're trying to figure that out, Aniki," Rinrin provided with a shrug. "Mutsuko-chan and Kodachi-chan..." — the two named girls raised their hands to show their "admiral" who they were — "...woke up and became Gifted five days ago after feeling Hinako-chan help Fujiko-chan come back in the spring, then they traced down their sisters — except for one of Mutsuko-chan's sisters — and they were all back 'in service' by yesterday. Aneki bumped into Mutsuko-chan and Kodachi-chan over at Fūrinkan, where Hinako-chan sensed something wrong about Akane-san..."

Ataru perked, then he looked to see Tendō Akane seated beside Susumu Marie. "Oh, Akane-san, welcome to the Island," he bade her as he gave her a wave of his hand. "Apologies for not coming after you earlier, but with your sister and all the other hangers-on..."

"Don't apologize, Ataru-kun," Akane said, a wary look on her face as she saw the physical evidence of what had happened to her first true friend over a year ago. "Any hope of getting yourself Gifted? What about Shinobu-san? The sooner you're both Gifted..."

"The problems with the memory rewrites imposed on everyone in Tomobiki last year are more deeply wedged in Shinobu than we first expected, Akane-san," he answered, making many of the sisters frown on hearing that. "Jody's keeping her in Kyōto for the indefinite future to get it all cleared out."

"Do her parents know?" Sakuya asked.

"They know. Tōdō Yuki is getting her father to see if Toshoba-ojisan and Kimiko-obasan could get jobs in Kyōto so they can get out of Tomobiki once and for all. The sooner the whole family is out of there, the better." Ataru then gazed on the holographic image projecting from Rinrin's PAA. "And that is...?"

"A very honourable ally, Shirei-kan," Fukushima Fujiko declared as all the shipgirls beamed at the possibility to serve alongside Prinz Eugen. "Fortunately, NOT a war grave."

That made him blink. "So...?"

"Given that the new girls kinda became human on their own, Aniki, we're hoping to do for this one what Hinako-chan did for Himeko-chan after her sisters came back," Rinrin provided, waving to where Inoue and her sisters were now seated. "It was actually Himeko-chan who proposed going after this one."

Eyes locked on Akatsuki Himeko for a moment. "And she is...?" Ataru asked.

"Prinz Eugen," Chikage answered. "Bismarck's companion on her only mission."

"In the middle of Kwajalein Lagoon as we speak, almost at the surface in fact," Rinrin added. "We gotta do a 'May I?' dance first with Uncle Jed before we go..."

Someone's PAA chimed off. "Speak of the devil," Marie declared as she pulled her own device, then tapped the crystal to link with Rinrin's, making the image of Prinz Eugen disappear to reveal an amused yet tired American head-of-state.

"Good morning, ladies! Pardon me! Good EVENING!" Josiah Bartlet called out from the White
"Is Karen back from Uru at this time?" he immediately asked.

"Still in Onishuto, Uncle Jed," Tariko called out from beside Chikage. "If you can see it now, we've got a lot more new housemates than we had before today."

The former governor of New Hampshire peered at the image before him — the sisters noted he was in the Situation Room in the basement of the West Wing — before he blinked. "I know Hinako wouldn't break her word like that, but how on earth did your 'fleet' of shipgirls suddenly DOUBLE, Tariko?!"

"That's what we need to figure out, Uncle Jed," Rinrin spoke up. "We want to go to Kwajalein and go salvage an old Nazi cruiser that sunk there after the war."

"The _Prinz Eugen_, Mister President," the voice of the American secretary of defence, Miles Hutchinson, then spoke up. No doubt, Bartlet had been meeting with his main security advisors when the call came in from Ōmure-jima. "After the Nazis surrendered, we got her as a war prize and she was brought to America to be studied. She was a target ship for the Crossroads tests in 1946; she sank near the end of the year due to damage that wasn't repaired from both tests. There's been calls to get the oil drained out of the hull like the Norwegians did to her sister-ship _Blücher_ in 1994."

"So you're trying to see if a sunken vessel that's NOT a war grave could be turned into a shipgirl, Rinrin? Who doesn't have a bond to the girls who are already there?" Bartlet asked.

"Hai!" Rinrin called back. "Since we could do it for Himeko-chan, let's see if this works." She waved to the silver-haired adopted Russian destroyer-turned-teenage girl in emphasis. "And we've got to find out who's sending the first gen battle dolls to Earth. After all, there's the big fear everyone has that one of our battle dolls might come along and make _Arizona_ disappear from Pearl."

"We control Kwajalein, Mister President; it's part of the Reagan Test Site," Bartlet's national security advisor, Dr. Nancy McNally, declared. "The only problem here is that if the hull disappears like that..."

"A diving spot, Rinrin?" the president asked.

"It's popular, Uncle Jed, but it's off-season," Rinrin noted. "Atop that, the whole island's part of the test range as McNally-hakase just said, so not many people actually go look around the hull."

"The whole thing with people like Tariko and her family is going to get out into the open, Mister President," Josh Lyman noted; the White House deputy chief of staff was seated by the main doors to the Situation Room with Leo McGarry. "Especially with what just happened a few hours ago in Tomobiki. People saw that bomb being lifted out of the Ginza and sent through Haruhi's time-warp to deal with Ōgi's fleet. Even if the Japanese government hasn't reacted officially to that yet..."

"That's coming soon," Bartlet finished.

"Yes, sir."

"Alright, raise whoever is the commander on the island so we can warn them ahead of time. What time is it over there, anyway?" the president asked.

"It's 9:06 PM, Uncle Jed," Rinrin provided.

"Flash traffic, Miles."
"Right away, Mister President."

"Ah! Mister President!"

People paused as Osamu Shirayuki walked into the dining room from her kitchen. "Yes, Shirayuki?!" the former governor called back.

"Did you enjoy Hime's turkey?"

"It was wonderful! My compliments to the chef!"

Shirayuki instantly blushed. "Desu no!"

Laughter echoed over the airwaves from both sides of the Pacific...

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Kwajalein, on the inner shore of Ennubuj Island, an hour later (local time: Two hours before midnight)...

"Holy hell...!"

"Do not be surprised about these ones, Colonel. Their youth is tempered by the weight of memories that date back from before the time of Christ. They can control themselves."

The commanding officer of the United States Army Garrison at Kwajalein Atoll could only nod in agreement as the gold-hued vessel looking like a mix of a submarine and a spaceship came to a hover over the beach nearby, then slowly descended to the sand. As his mind once more ran through the incredible details that had been passed onto him from both the Pentagon and the local Department of Magic — which, under the Specialized Warfare Treaty of 1959 and the magical codicils of the Compact of Free Association with the United States in 1986, was tasked to support the American military forces in the territory when it came to metahuman affairs — he could only shake his head in awe at the fact that the Second Metahuman Age had finally come to Earth...all thanks to one incredible girl from Japan.

The sister of the man who saved Earth from alien invasion last year.

The same man who RETURNED the Presidential Medal of Freedom awarded to him for winning the Tag Race back to the White House in April out of a very strong conviction that because of his "marriage" to the warlord's daughter Redet Lum, he had actually placed Earth under much greater threat...!

Though with the existence of metahumans powered by the planet that gave Canada's most famous soldier her own incredible abilities about to go public...!

"You're handling this very well, Colonel."

Colonel William Mann chuckled as he gazed on the other incredible visitor who came to the atoll this evening, having teleported in from his "retirement home" in a hidden magical settlement on the border between Minnesota and South Dakota. "I'm probably going to swallow a couple shots of whisky when this is finally all over with, Mister President," he declared with a shake of the head as the boarding ramp of the Plato-Mecha Mark V lowered to allow all its passengers out.

The native of Hodgenville in Kentucky chuckled before a voice called out, "OJII-CHAN!"
The frontier lawyer-turned-vampire hunter perked before he turned...

...then laughed as a too-cute-for-words strawberry blonde-and-white missile tackled him at the waist. "Ojii-chan!" the girl in the white jumpsuit with the red heart, belt and boots cried out as she seemed to try to squeeze the life out of the much older man.

He cackled as the others came over to join him. "You're as powerful as you were when we first met after Isaac gave you your umbrella, Hinako," he said as he reached down, then lifted the girl with one arm to cradle her close. "Lucky thing I'm something of a night owl even these days...oh, my...!"

"Abraham...Lincoln...?!

Colonel Mann blinked before he turned to look...

...then he gaped at the sight of FORTY girls in matching pattern jumpsuits with kanji on their chests, all now gaping in disbelief at the nigh-immortal sixteenth president of the United States of America. "Oh, my! Ataru, you got yourself quite the fleet here! I hope you're not planning something nefarious!"

The only person in normal clothing chuckled as he came up to shake Abraham Lincoln's free hand. "Not a chance, Oji-san," he said; since Yizibajohei battlesuits came with universal translator devices, the commander of USAG-KA and his companion could easily understand what the others were saying. "Hopefully, if this experiment goes well, we'll find out who IS trying to create a fleet of battle dolls here."

"Let us pray that God will show us the truth," the native of Kentucky and adopted native of Indiana and Illinois said as he placed Saeru Hinako down.

"Poi...you're really Abraham Lincoln...?!

That was a pretty blonde in the black-and-white jumpsuit with tufts of hair looking like fox ears at the temples and chestnut brown eyes approaching him. As Mann tensed just in case this stranger did something — for a man who trained as a field artillery officer years before, he had an interest in the history of the Imperial Japanese armed forces, thus he could recognize the kanji on Hamamoto Kodachi's top — Lincoln nodded after he placed Hinako down on the sand, then offered his hand. "Indeed I am, Commander Hamamoto," he said as she offered her hand, allowing him to courtly kiss it. As her fleet mates squealed at such a show of formal Western courtesies, he added, "I'm sure that regardless of true cause, God and the Kami wished this to allow you to live the life the casualties you suffered in the Solomons before your sinking were cruelly denied." Here, everyone was quick to sense a wave of the melancholy that had haunted the frontier lawyer since his childhood wash over them.

A blushing Kodachi blinked, then she smiled, her eyes misting. "I hope so."

The others nodded, then the girl with the long ponytails in the halter-top ballroom gown-like dark blue uniform with no insignia on her chest and frilly lace trimming the edges of the top turned to stare at a younger woman in a dark green jumpsuit with white pouch-lined belt and boots, goggles over her eyes as she peered in the direction of the wreck that was barely visible in the evening twilight about two hundred metres offshore. "What's she look like, Rinrin-chan?" she asked as the others all moved to stand in a row so they could gaze upon the rusting hull of what was locally called "RMIS Prinz Eugen".

"Well, there's no radiation in the hull," the younger girl said as she lifted her goggles away from her brown eyes. "The mesonium content is pretty large."
"Will Miss von Savoyen-Carignan be harmed when she becomes a battle doll, Rinrin?" Lincoln asked as he walked up to stand beside the girl.

Colonel Mann's companion blinked. "'Miss von Savoyen-Carignan'?

Moroboshi Ataru gazed upon the Marshallese shaman who had come to this event, Elder Imata Zedkaia. "As you might know, Sensei, in Japan, having a single name is seen as quite odd and could lead to discrimination because people would believe the person was cast out of the family. I made human names for the shipgirls so that they could be seen as normal girls. After all, would you call Kodachi-chan here just as 'Yūdachi' if she looks like THIS?" He waved to Kodachi in emphasis.

The silver-haired charms master chuckled as the woman born from the kami of the fourth of the Shiratsuyu-class destroyers blushed at being singled out by her admiral. "A good point, young man."

"The name my brother came up with for our sleeping cruiser out there is 'Olympia Catarina von Savoyen-Carignan'," Moroboshi Ataru's obvious twin sister mused.

"That's not properly correct, Anegimi-sama."

That was the regal-looking raven-haired woman with the bō staff in the white jumpsuit with the red belt and boots, crossed quarterstaff insignia on her chest. "What do you mean, Haruka-chan?" Ataru asked.

"She is named after a very noble prince," Tenhiro Haruka admonished as she raised her finger in emphasis, a bit of her German accent coming into her voice. "As she is technically of the noble blood of Savoy, her proper name is 'Olympia Catarina, Fürstin von Savoyen-Carignan'."

Ich bin...keine...Prinzessin...!

People gaped as they turned to look out into the lagoon...

"Ah! Catarina-san is waking up!" Hinako cheered.

As people began to whoop on realizing this particular task might go a lot smoother than some had feared, the waves in the lagoon began to stir as what little of Prinz Eugen's hull above the water glowed a deep yet quite noticeable reddish shade. "Ruby mesonium...!" Lincoln then breathed out as he recognized the material that had been forged in his own blood to finally end the twenty-four year mad rampage he had unleashed on the undead throughout North America in the wake of his "assassination" in 1865 thanks to John Wilkes Booth. "Dear God, she'll be as powerful as young Miss Hayashi and Miss Lehane...!" he then hissed out as Elder Zedkaia began diagnostic spells.

A hush fell over the beach as the waters churned. Something then began to pull the cruiser's hull out of its final resting place. The ship began to right itself as the shattered elements of her superstructure and her dislodged turrets holding her primary armament of 20.3 centimetre SK C/34 naval guns virtually teleported back to their proper places. Flashes of energy then produced her missing propeller and the guns for Turret Anton as the ship turned to starboard, the rust in the hull vanishing as the energy that was rebuilding Prinz Eugen made her look as good as the day she was formally commissioned into the Kriegsmarine at Friedrich Krupp Germaniawerft in Kiel over seventy-two years before.

"Sugoi...!" Hatoyama Rinrin hissed.

"This isn't the way we came back...!"

Eyes locked on what Colonel Mann quickly recognized was the reborn Imperial Japanese destroyer
**Mutsuki**, now a pretty brunette tomboy with matching eyes. The longer-haired woman beside her — the reborn **Kisaragi**, Mann realized on seeing the kanji on her jacket — gazed at her sister. "Hai, Mutsuko-chan's right," she said as she looked at Ataru's sisters. "Our hulls just disintegrated when we reformed as bioroids. Not literally being salvaged out of the water like this..."

"**LOOK!**"

On hearing Fukushima Fujiko's shout, everyone once more gazed on **Eugen**...

...then they all gaped as what looked like a black hole began to appear to the port side of the cruiser, growing to nearly encompass the whole hull.

**Tene lomher'buo, Olympia Catarina von Savoyen-Carignan...**

People gasped as the floating cruiser collapsed on itself, being pulled into the strange black hole. Given that **Prinz Eugen** topped the scales at a whopping 16,970 tonnes empty — well above limits laid down in various treaties before World War Two meant to retard the start of a new naval arms race — it surprised the people on the beach that the sounds of metal being crushed and compressed weren't echoing over the lagoon. Just as what was left of the cruiser was fused into a brilliant human-sized point of light...

**Meine geliebte Schwester...ich lebe...für dich...**

"'My beloved sister...I live for you...'" Mann repeated; he had been based in Germany when he was a battery commander in the Fifth Battalion of the 7th Air Defence Artillery Regiment in Baumholder, thus took the time to learn the language. "What does she mean, Mister President? Her own sisters?"

"No...!"

That was the purple-haired woman with the hooded white crucifix-embossed cape with the black jumpsuit topped with snarling dark red Oriental-like dragons ascending both sides of her body, the red belt and boots, walking over to stand close to Lincoln, Elder Zedkaia and the commander of USAG-KA.

"She speaks of someone else..."

****

**The North Atlantic Ocean at the edge of the Celtic Sea, five hundred kilometres west of Brest in France, at position 48°10' N, 16°12' W, that moment (local time: Two hours before lunch)...**

Seeing the wildly churning waters several kilometres below his feet, the Master of the Dark Gaol of the Great Crystal of Power could only shake his head as he contemplated the shitstorm that was going to stir up around the world from THIS particular "resurrection".

**Nein, meine geliebte Freundin...wir werden...zusammen leben...**

The man born Mark Caloway slightly shuddered as he concentrated on maintaining his position to the west of the watery grave of Germany's most famous warship just as a geyser exploded from the surging waves below, heralding the return ever so briefly of the great fast battleship that had been the object of an all-consuming hunt by the Royal Navy in the late spring of 1941, the shattered hull now whole and pristine. Much to the Undertaker's delight, the swastika insignia painted on **Bismarck**'s weather deck at the bow and stern then burned away, being replaced by the gold shield bearing the black stylized eagle of the modern Federal Republic of Germany. **How the hell did she know of**
he wondered as a space warp formed, forging a link between the reborn battleship and the Seeker's Forge.

_Tene lomher'buo, Wilhelmina Luisa von Bismarck-Schönhausen..._

Instantly, _Bismarck_ 's hull collapsed, compressing hard as over forty-one thousand tonnes of steel, wood and other materials were crushed and transformed by the massive injection of mesonium from the Forge. Watching this, the phenom was quick to see the mannequin-like battle doll being teleported in to fully merge with the ultra-condensed mass of Germany's largest battleship, transforming it into a beautiful woman. _"So you're NOT doing this, eh, Doctor...?"_ he breathed out.

_Nesu...BISMARCK!_

The mini-sun of energy that had enshrouded the crushed mass of the _Bismarck_ and the synthetic being meant to absorb the energy of that matter and make her truly human then faded, revealing a tall beauty that would have definitely matched the concept of "Aryan" back in the dark days of the Nazi regime decades before. Long straight blonde hair flowed down to her hips from a well-shaped face pierced by ultramarine blue eyes now glowing with the sheer nova of power barely contained within her. Her well-sculptured body was now cloaked in a jumpsuit coloured in honour of old Prussia where her namesake was born: White overall, it had black belt and boots, the bugwappen of KMS _Bismarck_ — modelled from the heraldic shield of the House of Bismarck-Schönhausen — proudly displayed on her chest.

_"Mein Admiral...mein Kapiän...meine ehrenwerte Offiziere und Mannschaft...ich lebe für euch alle...!"_ the blonde then cried out to the heavens.

_"They know."

Her head snapped to her left — she had been facing towards the North Star — then she blinked on seeing the well-muscled and quite handsome man in the black funeral-like clothing with the wide-brimmed stetson hat floating nearby. At first wary on seeing an obvious _American_ metahuman here — she had picked up on his Texan accent — she relaxed herself as a touch of familiarity overcame her.

_"We've met, haven't we...?"_ she asked in accented English as her eyes ceased glowing.

He shook his head, an amused smile crossing his face. _"You and I, not personally. My first self and the synthezoid whose body you now have did when the false gods tried to seize the Forge of the First Race, where the Undying Lord's power first rose billions of years ago."_

That made her eyes go wide. _"Rittmeister von Taserich's...?!"_ she blurted out the common name to the Undying Lord before she stopped herself, the massed memories of her crew which had been effectively imprinted themselves into her old hull from the moment her keel was laid until she sank after being scuttled made her pause and think for a moment. _"Then...?"

_"Those empowered by the Forge like myself — by accident and by choice — have agreed to defend all of humanity from many threats, some of them the Rittmeister himself fought when he was first Gifted millennia ago,"_ he warned before offering his hand, that protected by a padded finger-less glove as he normally wore in the ring. _"You've got a lot to catch up on, Madame von Bismarck. Let's get you to people who've helped others like you adjust to being human..."

That made her look down at her well-endowed "superstructure" and the very athletic body that would have made trainers of the Bund Deutscher Mädel drool in delight in hopes of getting her into
the Olympics. She then blushed. "Ah...j-ja...bitte...!"

She offered her hand to him...then they both teleported half a world away...

****

Kwajalein, that moment...

Nesu...EUGEN UOLE!

Hearing the Conservator's announcement, all the shipgirls on the beach screamed with delight as they shared hugs and handshakes while the bright nova of energy several hundred metres away transformed into something that was both slender like her ship self and as genki as one of two sisters of Tariko Katabarbe and Moroboshi Ataru who hadn't come to this atoll near the Equator to see this being reborn.

"Ah! Catarina-san! Catarina-san!"

Kasa-tama was unfolded, boosting Saeru Hinako into the air as she soared towards the reborn cruiser. Instantly, a division of shipgirls lead by Fukushima Fujiko leapt into the air after the Spirit of Innocence, moving to form a guard formation around Catarina von Savoyen-Carignan as she shook her head clear. Her strawberry blonde hair waved to and fro as she twisted her neck around, the tsunami of information from the collected memories of all who worked or served on her fusing into her mind while the glow of the power raging in her body disappeared from her beautiful emerald eyes. As Hinako came close to her, Catarina gasped as the aura of peace projected by the youngest of Tariko's sisters washed through her, wiping out the understandable confusion rocking her and filling it with wonder as she gazed out at this lovely starry night over her once-final resting place with literally newborn eyes. She perked on seeing the beautiful girl floating there like the famous "fictitious" English witch-turned-nanny Mary Poppins...which, thanks to the nimmagier that proudly served with her crew in the war, she knew had been a real person, a famous expert on "muggles" who also fought to defend Britain from the ravages of the Magische Reichsarmee under Gellert Grindelwald's command.

Catarina smiled at the pretty girl. "Gut-...!" She caught herself, then coughed in apology before giving the young girl a friendly wave of her hand. "Good evening!" she then called out in accented English.

"Eugen-sama?"

Catarina perked, then she looked left as Fujiko floated over, bracing herself to attention in mid-air as she gave the other shipgirl a formal salute. Quickly bracing herself, she returned the courtesy, her eyes widening for a moment. "You're...Fubuki, aren't you...?" she asked again in English.

"Hai!" Fujiko replied in Japanese, knowing that the other girl's jumpsuit would have the translator functions so the heavy cruiser-turned-metahuman teenager would understand her. "Given the absence of destroyers from your service, Eugen-sama, may we have the pleasure to escort you this evening?"

Blinking in surprise at interpreting what the other woman had said — she heard the words in clear German but the destroyer-turned-teenage girl's mouth hadn't moved in the proper manner — the blonde nodded. "J-ja! Of course! Danke!" she said, bowing in thanks.

Fujiko and Hinako floated over to warmly take her hands, then they drifted back to the beach where the others were waiting. Watching the transformed cruiser approach, the others quickly noted she
was in a red jumpsuit with white belt and boots plus gauntlets, matching the modern colours of her namesake's adopted home country. On her chest was a symbol that made Abraham Lincoln's eyebrow arch in surprise. The crest of Prince Eugene of Savoy — which mixed that of all the symbols of the house of Savoy with the core arms of Savoy impaled with those of the House of Bourbon-Soissons — was prominent...yet it was on a white field under a mounting depicting her very namesake in natural colours on his horse as if commanding his armies like he did centuries before. A motto scroll in blue was under the shield, it emblazoned with the words ICH DIENE DER LIEBE in gold. The whole was encased with a blue stadium ring trimmed in gold ship's rope as used with American warship crests, the words USS PRINZ EUGEN over the top arc and CA 161 on the bottom. So she still thinks of herself as being one of us, the nigh-immortal president mused, nodding in delight.

Josiah Bartlet would DEFINITELY want to hear of this.

Once Catarina was allowed to land on the soft sand, the shipgirls who remained on the beach gave her three banzai cheers, which made her blush madly at such a reception. Looking around, she perked as Hinako squeezed her hand while her umbrella folded up. At that moment, the commander of USAG-KA moved to approach her. Seeing him in his camouflage combat uniform, her eyes picked out the eagle on his rank slip-on, then she snapped to attention, saluting him. "Captain, heavy cruiser USS Prinz Eugen, reporting for duty, sir!" she called out in clear if accented English.

William Mann chuckled as he returned that courtesy. "I'm a colonel in the Army, Frau von Savoyen, not the Navy," he declared with a friendly smile, making her gape on hearing him speak German. "And you're decommissioned, so you don't have to report anywhere, especially as you are right now."

That made the younger-looking woman blink. "I...don't understand..."

"Are you a warship now?"

"Of course I...!"

She then paused, her cheeks reddening considerably as she looked down to see her bust under her jumpsuit, which instantly made her think of many of the Axis and Allied metahumans who had fought in the Second World War. "Oh...I see..." she then breathed out.

Laughter filled the crowd, especially from Catarina's fellow shipgirls. "It always gets to us at the start, Catarina-sama," Fujiko said as she came up to warmly squeeze the other shipgirl's hand. "At least with our admiral and his sisters, you can learn how to be this way."

That made Catarina's eyes sparkle in delight. "Admiral...?"

Hearing that, Ataru moaned as Tariko patted his shoulder. Sadly, he wasn't silent enough as the newly-arrived shipgirl's eyes snapped over to stare right at him; seeing that all the girls present were in fighting costumes of the same general cut and design as her own while he was dressed in more proper civilian clothes, he clearly had to be the one in ultimate charge of this fighting group. Shouldn't he be in uniform? the transformed cruiser asked herself before seeing the chorus of adoring looks on the faces of almost all the girls present towards him. Noting that, she instantly zipped over to present herself to him, making his sisters giggle on seeing the panicked look cross his face from such a rapid approach.

"Kiss her, Ani-chama!" Yotsuba Dunn then heckled.

Both Ataru and Catarina gasped on hearing that urge from the metahuman detective. "Now,
"Yotsuba-chan, stop that!" Tenhiro Haruka scolded. "Anigimi-sama needs to present himself properly to Fürstin von Savoyen-Carignen before he would take her first kiss..."

"FÜRSTIN'?!

That was a wide-eyed Catarina. "But of course, Eure Durchlaucht," Haruka said in very good German with little accent as she gracefully bowed to the reborn cruiser. "You are named in honour of the great Prince Eugene of Savoy, loyal servant of Their Imperial Majesties, the Emperors Leopold, Joseph and Charles, during his many years living in Wien. That you bear His Highness' crest upon your person declares to that you are spiritually of the House of Savoy." She gracefully bowed again before gazing on the others present. "I present ihre Durchlaucht Olympia Catarina, Fürstin von Savoyen-Carignen!"

KK-KLONK!

"F-f-Fürstin...?!

Everyone gasped on seeing a barely conscious Catarina lying on the sand, her eyes spiralling. As the other shipgirls blinked in confusion, the commander of USAG-KA turned to stare warily at Abraham Lincoln. "Are they normally like this, Mister President?" he quietly asked.

"They're being tame tonight, son," the former president answered.

Mann blinked. "Yeah..."

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Ōmure-jima, an hour later...

"Tadaima!"

"Ah! Karen-chan! Okaeri nasai desu no!"

Hearing the cheerful greeting from the metahuman chef now in her work area, Tanenobu Karen mentally commanded her costume to transfer into her normal civilian clothes, then she peeked into the kitchen. "Where is everyone, Shirayuki-chan?" the metahuman ambassador asked.

Osamu Shirayuki was busy cooking a very large meal for everyone, using her own trofikinetik powers to transform basic potatoes and rice into very nutritious side dishes to hurry up the production time. "They're at Kwajalein right now, Karen-chan. How's Ten-chan?"

"He's okay," the Herald of Fight Scenes noted as she opened the refrigerator to pull out a can of her favoured calorie drink. "Oyuki's father is busy meeting with President Lana in Onishuto about our 'stealing' Earth. Lum-san's still in denial about learning the truth of Onē-chan and Onii-chan."

"Poor woman," the young chef breathed out, shaking her head. "Hime thinks she'll be in mourning for a long time because of finding out about Nē-sama and Nii-sama. It's sad to do that to her..."

"It's necessary, Shirayuki-chan. The damage she and her friends did here..."

Both girls nodded. For the most part, incidents caused by the aliens losing control like they did had been concentrated in Tomobiki itself as the various organs of the Japanese government had arranged to keep the "contamination" in a small, contained area. However, as the whole incident with the space-taxi proved, things could get very out of control and spill beyond Tomobiki's borders; many Terran-born Yizibajohei who had interacted with Tariko Katabarbe in the past still kicked themselves...
in the butt for not sensing something odd going on, especially with the absence of the then-future Trickster of the Show from her cabin for six months. It was better to lay down the law now concerning how aliens could interact with Terrans before someone was killed or permanent environmental damage was unleashed before the local forces could gain the necessary power to prevent it and punish those responsible.

Indeed, Tariko's overall plan to literally SCARE OFF the neighbouring races from interacting with Earth had been quite sound from the very beginning.

Now the results would be seen...

Knocks echoed from the main door. "Hey in the House!"

Karen and Shirayuki perked on hearing that rough Texan accent echo from the foyer, then they squealed on recognizing one of the older people who had been Gifted even if their own beloved sister hadn't been responsible for this one. "Steve-san!"

A bald head peeked through the doorway. "Damn! Cooking up a storm THIS late at night, Shirayuki?!" Steve Austin wondered as he walked inside while Karen went to the fridge to pull out another bottle of calorie drink to toss to the Texas Rattlesnake; the six-time world champion NEVER drank beer in echo of his ring persona while in the presence of any of these girls. "How come?"

"Rinrin-chan's doing an experiment now over in Kwajalein," Shirayuki stated. "She wants to see if the kami of a warship could be summoned if no one died on it when she sank. We got twenty-one new shipgirls coming back as battle dolls in the last week alone."

That made the ki master from America blink. "What?! Who's doing that?!"

"It's not the Doctor."

"Ah! Mark-san!" Shirayuki said as Karen headed over to make some tea for the just-arrived phenom from Steve's home state who was seen as the sheer heart and soul of the modern incarnation of World Wrestling Entertainment; the Herald of Fight Scenes knew that the Master of the Dark Gaol had a preference for Marie's mixed cherry tea blend. "What are you doing here tonight?"

"There's no other evil spirit to send off, is there?" Karen asked.

"Fortunately, no," Mark Caloway said as he moved to lean down on the work table in the middle of the room beside his old co-worker. "However, soon as I sensed what the others were doing with Catarina von Savoyen, I headed over the North Atlantic when I sensed someone else waking up from her grave."

That made both sisters pause. "Who?" Karen asked.

"Bismarck."

That made both women's eyes go wide as Steve shook his head...

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Inside the dining room...

"So you are not a...schiffsmädchen...?"

Fujinami Ryūnosuke — now dressed down from her uniform as the Huntress of the Wild, back in
her normal mannish clothing as she waited for tea to be made — shook her head. "No, ma'am. Just a normal human girl. Shocked the hell out of me when Tariko-chan and Ataru told me that the kami of ships could and have been coming back as metahumans, though."

Hearing that, the tall blonde beauty in the black-trimmed white uniform with the blue shield bearing a white three-leaf clover over three oak leaves in a flipped "Y" formation blinked before she sighed as she raised her hand to gaze at something she never though she would ever get as a battleship. "Have any other schiffsmädchen come back than the destroyers Herr Caloway mentioned?"

"I don't know," the "heir" of Hamachaya said with a shrug. "I'm kinda new to this myself; just found out about Yiziba and metahumans and shipgirls this morning after Lum and the aliens were kicked off..." She jolted on sensing a faint aura of outrage then escaped Luisa von Bismarck's body. "Um..."

"Did those schmutzige Schlangen come back?!" the adopted native of Schönhausen in modern-day Saxony-Anhalt then coldly declared as her blue eyes started to glow.

"They've tried."

Both women turned...

...then Luisa blushed as the smiling brown-haired girl in the pretty dress came over with a cup of what had to be very sweet tea to place before the transformed battleship. "If you're speaking about the Goa'uld, they've been trying over the last three years to come back and unleash their 'we're your gods, so worship us' silliness so they could have slaves to be host bodies for their young," she said before walking over to place the other cup of tea in her hand before Ryūnosuke. "Fortunately, the American air force has control of our planet's Stargate, so they do their best to keep the Goa'uld from invading the planet. Now that we're openly involved, we'll make sure they'll stay away." She then giggled.

"What's so funny, Karen-san?" Ryūnosuke asked.

"Well, do you remember Apophis, Ryūnosuke-san?"

That made the tomboy blink before a smirk crossed her face. "One of those umale 'system lords' who tried to be a Gift thief since the Dawn of Power, you mean?" she asked as she mixed in some sugar to the tea from the service set on the dining room table. "Yeah, I'm starting to get the memories back from my past lives. Every time that jerk ever showed up, Warwind always stomped him into the dirt, but he got away. I know Ayumu-san's friend Takino Tomo is the current Warwind. She got a chance to go after him yet, Karen-san? Given the dork doesn't know how to DIE right..."

"He will be taught, Frau Fujinami."

Eyes locked on Luisa as she moved to sip her tea. "You remember...?" Tanenobu Karen asked in a hushed voice as she remembered what Germany's greatest battleship had become.

"Ja," responded in a near-growling voice as her whole body began to glow ominously while memories dating back five thousand years echoed in her mind. "They came like plague-filled locusts, moving to turn people into slaves to feed their war machine. The Atom of True Life made the people's bodies reject them, so they tried to exterminate us. That's when the Healer rose and summoned us from the Forge to smash them away...and we smashed them far beyond Kaeyu..."

She then calmed down before sipping her tea, clearly unbothered by her frightful display of power. "Wonder if those umale remember," Ryūnosuke mused.

"With the way they love to expose themselves to that false mesonium they call 'naquadah' all the
time, Ryūnosuke-san?" Karen mused. "Doubtful..."

The sounds of the main doors opening made everyone turn as a stream of chattering people came into the foyer. "Tadaima...!" many of the sisters called out.

"MEINE SCHWESTER!"

Luisa gasped as she rose up...

...then was sent flying into the couch on the other side of the dining room by a strawberry blonde missile in a red-and-white jumpsuit. Everyone winced as the veterans of Operation: Rhine Exercise in 1941 stumbled onto the floor, the smaller woman crying her eyes out as she showered Luisa with kisses. "Meine geliebte Schwester...meine Schwester...ich werde dich nie wieder verlassen...!"

As the shipgirls watching this all smiled at this tender reunion, the sisters all exchanged amused looks as Catarina von Savoyen continued to kiss away.

"Uh...yeah! That...!" Ryūnosuke breathed out...

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Tomobiki High School, that moment...

"Thank the gods...Ryūnosuke-sama is safe..."

Sniffing back the tears that had flown down "her" cheeks for almost an hour since the "heir" of Hamachaya collected all her things to move out of the old storeroom that had served as the Fujinami family apartment since she and her father moved from Chōshi in February, Shiowatari Nagisa could only smile in delight at knowing the woman he loved with all his heart and soul — the woman he actually COME BACK TO LIFE for to be with as had been promised between their fathers before they were even born — was now as safe as safe could be in this world from her father's grief-induced insanity.

"Arigatō, Tariko-sama...arigatō...!"

Hugging himself, the very effeminate young man who had done his best since he was old enough to understand what was going on to be a "woman above women" to please his widowed father Shin — who had always dreamed of having a daughter as well as a son before his wife Kanako died in a typhoon — took a deep breath as he used some meditation exercises to calm himself down, find his centre and acquire some sense of self-control. Much that he was grateful for the chance to be alone with his fiancée — that was thanks to Tariko Katabarbe's friend from Itabashi, Mizuhara Koyomi; she was the current incarnation of Yiziba's most powerful psychic bar none, the Mistress of the Mind-Dive, Tum Kamtimta ("Soul Searcher") — after his would-be father-in-law "convinced himself" to go out and find a new permanent home for the Fujinami Hamachaya two weeks before, it hadn't given Nagisa enough time to try to convince Ryūnosuke of his sincerity in helping her seek a new destiny for herself.

The very destiny that Tariko Katabarbe promised Fujinami Ryūnosuke a decade ago.

There were many reason for this. Nagisa couldn't be too open about things even if the potential alien threat had been eliminated in August with the removal of Redet Lum's "most faithful" from Earth; given the warlord's daughter possession of a spacializer — a personal time-and-dimension hopping device similar to the TARDIS from Doctor Who — any move to reveal the Yizibajohei presence on Earth could have caused more problems than it solved until Elizabeth Wakefield got the Ceres orbit
line defence field set up and operational. Atop that, Nagisa had long come to see that even if he was a boy, he was effectively transgender in his outlook on life; when Tariko had addressed him as "Serram Shiowatari" — using the honorific always bestowed to "fems" among the Hustari, the only legally and genetically FIVE-GENDER race in the local cluster; such beings were males when it came to reproductive functions but were women in their souls — it was as if blinds that had been over the eyes of the tea shop "maiden" for his whole life had been torn away in an instant, revealing a much more beautiful world.

A world that Nagisa desperately wanted to be a part of.

And then...there was Ryūnosuke herself.

Nagisa hadn't realistically understood how bad his fiancée's father had warped her life around at the start when they had met on the small islet near Ōmure-jima where the Shiowatari Hamachaya had been sited. But after living only a week with Ryūnosuke and her father at Tomobiki High School, he had come to realize that unlike himself — who had consciously made the choice to cross-dress — she had gained NO chance at all to fully explore her femininity. Her father watched over her like a hawk, always ready to pounce all over his "son" to make "him" conform to what the old fisherman saw as what being a "manly man" was all about. The only clear times that Ryūnosuke ever got any positive help from ANY of her peers came from the school's only declared lesbian, Tsuruya Rumiko...who had to use the fact that she was a girl to make Fujinami Fujimi believe his "son" was being "manly" with such a pretty girl.

That no one — not even Ryūnosuke's best friend, Miyake Shinobu — had done anything substantive to free the "heir" of Hamachaya from such an insane and abusive man outraged Nagisa like nothing had ever done, not even his own accidental "death" thanks to sea urchin roe poisoning a year ago.

Yet...

There had been hope all along...

Which had been personally personified by the arrival of the Texas Rattlesnake to school after lunch...

When, thanks to one of Tariko's wonderful sisters, Ryūnosuke became much more than she had ever got the chance to be in her whole life.

The Huntress of the Wild...

Carcajou...!

Shuddering as he tried not to drool unashamedly on remembering how his fiancée had looked in that gorgeous grey uniform that followed EVERY curve of her sexy body — one NOT constrained by the sarashi her father had forced her to wear even in the place of simple sports bras to support her bust — Nagisa then sighed as he sipped a cup of tea he had made for himself. A churlish grin then crossed his face as he imagined what would Fujimi's reaction be to learning his "son" was now a metahuman who had speed-learned how to be a WOMAN in a way he could begin to counter.

No more tricks...

No more lies...

A clear destiny ahead for someone who had gained several dozen LIFETIMES worth of experiences as the ultimate ki mistress on a planet like Yiziba.

If one could survive THERE, one could survive almost ANYWHERE.
And now...

Now Nagisa wanted a chance to gain that sort of power.

It was practical necessity that forced him to seek out a Gift. As a ghost made corporeal thanks to the power of the Great Sea Urchin, Nagisa was vulnerable in ways that no normal person had to deal with. Never mind the issue of people like Sakurambō Sakura and her uncle Hayao making use of ofuda to literally force Nagisa away from "haunting" his fiancée like he supposedly did, there was the more practical issue of the approach of the Herald of the Final Darkness when the current resident of Savannah in Georgia came in the next couple of days to remove the many ebony mesonium crystals that had been placed around Tomobiki in effect to keep the weirdness that came in Lum's wake contained in that part of the Tōkyō Metropolis...and try yet fail to keep Tariko Katabarbe contained.

If only whoever did that had been smarter...!

Nagisa sighed as he moved to wipe his eyes down. The pros of becoming a Yizibajohei were all too many. He would effectively become strong enough to block any attempts by his would-be father-in-law to try to corral his "son" through the tea shop "maiden". Given the block that had been placed on all Yizibajohei when it came to natives of that world — even adopted ones like Tariko — actually mating with aliens around the time of the Dawn of Power, there was no hope at all for Nagisa to have any sort of child with his fiancée if they actually formed a relationship; he knew that Ryūnosuke had been quite wary of the whole idea of getting hitched so young despite their "compatibility".

The one con...?

Nagisa WANTED to be a woman.

Even if Yizibajohei women were bisexual more or less by necessity, would Ryūnosuke accept Nagisa if they both turned out to be women, despite the former's several private liaisons with Tsuruya Rumiko...?

A sigh escaped him as worry clouded his heart.

"O-ha, Nagisa-chan!"

He turned to gaze with teary eyes at the living goddess who had just teleported into the room...

To Be Continued...

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WRITER'S NOTES

Translation list: Nimmbi — Reading of the initials NMMB ("non-magical magic-born"), the politically correct term coined first in Canada for a squib in the universe of my stories; Kriegsmarine — War Navy; RMIS — Republic of the Marshall Islands Ship; Fürstin — Often translated "princess", this is the term for a female member of a noble house ranked below a duke and above a marquess in German nobility; Ich bin keine Prinzessin — I'm not a princess; Anton — The letter "A" in the German phonetic alphabet; Nein, meine geliebte Freundin, wir werden zusammen leben — No, my beloved (lady) friend, we will live together; Mein Admiral, mein Kapitän, meine ehrenwerte Offiziere und Mannschaft, ich lebe für euch alle — My admiral, my captain, my honourable officers and crew, I live for all of you; Rittmeister — Ride Master, the German cavalry
title for an army captain; *Bitte* — Please; *Uole* — Prince; *Nimmagier* — Short for *nicht-magische(r)* ("non-magical person"), the German equivalent of "nimbib"; *Magische Reichsarmee* — Imperial Magical Army; *Ich diene der Liebe* — I serve Love; *Eure/Ihre Durchlaucht* — Your/Her Highness; *Schiffsmädchen* — Shipgirl; *Schmutzige Schlangen* — Dirty snakes; *Ich werde dich nie wieder verlassen* — I will never leave you again; *Kapitän zur See* — Captain at Sea, the German naval rank title for a navy captain (NATO rank code OF-5), short-formed as *KptzS*; *KMDR* — Short for *Kriegsmarine des Deutschen Reiches* ("War Navy of the German Empire"), the full name of the naval branch of the *Wehrmacht* ("Defence Force") from 1935-45.

Russian-form patronymsics used here:

Rínrin Mútovna — Rinrin, daughter of Muchi  
Khínako Mútovna — Hinako, daughter of Muchi

Here is the list of all shipgirls mentioned here (and sisters who were unnamed in the narrative) with their honorary ranks, human names and hull numbers (including the two from the previous part):

Kapitän zur See *Luisa von Bismarck-Schönhausen* KMDR (*Kriegsmarieschiff Bismarck* [pendant 62])  
KptzS *Catarina von Savoyen-Carignan* KMDR (later Captain, USN) (*Kriegsmarieschiff Prinz Eugen* [pendant K93], later United States Ship *Prinz Eugen* [IX-300/CA-161])  
*Kisaragi Mutsuko*-chūsa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan *Mutusuki* [DD-141])  
*Kisaragi Kyōko*-chūsa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan *Kisaragi* [DD-142])  
*Kisaragi Yayoi*-chūsa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan *Yayoi* [DD-143])  
*Kisaragi Utako*-chūsa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan *Uzuki* [DD-144])  
*Kisaragi Satsuko*-chūsa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan *Satsuki* [DD-145])  
*Kisaragi Minako*-chūsa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan *Minazuki* [DD-146])  
*Kisaragi Fumiko*-chūsa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan *Fumizuki* [DD-147])  
*Kisaragi Nanako*-chūsa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan *Nagatsuki* [DD-148])  
*Kisaragi Kikuko*-chūsa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan *Kikuzuki* [DD-149])  
*Kisaragi Miyako*-chūsa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan *Miyazuki* [DD-150])  
*Kisaragi Nozomi*-chūsa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan *Mochizuki* [DD-151])  
Hamamoto Miroko-chūsa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan *Shiratsuyu* [DD-183])  
Hamamoto Shōko-chūsa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan *Shigure* [DD-184])  
Hamamoto Momoko-chūsa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan *Murasame* [DD-185])  
Hamamoto Kodachi-chūsa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan *Yūdachi* [DD-186])  
Hamamoto Hideko-chūsa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan *Harusame* [DD-187])  
Hamamoto Sanako-chūsa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan *Samidare* [DD-188])  
Hamamoto Umeko-chūsa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan *Unikaze* [DD-189])  
Hamamoto Yaeko-chūsa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan *Yamakaze* [DD-190])  
Hamamoto Kawako-chūsa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan *Kawakaze* [DD-191])  
Hamamoto Suzuko-chūsa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan *Suzukaze* [DD-192])

As with Japan before the end of the Second World War in real life, Germany never made use of pendant numbers/hull numbers for anything larger than a destroyer, much less made use of a ship prefix such as *KMS*, which is short for *Kriegsmarieschiff* (literally "War Navy Ship"); the use of ship prefixes dropped by the wayside after the end of the First World War. In the universe of this story, Germany followed the British example of pendant numbers, with no "flag superior" letter assigned to capital ships. The number indicated here for *KMS Bismarck* indicate she is the sixty-
second battleship built or planned for service with Germany regardless of which actual service such a vessel would sail under (either the Kaiserliche Marine ["Imperial Navy"] serving the Second Reich from 1871-1918, the Reichsmarine ["Navy of the Realm"] serving the Weimar Republic from 1918-35 or the Kriegsmarine ["War Navy"] serving the Third Reich from 1935-45). As for KMS **Prinz Eugen**, she is given the flag superior pendant "K" for Kreuzer ("cruiser"); the number indicates she is the ninety-third cruiser (regardless of type) built or planned to serve in the German naval forces. When she was commissioned into the United States Navy after the end of the European side of World War Two, **USS Prinz Eugen** was given the hull classification code **IX-300**; IX meaning "miscellaneous auxiliary vessel". However, given that she is being "returned to service" as **Catarina von Savoyen-Carignan**, the cruiser would be given a proper hull code for a heavy cruiser. In the overall sequence of cruiser hull numbers before the introduction of a separate missile cruiser hull code series, USS **Prinz Eugen** would fall in as **CA-161**.

Note that my depiction of Catarina is a nod to the KanColle fanfic **Belated Battleships** written by The JMPer, which served as inspiration for my interpretation of Prinz Eugen in The Seventh Shipgirl.

The mentioning of Mary Poppins here is a salute to two crossover stories I love where the indomitable Ms. Poppins came to train Harry Potter for the Triwizard, **Harry Potter and the Alternative Tournament** and its sequel **Harry Potter and the Inevitable Battle**, both written by Twistyguru.

**Shiowatari Nagisa** first appeared in the Yatsura manga storyline "Nagisa's Fiancé" (manga chapters #341-342).
Lum Has a New Darling?

Chapter Summary

A broken-hearted Lum is made to remember her first encounter with Tariko...and winds up becoming the intended of Tariko's "twin" sister Hiromi while the Yizibajohei discover a snake problem on Uru...

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Outside Onishuto, the Invader home, before breakfast (Tōkyō time: Saturday, an hour after midnight)... "NO...!"

A gasp escaped Redet Lum as she surged up from under the covers, her eyes wide with horror as the last vestiges of a dark nightmare rocked her mind. As she instantly hugged herself, her eyes darting to and fro as if she was afraid the monsters that had been snapping at her would come out of nowhere...

Monsters that bore her husband's face...

Her husband...

No...

No!

NO!

"Lum-cha!"

The warlord's daughter gasped, then spun around, hand raised to unleash a bolt of electricity — which she couldn't use thanks to the loss of her horns the previous morning — at whoever was close to her...

...then she stopped on seeing who it was. "Oyuki-cha!"

Instantly, she was enveloped in the sleeves of Oyuki's kimono as the crown princess of Neptune hugged her. "Thank the Fates, it wasn't so bad," the latter calmly stated as she moved to thread her fingers through her friend's hair. "Given what Madame Embassy warned your parents about the creature that had been possessing you while you were living in Tomobiki with Lady Tuyuki..."

A gargle escaped Lum on hearing that statement. "No..."
"Oi! Go easy on her, Oyuki! She just got the damned shock of her life!"

Hearing that from her other best friend, Lum smiled as she felt Shigaten Benten's hand land on her shoulder to give her a friendly squeeze. "Wh-when did you g-get here...?" she asked as she gazed on the biker-babe from the Fukunokami capital city of Bensaikyō.

"Instant Ran called me and warned me the You Know Whos were on Earth," Benten said as she gave her friend a wry smile. "Couldn't believe it when I heard that your hubby actually turned out to be one of them, never mind 'he' being a she...!"

"And destined to become Lady Tuyuki," Oyuki finished in a calm voice as she held Lum tight to prevent the latter from overreacting. "Amazing that she chose to hold off on allowing the Gift to take her until she was mature enough to actually accept the Gift without it overloading her soul." She sighed as Lum shook her head. "Lum-cha, stop that." She paused. "She's here..."

Hearing that, Lum's eyes went wide, then she howled in anger as she burst free of Oyuki's embrace. "GIVE ME MY HUSBAND BACK, YOU MONSTER...!"

KK-KLONK!

"Ittacha..."

Benten and Oyuki winced on hearing that pained yelp, then they walked out of the bedroom to see Lum on the floor of the living room rubbing her head, having slammed her forehead into one of the internal support struts. Before either could comment, a woman sighed. "Lum, you've lived in this house for HOW long now? Don't you know where things are?"

"Oh, go easy on her, Tariko-chan! Given what Mark-kun had to yank out of her yesterday, she's bound to be disorientated for at least a storyline."

Hearing those voices, Lum blinked, then looked to her right...

...before she awked on seeing the woman in the off-white jumpsuit seated on a sofa, an amused look on her face. Beside her was another woman her age, possessing dark brown hair in a shaggy bobcut with a golden bandana pulling some of the hair away from her face, that pierced by very wide and friendly caramel eyes. She herself was in a Yizibajohei bodysuit, black overall with white belt and boots, psychedelic lines of multiple colours wrapped around her torso and legs in a wild pattern that seemed not to have any sort of logic on it. Noting this was the current incarnation of the Mistress of Time and Space seated beside the being who claimed to be her husband, Lum gulped as she raised her hand to faintly wave at the woman born Suzumiya Haruhi in Nishinomiya near Kōbe. "Ah..."

"WHAT ARE THESE MONSTERS DOING HERE?"

Lum yelped before she looked towards the main entrance...

...then she moaned on seeing the man who would have been her uncle-in-law — he was actually a distant relative through her mother Chim — standing there with several other senior representatives of the "old boys club" that wanted desperately to restore the old Empire to the way it was before the Union Revolution. As Oyuki and Benten both shook their heads on seeing Seq Yethis and his allies there, the current chief of staff to the President of the Union was staring with a mixture of outrage and terror at the living personification of the Imperial Houses' truly darkest hour. "Oi! Umale! Volume, huh?!" Tariko Katabarbe snapped. "They can hear you all the way back at my cabin on Yiziba!" Here, she smirked as all the people in the room save for Lum's young cousin yelped on hearing that word. "Oji-chan, you invite this schlep here while Lum's in the healer's cockpit?"
"No!" Redet Invader snarled from next to the communications console.

"Now, see here, Invader...!" Yethis snarled...

**SNAP!**

In a flash of light, all of them disappeared!

As the sounds of people falling onto the rocks that bordered the nearby Terrible Swamps echoed from outside, Invader sighed. "Thank you, Tariko!" he breathed out. "I didn't want to deal with him today!"

"I could make his departure rather terminal," Tariko warned.

Lum's father cackled on hearing that offer from the Trickster of the Show. "Don't tempt me, young lady!" he playfully snapped even if the other people in the room were quick to note he had been very tempted to see the leader of the Imperial Round removed forever from this life, thus removing a potential source of a new revolution which could prove disastrous for the whole Galactic Federation.

"Keep it in mind," Tariko said with a wink as Lum's mother Chim came over with two cups of spiced tea for the guests to enjoy. "Dōmo, Oba-chan!" she said as the older woman held out the tray for her to take one of the cups as Haruhi reached over for the other one. "My sinuses definitely thank you."

"A cold?" Chim asked.

"Yeah, Oba-chan! Have to start fully adjusting to living back at the cabin again! Tōkyō's too damned WARM for me at times!" She sipped the tea before the specific taste got to her. "Hey! You actually get the real eta leaves imported from Noukiios, Oji-chan?"

"Right from a grower that lives near Ryekkyuk," Invader said as he walked over to tenderly help his daughter back to her feet, then put her down nearby.

"You can't be Darling..."

Hearing that tear-filled moan from her would-be wife, Tariko took a deep breath. "I hope you two wouldn't mind," she then said as she gazed on Lum's parents. Invader and Chim nodded permission. As Lum gazed on them, she then stiffened as something washed through her mind, touching memories from over a decade before when she was an innocent and adventurous child who loved to play around and get into all sorts of incidents that made many people laugh even if her oldest friend wound up suffering in the end thanks to her unstable mother. As the actual events of the first open encounter between Uru and Yiziba since the Mother of All Fight Scenes replayed in her mind, Lum stiffened as she felt energy flood her, making her horn buds regrow, giving her back her powers. As people tensed — when Oni went through this sort of thing, any additional paranormal powers tended to lash out quite harshly to cover the surroundings — Lum's eyes went wide as she focused once more on the woman who personified the darkest time in her race's history.

The woman who had helped give her back a normal life...

"Tariko-cha...?"

Hearing that as Oyuki and Benten both gaped, Tariko opened her arms. "Get over here, Lum-chan!"
A wild scream escaped the warlord's daughter as she flew right into her would-be husband's embrace, laughter and tears escaping them both as they enjoyed their first true reunion in over a decade. As Lum's parents and Haruhi all nodded in delight, Oyuki and Benten exchanged shocked looks. "Bensaiten's Grave...it's all true?" the latter then whispered, shaking her head in disbelief.

"All true," Chim affirmed with a nod,

After a moment of their holding each other, they pulled apart before Lum leaned in to kiss Tariko on the lips. They remained still for a moment as their tongues played with each other, which made the Mistress of Time and Space moan. "Oi! If you two are gonna do a pillow scene, get a room, huh?!"

As Lum's parents laughed and Oyuki and Benten both gasped at such an open comment from the Mistress of Time and Space, Tariko and Lum pulled apart before they turned and stuck their tongues out at Haruhi. Seeing that from nearby, Redet Ten nearly fell over laughing in delight...

...then everyone tensed on sensing someone teleport in.

"Ah! Hime's work is never done!"

Ten gaped as people looked over. "Shirayuki-nēsama!" he called out.

Everyone turned to see the Great Chef of the West standing there, a large picnic basket in hand. As she was now visiting a planet which had been hostile to Yiziba in the past, Osamu Shirayuki came in her battle uniform, a beautiful lavender suit with dark purple belt and boots, a stylized picnic basket insignia on her chest. "Ohayō gozaimasu desu no!" the native of Nagoya greeted with a wave of her hand. "Hime suspected you wouldn't be in the mood to cook breakfast, Oba-chan!"

As Chim blushed on hearing that observation, Tariko smirked before she gave Lum a reassuring look, making the latter shake her head...

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Dear Diary,

Well, it's the morning of the first day of us being back on Uru. It looks like Lum-cha is finally going to recover from what that mean oni did to her while we were living in Tomobiki. Even better, she now remembers meeting Tariko-onēchan when she and Ayumu-onēchan came to Uru one day to help heal Lum-cha from having a power dampener being put on her by the man who wanted to liberate the Avalonians from the Niphentaxians.

And while I can tell that Lum-cha might still be wary — I mean, the memories of the Mother of All Fight Scenes and what Tariko-onēchan's adopted ancestor did back then that are placed in people's heads when they're kids are really INTENSE! — I hope that things will be calm between them. Given how much people care for Lum-cha, it might keep things peaceful. I'm sure that Shirayuki-nēsama will help with that.

Oh, that's right! I forgot about Shirayuki-nēsama! Osamu Shirayuki is from Nagoya. She's practically a professional chef, having taken up cooking as a hobby when she was my age, then improved and improved herself in ways that allowed her to start winning cooking contests — including the Iron Chef playoffs — by the time she got into middle school!

It was no wonder that she eventually became the Great Chef of the West, Syuosekuo, when it came time for her to be Gifted. She chose to use the German word Küchenchefin as her battle name on Earth...and this was way before she ever met Haruka-anegimisama!
Like Aria-nēya, Shirayuki-nēsama is a trofikinetic. Her first-self saved MILLIONS of lives during the Starvation Times, which makes any version of her automatically respected when s/he ever comes out of the Great Crystal of Power.

If it wasn't for the fact that the Gift crystal bearing the seed of Syuosekuo wasn't just LEFT out there one day for Shirayuki-nēsama to find — normally, such things should be taken back to the Great Crystal when someone dies — would she have actually chosen that Gift if she met her sister? You gotta wonder at that...

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The Invader house, an hour later...

"Oh, man! Roll me to the nearest bunk! That was the best meal I ever had!"

Shirayuki giggled. "You needed good food to eat, Benten-san! The times Hime sensed you were in Tomobiki and heard from Nē-sama's friends at Toranoseishin which restaurants you liked to go to, Hime knew you were eating a lot of bad junk! A tough girl like you needs to eat healthy so you can fight people at full strength! Even if you don't get Gifted like Kamen-chan did, you need it!"

Invader perked as Benten gave her a curious look. "What about Kamen?" the former asked. "Don't tell me you people know a way to turn a gynoid into one of you!"

"She wasn't a gynoid, Oji-chan. Neither were Hensō, Mienai nor Damasu."

Silence.

More silence.

Still more silence.

Then...

"Who are they?" Oyuki hesitantly asked as everyone gazed on the Trickster of the Show.

"Your clone twin sisters," Tariko answered.

"WHAT?!"

That was Lum and Benten, both of whom shot out of their chairs as they stared in horror at the former's would-be husband. "It's true," Tariko affirmed as Chim gaped in disbelief, Oyuki blinked and Invader moaned. "Five years ago, after what Ōgi unleashed on Lecashuto, Nassur got worried that you three and Ran would be targeted by the Mikado or some other fool in vengeance over that attack or some other thing. He proposed making gynoid replicas of you to act as living targets, ready to sub in when a threat was detected. The Zeiwanites couldn't do anything...but lo and behold, Ōgi proposed a solution!"

"Except they were bioroids, not gynoids," Ten added.

"WHAT?!" Invader snapped. "He told us they were gynoids!"

"And Ōgi's record of truthfulness is, Captain?" Haruhi sarcastically wondered.

Hearing that, Invader moaned as he sank into his chair. "Oh, Maidens...!"

"It's alright, Oji-chan," Tariko said. "After the computer at Home Base detected the truth, Nassur and
Cinba contacted Kyech on Okusei, then got them sent over there to let them live their lives. I found out about them through Ayumu around then, then gave them the offer to be Gifted. They took it.

The three women affected by this blinked. "They're safe?" Oyuki then asked. "Given what Ōgi’s former ambassador to my father was made after Haruhi removed that temporal block on the Phentax system after your friend in America put up that screening system at Ceres, most Niphentaxians see Avalonians as nothing more than robots, not a sentient race in their own right."

"Realistically yes," Tariko affirmed. "Sure, there's the chance they could be hurt if a fight scene comes about thanks to some slave-catcher getting lucky, but that's small. Damasu is effectively the president of Yiziba..." She smirked as people blinked. "I took it all out of you, by the way." As the others nodded, she added, "The others live there as well. Kamen is the current Weaponeer, so she's busy making new toys that go 'bang'!" As Benten's eyes lit up in clear interest, Tariko stared in admonishment at her. "No, she's not going to loan you the World-Breaker, Benten! Your aim sucks the big one..."

"HEY! I HAVE PERFECT AIM!"

A trill escaped the Trickster of the Show. "Sure you do...!"

"What of Hensō?" Invader asked, waving down an insulted Benten before the latter could launch into a mad tirade at his would-be daughter-in-law.

"The new Tempest. In the very footsteps of Redet Danu."

Confusion crossed the places of the non-Gifted there. "But Lady Danu died!" Chim protested. "How in the Maiden's Names did she become one of you?!

Tariko blinked, then she sighed. "Right! You all keep getting taught a damned LIE about what started that mess! Haruhi!" she then called out to her friend.

"One Historama coming right up!" the Mistress of Time and Space declared...

****

Oh, man...!
Poor Lady Danu...!
Oh! Forgot to explain what's going on!
The last Imperial Century — which fell in the latter mini-series of the Eighteenth Series of the Great Show of Life on Yiziba or the Eighteenth Century CE on Earth — was a bad time for a lot of Urusians, especially if they weren't noble-born.
During this time, leaders of the Imperial Houses tried to expand their territory in every direction. Coreward towards Noukiios, inspin towards Dominos, spinward towards Ipraedos and outspin towards Fukunokami. This was a time when the racism and elitism that drives people like Rei's uncle Yethis and his buddies even to this day was at its utter worst.
Sure enough, forces of the Empire ran across the Confederation of Vos, who — along with the Imperial Dominion of Noukiios and the Royal Kingdoms of Yehisril — were trying to force some sort of universal non-interference treaty to protect those who hadn't developed their own warp drive like Earth.
Naturally, the Imperial Round — the combined heads of the noble families who were in charge of the Empire — didn't care for the "lessers" on Vos dictating to them how to behave among potential slave races.
They needed a forward observation post to keep an eye on the Vosians.
Guess where they picked?
Yiziba.
That was a DUMB decision.
Because of their arrogance, the people in charge of the invasion of Yiziba in the 1787th Season of
the Great Show of Life — everything's counted from the first year of the Dawn of Power; the Show
itself started in the Forty-eighth Season — didn't do ANY sort of advanced research about the planet,
what went on there and why. Seeing a world that was pretty advanced technologically yet had no
space navy and pretty much was isolated from everywhere else convinced the dorks in charge of the
Empire that this was a perfect planet to invade.
Were they EVER sorry about that.
Anyhow, Redet Danu — she's my and Lum-cha's many-times grandaunt — was elected to be
Urusian champion. A guy from the northern polar continent named Lir'beta Pietobeesogu — he was
the Rampage at the time — was the defending champion.
And the leader of the invasion, a guy named Seq Joth — he's one of Rei's ancestors — never knew
Master Lir'beta could FLY!
The tag was made in seven frames and eighty-two shots!
Nearly EIGHT SECONDS!
And while Master Lir'beta was really, really, really nice about treating Lady Danu properly,
congratulating her for trying to do her best, General Joth just LOST IT!
"YOU CHEATED!"
That's one thing you NEVER say to most Yizibajohei!
You can probably guess the result...!

****

"Hey, the house!"
Shirayuki looked over her shoulder. "Ah! Jessica-san!"

Everyone else turned away from Haruhi's using her "historicama" power to show the events of the
Mother of All Fight Scenes to see a smiling Western woman with sunflower blonde hair in free wavy
bangs down to her shoulders, beautiful blue-green eyes peeking out of a perfectly shaped face with a
dimple under the left eye. She was dressed in a sky blue jumpsuit with gold belt and boots, twin lines
of golden birds flying up the sides of her legs and abdomen to form an "X" formation over her
cleavage, a pair of gold gauntlets on her lower arms. Seeing that, all the non-Yizibajohei save Ten
paled in horror as they realized who this woman was the current incarnation of.
The Yizibajohei champion at the time of the "invasion".
One of the most powerful FISS-types to live on that planet.
The Charging Belle of the Heavens, Duohuo...

Rampage!

"What are you doing here, Jess?" Tariko asked.

The woman born Jessica Wakefield in a fish canning town on the Santa Barbara coast of California
near Los Angeles the summer after Tariko was born shrugged. "I sensed there was some reveal
scene happening here. After Chikage told me you were coming here to make sure your ex didn't do
something dumb after you divorced her, Tariko, I came over to make sure people got the right story."

As the Urusians save Ten gulped on hearing that from a woman whose incarnation two centuries ago
had unleashed the lion's share of damage on the planet during the Mother of All Fight Scenes,
Haruhi sighed. "Just giving them a chance to see the Historicama, Jess! Sit back and watch!" she
declared.

With a gesture of her hand, the Mistress of Time and Space let the playback from over two series ago commence again for the others...

****

After Master Lir'beta and some friends chased off General Joth's fleet, they all went back to Habitation One where the Tag Race had been done.
And there was Lady Danu, ABANDONED and ALONE on Yiziba!
Fortunately, a lot of Yizibajohei understood right away what just happened to her since they had memories of what happened when people had abandoned their past-selves for all sorts of dumb reasons in the past.
Naturally, Master Lir'beta took her under his wing and let her live in his cabin out in the country; it was actually not so far from where Tariko-onēchan lives these days when she's not busy on Earth.
And there she stayed.
No one came from Uru to rescue her.
She was actually declared DEAD by the Imperial authorities!
Though, once the Infinity at the time found out what had happened back on Uru, Lady Danu was actually relieved to be seen that way.
You see, back in those days, women never had any real power when it came to the Imperial Houses.
If you were the first-born daughter of a lord, you were always passed over for the inheritance until a son was born. Daughters were always married off to cement political alliances between the Houses.
Sort of reminds me of how Lum-cha was always treated here on Uru.
Anyhow, Lady Danu settles down with Master Lir'beta on Yiziba. She becomes quite the novelty among the people living there at the time, being a 'same' on a world with metahumans (except the newborn and very young). Eventually, after living there for three seasons and being part of the local environment, Lady Danu begins to sync with the Great Crystal of Power after becoming lovers with Master Lir'beta. She eventually took the last step and became Tempest.
They got married both by Urusian law (he tagged her horns) and Yizibajohei Nameless tradition right afterwards.
So it's all good...until Lady Danu got homesick and went back to Uru to see her parents.
Hearing about that, General Joth decided he wasn't going to let his 'shame' at 'losing' Yiziba like he did haunt him forever.
So he has her EXPERIMENTED on!
WITH the full agreement of her parents!
And that's when Master Lir'beta and his friends — including Tariko-onēchan's past-self Haddoro Hamee — come in to rescue her.
And they ALL have bad flashback scenes about what had happened to many people on Yiziba in what led up to the Dawn of Power.
Back then, the various dictatorships were engaged in a METAHUMAN ARMS RACE like what nearly happened on Earth with the Übermenschen Gruppe.
Maidens!
It's no wonder the Yizibajohei went so crazy...

****

There wasn't a dry eye in the house, even with Redet Invader.

"Well...that does explain a lot of things about your people, Tariko..." his wife Chim said as she tried not to choke on her own tears at the thought of how much her husband's ancestor had suffered at the hands of her own ancestor just because of his "shame" at "losing" Yiziba like that.
Not to mention what happened to him during the Mother of All Fight Scenes.

"The stupid homo'bu umale was begging for a death scene like that," Jessica said, an uncomfortable look on her face. "Threatening Danu like that, vowing he wouldn't stop until he learned our 'great weakness', then he'd make us go extinct so his people could seize the Great Crystal of Power..."

"Fucking bastard deserved it!" Benten bit off to prevent her own sympathy at what happened to Redet Danu — who did get rescued and returned to Yiziba to live the rest of her life with her husband Lir'beta Pietobeesogu in peace and harmony — from spilling forth. "Like you said, Jess! He was begging for a trip to Bensaiten's Grave for causing that shit! Anyone with eyes would have noticed Yiziba was a no-go zone for anyone who wasn't a fucking metahuman!" She jerked before she gazed warily at Shirayuki, remembering how young she was in comparison to her half-sister. "S-s-sorry about th-th-that...!

"Daijōbu desu no!" the chef from Nagoya said as she waved the biker from Fukunokami down. "Hime hears worse from the fishermen who come by the Island to land their catches!"

"You live on an island?" Oyuki asked as she wiped her own eyes clear.

"Desu no! It's Ōmure-jima, near the island where Ryūnosuke-san met Nagisa-san." Shirayuki then perked. "Nē-sama, did Ayumu-san go see Nagisa-san?"

"Guaranteed, Shirayuki," Tariko assured her.

Benten and Oyuki blinked. "That's that cross-dresser that got hitched to Ryūnosuke a month or so back, right?" the former asked.

"Same one, even if our friends on Hustaros would actually see her as a 'fem' and not a real man," Tariko affirmed. "Unlike Ryū-chan, Nagisa-chan wasn't ever physically abused by his father. He always wanted a daughter...and in a weird way, Nagisa-chan elected to be that daughter as he grew up. But now that he's a ghost made corporeal with Margo about to come drop into town..."

"That's Doctor Death," Haruhi added.

The non-Yizibajohei shuddered. "Is that a wise idea?" Invader demanded.

"Oh, relax, Uncle!" Ten scolded him. "Miss Margo's more an anti-face than a real heel. She's the one who killed Usāmah bin Lādin last spring!"

That made the Urusians present all tense. "Oh..."

"Invader...UURKK!"

Everyone turned to the doorway...

...where a dazed and bleeding Seq Yethis now stood with his escort, all of whom looked as if they just went through a Battle Royale hosted by World Wrestling Entertainment and done under hardcore rules, having lasted through all thirty attacking participants. Before the chief of staff to the leader of Uru and would-be emperor of the planet could say anything further, Jessica gazed his way, displaying her uniform to the rude intruders. "Hey...!" the lawyer's daughter from Sweet Valley snarled as she moved to advance on the now white-faced Yethis. "I've seen you before
somewhere...!"

As the wide-eyed bodyguards all scrambled away from their principal in hopes of avoiding this oncoming beast that had just locked her sights on him, Yethis stammered as he tried not to soil himself, "W-w-we n-n-never m-m-met before, m-m-madame...!"

"Yes, we did..." Jessica snarled as a very impressive battle aura formed around her, her eyes now glowing with terrible outrage as her fists started to quake. As the people who had been in the house before Yethis and his goons came in all gaped with both awe and trepidation at the sight of the Charging Belle of the Heavens face down a man who would gladly see the galaxy burn to get his way, her voice took on an animistic growl. "YOU TRIED TO KILL MY WIFE...!"

**KK-KKRUNCH!**

Everyone gasped as Yethis howled in mortal agony after his heart was literally ripped out through his spine thanks to Jessica's supersonic corkscrew punch, one that could shatter ASTEROIDS with one blow! As the bodyguards all screamed in gut-wrenching terror before flying out of the Invader home to get away from this horrible monster, the Californian contemptuously tossed out the chief of staff's body after them, the power of her pitch sending the corpse way beyond the outer limits of the property!

"Holy fucking shit...!" Benten gasped.

Tariko moaned, then snapped her fingers to vanish all the blood and gore from the floor and Jessica's arm. After a moment, the panting Californian took a deep breath as her battle aura faded, then she blinked before she pulled up her hand. A moan then escaped her. "Oh, no! I just got a manicure!"

All the non-Yizibajohei face-faulted on hearing that!

"Ti'ibie?" Haruhi then whispered to her friend.

"With Jess, I have to wonder," Tariko breathed out...

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**That, dear Diary, is a flashback scene...!**

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**Onishuto, the Union Congress Hall downtown, two hours before lunch...**

"And that's what happened, Boss."

Hearing the explanation from the warlord that had led the first contact with Earth a year before, Grand General Hozan Lana chuckled. "Oh, Des and his friends are just going to be beside themselves," the president of Uru trilled out.

Redet Invader chuckled. The meeting was being held in camera in the secure meeting room set aside for the Urusian head-of-state away from potential monitoring by political opponents; the room was swept every day by Lana's deputy chief of staff, Vice Admiral Azu Kakazu...who was the only other person in the room besides the current captain of the battlewagon Kashin and her own top boss. "Well, looks like you're gonna get a promotion finally, Teach!" Invader then said as he gazed in amusement at his old basic officer training course platoon leader.

"'Here's to bloody wars and sickly seasons',' the raven-haired tomboy with the caramel eyes behind
reading glasses quoted the old British military toast. A moderate Imperial and one of the senior members of her noble house, Kakazu had been the darling of the Urusian infonets for becoming a battlewagon warlord at the youngest age imaginable, even younger than Redet Invader did when he finally was given his captaincy five years ago. Until Seq Yethis had run afoul of Jessica Wakefield, she had always been seen more as a background player in Union government politics, ensuring that the machinations of the ultra-conservative members of the Imperial Round didn't derail major government decisions, much less wreck Uru's fragile alliances with other worlds in the Federation; unlike her now-late superior, Kakazu supported the return of the monarchy, but also wanted to keep in place all the legal changes done for the "lessers" in the wake of the Union Revolution. "Not a way I'd personally want to earn my fourth star, but if that's the way Fate made it..."

"You're in, Kazu," the bald and muscular man with the raven sideburns and goatee stated with a delighted smirk. While a believer in the current form of military meritocracy that had ruled Uru since the Union Revolution two centuries before, Lana was a man who understood that the people wanted and needed changes in the way society was governed. But when one had to balance the interests of the radical conservatives who wanted their serfs and slaves back and the radical liberals who wanted full multi-level participatory democracy on the same scale as many nations of Earth ran it, it was very hard. Having to deal with Yethis and his many machinations had given Lana asteroid-sized headaches at times. Kakazu may be of noble blood, but she was a very smart woman, perfect to succeed him as President when he finally retired in the next couple of years. As a moderate Imperial possessing a wide level of respect among the rank and file in the Defence Forces and having quite an intergalactic profile as well, Azu Kakazu would lead Uru into a new golden age even if she strove to be the last president of the Union before an Imperial Restoration...IF Invader's daughter was willing to be Empress.

Kakazu blushed, her cheeks reddening. Seeing the woman he once had a crush on when he was an officer cadet, Invader blinked on realizing that she actually looked as young as she did thirty years ago when she had been a hard nosed drill lieutenant at the Defence Force Academy. "Thanks, Boss!"

What was going on here...?

"Speaking of which, where are Lady Tariko and her friends?" Lana then asked.

"My daughter's taking the chance to give Tariko and Haruhi a tour of Onishuto; Benten and Oyuki are with them now," Invader reported as a sly smile crossed his face. Now that he had been freed of that childhood brainwashing Urusians were subject to so they could never say a certain planet's name or the demonym for the people living there, he had come to realize how silly he must seem to the likes of his would-be daughter-in-law and her peers. Not to mention the leaders of Earth such as President Josiah Bartlet, who was a good friend of the Trickster of the Show and had supported her quest to see Earth protected from alien intrusion. Especially with the increased levels of Goa'uld activity in the region over the last three years; while a possible invasion from Ipraedos had been the primary reason for the Tag Race the previous fall in Japan, the "children of the gods" who had been the galactic boogeymen from way before the time the Seifukusu had entered space and chased them out of the local cluster five millennia ago were always a concern. "Lady Danu's successor as Rampage and Tariko's sister Miss Shirayuki went home; it's four hours after midnight in Japan right now and Miss Shirayuki's got a tonne of mouths to feed on the island where my daughter's ex-husband now resides. Lady Jessica wants to get started on the weekend where she lives and she needs to fix her fingernails." He shook his head as Lana and Kakazu both laughed in amusement at that little footnote concerning Yethis' demise. "At least Ataru's away from that shrew he called a mother and that spineless husband of hers...!"

Lana nodded in understanding; he had got a contact report from both Invader and his wife Chim in
the wake of the incident with Queen Elle, so he had a good idea what type of home life Moroboshi Ataru had endured when he had been "married" to Redet Lum. "I expect a full report about the truth behind Lady Tariko and her brother before the next month is out. See if you can get your daughter to add to that since she was the point person in that regard." He then sighed. "Well, as long as Lady Jessica's sister doesn't interfere when it comes to ships passing by their solar system beyond Ceres' orbit, I doubt there should be an issue. Belok and Schwartz aren't stupid enough to try to attack Earth with so many of the Yizibajohei there." Lana had lost that brainwashing fifteen years ago thanks to an encounter he had with Kasuga Ayumu's predecessor as Infinity, Tami Ugadese, over Shingetsu, home colony of Invader's late friend Aruka Mamoru, Ran's father.

"As long as there aren't reckless idiots trying to see how far in they could go, it should be alright, Boss," Kakazu noted. "I actually got the chance to speak with Lady Elizabeth's chief gynoid aide, Miss Katy Franklin, aboard her base ship, the Discovery, when His Majesty came in with the news of what was going on. It's a good thing this version of the Academician is a nice person deep down. Much that I'm sure our Nukiite Imperial Marine friends on Jiyo will treat civilians well, anyone who supported Yethis and his clique are in for a very hard time."

"No great loss," Lana noted.

Rueful chuckles escaped everyone in the room. "One interesting thing about what Tariko's been doing, Boss," Invader noted. "You know about Project: Kamen?"

"Nassur's proposal to have gynoid replicas of your daughter and her friends created to distract the Mikado's hunters and everyone else?"

"Same. Turns out, that lying bastard Ōgi had bioroid replicas made of them. Nassur-cha and Cinbachi clued into what was going on, then sent them to Okusei to have them placed under Lady K'ekhech's protection. Shortly after that, Tariko met them and got them Gifted. My own 'daughter' Hensō is now the new Tempest, falling into Lady Danu's place. Ran's 'sister' Damasu is now Lider, the effective president of Yiziba's government. What government is there, by the way."

"Avalonians?" Kakazu asked.

That made him gape. "Yeah! How did...?"

A chuckle escaped her. "I'm an Avalonian now, Invader. That's why I look so young. I helped Skelad Lara save Renning Uday's daughters Shunran and Mayhan when he tried to get them killed, then agreed to have a gynoid replica built by the Zeiwanites made of myself to raise them properly. There was an accident two years ago with Lady Ayumu, which fused my mind with that of my replica's programming." As Invader winced and Lana shook his head, she added, "Tariko came along and got some non-templated Avalonian bioroid bodies from the very man who once tried to cripple your daughter; he did it ultimately because he wanted to free the Avalonians — who are blood-related to the Maidens of the Eternal Voyager themselves — from slavery." As Invader gaped in shock on hearing that — the news of what had happened in the Phentax system months before was just now getting out, making leaders on allied planets scramble like mad as they confronted one of their worst possible nightmares when it came to dealing with the Federation's main enemies — Kakazu added, "It's not as hard as one might think. And with President Miree having taken control of the provisional government of the Niphentaxian Union, with a massive rebuilding program underway using unique starship designs created by architects based in the colonies — all of whom always viewed Avalonians as sentient beings — we shouldn't really have any issues anymore with Dominos and Ipraedos. With your daughter's friendship with Tariko..."

"We could milk that to keep the idiots away, you mean?" Invader asked.
"Exactly," Lana stated. "We got a signal from INN. Milan Domo's on her way here right now to try to land an interview with Lady Tariko. See to it she gets one with you as well. Be as positive about what she's done for Earth and how much support she has with local governments there. What happened to Yethis was a sad tragedy given his resemblance to that idiot Joth. And with what Lady Haruhi just revealed, we can finally get the truth of Danu's fate out in the open."

"Even better, try to convince your daughter to go through a body-swap and become an Avalonian herself," Kakazu added. "Doing that will change her slightly emotionally, but she'll finally shatter the hearts of the remaining Ōgi-aligned Lumites; they were all for suppressing the Avalonians before the Yizibajohei came by to remove the threat of the 'one true faith' from Tariko's brother."

"We don't need them now, so go ahead," the president added as a wry smile crossed his face. "You've wanted to do this since the bio-bombing, Invader."

An icy grin crossed the younger warlord's face. "That I have, Boss...!"

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The city market (a kilometre from the Union Congress Hall), that moment...

"That's Tuyuki?!!"

"And R'buttoo?!!"

"They don't look like the monsters people taught us about in school!"

"Wow! Miss Lum and her friends aren't scared by them!"

"They're sure brave...!"

Hearing the kids from a local elementary school babble away as they stared in wary curiosity at the two reality warpers enjoying a pleasant morning tea with Uru's most famous daughter and her two closest friends at a street-side bistro set up at the entrance of Onishuto's main city market, Tariko smirked. "I shudder to think of what Hinako-chan would do with this place if she ever visited."

That made Redet Lum, Shigaten Benten and Oyuki blink. "Your youngest sister, you mean?" the crown princess of Neptune then wondered. "She became Pureheart."

"Yeah," the Trickster of the Show answered...

...before a flash of energy made people spin around!

"Onē-tama!"

"Speak of the devil," Tariko muttered as Suzumiya Haruhi giggled.

The kids looked over. "Who's that, Miss Tuyuki?" one girl asked, pointing.

Tariko smiled as Saeru Hinako, Fukushima Hatsue and a third person — all of them were in their battlesuits; the unknown had a hood slung over her head — took a moment to glance around. "Waa...!" the living Spirit of Innocence breathed out as the kids seeing this — and their teachers and guardians — all gushed at seeing how cute and pretty she was. "This is Onishuto..." she then declared. "Hina likes!"

The children cheered, which made Hinako blush as Redet Ten floated to her side. "Um...Tariko-
onē-chan, would you mind?" the firefighter's son asked as he looked over his shoulder.

Tariko blinked, then she made a gesture with her hand. "Go on, Ten."

"Hai!" Out came the megaphone. "Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls, children of all ages!" he called out through it. "The Great Show of the Free Planetary State of Yiziba..." — no one in hearing range reacted to that word, which made many look over in confusion — "...proudly presents the Living Spirit of Innocence, Protector of Purity and the beloved sister of the Trickster of the Great Show of Life, Lady Saeru Hinako...SUIKI!" He then waved to the third of the Fukushima sisters. "Currently accompanied now by the first of her battle line, the living spirit of the third of the Fubuki-class destroyers of the Imperial Japanese Navy given life as a shipgirl, the Silent Blizzard, Lady Fukushima Hatsue...HATSUYUKI!" As the people hearing this gasped on hearing where Hatsue came from, Ten waved to the third one before he stopped. "Um...s-s-sorry, Onē-chan, I don't know you..."

People blinked before laughter filled the market as more people came over to see what was going on. "That's understandable, Ten-chan. I was flying under the radar since I got Gifted last month before I came in to help Onē-san here sub in for Onii-san in classes so he could spend time with Hinako-chan and the others." At that, she reached up to her hood and pulled it away.

People gasped on seeing what she looked like. "Holy!" Benten exclaimed before she gazed at Tariko. "Oi, Tariko! Don't tell me you got your soul split again!"

"No, that didn't happen, Benten," the Trickster of the Show said as she waved the biker down. As the crowd all looked at her, then gazed at her effective twin sister standing with Hinako and Hatsue, Tariko gazed at her would-be wife. "You remember the class film project back in March, Lum?"

Lum blinked as she stared at the newcomer, then her eyes widened. "But...didn't their souls disintegrate after I shut down the camera?!"

"No, koishii, we were spared that fate," the newcomer said as she walked over to sit at the table directly across from Lum, focusing her own brown eyes on the warlord's daughter, which instantly made her blush as red as ripe cherries as she realized what this woman just called her. "Since they plugged up the rakha'ip' that flowed through Tomobiki to help block the shifting of news inside and outside the town..." — here, she used the Noukiite term for spiritual ley lines to make the non-Terrans understand what was going on — "...the natural flow of spiritual energy through there was badly disrupted. It was 'lucky' for all of us that we were preserved long enough for Onē-san and Ayumu-san here to find us after the thing with Elle, then give us bodies." She then shook her head. "Not to mention — and I apologize if hearing of this bothers you — some of your own 'most faithful', who made clone bodies for you and those of your 'holy company' who lived full time on Earth in case something happened."

Lum blinked as she took that in, then she gaped. "I have another sister?!!"

As the people hearing this all gasped, the newcomer nodded. "Hai. Onē-san gave her the name 'Redet Danu' and she was Gifted as Ledo; 'Epimethius' as she would call herself on Earth. I myself became Dikeso; 'Slipstream' on Earth." Here, she winked before a flash of energy saw her transform into a perfect replica of the warlord's daughter, complete with her strapless bikini and calf-high boots.

The people seeing this cried out at such a sight while Lum gaped in shock just as the newcomer shifted herself back to normal, donning the jumpsuit with the psychedelic pattern of multiple primary colours, matching hooded demi-cape, white belt and boots, a traditional tàijítú symbol from Taoism on her chest. Gazing deeply into the newcomer's eyes, the warlord's daughter then shuddered as she
recalled the last month she lived on Earth, where on many days, her "husband" — no doubt, this woman in disguise — had been quite friendly with her, even going so far as to not chase other girls when "he" was with Lum. Yes, there were the ever-increasing incidents where "Ataru" was snapping harshly back to "his" mother for her rude comments, but given how Lum now saw Moroboshi Kinshō for the petty and selfish woman she really was, she didn't blame Tariko, Ataru or their just newly-revealed sibling for doing that, especially as the moment where Earth would be free of alien influence was approaching. And while it still hurt in a ways, Lum had started to sense that this newcomer had purposefully come from Earth to help her mend from it, allowing relations between House Redet and House Moroboshi to even out after over a year of a very rocky relationship built on a desperate lie...

"Oh, Darling..." she then moaned.

"What is it?"

Lum gasped as she noted the newcomer had asked that question. A blush then crossed her face before she smiled as she got up. As Benten and Oyuki gave her envious looks — which was instantly picked up on by Tariko and Haruhi, who then shared an amused look — the warlord's daughter moved over to sit into the newcomer's lap, making the people seeing this gasp on noting how close she was willing to be to one of "they who must never be named" even if this was some odd replica of Lum's would-be husband. As the newcomer warmly wrapped her arms around her would-be wife's abdomen, she then concentrated...which made Lum gasp in surprise as her cheeks went nuclear on feeling something VERY interesting press up against her butt. Noting this, Hatsue chuckled in amusement as Hinako huffed. "Onē-tama!" she then scolded as she wagged a finger at the other woman. "If you want to do all that mushy stuff with Lum-san, go back to her room to do it! Hina doesn't want to see it!"

Tariko roared with laughter as Ten shook his head, Haruhi giggled, Hatsue smirked and Oyuki and Benten both gaped in shock at such boldness from a person who represented a man who was often quite leery of showing such close affection in public even if he did chase after girls for names, phone numbers and requests to go on dates. "D-d-Darling...!" Lum sputtered.

"Oh! Koishii has her horns back!" the newcomer then cooed. "I just have to TAG them!"

Lum cried out as her hands moved to cover her horn buds. "Darling! Stop teasing me!" she shrilled as she glared at the other woman...

...before her lips were instantly captured by the other woman's own in a very passionate kiss. As the crowd seeing this whooped in delight on seeing someone doing that to the person that was hands-down the most famous Urusian alive today, Hinako whooped. "Yay! We'll have a wedding dress party!"

"How about a flat-out wedding?" Tariko then proposed.

A shocked cry escaped many in the crowd...

...before an outraged voice bellowed from nearby, "HOW DARE YOU?! RELEASE HER NOW, MONSTER! YOU'VE NO RIGHT TO...!"

An animistic growl escaped the only shipgirl in their midst as Hatsue's brown eyes glowed a bright silver-white just as the air around her turned as frigid as Triton in summertime, she spinning around...

In a flash of light and the loud tinkle of ice forming, the leader of the small troupe of Urusian security personnel — to Lum's shock, it was Pochik Ando, a colonel in the Defence Intelligence Directorate.
under Azu Kakazu's distant relative Azu Des, Seq Yethis' second in the Round — was encased in a solid block of ice with the head and neck exposed. As the others in the detail scrambled back from their boss, Hatsue turned around, flaring her battle aura to a degree that made everyone gape in awe as they sensed the full scale of the destroyer-turned-teenage girl's power. "LAR'BEKE!" she hissed out...

...as a dagger-shaped shank of ice projected from her finger to rip through Ando's neck, causing blood to explode everywhere as a croak of agony escaped the intelligence officer. Then, the dagger turned into the shape of a grappling hook as Hatsue pulled it back through her target's neck, yanking out an eel-like symbiote from the colonel's throat just as the sharp frozen water decapitated him!

"GOA'ULD!" one shopkeeper seeing this screamed out.

"CALL HEADQUARTERS! WE NEED BACKUP!" the sergeant of the team that had been under the possessed Ando's command then barked to his corporal.

The younger marine saluted before leaping into the air and flying off towards the headquarters of the Defence Force some blocks away from the market. By then, the hissing symbiote was in Hatsue's outstretched hand as the raven-haired shipgirl-turned-battle doll licked her lips. "Tasty..." she mewed...

...before her teeth chomped into the creature's body behind its head before the dorsal fin, ripping into the flesh with the force of a neutronium vise. As the neck was crushed, the head was severed, a dying squeak escaping it as it flopped to the ground by Hatsue's feet, she yanking the rest of the body clear of her before she contemptuously spat out what she had tried to eat. As the crowd seeing this all gasped in awe at such an act, the shipgirl dropped the writhing body onto the ground as what little blood it had leaked out of severed arteries and veins. She then reached up to wipe her lips clear. "Young one..." she muttered as if she had been sampling a vintage wine.

Silence fell as people took that in, then Tariko sighed. "And THAT, dear viewers, is why those so-called 'children of the gods' call us 'Orak’now'," she mused, making people gaze her way. "The 'unspeakable devils'," she then translated.

People blinked, then a wild cheer flooded the crowd, even from the marines who had come with the possessed Ando to "save" Lum...

****

An hour later...

"Hai! Here you go!"

"Ah! Thank you, Miss Tamkuo!"

"Kusun!"

As the last of the elementary school students who had seen Fukushima Hatsue kill off the Goa'uld who had possessed Pochik Ando bowed before racing off to join her peers, Aria des Beauchamps allowed a deep yawn to escape her. "Ah...Aria is sleepy..." the native of Paris moaned before she sat down.

"Aria-chan can sleep now," Saeru Hinako noted. The two youngest of Tariko's half-sisters were now seated at the table that had been occupied by their elder sister and her companions when the incident began; Aria had teleported straight to Onishuto from Ōmure-jima under escort by Ashikaga Shikuko,
the living spirit of the Ayanami-class destroyer *Shikinami*. "All the kids have their candy."

"Um...!" Aria then shifted herself to rest against the taller woman with the brown hair tied in a ponytail with a hairband tied in the same cat-ear style Osamu Shirayuki used. "Shikuko-chan is so warm..."

Seeing her sister doze off, the living Spirit of Innocence looked around. The mess made by Fukushima Hatsue had been cleaned up by the city police force and the Defence Intelligence Directorate...whose members, no doubt, were reeling from the shock that one of their senior leaders had been possessed by a *Goa'uld* of all things. As the adult memories of her past-selves seeped into her mind when it came to encounters between the Children of the Forge and the Children of the Gods, Hinako could only shake her head in sadness. Given that the serpentine symbiotes had simply known nothing more than possessing hosts for as long as they had been travelling in space and through Stargates for thousands of years, trying to make them stop being such bad people was pretty much seen as a lost cause. And with the clear connection between the first generation battle dolls and the first Goa'uld invasion of Yiziba over five sagas ago as her escort to Onishuto just demonstrated, the chances were awfully good that when the System Lords got wind of people like Hatsue, they would do anything to suppress such beings to prevent their whole empire from being smashed down.

Which would definitely get Takino Tomo involved.

Hinako shook her head as she called up the image of the current incarnation of the Wild Warrior of Passion, *Rimbo'o* ("Warwind"), in her mind. A one-woman wrecking machine that was simply unstoppable even by the likes of Hayashi Kanami and Faith Lehane when she was going full-tilt, the raven-haired native of Itabashi in Tōkyō itself was perfectly fit to have become one of Yiziba's most powerful warriors when she was Gifted the previous February. Despite being a lackadaisical slacker most of the time who had been as inconsiderate about the consequences of her actions as Tariko Katabarbe had effectively become when she had been brainwashed and forced to play "Moroboshi Ataru", Tomo could be frightfully energetic and competitive when the mood struck her...which was, much to her best friend's constant mortification, quite often since she got a very strong high when the adrenaline began pumping rapidly in her blood or if she was caught in the middle of a very interesting fight scene. Given she was the effectively Yizibajohei equivalent of the Incredible Hulk from Marvel comics, Tomo’s ultimate strength level could not be measured; thanks to a special adrenaline boost capability, she had been known to toss around the weight of minor planets when she was on a tear!

And she had a particularly BIG hatred of Goa'uld!

"Hey, Boss Lady!"

Hinako looked over to see where Redet Invader was now standing alongside Azu Kakazu and the current leader of the intelligence security forces in charge of the investigation over what happened to Pochik Ando, Invader's adopted daughter Captain Redet (née Renning) Negau, Lum's adopted elder sister. "What is it, Sergeant?" the green-haired tomboy with the blue eyes asked.

"We found another fucking snake, ma'am! It's Colonel Ando's father, Admiral Vel!" the younger officer said as a hovercar came down to a landing nearby, the hatchway opening to disgorge a small section of heavily armed marines and their prisoner.

"RELEASE ME! BOW TO YOUR GOD, LESSERS!"

Hinako moaned as her own empathy picked up on the radiation-induced madness from the creature now possessing Ando's elderly father, Pochik Vel, a retired admiral in the defence forces and the
current president of one of the planet's largest communications systems manufacturers. Thanks to wounds taken when he was a battlewagon warlord, Vel had been confined to a hoverchair since he turned forty; much that his legs had been shattered in a battle with Ipraedies pirates, his mind had been still sharp, which allowed him to advance into the flag ranks as a very cunning warrior even if he was a passionate member of the Imperial Round. But seeing him physically yanked out of the vehicle nearly helpless made many of the people seeing this look away; much that possession by a Goa'uld symbiote was a hideous thing, seeing such a once-proud man reduced to THIS...!

"So where's the snake...?"

Hinako gasped as people shuddered on hearing that ki charged voice echo through the market, then the youngest of Tariko's sisters turned to look down one alley as smoke dramatically billowed from there, masking the arrival of one of Yiziba's most feared warriors; the Wild Warrior wasn't above using a little theatrics to make her point. As people watched, the slender woman about Tariko's height emerged from the fog, her shaggy bouffant black hair seemed to writhe with the energy about to explode from every cell inside her, a lethal smile on her face showing rather sharp canines as her brown eyes glowed with both an indomitable rage and a frightful cunning that revealed how smart she really was. Unlike most Named Yizibajohei, her uniform consisted of a simple one-piece swimsuit that showed off her developing body very well; she wasn't busty by any stretch of the imagination, but her muscles were very well sculpted. Black thigh-high boots and bicep-high fingerless gloves covered her limbs, silver studded straps wrapped around her thighs and upper arms to keep them in place. A silver studded belt around her waist and a studded silver collar around her neck finished the ensemble. As people instantly backed away in mortal terror from the sight of the Wild Warrior marching determinedly to her target, one couldn't fail to tell that doing ANYTHING to anger this person was nothing short of suicidal.

Seeing the oncoming engine of destruction approach him, the possessed silver-haired Oni businessman sneered. "Rimbo'o...!" he growled out.

Hearing that, Tomo stopped before she seemed to gush in excitement. "Oh, my! I'm known!" she then squealed, making people gape in shock at her as all the Yizibajohei now on the scene shook their heads in amusement. "I've got FANS! Isn't that COOL?!"

Her hand then lashed out...

...before Vel screamed in agony after Tomo effectively snapped his arms when she fast-yanked him out of his captors' manacles. "Oh, shut it, you stupid would-be echo voiceover!" the latter moaned as she used her free hand's middle finger to flick his forehead, nearly cracking his skull from the impact. "Bah-blah! Bah-blah! Bah-blah! You're so much a hom'rbu umale, I can repeat all your script lines in my damned SLEEP! You might wanna get a better scriptwriter!"

"They're too STUPID to consider that, Tomo-chan!"

Tomo hummed as she considered that point, then she nodded. "Yeah, yeah! You can only hope these things would actually get interesting once in a while!" she said as she shrugged, gazing over to Tariko Katabarbe, who was at the table where Aria was now sleeping, enjoying tea with her companions...and yes, Redet Lum was still in the lap of Tariko's newly-revealed sister Hiromi Katabarbe. "Oi! Oi! Oi! Hiromi! For fuck's sake, if you're gonna knock her up, GET A DAMNED ROOM, HUH?!

As Invader and Negau awked before they gazed over to see Lum looking VERY content being in Hiromi's arms, Hinako sighed. "Tomo-chan is silly!"

That made Tomo glare at her. "Am not!"
"Are too!"

"Am not!"

"Are too!"

"AM NOT!"

"ARE TOO!"

"WHOA, tiger!" Tariko yelped. "Get to the climax of the scene, huh!"

Tomo blinked, then she sighed. "Right, forgot!" She looked to where Fukushima Hatsue was...before she sweat-dropped on seeing the living soul of the third Fubuki-class destroyer tucked under a kotatsu of all things laid out on the street behind where Benten was sitting. "Oi! New girl! Front and centre!"

Of course, the raven-haired woman appeared almost asleep. "I'll do something..." she said with a yawn, "...starting tomorrow...Tomo-san..."

A sweat drop appeared in Tomo's hair. "Man! And people say I'M lazy?" she muttered. She then gazed at Tariko, who winked in reassurance at her. Smirking, Tomo then yodelled, "Oi, Hatsue-chan! Ataru-kun told me he'll have a full-day PILLOW SCENE with you...!"

ZZ-ZIP!

"Hai, Sensei!" a now VERY awake and alert Hatsue said as she knelt seiza a metre from Tomo.

"Good! Pay attention, Student! This is 'Tomo-chan's Lessons doing Goa'uld Interrogation'! You pass this, I'll ask Ataru-kun to give you TWO DAYS!"

That made the Silent Blizzard instantly beam. "HAI, SENSEI!"

"Okay! Now, I heard from Haruhi that you actually ripped out the lar'beke from this dork's son, then bit into it to kill it, right?!"

"Hai!"

Tomo hummed. "Didn't taste so good, huh?"

"I seem to have been given a taste to enjoy eating them raw, Sensei!"

"KEK'ULD!" the possessed Vel shrieked.

"Wow! What was Doctor Destructo thinking of back then, huh?!" Tomo mused before she winked at Hatsue. "Now, Lesson One: You have to remember where these idiots love to insert their bodies when they're possessing someone! Like right HERE...!"

An inhuman howl of pain escaped Vel as the fingers of Tomo's free hand lanced into his back at the level of his diaphragm. As people watched this, Tomo twisted his writhing body around to show the attentive Hatsue where she had punched in to get at the symbiote's tail. "Lesson Two: You want to make these things sing like canaries without putting them through their death scenes, you start crushing the spine of the lar'beke from the tip up, like SO...!"

"AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH! MONSTER!"
"Lesson Three: Now, if the host's mind is still there, crushing the lar'beke's tail normally will make it release control of the host...!"

Everyone looked at the possessed businessman, whose screams continued to echo with the being still controlling his brain.

And his voice still echoed...

And echoed...

And echoed some more...

"And the conclusion here is, Student?!!" Tomo then asked.

"Hai!" Hatsue said as she shot her hand into the air. "The host is dead!"

"Correct!" the Wild Warrior declared. "So now we get to Lesson Four: Making this thing suffer for all the crap it's caused people...even if the host is nothing more than some dictator wanna-be whose whole cause should have gone through its death scene two series ago! Now, when you want to extract the lar'beke, you can pull it out through the hole you make to crush the tail like THIS...!"

Vel's wailing soon turned into some sort of perverted warble like some drunken songbird as his head seemed to rock to and fro, blood exploding from his nose and mouth as the being inside him tried to maintain whatever control it had over the host in spite of the horrible pain being inflicted directly on the symbiote itself. Before she got splashed with the blood, Tomo tilted the body so the fluids would drip onto the street. "Of course, you have to watch out for the blood when these things try to burrow its way deeper in to get away from your fingers," the Wild Warrior noted.

"Hai, Sensei! Question!" Hatsue said as she put her hand up.

"What is it?"

"What would the recommended frequency be when it comes to crushing the lar'beke's spinal bones in succession?" the destroyer-turned-teenage girl asked.

That made Tomo hum. "You ever get the 10 centimetre 65 calibre Type 98 naval guns fitted to you before you got sunk?"

Hatsue shook her head. "No!"

"Okay, go at the pace your Type Three guns would fire normally." Tomo winked as she worked another spinal bone in the symbiote, making Vel's scream turn into something similar to a yelping hiccup.

"Five rounds a minute! Hai!"

"Want some practice, Hatsue-chan?"

Everyone perked from the rather gory scene before them before they looked over to the alley that Tomo had teleported into...
...before Negau gaped. "Oh, Maidens! Des, too?!"

"Hai, afraid so!" the calm voice of the Mistress of the Mind Dive said as she calmly walked towards them, she accompanied by a hesitantly-walking middle aged raven-haired man in rather normal civilian clothing, his eyes glowing as the creature inside it tried to wrest back control of its host from the woman born Mizuhara Koyomi. "And yes, he's as brain-dead as the old fool that Tomo's playing around with right now. Looks like you're up for a promotion, Negau-san."

Negau took that in, then she sighed. "I wouldn't have wanted it this way."

"Yeah, sure, Negau-san! Pull another one!" Yomi telepathically answered, making Lum's adopted sister blush as she recalled that Yiziba's most powerful psychic could easily read minds from a CONTINENT away on either of her home planets.

"RELEASE...ME! BOW TO...YOUR GOD...! YOU WILL....NOT WIN, ORAK'NOU...!"

"Shut up!" Yomi said as she mentally commanded Azu Des' body to walk over.

As the destroyer-turned-teenage girl now paying attention to the Wild Warrior's "lesson" slammed the soon-to-be late director of the Defence Intelligence Directorate face first onto the ground, Tomo grinned. "Now, adding to the last lesson, Student, there's also the way you can extract the lar'beke out through the MOUTH! Watch what I do with this one!" she declared with a wink.

«For those who have weak stomachs, turn away!» Yomi telepathically called out.

As people spun away, Hinako gave Aria an envious look before closing her eyes. *Hina's glad she's still a kid*, the Spirit of Innocence mused.

Seconds later, mortal screams exploded from downtown Onishuto!

To Be Continued...

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**WRITER'S NOTES**

*The Senior Year* character notes: Seq Yethis, Hozan Lana, Pochik Ando, his father Pochik Vel and Azu Des first appeared in the "Great Father Ataru" storyline that ended the main series. Shigaten Kamen, Redet Hensō, Mienai and Aruka Damasu first appeared in "What Price For Love?" Cinba was first mentioned in "Return of Memory". Redet Belok first appeared in the TSY/Sailor Moon crossover Lonely They Who Guard... Emperor Schwartz of Ipraedos first appeared in "Enter Space-Hybrid Hazel". Skelad Lara and Lum's adopted sister Redet Negau first appeared in "Towards the Unstoppable Future". Milan Domo was a background character throughout the whole series.

Translation list: Eta — Noukiite red pepper; Ryekkyuk — The first worldwide capital city of Noukiios, the analogue of ancient P'yŏng'yang in Korea; Homr'bu umale — Literally "scripted same", this is a person who religiously follows a code of behaviour as if it was a military training manual, seen on Yiziba as the worst type of person ever to live; T'ībie — Kayfabe; In camera — Inside a room sealed off for secrecy; INN — Intergalactic News Network; Koishii — Darling; Tāijítú — Literally "absolute picture", this is the black-and-white yin-yang diagram commonly used to represent the concepts of Taoism; Lar'beke — Snake leech; Would-be echo voiceover — Yizibajohei euphemism describing people with voices that sound like God did in the 1956 movie
The Ten Commandments; Get to the climax of the scene — Yizibajohei euphemism equivalent to the Terran "get to the point".

The Yizibajohei calendar dates from 47 BCE on the Terran Gregorian calendar.

Azu Kakazu first appeared in the *Phoenix From the Ashes* side story *A Nice Quiet Place*.

The fembots created by Elizabeth Wakefield to crew her starship *Discovery* are modelled after the ones that appeared in the "Kill Oscar" and "Fembots in Las Vegas" storylines in the original run of *The Bionic Woman*. To allow them to interact with normal people when they need to, they were all given family names, such as Katharine "Katy" Franklin (whose "television-self" was played by Canadian-born American actress and former member of The Golddiggers, Janice Whitby).

Miree ot'ndai-Bohgar first appeared in *Lonely Souls*.

The film-replica of Moroboshi Ataru/Tariko Katabarbe appearing here — Hiromi Katabarbe/Moroboshi Hiromi — first appeared in the *Yatsura* manga story "Love and Violence" (manga chapter #78). Also appearing in this story was Lum's film replica, given the name Redet Danu in honour of Lum's ancestor from the time of first contact between Uru and Yiziba.

The wedding dress party concept was first shown in "Season of Love" (*Sister Princess* first season anime episode #7).

I invented the terms Orak'nou ("unspeakable devil") and Kek'uld ("god eater"/"cannibal") to serve as Goa'uld terms to address the Yizibajohei and the Niphentaxians respectively; in this, I mixed Coptic words with samples of what little of the Goa'uld language I could find in various websites.
The Day After: Tomobiki

Chapter Summary

Nagisa gets Gifted, people learn a big surprise about Asuka and Buffy gets her boy-toy back...

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Ōmure-jima, Welcome House, Saturday morning at breakfast (Onishuto time: Two hours after lunch)...

"Such a calm breeze..."

The blonde Aryan beauty now standing at the old sea wall that formed the outer border of Welcome House's grounds blinked as she gazed towards the open Pacific Ocean beyond the limits of the Sagami Sea, glad it was a clear day so she could take in her surroundings and better adapt to what she had become hours before. While she had been pleased to get the chance to nap after she had been brought here by the Undertaker the previous evening after her resurrection over the North Atlantic, Luisa von Bismarck had effectively slept for seventy-one years after she — as Germany's penultimate battleship — had been hunted down and pounded into scrap by the vengeful crews of the Royal Navy. And while the people who lived here like young Saeru Hinako — now off to the planet Uru to look in on her elder half-sister Tariko Katabarbe — had vowed never to violate war graves again, the sheer number of true "dead" from the sinking of Bismarck actually was about HALF of what the records stated.

"Will I ever meet you..." Luisa whispered. "Dame Drachentöter..."

"Sadly, her identity must remain secret for a time, Luisa."

Luisa tensed, then she turned to see a purple-haired arch-mage standing behind her, dressed in her normal Gothic-like noblewoman's clothing, a light smile on her face. "Frau Hirosaki," the battleship-turned-twenty-someting woman breathed out even if she was more than grateful that the Dark Heart of Pure Chaos had spoken to her in German. "It may not be wise to approach me in such a manner."

"The newness of your transformation is making you hesitate at this time," Hirosaki Chikage warned as she moved to stand beside the taller woman. "But it's more than understandable. While you were effectively 'alive' as a battleship, you never once were expected to become physically human. While you did inherit the memories of your crew — both saved and lost — to understand the basic mechanics of being human, they were men." Her royal blue eyes sparkled in amusement.

"Unless...?"

Sensing that unspoken question, Luisa snorted. "Nein. There was no woman who disguised herself to serve, even if such would have been more than understandable in those times. The rage many in
the Fatherland felt at being treated like that after the Great War was immense."

"And taken gross advantage of by Herr Hitler and his clique."

That made Luisa nod. "Ja. I sensed some of my crew come by when Herr Professor Ballard
discovered my wreck twenty-three years ago. They knew of the horrible things that stupid corporal
and his friends unleashed. My admiral never cared for that nonsense in the first place even if he
wished the Fatherland to be strong again." She shook her head. "No wonder Catarina's so
ashamed..."

"If she ever moves to the United States, she'll be treated well," Chikage assured her. "President
Bartlet is a good friend of Ane-kun's and has always supported her quest to see us protected from the
aliens. If a new version of the Liberty Legion is formed, Catarina will no doubt be a part of it."

"The American team of metahumans meant to fight the Rittmeister's last round of students, ja?"

"Ja."

"Guten Morgen, Eure Durchlaucht."

Luisa gargled, then she looked over. "Frau Tenhiro!"

As the battleship-turned-twenty-something beauty flustered in embarrassment at being called "Your
Serene Highness" by a bowing Tenhiro Haruka, Chikage smiled...

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Inside the main commons of Welcome House...

Tendō Akane moaned as she slowly rose from her bed.

"Damn...morning already...?"

Grunting, the raven-haired tomboy slipped out from under her covers, stretching herself for a
moment before opening the blinds over the window of her guest room to gaze out at the back lawn
of the youth hostel she had stayed in overnight. Noting Luisa von Bismarck now acting like a
flustered child as she tried to admonish Tenhiro Haruka while Hirosaki Chikage stared at this in
amusement, the Hammer of Passion could only smile. "You're a really lucky lady, Tariko-chan."

A knock echoed from the door. "Akane-san?"

Perking on recognizing the voice of one of the cute "shipgirls" that had been there at Fūrinkan High
School the previous afternoon when Akane finally recovered from what her idiot father had done to
her years ago in the wake of her Gifting, the nude woman walked over to slip on the housecoat she
had been given since she had come here only in her battlesuit as Cremisi. "Come in, Fujiko-chan."

The door opened to reveal the first of her class of destroyers and the first shipgirl to rise thanks to
Saeru Hinako. "Gomen nasai, Akane-san," Fukushima Fujiko said as she stepped inside, a small bag
in hand. "Sakuya-san arranged to get some clothes for you so you don't have to wear the battlesuit all
the time. Fortunately, both Tariko-san and Shirei-kan knew your sizes through Kanami-san, so we
made sure you would get some properly-fitting clothes."

Akane blushed at such thoughtfulness by the matriarch of the Moroboshi Clan and her siblings.
"Appreciated, Fujiko-chan," she said as she took the bag in hand, then slipped off her housecoat to
get dressed; since there were only women in this place thanks to Moroboshi Ataru living in the
rotunda at the old seaward side of Welcome House, there was no need to worry about peepers.

She was quick to sense the former destroyer blush madly as her well-toned body was revealed, then she posed herself slightly. "Like?" she cooed.

Fujiko’s cheeks reddened more. "Akane-san is so beautiful...!"

That made the youngest child of the Tendō of Ōizumi blush in return at that honest appraisal, then she moved to slip on a pair of sports panties and a matching bra, both fitting her perfectly. Noting there were pairs of track shorts and sweat shirts along with a couple pairs of jeans and button blouses, Akane then gazed briefly at Fujiko to note she was prepared to do some exercise. Quickly donning a red shirt and matching shorts, she then pulled out some socks and the pair of running shoes provided by the Moroboshi Clan before she reached over for her war hammer, which had been leaning against the wall by the window. With that, she reached over to allow Fujiko to take her hand, then they headed out.

"Poi! Fujiko-chan!"

Fujiko and Akane stopped, turning around to see Hamamoto Kodachi, Kisaragi Mutsuko and her younger sister Kisaragi Kyōko come over. Like the first of her class of destroyer shipgirl, the fourth of the Shiratsuyu-class and the first and second of the Mutsuki-class were also in track gear. "Oh, Kodachi-chan! Mutsuko-chan! Kyōko-chan! Ohayō!" Fujiko called out to her old fleet mates.

"Everyone else is out on the front lawn ready for calisthenics!" Mutsuko called out. "We can't seem to find Ryūnosuke-san anywhere."

That made the "flagship" of the shipgirls on Ōmure-jima blink. "Is Steve-sensei here? He was going to help her adjust to being Gifted."

"I haven't seen her..."

"HELP!"

All the shipgirls gasped. "SHIREI-KAN!" Fujiko screamed out.

All four of them then raced for the end of the hallway, where an open window was conveniently located. They leapt through it, flying down to starboard to land at the main entrance to the rotunda before running inside, falling in alongside their sisters who also heard Moroboshi Ataru scream out and were streaming into the building. Watching this as she walked over to see what was going on, Akane nodded.

"Good reflexes..."

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Inside the rotunda, ground floor...

"Oi! Teitoku! What's wrong?!"

"Goshujin-sama! Are you alright?!"

As Ashikaga Akemi knocked hard on Ataru's bedroom door, footfalls heralded the approach of a certain metahuman detective from London. "Oi! What the hell's wrong with you guys?!" Yotsuba Dunn demanded from the second floor landing. "Some of us are still trying to sleep!"
"Teitoku called out for help, Yotsuba-san!" Ashikaga Ami said as her sister moved to force the door.

"Catarina-san! Please...we just met...!"

All the shipgirls awked on hearing that pleading voice from inside Ataru's bedroom, then Yotsuba grinned in delight. "Ani-chama date checky!" she bellowed out as she leapt down from the second-floor landing, then raced over to shove Akemi and Ami out of the way before quickly twisting the doorknob in a unique way to unlock it. She then shoved open the door, her camera out and ready.

"YOTSUBA!"

The camera clicked away several times as the destroyers at the doorway peeked in. "Oi, you shitty Kraut cruiser! What the hell are you doing?" Akemi shrilled.

Fukushima Fujiko came over to look before she blushed on seeing a nude Catarina von Savoyen trying desperately to crawl all over a struggling Moroboshi Ataru, who was at least in his pyjama bottoms. "Catarina-sama! Stop being so forward to Shirei-kan! You just met!" the first of her class called out.

"WAS ZUR HÖLLE IST DAS?!"

Everyone yelped as a blonde battleship stormed into the rotunda, pushing past the younger shipgirls to gaze into the bedroom before her eyes went wide at what her companion from Operation: Rheinübung was doing with their effective new admiral. "OLYMPIA CATARINA VON SAVOYEN-CARIGNAN!" Luisa von Bismarck shrilled, making Catarina bolt up to attention. "WHAT IN GOD’S NAME ARE YOU DOING WITH THE ADMIRAL?!! GET OUT HERE RIGHT THIS INSTANT, YOU SILLY GIRL!"

"J-J-JAWOHL!" the cruiser stammered out as her cheeks turned as red as cherries.

Luisa lunged inside, snaring her friend by an arm and dragged her out, ignoring the fact that Catarina was trying to cover herself with just one of Ataru's bed sheets. As the destroyers got out of the larger shipgirls' way, Yotsuba blinked before she gazed in amusement at Ataru, who was now lying on his bed, panting. "Oi, Ani-chama! Was it good?" the metahuman detective coyly teased.

A moan escaped him. "Not this early in the morning, Yotsuba, PLEASE...!"

"My, what a passionate young lady! Never expected that from an Austrian!"

Yotsuba perked, then she leaned through the doorway to gaze towards Tanenobu Karen's room. "Oi! Giles-sensei! What are you doing here?!"

The greying middle-aged Englishman in the grey tweed business suit he always wore when he worked as librarian at Sunnydale High School in a seashore town near Los Angeles smiled as he slipped off his glasses, his blue-green eyes twinkling in profound amusement. "I see you gained a much larger fleet than you had just last week, Miss Dunn. It appears whatever force is sending the first generation battle dolls down here from the Forge is being more thorough than we'd wish."

That made Yotsuba sweat. "ANOTHER one...?!!"

"Yes," Rupert Giles said. "Two of them, in fact."

As the metahuman detective moaned, Ataru croaked, "Please, Sensei, keep these ones away from me. I've got enough shipgirl issues..."
"Oh, don't worry about that, old boy." Giles then blushed. "It seems..."
"Admiral?"

Everyone perked, then they turned...

"Would you like some mixed cherry tea, Admiral?" the grinning girl looking to be about Yotsuba's age standing by the entrance to the dining room declared, holding up a tray with a piping hot cup of reddish tea. "Admiral Susumu made it for you."

As the destroyers all blinked, Yotsuba looked over with her spy glass, then she grinned. "Oh! Yotsuba DEFINITELY has to check this!" she leered.

An embarrassed moan escaped the Watcher. "Miss Dunn, please...!"

The other shipgirls blinked, then they burst out laughing...

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The dining room, thirty minutes later...

"So these two just showed up in Sunny-hell two days ago, then started beating up vampires when they came into town, Xander-kun?" Hatoyama Rinrin asked.

"Yep," Xander Harris replied as he tried not to blush as one of the two new shipgirls — a very busty woman even if she looked to be the same age as he, possessing blonde hair in bushy twintails that went to her shoulders, blue eyes peeking out of a somewhat chubby face despite her well-muscled body — reached over to squeeze his hand. All the members of the Scooby Gang were seated on the couches that lined the outer wall of the dining area, with the sisters at the tables and Rupert Giles himself at the guest of honour spot beside Susumu Marie, with the cute young tomboy with the electric blue hair tied in twin odangos at the backs of her temples standing close to the elderly Watcher. Much to the two new shipgirls' amusement, Marie's bushy-haired "golden retriever" Michael — he was actually a Yizibajohei ruolosuo, a wild wolf-like being native to the northern polar continent — was busy sniffing up both girls' legs, making the older-looking of the pair blush madly as she shied away from the friendly dog while the younger-looking of the pair giggled in delight. "Made a whole ton of them bleed rivers of ichor from the nose on seeing two nude girls walk up Main Street like that, but we were able to subdue them and get them turned back with some donated blood."

"They're not fully Gifted yet, Shirei-kan," Fukushima Fujiko reported as she gazed at Ataru, who was now busy scanning his large PAA as it linked to various sites in the Internet to help him devise human names for these newcomers.

"Why are you two holding off?" Sukeyama Sakuya asked them.

The one holding Xander's hand blushed deeply. "W-well, we didn't know that we could d-d-do that, Admiral Sukeyama!" she said in a timid voice, then she smiled as Xander gave her hand a reassuring squeeze. "Some of my crew came from Sunnydale. After I fully merged with the battle doll sent from the Great Crystal of Power to turn me into this, the memory blocks that were placed on their minds when they lived there fell away and I realized something really awful was going on in town. As soon as I got close enough to scan what was going on — I wish I had my planes with me so they could have done a reconnaissance in force before I got there — I realized there was some sort of interdimensional gate, like the one that leads into the Dark Gaol the Healer's ally used to imprison the snake leeches when they tried to seize parts of the Great Crystal. That's when I met up with
Sammy here...

Silence.

More silence.

Still more silence.

Then...

"No WAY!" Fukushima Shirayuki exclaimed, her eyes wide. "It CAN'T be...!"

"To even STAND in her presence!" Ashikaga Ami squealed. "What an HONOUR!"

"Of course she became an elephant lady...!"

"ELEGANT!"

Everyone looked over to where the Akamatsu sisters were now standing, with the elder of them now flustering in embarrassment. "Keep trying, Tsukiko-san," Tenhiro Haruka bade to Akamatsu Tsukiko, the reborn destroyer Akatsuki.

As the childish raven-haired girl with the matching dark blue eyes blushed madly at the encouragement the Quarterstaff Mistress just gave her while her younger sisters Himeko, Ikue and Inoue all shook their heads in amusement, many of Fujiko's and Ami's sisters raced over to stare closely at the reborn "destroyer escort who fought like a battleship" at the Battle off Samar...

...then they dropped to their knees and began bowing to her, waving their hands over their heads as Wayne Campbell and Garth Algar did to Alice Cooper in Wayne's World. "WE'RE NOT WORTHY! WE'RE NOT WORTHY! WE'RE NOT WORTHY! WE'RE NOT WORTHY! WE'RE NOT WORTHY...!"

Laughter filled the dining hall from the normal humans seeing this. "Aw! Cut it out, you crazy Nips!" the living kami of USS Samuel B. Roberts cried out. "I was just doing my damned job! Don't make it look like I was part of the Liberty Legion, huh!" the adopted native of Houston in Texas (her place of construction) and San Francisco (her namesake's place of birth) then cried out.

The destroyers still chanted away as they bowed, making her fluster madly as her new friends from Sunnydale laughed at such a show of respect. "Oi! A-man! You make up a good name for the Little Scrapper here, yet?!" a voice called out.

Eyes locked on Faith Lehane, who was seated beside Buffy Summers off to one side close to where Sakuya sat with Moroboshi Ataru, Hirosaki Chikage standing beside the two current living Slayers. "Just got it, Faith-san. For her and her friend here from Taffy Three," he then declared. As the Japanese shipgirls then stared as one at Xander's current companion, they all gasping in awe on hearing that she too was part of the famous Task Unit 77.4.3 at the Battle off Samar back in the fall of 1944 during Leyte Gulf, he stood up, clearing his throat. As the two newcomers tensed, he waved to the reborn destroyer escort. "Lieutenant Commander Samantha Brooke Roberts," he solemnly declared before he indicated the older-looking shipgirl. "Captain Honore Chloe Zitzewitz," he added with a wave of his hand.

That made the twintailed blonde blink, her cheeks turning deep red as she looked away from the nice man who had just named her in partial honour of the woman who had christened her in 1943 at Vancouver in Washington. "Admiral Moroboshi...!"
"Hey, that's pretty classy, Gamby!" the just-named destroyer escort noted, which made the Japanese shipgirls gasp on realizing they had just met the first **aircraft carrier** to assume human form. She then looked hopefully at the elder man standing in the room. "Hey, Admiral, which name...?"

Giles sighed. "Which would you be more comfortable with, Miss Roberts?"

That made her think before she flustered. "Well, B-b-Brooke sounds nice..."

"Okay, Little Scrapper! You're Brooke!" Faith then declared.

As people snickered at the Bostonian's automatic declaration, the spirit of USS **Gambier Bay** then gazed on Xander. "Um...what do you think, Admiral Harris?"

The son of one of Sunnydale's more notorious unemployed drunks and the "normal" one of the Scooby Gang despite his being also the Wild Hunter of the Plains then hummed as he considered that point before he nodded. "'Honore' sounds pretty square. 'Chloe' sounds very nice."

That made her blink before she rapidly nodded. "Y-y-yessir..."

"My! Chloe-san is skittish, isn't she?" Haruka then noted.

"Understandable," Chikage mused. "She was sunk in an action where she wasn't designed to operate. While one admires her crew, it wasn't the right sort of battle to operate an aircraft carrier in."

"Hey, **White Plains** did good!" Brooke protested.

The Dark Heart of the True Chaos nodded. "True, Brooke, Elaine's crew performed splendidly," she affirmed, referring to Chloe's sister USS **White Plains** by her planned human name, Elaine Mitscher. "But what if a shell struck one of her ammunition magazines or her aviation fuel storage tanks?"

That made all the shipgirls present wince. "Yeah, that's true..." Chloe breathed out.

*Let me out of here...!*

People blinked on hearing that roaring voice echo from nowhere in particular, then Chloe gazed at the beautiful Latino girl seated on Xander's other side. "Um, Your Highness, I think Admiral Summers needs to know of your prisoner, ma'am," she then whispered.

Hearing that, the Inca princess born Coya Yupanqui in the early Sixteenth Century smiled as she rose from the couch, turning to bow deeply to the elder living Slayer. "Forgive me for my impertinence, my Mistress, but given the horrid wound delivered to your heart at the start of this most dark year, I acted without your orders in capturing your errant beloved with the Sea Angel Chloe's help."

Silence.

More silence.

Still more silence.

Then...

"**YOU CAUGHT ANGEL?!**" Buffy screeched in wide-eyed delight.

The living avatar of an ancient Yizibajohei volcano goddess from the southern polar continent later transformed into one of the Handmaidens of the Master of the Dark Gaol bowed again as the others
in the room save the newly arrived destroyer shipgirls from Japan and their two new German friends gasped in delight. "Indeed I did, my Mistress! Forgive me for not telling you this, but I wished to use the chance to properly torture the corrupted part of Master Liam as my own great master taught me how to do in my first life when the lar'beke came upon our beautiful world and as my own spiritual patron has commanded me," the current incarnation of Raeru Uoto ("Pacha Kamaq") declared, a mirthless smile crossing her face, brown eyes glittering in anticipation of producing quite a show. "If this is done correctly, Master Liam will never again feel guilt at what his horrible sickness forced him to do as 'Angelus'. And with that, the fool wanderers from Europe who botched the revenge scene over a series ago with the poor man will be denied their worthless final vengeance and you will have your lover back."

Hearing that, the native of Los Angeles who was one of the best urban warfare fighters on Yiziba atop being a vampire Slayer hummed as she crossed her arms before she gazed on her "successor". "What do you think, Faith?" Buffy then asked.

"Hey, any face loves to be a heel if they can get away with it, B," Faith noted with a shrug. "Let Coya go to town. I want to hear the bastard squeal."

"Kaho doesn't want to listen to this, Onii-chama," a young voice then declared from nearby. "It hurts Kaho's ears when creepy heels are made to scream like that."

People turned as Eigo Kaho got up from the table, a frown on her face. "Here, Kaho-chan, I'll come with you," Ashikaga Ayako then vowed.

Kaho nodded as the living personification of the first of the Ayanami-class destroyers came over to escort her out of the dining room. "I'm sure you all have strong stomachs," Rupert Giles calmly stated.

"You KNEW?!

"Miss Gutierrez hinted she was going to do that to Angel, Buffy," the Oxford alumnus answered. "Much that I'm surprised she was able to succeed in doing so, I was wary, so I kept it to myself, especially when she described what she was going to do after pulling him out from the Dark Gaol." As others in the room gasped, he smirked. "Then again, luck seems to be with you all in cases like this."

That made Buffy stare anew at Coya. "A surprise?"

"Only the best for you, my Mistress."

The current incarnation of the Mighty Maiden of the Mountains, R'besuoto ("Virago"), then nodded her permission. "Okay! Go ahead!" She then raised her finger in warning, winking at her new friend. "Remember, Coya! I want my lover back in ONE PIECE! Got it?!"

"Of course, my Mistress."

"Oi, people in Welcome House! Am I in time?!"

People looked over to the doorway to see a grinning woman somewhat younger than Marie standing there, dressed in the urban camouflage battlesuit with pouch-lined brown belt and boots of the Voice of the Great Show of Life, Bo'odurba ("Windtalker"), her handy portable camera in hand and sitting on her right shoulder. "Hey, Paparazzi Girl!" Faith whooped as others cheered the arrival of Asakura Kazumi. "You ready to make those stupid gypsies howl like babies?!"
The chestnut-eyed would-be reporter with the shaggy red-brown hair in a high ponytail laughed. "Hey, if these so-called 'experts' can botch up a revenge scene like you told me they did with Buffy-chan's pillow scene partner, I'm all for making them look like total morons!" She then looked around the room. "So where IS the Angelmeister, anyway? I hear he's definitely pleasing to the eyes...!"

"Mine, Asakura!" Buffy snapped.

She got a tongue stuck out in return from one of the students of the son of the Thousand Master while others in the room laughed. "Okay, let's get the revenge scene under way!" Yotsuba then declared with a flourish as Kazumi went over to position herself in a perfect place to capture the best shot.

"Skylight sunscreen on!" Rinrin then called out.

The overhead skylight darkened to prevent the reflected rays of the morning sun from coming close to Coya's prisoner. The former princess smiled as she gestured with her hand. A space warp then appeared, causing a dark-haired man appearing to be in his twenties to appear, his body quaking as if he had been subjected to WEEKS of exposure to Redet Lum's bio-electricity. As a moaning cry escaped the man born Liam O'Connor in 1727, the handmaiden to the Undertaker chuckled as she walked over to loom over the well-restrained demon-infected master vampire. "Well, Master Liam..." she cooed as she leaned down to breathe into his ear. "How did you like your visit to OUR version of Hell?"

Angelus roared as he spun around to glare at the impudent mummy princess that came back to life somehow before the previous Halloween. "LET ME GO, YOU FREAK ZOMBIE BITCH!" the transformed linen merchant's son roared as his "game face" came on. "I SWEAR I'LL KILL YOU FOR DUMPING ME INTO THAT DAMNED PLACE! LET ME GO! I'LL MAKE IT QUICK...!"

KK-KRACK!

Angelus' head was snapped over by Xander's rabbit punch, making the three century-old vampire gape in shock as the sheer power behind that blow registered deep within his mind...which no normal MAN should ever possess! As he slowly turned around, Xander smirked as he unfolded his fingers.

PSSSHHEEW!

Angelus screamed in disbelief as foot-long ki claws grew out of the fingertips of Xander's right hand, then he stared wide-eyed at the "normal" member of the Scooby Gang...before he gaped as Xander's clothes then morphed into the brown jumpsuit with the darker brown animal striping on the sides, black belt and boots and black hyena's head insignia of the Wild Scavenger of the Plains. "No...!" the linen merchant's son then exclaimed. "You can't be...there's no way possible...!"

He yelped as Xander — who had then sheathed his ki claws — slapped down on his forehead, making the vampire's face go back to normal. "Deadboy, it's mesonium! It's ALWAYS possible!"

"And once we inject such into your body, you'll feel HUMAN again!" Coya then cooed as she stared without mirth at the shaking master vampire.

Angelus recoiled as he had just been jabbed by a blessed cross or had holy water dumped on him. "NO! DON'T YOU DARE, YOU MONSTER!" he screamed out.

"Isn't that like the kettle calling the pot 'black', Sensei?"
His head snapped around...

...then his "game face" came on as he growled at the black-haired girl seated next to Buffy's watcher. "You got guts saying that having your tea, little girl...!"

Susumu Marie's hand gestured as a stream of paper instantly flowed out of her pockets into her hand, forging a very thin stake, which then lanced out.

"YEAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAARGH...!"

"DO try keep a civil tongue, Mister O'Connor," the Paper Mistress calmly said as the deadly shank she made with her powers punched through Angelus' shirt to probe close to his heart, making the master vampire squeal like the proverbial stuck pig while she drank the rest of her tea. "One would think with your so-called 'refinement', you'd know how to behave in the presence of your betters."

"You remember when our friend Miss Black came by to town in March when she and her sister were visiting our friends in Sweet Valley, Deadboy?" Xander then asked. "I sure remember how much you and Bill and Drusilla and the rest of the crew CRIED when they watched Margo MELT your 'friend' the Judge with just a TOUCH!" A faux-sob escaped the "normal" member of the Scooby Gang. "Aw! I saw the great Angelus actually CRY! I even think I SMELT you SHIT yourself when you found out that there were far WORSE things on Earth these days than your precious 'old ones'!"

Derisive laughter filled the dining room as Angelus sputtered in disbelief, completely knocked askew by the fact that these supposed "normal" humans now looked upon him as he actually would look on anyone whose blood he wanted to drain. That was NOT something the master vampire was used to; not even the most vicious Slayer was intentionally cruel like this. "Wh-what the hell happened to you, Xander?!" he demanded as his face reverted back to normal, a fist of icy fear gripping his heart as the fact sank into him that these people were honest-to-goodness METAHUMANS — all blessed with MESONIUM in their blood, exposure to which was like hydrochloric acid to any vampire! — like the damned Liberty Legion and the others who had gone crazy during the Second World War...not to mention a near-immortal former president that Angelus and his sire Darla barely escaped from in the Great Chicago Fire of 1871. "You can't act like this! You're the GOOD GUYS! You don't do this...!"

Silence.

More silence.

Still more silence.

Then...

"Nothing is true', Liam, old son," Xander said with a smile that didn't flash in his eyes. "'Everything is permitted.'" He shrugged. "Granted, that's the motto in Assassin's Creed, but it fits us as well."

"Holy shit, B!" Faith called out as she and Buffy came over to stand between Angelus and Giles. "I can't believe it! A dude with his amount of experience and he only just figured it out NOW?! Didn't Angel notice all the vampires we were turning back to normal since you first hit Sunnydale two years ago?!"

"WHAT?!"

That was a wide-eyed Angelus, who was gaping at the Bostonian in total disbelief. "It's quite true,
Liam," Giles stated before he nodded his thanks as Ashikaga Namiko came over with a new cup of tea for him and Marie. "Oh, thank you, my dear," the Watcher said before he gazed at the master vampire. "Granted, I myself was quite skeptical about the whole concept, but after Xander here lost his friend Jesse when Buffy teamed with Willow, Tara and Xander to deal with the Master and the Order of Aurelius, they implemented it and it's been quite the resounding success ever since. As soon..." He then blinked as Angelus howled with derisive laughter. "Oh, dear! It appears he's not convinced of it!"

The sounds of druids chanting then echoed through the dining hall, that followed by a soulful gong that chilled Angelus to the core of his being...!

"Then he will watch as the Whirlwind dies, Rupert."

A space warp then appeared by the main doors...

...then Angelus gaped in horror on hearing the combined screeches of his spiritual "daughter" and "grandson" — along with a girl from Sunnydale he recently turned — as they were literally pitched out of the tunnel connecting Earth to the Dark Gaol to land beside their sire. Like Angelus, the people born William Pratt in 1852 and the woman born Drusilla Keeble ten years earlier were tied with dark crystal chains glowing with a terrible power that seemed to sap all their abilities. Much to his horror, the younger surviving members of the Whirlwind — not to mention Buffy's and Xander's old classmate Therese Klusmeyer, who had been one of the few in Sunnydale High School to never look down on the members of the Scooby Gang before she "disappeared" a month ago; she was also well-secured — were as pale as real ghosts, showing the very ugly signs of having been deliberately STARVED!

"Amazing what a little time travel can do, isn't it, Liam?" a new voice then said as footfalls heralded the arrival of a certain redhead Angelus knew well. "Just send them back in time a month and put them in the Dark Gaol to let them hear the many demons trapped there by the Undertaker and his servants like Coya scream as their very life essences are slowly drained out of them to feed into the Forge of the First Race." As Angelus gulped on hearing the ice-cold tone in Willow Rosenberg's voice, the current incarnation of the Arch-Mage of True Passion, R'bemdo R'hem ("Crimson Heart"), came up to stand close to Marie, her hooded rune-line red cape drawn around her body as if she was hiding something. "Hey, Kazumi! You sure the idiots in Clan Kalderash are seeing this right now?" she asked.

Kazumi chuckled as she tapped a control on her camcorder...

...which projected the image of a middle-aged man everyone from Sunnydale recognized as Janna Kalderash's uncle Enyos, now seated somewhere in a rather plain home, most likely in Europe; as the others were quick to conclude, he had probably been watching the news in his house when Kazumi's technopathic powers cut into the feed to show what was happening with Angelus. "Hey, Mister Kalderash!" Buffy called out as the older man gaped in shock on seeing people glare resentfully at him. "How's it feel, huh?! Sticking US with the problem of Angelus because you idiots botched the revenge scene back in 1898, huh! Just because you're nothing more than a homr'bu umale in your dumbass 'traditions', it might have helped us if you allowed your niece to TELL US what was happening with the guy! We could've settled the issue back then instead of allowing the rabid dog to run wild like he did!"

He sputtered on hearing that accusation, then barked out, "We serve Vengeance, you stupid child! You have no right to judge us...!"

SNAP!
Everyone perked on hearing Chikage's fingers click...

...then they gaped as a flash of light caused Enyos to appear in the air over the floor near to where Therese was, then he comically dropped head-first into the deck behind Rinrin! As a pained moan escaped the older man, Angelus blinked before he then laughed. "Oh, how the mighty have fallen!" the master vampire then leered. "You know, Enyos, Buffy's right! If Faith hadn't shown up back in February to stop me from turning your niece into a beautiful work of poetic art to give to Giles here, you would have joined her in death!" A wild laugh then escaped him as some of the people in the room shook their heads in silent amusement at his forced show of bravado.

Enyos moaned as he tried to get up...then he blinked as heavy footfalls heralded the arrival of something that was setting his mage-senses overloading with the sheer volume of POWER contained within the body of whoever had just stepped up to loom over him. Turning to look, he then gasped on seeing the tall blonde woman with the ice blue eyes staring down at him as if he was no better than slime. At that moment, Luisa von Bismarck's clothing melted into a beautiful black uniform complete with white shirt and black tie, black rider's trousers and zip-up jackboots spit-shone to a bright gleam. As she knelt down to gaze intently at him, his eyes went wide with horror on seeing the four "pip" stars of a sturmbannführer on her left jacket collar, the dual Armanen "sig" runes of the Protection Squadrons that served as Germany's secret police in the dark years of the Third Reich on her right collar, the badge of the Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei on her left breast pocket, the Totenkopf skull-and-crossbones hat badge of that same service on her wedge cap...and worst of all, the black tilted Hakenkreuz on a white circle embossed on a red armband wrapped above her left elbow. As Enyos howled in disbelief and horror on seeing this woman draped in the uniform of the monsters whose magical affiliates nearly hunted his clan to extinction seven decades ago, Luisa smirked as her eyes seemed to bore right into his soul to find what was there very wanting.

"Ein wahrer Untermensch...!" the battleship-turned-twenty-something woman sneered.

As Enyos shrieked at that insult and Angelus cackled with delight, Coya raised a hand, allowing mystic fire to dance over her fingers before she flung it at the screaming gypsy elder's face. A wild yelp of pain escaped him as a strange brand was burned right into his skin over his left eye, it appearing to be a three-layered cockade over a burning sun. Seeing that, Angelus blinked...before his eyes widened in disbelief as his mind locked in on that symbol before he shrieked in mortal terror, shaking his head as he began to struggle to break free of his chains and get as far away from these monsters as he could.

The Inca princess pointed in condemnation at him, making many in the room stiffen.

"NESU BAMGAM MU R'BETO BATAE ERBA!"

"Bamgam giro..." the shipgirls in the room then chanted as one.

Angelus' screams turned into a near ear-splitting shriek of mortal agony, that accompanied by Spike's and Drusilla's wide-eyed wails...though the younger vampires were just too weakened by having drank no blood for a month. As the others in the room nodded at Coya's declaration, Ashikaga Akemi marched over to snare Enyos by the neck and boost him up. "Okay, you fucking screw-up of a gypsy!" the profane eighth of the Ayanami-class destroyers made human snarled, her eyes glowing. "You have my creator's mark on you! When you join your fuck buddies, that mark spreads to all of them, even your NIECE!" As Enyos shrieked in terror at what was now being implied, Akemi smirked. "And when ALL of the Children of the Healer of Destruction sees that, they'll know you are ENEMIES OF ALL LIFE, only deserving DEATH!" She smirked as she leaned right into his face. "Better hope that Doctor Death doesn't find you first, shithead!" she then snarled. "She'll
"Begone from our sight, selfish fool!" Coya declared as she summoned energy to teleport the dazed Enyos away. "Liam O'Connor is the beloved of my mistress! MY master has granted Master Liam his pardon and welcomed him to become one of the Children of the Healer of Destruction, as his adopted children shall also become." As the gypsy elder howled on hearing that, the Inca princess smirked. "Harm any of them and you will be hunted down and slaughtered to the last! BEGONE!"

In a flash of energy, the elderly man was teleported off Ōmure-jima and sent back to Europe. As Kazumi temporarily cut the feed to the television sets of the various members of the Kalderash Clan, she gazed in amusement at the others in the room. "Doing ti'ibie is so much FUN, isn't it?" she asked.

People gaped at her, then they laughed.

"You FAKED that...?"

That was a stunned Angelus, who had caught the words the Mahora Academy middle school senior just said after nearly screaming his heart out on hearing the two words that he had been taught by the Master to fear above all others since even the OLD ONES themselves were said to dread the utterance of those very words! "Oh, no, Liam," Coya said as she stared at him. "It was QUITE real! Of course, the Sea Angel Luisa doesn't care a bit to don the uniforms of the maniacs that ruled her country when she was created by the hands of good shipwrights decades ago..." — at this, Luisa von Bismarck's authentic SS dress uniform disappeared to revert to her normal clothes just as the now-quite nauseous transformed battleship rapidly moved to head out of the room for the nearest bathroom, she followed by a concerned Catarina von Savoyen — "...but that performance was actually for YOUR benefit in the end!" She then smiled before sharing a knowing look with Willow. "If you may, my friend...?"

"Of course, Coya!" Willow said before she gazed on the dazed Spike and Drusilla, an admiring sigh escaping her. "Oh, my! You and Bill do make a lovely couple, you know that," she said as she focused on the seer, which made the dazed woman blink before she gazed drunkenly upon the red-haired hacker/arch-mage now kneeling before her, blinking in confusion on seeing the friendly look on her face when there had been many times Drusilla tried to kill her. "You look thirsty," she said as she reached under her cape to pull out a quart-sized take-out mug of coffee, opening the lid. "Here, have some..."

Drusilla's nose instantly flared on sensing the beautiful tincture of rich human blood in that mug, then she nodded as Willow handed it over. Seeing that, Angelus blinked before his nose picked up a VERY familiar acidic mineral scent from that blood. "NO! DRU! STOP! YOU DRINK THAT, IT'LL...!"

He then howled in mortal agony as something akin to a shank being driven into his soul overwhelmed him after the first drops of that rich liquid passed Drusilla's parched lips to flood down her gullet and plunge into her semi-active stomach, the particles of the Atom of True Life then seeping through the membranes into the seer's dormant circulatory system. Instantly, the ichor that kept her in an "undead" state began to be transformed as the mesonium in the blood purged the dark interdimensional energy that had been passed down through generations of demon-infected vampires from the days of the Great Banishment twenty-five millennia ago. As the tiny segment of energy inherited through the generations and the years from the blood of the Old One known as Maloker — who had been banished to a pocket dimension known to later generations as the "Deeper Well" by the man later known as the "Undying Lord" during the last years of the ancient war to purge Earth of interdimensional taint — which kept Drusilla Keeble "alive" in an odd way was morphed and
transformed, sending a flood of energy to fully awaken her body's cells and restore them to something akin to normal function...

...with an extra prize as well, Ataru mused as he watched this...!

As Drusilla's skin began to flush with new life after she gladly gulped down the blood given to her by Willow, the crimson-haired arch-mage moved over to Spike, holding out another coffee mug for the former poet to take. He grabbed it without hesitation; even if there was a part of him that tried to make him reject what was being offered, the gnawing feelings of hunger that overwhelmed him since Willow and her lover Tara Maclay caught him and Drusilla, then sent them and others — with the help of the bloody Undertaker of all people; Since when the hell did a wrestler become a bloody metahuman of all things?! Spike often asked himself after that event when he could muster the energy to actually think about that encounter — into that awful place where demons seemed to be chained down and drained of life was just too much for him. Gulping down that life-giving fluid made him gasp in relief as he felt new energy flood his body...before he blinked as a thumping sound started to echo from his chest. "Bloody hell..." he said as a wry smile then crossed his face while Drusilla seemed to moan, not resisting as a couple of the shipgirls moved to shift the seer onto a couch. "Nice move, Wills...!"

"Rest now, William," Chikage said as she came up to join them, using her own mage-sight to examine their transformation. "Soon as the rest of the ichor is morphed back to proper bodily fluids, I'll get you somewhere where I can do a thorough examination of you two. I'm sure Willow and Tara have already made this process an exact science, but one can never be too sure about something like this."

With that, she gestured with her hand to levitate Spike over to lay down on the couch beside his long-time girlfriend. By then, Willow was busy helping Therese drink down the coffee cup set aside for her. Thanks to her being a lot younger than the two master vampires who had been sired in the Nineteenth Century — and being a native of Sunnydale atop that — she proved to be a lot more willing to drink what was being offered to her despite her sire's plea to Drusilla to not partake. "Oh..." she moaned out as her skin began to flush to a more healthy shade. "My, that's very tasty..." she moaned as she moved to wipe her lips down, then she blinked as she began hearing her heart beat again. "Oh, wow..."

"Feeling a little better now, Therese?" Willow gently asked.

The raven-haired girl with the brown eyes blinked before she looked around, seeing all the pretty girls gazing her way. "Hey...I don't swing your way, Willow...!"

That made others blink before delighted laughter filled the room as the arch-mage used her own power to levitate the other woman over to the couch close to where Spike now lay. At the same time, she floated the last coffee cup of blood over to Buffy, who was moving to kneel down beside her dazed boyfriend. "Okay, Liam...you look a little thirsty there," she said as she popped open the lid.

Angelus croaked as the rich scent of that fluid overwhelmed him...before his eyes went wide on sensing the scent of his other-self's lover in that blood. Before what little "rational" side of the monster who had earned the ugly moniker "Scourge of Europe" in decades past could stop his body from reacting, he snared the mug from Buffy's hand, then let it pour down his throat as quickly as it could. As his own body began to shift in skin tone while the mesonium in the blood began its work, his eyes went wide as they glowed the reddish-gold they normally assumed when he put his "game face" on before they reverted back to their normal dark brown. His hands jerked, making him drop the mug as a faint scream echoed through the room; those with mage-sight were quick to see the last vestiges of his darker self being yanked out of his body and banished through an invisible warp to
the Dark Gaol.

"You...should have...destroyed me...Buffy..." Angel whispered as his eyes teared.

Instantly, he was in her arms. "I'm not letting you go, you big lug!"

He blinked before a relieved sob escaped him, then he held her tight as the people seeing this broke out in wild cheers at this reunion almost a year in the making. "And THAT'S a revenge scene, folks!" Kazumi then declared to her "audience". "Lovers reunited as it should always be!"

People gaped at the Voice of the Show before laughter filled the room...

****

Tomobiki High School, an hour after breakfast...

"Oh...morning..."

Grunting as she slipped off her goggles to rub her eyes clear of the sleep that had accumulated while her systems were busy fully establishing her special workshop in the clock tower, Tsuruya Rumiko took a deep breath to pump new oxygen into her body, then she stretched herself to get the kinks out of her limbs. Gazing at her own work PAA, she then nodded in delight on noting that all the external defences she had promised the school staff were now fully in place, which would keep out all of the local riffraff, from the morons of Butsumetsu High School at the south end of the city to all the incompetents who served the Mendō Clan all the time. As she imagined how the scion of Japan's richest family would react once he got the news that he couldn't bring his lackeys onto the school property anymore, the Careful Planner of the Circle of Thought smiled before she stood up, stretching again.

"Rumiko-san! Breakfast!"

She looked over, then grinned as the hatch into the belfry opened to reveal a smiling Shiowatari Nagisa, who was carrying a tray full of good food. "I see Ayumu-chan got to you finally," she noted as Fujinami Ryūnosuke's fiancé came up and moved to place the tray on the table. "Hard to adjust?"

A laughter escaped the tea shop maiden who had been promised to the "heir" of Hamachaya before the children of Fujinami Fujimi and Shiowatari Shin had been born. And indeed, Nagisa was a true maiden now; the gold strapless sundress she had on now barely masked the sloping mounds of very feminine breasts, much less the more slender waist flaring into child-bearing hips. "These battle doll bodies Ayumu-san's first self made are just amazing!" Nagisa said as she moved to pour some sencha for the other woman to enjoy. "It's as if I was born a girl all along. I remember growing up as a boy, even going through puberty and all the things boys experience as they move into adolescence...yet now it's been shifted in my mind to make me re-experience it as if I had been born a girl. Menarche, how one handles menstruation — I hope I don't get PMS, of course — and all the other things..."

"Well, I doubt Ayumu-chan's first self never thought it out all the way through," Rumiko noted as the other woman sat down opposite from her. "Itadakimasu!" she then called out before digging in.

Watching the only declared lesbian attending Tomobiki High work away at her meal, Nagisa then frowned as she considered how lonely it must have been for Rumiko over the last year and more. Coming to a school which seemed full of normal people at the start...which then became polarized the previous fall when Redet Lum came into everyone's lives, followed by Mendō Shūtarō. With the boys almost all moving to chase Lum and find a way to break her from Moroboshi Ataru — Shūtarō
among them — and the girls getting mass crushes on the scion of Japan's richest family when no boy save "Ataru" showing any sort of interest in them, it was clearly a dry well to someone who was looking for some sapphic action. It was no wonder that Rumiko had gravitated to Ryūnosuke when the latter had come to school in February. Since the "heir" of Hamachaya wasn't the least bit interested in Shūtarō and was hell-bent on doing ANYTHING to throw off her father's insane teachings when it came to how "he" was to live his life, Rumiko must have seemed a very safe port in a crazy storm that swirled around Ryūnosuke even after Nagisa had been effectively reborn and had become part of her life.

Of course, Nagisa wasn't the least bit jealous when it came to Rumiko being her fiancée's first true lover. One of the smartest high school students in Japan certainly HAD to know that someone like Fujinami Ryūnosuke would definitely be high-maintenance, especially since the "heir" of Hamachaya probably really didn't understand the whole concept of things behind sex. And while understanding the physical mechanics was an easy task, tying it to emotional attraction was much harder. Nagisa had discovered that early on after she had moved in with the Fujinami family after her rebirth on the tiny islet near Ōmure-jima her family had acquired for a very cheap price in hopes of attracting passing fishermen going and coming from Tōkyō Bay. Try as she had might — even if Rumiko had obligingly backed off on hearing of the engagement — she hadn't got far with Ryūnosuke.

"She'll have to discover what she is before thinking of anything concerning marrying anyone," the Careful Planner then warned as she fixed the boy-turned-girl seated across from her with a knowing look. As Nagisa gaped in surprise at that seemingly all-knowing comment, Rumiko chuckled. "Sorry about that. Since I allowed my Gift to take me, I've been overthinking about people's relationships as a way of exercising my deductive skills. Given how things are between you and Ryūnosuke, it's too easy to conclude. You may be ready to get a husband or wife. She's not."

Hearing that, Nagisa blinked before she sighed. "Agreed. If her father had only been a little bit more understanding..." she hissed out as she leaned her chin on one of her hands, shaking her head. "I was glad when Yomi-san used her telepathy to make Oji-san go away for a while. Ryūnosuke-sama really needs the chance to discover what she is without him leaning down on her like that. Much that I'm prepared to marry her even after getting my wish come true, you're right about her not being close to be married. And with her now being Gifted? I hope the Post-Gifting Shock isn't too bad."

"Oh, Steve took her over to his ranch in Texas to give her the chance to work out a lot of her frustrations and maybe go stomp on a few idiots. Maybe she'll help him out with that television show of his, too. Earn some real money for a change, way beyond her father's reach." As Nagisa giggled on hearing that, Rumiko then smirked. "And when he finds out that his 'manly man' is learning how to do that 'fancy pro wrestling' all the way over in America..." Here, she said that in a good approximation of Steve Austin's rough Texan accent, which made Nagisa laugh. "He'll be so beside himself figuring out how to get there that he probably won't pay a single bit of attention to you or how your bust grew so big!"

Both women then laughed...

...then they perked on hearing a frightened yell from outside.

"That's Mizunokōji Asuka!" Rumiko exclaimed. "What the HELL...?!"

Both women stepped out of the belfry onto the veranda that overlooked the front doors of the school, quickly spotting the quivering middle school senior now kneeling on the road just beyond the main gate, curling in on herself. Seeing she was dressed in the white-trimmed black seifuku of Keppeki Girl's Junior High School in Niiza north of Tomobiki itself, the Careful Planner blinked. "What the
hell is she doing all the way down here?! Her house is at the north end of town!"

"ASUKA-CHAN! LEAVE THAT TRANSVESTITE MONSTER! COME TO MY ARMS!"

Both women blinked. "Soban!" Nagisa snarled. "I'll get her!"

With that, she leapt off the veranda, dropping down to the ground as she charged towards the gate and the crying heiress of Japan's second largest family fortune. As she moved, her whole body began to glow as energy from the main source of mesonium in the universe started to flood her, a Gift seed that sensed Nagisa's strong beliefs in duty and honour moving to link with the boy-turned-girl's soul. Watching this, Rumiko shook her head. "Eager beaver, aren't you...?"

By the time Nagisa reached the gate, Asuka had been joined by a shuddering figure in a pink halter top and jean cut-offs, possessing shaggy strawberry blond hair and very warm and welcoming emerald eyes. Said person — a very effeminate boy her age, Nagisa was quick to see despite the girl's clothing — also had physical damage to her exposed arms and legs, revealing artificial musculature, ripped conduits and circuits and flashing diodes indicative he was actually a very advanced android. Noting he was trying to protect the androphobic Asuka from her would-be attackers, Nagisa barked out "GET HER INTO THE SCHOOL GROUNDS!" as she moved to shield them.

_Tene lomher'buo, Shiowatari Nagisa_

"H-hai!" the damaged android said as he summoned what strength he had left to snare the crying Asuka and leap with her past the gate into safety.

As Rumiko keyed a control to activate a nasty force field around the school grounds to keep all non-Yiziba members off the property, Nagisa screamed out as her clothes combusted, her whole body glowing like a sun in the eyes of the oncoming toughs from Tomobiki's "bad luck" school, including the dwarfish fellow with the VERY large lips that led the pack. "TAEIM LETAM...!" she screamed out.

Seeing that oncoming comet, Soban shuddered. Oh, SHIT...!

A massive ki explosion then rocked Tomobiki to its foundations!

_Nesu...BURBUO!

Fists now covered in white padded gauntlets then lashed out at machine gun speed, sending Soban flying to the south towards his home school as other members of his gang seemed to dance on air from the mountain-crushing hammer blows of the Stoic Guardian of the South, _Burbuo_ (the "Sentinel"), one of Yizaiba's most powerful FISS-types. People seeing this screamed out as the very unexpected sounds of metal being sheared apart like tinfoil, energy cells exploding, the sparks of torn circuits and other strange things that soon revealed that all of Soban's gang were themselves androids. As the onlookers morbidly watched, the just-Gifted Nagisa went through them like a cyclone, wrecking all of them in under a minute before somersaulting back, assuming a guard position with her hands.

"They're ROBOTS?!!" one housewife then exclaimed.

"Are they aliens?!!" another demanded.

"I thought Moroboshi Ataru got rid of them all yesterday!" a third barked out.
"Honestly! What's this town come to?!" a fourth demanded.

"OKAY, PEOPLE! CUT IT OUT WITH THE USELESS COMMENTARY!"

Onlookers perked, then they all gazed over to the main gate of the school, where the famous Tsuruya Rumiko — now in the same type of costume as those nice girls who had visited yesterday when the aliens were finally sent home and that bomb was removed from the Ginza — now stood, a megaphone in hand. "WE DON'T KNOW WHERE THEY CAME FROM! IT'LL BE INVESTIGATED! WAIT FOR FURTHER ANNOUNCEMENTS! LEAVE THE SCENE ALONE FOR THE AUTHORITIES!"

"SOMEONE CALL THE POLICE!" one shopkeeper then barked out.

As people pulled out cell phones, Nagisa walked over to join her friend, the spare energy of her Gifting slowly seeping into nothingness away from her. "What on Earth's going on here, Rumiko-chan?" the Steady Guardian then demanded as she thumbed the wrecked androids behind her. "Did you...?"

"Help him...please...!"

Both women's heads snapped over towards the main doors...

...where a shivering and sobbing Asuka was holding her now-unconscious rescuer in her arms. "Please...don't let him die...please...!"

Seeing that, Rumiko sighed. "Handle the police," she then ordered.

"Hai!" Nagisa called out as the Careful Planner went over to comfort the sobbing heiress and move to examine her android companion.

"ROBOTS?! WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?! IS MY STUPID SON INVOLVED?!" a very unwelcome voice barked out from a house some distance away. "I WISH I NEVER HAD HIM!"

Growling, Nagisa reached over for an obelisk-shaped road marker by the gate, yanking it out of the ground with one hand before pitching it directly towards the Moroboshi house. A second later, the thunderous impact of the hard stone ripping through Moroboshi Ataru's would-be residence echoed through the air, that accompanied by the pained scream of his mother Kinshō after she was buried by that block of rock. "YOU BE QUIET, YŪJO!" the tea shop maiden snapped. "YOU GOT WHAT YOU WISHED FOR! YOU'RE GONNA GROW OLD AND DIE ALONE LIKE YOU DESERVE!"

As the onlookers stared in shock at such a vicious act by the transformed tea shop maiden, Nagisa looked at them. "WHAT?! DON'T TELL ME YOU ALL DON'T KNOW WHAT A SCHOOL DOORKNOB SHE WAS WHEN SHE WENT TO SCHOOL HERE BEFORE SHE WAS FORCED TO MARRY THAT LAZY BUM!" With a humph, the just-resurrected ghost turned and marched onto the school ground to make some tea for herself and the soon-to-arrive police being called to the scene.

People watched her go, then they started to madly chatter away...

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The Moroboshi home...
"Who's going...to take...care of me when...I'm old and...grey...?"

Now partially buried into the kitchen floor by the road marker that had been pitched directly onto her head thanks to Fujinami Ryūnosuke's would-be fiancée, Moroboshi Kinshō could only quake as a knock echoed from the doorway. The door opened, allowing someone to walk inside. Not bothering to take off his shoes in the genkan, said person — a handsome twenty-something businessman with blue eyes behind reading glasses, well-styled black hair and a perfect Savile Row business suit — looked into the kitchen before he walked over to place a pile of envelopes and files on the living room table. "Well, well, well!" he trilled, making Kinshō gasp on recognizing the voice of the chief operations officer of her brother-in-law's keiretsu. "How the mighty are brought down low at last! I knew Tariko-san was going to make the revenge scene pull itself out as long as that issue with the bomb in the Ginza remained unresolved, but wow! To see a bitch like you brought down like this, Kinshō! It's POETIC!"

She shuddered as she tried to summon what strength she had to burst up at this VERY unwelcome intruder into her domain and chase him off. "You...!"

"Don't bother," Yumoa Reigi said as he adjusted his glasses. "The memory wipes on us were reversed back in April while you were stuck in intensive care on Uru. Your attempts at trying to embezzle Tariko-san's inheritance were all stopped and a court injunction was put into place as your behaviour concerning your DAUGHTER was properly investigated. Once the legislation declaring Terran-born Yizibajohei was brought into play, any claims you or that worthless sack of flesh you married had towards ANY money Nagaiwakai-sama left behind for Tariko-san was wiped out. All the money you stole from her trust fund was purged from your savings account!" As Kinshō awked on hearing that, Reigi smirked. "Don't depend on your brother to try to fix things, Kinshō. The whole Tomobiki police box is under investigation for collusion to embezzlement when it came to Tariko-san's inheritance! They won't help you anymore if they don't want to see jail time themselves!"

"No...MY money...!"

He shook his head. "Pity you never knew that your husband was HYPNOTIZED and made to go to Ōmure-jima to father TWELVE daughters to serve as new matriarch candidates for the Clan," Reigi then added, which made Kinshō gargle. "And the elder of them — now the new Matriarch — declared you and your husband EXPELLED from the Clan once and for all! Whatever deal you made with the Redet family on the Kashin back in April is on YOUR heads, not Tariko-san's! She's free to continue meeting many pretty girls around the world to be Gifted, the Clan is safe from your interference and you get the peaceful and quiet life you've always wanted! You just won't be STEALING money from anyone anymore...save for what Oji-chan gives his brother as an allowance! Then again, he might die soon..." With that, he turned to walk out. "And you'll be in POVERTY as you DESERVE!"

Kinshō wailed as Reigi moved to walk out. "Oh, by the way," the chief of staff for the Inshin Group and Toranseishin Finances warned as he paused by the genkan. "Someone's on the way to have a little chat with you about your involvement in trapping Tariko-san in this town back last September before the aliens came to be stupid. She won't take 'no' for an answer, so if I was you, I'd answer everything she asks when she comes to see you. If you don't, you won't see the next dawn...and there's no power on Earth OR Yiziba that can stop that from happening. Have a nice AFTERLIFE, slut!"

With that, he walked out. A gasp escaped Ataru's mother as her mind instantly rolled through what had just been slammed down on her by her brother-in-law’s eldest ward...before her eyes then went wide as new footfalls echoed from the hallway leading to the back door. Before she could try to
escape what Nagisa had done to her, those footfalls — indicating two people had just stepped in — echoed on the kitchen tiles before a hand snared her by the neck, sending an ice pick of seemingly absolute zero cold ripping through the older woman's body. Before she could try to scream for help, said hand pulled her out of the hole she made in the floor before she was flung back-first into the refrigerator!

"Good morning, Miss Yamaguchi," a voice called out in Japanese with a very deep Southern American accent. "My sister and I want to talk to you."

Before Kinshō could slide down to the floor, that freezing hand snared her by the front of her neck, boosting her back up to make her stare into a pair of stormy grey eyes that burned with a dark alien fire that made the housewife gargle in horror as she wondered what sort of kami possessed this woman.

"Hiya, slut!" the Archangel of Mortality said, her voice echoing with the power she commanded as she glared into the eyes of her first friend's mother. "You've got a LOT to answer for! And believe me..."

She leaned up to stare directly into the older woman's eyes, making Kinshō gargle as those grey orbs turned into twin bright mini-suns. "YOU WILL ANSWER THEM!" Margo Black roared.

As Ataru's mother nearly soiled herself as she sensed the true eternal power of the Herald of the Final Darkness, her obvious twin sister — dressed in a white jumpsuit with a bursting sun insignia on her chest, red belt and boots completing the ensemble, the belt having the Confederate States of America battle flag as its buckle — moved to make some tea. Shuddering as the impudent raven-haired girl with the grey eyes — an obvious twin sister to the dark demon now holding her against the refrigerator — began the preparation process, Kinshō tried to bark out...then gargled on sensing something freeze her throat. "Oh, do stop that, please," the other woman said as she gazed in amusement at the trapped housewife. "You don't have the authorities on your side anymore. When they moved to trap poor Tariko in this place that NEVER was her home, they defied not only your Heavenly Sovereign's own proclamation concerning those of Earth who became Gifted, but the National Diet's own laws concerning that. Now, we know of some who were behind all this...but they were mind-wiped of any vital information to help us locate the ones who made that decision...but since you're just an INSIGNIFICANT BUG in the great wheel of Life, you clearly know something."

"She does, Nora," Margo said as she licked her lips in anticipation. "Since she's friends with Miyake Kimiki, she should know about the Catholic concept of confession. If she doesn't want to become nothing more than goo on the ground, she'll start confessing things." She then chuckled, an evil sound that made Kinshō turn as white as a sheet. "Just like I did to Usāmah bin Lādin!"

The older woman's eyes nearly shot out of her head as she realized what this woman had ALSO been. "Yes, Miss Yamaguchi, my poor dear sister is the origin of those 'angels of darkness' rumours from the Middle East. And yes, I call you by your maiden name because the late Lady Nagaiwakai NEVER recognized you as her son's legitimate wife per the bylaws of his clan!" As Kinshō silently shrieked out, Nora Chapelle shook her head. "Oh, do stop that. I do know the neighbours in this town despise your useless and selfish wailing FAR more than they ever did your 'son's' actions since he was forced to reside here. When my sister removes the ebony mesonium used to anchor all the necessary energy fields to keep what happened here from being spread worldwide, the people will remember the truth about how you and Muchi lived here ALONE for over a DECADE! And they'll realize then how much you chased your DAUGHTER away from home once they realize that the lady who effectively DESTROYED that filthy Oni girl yesterday morning is your child! After all, legally, Moroboshi Ataru DOESN'T EXIST!"
As Kinshō rapidly shook her head in denial, a beeping sound then echoed from the belt of the Living Dynamo of Energy, *Riekbu* ("Accretor"). Blinking, Nora reached down to pull out her PAA, tapping the crystal there. "Hello?" she then called out into it.

"Greetings, Nora," a VERY familiar man's voice then called out as a hologram then appeared, revealing something that made Kinshō gape. "Tariko just informed me that you and your sister are interrogating our genetic progenitor concerning the illegal actions taken against her over a season ago."

"That's correct, Kaeru. We were just about to tell her that you ultimately SURVIVED that terrible fall you took when you were a child, after being saved by your REAL parents and rescued from such an ABUSIVE environment," Nora said as she gazed with pity at her twin sister. "Not as harshly as those filthy Yankees abused and corrupted my poor sister before your sister rescued her seven years ago and got her Gifted, then helped her control her powers with Ayumu's help, but it was quite the abusive environment indeed." Here, the Vermonter-turned-Georgian trader's daughter gave Kinshō a very scornful look as the older woman rapidly shook her head at such a public denunciation.

"It was indeed most fortunate that I was rescued by my parents and thus spared what Tariko was forced to endure until her true mother rescued her after his trip to Sagussa." As Margo snarled on hearing THAT planet's name while Kinshō began to silently sob at the idea that her beloved son HATED her in the long term, the man born Moroboshi Kaeru sighed. "Margo, your reaction towards the Daishi'cha is most illogical. I realize you disapprove of the methodology that Head Scientist Yura used to bring new life to that planet in lieu of using the Avalonian bioroid factory, but Ayumu went and corrected that, as did Ride Master von Taserich. What is the issue?"

That made the Archangel of Mortality blink before she sighed. "They abandoned her to this piece of filth right here," she said as she glared at Kinshō.

"The Daishi'cha operated without proper knowledge, Margo. Still, the issue was effectively resolved when Tariko's true mother shifted her to her cabin in Butodutogasuto," Kaeru replied before a slight smirk crossed his face. "I suspect that your sister sincerely seeks Tariko out as her future life-mate."

As Margo turned a deep cherry on hearing that, Nora giggled. "Well, I certainly won't object. I'm sure dear Sakuya and her delightful sisters won't either!"

"NORA! KAERU!" Margo screamed out. "C'MON!"

Nora laughed as Kaeru shook his head before he perked. "Forgive me, Nora. Naromo wishes to engage in what you address as a 'pillow scene' with me."

That made the adopted Southern belle hum. "Well, far be it from me to interrupt such a scene, my friend. You have a pleasant day."

"Until we speak again."

The link was cut as Nora moved to pull out cups from the cupboard before she began to prepare the sencha. "Yes, that was your lost son, Miss Yamaguchi. Whose TRUE parents saw you be abusive to your DAUGHTER after Kaeru was healed and they moved to return him to your custody. They had no choice but to conclude you were NOT FIT to be a parent to so many children. A pity they never took Tariko away from you. You have wished for it well nearly THREE THOUSAND times since Tariko fled this world eleven years ago to be with her REAL mother. She kept count, by the way."

As Kinshō paled again, the Living Dynamo gazed over her shoulder. "Now, if you DID accept what happened to Tariko and DID accept her as your DAUGHTER, let me introduce you to your..."
potential DAUGHTER-IN-LAW!"

A silent gulp escaped the housewife as Nora's eyes began to glow. "As she just claimed before Kaeru called in, she is the slayer of that heretical mass murderer who betrayed the spirit of his faith and brought misery to millions worldwide. May I present my dear twin sister, Margo Elaine Chapelle...

"...or as you would call her, Doctor Death!"

As Kinshō silently wailed on hearing THAT name, Margo smirked. "Okay, time to talk...or time to DIE! Your choice, bitch!" she then growled hopefully.

As Nora calmly sipped her tea, Margo's cackle filled the house...

To Be Continued...

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WRITER'S NOTES

Translation list: Drachentöter — Dragon Slayer; Was zur Hölle ist das? — What the hell is this?; Rheinübung — Rhine Exercise; Ruoloso — Bush wolf; Sturmbannführer — Assault Unit Leader, the Schutzstaffel (literally "Protection Squadrons", short-formed SS) officer rank equivalent of an Army major; Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei — National Socialist German Worker's Party, the official name of the Nazi Party that ruled Germany from 1933-45; Totenkopf — Literally "death's head", this is the term for the skull-and-crossbones insignia used by the SS; Hakenkreuz — Literally "hooked cross", this was the right-turning swastika symbol used by the Nazis; Ein wahrer Untermensch — A true subhuman; Nesu Bamgam mu R'betu Batae Erba — Behold, the Judgment of the Children of the Healer of Destruction; Bamgam giro — Literally "to be judged" but meaning "It is judged" in this case; Genkan — The entranceway of a house where people remove their outdoor shoes; Daishi'cha — Great birth mother; Butodutogasuto — The northern polar continent on Yiziba.

The shipgirls introduced here:

Captain Chloc Zitzewitz USN (United States Ship Gambier Bay [CVE-73])
CAPT Elaine Mitscher USN (United States Ship White Plains [CVE-66])
Lieutenant Commander Brooke Roberts USN (United States Ship Samuel B. Roberts [DDE-413])

And yes, both USS Gambier Bay (Chloc Zitzewitz) and USS Samuel B. Roberts (Brooke Roberts) resemble their Kantai Collection interpretations.

Yes, Coya Gutierrez (née Coya Yupanqui) is the Inca mummy girl from the episode of Buffy The Vampire Slayer of the same name (season two, episode #4). Her birth name and current name are my invention. Her Terran battle name, Pacha Kamaq, is taken from an ancient Inca creator god similar to the Judaeo-Christian god, said to have made the first man and woman that were the ancestors of the latter Inca civilization. Pacha Kamaq was worshipped in his namesake city in Peru from its first settlement before the time of Christ to the time of the Spanish invasions in the Sixteenth Century.

The family names of Angel (Liam O'Connor) and Drusilla (Drusilla Keeble) are my creation.
Theresa Klusmeyer first appeared in the fifteenth episode of the second season of BTVS, "Phases". The part of that storyline involving Theresa would have gone much differently given what is about to be revealed in this story.

The fight between Angelus, his sire Darla and Abraham Lincoln is first mentioned in Magic and Canada and better described in The Lighthouse Beacon of Freedom.

Enyos Kalderash first appeared in the thirteenth episode of the second season of BTVS, "Surprise". The events surrounding the destruction of the Judge as noted above (which happens in the following episode of the series, "Innocence") went down about a month before the events of the Yatsura movie Only You in the timeline of this story (early March of 2012).

Mizunokōji Asuka first appeared in the Yatsura manga storyline "That Mizunokōji Girl" (manga chapters #224-227); in the timeline of this story, the encounter between Asuka and the people of Tomobiki happened in late March of 2012, just before the start of second year for Tariko Katabarbe et al. Asuka began attending the Keppeki Girl's Junior High School in the manga storyline "Fortress of Fastidiousness" (manga chapters #338-340). In the universe of this story, Asuka would begin attending Keppeki in May of 2012 even if the "physical" that was depicted in "Fortress of Fastidiousness" occurred at the end of October as Redet Ten noted in his diary entry in Part 2.

Soban first appeared in the storyline "Get Something On Your Chest" (manga chapters #184-185).

Yumoa Reigi first appeared in The Senior Year story "Sakura's Class Reunion". Moroboshi Kaeru and his girlfriend Naromo first appeared in "My Darlings United".
The Day After: Nerima

Chapter Summary

Ayumu turns day into night, Akane finally leaves the family home for the last time, Nagisa and Rumiko meet Asuka's boyfriend and Asuka's mother gets bombed by a certain flugzeugträger...

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Nerima, Hikarigaoka Park (two kilometres east-northeast of the Tendō dōjō), two hours before lunch...

"Ah! Negako-chan! O-ha!"

Hearing that cheerful call from the living celestial goddess in mortal form, the twenty-something woman with the shaggy dark brown hair and the almost black eyes dressed in a plain black martial arts gi with matching pleated hakama trousers, the black belt tied around her waist bearing the simple kanji 地 in gold at the ends turned to watch as Kasuga Ayumu came up to join her. "Greetings, Ayumu. You are well?" she asked in her normal metered and toneless voice.

The Infinite One nodded as she sat down at the bench beside the Steward of the Moroboshi Clan, personal assassin to the Heavenly Sovereign and the grandmaster of the clan's in-house martial art, Saikō Jinseijutsu-ryū. Instantly, a flock of birds moved to land on the Wakayama native's head and shoulders, making her blush. "Hey, guys! Stop that!" she pleaded even if she didn't shift her body around to shake them off while people looking her way all gasped at such a sight.

As cell phones were pulled out to get pictures made and transmitted onto social media chats, Negako sipped the can of ice tea she acquired at a vending machine. "Tariko's plans to remove the aliens from Earth proceeded well," the ninjutsu grandmaster and Earth's first true artificial intelligence — who, in a way, was an older adopted sister of the Trickster of the Show and her cloned siblings as Negako's own DNA was modelled on Tariko's after the latter's transformation in the wake of her moving to Yiziba — mused as children came close to gaze upon the birds resting on the two older women's shoulders and heads. "Do not alarm them," Negako said with a touch of ki in her voice. "They will be frightened."

The children tensed at that warning, then they nodded as they moved to sit down close by, some drawing out snacks. As Negako and Ayumu watched, a couple of the more adventurous birds flapped over to land on the children's heads to get at what was being offered, making all of them squeal in delight. As Ayumu giggled on seeing that, Negako shook her head before her eyebrow arched. "Dean."

Silence.
More silence.

Still more silence.

Then...

"You've NEVER called me that before, Negako."

Hearing that voice with its flat Canadian accent, the children looked over...

...then they gasped on seeing the amused-looking twenty-something Western woman there with the military short-cut dark brown hair and the sky blue eyes approach them, she now dressed in a mixture of Canadian Army temporal woodland CADPAT trousers with an olive green Royal Canadian Air Force pilot's jacket, that over a buff gold T-shirt, under which was tucked a pulsing three-layer mesonium jewel mounted on an intricate necklace wrapped around her neck. On the Velcro patch on her left upper arm below the national flag was the red arrowhead formation insignia of the Canadian Special Operations Forces Command. On the right arm's patch was a low-visibility version of the badge of her home regiment, the 10th Saskatchewan Cavalry Regiment of Canada (Air). Perched on her head was a buff gold beret — the standard headdress colour of her recently-restored corps of service, the Royal Canadian Corps of Air Cavalry — bearing the hat badge of a general officer in the Canadian Armed Forces, a variation of that service's heraldic crest with a wreath of gold maple leaves in lieu of red; this matched the fact that on her epaulettes, there were the three gold maple leaves in a pyramid formation below the crown over crossed sword-and-baton of a lieutenant general in the Canadian Army. Since she was visiting Japan, the Dominion's oldest publicly known citizen didn't have her gun belt with her Clarkson M34 .44 Special revolvers, much less the pure neutronium straight-edged taiken-like blade that had come hand in hand with her Power Jewel, the oldest surviving alien artifact on Earth.

"Raeburn-shihan!" one girl gushed.

As the children cheered while moving to flock around the leader of the War Hawks, the hint of a wry smile crossed Negako's face. "A slight influence of the power of the Seeker's Forge when Ayumu here brought my essence to Yiziba after my would-be host relocated there thanks to her mother's verbal abuse. Much that I was able to resist seeking out a Named Gift after being given this body, it appears that the background mesonium radiation in Yiziba's environment allowed some of Tariko's and Ayumu's vocal mannerisms to fuse with me. Besides, 'Deannette' is hardly a proper woman's name."

A laugh escaped Dean Raeburn as she sat beside her sister grandmaster. Thanks to what happened on her seventieth birthday in 1937 when Negako's effective creator was killed by metahuman agents of the Black Dragon Society, the native of Queenston near Niagara Falls had been declared the senior teacher of the Tensei-ryū, one of the deadliest martial arts forms ever created; Negako's own art was seen as a daughter school of the Tensei-ryū even if Saikō Jinseijutsu-ryū had developed on a separate track than the "mother art". "How is the kid, anyway? Where is she? I haven't sensed her since late last night."

"She teleported to Uru to look in on her 'wife'," Negako reported. "Much that Tariko does not have passionate feelings for Lum, she — and Ataru and Hiromi, of course — see her as their one true friend during the time they were 'trapped' in the town between September of last year and April this year."

"I just wish I had sensed something sooner," Ayumu lamented.

"Do not blame yourself for what happened, Ayumu," Negako said as nearby adults took pictures of
Canada's most famous soldier while Dean reached into her jacket pocket to pull out some candy to pass on to the children. "Margo is currently interrogating Kinshō concerning the party ultimately responsible for this. As Stephen Harper ordered Dean and her friends to be on immediate recall standby in case Tariko lost the Tag Race last October, there would have been no issues."

"Yeah! With the time bomb of Coyote inside the kid's head, anyone trying to lynch her would wind up being lynched themselves," Dean mused.

"What do you mean, Onē-chan? It was Moroboshi Ataru who won the Tag Race!"

That was one curious girl. "You are correct and incorrect, Keiko," Negako said, making the girl gasp on realizing the ninjutsu grandmaster had guessed out her name. "The man who was involved in that competition with Redet Lum was born as Moroboshi Ataru. Eleven years ago on his birthday, he relocated to the planet Yiziba, where Dean's Power Jewel was forged three billion years ago by the First Race." She indicated the glowing jewel over the suprasternal notch of Dean's neck. "There, he was adopted by a far more caring person than his birth mother, Yamaguchi Kinshō. However, due to an accident in the adopting, Ataru was made to physically become a girl." As the people within hearing range gasped at that revelation, Negako added, "Thus, Moroboshi Ataru became Tariko Katabarbe...or 'Moroboshi Tariko' here on Earth. She matured as a woman until she was trapped by unknown persons last September, no doubt in preparation to confront Lum. Tariko was magically reverted into her birth form, becoming Ataru again. That state of affairs remained until April and the encounter with Elle de Rosenbach, when Ayumu here rescued Tariko and helped revert her to the way she wished to be."

"However, thanks to that bomb that was buried in the Tomobiki Ginza, Tariko had to do an Operation: Fortitude on the aliens to make sure they never learned there were metahumans on the planet like what Tariko and Ayumu are." Here, Dean waved to Ayumu as the latter allowed her civilian clothes to morph into her battlesuit as the Goddess Who Walks Among Men. As people gasped on seeing such a display of power, the Canadian warrior added, "That lasted until yesterday morning when they finally got rid of the bomb, then the aliens were finally sent back to their home planets. Even better, a good friend of Tariko's now in California made sure we don't have to deal with them again."

The children cheered as people with cell phones began madly texting away to send information out to friends and over social media websites to relay this incredible tale around the world. "What can you do, Onē-chan?" a boy asked as he gazed on Ayumu. "You're friends with Mihama Chiyo-onēchan, right?"

"Hai!" Ayumu said. "Watch this!"

She snapped her fingers...

...then people gasped as the bright day overhead turned instantly to night!

"KID!" Dean snapped.

Ayumu giggled as she snapped her fingers again...

...turning everything back to normal. "That's some trick!" a teenage boy mused from nearby as people began taking photos of the Infinite One while relaying news of what just happened as people's phones beeped away to indicate questions flying across the Internet and elsewhere.

As the leader of Canada's first team of metahumans moaned at such an undisciplined show of Ayumu's cosmic-level powers, a PAA then chimed off. Ayumu pulled it out of her belt, then she
tapped the crystal on it as people gasped on seeing that. "O-ha!" she called out.

"ŌSAKA-SAN! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?! YOU DON'T DO SOMETHING LIKE TURN DAY INTO NIGHT LIKE THAT AROUND THE WORLD! HOW COULD YOU BE SO SILLY?!"

"ŌSAKA! WHERE THE HELL ARE YOU, YOU NARCOLEPTIC BONKURA?! WHAT'S GOING ON?!"

"AYUMU-CHAN! WHAT THE HECK, GIRL?! YOU NEARLY FRIGHTENED ALL THE SHIPGIRLS DOWN HERE TO DEATH! WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING?!!"

"AYUMU! I WAS TRYING TO DO A CELESTIAL MEASUREMENT! DO YOU MIND?!!"

"Miss Kasuga! Would you PLEASE not do that in the future?!"

As the mass chorus of voices shouting at the Infinite One over the PAA links from around the world, Dean winked at the kids. "As you see, kids, she's under control!"

People blinked in confusion on hearing the grandmaster of the Tensei-ryū make that comment, then many of them laughed as Ayumu tried not to cry...

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Near the Tendō dōjō, a half-hour later...

"Honesty! I was just trying to show the kids my powers!"

The Infinite One's companions blinked, then exchanged knowing looks.

KK-KLONK!

"Ah! Nandeyanen...?!!"

Both grandmasters sighed as they stared at Kasuga Ayumu, who was now rubbing the back of her head after Dean Raeburn and Moroboshi Negako slapped her there. They ignored the stream of curious onlookers who had followed them from Hikarigaoka Park in the wake of the "flash of night" as such was now being called over social media. As pictures were taken of the famous Canadian metahuman warrior, the silent assassin of the Imperial Throne and the Infinite One by people who trailed them — though none got close enough to pester them with questions — they turned down the street towards the gate leading into Nerima's most infamous residence. "There were other ways you could have demonstrated your powers while making your point to those who were curious, Ayumu," Negako stated.

Ayumu moaned...

...then everyone perked on seeing that there were members of both the local fire brigade and the local police box now standing guard before the open gates of the Tendō home. The smell of burnt wood assaulted their noses, which made Dean blink. "What the hell's going on here?" she wondered.

"It appears Sōun's attempt at suppressing Akane's Gift has backfired on he and his family grievously," Negako stated as she quickened her pace, moving through the crowds to get to the police line.
A riot trooper noticed her, then moved to block her. "Please stay back. This is a crime scene now."

Negako pulled out her wallet to display a special identification card. Seeing that, the trooper's eyes went wide, then he saluted her. "Hai, Moroboshi-sama! You may pass!" he declared.

"Dean and Ayumu are with me," Negako announced as another trooper lifted the tape to let her pass.

On hearing the former woman's given name, all the crowd gasped before they gazed on the last true heir of the Immortal Master. As Dean gave them a reassuring smile, the troopers nodded as they snapped to attention, saluting her. Returning that with her own salute, Dean ducked under the tape as Ayumu simply floated over it, making the crowd gasp in shock before one man called out, "Look! She can fly! She's just like Akane-chan and her girlfriend! She's a metahuman!"

People whooped in delight as Ayumu chuckled in embarrassment before she followed the older women into the grounds of the Tendō home, stopping to see that the dōjō building and a good portion of the main house were now wreckage thanks to some sort of explosion with the blast point at where the kamidana would have been in the training hall. As the older people moved to examine the scene more closely while the inspector in charge came over to brief them, the Goddess Who Walks Among Men looked right to see four people frozen in solid ice near the koi pond where Hayashi Kanami had trained almost daily with her now-estranged father Saotome Genma. Sure enough, one of the people trapped in the ice was Genma; the other three were his wife Nodoka, Tendō Akane's father Sōun and Happōsai himself. Seated nearly with a dazed look on her face was Akane's elder sister Nabiki, whose face was twisting in a flowing contortion of looks while a queer chorus of sounds escaped her lips.

"Akane-san! Do you need to have all this in your closet packed, too?"

"Hai!"

Hearing the voices of the Hammer of Passion and the first warship kami to be reborn as a shipgirl back during the middle of March, Ayumu walked over to step through the genkan into the main living room...which clearly had borne the brunt of the explosion from the direction of the dōjō; the kitchen itself had been completely obliterated in the blast, with fragments of various pieces of furniture embedded in the walls and scattered all over the back yard. Moving to head upstairs, she tensed on hearing the floorboards creak ominously. A detective examining the scene looked over. "If you can fly, go up that way, Ojō-sama. Most of the house has to be condemned because of the blast."

Ayumu nodded, then she floated to the second floor, walking over to peek into the open door of Akane's bedroom. There, the youngest daughter of Tendō Sōun was busy getting all her clothes taken out of her drawers and placed inside one of several chests — obviously charmed by Hirosaki Chikage to allow all sorts of things to be stored there without issues of volume, plus make them incredibly light even for normal people to carry — as the objects of a whole life spent in this house were removed from this room for the final time. Helping her was Fukushima Fujiko, currently in the white-and-dark blue battlesuit marking her as the Blizzard of Death, Roerike ("Fubuki"). "O-ha!" Ayumu called out.

Both girls gasped on hearing the Infinite One call out, then Akane sighed. "Oh, good! Can you just send all the heavy furniture over to Welcome House, Ayumu-chan? The sooner I'm out of this place and living somewhere SANE, the better! They're gonna tear it down soon!"

"Sure."

With a snap of the fingers, the bed, dresser, nightstand and work desk vanished. "We're almost done,
Akane-san," Fujiko announced, noting there were just some small items left to put into the chests.

"Good," Akane breathed out.

"What happened?" Ayumu asked.

A disgusted snort escaped the "heiress" of the Tendō-ryū. "Turns out that my idiot father got so upset at my getting Gifted back in 2003 that he used an object the old lech stole from Shānpú's tribe to block my using the Gift and the memories I got from my past-selves." As Ayumu gasped in horror on hearing that, Akane smirked. "When Hinako-chan used her power to get rid of that block, the thing overloaded with ki and detonated, wrecking the dōjō and most of the house." She frowned. "Kasumi was caught in the explosion; she's at Nerima General Hospital right now. The others survived..." She shook her head. "Proving yet again that the real idiots don't get sick or hurt whenever something weird happens."

"So home come your dad and the others are on ice?" the Infinite One asked.

"I had Fujiko-chan put them there," Akane said as she thumbed her companion as she moved to close one of the trunks. "Soon as I heard what happened, I came here to get all my stuff out. Once he saw me in my battlesuit, Baka Tō-san tried to get the old lech to help him suppress my powers again. Fujiko-chan froze them in place and dumped them outside. Once Genma and Nodoka tried to convince me to find Kanami and drag her back here, they joined the other idiots out on the lawn."

"What about your sister?"

A disgusted snort escaped the Hammer of Passion. "She can take care of herself. If she doesn't care at all about her family, why should I care for her?" she sneered.

Hearing that, Ayumu sighed. Like other Terran-born Yizibajohei living in Japan, she had got the whole sordid story about the "Nerima Wrecking Crew" as soon as the Week of Hell went down and Hayashi Kanami left Japan to join the Scooby Gang in Sunnydale. Tendō Nabiki's website about the martial artists of Nerima and their relatives had come quite handy in filling in the gory details, especially about the mad quest to "unite the schools" as launched by Akane's father and his old training partner after Happōsai was imprisoned in a mountain cave over a decade before. However, since the grandmaster of Musabetsu Kakutō-ryū was under a set of restrictions when it came to developing his art, the "separate schools" story was a lie. Neither Tendō Sōun nor the former Hayashi Genna had gone to the home dōjō of the Tensei-ryū to seek out certification from the trainers there as had been stipulated in Happōsai's own mastery papers issued nearly a century before by the Immortal Master; that had been discovered by Kanami and her sister Kikuko shortly after the Hayashi siblings left Japan for the final time.

However, getting the fathers whose mad desire to see their children married had driven a lot of the chaos in Nerima for the last year to see that...!

A squealing noise then echoed from outside, making Akane stop before a bright battle aura flared around her, she looking outside. "Hibiki...!"

Hearing that name, Fujiko and Ayumu shared a knowing look...

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Outside...

"Hey! Stop that pig! That's Hibiki Ryōga!"
"Keep him from releasing the prisoners, men!"

"You hold still, you perverted lecher!"

Hearing the voices of the obviously corrupt police that were moving to bring misery to Tendō Akane's family after all they had been made to suffer because of that dishonourable Saotome Ranma — whom he REFUSED to believe had WILLINGLY allowed himself to become a GIRL of all things! — the transformed Hibiki Ryōga quickly dodged grasping hands to get closer to the ice blocks holding down Akane's father and the others so he could free them with the application of the Bakusai Tenketsu strike. Seeing this, Tendō Sōun — all of the prisoners had been allowed to keep their heads above the ice so they could breathe — laughed as relieved tears fell down his face. "That's it, Ryōga-kun! Quickly! Free us all and we can turn Akane back to normal, then unite the schools at...!"

**KK-KRANG!**

A pained squawk escaped P-chan after a war hammer was smashed down on his back from a smirking Akane, who was now floating a metre over the ground. As the riot police stopped before they all whooped in delight on seeing that Nerima's newest metahuman had prevented a potential prisoner outbreak, the Hammer of Passion calmly pulled back her weapon, then floated to the ground before walking over, deliberately stepping on the badly wounded piglet before she approached the sergeant in charge of the riot squad inside the compound. "Everyone okay?"

"We're fine, Tendō-san! Thank you so much!" He nodded in contempt at the squealing transformed wanderer. "What are your plans for him? Our own prisons won't be able to stop that lech."

That made Akane blink as Sōun began to sob on noting that his daughter was still caught in that "foolish girl's delusions" about being some mystery man; the other three prisoners were just too dazed after Akane beat them down after her arrival to say a thing. "Well, we could dump the idiot into the Dark Gaol and see his life force sucked off into the Great Crystal." She then hummed for a moment as she considered that before she shook her head. "Still, there's no way I'd want to pass on the jerk's curses on anyone back home on Yiziba." She shrugged. "Oh, well, there are black holes...!"

The policemen all laughed as Sōun goggled in horror on hearing such a dark suggestion concerning his would-be son-in-law's chief rival. Before coming to this place, all the officers present had been briefed by agents of the Interior Ministry in the know about the Yizibajohei version of wrestling kayfabe, where even the kindest "faces" on that planet would do things that would make them seem like selfish "heels" as a psychological ploy to see the fight scene won with ease. Given that Tendō Akane had the reputation of being a very sweet and kind girl despite her anger issues — which had been effectively controlled by Hayashi Kanami when she had been living here — seeing her act as if she just got a brain transplant with her older sister Nabiki would rattle anyone. While many of the crowd now watching this over the fence-line began to cheer at the fact that one of the more dangerous of the Nerima Wrecking Crew had been put down — in the wake of Akane's delayed Gifting, the news of Hibiki Ryōga and his curse had been spread like wildfire across the ward to make sure anyone sympathetic to the man wouldn't come to his aid — she then looked over her shoulder. "We done?!"

"All packed up, Akane-san!" Fukushima Fujiko called out from inside her bedroom.

"Ayumu-chan, can you teleport it all off?!"

"Sure, Akane-chan!"
Sōun screamed out, "**NO! I FORBID THIS...!**"

A flash of energy echoed through the windows, then Fujiko calmly flew through the open portal to come down on the ground, earning her a wild cheer from the crowd seeing this. Akane held out her arm, allowing the first of her class of destroyers to float into an embrace, then they went to "kissing stations"...which is what is the shipgirls as a whole called a public nookie scene.

As many people hooted in delight on seeing that Akane had obviously found someone who really did care for her, Sōun gaped at the sight before he began to bawl.

"**WHAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH! MY DAUGHTER'S A LESBIAN! SHE LOVES ANOTHER WOMAN! NOW THE SCHOOLS WILL NEVER...!**"

Fujiko gestured with her hand to use an ice clamp to shut the man's mouth up. By then, Saotome Genma and Happōsai had recovered enough from nearly having their skulls caved in by a rampaging Akane over an hour before. Seeing the very sapphic scene nearby, the grandmaster of Musabetsu Kakutō-ryū blinked before he cackled. "Hah! I knew the stupid girl was a dyke! She's no student of the school, you stupid boy!" he snarled as he glared at Sōun...before he blinked on seeing the man had been rendered totally mute by a face mask of ice. "Sōun! Stop lazing about and free your master now!"

The younger man was too out of it to notice his master's raging while Akane and Fujiko continued to kiss away. At that moment, the sound of a stick bouncing off rock made people look over as a diminutive form in classical robes dropped down out of the sky. "Ah! Elder Kělún!" the inspector in charge of the scene called out as Nǚ Kělún came to a rest close to the koi pond, she gazing in amusement at her would-be husband's predicament. "Please don't disturb the crime scene."

The village elder nodded. "I will do no such thing. Seeing young Akane in the uniform of one of the Children of the Forge of the First Race explains a lot. I'm curious about why YOU'RE here, Dean."

A chuckle escaped the Canadian warrior as she came over, leaning down to hug her old friend before she stepped back, pointing to the badge on her beret. "Something that Tennō asked me to look in on when I got the chance to get away from keeping watch over the successors to the Devil's Brigade, Kělún. Not to mention doing a favour for Indy." Here, she nodded towards Nodoka.

Kělún looked over, then her eyes widened. "**A relative?!**" she hissed.

"His granddaughter. And she and her family **rejected** it since he knocked up her grandmother before the war," Dean Raeburn answered as she indicated the sword Saotome Nodoka carried with her all the time, which was frozen in the block of ice Fujiko entombed her in. "He got that sword for her family."

That made the Nǚjíezú elder blink before she shook her head. "No wonder Junior was so despondent after the war! I assume that all the interesting things he's encountered over the years ended up cursing that blade to affect the members of Nodoka's family as punishment for their hurting him like that."

"Indeed they did, Kělún."

Both turned as Moroboshi Negako came over to join them, a slightly amused smile on her face. Kělún scanned the approaching grandmaster with her own ki sight, then she cackled. "To see the Promise of Bunka-gonen fulfilled THIS way! How did this happen to you, Negako?!"

"I helped her, Hūbā-chan!"
Everyone turned to see Kasuga Ayumu lean out the window of Akane's empty room before she teleported herself down to join them. As her eyes widened in shock on sensing the raw galactic aura of energy burning in this unusually perceptive woman's body, Kēlún could only laugh in admiration. "Oh, you disguised yourself too well, child!" she declared. "What happened?!"

"After Tariko-chan I met and I went to Yiziba to be Gifted, I learned that Negako-chan's last host had tried to transfer her soul into Tariko-chan's head. I got her out of her last host, then put her into a battle doll!" Ayumu then grinned. "You should have seen what happened next, Hiibā-chan! Negako-chan shocked EVERYONE on Yiziba when she used the background meson radiation to make herself fully organic before she went back to Earth. Yeah, they call her 'Ledo Kimr'be' over there instead of her given name like she likes, but she doesn't have much in the way of powers beyond what she got from all the knowledge that went into making her as Imperial Special Agent #49 and all that!"

As the crowds gasped on realizing that the woman in the black gi and hakama was the one responsible for stopping a metahuman civil war when Shōwa Tennō surrendered to the Allies in 1945, Happōsai's head snapped over before a smile crossed his face. "Um, Negako-chan...would you mind, please...?"

"No."

That made the aged grandmaster jolt before crocodile tears flowed. "But..."

"Dean wishes to address you. Your business is with her, not me."

That made him pale as the woman with the beret looked over. "Ah...hiya, Dean...!"

A devilish smirk crossed the Canadian's face. "Hey, Happy. Cold, aren't you?"

An embarrassed cackle answered her. "I could use a chance to warm up..."

"Tough! I survived the winters on the Prairies for ten years...and I was in way worse shape back then than you are now! Suffer!" Dean snapped, making Happōsai jolt on realizing that the ONE person in the world who had any real sort of power over him wasn't pleased at the moment. "Did we forget something over the last few years, by any chance? Especially when it comes to THIS?!" Here, a book appeared in the Canadian's hand as she opened it to show him a particular page.

Gazing at it, Happōsai then paled. "Uh...haven't had the time..."

"Oh, really?" she trilled. "You know the obligation you had when Papa-sensei gave you your mastery back in '23, dumbass! All OFFICIAL students of Musabetsu Kakutō-ryū must be registered with US before they can go forth to teach others! I don't see either Hayashi Genma or Tendō Sōun on this list, so how the HELL can either of them go forth and claim themselves as MASTERS of your art when they were NEVER registered as your STUDENTS?!!" She shook her head. "Happy, this goes WAY beyond mere 'not having the time' to get to Watari-shima to have them registered!

"You want to know the SURPRISE I felt when a nice kid came to my office in Ottawa back in June claiming that you had declared her your student...when she wanted nothing more than to RENOUNCE all affiliation with you?!!" she then snarled, making Akane and Fujiko break off from their kissing to stare her way. "Naturally, I went to Watari-shima to ask Michiba Hatatsu what was going on! You wouldn't BELIEVE the story he landed on me! Two people who were NEVER certified to TEACH Musabetsu Kakutō-ryū — not to mention their NEVER being certified as STUDENTS of that art! — declaring themselves as MASTERS of separate schools trying to 'unite' them in some sort of marriage...AFTER this poor kid wound up CURSED at Zhòuquán-xiāng of
all places!" Dean then smirked as she glared at Genma. "Thanks ultimately to YOUR stupidity, Mister Hayashi! Chinese and Japanese are written with the same script in many places; the meanings are almost all the same! How the HELL could you not understand that place was CURSED when you dragged your kid into it?!"

"Kanami's claims of a mental change because of Zhòuquán-xiāng are true?"

Dean gazed on Kèlún before she nodded. "Yes. If you don't change anytime after an hour from the moment you're cursed, the soul echo of the being that drowned in the spring that was violated fully intertwines itself into the victim's mind. Kanami was mentally a girl the instant she ran into the little porker Akane here just smashed down after he was foolish enough to follow her into that valley. That's where your blood-sibling law ultimately comes from, Kèlún...but since Kanami is now Mustang, she's a little hesitant on sharing her blood with your great-granddaughter."

The Nǖjiézú elder's eyes widened on hearing THAT battle name. "That makes a load of sense. I assume that in this incarnation, Mustang must be a girl."

"Exactly. But the blood relation with Indy is enough to let your great-granddaughter off the hook."

"I can get a friend to take the curse away from her, too, Hiibā-chan," Ayumu then offered. "She's in Tomobiki right now beating up Ataru-kun's stupid mother."

Hearing that offer from the Infinite One, Kèlún nodded. "You are gracious, child. Indeed, given today's revelations, I'm sure that Shānpú will be more than relieved to finally leave this place and return home. Brokenhearted as she is about what befell her 'husband', Kanami becoming Yizibajōhei negates any claim of marriage on her by Shān. Since she's Junior's great-granddaughter, the original Kiss of Death can be seen as unnecessary as well as long as Kanami doesn't wish to press anything. As long as Kanami doesn't spread our teachings willy-nilly all over the place where she is now..."

"He is...NOT MY GRANDFATHER...!"

"QUIET!" Dean barked with enough power to upend the ice cube holding Nodoka in place, sending her head smashing on a rock as the ice shattered, making her collapse in a bleeding heap on the ground.

"Kanami-san will be alright, Elder," Fujiko declared, making the Nǖjiézú elder gaze her way, her eyes then widening on sensing the power this young one had. "She's now with the Slayers over the Hellmouth now helping things stay calm there. She also has a very nice girlfriend as well..."

"I HAVE A SON...!" Genma bellowed.

"QUIET!" Dean snapped again, knocking over the ice cube holding Genma in place, nearly shattering his skull on another rock nearby. "Just for that, I'll make sure you never practice the martial arts again...!"

Sōun's and Happōsai's eyes widened as the Canadian walked over to flip the unconscious Genma onto his stomach, then she applied her fingers to several points on his shoulders and the back of his head. "The Shijutsu-soku," Kèlún breathed out as many of the people quieted down to hear the Nǖjiézú elder's pronouncement. "The ultimate punishment of the Immortal Master to those who would defy his decrees or the teachings of his school. Far worse than the Ultimate Weakness Moxibustion that Happy put on Kanami back in March. There, Kanami still had the ability to learn martial arts to overcome Happy and regain her strength. Here..." She shook her head, a complete lack of pity in her eyes. "The fool male will FORGET all he knows and NEVER be able to reteach himself any martial skill..." She closed her eyes. "In effect, he is no different than anyone struck..."
down with a variation of Alzheimer's. Thus giving those who were defrauded by this fool enough of a chance to see proper restitution."

"A befitting fate for his kind," Akane sneered out.

Hearing that, Sōun's eyes shot out of his head, then in a burst of ki, he spat away the ice block over his mouth. "**TENDŌ AKANE! WHAT ARE YOU DOING STANDING THERE, YOU LAZY GIRL?! GO AND CHALLENGE THE GAIJIN AND HAVE SAOTOME-KUN RESTORED TO NORMAL!**"

"No."

Silence.

More silence.

Still more silence.

Then...

"**YOU WILL DO AS I SAY! I AM YOUR FATHER!**"

"I have no father."

The angry aura that had bloomed from Sōun as he tried to force his daughter to submit to his will then vanished as his eyes went as wide as saucers on hearing that final declaration. As he shook his head in denial, Akane sneered at him. "You have consistently and constantly LIED to me about Hibiki and his curse, as did your elder and younger daughter! In the face of that, why in the name of the First Ones should I even BEGIN to acknowledge we are of the same blood?! You sat there, pretending that your warped dreams would come true only if you wished it without realizing that more and more people in this town were learning how much you never cared about my **honour**! It's no WONDER that all the boys went along with what Kanami made them see back in May after she finally decided she'd had enough of your HYPOCRISY and LEFT this place! In a weird sense of the term, Kunō-sempai and all the boys from the Horde cared MORE for me than my own FAMILY supposedly did!" As Sōun squeaked in helpless protest, Akane spat into his face. "As far as I'm concerned, you'll all DEAD to me, Tendō Sōun! And you can't do a thing about it since I was Gifted and EMANCIPATED because of my Gifting! And I REFUSE to bow to this lazy old troll anymore!" She nodded contemptuously towards Happōsai before she gazed at Ayumu. "Ayumu-chan, could you find all the things this lech stole from Hiiobā-san's tribe and send it back to them, please? He doesn't deserve them at all!" she then asked.

"Hai, hai..." the Infinite One said as she raised her fingers.

"**NO! DON'T YOU DARE! THEY'RE MINE...!**"

In an explosion of ki, Happōsai freed himself, then lunged at Ayumu...

...before Fujiko snared him by the forehead.

A second later, a geyser of blazing ki exploded into the sky over Nerima, that accompanied by Happōsai's mortal scream of agony!

As dust was instantly whipped up all over the place by that burst of power to blind people, Ayumu snapped her fingers to clear the air and do as Akane just asked. People blinked before they looked
over to see a burnt husk of an elderly man held in mid-air by the Death Blizzard's hand before a final rasp of breath escaped him, his body dropping to the ground to literally shatter into dust on impact. Cries of shock and disbelief escaped the crowd seeing this as the inspector winced before he turned to stare hopefully at Negako. "Um, Moroboshi-sama, what just happened here...?"

"Quite simple," the grandmaster of Saikō Jinseijutsu-ryū calmly declared. "Fujiko here is the actual living kami of the destroyer Fubuki, first of her class, launched at Maizuru on the fifteenth of November in 1927 and sunk in the Battle of Cape Esperance near Guadalcanal on the eleventh of October in 1942." As people hearing this all gasped in shock before they gazed on the pretty brown-haired tomboy who was clearly more than just a friend to the Hammer of Passion, Negako added, "Made human with the accidental help of my youngest adopted sister, Saeru Hinako, in the spring when she passed over Fujiko's wreck site while travelling around the world. However, despite her now being a teenage girl in soul and body, she was formed by the dreams, hopes and desires of thousands of MEN — her designers, her builders, her maintainers, her officers, sailors and naval infantrymen — who served on her from the moment her keel was laid until her sinking. Happy suffered from a fatally chronic addition to absorb female ki. In hopes of overpowering Ayumu, he tried to use Fujiko's ki to empower himself...and was killed when he GORGED himself on her ki, which his body simply couldn't handle."

That made Fujiko wince. "Ugh...!"

"ARREST HER!" Sōun then screamed out. "SHE MURDERED THE MASTER!"

"An accidental death," the inspector declared, making Akane's father gasp at being contradicted like that. "You've no right to demand a thing, Tendō-san. Your position as a member of the ward council was stripped because of your LIERS concerning your master and his being the Panty Thief!" As Sōun gargled in disbelief at being called out like that, the senior policeman gazed on Fujiko. "Commander Fukushima, you will need to present evidence when this is brought to the court for review just to observe all the necessary legalities. Is there someone we can contact when we need you to come in?"

"I'd rather say things in private, Inspector. I do not wish my friends harmed by a certain someone who currently resides in this place," Fujiko warned.

Eyes locked on the still-dazed Tendō Nabiki nearby, then the inspector smirked. "More than understandable, Commander," he acknowledged with a nod.

"If you can contact Nexus, she can relay it to me and I can bring her over, Inspector," Akane offered before she straightened herself. "Shihan-sama?"

She bowed to Dean. The Canadian acknowledged that with a nod. "Tendō-dono?"

"As I am clearly not any student of any affiliate of the Tensei-ryū, may I seek out teaching from yourself or your appointed teachers when I feel it is time for me to progress my own journey in the martial arts?"

Dean nodded. "You may indeed, Tendō-dono." She then glared at Akane's father. "In my authority as grandmaster of the Tensei-ryū, I declare that Musabetsu Kakutō-ryū is hereby DEFUNCT as no one is officially registered in practising that art! Someone get that sign, please?!"

"NO...!" Sōun wailed.

"Here ya go, Dean!" Ayumu said with a snap of her fingers. Two martial art dōjō signs appeared in the Canadian's hands, then she crushed them without effort,
making Sōun shriek in agony at seeing the visible marks of his and his friend's dreams shattered before his very eyes. As the crowd around them cheered on seeing that Nerima was now effectively free of the hijinks that had haunted it for over a year, a moaning Nabiki shook her head before she looked around in confusion. "Hey! What the...?! What's going on...?" she demanded.

"THERE'S NO MONEY ON YIZIBA!" Akane and Fujiko screamed together.

A wailing shriek then escaped the middle Tendō daughter as people laughed...

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Tomobiki High School, an hour before lunch...

In the very late fall of 1998, there had been born a girl named Mizunokōji Asuka.

Blessed from birth to possess ki charged physical strength, she had been taken from her father Yūjiro and elder brother Tobimaro to be raised in strict total isolation from all men by her mother Saeko at a remote Buddhist convent in the mountains, thus guaranteeing her spiritual purity to allow her to master such powers so she would be able to succeed Saeko as Matriarch of her clan.

All had gone according to plan until after her fifteenth birthday, when she had been allowed to return to her family's ancestral mansion on the border between Tomobiki and Niiza in hopes of introducing Asuka to her future fiancé, Mendō Shūtarō, thus bringing the long-running feud between their clans to an end.

Sadly, she soon had a very frightening encounter with Moroboshi Ataru.

Since then, Saeko — aided by the Mizunokōji Clan's personal troupe of female security officers, the Kurotenshi — had tried their best to help the now severely androphobic Asuka find a way of mastering her fears so she could properly operate in society as would be expected of a future captain of industry.

Unfortunately, the lecherous monster who had become a rival to Asuka's would-be fiancé the previous fall was just impossible to stop whenever he got into the mood to look up the young sports empire heiress to see if he could get a date from her.

That state of affairs had lasted to this day, even after Asuka had been allowed to attend a posh private school, Keppeki Girl's Junior High, located on the opposite side of Niiza from Tomobiki itself. Within the foreboding ramparts of the "fortress of fastidiousness", it was hoped that Asuka would be able to get the right training to finally overcome her phobia and be a proper lady.

Despite a "physical" launched on the place by the students of Tomobiki High the previous month, Asuka's life had pretty much gone on as planned.

Of course...

...the truth was far more intricate than what people normally believed.

Even someone such as Mizunokōji Saeko.

****

"HE'S YOUR LOVER?!

Asuka blushed on hearing Tsuruya Rumiko's shocked question, then she shyly looked away. "W-w-
well, y-yes, we do in-interface sexually. It's very good physical exercise for me and it helps him maintain his internal functions." As the Careful Planner of the Circle of Thought — joined by her friends from Sweet Valley and Výborg — gaped in shock at such a candid explanation concerning something so intimate from the near-metahuman sports empire heiress, Asuka added, "Since he’s an android, I don't risk a pregnancy and I find it easier to control the phobia Tariko-san unleashed on me at the start of the year when she was hypnotized to act as Ataru-san. His lovers interface with me sexually many times, too."

Silence.

More silence.

Still more silence.

Then...

"Then what the HELL was that last month when we came to do that 'physical' at your school?!" Rumiko asked as Elizabeth Wakefield and Tat’jána Chapáeva shook their heads, the other two of the Circle of Thought wondering if they would EVER understand what went through the heads of people in Tomobiki.

"Well, I still get very scared of men from time to time, Rumiko-san," Asuka said. "Even if I know now that the 'Ataru-san' I've encountered in town since March was actually Tariko-san or Hiromi-san, I still have flashbacks about when we first met at the mansion. Hai, Tomohotoke-kōchōsensei and the staff and my friends at the school help out from time to time, but I'm still not comfortable enough to be out on my own in public. Whenever I'm with Hikaru or Chikao or Konoe on an interface date, I'm alright...unless someone like that monster that tried to chase me down today tries to attack me." She shuddered as she recalled again being nearly overwhelmed by that horrible creature not two hours before just as members of Soban's gang tried to kill Sakō Hikaru before they raced off to get help.

"Asuká Júdzirovna, please describe what an 'interface date' is like?" Tánja then asked. The current incarnation of the Passionate Historian of the Circle of Thought, Kikhodato (the "Philosopher"), was a senior at a girl's private school in her hometown of Výborg near the Finnish border some distance from Russia's old imperial capital. The maternal niece of one of the major crime bosses located in the infamous Thai pirate town of Roanapur, Captain (retired) Sofíja "Balalájka" Pávlova of Hotel Moskvá, Tánja was a tall and slender brunette with grey eyes that had suffered from scorn from peers and elders alike due to her part-Karelian ancestry until she met Tariko Katabarbe sometime after Sweet Valley Summer in 2007 saw Elizabeth Wakefield transformed into the Wise Genius of the Circle of Thought, Daturie (the "Academician"). These days, atop pretending to be a normal high school student and working as a part-time model, Tánja was an under-the-table supporter of Russia's many special military projects that fell under the overall aegis of the International Specialized Warfare Treaty of 1959. "Given what Táriko Ájonovna told me of your mother, she is quite strict when it comes to how you are to be raised. How on Earth do you get away with having sex with an android of all thing, even one who finds it very easy to dress as a girl?"

Here, she gazed on the diagnostic bed nearby, where an unconscious Sakō Hikaru now lay, his skin being rebuilt by a special paste that Elizabeth had provided for him.

Asuka smiled. "Well, given that Okā-sama and the others just wouldn't understand what Hikaru and Chikao and Konoe really are like, I find a way to make sure I'm not bothered by Kinko-san and the others when I go shopping with my friends to meet the boys and have interface dates."

"You use your classmates to help out?" Elizabeth noted, nodding in understanding as she recalled the
several times she had encountered strict parents in Sweet Valley whose actions made their children lash out in whatever way possible to live their lives as they chose. "Do they know about them?"

A shake of the head responded. "No, Elizabeth-san. They don't even realize that Hikaru and Chikao and Konoe are boys," Asuka stated.

That made the three polymath hyper-geniuses blink before they gazed as one at the unconscious android nearby while Rumiko's systems scoured his programming. Save for the more visible laryngeal prominence on his neck and the obvious bulge in his trousers indicating he was sexually male, Hikaru could be easily mistaken as a very tomboyish woman...which, given the example of his own rescuer Shiowatari Nagisa, would make it easy for Hikaru to pass himself off as a girl, thus be not seen as any sort of danger to the rather androphobic staff at Keppeki...to say anything of Asuka's mother herself. "So how do these dates go, anyway?" Tánja asked. "What happened today that caused that creature that Nágisa Sínovna had to deal with to lash out once he noted you and your lover?"

As Elizabeth rolled her eyes at her Russian friend's probing into such an intimate subject and Rumiko shook her head, Asuka smiled. "Well, since I have no school today, I arranged with my friends to meet me at the south gate of the mansion grounds where we would go to the Natural Café; that's where Hikaru, Chikao and Konoe live and work. Once we got there and had breakfast, I knew right away that Hikaru needed to have his intimacy programming balanced, so we went up to his bedroom and interfaced. I had two orgasms as a result." As the members of the Circle of Thought blinked in surprise at such a frank admission, the sports empire heiress added, "After he told me he was stabilized, we went downtown to do some shopping; after all, Okā-sama might get suspicious if I go shopping and actually don't buy something." As Tánja nodded, Asuka added, "After that, we headed back up towards the Café while Chikao and Konoe took my friends out to see a movie. That's when that creature came and tried to date me, with his friends moving to hurt Hikaru. We tried to dodge clear of them when Nagisa-san came and stopped them, but Hikaru was hurt and we had to see Rumiko-san, Tánja-san."

"So what about those androids I took apart, then?"

That was Nagisa herself, who had been seated off to one side, ready to help when the three geniuses needed anything. Outside beyond the gate of the school, elements of the Self-Defence Forces and the Public Security Intelligence Agency were picking through the wreckage that the Steady Guardian of the South had left behind out of two dozen android "toughs" reported to have attended Butsumetsu High School. While there had been times that Nagisa and Rumiko had to go outside to give their statements to the officers of the Public Security Bureau who had been dispatched to oversee the investigation, no one had come forth to ask about Asuka or Hikaru; given the sports empire heiress' known androphobia, the public security authorities knew better than to bother her lest their superiors in government get an irate call from Asuka's mother concerning this issue. Much to Rumiko's surprise, there had been no sign of any of the Kurotenshi since the news of the incident got out into the public media almost two hours ago; given how much people like Makige Kinko doted over Asuka, that they weren't here...!

"Well, they're all Shōzoki, including Hikaru-kun here," Rumiko reported as she rubbed the bridge of her nose. "But given the sheer complexity of Hikaru-kun's programming and systems architecture, he's light years ahead of what's been normally encountered from that planet."

"'Shōzoki'?" Asuka asked.

"An effectively extinct race of reptilian humanoids from a planet about a thousand light-years from Earth, Asuka," Elizabeth explained as she gestured with her hand, pulling up a hologram of the local
galactic map before indicating two icons, marked EARTH and SHŌZORAN respectively. As Asuka nodded, the lawyer's daughter from California added, "Technology-wise, they're as advanced as anything that we or our past-selves could create. You've no doubt noticed how easy it is for Hikaru here to pass as fully human." As the young sports empire heiress nodded again, Elizabeth gazed at her. "Some centuries ago, they underwent what they called the 'Great Conversion', where they found the means by which to transfer their living souls into machine bodies; this was a way to allow a sort of utopia governed by logic to be forced on all the people there. Many of the Shōzoki rebelled against being enslaved to such a thing, then sent out small probes to other planets as a way of keep the free elements of their society alive and away from an entity they call 'Mother', the central computing and control unit of their culture. Earth's been a target of such probes. As to the 'why' those boys were made to attack Hikaru here, we'll find out. But given Hikaru's advanced programming..."

"They could have been scared of him and his lovers, you mean," Tânja mused.

"Or wanted to seek a way to improve their own programming?" Rumiko proposed.

As Asuka then watched in wide-eyed wonder, the three hyper-geniuses then began chatting away in what clearly was Yizibajohei as they tossed around theory after theory concerning today's incident. Noting this, Nagisa then came over to place a warm hand on the younger woman's shoulder. "Here, let's leave the three brainiacs alone while they brainstorm. Knowing them from the stories of their past-selves, this could take hours. You look like you can use a good tea right now."

Asuka nodded as she got up to follow the tea shop maiden out of the clock tower belfry, even as she paused to stare briefly at her lover...

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By the main gate...

"I DEMAND YOU LET ME INTO THIS SCHOOL!"

"I'm sorry, Mizunokōji-sama, but since you have no official business visiting the school, you'll have to wait until Tsuruya-kun is finished with her current project before she can come see you and explain what just happened to your daughter."

"ENOUGH! LOWER THIS WHATEVER IT IS THAT'S BLOCKING MY PATH AND STAND ASIDE!"

Hearing that screamed demand from the woman with the perennial smile frozen on her face by some sort of palsy, Nanase Mariko shook her head. "I have no control over what is happening, Mizunokōji-sama. You just have to wait," the school secretary — who had been called in by the Tōkyō Metropolitan Board of Education when the news of what happened on the street nearby two hours ago got out over the news — declared. "Given the nature of what has been discovered, the needs of the Public Security Intelligence Agency come first." As Mizunokōji Saeko began to shudder while a faint battle aura formed around her and her small troupe of bodyguards readied their own weapons, Nanase smirked. "Tsuruya-kun is legally obliged and has promised Tennō himself that she will be available whenever incidents of a paranormal nature occur. What just nearly befell your daughter is one such incident, so Tsuruya-kun — aided by her friends Wakefield-kun and Chapáeva-kun — will see this incident investigated in a way that THEY decide will proceed, not what you're demanding. Do you wish to DEFY Tennō's wishes?"

Saeko awked on hearing that scornful question by someone who clearly didn't care for her place in
the social pecking order in this town, then she shuddered. "My daughter's safety is the priority here..."

"She is safe!" the school secretary countered. "She is far safer now than she could be with your own assistants given the twisted teachings they've forced down that girl's throat since she left this convent you trapped her in for so long!" As the other woman gasped in outrage on hearing that comment about her clan's sacred traditions, Nanase went for the kill. "Much that poor Moroboshi-kun might have been the one who unleashed that fear of men your daughter has experienced since her return to society, the fact that YOU never prepared her to encounter men — especially with this marriage arrangement with the Mendō family I've heard about — would make YOU ultimately responsible for all the damages your daughter unleashed on this school every time she came here! And dealing with THAT, Mizunokōji-sama, is MY responsibility! And I refuse to let MANIACS like YOU run rampant on the grounds of MY school anymore! Do you know how much all the damage you lunatics cause COSTS in the long term?! NO MORE!" Her own battle aura then appeared around her, making the crowd watching Nanase give the matriarch of Japan's second richest family such a verbal smack-down gasp in awe. "IF I HAVE TO GET MOROBOSHI-KUN TO SEND THOSE SHIP KAMI METAHUMANS LIKE THE ONE WHO PUT MENDŌ-KUN INTO INTENSIVE CARE YESTERDAY TO COME HERE AND CRIPPLE YOU FOR LIFE TO MAKE YOU LEAVE MY SCHOOL ALONE, YOU PALSY-FACED SELFISH FEMINAZI MONSTER, I'LL DO IT WITHOUT HESITATION! NOW WAIT THERE UNTIL TSURUYA-KUN IS DONE!"

Saeko shuddered. "How DARE you...?"

"Your pardon, meine Frau...but I couldn't help but overhear your desire to keep your Gymnasium free from damages unleashed by this selbstsüchtige Hexe..."

People perked before they looked to the south...then looked up...

"Oh, my...another shipgirl?" Nanase gasped.

...to see a smiling tomboyish woman of the same physical age as the other shipgirls who had visited Tomobiki the previous day, she dressed in the standard modern Yizibajohei jumpsuit pattern, now floating about two metres off the street. Coloured in light blue with white belt and boots, she had a red shield bugwappen on her chest about her cleavage, it embossed with three stag heads facing the viewer in natural colours surrounding a six-point star in the middle; that was embossed over the white intertwined alpha-numeric code Z1. She had short-cropped silver hair that gave her quite the mannish look even if her uniform clearly indicated she was a woman, sea blue eyes peeking out of a well-shaped face that made many girls seeing this all gush at how handsome this "boy" really was.

Spinning around to see the impertinent woman who dared speak out in support of the impudent trollop keeping her away from her child, Saeko looked...
...then she awked as the newcomer FLEW down to literally stand in her face, her left hand snapping up with middle finger curled against her thumb.

**KK-KRUNCH!**

People gasped after seeing Saeko struck by the newcomer's finger, sent flying right into the engine block of the UAZ-469 command car that had been used to transport the matriarch of the Mizunokōji Clan down from her estate, crushing it on impact! As the Kurotenshi present today squawked in horror on seeing their employer brought down so easily by this stranger, Nanase sighed. "You have my thanks, Ojō-sama!" she stated, making the newcomer blush on hearing the proper honorific for a young woman applied to her. "Um, are you part of Moroboshi-kun's fleet...?"

That made the stranger perk. "You mean there are other schiffsmädchen such as I? I thought that Max and I and our friend were the only ones who came back this...!"

"Wie heißen Sie?! Was ist deine Schiffsklasse?!"

The newcomer squawked as she snapped to attention, spinning south as the older blonde woman approached, she in the black-and-white jumpsuit given by the Great Crystal of Power to the living spirit of Germany's penultimate battleship. "Zerstörer Nummer eins, Leberecht Maass, erster Zerstörer der Klasse 1934!" the newcomer barked out as she snarled to attention so rigidly, one might fear for her backbone. She then blinked on seeing the other woman's bugwappen.

"Bismarck...?"

Luisa von Bismarck nodded. "Ja! Welcome back, Lebe," she said with a delighted smile. "You said Max is with you as well?" she then asked.

"Jawohl!" the living spirit of the first destroyer built for the Reichsmarine after World War Onedeclared with a nod before a concerned look crossed her face. "And another we encountered over the Ostsee near Großendorf in the Polish Corridor near Danzig. We've had the devil's own time trying to make her talk to us since we met her after she beat away some dragons threatening a hidden village of forest elves on the Hel Peninsula! I don't even recognize her bugwappen!"

Hearing that, Luisa sighed. "Bring her here. Maybe Prinz might know her."

That made the younger-looking shipgirl gasp. "Prinz Eugen?!"

"Ja."

"Jawohl! MAX!"

The whooshing sound of air whipping past two people's bodies made everyone look up, then spin to the west before they gasped on seeing two people drop down out of the sky to join the two shipgirls there, one the same physical age as the one who had struck Mizunokōji Saeko down, the other the same physical age as Luisa herself. The first was a pretty girl the same age as her sister, with bobcut auburn hair and dark brown eyes, she dressed in the same model uniform as the living kami of *Leberecht Maass* though having an intertwined Z3 in white embossed with a different family crest, one a party per cross in black and white, the black fields to top left and bottom right holding white stars while the opposite white fields had an armoured hand holding a sword up. The second woman was a strikingly tall beauty with long blonde hair with side-locks and decorative twintails over the ears, a pair of piercing grey eyes peeking out of a face that seemed almost totally void of emotion. She wore a uniform with a gold top, blue pants and red belt and boots — the colours of old Mecklenburg, Luisa then realized — with a bugwappen on her chest in the same general design as the younger-looking woman's, though it had red fields with rampant white horses to top left and
lower right and rampant black tigers on gold fields on the other fields, the whole embossed with a crowned blue shield bearing a sheep's head.

"Lieber Gott im Himmel...!" Luisa gasped. "GRAF ZEPPELIN?!!"

That made the two destroyer shipgirls blink before their eyes shot out of their skulls before they stared in awe at the taller woman. "Our Flugzeugträger, meine Frau...?!" the kami of Max Schultz, third of the 1934 class of destroyers, exclaimed as she pointed at the woman she had just escorted here.

"Ja! They finally completed her?!"

"Actually, that didn't happen, Luisa-san."

Luisa blinked, then spun around...

...before she moaned as a smiling Tenhiro Haruka raced past her to place herself before the living spirit of Germany's only aircraft carrier, bowing respectfully to her. "Eure Durchlaucht, Willkommen in Japan," the adopted native of Düsseldorf declared as Luisa winced at such formalities while the two destroyer shipgirls gaped at such a show of deference to their fleet mate; they had heard the Japanese as a people were very polite and formal, but THIS was clearly not expected! As Hirosaki Chikage smirked in amusement and both Hatoyama Rinrin and Ashikaga Akemi moaned — all had come up from Ōmure-jima to see what was going on after Luisa sensed her fleet mates approaching Tomobiki from the direction of Europe — the Quarterstaff Mistress carried on in German, "I'm sure my dear beloved brother will be happy to serve as your admiral as you adjust your noble self to this remarkable set of circumstances the Fates forced upon you. Do you require refreshment at this time, Eure Durchlaucht?"

Silence.

More silence.

Still more silence.

Then...

"Um...meine Frau...?"

Haruka looked over. "Ja, meine Freidame?"

That made the kami of Leberecht Maass gasp. "'FREIDAME'?!"

"Ja!" Haruka declared. "You are Lieselotte Catrin, Freidame von Maaß zu Korkenhagen und Kiel." As the just-named Lieselotte gaped in shock at such a title being bestowed to her, Haruka then bowed to her sister. "As you are Melanie Ute, Freidame von Schultz zu Neu Brünken und Kiel." As the just-named Melanie squawked in embarrassment, the Quarterstaff Mistress waved to the reborn battleship. "Atop being graced by the presence of ihre Durchlaucht, Wilhelmina Luisa, Fürstin von Bismarck-Schönhagen und Hamburg..." — here, Luisa groaned at being called THAT yet again by the Quarterstaff Mistress — "...we are now graced with the presence of ihre Durchlaucht, Amélie Françoise, Reichsgräfin von Zeppelin zu Thürkow und Konstanz und Friedrichshafen und Kiel!"

"REICHSGRÄFFIN'?!" both Lieselotte and Melanie exclaimed.

"Ah, yes," Luisa trilled as she looked up to the heavens, recalling something from the memories of one of her crew. "The Zeppelin family were imperial counts back in the old days..."
"Um...is she okay, Liese-chan?"

That was Rinrin, who had walked over to stare into the vacant eyes of the just-named Amélie. "We've barely been able to get her to talk at all since we met her near Großendorf, meine Frau," Melanie said with a shrug as people gazed at the mute aircraft carrier-turned-twenty-something woman.

That made the Technological Sorceress of the East blink. "'Großendorf'?"

"Władysławowo in Poland, Rinrin-chan," Haruka provided.

That made the Ōsaka native hum before she nodded. "Oh, that's right!" she trilled out. "The Soviets scuttled her off the coast of that town in 1947..."

"Bitte versenke mich nicht...!"

Everyone spun around to see Amélie stare fearfully at Rinrin as she seemed to cringe, slowly shifting herself to hide behind Lieselotte and Melanie. "You will not be sunk again, Amélie," Chikage then calmly called out, making the other woman pause. "You will be given the chance to properly serve as you should have done all along. Herr Oberleutnant Göring is nowhere around to stop you."

That made Amélie's eyes brighten as the other German shipgirls snickered on hearing the infamous leader of the Luftwaffe in World War Two be addressed by the rank he held in the Luftstreitkräfte during the Great War when he commanded the famous Flying Circus. She then shuddered as tears filled her eyes. "Ich kann dienen...! Ich kann dienen...! Endlich kann ich...dienen...!" she then sobbed.

Instantly, the two destroyer shipgirls who had escorted her from Europe moved to embrace the transformed aircraft carrier as she began to cry...

"HOW DARE YOU...?!

"Oh, shit...!" Rinrin moaned.

As people scrambled clear to safety, Mizunokōji Saeko leapt out of the wreckage of the command car she was smashed into by Lieselotte moments before, lunging over to snare the impudent girl by the throat and throttle her for such disrespect. Of course, despite her own considerable superhuman strength, the matriarch of Japan's second-richest family was effectively a "slight" by Yizibajohei terms and the now-organic battle doll body that the living kami of the first of the Type 1934 class destroyers had been given when she had been reborn over the North Sea had been constructed by the Healer of Destruction to deliver fatal damage to Goa'uld ha'tak starships with force blasts. As Saeko screamed on snaring Lieselotte by the throat, Amélie's eyes hardened to the consistency of storm-laden clouds as her hand lashed out to snare the matriarch's face and shove her away from her fleet mate...

KK-ZZZZAP!

"YEAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAARGH...!"

The poor matriarch's body was instantly burned alive by the cutting force of THOUSANDS of volts of electricity on reaching the line of the main gates to the school grounds. As the Kurotenshi screamed on seeing their employer treated in such a vicious manner, the three sisters from Ōmure-jima could only sigh. "Now THAT, she had coming to her," Rinrin calmly noted, shaking her head.

After a moment, the burnt husk of the matriarch of Japan's second-richest family — still alive after
being electrocuted like that — dropped to the ground in a dazed moan. Before any of her bodyguards could move to help get Saeko back on her feet and evacuate her back to the family estate, Amélie pushed past Melanie to snare the groaning woman by the neck. "Wo lebt dieses Ding...?" she snarled.

"The Schloss at the north end of the street," Haruka provided, pointing towards the Mizunokōji estate.

"Danke!"

With that, Saeko was sent screaming into the sky towards her home. "SAVE THE MISTRESS!" Makige Kinko, the curly-haired leader of the Kurotenshi, howled as the others raced to the escort vehicles that accompanied the wrecked command car to the scene of the horrid attack on their employer's daughter.

As people scrambled clear of the vehicles as they were driven off to the north, Amélie hissed as she focused on the distant estate, using a form of meta-sight which would have worked in a similar fashion to the radar which she would have been fitted with had she been commissioned into the Kriegsmarine. Instantly drawing up a mental map of the distance between herself and where she had just sent the screaming little slight away from an area protected by one of the Circle of Thought, the aircraft carrier-turned-twenty-something woman then focused, summoning a tonne of ki to literally drop down on her target with a gesture of her hand as if she was lifting a wine glass to toast the Führer.

"AMÉLIE! HALT!" Luisa screamed on sensing what was happening.

Amélie dropped her hand...

...before a titanic explosion ripped out the very heart of the Mizunokōji estate!

As the crowds screamed at such a fiery display of power, Akemi shook her head in awe. "Damn! So THAT'S what a shipgirl aircraft carrier can do, huh?!!"

Sweat drops appeared in Haruka's and Rinrin's hair. "Oh, shit...!" the latter moaned as she shook her head. "We're gonna have FUN explaining this one...!"

"At least we have enough witnesses to make sure the proper blame for provoking Amélie is placed on the right head, Rinrin," Chikage calmly stated.

"Damn straight about that!"

They perked before they turned as the inspector from the Public Security Bureau who had been sent to supervise the joint investigation concerning Soban's android classmates from Butsumetsu High School that started this interesting day in Tomobiki. "What do you mean by that, Keibu-san?"

Haruka asked.

"Instant they learned that there were honest-to-goodness alien androids that were in town, agents from the Mendō Conglomerate stated they wanted to send out investigators to look them over, threatening to call the Prime Minister to get his approval of it," the middle-aged man said with a sour note. "You think we can keep your friend from Germany here to make them behave?"

As Rinrin hummed on hearing that, a humourless smile crossed Chikage's face. "We have a better solution," the metahuman sorceress then proposed.
"What's that, Chikage-chan?" Haruka asked.

"A full AUDIT of BOTH clans' use of the money WE lent them, Haruka!"

Haruka and Rinrin blinked, then they snickered as they imagined what the reactions in both families would be. "I'll call Reigi-kun!" the Technological Sorceress of the East then proposed.

As she pulled out her cell phone to make a call downtown, the German shipgirls all stared in confusion at them even if Lieselotte and Melanie were still doing their best to keep Amélie calm. "Warfare certainly has changed in the last seven decades," Luisa mused.

"You have only seen the beginning of it, Luisa," Chikage stated.

"No wonder the kobaloi in Gringotts all claim we have their blood," Haruka noted.

Both women then snickered as Akemi laughed...

To Be Continued...

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WRITER'S NOTES

Moroboshi Negako is one of my frequently-used original characters, first appearing in The Senior Year story "Spirit-War Tomobiki". Deannette "Dean" Raeburn is one of my oldest creations, who has been mentioned from time to time in my works; her basic background is covered in Magic and Canada.

Translation list: Saikō Jinseijutsu-ryū — School of the Path of the Supreme Life; CADPAT — Canadian Disruptive Pattern, the current digital camouflage combat pattern worn by soldiers of the Canadian Armed Forces; Shihan — Grandmaster (of a martial art school); Tensei-ryū — School of the Star of Heaven; Suprasternal notch — The proper name of a person's Adam's apple; Bonkura — Knucklehead/Nitwit/Dunderhead; Nandeyanen — Literally "Why is that?" in Ōsaka dialect, this is also the phrase the straight man (tsukkomi) would often ask the boke (funny man) in manzai (rapid-paced two-person stand-up comedy) to make the joke; Bunka-gonen — Fifth Year of Culture (the Japanese year name for 1808 CE); Ledo Kim'be — Earth Angel; Shijutsu-soku — (Martial) Arts Death Touch; Gymnasium — A type of school in Germany with a strong emphasis on academic learning, usually covering levels taught in middle and high school in Japan; Selbstsüchtige Hexe — Selfish witch; Wie heißen Sie? — What is your name?; Was ist deine Schiffsklasse? — What is your warship class?; Zerstörer Nummer eins — Destroyer Number One; Erster Zerstörer der Klasse 1934 — First destroyer of the 1934 class; Ostsee — Literally meaning "eastern sea", this is the German term for the Baltic Sea; Party per cross — Heraldic term for a shield divided into four fields vertically and horizontally; Flugzeugträger — Aircraft carrier; Willkommen in Japan — Welcome to Japan; Zu — A nobility particle indicating the location of the noble's residence; Und — And; Bitte versenke mich nicht — Please don't sink me; Oberleutnant — Senior lieutenant; Luftstreitkräfte — Literally "air striking forces", this was the name of the German Imperial Army air service in World War One (compare with the World War Two and modern-day Luftwaffe, which literally means "military air service"); Ich kann dienen — I can serve; Endlich — Finally/At last; Wo lebt dieses Ding? — Where does this thing live?; Schloss — Chateau or manor house; Fregattenkapitän — Frigate Captain, the German Navy rank title for a commander (NATO rank code OR-4), abbreviated as FKpt.
Operation: Fortitude is the code-name for two false invasion plans the Western Allied powers developed to prevent the Nazis from determining when and where the invasion of Europe (Operation: Overlord) was to be carried out in 1943-44. This operation, under the aegis of Operation: Bodyguard (which was the overall deception strategy developed by the Allies to keep the Nazis in the dark concerning war plans on the Continent), covered two possible paths to invade Europe, either through northern Norway (Fortitude North) or the Pas de Calais in France (Fortitude South).

The relationship between Dean Raeburn's friend and Saotome Nodoka is based on what was introduced in the fanfic Suikoden One Half, written by MadHat886; I used this theme in Phoenix From the Ashes.

Watari-shima is the island off the south coast of Hokkaidō in my stories where the main dōjō of the Tensei-ryū is based. The name is taken from a ancient name for Japan's northern main island itself.

Michiba Hatatsu is my name for the Dōjō Destroyer who first appeared in the Ranma 1/2 manga story arc of the same name (manga chapters #70-73). I first used this name in Phoenix From the Ashes. In the universe of my story, Hatatsu and his family are special inspectors sent by the Tensei-ryū to monitor the teaching of students in unique martial arts schools (such as Musabetsu Kakutō-ryū) to prevent any sort of major deviation which could disturb the civil peace.

Mizunokōji Asuka's parents, Mizunokōji Yūjiro and Mizunokōji Saeko, first appeared in the Yatsura manga story arc "That Mizunokōji Girl"; their given names are my invention. Mizunokōji Tobimaro first appeared in the story "Life is a Ball" (manga chapter #40). Makige Kinko is my name for the leader of the Kurotenshi ("Black Angels"); she first appeared in the story "Let's Have That Bikini" (manga chapter #44). The name of the Mizunokōji bodyguards is my creation, made to match the Mendō Clan Kuromegane (black glasses). Tomohotoke Asuka is my name for the headmistress of Keppkei Girl's Junior High School, who appeared in the "Fortress of Fastidiousness" manga storyline.

Russian patronymics used in this episode:

Asuká Júdzirovna — Asuka, daughter of Yūjiro
Nágisa Sínovna — Nagisa, daughter of Shin

Note that the term used for Tariko Katabarbe here, Táriko Ájonovna ("Tariko, daughter of Ayone"), is actually a matronymic, not a patronymic.

The Shōzoki first appeared in my lemon fanfic story The Galatea Syndrome.

The list of shipgirls appearing in this chapter:

Kapitän zur See Amélie von Zeppelin KMDR (Kriegsmarieschiff Graf Zeppelin [pendant F1])
Fregattenkapitän Lieselotte Maß KMDR (Kriegsmarieschiff Z1 Leberecht Maass [pendant Z1])
FKpt Melanie Schultz KMDR (Kriegsmarieschiff Z3 Max Schultz [pendant Z3])

All three characters, of course, take after their Kantai Collection interpretations. As for the pendant assigned to KMS Graf Zeppelin (Amélie von Zeppelin), the pendant superior "F" means flugzeugträger (aircraft carrier); at that time, the Kriegsmarine didn't have any frigates in service with the nearest equivalents being the various torpedo boats (in German, torpedoboot), who would have pendant superior "T" before their hull numbers in the universe of my stories. Of course, the pendant superior "Z" means zertömer (destroyer); the 1934 Class from which KMS Z1 Leberecht
Maass (Lieselotte Maass) and KMS Z3 Max Schultz (Melanie Schultz) hail from were the FIRST true destroyer class built in Germany.

German warship bugwappen are always based on the family or town crest the ship itself is named after. Since I don't know which family crest would properly apply to either KMS Z1 (Leberecht Maass) or KMS Z3 (Max Schultz), I picked what could be determined via a search on the Internet. Both destroyers were named after Imperial German Navy officers who served and died in World War One; Konteradmiral (Rear Admiral) Leberecht Maß (1863-1914) lead German naval forces at the Battle of Heligoland Bight on 28 August 1914 while Korvettenkapitän (Lieutenant Commander) Max Schultz (1874-1917) commanded the VI Torpedoboat Flotilla until his death. Note that I use the German graphemeß (known as the scharfes S ["sharp S"]) with KAad Maaß's name as that was how it was spelled at the time of his death; the ship name used the double "s" in the spelling. Thus, devising the human name for KMS Z1, I came up with Lieselotte Maass for stories such as The Seventh Shipgirl.

Note also that KAad Maaß's hometown of Korkenhagen is today the Polish town of Budzieszowce in the province of West Pomerania in the northwest section of the republic near the Baltic Sea. KKpt Schultz's hometown of Neu Brünken is today the town of Nowe Brynki in the same province.

The term Freidame (literally "free lady") used here is NOT the proper term for the wife or other relative of a Freiherr ("free lord", often translated as "baron" in English) such as the "Red Baron" Manfred von Richthofen. The proper term for the wife of a freiherr is Freifrau while other female relatives such as daughters or maiden aunts are known as Freiin; both are normally translated as "baroness" in English. I invented this title for use in Germany's magical enclaves in The Seventh Shipgirl; this is the standard mode of address for any magical woman who is NOT of the normally titled nobility. In effect, a freidame would be the effective equivalent of a baronetess in the English nobility system, indicating someone who was knighted by the Crown but is not seen as a titled noble.

A Reichsgräfin ("imperial countess") is the wife or other female relative of a Reichsgraf ("imperial count"). This is a title bestowed on nobles during the period of the Holy Roman Empire from 962-1806 whose descendants were later recognized by the German Empire and its component states; one of them was the commander of German naval forces at the Battle of the Falkland Islands on 8 December 1914, Vizeadmiral (Vice Admiral) Maximilian von Spee (1861-1914). Nominally the head of an imperial county, these were the noble leaders of medieval fiefs who administratively responded directly to the Holy Roman Emperor without having to defer to local princes and other lords. And indeed, the family of KMS Graf Zeppelin's namesake, Ferdinand von Zeppelin (1838-1917), had been elevated to the rank of Reichsgraf in 1792. So technically, Tenhiro Haruka is quite correct in addressing Amélie von Zeppelin as "Reichsgräfin" even if Ferdinand's descendants just use "Graf" or "Gräffin".

However, Haruka made one mistake here. When one addresses someone of the rank of Reichsgraf/Reichsgräfin, one doesn't use the term Eure/Ihre Durchlaucht (which, as noted before, is the rough equivalent of the English "Serene Highness"). The proper form of address for someone of Amélie's noble rank is Eure/Ihre Erlaucht (which would be the rough equivalent of "Illustrious Highness"). This shows that while the Quarterstaff Mistress does her best in showing proper respect to those of noble rank, she still makes mistakes.

As noted in Magic and Canada, the term kobaloi (singular kobalos) is the word I use for the goblins as they appear in the Harry Potter series. This is derived from a type of sprite in Greek mythology.
New Recruits for Stargate Command?

Chapter Summary

Utako (Uzuki) goes on a snake-fishing expedition, Isaac Thomas comes to Uru and Stargate Command gets a tonne of new recruits from the Crossroads veterans...

And at the end of it all, it's Hinako: 1/Reiko (Nagamon): 0

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Onishuto on Uru, the Union Congress Hall, suppertime (Tōkyō time: Lunchtime)...

"Puppukupu! Pyon, pyon! U-chan is fishing for snakies, pyon! Puppukupu!"

Seeing the comical looks on the faces of the security personnel assigned to guard the central edifice of the Union government, Tariko Katabarbe could only shake her head in amusement as the chattering bouncing girl in the dark blue-and-black jumpsuit of the Rainy Scrapper of Spring, Nyuodake ("Uzuki"), moved to take down the considerable number of Goa'uld possessed officials — including several senior members of the Congress, Redet Invader and Azu Kakazu had been quick to note — to literally extract their symbiotes for a feast that her sisters both on Uru and on Earth would enjoy. "I'll have to admit this," she said as she crossed her arms, making people gaze her way. "She's enthusiastic in her work."

"FILTHY KEK'ULD! HOW DARE YOU THREATEN TO EAT YOUR GODS?! RELEASE US!"

That was the Speaker of the Congress, who had been frozen in his seat by Fukushima Hatsue when the fourth of the Mutsuki-class destroyers — who was now calling herself "Kisaragi Utako" — came to Uru from Earth to bolster the shipgirl presence there around the Trickster of the Show, her sisters on the planet and their friends. As soon as she got to Onishuto, the very childish girl with the light chestnut eyes and the long pink-red hair that extended to her knees felt her nose twitch excitedly before she raced into the Union Congress Hall, scaring the hell out of people there before she started extracting symbiotes from bodies, which made the Silent Blizzard deploy from the Invader home to help out.

Before anyone could shout at the possessed general while Utako continued her “fishing expedition” — naturally, Hatsue was tucked in under her personal kotatsu at the entrance of the hall, dozing off — Redet Ten flew over to loom above the speaker. "Nyah! Nyah! Nyah! U-chan's gonna eat you, pyon!"

"PYON!" Utako echoed the firefighter's son as she tore out another symbiote from the back of a congresswoman frozen in one of the seats.
"KEK'ULD! ORAK'NOU! YOUR GODS WILL NEVER FORGIVE YOUR IMPERTINENCE!"

That made Utako stop. "'Impertinence'?!" she wondered before she looked towards the entrance. "Hatsue-chan, does impertinence taste any good, pyon?!

The raven-haired reborn third of the Fubuki-class hummed before a yawn escaped her. "Maybe you should pull that lar'beke out of the umale's throat and have Ten-chan cook it," she lazily proposed.

Utako hummed, then she nodded, a giddy smile crossing her face. "Pyon!"

With a leap, she dropped down in front of the trapped speaker, then plunged her fingers into the back of his neck to yank out the symbiote that was wrapped close to his spinal column. As people watching this winced while some looked away — any sort of possession by the "children of the gods" made an Urusian dead in the eyes of the law, so what Utako was doing wouldn't see her charged with any sort of crime...even if some judge, peace officer or lawyer was crazy enough to try to persecute a Yizibajohei of all things! — Utako held up the symbiote. "Puppukupu! Cooked snaky please, pyon!"

"Hai!" Ten said before breathing in, then he let go with his flame-breath.

"AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH"

Everyone gasped on hearing that pained scream before Ten spun around, then he turned as white as a ghost. "MOM?!" he cried out with a mixture of terror and embarrassment.

As Invader winced, his sister-in-law Redet Jon — she was his wife's younger sister — stared in horror at the fact that her own beloved son had flame-breath capabilities. "MY SON'S AN ARSONIST!"

Ten howled in fright as his mother yanked out her matoi, charging at him to deliver punishment, a fanatic smile on her face. As the Urusians seeing this all moaned — Jon's reputation as a fanatic when it came to arsonists and pyromaniacs was known throughout the Union — Utako blinked before she snarled as she placed the cooked Goa'uld symbiote that Ten just flash-fried on a nearby desk, then she summoned a condensed rain cloud. "U-CHAN CHILD ABUSER SMACK PYON!"

KK-KRAACK!

"MOM!"

"Ow...!"

People gaped on seeing a nicely-roasted Jon on the floor of the central hall, having been electrocuted by a blast of lightning from the Rainy Scrapper that made even the worst "divine punishment" unleashed by Tariko's "wife" seem like a pinprick in comparison. As Ten gaped in horror on seeing how fast the fourth of the Mutsuki-class brought his mother down — and under the charge of being a child abuser, which was something he would associate more with Tariko's estranged birth mother Moroboshi Kinshō or Fujinami Ryūnosuke's loon father Fujimi! — Utako sighed as she picked up the cooked symbiote she had just pulled out of the now-dead speaker's body before munching down on the head. After a minute or two, she nodded. "Nice wood taste. U-chan likes this! Oi, Hatsue-chan, pyon!"

"Let me try," Hatsue called out as she held out her hand.
As the crowd watched the third of the Fubuki-class destroyers munch away on the corpse, a brown-haired woman with brown eyes holding a microphone standing close to Tariko — she accompanied by her camera crew, including a gold-skinned humanoid from Zeiwan who served as her field director, a blob-shaped being of the same race as the infamous space taxi driver Tariko knew of who drove Milan Domo's starship around to news scenes and a tall, tawny-furred feline humanoid from the planet Sakarahaven who served as her camera operator — took a deep breath before she faced the Trickster of the Show. "I take it, Miss Tariko, that Yizibajohei don't care for child abusers," she commented.

"Well, unlike the piece of genetic refuse I was born from, Ten's mom does have her many good points," Tariko noted as the cameraman focused his machine on her. "You just have to make her stop giving the poor kid a tonne of flashback scenes every time she tells him scary bedtime stories about tearing apart some arsonist or pyromaniac like the idiots that killed her husband. I mean, does the kid need to experience THAT flashback scene CONSTANTLY every time she visits him?!"

As the people around her nodded in understanding, Ten gazed her way, a faint smile crossing his face before he found himself caught in Utako's free arm and hugged. While women seeing this all gushed at what the Rainy Scrapper was happy to do for Ten while the Silent Blizzard enjoyed her charred symbiote snack, Milan hummed. As a native of Kurakoa — one of two worlds inhabited by people who were blood-related to the Avalonians the Yizibajohei had helped liberate in June — she herself had no care for child abusers; such a belief was said to be hard-wired in her very DNA.

"Speaking of which, I've learned through Miss Asakura Kazumi about how verbally abusive your birth-mother really was. Is it true that she constantly said words like 'I wish I never had him' and the like concerning you for a total of nearly THREE THOUSAND times since you moved to Yiziba eleven years ago? Even when you were ABSENT from the house?! Isn't that like an average of...?"

"Once every two days," Tariko finished for the reporter from the Intergalactic News Network. She knew her friend from Mahora would be tapping into the INN feed through Triton to send into the Moroboshi home, where Margo Black and her sister Nora Chapelle were still interrogating Moroboshi Kinshō. "Hai. Sadly, until I got my mind straightened around, I couldn't make her stop doing that. Of course, after Ayumu rescued me and got me straightened around, I started to pay her back for those insults, usually with my normal trick." As people winced on her referencing her "cinder block dropped out of nowhere on the head" stunt that was her signature prank, Tariko added, "But after we got the Niphentaxians off the planet three months ago, Ataru and I — and Hiromi when she got Gifted and could sub in for him — decided she deserved a little of the same medicine right back. And in PUBLIC, too!"

"What did you do?" Invader wondered.

"Oh, you should have seen it, Uncle!" Ten called out as Utako carried him over to join the rest of the crowd, her other hand holding the stasis bucket with hundreds of frozen symbiotes within, fresh for a picnic. As Kakazu waved in the security personnel and coroners to deal with the corpses the Rainy Scrapper left behind on her snake fishing expedition, the firefighter's son added, "When Ataru wanted to spend a day with Mamoru-anē to celebrate her birthday in October, Tariko-onēchan took his place in the house, then really let the creep have it!" He snickered as his mother looked over, dazed in horror at the idea of her own son supporting such actions by a disobedient child to a clearly caring mother. "After Tariko-onēchan managed to get away from Lum-cha trying to cook dinner for her — I really wish she'd learn how to cook! — the creep said to her the next morning, 'You're the poster child of an unfaithful idiot of a husband!!' As the crowd shook their heads — the truth about Tariko's "marriage" to Lum was now getting out over the news nets — Ten smirked. "Tariko-onēchan said right back, 'And you're the poster child of a hypocritical, money-grubbing slut who's going to grow old and die alone. That makes me WAY better than you since I'm HONEST about my feelings!!"
Tomobiki, the Moroboshi home, that moment...

"WHO'S GOING TO TAKE CARE OF ME WHEN I'M OLD AND GREY?!"

"No one is. That's the general idea."

As Moroboshi Kinshō swayed between screaming in outrage at her "idiot son's" refusal to support her and wailing that she wasn't loved at all by said son, Margo Black and Nora Chapelle exchanged looks, then they shrugged before turning back to the television to watch INN. Unseen by either the Archangel of Mortality or the Living Dynamo, people passing by the house on the street beyond the front gate all paused to look at where Tomobiki's most infamous resident had lived before they made warding signs with their hands to make the bad kami haunting the place leave good people be, then they raced off...

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Back in Onishuto...

"What happened, Ten-chan?!" Kisaragi Utako asked.

Before Redet Ten could answer, a warbling noise echoed through the air, making people look up through the skylight over the meeting hall. "What the heck is HE doing here?" Tariko Katabarbe asked.

"Who is that?" Milan Domo wondered.

Utako moaned. "Weird spaceship noise, pyon! U-chan hates that!"

As people blinked, a saucer-shaped craft about the size of Redet Lum's mobile saucer home came to a hovering orbit, its outer ring orbiting around indicative of some sort of gravity-repulsion system keeping such a large mass in the air. The bottom hatch then opened, allowing a beam of light to project through the centre of the skylight to touch the deck in the middle of the chamber. That then materialized a tall, blond twenty-something man in a silver-white jumpsuit with buff gold belt and boots, a hooded matching cape with buff trim slung around his neck, a pair of what looked like welder's goggles over his blue eyes and a three-leaf Celtic cross insignia on his chest. After the beam disappeared, he looked around before his nose twitched on detecting the scent of burnt Goa'uld flesh.

"Okay, who's been having a bonfire here?" he wondered in a flat New York accent.

"Pyon! Make the stupid noise stop! U-chan hates it, pyon!"

Hearing that, the current incarnation of one of Yiziba's wisest people gasped in horror as he gazed on the shipgirl. "'STUPID'?!" the man born Isaac Thomas demanded, his eyes wide with disbelief.

"My dear Commander Kisaragi, that is the classic sound of one of the greatest mad scientists in fiction...!"

"U-chan says it's stupid, pyon!" Utako chanted. "Stupid, stupid, stupid, pyon!"

That made the native of Queens moan. "Everyone's a critic...!"

Seeing that, Tariko roared with laughter...

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Dear Diary,
Well, the first day back on Uru has almost ended.
Boy, a lot of things sure have happened today!
Not only did Lum-cha get a version of Ataru to have for herself in Hiromi-onē-chan — boy, that marque'i'cha thing Avalonians have sure is like Vosian recognition, isn't it? — but the shipgirls who came to Uru with Hinako-onētama and Aria-nēya found a lot of Goa'uld creeps possessing people. You just had to laugh as Utako-chan went on her 'snake fishing' expedition to clear out the Union Congress. Hopefully, people will figure out which one of those 'would-be echo voiceover snake leeches' calling itself a 'system lord' caused this so they could go and have that at a picnic cookout. With Takino Tomo-chan around — her past selves really made life rough for a lot of those dorks like Apophis — it should be an okay fight scene.
But now Mister Isaac Thomas has come to visit Uru.

He's the Wise Lone Sage, Raer'buo Erba; on Earth, you call him Doctor Renaissance. He's as much a polymath hyper-genius as any of the Circle of Thought like Lum-cha's old classmate Tsuruya Rumiko, but he's always acted independently from them.

According to Tariko-onēchan, Hiromi-onēchan, Nassur-cha and his wife Cinba-cha, Mister Isaac is pretty much an otaku. That's the Japanese word for someone who is a really passionate fan of something. Normally otaku are as bad as Megane and his dorks were to Lum-cha, but Mister Isaac uses his own passion for things like video games, science fiction television series and movies, graphic novels and the like to inspire him in his inventions.

He not only built himself a TEN-TO-ONE scale starship replica of the SSV Normandy from the Mass Effect game series to do deep space travel with, he built himself a big space station in geosynchronous orbit over Earth at the meridian of New York City to serve as his home base away from Yiziba. He also, as people just found out, built a replica of the flying saucer scoutship used by a Doctor Wily in the MegaMan video game and anime series; this serves as his personal shuttlecraft. Can't understand why Utako-chan hates the sound of it when it's moving. It sounds pretty normal to me.

One big change between Mister Isaac and his predecessors is that unlike his past-selves, he's willing to work with people like the Circle of Thought and other hyper-geniuses to make sure what he's doing is alright and doesn't violate any ethical lines. His past-selves NEVER did that before; hence, his tag-line.

Anyhow, ever since he got Gifted, Mister Isaac has gone out to help people get Gifted and learn how to properly master Gifts; much that people automatically get the memories and knowledge of their past-selves when their souls merge with a Gift seed, people still have to adjust to how to use that Gift in whatever current environment they live in. Given how different Earth and Yiziba are...!

He just came in right now from another planet called Remnant, whose population have been at war with nasty creatures called Grimm for centuries. These things are SO nasty that even the Goa'uld avoid the place; the few System Lords who tried to conquer it in the past all disappeared without a trace.

Hopefully, Mister Isaac was able to help the Remnantians be able to expand finally into space. Settling on planets away from the Grimm would do them a lot of good.

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The Invader home west of Onishuto, an hour later...

"So this war against this Salem woman who's been causing all this trouble on Remnant is over with," Hozan Lana stated as he crossed his arms, facing Isaac Thomas across the living room table as Redet Chim served spiced tea; much to the delight of Lum's mother, the Terrans-turned-Yizibajohei had been willing to have a cup even if they found it really harsh on their tongues, even people such as Saeru Hinako and Aria des Beauchamps. "How soon can the Remnantians develop their own space technology? With the level of technomancy they have..."
"It will take a while, Mister President," the New Yorker stated before nodding his thanks as Chim handed him a cup of tea. Currently, his former students — both among the huntresses from Remnant and his first group of students from Santa Clara outside San Francisco calling themselves the "Camelot Wondercolts" as a team — were still aboard the Normandy awaiting the chance to be officially cleared to come into the Urusian capital city; given there were too many people who were still too scared of the Yizibajohei in Onishuto, it was just being prudent. "You have to understand, the war against the Grimm has always been all-consuming with the nations of that planet for as long as they could remember. Any thought of advancing technology towards things like space flight has had to take a back seat to more important matters, especially with the fact that Dust was a finite resource on that planet. I've improved things by showing them how to create artificial Dust and helped them start to seed mesonium farms on the planet to help clear the biosphere from what Miss Salem helped provoke..."

"As Isaac just implied, it'll take time," Nassur of Vos noted from his place off to one side. The expat Vosian bounty hunter and old teacher to Invader's daughter had come to this meeting from Home Base, the asteroid headquarters of his hunter's group located near the Urusian colony world of Shingetsu. With him was his wife Cinba and elder son Akisur; while the daughter of the late governor of the lost Colony Seventy-one stood beside her husband, their son was off to one side listening to the shipgirls who had come to Uru as they told him stories about their crews' adventures in the Second World War. "They only just recently discovered their Stargate, Lana; it was set out way in the wilderness in territory Madame Salem had controlled for centuries. With what Isaac was able to tell them about the efforts the Americans on Earth have made with their own Stargate, I'm sure Professor Ozpin and his co-workers could get it going. Once they have it working, Isaac will arrange a first contact between them and Stargate Command on Earth." He then smirked. "I'm sure Colonel O'Neill will impress them a lot."

"Knowing Jack, yes," Tariko mused from beside Isaac, making people from Earth snicker as they recalled the times they met the Air Force pararescueman who lead SGC's primary expeditionary team and had been the one responsible for the death of the Goa'uld supreme system lord Ra four years ago.

"Speaking of Stargate Command, what of the Goa'uld themselves?" Azu Kakazu asked from beside her boss. Her uniform top now had the four gold nova of her new rank as an admiral in the Defence Force.

"As Yomi was quick to learn when she and Tomo came here to deal with Admiral Vel and his son, it was Nirrti who sent those infiltrators to Uru, Admiral," Isaac reported. "She's always been interested in finding ways to develop hok'tar; that's their word for metahumans. Back during the First Invasion five millennia ago, she was tasked by Ra to learn ways to counter the powers of the Healer of Destruction and the first generation battle dolls that crippled their fleet for centuries and helped contribute to their final expulsion from the local cluster once the Seifukusu went after them." As the people there nodded in understanding — much that there was little love these days on Uru for the modern descendants of those incredible warriors from Dominos that made life hell for the "children of the gods" back then, one had to admire the Imperial Houses for maintaining a harsh anti-Goa'uld stance, treating the symbiote race as a "plague" to be exterminated — the Wise Lone Sage added, "While I was busy on Remnant, I discovered a world Nirrti controls where she's actually had some success in creating indigenous metahumans. Of course, since her technology is based on naquadah, the results haven't been as good as if she had any control over mesonium. When I saw that, I decided to 'correct' the issue."

"What did you do?" Shigaten Benten demanded...

...before a beep echoed from someone's PAA. "Oh, dear," Isaac trilled out before he reached into his
belt to pull out the device, then place it on the table. After tapping the crystal, he smirked. "Nirrti! It's been so long!" he then teased as the image of a snarling brown-haired woman in her thirties appeared over the crystal. "You never write or call me! What?! You don't like me anymore!"

"IMPERTENANCE!" the namesake of the Hindi goddess of deathly shadow realms snarled as her eyes flared with the power the symbiote within her possessed. "HOW DARE YOU DESTROY YOUR GODDESS' WORK, THOMAS?! DO YOU REALIZE WHAT YOU'VE DONE?!!"

"I detected your hidden naquadah bomb inside that poor Hankan girl that was rescued by SG-1 three years ago, then sent it to your hidden scientific research base on Ketu," Isaac calmly replied while people from Earth began to snicker in the background as he got warmed up. "You're now going to say, 'You had no right to do that. How dare you interfere in our quest to suppress the Tau'ri, you monster?'

"YOU HAD NO RIGHT TO DO THAT! HOW DARE YOU INTERFERE IN OUR QUEST TO SUPPRESS THE TAU'RI, YOU MONSTER?!" Nirrti shrielled out before her eyes went wide and the people listening to this shrieked. "DON'T LAUGH AT YOUR GODDESS!" she screamed as if she was a child who just got scolded for painting the walls. "WHO UNLEASHED THE ORAK'NOU, THOMAS?! HOW DARE YOU ALLOW THOSE FILTHY KEK'ULD TO INTERFERE IN MY RESEARCH CONCERNING THE SHATAN'AF?! ANSWER YOUR GODDESS! WHO UNLEASHED THE ORAK'NOU?!!"

Isaac rolled his eyes before he gave the senior scientist among the System Lords a look as if he was about to lecture a stubborn and selfish child. "Nirrti, you were there five sagas ago when you and your friends tried to be Gift thieves before it was seen as a crime on Yiziba. Who CREATED them in the first place?" he asked, a mirthless smile crossing his face. "Who is the ONLY ONE who holds the key to the First Doll House? Who is the ONLY ONE even the so-called 'old ones' — who would have LAUGHED at you when you were playing your false god games on Earth — are TERRIFIED OF?"

Silence.

More silence.

Still more silence.

Then...

"Batae Erba...!" a white-faced Nirrti croaked.

"Yes," he trilled. "So what does that tell you if they're active NOW?!"

The female-form system lord blinked. "No! He will not turn the Tau'ri into your kind, Thomas! We will never stand for it! This is a violation of the Protected Planets Treaty...!"

"That was a treaty you signed with the Asgard. We don't recognize it. And since we of Yiziba are actually blood-related to our cousins on Earth, do you honestly expect us to stand by and allow you to enslave that planet like you did before Master Tash Ri and his son threw you off Earth five sagas ago?" he countered before smirking. "Now you're going to say, 'The Alliance of Four Great Races will never stand for your interference in the Tau'ri homeworld. Withdraw now.'"

"THE ALLIANCE OF FOUR GREAT RACES WILL NEVER STAND FOR YOUR INTERFERENCE IN THE TAU'RI HOMEWORLD, THOMAS! WITHDRAW NOW!" Nirrti
shrieked out, making everyone in the room scream with laughter. "STOP LAUGHING AT ME!"

"THEN GET A FUCKING BETTER SCRIPTWRITER, LAR'BEKE!" Takino Tomo yelled out from one corner of the room, where she stood with her classmate Mizuhara Koyomi while they had been conversing with Lum's adopted sister Redet Negau.

"Speaking of the so-called 'four great races', the Ancients have all 'ascended' to non-corporeal state and are too busy dealing with their Ori rebels to bother too much with the mess they've left behind with the technology you STOLE from them over the millennia, the Asgard are about to be wiped out by these 'replicators' they foolishly created some years back, the Nox pretty much live by themselves and the Furlings are too busy concentrating on making their utopia to worry too much about other species. You don't HAVE them anymore to hide behind, Nirrti," Isaac warned before he smirked. "Of course, there are new species with as much power as they who are ready to step into their place, such as the ch'uokyek of Noukiios and the ib'f of Yehisril...not to mention the Djaf'kalach and the Kal'ma Ra'kalach! I'm sure even the Majujjō could be persuaded to join such an alliance. Not to mention those of us who would love to help put you annoying lar'beke down. Right, Tomo?"

"Damn straight!" the Wild Warrior of Passion snarled. "Oi! Nirrti! You pass it on to Apophis! Next time he shows his ass anywhere close to Earth, he's gonna have his DEATH SCENE finally! That's ONE death cheater that's gonna learn how to fucking DIE properly! I'll leave your skanky ass to Isaac here!"

"IMPERTINENCE!"

"Oh! U-chan thinks impertinence is tasty, pyon!" Kisaragi Utako then called out from beside Akisur. "U-chan can't wait to EAT your impertinence!"

"I'll make sure I save the symbiote for a snack, Utako," Isaac promised.

"Isaac-kun is nice, pyon!"

Nirrti howled in outrage as people in the room laughed. "Now, Isaac-san, stop teasing the little snake!" Hinako scolded. "It doesn't have much of a brain! Calling it names is like picking on a dumb animal!"

As the Goa'uld screamed at what the Spirit of Innocence just said about her to the Wise Lone Sage, others in the room nearly fell over laughing...

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Colorado Springs Air Force Station, headquarters of United States Stargate Command, that moment (local time: Three hours before midnight)...

A hum escaped the leader of SG-1, making the others of his team stare at him. "Is there something amiss, Colonel O'Neill?" the bald Chulakian warrior who had served as First Prime to the currently most powerful of the System Lords asked as he gazed on the silver-haired pararescueman from Minnesota.

Colonel Jack O'Neill perked as he returned Teal'c's look, then he shrugged. "I just had a weird feeling, T. That's all," the leader of SG-1 admitted.

"What weird feeling, sir?" Major Samantha Carter asked, a wary look on her face.

"That Isaac was teasing someone, Carter."
Silence.

More silence.

Still more silence.

Then...

"Doctor Renaissance normally does not tease people," Teal'c calmly observed.

O'Neill snapped his fingers. "Unless it's Nirrti or some other brainiac," he said, making the others in the office set aside for Stargate Command's premier expeditionary team nod. "He loves doing that."

"His way of predicting what people say is funny to watch," Daniel Jackson mused, a smirk crossing his face. "Remember the time he teased Nirrti after he discovered that naquadah bomb inside Cassandra?"

"Oh, that was priceless!" O'Neill noted as the Terran members of SG-1 snickered on recalling that incident two years before when Isaac Thomas — just before he went to Santa Clara at the south end of San Francisco Bay to train the team that would later call themselves the "Camelot Wondercolts" — came to the base and used his devices to extract the naquadah that had been pumped into the orphaned Cassandra Fraiser's body before he used it as a "bullet" in a replica of the Little Boy atomic bomb with a hyper-charged ebony mesonium core as the "target". Once it was ready, he had it sent through the Stargate to the planet Ketu, where Nirrti's largest research facility had been located. Once the naquadah and mesonium had been allowed to fuse, the resulting explosion made Ketu look like the moon of Remnant, rendering the whole planet uninhabitable and effectively wrecking Nirrti's combat forces. "How many times did he make a prediction of what she was going to say in the end?"

"Six times," Jackson reported.

"Seven."

Everyone looked at Teal'c. "You counted, T?" O'Neill asked.

"Indeed."

Smirks crossed the Terran members' faces on hearing their Chulakian friend's catch-phrase...before the lights began to flash just as a battle alarm echoed. "What the hell...?!" O'Neill moaned.

"All personnel! Code Three! Code Three! Unknown intruder in the detention bay! All personnel! Code Three! Code Three! Unknown intruder in the detention bay!" the security sergeant called out from the control room. "Bio-scan indicating Gifted Yizibajohei, identity unknown! Repeat...!"

The four members of SG-1 exchanged looks. "Wonder who's visiting," O'Neill said as he got up. The others quickly followed him out of the room...

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Several levels below...

"Ma'am! Ma'am! Please, stop right there! Please identify yourself!"

The tall and rather curvy woman with the slightly tanned skin in the recognizable Yizibajohei-pattern jumpsuit looking to be in her late twenties paused on hearing that question from the security forces
sergeant that had just approached her as she was walking down the corridor where the ten detention cells meant to contain Goa'uld-possessed prisoners were located. She slowly turned as her glowing blue eyes focused on his multi-grey shaded airman's battle uniform before she shook her head. "You a Marine?" she wondered as her body tilted in such a way to reveal the crest over her cleavage.

He blinked on seeing that such was a standard United States Navy warship's crest, though he was too far away to read the gold wording in the blue stadium ring that would declare her name and hull classification code number. As he tried not to stare at her considerable superstructure — rather hard to do as Yizibajoheli battle uniforms of the new generation tended to be quite form-fitting — a hissing voice bellowed from the one occupied chamber, "SILENCE THIS ALARM! RELEASE ME!"

The sergeant gulped as the curious look on the newcomer's face melted into something that just chilled his bones before she focused on the place where Daniel Jackson's possessed wife Sha're was now imprisoned. By then, running footfalls indicated a section's worth of security forces personnel had come to support the sergeant who had been in charge of monitoring the detection level. "She's a shipgirl, guys!" he called out as they levelled their weapons at her back.

"'Shipgirl'...?"

As the security force personnel lowered their M4A1 carbines — everyone in Stargate Command had been briefed on the reborn ship spirits as soon as news of the return of Fukushima Fujiko and her sisters during "Hinako-chan's Spring Break Shipgirl Hunt" in late March got across the Pacific thanks to Isaac Thomas — the newcomer turned to stare once more at them. "Yes, ma'am," the sergeant said as he secured his M9 pistol just as footfalls heralded the arrival of more people, including the members of SG-1, followed by the flag officer in overall charge of Stargate Command, Major General George Hammond. "We're heard of other ship spirits being given human bodies over the last few months, mostly from Japan. When exactly did you get back, ma'am?"

She stopped to think about it, her head rocking to and fro, making that high ponytail of reddish-brown hair rock that extended to her waist sway like a cat's tail. "About...four hours ago. Um, I think it was four hours." An embarrassed giggle then escaped her. "We felt it when Eugen disappeared like she did late last night from Kwajalein, then something seized all of us that were there in the lagoon when the tests were done. After this weird voice called out these strange words I couldn't understand — it sounded like God Himself! — I became...um, th-this!" She turned to fully face them, waving to herself.

Now able to see her front directly, people were quick to pick out the USS SARATOGA at the top of the ring and CV 3 at the base of her ship's crest, which bore a black trident on a red shield insignia topped by a rooster about to take flight, the shield also containing one silver and four bronze stars at the base indicative of the eight battle stars she earned with the award of the Asiatic–Pacific Campaign Medal and the "Fleet" clasp applied to the American Defence Service Medal she had also been awarded for her service in the Second World War. Her uniform was composed of a white top over red pants, black boots and a black belt with a buckle bearing a white E on it. "Holy shit! She's Saratoga?!" an airman first class hissed out in awe at meeting the living spirit of one of America's most famous aircraft carriers made human...and a very pretty one at that. "The one they sank at Bikini?!"

"Pleadedontsinkme...!"

That was the newcomer, who now had a frightened look on her face as she seemed to shy away from them. "Um...Captain Doolittle, you won't be sunk," Samantha Carter said as she came through the cordon of security personnel, holding out her hands in a peaceful gesture to calm the second of the Lexington-class aircraft carriers down. "In fact, given that body you now have, no Terran
weapon exists that can even bother you. You're practically as tough as General Raeburn is now."

That made the shipgirl before her blink. "Major Raeburn's a GENERAL now?! Oh, my!" She then perked. "Wait! 'Captain Doolittle'?! Why call me that?!"

"Do you look like an aircraft carrier right now, ma'am?"

"Of COURSE I'm...!"

Jack O'Neill instantly smirked as a confused look crossed her face before she looked at herself; he had seen videos Hatoyama Rinrin made of shipgirls now living on Ōmure-jima reacting the same way the adopted native of New York and New Jersey was now to being told they were human. "Oh! I see..."

"So what did Ataru name her, by the way, Carter?" O'Neill asked.

"'Olive Dionysia Doolittle'," Carter provided.

That made the newcomer blink. "'Dionysia'?! she wondered, her face twisting.

"We can make it 'Dionne'," O'Neill proposed.

That made the just-named Dionne Doolittle blink before she nodded. "That sounds nice, Captain," she said before she noted the uniform. "Er...Colonel...?"  

"Yeah, Colonel," he confirmed.

"RELEASE ME, TAU'RI! YOUR GODDESS COMMANDS IT!"

Dionne shuddered as her eyes glowed. "Post-Gifting Shock..." O'Neill moaned. "Oh, great!" He called out, "Captain, what exactly are you going to do to the stupid alien would-be 'god' giving us earaches?!"

She turned to flash him a smile that would have been perfect on a pinup model from the 1940s that troops loved to get pictures of. "Why, Colonel, I'm just going to EAT it...!"

"NO! KEK'ULD! YOU DARE MAKE ALLIANCES WITH THE E'OUNOU, O'NEILL?!

"I'd be very CAREFUL if I was you, Amaunet!" Daniel Jackson then called out. "Considering we're graced with the presence of one of the Orak'now...!"

"NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO

People winced on hearing the possessed Sha're's terrified shriek, then O'Neill gave Teal'c a warning look. The Chulakian warrior nodded as he headed off...

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The main briefing room, an hour later...

"Hai! Hina's here!"

Hearing that cheerful voice, George Hammond turned around, then he rose, his hand reaching out to grasp that of the Spirit of Innocence. "Hello, Miss Saeru," he said with a grandfatherly grin, which made Saeru Hinako blush at such a caring look. "I trust everything's going well on Uru at this time."
Hinako nodded. "Un! As soon as Utako-chan caught all the nasty snakies who were possessing people on Uru, she wanted Shirayuki-chan to teach her how to make a picnic for the others in Onii-tama's fleet!" Here, she waved to Kisaragi Utako, who had given the elderly pilot a perfect Eta-jima salute.

Hammond nodded before he returned the courtesy the fourth of the Mutsuki-class destroyers gave him. "At ease, Commander Kisaragi," he bade her, grateful that he had got the updated list of human names for these beings via Samantha Carter. "I hope you can be of assistance with our current prisoner."

Utako relaxed herself. "I'll be happy to assist with the nasty lar'beke, Hammond-shōshō," she said in her most formal voice without any of the childish inflections she normally used. "Shirei-kan's sister reported to me that this particular one is possessing the wife of one of your senior scientists."

"That's correct," Hammond said as he waved the two over to sit at the briefing room table. "Given that this is also Apophis' wife we're speaking of..."

"Oh! We should have asked Tomo-chan to come here!" Hinako then stated.

"But she can only rip out the snaky from the body, Hinako-chan," Utako warned. "We want to keep Jackson-hakase's wife alive, remember?"

That made the Spirit of Innocence blink before she hummed. "Okay! Hina knows what to do! Can Hina see Oba-san right now, Ojii-san?"

"I'm having her..." Hammond was interrupted by a knock at the door. "Enter!"

The door opened, revealing two female security personnel dragging in the possessed Sha're, who had been stripped of the formal robes that Amaunet wore to mark her station, that replaced by a plain jumpsuit. Even if she was locked down by very advanced gear provided by people like Isaac Thomas and Elizabeth Wakefield that effectively blocked the symbiote from fleeing its current host body to possess someone else, it didn't silence her voice. "RELEASE ME, TA'URI! HOW DARE YOU TREAT YOUR GODDESS THIS WAY?! RELEASE ME AND YOUR DEATHS WILL...!"

"YOU BE QUIET, YOU NASTY, EVIL CREEP!"

Amaunet's voice was effectively choked off as a pained look crossed her face while the others in the room shuddered at the invisible wave of power now flowing out of Hinako's body surged through them. As the two security officers smiled at the pretty girl who was making their prisoner shut up, Hammond walked over, with Utako falling in to his left rear in a protective position. "I think that's more than enough out of you, Miss Amaunet," the veteran pilot declared as the possessed Abydonian chief's daughter looked his way. "Considering how afraid you Goa'uld are of death, your reaction to the presence of Captain Doolittle is understandable. But given the sheer level of damage your race has caused not only my people but the slaves and their descendants your kind have hurt over the millennia, you should have realized karma was going to come back and bite you HARD! How nice of the Yizibajohei — the one people you've NEVER been able to hurt — to help us in that regard."

Amaunet shuddered. "You are a fool, Hammond! To make an alliance with the Orak'nou will see your world destroyed, just as they nearly destroyed themselves two millennia ago in their 'dawn of power'! You actually WELCOME an alliance with those monsters?!" she hissed out as she tried to escape the bonds holding her down. "We were trying to civilize you...!"
«You call what you did to us 'civilizing', Amaunet?»

Hearing that voice made the possessed chief's daughter turn as white as a ghost. "Tash Ri...!"

Utako gaped in wide-eyed awe. "Rittmeister von Taserich...?"

«What a pathetic joke you just made.» As the security people looked around for the source of that voice, the effectively oldest living human being on Earth added, «We were doing quite fine before Ra and his ilk came to our world seeking new host bodies since the Unas weren't sufficient enough for them. And while your need to possess others is understandable, why didn't you listen to Egeria in the first place and seek out WILLING hosts? Egeria and her kin have been quite successful in that regard. Look at the example of how Selmak merged with Samantha Carter's father a year ago? You could have easily done the same thing. If you — and Apophis — had done that, then all the objections concerning your child Shifu would be erased and your race could actually evolve. You wonder why the Children of the Forge look DOWN upon you?» As Amaunet gargled on realizing that the most deadly enemy the Goa'uld ever faced on Earth knew of her child, the man known these days as Josef von Taserich added, «Thanks to what that fool Telchak created, your kind have been KILLING yourselves every time you expose your minds to the false mesonium you call 'naquadah'. It is fortunate that whoever is the Healer of Destruction today is making sure that your foolish mistakes will not harm those you've enslaved or anyone else.»

If Amaunet had been pale before, she was now grey with mortal terror. "Batae Erba...?!" she hissed out. "No! You must help us, Tash Ri...!"

"Why?"

Hearing that voice in the clear, everyone perked, then Hammond turned around...

...before he straightened himself and saluted the middle-aged man in the rather dated normal clothing standing by the whiteboard at one end of the room, an amused smirk on his face which was barely masked by his well-trimmed moustache and goatee. Noting the more classic sideburns a man might have worn in the late Victorian era when the German Empire had just been united in the wake of the Franco-Prussian War and the miniaturized badges of the Orden Pour le Mérite and the Star of the Grand Cross of the Iron Cross on his left breast pocket — both won for his participation in leading Prussia's metahuman forces during the Napoleonic Wars — Hammond nodded in admiration. Regardless of the man's ultimately grief-induced actions in World War Two, there was no question that if Taserich had been an American, he would have won the Medal of Honour in some action or another.

"Herr Rittmeister, welcome to Stargate Command," the veteran pilot declared as he offered his hand as the fisherman from Rügen during a warm period during the Weichselian High Glacial age came over.

"My thanks, Herr Generalmajor," Taserich stated as he gazed in amusement at the human-form ship spirit in a now-organic battle doll body and the youngest of his spiritual "granddaughter's" adopted sisters. Nodding as Hinako gave him a kind smile, he then focused on the stasis bucket hanging from Utako's hand. "You seem to have done a lot of fishing today, Frau Fregattenkapitän Kisaragi."

"Loads of snakies for U-chan and U-chan's sisters to eat, Herr Rittmeister!" Utako said as she held up the bucket to display the frozen symbiotes within.
Seeing that, Amaunet shrieked. "**KEK'ULD! YOU'LL NEVER GET AWAY WITH THIS...!**"

"Do be quiet, Amaunet."

The possessed chief's daughter's voice was cut off by Taserich, who only had to use a small amount of his unbelievable power to silence her. "Sir, could you please remove this thing from Doctor Jackson's wife?" one of the security officers then pleaded. "Given how much she loves to scream all the time..."

"Ah! So that's why you spared this one," the immortal Pomeranian baron mused as he concentrated for a moment, his hand reaching towards her.

Sha're's body shuddered for a moment before the writhing form of Amaunet was phased right out of her neck through her mouth. "Ah! Snaky to eat!" Utako called out as she moved to snare the struggling symbiote and put it in her bucket...

...before a hand snared it, then yanked it over to plunge the head right into Dionne Doolittle's mouth. As Utako cried out at the transformed aircraft carrier's theft of the prized symbiote, Hinako made a face. "Eeew! You eat it RAW, Dionne-san?!" she moaned before looking away. "Hina's gonna be sick!"

A wailing scream echoed through the air as Sha're seemed to collapse in the arms of her captors while Dionne munched down the symbiote. "Oh! Nice and aged! Tasty, too!" she gasped after swallowing what was left before a belch escaped her. "Oh! Excuse me!" she said with a red face.

"Please tell me we had someone FILM that!"

As people turned to see Jack O'Neill and the other members of SG-1 standing at the doorway, a voice then called out, "Always available for news, Jack-kun!"

Hammond spun around before he sighed. "Miss Asakura, would you PLEASE announce yourself next time?!!" he pleaded as Asakura Kazumi lowered her special video camera recorder. "Much that I'm sure Apophis will be *pleased...*" — everyone could sense the sarcasm in his voice on saying that word — "...to learn what happened to his wife, we do have security procedures to follow in this place."

Hearing that, the red-haired native of Niigata in the urban camouflage jumpsuit of the Voice of the Great Show of Life nodded. Honestly, when would people stop being so damned uptight when her "news sense" made her go out to look in on things that would interest people back on Yiziba and among the Gifted here on Earth? "Hai! Hai!" she called out before she perked as a moan escaped the slowly-recovering Sha're. "Ah! Time for a Kodak moment...!" she sing-songed.

Immediately, Daniel Jackson was at her side as the two security personnel moved to remove the restraints; given the presence of both Dionne and Utako, any surprises that Amaunet might have left behind in her host's body could be neutralized quickly. As a pained moan escaped the chief's daughter from Abydos, Hammond walked over to kneel in front of her. "Are you alright, Mrs. Jackson?" the general calmly asked, making her stare in confusion at him.

"Who...?" she rasped before her eyes focused on the man now holding her before a grin crossed her face. "Husband...!" she moaned as she slumped against him.

As a relieved wail escaped her, people fell respectfully silent...

...before a quiet knock echoed from the door, revealing the presence of Master Sergeant Walter
Harriman, the senior airman in charge of operating the Stargate's dialing computer here at Colorado Springs. As everyone looked at him, the bespectacled balding native of Swansea in southwest Illinois bowed his head as Jackson moved to get his weeping wife over to a chair while being helped by Samantha Carter. "Excuse me, General, but the officer of the watch is wondering what we're supposed to do with Captain Doolittle's friends," he said, making people gape.

Hammond blinked before he gazed on Dionne. "Captain, care to explain?!

The red-haired aircraft carrier-turned-twenty-something woman sputtered in obvious surprise. "I was the only one who deployed here when I sensed the lar'beke infiltrating the base, sir!" she instantly declared. "I swear to you, sir, the others elected to remain at Bikini!"

"How many others, Captain?! I think they would have appreciated if you had told us about their transformation so we could get them fed!"

"Shirayuki-chan could feed them all!" Hinako then piped in.

That made people blink. "How many altogether, Dionne?" O'Neill asked.

The adopted native of Saratoga Springs in New York (her namesake town) and Camden in New Jersey across from Philadelphia (her place of construction) hummed. "Well, outside our missing heavy cruiser from Germany, we have one light aircraft carrier, five battleships including one Japanese, two heavy cruisers, one Japanese light cruiser, thirteen destroyers and seven submarines, Colonel. Plus five Japanese destroyers who came as soon as the last of us found ourselves getting our extra powers by that god-like voice; they all came from Japan, having assumed human form about a week ago."

"What class are they from, Captain?" Carter asked.

"Kamikaze-class. Kamikaze, Asakaze, Harukaze, Matsukaze and Hamakaze."

Hearing that, people sighed. "Is this EVER going to end?!" O'Neill wondered before he gazed at Hinako. "Looks like you're up, kid!" the leader of SG-1 bade.

"Hai! Hai!" the Spirit of Innocence declared...

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The embarkation room, that moment...

"They're all of the fucking Army Air Forces?! Where the hell are the damned Marines?! They can guard this damned thing WAY better!"

As the security personnel winced on hearing that admonishment from the woman with the long twintailed blonde hair and the blue eyes, the more scholarly-looking woman with the brown hair done up in a bun at the back of the head and the matching eyes behind safety goggles sighed. "Honestly, Nevada, stop that!" she admonished as she gave the older battleship-turned-twenty-something woman a scolding look. "It's good that the junior service has progressed very well." As all the Air Force people present perked on hearing that, she added, "Given this device can connect our planet to other words, its operation should logically fall in the area of responsibility of the Army Air Forces, not the Navy..."

"Um...it's just the 'United States Air Force' now, ma'am."

That was the master sergeant in charge of the detail watching over the thirty-four women standing on
or to either side of the embarking ramp leading to the Stargate. While all the security personnel were holding their carbines at port arms, they were relaxed enough that even the five Japanese teenage women in the older-model Yizibajohei jumpsuit style — one with very flared sleeves and bell-bottom trousers that made them look like alien martial artists — had no reason to concentrate on them even if they stood protectively close to the twenty-something raven-haired woman with the chestnut brown eyes possessing the bearing of someone who was clearly used to being in charge of things, she currently accompanied by a younger woman with short-cropped lavender hair and matching eyes that seemed quite scared of something while she hovered close to her old fleet mate. "Oh, I apologize," the woman with the proud ship name USS PENNSYLVANIA over BB 38 on her ship's crest stated with a polite smile, making the sergeant blush. "It has been some years."

"So how come we're smelling snakes all over this place?"

That was the very slender woman with the black skinsuit that looked like something a deep sea diver would wear on a trip to the depths; not even her footwear were the flared buccaneer boots that the other transformed warships had. She had short-cropped two-tone hair, a mixture of gold and brown in reflection of her namesake ray fish, a pair of almost black eyes peeking out of a very tanned face; she wasn't African by any stretch of the imagination, but could be mistaken for a native of Hawai'i. In addition to her new ship's crest on her chest, she also bore the proud hull classification symbol number 305 in white on her upper arms and thighs. "Hai, Skate-dono, there is the filthy stench of the lar'beke here," one of the Japanese women in the traditional battledress said as she scanned the room, her nose flaring. She was a tomboyish girl as people who did understand Japanese could sense by the more mannish tone in her voice and words, possessing shaggy black hair, light blue eyes taking in everything in around her. Her uniform composed of a white top and dark green trousers, the intertwined kanji 松風 on her chest in white-trimmed green over a pine tree in full bloom, displayed in natural colours.

"What do you mean by 'lar'beke', ma'am?" one of the junior airmen asked.

"They call themselves 'Goa'uld' as a race," the raven-haired Japanese twenty-something woman with the black-and-dark grey jumpsuit bearing the intertwined kanji 長門 in black-piped grey on her chest over the red-and-white mon of the Mōri Clan of Chōshū that had ruled her namesake province at the west end of Honshū throughout the Tokugawa period declared in a cold, analytical voice. "Pretending to be actual kami when they invade planets like the planet that gave us our current hulls, enslaving and killing innocent people by the millions because they simply have the power to do so..."

"We've been fighting them for at least four years, Captain Yamamoto."

People blinked, then they turned to see a smiling woman walk into the room, dressed in the two-tone blue dress uniform of the majority of the officers in this place, captain's bars on the epaulettes of her doctor's smock slung over her shoulders. Hearing that name applied to her, the living kami of THG Nagato then asked, "'Captain Yamamoto'? I don't understand, Doctor."

Doctor Janet Fraiser smiled as the younger-looking women all gave her respectful looks on seeing the Medical Corps badge on her smock pocket, the ones in the more traditional battlesuits bowing deeply to this pretty thirty-something officer. "Well, do you see yourself as a physical battleship, ma'am?" the brown-haired native of Washington state asked as she gazed down at the battleship-turned-twenty-something woman's ample bust line. As the reincarnated flagship of the Combined Fleet at the time of the Pearl Harbour attack in 1941 blushed at that comment and some of the people in the monitor room snickered at that reaction, Fraiser added, "The man who became the unofficial admiral of a lot of your fleet mates plus a selection of shipgirls from your old allies in Germany came up with human names for all of you so that you could fit in much better as you are now." That wasn't the exact truth, Fraiser knew, but she didn't want to confuse these poor women about concepts such
As Reiko blinked while her eyes teared at the fact that her return as a human had been expected—and even better, APPROVED of! — by the Son of Heaven himself, the tomboyish raven-haired destroyer protecting her hummed. "Truly this admiral is a very wise man. I only pray that there is such a kind man among the good citizens of your land, Sensei, to serve as an admiral for our good friends here..."

"I think there's a few good candidates, Commander Taruka."

That made the living spirit of the destroyer Matsukaze blink. "Taruka'?"

"Ah! Fraiser-sensei! No fair! Hina wants to tell them their names!"

People turned around...

...then the Japanese destroyers and the one light cruiser present all screamed out "KAWAII!" on seeing Saeru Hinako come in, escorted by Dionne Doolittle and Kisaragi Utako.

The Spirit of Innocence yelped in surprise as the five conservatively-dressed destroyers surged over to boost her off the floor and plant her on their shoulders. As the American shipgirls gaped at such a show of motherly caring towards this little cute girl, a gargled breath escaped the just-named battleship standing close to the Stargate itself as she stared in wide-eyed awe at Saeru Hinako. As people fell silent, Reiko started to hyperventilate before a look of sheer BLISS crossed her face.

"So cute...!"

And down she went! As people gaped at the sight of the flagship of the Combined Fleet at Pearl Harbour being poleaxed like that, Hinako blinked. "Hina didn't do it!"

People turned to stare at the Spirit of Innocence while a wide-eyed Reiko convulsed on the boarding ramp as if she was in the middle of having a diabetic fit...

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Ōmure-jima, Welcome House, an hour before supper (Colorado time: Saturday morning, an hour after midnight)...

"MORE?!"

"Yeah, Ataru. More."

Hearing that declaration from the leader of SG-1, Moroboshi Ataru moaned before his forehead smacked into the circular table in the middle of the dining room. Seeing that, Jack O'Neill shook his head. "You know, much that I understand you're trying to live your life the way you want to live it..."

"This is karma biting my ass for our not watching our back a year ago," Ataru groaned.

"Yeah," the pararescueman from Minnesota breathed out.
The younger man shook his head. "Thanks, Jack. I needed that."

"Oh, stop that, Onii-sama!"

Both turned as Sukeyama Sakuya came into the room, she accompanied by two smiling teenage women in fashionable Western clothing, one raven-haired beauty with stormy grey eyes and a very intelligent brown-haired woman with matching eyes, both walking in hand-in-hand. "We heard your harem has grown quite exponentially since we last talked," Pansy Parkinson gently teased as she and Hermione Granger moved to sit off to the Terran tag race champion's left. "Care to share?"

"If you would take some of these girls off my hands, Pansy-chan, I would be a very happy man," Ataru moaned as O'Neill laughed while Sakuya ducked into the kitchen to prepare tea for the second heiress of the Parkinson Clan of Keerford and the normal-born dentists' daughter from Crawley. "I'm just waiting for the special to break out on CNN that the wreck of the Arizona has disappeared from under the memorial at Pearl. Uncle Jed won't like seeing that, I'll bet."

"Any idea what's happening here, ladies?" O'Neill asked.

Both of them nodded politely at the leader of America's primary extraterrestrial exploration team, a group that even was known among the magical enclaves of Europe thanks to vivid reports of SG-1's operations relayed to the magical news media thanks to the American Department of Magic via liaison officers between Stargate Command and the Seventh Cavalry Division, the United States Army's primary magical combat formation whose plank owners had won their spurs during the latter years of the European side of the Wars of Liberation. "Honestly, Colonel, your guess is as good as ours," Hermione stated as Sakuya came in with a tray carrying some tea. As the dentists' daughter nodded her thanks, she added, "Our research group looking into the resurrection of the ship spirits as metahumans created sensors that could tap into the Trace network that detects underage magic use. We picked up three such ships returning back close to Britain, two in the North Sea a month ago and one in the North Atlantic off Brittany yesterday. The sheer power of that last one was just enormous."

Ataru smirked as he straightened himself. "I know exactly who you're talking about, Mione-chan." He then looked over his shoulder towards the open doorway leading into the rotunda. "Luisa-san! Liese-san! Melanie-san!" he called out. "Some fans of yours are here!"

Pansy and Hermione blinked as Sakuya giggled and O'Neill shook his head before footfalls echoed from the foyer. "What is the matter, mein Admiral?" a powerful woman's voice called out as three women came into the room, all dressed in rather plain women's clothing even the elder of the two and the short-haired teenager wore slacks in lieu of a flowing calf-length skirt as the other girl wore.

The newcomers from Hogwarts looked over, then Pansy gasped. "YOU!"

Hermione moaned as her lover pointed at the tomboyish silver-haired woman who had just come into the room. "Your pardon, meine Frau, but we've never met," she stated as she peered intently at the second heiress of one of magical Britain's richest families. "I'm sure we've never met..."

"Pansy...!" Hermione gently scolded.

Pansy found herself blushing. "I apologize, miss. I have the powers to control the very shadows themselves and I use them to spy on my parents' many 'friends' who now support Herr Vizeminister Grindelwald's successor as this generation's magical dark lord," the current incarnation of the Shadow Hunter, Semtato ("Silhouette"), said with a flustered face as the tomboy's obvious sister moved to bring a chair over so Lieselotte Maab to sit close to her questioner. As Luisa von Bismarck took her own seat to O'Neill's right while Melanie Schultz stood protectively close to her, Pansy
added, "Through my shadow-spies, I saw you in action just as you were Gifted at the beach near Whitby a month ago. You stumbled onto a meeting of the various werewolf packs of Britain that night."

"Ach!" the destroyer-turned-teenage girl trilled out, nodding in understanding before a churlish smile crossed her face. "I thought there was something more to those shadows when I was busy fighting those sabbernde tollwütige Hunde!" Her eyebrow arched. "Was there a reason you were sending your scouts to observe that particular rape party that evening, meine Frau?"

"What rape party, Lieselotte?" Luisa asked in a cold voice.

Lieselotte looked over. "Shortly after my Gifting, I heard children cry out in fear near the beach where I decided to come ashore to get my bearings and determine what to do next, meine Flagschiff," she explained. "There, I found several dozen Werwölfe having a clan gathering revel of some sort; some of my crew were nimmagier, so I recognized what they were doing. The leader of this lot was a filthy creature — the pack alpha, I would assume — who was singing the praises of a 'dark lord' he liked very much. The children — all younger than Markgräfin Hinako, in fact! — were to be made into new Werwölfe to serve his principal. Naturally, given they were about to be raped, I defended their honour."

"What did she do, Pansy?" O'Neill asked.

"Well, the full moon was coming on, so they were about to transform, thus allow their infection to be passed on to their new victims," Pansy said. "When she arrived, Greyback realized what she was right away and ordered his people to attack her to transform her; after all, a METAHUMAN werewolf would be quite the ace card for Riddle to use in his war against the Ministry. Of course, given how strong and invulnerable your fleet mate is, their bites didn't even crease her skin even as their teeth and jaws were broken when they bit her." As the leader of SG-1 laughed on hearing that, the Shadow Hunter added, "When Greyback tried to wrestle her down, she grabbed him by the teeth and YANKED HIS FACE APART!" As Hermione giggled and Ataru laughed on hearing that, Pansy said, "When the aurors showed up the next morning to see them all slaughtered like that, half of them lost their breakfasts! I'm sure a lot of people across Britain lost theirs when they saw that on the front pages of the Daily Prophet!" She then gazed at Lieselotte. "Where did you take the children, by the way?"

"To the office of the Magische Bundespolizei on Heligoland," the first of her class of destroyers said. "The nimmagier in my crew know how corrupt the law enforcement authorities are in your country, so I felt it was proper to get those poor ones over to my nation so they could be properly cared for."

"Amazing that for all the crap he caused, Master Gellert actually made things so nice for magicals and normals alike in Germany," Hermione noted.

"What's going on with the yearly sacrifice, by the way?" Sakuya asked; the Healer of Men's Hearts had kept silent as she listened to others talk about what was now called the "Whitby Werewolf Massacre".

Pansy and Hermione howled with laughter as O'Neill shook his head; try as he might, he could NEVER understand many British magicals. "'Yearly sacrifice', Frau Markgräfin?" Melanie asked.

"Hogwarts has a curse on one of its key teaching positions," the dentists' daughter from Crowley explained. "Defence Against the Dark Arts. We haven't had a teacher last a single year ever since Tom Riddle — he's the dark lord Greyback and his idiots your sister killed last month wanted to serve — tried to get the position back in the 1960s. It's got so bad there that we all jokingly call the new DADA teacher the 'yearly sacrifice' and run bets on what would happen to them by year's end.
Ever since Pansy and I started school, we've had ONE competent teacher...and he was a werewolf, in fact!"

"Isn't that dangerous?" Luisa asked.

"He took precautions, but a long-simmering feud between him and my head of house — he's also the potions teacher — saw him exposed at year's end," Pansy answered.

"Lupin wasn't anywhere close to where Liese-san was, was he?" Ataru wondered.

"He was at Grimmauld Place in London with his friend Sirius Black to wait out the full moon," Hermione answered. As she was the current Bright Seamstress of Spells, Myuno (the "Enchantress"), the use of a Fidelius Charm on the townhouse residence of one of magical Britain's oldest titled families by Albus Dumbledore to keep the location secret from the Death Eaters had no effect on her. "Once that was done, he would have tried to approach the fence-sitters to pull back from supporting Greyback. Of course, once he saw the pictures of what she did, he proceeded to try to track her down."

"If he's that hell-bent on dying..." Lieselotte warned.

"He's not evil by any stretch of the imagination," Pansy moderated. "He's one of a very few werewolves who actually had enough magic in him to accept being invited to Hogwarts. Professor Lupin's a real good man deep own even if he really looks down on himself and acts as if the world shines out of Dumbledore's arse all the time. Then again, it's probably a minor magical life debt he feels for getting the chance to make a name for himself despite his 'monthly furry problem'."


"Same man," Pansy provided. "So who are you guys, anyway?"

Introductions were then made...

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_In the highlands of Scotland, that moment (local time: Breakfast)..._

"Headmaster!"

Hearing that high pitched voice from the entrance to his office overlooking the vast grounds of the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, the elderly headmaster of Britain's wand-magical school politely smiled, one that didn't reach his twinkling blue eyes. "Madame Umbridge, a good morning to you," Albus Dumbledore declared before sipping his tea. "What seems to be the issue?"

"One of your muggleborn students is missing this morning, Headmaster," Dolores Umbridge declared as she looked haughtily at the man who had defeated Gellert Grindelwald and frightened Tom Riddle enough to keep the rebellion the man known more commonly as "Voldemort" from turning into another magical world war at the same scale as the Wars of Liberation that paralleled the Second World War. "Miss Granger from Ravenclaw. Professor Flitwick refuses to tell me where she is. If she does not return to the castle immediately, I will suspend her Hogsmeade privileges and have her in detention..."

"You cannot do that, Madame Umbridge."

The High Inquisitor's eyes flared with outrage. "Of COURSE I can!"
"No, you cannot. Miss Granger is listed in the Annex to the Magical Royal Proclamation of 1949 vis-à-vis the Specialized Warfare Act. Mister Holmes recalled her to London this weekend for consultations."

Silence.

More silence.

Still more silence.

Then...

"WHAT?! Since when do we allow METAHUMANS to come to this school?!" she shrieked.

"Since she was Gifted well AFTER she was invited," Dumbledore stated as he gave her a look more befitting to a very inept student. Which in many ways, the half-blood janitor's daughter from London had been when she herself attended Hogwarts in the late 1960s, the headmaster then recalled. "I suspect Miss Granger met Miss Katabarbe sometime before her invite to the school; Miss Granger became Gifted in the wake of the incident concerning the Chamber of Secrets in 2009, after she was frozen by whatever beast had been unleashed by Lucius Malfoy on the muggleborns..."

"Ridiculous!" Umbridge spat out. "Lucius is one of the most upstanding citizens in our community! This accusation made by Mister Longbottom concerning what happened in the spring is just a delusion...!"

"Shall we ask Madame Longbottom on her opinion of that, Dolores?"

That made the senior undersecretary's breath catch in her throat as the nature of THAT threat sank into her. Despite all her power and influence in the Ministry, Umbridge had no real weight she could throw against the major leaders of the Wizengamot, of which Neville Longbottom's grandmother Augusta was one of the top-ranked members given her position as Regent Lady of one of the seven magical marquessates that formed the top tier of wizarding Britain's legislative body. To even think of trying her normal tricks on the future Marquess of Holdenhurst would be political suicide even if Umbridge had the backing of the current Minister for Magic, Cornelius Fudge, and his allies like Lucius Malfoy.

Shaking her head, she turned to leave. "Mister Holmes has no right to draw any student from this school even if he or she is subject to that particular muggle act, Headmaster. I'll have to review Miss Granger's right to actually attend classes here. I honestly wish something could be done about that Katabarbe woman. The sheer level of the disruption she's caused..."

"Given that Tariko is a reality warper whose total power outstrips that of even Rittmeister von Taserich, I doubt you'd survive such an encounter with her, Dolores," Dumbledore coldly warned, making Umbridge wince on hearing the steel in the old arch-mage's voice, one that had cowed HUNDREDS over the last few decades. "And kindly keep such a fight scene — to borrow the Yizibajohei term for that type of confrontation — out of the school. It's bad enough that you've come here in complete defiance of the school charter by still holding your position as Cornelius' senior undersecretary while serving as a professor. I don't have the allies necessary among the Board to have you dismissed given all the complaints I've heard about your detentions and your clear bias towards the muggleborns." His eyes then narrowed as he coldly added, "You have many secrets of your own, young lady."

As Umbridge squawked on hearing that unspoken threat from the former Chief Wizard of the Wizengamot, the headmaster's face turned back to his normal congenial smile. "Now, if you'll excuse
me, this parchmentwork won't go away on its own. Do have a good weekend, Dolores."

As the "yearly sacrifice" scrambled out of the office, Fawkes warbled in amusement as Dumbledore shook his head. He then perked on sensing someone very powerful teleport in. "It's almost time, Professor," a strange woman's voice then declared as someone in a red hooded cloak stepped out of the shadows to stand close to the window. "By this time on Monday, Tom will be no more."

Hearing that, Dumbledore gazed on the woman who had been born the Boy Who Lived, a child he had miserably failed right from the moment s/he had been orphaned at Godric's Hollow on All Hallows Eve in 1996. "Praise the Fates for that small favour at least!" he said as he offered his bowl of lemon drops to his new guest. "Is Thérèse ready to deal with her other-self, Rose?"

The current incarnation of Yiziba's sorcerer supreme, Lokrole (the "Warlock"), smirked while taking one of the sour candies in hand, her green eyes glittering with the power of the typhoon of magic that swirled deep in her body. "That could be said," Rose Potter declared with a cold smile...

*To Be Continued...*

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**WRITER'S NOTES**

As established in *The Senior Year*, recognition is an ability Vosians and those descent of Vos have when it comes to seeking out one's perfect mate after they advance into puberty. It's a telekinetically-based ability that locks on a mate's DNA and other attributes which is said to be so strong and so perfect, it was the source of a saying that is quite popular among Nassur's people: "Recognition does not lie". Mike Smith based this on a similar concept shown among elves in *ElfQuest*, created by Wendy and Richard Pini. By comparison, the urge to seek out one's marei'cha among Sagussans and those descent of Sagussa is an empathic talent which locks in on the emotional and psychological compatibility of the mate's souls. This is the primary reason that Sagussans are as a whole bisexual while Vosians are almost universally heterosexual with a very small homosexual minority; bisexuality doesn't occur among pureblood Vosians but does appear among those descent from other races.

The events of the Remnant War will be covered in the *Of Gifts and Semblances* side story planned for this series. The Camelot Wondercolts will appear in the *Friendship is Yizibajohei* side story also planned for this series. Both will be published soon.

Akisur first appeared in *The Senior Year* story "Great Father Ataru Stage Seven: Rebirth". The Majujjō were first mentioned in "My Darlings United"; there, Moroboshi Kaeru mistook Cherry as one.

The Goa'uld nicknames mentioned here: Shatan'af ("devil head") for the Urusians, Djaf'kalach ("ice souls") for the Nagussans, Kal'ma Ra'kalach ("children of the souls of the sun") for the Avalonians and E'ounou ("holy devil") for the Niphentaxians.

Translation list: Matoi — Signal staff; Ch'uokyek — Great Dragon; Ib'f — Dragon; Shōshō — Navy rear admiral/Army major general/Air Force air vice-marshal; Hakase — University professor; Generalmajor — Major general; Taisa — Navy captain/Army colonel/Air Force group captain; Vizeminister — Vice Minister; Sabbernde tollwütige Hunde — Drooling, rabid dogs; Flaggschiff — Flagship; Werwölfe — Werewolves; Markgräfin — Literally "countess of the march", the equivalent of a marchioness (a female marquess) in the British noble system; Magische
Stargate SG-1 minor character notes: **Nirrti** first appeared in the third episode of the third season, "Fair Game"; she was first mentioned in the fifteenth episode of the first season, "Singularity". It was also in "Singularity" that **Cassandra Fraiser** first appeared; her adopted mother Doctor **Janet Fraiser** first appeared in the fifth episode of the first season, "The Broca Divide". **Sha're** was first introduced in the original movie Stargate; she would appear in the television series in the series premiere, "Children of the Gods". It was in that episode that Sha're was possessed by Apophis' wife **Amaunet**. **Egeria** first appeared in the tenth episode of the sixth season, "Cure". **Selmac** first appeared in the two-part episode "The Tok'ra" (eleventh and twelfth episodes of the second season); its current host and Samantha Carter's father Major General **Jacob Carter** first appeared in the ninth episode of the second season, "Secrets". Apophis' and Amaunet's son **Shifu** also had his first appearance in "Secrets". **Telchak** was first mentioned in the two-part episode "Evolution" (eleventh and twelfth episodes of the seventh season). **Walter Harriman** was a minor background character throughout the series.

Note that the events in the tenth episode of the third season "Forever in a Day" went differently as was depicted in the television episode itself given the interference of **Doctor Renaissance** (Isaac Thomas).

**Josef von Taserich** (born Tash Ri) first appeared in *Wizards and Avalonians III*.

The list of shipgirls who show up or were mentioned in the scenes at Stargate Command with their human names, hull classification codes and honorary ranks:

- Captain **Dionne Doolittle** USN (United States Ship Saratoga [CV-3])
- CAPT **Rayne Warner** USN (United States Ship Independence [CVL-22])
- CAPT **Jane Sevier** USN (United States Ship Arkansas [BB-33])
- CAPT **Yvette Stuyvesant** USN (United States Ship New York [BB-34])
- CAPT **Sarah Blasdel** USN (United States Ship Nevada [BB-36])
- CAPT **Margaret Penn** USN (United States Ship Pennsylvania [BB-38])
- **Yamamoto Reiko**-taisa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan Nagato [BB-22])
- **Yamamoto Chiyoko**-taisa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan Mutsu [BB-23])
- CAPT **Amber Seligman** USN (United States Ship Pensacola [CA-24])
- CAPT **Julie Budge** USN (United States Ship Salt Lake City [CA-25])
- **Ōkawa Sakura**-taisa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan Sakawa [CL-51])
- Commander **Alexandra Anderson** USN (United States Ship Anderson [DD-411])
- CDR **Gwenaëlle Conyngham** USN (United States Ship Conyngham [DD-371])
- CDR **Melodie Hughes** USN (United States Ship Hughes [DD-410])
- CDR **Hallie Lamson** USN (United States Ship Lamson [DD-367])
- CDR **Julia Mayrant** USN (United States Ship Mayrant [DD-402])
- CDR **Joan Mugford** USN (United States Ship Mugford [DD-389])
- CDR **Crystal Mustin** USN (United States Ship Mustin [DD-413])
- CDR **Rhonda Talbot** USN (United States Ship Ralph Talbot [DD-390])
- CDR **Colleen Rhind** USN (United States Ship Rhind [DD-404])
- CDR **Eileen Stack** USN (United States Ship Stack [DD-406])
- CDR **Johanna Trippe** USN (United States Ship Trippe [DD-403])
- CDR **Amelia Wainwright** USN (United States Ship Wainwright [DD-419])
- CDR **Charlotte Wilson** USN (United States Ship Wilson [DD-408])
Taruka Keiko-chūsa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan Kamikaze [DD-132])
Taruka Asami-chūsa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan Asakaze [DD-133])
Taruka Haruka-chūsa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan Harukaze [DD-134])
Taruka Tsukiko-chūsa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan Matsukaze [DD-135])
Taruka Takako-chūsa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan Hatakaze [DD-136])
Lieutenant Commander Paula Schoeni USN (United States Submarine Apogon [SS-308])
LCDR Sydney McCain USN (United States Submarine Dentuda [SS-335])
LCDR Lana Ramage USN (United States Submarine Parche [SS-384])
LCDR Rosemary Close USN (United States Submarine Pilotfish [SS-386])
LCDR Brenda McKinney USN (United States Submarine Skate [SS-305])
LCDR Charlene Freeman USN (United States Submarine Skipjack [SS-184])
LCDR Julia Crane USN (United States Submarine Tuna [SS-203])

Of course, USS Saratoga (Dionne Doolittle) and TH Gunkan-tachi Nagato (Yamamoto Reiko),
Sakawa (Ōkawa Sakura), Kamikaze (Taruka Keiko), Asakaze (Taruka Asami), Harukaze
(Taruka Haruka), Matsukaze (Taruka Tsukiko) and Hatakaze (Taruka Takako) all resemble
their Kantai Collection interpretations, as would THG Mutsu (Yamamoto Chiyoko) when she
finally appears in this story. US Ships Independence (Rayne Warner), Pensacola (Amber
Seligman) and Salt Lake City (Julie Budge) take after their Azur Lane interpretations. And US
Ships Pennsylvania (Margaret Penn) and Nevada (Sarah Blasdel) take after the interpretations
made for them in the KanColle fan production Pacific: World War II US Navy Shipgirls. The
physical looks of the other shipgirls appearing here will be of my own creation.

The Mōri Clan of Chōshū was the noble family that governed Nagato Province during the
Tokugawa period. Today, the territory of said province forms the majority of the territory of
Yamaguchi Prefecture at the west end of Honshū.
Chapter Summary

Umbridge and Fudge have bad days, Ginny and Luna reminisce about how they got together and how Rose (Harry) began to create her future wife Thérèse (Tom)... and Amy (Ark Royal) and Akemi (Akebono) dispose of some staleblood trash...!

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Married students' quarters at Hogwarts (close to Ravenclaw Tower), breakfast...

"Luna...!"

Luna Lovegood perked on hearing her lover mew from what her fingers were now doing, then she sighed. "Relax, Ginny," she cooed as her hands drifted to very sensitive places on her wife's body. "I know. Rose is clearly excited to finally put down that silly death-cheater."

Hearing that, Ginny Weasley moaned as she allowed her face to be buried into one of the pillows. "I want to have Rose's first baby!" she whined.

The present incarnation of the Far Seer of the Cosmic Mage Guild, Yudim ("Prophecy"), chuckled as she reached over to gently stroke her wife's nexus, making the woman who was the current incarnation of the Mistress of the Fires of Passion, Dumta ("Soulfire"), croak in orgasmic delight. "Don't I fill you with joy every time I use my little love engine inside you, Ginny?"

Ginny nodded. "You do...but I still owe Rose the Life Debt, Luna..."

"As does Thérèse," Luna reminded her. "Remember, the instant Tom made his first soul-split when Myrtle was killed in 1943, he set himself on the path that would see the true core of Tom reborn as Thérèse once Harry became Rose and was Gifted. Given how Harry was practically abandoned by our society when he was dumped on the Dursleys after Tom so nicely disembodied himself, Rose has no real care about our culture. She won't fight the fight scene the Old Man wants her to fight. Especially if our 'wise elders' ALLOW the Toad to run rampant over the kids here." A lethal smile then crossed the spacey blonde with the blue-grey eyes. "Still, it does give us interesting fight scenes now."

Ginny snorted. She and Luna had always been very close, even after the point when Tariko Katabarbe rescued Luna's mother Pandora from her potions accident in 2006, then persuaded the daughter of the owner of the Quibbler to become Prophecy. When they first came to Hogwarts in what would have been Rose's second year in 2008, Ginny was sorted to Gryffindor and Luna to Ravenclaw. However, thanks to the machinations of Lucius Malfoy, a certain soul-anchor hidden in an old diary that had been slipped into Ginny's belongings began to exert influence on the youngest
of the Weasley Clan of Ottery Saint Catchpole, which wound up provoking an interesting fight scene in the Chamber of Secrets...

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_Underneath Hogwarts, Friday 29 Mary 2009, early afternoon..._

"« Wow! You're sure a big one, aren't you?! Pretty one, too! »"

Hearing that voice from somewhere close to the entrance of the central Chamber, the version of Tom Riddle which had been broken away from the core soul of the being who would call himself "Voldemort" many decades ago in the heart of the Second World War spun around as someone stepped. Blinking on seeing the sweeping floor-length cape, Tom then gaped on noting that cloak was a brilliant crimson shade lined in gold runes, that covering the shoulders of a girl a little older than the stupid blood traitor he used to try to restore himself to life. Said girl was dressed in a form-fitting sleeveless jumpsuit in matching dark red with gold belt and boots of a cut and style that made the orphaned last living heir of Salazar Slytherin pale on remembering the fighting costumes many "mystery men" that haunted North America and Europe in the years leading up to the Second World War wore, especially those who had fought the metahuman allies of Gellert Grindelwald, the Übermenschen Gruppe.

Once the head came out of the dark shadows that covered the Chamber like a shroud to reveal a familiar face with shaggy black hair and brilliant green eyes behind what appeared to be welder's goggles, Tom blinked...then gaped as he realized this was a GIRL and not a young boy.

"Harry Potter...?" he hissed out.

The newcomer blinked. "Once. No more." She then perked as the basilisk that just emerged from the hidden chamber behind Slytherin's image on the south wall of the Chamber moved to strike down the unconscious girl in Ravenclaw blue-and-silver lying nearby, near another girl in Gryffindor crimson-and-gold. "So what in the name of the Forge happened to _you_?" she asked before the basilisk hissed. "« Hey! »" she hissed out in parseltongue, which made the ancient snake stop and stare in confusion at her. "« You don't want to bite or eat her, »" the newcomer then advised. "« She's full of mesonium crystals in her blood. All it'll do is undo all the magic your old owner used on you and hurt you. »"

The basilisk's eyes went wide on hearing of the accursed crystals that flowed through the blood of the ONE being those like its owner back in the Tenth Century feared above all else, then it focused on the Speaker that just arrived before it nodded as it shuffled away from her. "« Smart, »" the newcomer said before she focused on the now-solid ghost of Tom Riddle as he had appeared when he was in his OWL year. "So what happened to you?" she then asked. "How come you're very disembodied right now?"

Surprised at such a friendly tone of voice, Tom relaxed himself. "I'm trying to make myself a proper body so I can restore myself to proper life," he said as he wondered how on Earth he could manipulate this strange girl into helping him or convince her to stay out of his way. "I'd rather not want to live in a diary listening to a petty girl write about her missing 'boy who lived' all the time!" Would saying that trigger a reaction in this newcomer, who seemed awfully similar to the boy rumoured to have destroyed his other-self over a decade ago even if the telltale 'sig' rune scar over the right eye was missing...?

The newcomer then nodded. "Oh, you're a horcrux, right? I understand." She then blinked as something came to her. "Tom Riddle?" she asked.
"Yes."

That made her grin. "Oh, good! I found you!"

That response was...unexpected. "You found me?!"

"Sure! The part of you that was still in your old body tried to make me face my death scene when I was a baby so he could make his sixth horcrux; you know about the number seven and how it influences magic here on Earth, right?" As Tom immediately nodded, quite surprised at such candour from the young girl, she shrugged. "Well, after a friend of mine pulled me out of a house full of the most rhabdophobic muggles you could EVER imagine meeting...!" She made a disgusted face. "Would you believe they spent the better part of six years trying to beat the magic out of me, Tom?! You lived in that orphanage down in London after your mom passed away, right?" At Tom's feeble nod, the girl shrugged. "Well, when I got my gift, I had to be a girl because my last-self was a boy. Good-bye, Harry Potter! Hello, Rose Potter, the Warlock! But don't worry! Thérèse — that's what I call the part of you that wound up in my head — got a new body thanks to a friend. But I have to find the other horcruxes and put them into her to make her feel whole and complete! And look here! I found you!"

With that, she made a gesture off to her right, causing a pentagram-shaped teleportation circle to appear about a metre away. As Tom watched in wide-eyed disbelief and with a healthy dose of fear — after all, he had gone way out of his way to become immortal to ultimately AVOID being put back together where he could be killed! — a girl about the same age as Rose draped in a plain silvery jumpsuit then appeared as if she was rising up on a lift, possessing Mediterranean-tanned skin, silver hair done in pigtails and deep blue eyes. While a moan escaped the unconscious Luna Lovegood nearby, the newcomer shook her head...before she seemed to focus on the other part of her soul nearby. That made Tom croak in horror as the girl who now called herself "Thérèse Peverell" smiled.

"So incomplete..." she hissed in a faint voice...

"Oh, my! What have we here?!"

Rose blinked, then turned to gaze at the main entrance as a well-dressed wizard stepped in, holding one of those sticks magicals here used as foci for their powers. "Great!" Tom hissed. "Lockhart...!"

Rose blinked. "Gilderoy Lockhart?"

"The same!"

A look of cold fury then crossed Rose's face. "The rapist ?!"

That made Tom gape. "I didn't know that!"

"Naturally! You were possessing a freshman! Too young for this ponce!"

" OBLIVIATE! "

A bolt of energy lashed out at Rose's head. Before she could be hit by it, she swung her hand around to bat the spell away to slam against a nearby wall. Seeing that, the current Defence Against the Dark Arts teacher gaped in shock as Rose turned to fully face him. "Impressive! I'll have to add fighting a rogue metahuman into my next book there! Pity I can't allow you to report to Dumbledore about all the fun that I've had with all the pretty girls here! I hope you understand, of course! Now, if you will..."
His voice melted into an ear-piercing scream as his body began to quake...

...then he shuddered before his very skin and bones began to MELT into a gooey puddle of liquid at the foot of the Archangel of Mortality herself. "Pity that the Secretary of Magic's niece is a student here," Margo Black calmly said as the stench of rotting flesh filled the chamber, which made Luna groan. The Vermont-born living killing machine then focused on Tom before her eyebrow arched. "Oh, my! Another death cheater! This one part of your current work project, Rose?"

"Yeah!" Rose stated.

"Fine!" Here, Margo then gestured...

...and the diary that was lying on Ginny Weasley's chest was yanked away and flew right into the American's hand. "NO!" Tom shrieked...

...then he howled in mortal agony as Margo's necrosis power began to melt the diary's organic material and burn away the dark magic that he used to keep this soul container effectively intact for multiple decades. As he screamed for mercy and to be allowed to live, his semi-solid body began to melt into sparkles, such being pulled in like a tractor beam into the still form of Thérèse Peverell, flowing into her like a Fundy tide and causing her body to shudder as the mangled soul fragment animating a battle doll merged with the larger fragment from Voldemort's first horcrux. At the same time, Ginny cried out in pain as her body began to glow, causing Luna to stare in wide-eyed horror at her best friend. "Oh, dear...!" she grunted as she pulled out a black device with a glowing crystal on it. "Good thing I properly got you pre-Gifted, Ginny!" she said as she placed it on her neighbour's chest, then slapped it.

As the youngest child of Arthur and Molly Weasley was teleported out of the Chamber and sent to the Cave of the Future light-years away, the disintegrating Tom wailed in mortal agony as he felt all the magical links with Ginny snapped like very rotten twigs, then what was left of his soul fragment flowed into Thérèse as she collapsed to her knees, moaning in relief. The basilisk shrieked as it sensed its current master vanish like that, then it reared up to strike at the creature that killed it...

...just as another teleportation circle appeared next to Thérèse, revealing a very alive and VERY angry Ginny Weasley, now dressed in a jumpsuit and cape similar to what Rose was wearing, her hazel eyes now glowing with power the likes of which Voldemort could NEVER begin to imagine having.

"Oh, bugger...!" Rose moaned on seeing the signs of a very NASTY bout of Post-Gifting Shock raging like a tsunami through the new incarnation of Soulfire, then she magically drew Luna, Thérèse and Margo close to her before using another teleportation circle to get them clear.

"DIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIE...!"

The whole of the Chamber of Secrets was then inundated with a wall of meson-fuelled fiendfyre-like energy that turned the basilisk and what was left of Gilderoy Lockhart's body into instant ashes...!

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"To believe that not even the 'experts' in the Unspeakables figured it out," Ginny sighed as she shifted around to stare at the ceiling of their bedroom.

Both OWL-year girls giggled as they allowed their minds to magically touch the other woman's, their memories falling back on what came after the Chamber fight scene...
Of course, there had been no fear whatsoever about people who might object to the current graduate year students possessing metahuman levels of magic now attending Hogwarts. The Specialized Warfare Act of 1949 meant to govern Britain's metahuman population had been accompanied by a Magical Royal Proclamation released by King George VI which forced the Ministry of Magic to acknowledge that such beings were legally answerable to the Crown ONLY via the Royal Master of the Specialized Warfare Fencibles — now Mycroft Holmes, older brother of the famous Sherlock Holmes — and not any Minister for Magic such as Cornelius Fudge, to say anything of the Wizengamot.

Given how much of a money-hungry wuss Fudge was in the long term — as Ginny's father Arthur often loudly complained about to his wife Molly when his children could overhear them — that was something EVERY magical metahuman now living in Britain could be thankful for.

In the wake of the death of Gilderoy Lockhart, the destruction of Salazar Slytherin's ancient basilisk and the locating of the first of Voldemort's horcruxes to be fused into Thérèse Peverell's soul, Ginny spent some hours as Rose Potter's guest in the latter's family mansion in Somerset near Glastonbury to recover from her rushed Gifting, plus get explanations. After swearing herself to the service of the Cosmic Mage Guild — a magical oath even more demanding than an Unbreakable Vow — Ginny and Luna teleported back to Hogwarts, acting as if nothing had happened. Fortunately for the youngest daughter of Arthur and Molly Weasley, the whole thing about the Chamber and the "Heir of Slytherin" had been investigated by Luna with help from Rose from a distance and Hermione Granger until she herself was petrified at the start of May. When Ginny vanished and her brother Ronald — who helped Hermione with her investigation — went crazy trying to find her, going to Lockhart to get help, Luna used her meta-senses to seek out her best friend, then teleported down to the Chamber to rescue her. Sadly, she hadn't realized until Tom used Ginny's wand to stun her that the first of Voldemort's horcruxes had long suspected something was way off about the quirky blonde Ravenclaw freshman.

Fortunately, once it was revealed that Ginny hadn't been "taken" into the Chamber and that Ron had ultimately panicked over nothing at all — the youngest Weasley boy had been found unconscious at the site where Myrtle Warren had been killed in 1943; people later came to believe Lockhart had stunned him before disappearing — the staff relaxed. Of course, with no physical evidence of a horcrux present thanks to Margo Black, Albus Dumbledore seemed to have no idea what had really happened, much less why. And while it appeared at first that Lucius Malfoy had managed to get away with nearly murdering hundreds of defenceless students by proxy thanks to lack of physical evidence, Ginny used her new powers to secretly torture Voldemort's former lieutenant until he was tricked into giving clothes to his house elf Dobby, who was then promptly adopted by Luna and her family in Ottery Saint Catchpole. Since Ginny showed no signs of any sort of possession, the panic over the whole "Heir of Slytherin" situation died down and the petrified normal-borns were soon restored to active life again. Since Lockhart's body had vanished from the scene even if the entrance to the Chamber had been blasted open left open by the late defence teacher while he investigated what had set off Ron Weasley in the first place, no attempts by anyone sent to Hogwarts from the Ministry revealed a thing.

Luna and Ginny felt the issue was resolved...

...until they were called to the headmaster's office before the end of their freshman year, where Dumbledore then calmly asked the former, "When did you meet Miss Katabarbe, Miss Lovegood?"

That particular meeting soon saw Rose Potter and Thérèse Peverell visit Hogwarts, where many painful revelations about a fateful encounter in Little Whinging between the-then Harry Potter and
Tariko Katabarbe after Hallowe’en in 2003 were finally aired to the defeater of Gellert Grindelwald.

For the transfiguration prodigy and alchemy master who had been touted in the magical press as the effective second coming of Merlin since the end of the Wars of Liberation in 1945, learning of the scale of abuse the “boy who lived” had endured at the hand of his maternal relatives until his rescue by the future Trickster of the Show had been a bitter, horrible eye-opening experience.

While Rose had definitely NOT been interested in coming to Hogwarts even then — as the Warlock, she had effectively become self-trained due to her past-selves’ two millennium’s worth of collected memories — she wasn’t totally ignorant of events in the magical world.

After all, as soon as she was Gifted, the only child of the late Marquess James Potter of Taunton Deane had gone to Gringotts and claimed her family ring, making her one of the “Seven and Ten” senior lords in the Wizengamot...even if she kept her seat in recess to maintain the illusion that "Harry Potter" was safely tucked away in the "muggle world" until the time came for "him" to return "home".

When Dumbledore then asked why Rose kept up the illusion even after she had effectively renounced coming to Hogwarts in the late summer of 2007, the Sorcerer Supreme of the Cosmic Mage Guild had been blunt in her reply: "Would you want me to expose those umale to Yizibajohei prejudices, Professor? You wrote Major Raeburn's book on the planet, remember."

THAT made Dumbledore visibly cringe as he recalled those days staying at the Raeburn mansion near Fort Saint John in British Columbia in the wake of his defeating his once-best friend at Nurmengard in the summer of 1945, when he learned how VICIOUS a society of metahumans could ultimately be.

Especially when it came to dealing with "sames".

At the end of the meeting, a very guilt-ridden Dumbledore agreed to keep up the illusion that "Harry Potter" was still missing from the magical world; given that Rose was busy with trying to help Thérèse bring her fragmented soul back together — doing so effectively helping see Voldemort defeated and destroyed forever as the prophecy governing their lives demanded — it was for the best. Ginny and Luna would serve as their leader's eyes and ears in the castle, protecting the students as best as they could without revealing themselves while also searching for potential new candidates to be Gifted. While Dumbledore himself was understandably wary of the idea of having metahumans living in his school given his memories of what the War Hawks and their opponents did in the Second World War, he knew Tariko was keeping a bigger picture in mind as she continued to find pretty girls to be Gifted.

Such as Hermione Granger.

And Tariko's then-unknown half-sister Hirosaki Chikage.

Dumbledore suspected there were more — as did Ginny and Luna — but no one had gone to find them.

After all, why provoke unnecessary fight scenes...?

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With their hectic freshman year done with, Ginny Weasley and Luna Lovegood spent the summer of 2009 enjoying "slumber parties" at the latter's home in Ottery Saint Catchpole; in truth, they used the chance to exercise their powers on Yiziba and with Rose Potter and the slowly recovering
Thérèse Peverell. Ginny was listed in *The Book of Pretty Girls* as Annex Entry #620-A under Luna's entry when the younger girl got a chance to spend time getting to know Tariko Katabarbe at her cabin on Yiziba. Other than getting Thérèse's help to rebuild her wand to accept the greater levels of magic she now possessed, Ginny carried on as normal as the school had to endure the consequences of the escape of Sirius Black from Azkaban late that summer. While there had been close calls when the dementors sent by the Ministry to find the wayward would-be Marquess Black of Grimmauld got close to students, such didn't see anyone kissed; Ginny and Luna — joined by Hermione Granger, who had been Gifted as the Enchantress after her recovery from being petrified back in the spring of 2009 — were more than happy to chase away the dark soul-vampires...until the arrival of Margo Black saw a good number of them slain, sending the remainder fleeing in terror for their island prison home, much to the frustration of Cornelius Fudge, who had wanted to see the "betrayer of the Potters" killed for his escaping gaol.

One Magical Royal Proclamation later — thanks to Mycroft Holmes' suggestion via Rose Potter and Luna Lovegood — the idiot was made to shut up.

Sadly, issues with Rose's godfather remained up in the air to this day...

Third year for Ginny and Luna was very quiet in comparison to their freshman and sophomore years, which gave them the chance to develop a true soul-bond between each other, being then seen as married by British magical law. To celebrate, Tariko arranged to have them married by ancient Yizibajohei custom by her adopted granduncle Neyanege Katabarbe, the current incarnation of the High Priest of the Great Crystal, Gimtyuole (the "Preacher"). Thanks to a decision made at the suggestion of her grandfather before she went forth to commence formal magical education, the most famous member of Hermione Granger's cadre of peers at Hogwarts would be Hirosaki Chikage, a native of Tōkyō adept in many forms of spellcraft and had a hunger for learning that should have seen her sorted to Ravenclaw if her loyalty to her then-unknown "Ani-kun" saw her become a Hufflepuff. While her classroom work won her praises from all the staff — even the notoriously hard-to-please Severus Snape — the future Matriarch-in-Waiting of the Moroboshi Clan extended her level of self-training by visiting OTHER DIMENSIONS to learn magic native to those realms during summer vacations, spending up to a solar year under the tutelage of a wide group of people, from Doctor Stephen Strange in the "Marvel Comics" universe to Bruce Wayne in the "DC Comics" universe to Imperial Chancellor Cáo Cāo in the universe of the video game series called Dynasty Warriors in the English-speaking world...

...and finally to Anakin Skywalker, AKA Darth Vader, in the universe of *Star Wars*.

Where Chikage herself became a Dark Lady of the Sith, Darth Eizō.

Not to mention helping Anakin finally dispose of the man responsible for provoking him into effectively killing his wife Padmé Amidala on Mustafar.

AND reunite the man with his lost children, Luke Skywalker and Leia Organa.

Of course, Ginny and Luna knew, given that Chikage was also *Dragonheart*...!

Since she was willing to share her knowledge with her peers, Chikage found herself spending her senior year helping direct the first International Magical Fair hosted by Hogwarts at the suggestion of Minister Cornelius Fudge. While such didn't see the Dark Heart of True Chaos expose her own Gift to others, the fair had done much to mend the many rifts left behind from conflicts such as the Wars of Liberation and the Blood War provoked by Voldemort well over a decade before.

Such had been enough for the Ministry of Magic to agree to host the Quidditch World Cup in Britain during the summer of 2011, not to mention revise the Triwizard Tournament between Hogwarts and
its main rivals, Beauxbâtons and Durmstrang, which was held during Ginny's and Luna's senior year.

After a period of peace, the 2011-12 school year was when the Death Eaters who had "claimed the Imperius" in 1996 fully revived themselves.

As had been their disembodied leader.

As events got underway the previous Hallowe'en evening, Ginny and Luna got a huge laugh when Harry Potter's name emerged from the Goblet of Fire thanks to the younger Barty Crouch — then disguised as retired master auror Alastor Moody — in hopes of drawing the missing Boy Who Lived back into range for Voldemort to kill. When Unspeakables from the Department of Mysteries tried to use the ancient device to track down where the missing lad had gone, the conclusion soon made by elder researcher Saul Croaker was that the long-missing "saviour" of wizarding Britain was dead, most likely at the hands of his long-absent muggle relatives. Of course, no one had any idea where Lily Potter's sister, brother-in-law or nephew were even if there were normal-borns who could access Internal Revenue records. As Ginny, Luna and Hermione knew, the Dursleys had been tortured so much by the just-Gifted Rose back in 2003, they fled Britain for Australia before Dumbledore or anyone else could contact them, then their existences were made to vanish from computer and print records at Rose's command with help from a brainwashed Niphentaxian observer who had inserted himself inside the Home Office (and who was later obviated of what he did) who could ensure such a sweep happened.

"'Magicals is SO stupid'!" Ginny commented to Hermione in a good imitation of Yosemite Sam's gravelly voice after the announcement of the Boy Who Lived's "fate" was made by the Ministry.

While the whole of wizarding Britain mourned the "loss" of their saviour, the Triwizard went on. Popular Hufflepuff NEWT student Cedric Diggory would win against stiff competition from Bulgarian quidditch star Viktor Krum from Durmstrang and Fleur Delacour from Beauxbâtons, elder daughter of France's chief magical law enforcement officer. During the Third Task on the last Sunday of June, Hermione's best friend Neville Longbottom was kidnapped by the disguised Barty Crouch Jr to help Voldemort gain his new body using the blood of the scion of the Longbottoms of Holdenhurst atop the bones of the dark lord's late father and the severed hand of Peter Pettigrew, the true betrayer of the Potters.

The outcome of that particular event rocked Hogwarts to this very day...

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"Excuse me, ladies."

Both girls perked on hearing that apologetic voice, then they turned to gaze upon the portrait of Wilhelmina Tuft, the first post-War of Liberation leader of the Ministry of Magie and a supporter of the Magical Royal Proclamation of 1949 that made sure no magical could interfere legislatively with Britain's ever-growing metahuman population. "What is it, Aunt Wilhelmina?" Luna asked; the portrait frame had been empty when she and Ginny had decided to have their pillow scene.

"I'm sorry to interrupt, but Albus just got a message from his brother at the Hog's Head Tavern about another of those ship spirits that have become these battle doll creatures from your adopted planet."

That made both girls groan. "ANOTHER one...?!” Ginny breathed out.

"We'll go down there," Luna vowed as both moved to dress...
Hogsmeade, the Hog's Head Tavern at the east end of the village, a half-hour after breakfast...

"RELEASE HER, YOU MONSTER! YOU'VE NO RIGHT TO INTERFERE!"

"You be quiet, staleblood!" the tall and muscular woman in the light blue jumpsuit with the gold belt and boots and the circular crest with a naval crown on her chest above her well-formed breasts snarled, her blue eyes glowing with both power and outrage. "I hardly call using an Unforgivable Curse on your DAUGHTERS to be anything close to proper, even among such inbred fools like yourself!"

"FITHY MUGGLE-LOVING MONSTER! AVADA KEDAVRA!"

A bolt of sickly green light slammed into the exposed back of the woman with the tomboyish-cut shaggy red hair, making her jolt for a second as the death energy unleashed by Amycus Carrow in defence of his sister Alecto tried to punch through to stop the stranger's heart as it normally would work...

...yet did nothing save make the woman turn to gaze upon the current Baron of Norwich as if he was a cockroach she was about to step on. As the gasping Alecto tried to pry those rock-hard fingers away from crushing her larynx, her nieces Hestia and Flora were pulled closer to the entrance of the Hog's Head by a scowling Aberforth Dumbledore, he being aided by several of the house elves the younger brother of Hogwarts' headmaster welcomed as staff over the years. Both Slytherin fifth-year girls were shivering with the obvious signs of intensive Cruciatus exposure, yet no one seemed willing to come over to assist Aberforth in helping them recover. As soon as Alecto tried to make her nieces submit to the will of her master and spend the weekend at the Malfoy mansion in Wiltshire being inducted into the Death Eaters, the stranger — who had been wandering around the village in the Scottish highlands since dawn — stormed in, threw the elder Carrow siblings out with strength that would overwhelm a giant, then began to publicly berate them for such abuse. Yet, despite the obvious crimes being committed by two people who escaped lifetime imprisonment in Azkaban thanks to "pleading the Imperius" back in the fall of 1996, no one had yet to think to call down to London to summon the aurors.

"Impossible...!" Amycus croaked as the stranger's face turned into a scowl...

...before a hand grabbed him by the shoulder and spun him around.

A second later, Hestia's and Flora's father was doubled over thanks to a vicious front kick by an orchid-haired teenage girl in a white jumpsuit with blue belt and boots, the force of the impact making him let go of his wand. As people seeing this gaped at such a muggle attack by the young woman who just FLEW INTO the scene to assist the other stranger, she twisted around, snaring Amycus' head, forcing him into an inverted headlock, then she dropped down onto her back, pulling him down with her.

KK-KRACK!

Amycus gasped as his spine and throat were instantly crushed by the sudden impact against a hard rock on the street, then he was contemptuously tossed aside as the girl rolled back to her feet, spinning around to give him two reversed victory hand salutes as she stuck her tongue out at the pureblood fanatic. "Have a nice AFTERLIFE, shithead!" she snarled in accented English before she walked over to join the other stranger, her foot smashing down on the side of Amycus' head to nearly crush the skull.
As people winced on seeing the "former" Death Eater being treated like that, a voice called out from the direction of High Street, "Excuse me! Miss Akebono!"

That made Ashikaga Akemi perk before she looked over...

...then she nodded politely as two girls dressed like she — with the addition of hooded ankle-length cloaks covering their shoulders and heads, with only their lower faces exposed from the shadows, they projecting the air of professional Unspeakables to the onlookers — approached her from the intersection of High Street and Hengist Lane where the Hog's Head was located. As people exchanged confused looks, Akemi bowed her head. "Lady Soulfire. Lady Prophecy. Forgive me, but Lady Dragonheart sent me here once she sensed another ship spirit had been given the chance to live again as one of us. I just came onto the scene when this foul traitor to the Crown of Britain made use of a Killing Curse on my peer's back when she was upbraiding the other foul traitor now in her grasp. As to the 'why', I can't answer that. I don't apologize for snapping his neck, though."

A snort escaped the other shipgirl present. "Use of any of the Unforgivable Curses in this land unless authorized by the House of Lords Wizengamot in a wartime situation is an automatic life sentence to His Majesty's Prison Azkaban or Her Majesty's Prison Gonebren, my ladies," she said with a polite nod of her head, her voice layered with the tones of Merseyside where she had been constructed from 1935-38 at Cammell Laird in Birkenhead. "The nimmibs that served in my ship's company knew that. Atop what that fool Miss Akebono just killed tried to do..." — hearing that word made the crowd gasp in shock before several people raced into nearby buildings to get at floo portals to summon the aurors — "...this one here made use of a Cruciatus curse at her own NIECES!" As she shook the struggling Alecto's head around — not with enough force to snap her own spine — she jutted her jaw towards the shivering girls being comforted by Albus Dumbledore's brother. "Tell me, ladies, are the aurors as corrupt these days as they were during the time of the Second World War?"

"In many ways, yes, Lady Ark Royal," the lady in the pale silver suit and cape with light blue rune trim, belt and boots declared, her voice having a wispy tone that made the reborn aircraft carrier that helped in the sinking of the battleship Bismarck in 1941 shiver in delight; she had deduced who this shipgirl was thanks to the ship's crest on the woman's chest above her cleavage, which displayed a sailing ship hull surmounted by a crowned building on waves. "How long have you been back?"

"About two weeks. After it sank in as to what happened to me — never expected to be made HUMAN after all, much less turned into a woman who could make Vivien Leigh seem ordinary! — I went to Gibraltar to present myself to the Flag Officer there...only to find out that seventy-one years have passed since my sinking thanks to that dratted U-boat and we only have just two patrol boats based there." She shrugged, clearly unbothered by the fact that she was holding Alecto Carrow up in the air while the latter struggled to do anything to get that iron-hard grip off her throat. "So I flew up here to report to the Admiralty...then it dawned on me that they would hardly believe my story. Once I recalled there were hidden magical places located in the country, I resolved to find one, then get to someone in authority to find out if we have any specialized warfare forces active at this time. I just discovered this lovely village today, then came to ask about when I discovered what these two were doing."

"She's Ark Royal?!!" Akemi demanded.

"Indeed she is," the disguised Luna Lovegood declared before she hummed. "'Amy Joan Power' is the human name that was chosen for you, I believe."

The newly-named Amy Power blinked. "After my first captain?!!"

"Of course! After all, is 'Ark Royal' a proper lady's name?"
A hum responded from the reborn aircraft carrier. "Well, no, not really...

"ARREST THAT MONSTER! AURORS! ARREST THEM ALL!"

Hearing the voice of a certain senior undersecretary as footfalls heralded the arrival of a small troupe of aurors, the disguised Ginny Weasley turned to scream out, "LA REINE LE VEULT!"

Silence.

More silence.

Still more silence.

Then...

As everyone within hearing range of the Mistress of the Fires of Passion froze still from their inner magic's instantly responding to the Norman French phrase which was the ultimate call of loyalty to the Crown as was enshrined in the Separation Act of 1692 that saw the International Statute of Wizarding Secrecy made law within the United Kingdom, the woman in the deep crimson jumpsuit with matching cape lined with dark gold runes, gold belt and boots smirked. "Madame Senior Undersecretary, you are interfering in business concerning people protected by the Specialized Warfare Act of 1949 and its accompanying Magical Royal Proclamation," she declared in a power-enhanced voice that made everyone stiffen. "You're already guilty of VIOLATING the Charter of Hogwarts by holding a teaching position while STILL being employed in Her Majesty's Ministry of Magic." As Dolores Umbridge squawked in outrage on hearing that statement spoken out in public and many of the people gaped at her, Ginny added, "When it comes to the affairs of Her Majesty's metahuman subjects as Lady Ark Royal here is — to say anything of an honoured metahuman guest who is a loyal subject of His Imperial Majesty, the Heavenly Sovereign of Japan as Lady Akebono here is — you have no right to interfere. Aurors, disperse now! Inform the Ministry Whip of the House of Lords Wizengamot that Lord Amycus Carrow of Norwich and his sister Lady Alecto Carrow are hereby declared TRAITORS TO MAGIC AND THE REALM for their support of the so-called 'Lord Voldemort' and his foul allies." As Umbridge tried to shriek that such a statement was a lie, Ginny smirked. "In the eyes of Her Majesty, the Lady Hestia Carrow — now being comforted by Master Aberforth Dumbledore — is recognized as Baroness Hestia of Norwich unless she wishes to defer to her beloved twin sister, the Lady Flora. They are also declared EMANCIPATED in the eyes of the Crown because of obvious crimes against their persons by their late father and their aunt now in the custody of Lady Ark Royal." She snapped her fingers. "HOLLOWS, COME FORTH!"

People blinked in confusion...

...before they cried out in mind-numbing horror as a strange mist rose from the dirt roadway to cover the scene with a very thick, chilling fog. Seconds later, several glowing humanoid figures rose from that blanket of miasma, making people scream in mortal terror as the TRUE nightmare that had haunted the subconscious minds of magical Britons for centuries appeared in the streets of Hogsmeade. The leader of the group then turned and bowed towards Ginny. «My lady.»

"Remove the staleblood filth who presumes herself better than their peers from this loyal village, my good man," Ginny then bade as she indicated the now-frozen Alecto trapped in Amy Power's grasp, who looked ready to soil herself at confronting several of the deadly denizens of Britain's most foreboding piece of magical real estate located deep in the moors of Cornwall. "Dump the corpse of
her brother off Land's End. The kraken who live out there deserve a good snack, I think."

"As you desire, my lady. You heard her, lads!"

As a panicked scream escaped Alecto, the other ghostly figures swarmed around her, pulling her seemingly into the very earth itself as others moved to draw Amycus' body into the ground as well, they being teleported out of Scotland itself. While Umbridge sputtered helplessly on seeing two "upstanding citizens" being treated like utter TRASH by the infamous spirits which haunted the site of Britain's oldest magical prison to this very day, Ginny and Luna smirked before they turned to join a now-smiling Hestia and Flora, who were being helped to their feet by Aberforth and his elves. On feeling whatever spell had been used to freeze her in place fade, Umbridge snapped up her wand and aimed deliberately at the crimson-cloaked monster's back, the bloom of the Cruciatus Curse appearing at the tip...

...before her wand and hand literally EXPLODED!

As Umbridge dropped to her knees while gripping her now hand-less arm, Ginny gazed contemptuously at her. "Nice try, half-blood," the Mistress of the Fires of Passion quietly heckled.

People gasped before they stared at the whimpering Umbridge while Amy and Akemi followed Ginny and Luna inside the Hog's Head...

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The Hog's Head, two hours before lunch...

"Came as soon as I could, girls."

Ginny Weasley and Luna Lovegood — who still kept their hoods over their heads to mask their looks from people who could recognize them — perked on hearing that voice, then they smiled as a woman in an off-white jumpsuit with black trim and boots walked into the bar. "Hey, Tariko!" the youngest daughter of Arthur and Molly Weasley called out with a wave of her hand. "We got the two newbies right here!" She then waved to two gratefully-smiling girls seated with them.

"Your usual, Tariko?" Aberforth Dumbledore called out from behind the bar.

"Please, Aberforth!" Tariko Katabarbe said with a nod before she thumbed outside. "What the hell's with all the cops shuffling about like lemmings outside?"

"Oh, nothing more than a staleblood wanna-be who tried to curse me," Ginny said as the Trickster of the Show took her seat, nodding politely at the Carrow twins, who bowed in return. "Even after I called out the Queen's Code to make them pay attention, she still was going to press a fight scene, especially after finding out that an 'upstanding citizen' like Amycus Carrow was KILLED when Akemi gave him a DDT." Here, she nodded to where Ashikaga Akemi was seated across from Amy Power as the Japanese destroyer-turned-teenage girl briefed the recently transformed British aircraft carrier about life as a shipgirl. "I magically blew up her wand and hand, so she fled to her 'dear Cornelius' in London to get help." She smirked before sipping the butterbeer that her headmaster's younger brother provided for her and her wife after they had got Hestia and Flora inside to help them recover from their aunt's torture. "The aurors are here, but they know better than to try to press for an arrest."

"Where's Mycroft?" Tariko asked before nodding as a smiling Aberforth came over with a large mug of spiced mistletoe berry tea. The Trickster of the Show got the owner of the Hog's Head to use hot chili pepper flakes to perk the taste of the tea up when she first visited Hogsmeade three years ago
after she got the chance to enjoy Noukiite ginseng tea thanks to that planet's greatest metahuman hero; spiced mistletoe berry tea had become popular among many students at Hogwarts.

"He'll be here soon, probably right after the Minister arrives to avenge his 'dear Dolores'," Luna wryly commented. "Should make an interesting article in the Quibbler. The Minister defying a Royal official when it came to an affair that's legally beyond the Ministry's purview."

"Riddle's idiots won't like reading that," Aberforth declared with a smirk, staying close to his guests in case they needed something else. "If they read Xeno's magazine at all, of course."

"I doubt that. Daddy would never sell magazines to such rude people. The only way they could read it is if their children attending Hogwarts send copies...and I know those people don't have subscriptions."

"So how soon can we be Gifted?"

Tariko blinked before she gazed on Flora Carrow. Seeing the slight tremors in her hands indicating her aunt's prolonged torture curse was still affecting her — the butterbeer she was drinking had been laced by Aberforth's own homemade anti-Crucciatus potion, which was working on her even if the effects hadn't sunk in — Tariko shook her head. "How long has the stupid umale been doing that?"

"Years," Flora's twin Hestia hissed, her voice hollow. The ring marking her as the head of the Noble House of Carrow of Norwich was on her finger, having magically transferred over after her father expired from asphyxiation an hour before. "As long as I can remember. All we heard all the time was how great the Dark Lord was, how he'd clean our society of 'mudblood filth' and 'blood traitors' and how we'd conquer the world. With people like YOU living on it, Lady Tariko? I guessed out about Luna being Gifted almost as soon as we came to school back in 2008. Only logical that Ginny would have been Gifted as well the instant they declared their soul-bond and were seen as married by the Ministry."

"Or is that a lie?" Flora wondered.

"Oh, no, it's true," Luna affirmed as she grasped her wife's hand. "We just decided to keep our maiden names. When it comes time to have children, we'll choose what to do then. Of course, finding a willing man who is Gifted and would agree to consent to sire our children will be a little daunting, but I'm sure we'll find the right person eventually. After all, we're just too young to consider starting a family now. Look at what happened to Tariko when those fools in Japan trapped her in Tomobiki and forced her back into becoming a boy. Was she ready to marry anyone, much less a woman like Lum?"

The Carrow twins gazed on the Trickster of the Show. The "invasion" of Earth the previous October had caused massive shockwaves in magical societies worldwide; while many academics had known other planets bore sentient life thanks to Albus Dumbledore's interview of Dean Raeburn after World War Two, the concept of aliens hadn't sunk in among the average magical until the Kashin appeared over Tomobiki and the news was flashed in the Daily Prophet and other newspapers within a day.

Of course, the truth about Tariko had been revealed within days of her being rescued by Kasuga Ayumu from her "marriage" to Redet Lum in April, when it was revealed it had been the Trickster of the Show who rescued Luna's mother Pandora from a spell research accident in 2007. While there had been calls among the liberal members of the Wizengamot like Neville Longbottom's grandmother Augusta to award the Trickster of the Show an Order of Merlin for her actions, such had been shot down by neutrals and darks alike when the true nature of Tariko Katabarbe's mission to Gift "pretty girls" sank in.
As the four Hogwarts OWL year girls knew, the memories of what was called the "First Metahuman War" were etched in too deeply among magicals of Europe. The destructive power of metahumans — matched to a shocking invulnerability that was demonstrated by many to even the darkest of spells like the Unforgivable Curses unless the magical had augmented his/her wand or other focus with mesonium to boost the spell’s power — so horrified people that there had been calls among even liberal magicals to find ways to cull the development of such "muggle monsters" in the wake of the Wars of Liberation. Fortunately, the various Specialized Warfare Acts passed in the wake of that war — augmented by things such as Magical Royal Proclamations, Magical Executive Orders and Magical Imperial Rescripts as could only be issued by properly anointed or elected heads of state per various clauses in founding legislation such as the Separation Act — saw such a monumentally stupid idea stopped in its tracks.

But the fear still lingered.

Thinking on that, Ginny and Luna exchanged a knowing look. «If they only knew the truth about Jody,» the latter mused before sipping her tea. 

«Oh! That'd set the kneazle among the nifflers for sure!» the former replied through their soul-bond.

Tariko's eyebrow arched; her own telepathy picked up on those comments. She then sighed as she made a gesture with her hand, summoning The Book of Pretty Girls from her cabin on Yiziba. Another gesture with her hand brought forth two sealed containers with slices of black forest cake in them. "You two had breakfast?" she then asked as she gazed upon the Carrow twins.

"Had it before we got dragged here," Flora asked as Ginny handed the cakes over. "What are these?"

"Tariko's 'Oh, SO sinful, it should be declared Unforgivable' pre-Gifting snack," Luna provided as she licked her lips. "It has enough mesonium from the Great Crystal of Power to link your souls to it so that a compatible Gift seed that could merge with you can seek you out and empower you. Here's a warning, though: The instant you eat the cake, there's no going back. And once you're Gifted, you can't exchange it for something better. No 'thirty day guarantee' as the normals would call it."

That made the twins blink before they nodded as they took the slices of cake in hand. Once Aberforth handed them forks, they eagerly dug in. Watching that, Tariko smiled as she opened the Book, then drew out a pen to begin marking new entries there. Ginny looked over to see which page in the main index the Trickster of the Show was, then she whistled. "Holy! You two just pushed the number of girls that Tariko's helped being Gifted past a thousand! Way to go!"

Luna smiled as she waved her hand, making congratulatory balloons appear hanging from the roof before they exploded, displaying streamers declaring in English WELCOME TO THE GREAT SHOW OF LIFE! As Aberforth laughed on seeing that and Akemi whooped in delight while Amy clapped her hands, the front door opened to reveal a smiling raven-haired middle-aged man in a dapper business suit complete with matching waistcoat, an umbrella in hand. Accompanying him was a woman in a black jumpsuit with dark ruby runes lining the sides of the body and the hooded black cape she wore, topped with burgundy boots and belt. Naturally, the hood was drawn over the head of the Mistress of the Shadow Realm to prevent the aurors who were milling about doing practically nothing outside from panicking on seeing one of the most feared dark witches in British history on the streets of Hogsmeade.

"Ah, good morning, Aberforth," Mycroft Holmes declared as he moved to sit beside Tariko. "The usual for both Jody and myself, please."
"Right away, Mycroft!" the younger brother of the headmaster of Hogwarts said with a nod.

Immediately, both Amy and Akemi rose to join them. The transformed aircraft carrier snapped to attention, saluting the man viewed by many in the know as the true heart and soul of the British government. "Chief Fencible Holmes, Her Majesty's Ship *Ark Royal*, pendant 91, reporting for duty!" she declared with a crisp announcement that would impress the training petty officers at Britannia Royal Naval College in Dartmouth. "Have the Fencibles been mobilized by the Crown, sir?"

"Not yet, Captain Power. You will be required to answer the call should ever such a possibility come, one which our allies from Yiziba are working hard to prevent. Please join us," Mycroft declared. "You as well, Commander Ashikaga. Captain, has the commander briefed you on what her own spiritual 'admiral' and his family have done for her and her fleet mates in Japan?"

"She has, sir. Is there such an admiral here or will I respond directly to you?"

"I'm sure we'll find someone who can take up such a task. Patriarch Moroboshi is rather deluged at this time with all of Commander Ashikaga's fleet mates now living with him and his family on Ōmure-jima, not to mention five German shipgirls. In the meantime, Lady Hestia, congratulations on your ascension to your family's seat in the House of Lords Wizengamot. I hope you and your sister have no ill-intentions towards the peace of Her Majesty's Realm akin to what your late father pursued."

"Of course not, sir," Hestia answered. She had heard of the current Royal Master of the Specialized Warfare Fencibles, one of three of the Great Officers of State who served the Crown when it came to affairs of a metahuman nature; the other two were seen as the Chief Wizard/Witch of the House of Lords Wizengamot and the Magus of the Meridiana School of Magecraft. As anointed in the Specialized Warfare Act of 1949, the Master of the Fencibles could summon Britain's metahuman population to form a defensive regiment in case of another major metahuman war. In the most extreme of cases, the Master of the Fencibles could also summon the Ministry of Magic's auror and hit wizard forces to help defend the Realm; it was THIS overwhelming political power that made Mycroft Holmes so loathed among the conservative members of the Ministry of Magic and the Wizengamot, especially a rabid mugalophobe like Dolores Umbridge. "We've always had moderate opinions when it comes to the entry of muggleborns into our society. I only wish Headmaster Dumbledore was able to offer an introductory course for people such as Miss Granger — she's like Ginny and Luna, isn't she...?" At Mycroft's nod and approving smile on seeing such a sharp mind at work, Hestia smiled before she ate a forkful of black forest cake. "Well, all the muggleborns have had to go and ask people, mostly in Ravenclaw, about proper etiquette and what is seen as 'right' and 'proper' in our society. Having a formal class..."

"Blocked because the stalebloods that loom over Albus all the time don't want to allow the 'mudbloods' the chance to be good citizens, thus 'keeping up the scare' and feed Riddle's war machine now that he's back," Mycroft's companion dryly noted as she crossed her arms. That made the twins perk. "Who's Riddle?" Flora asked; she had heard the name spoken before, but didn't understand whose name it actually was.

"Thomas Marvolo Riddle. The birth name of the man who's battle name you're too afraid to speak of," Mycroft noted. "He was head boy at Hogwarts for the 1944-45 year, a Slytherin of course. Born near the end of 1926, he's the bastard son of a normal yeoman from North Yorkshire and a nimmib woman named Merope Gaunt, the last known living descendant of Headmaster Slytherin." As the twins gaped on hearing that revelation, he grimly nodded. "That's correct, girls. Your 'pureblood icon' is effectively a 'mudblood' by your worldview, never mind his being a *bastard child* atop that."
As the two pureblood witches scowled on hearing that — to be seen as a bastard in wizarding Britain was viewed by traditionalists as being no better than a muggleborn in places — Mycroft added, "Fortunately, there's a far more worthy heir of the Dukedom of Kyme Eau about to make her appearance. Blood-descent of Headmaster Slytherin as confirmed per various treaties with the Noble Tribe of Gringotts last year."

"How soon could she take her seat?" Hestia asked.

"As soon as Mister Riddle is dealt with finally. Sometime this weekend, I wager," Mycroft stated, which made the twins smirk before they dug into their cake. He then smirked as he gazed on his companion. "I'm surprised neither of them have begged for your autograph, Jody. Given how famous you are..."

"Oh, Dear Sweet Mercenaries Guild, spare me from my fans!" the native of Anglesey and adopted native of Warwickshire moaned as she slipped off her hood, making the Carrow twins gasp in disbelief on seeing who had accompanied the Master of the Fencibles to this meeting. "Eat your cake, girls. The sooner you're Gifted, the better," Jody Crowley then bade. "I can show you some interesting forms of wandless magic once you're stabilized to better keep away the idiots who might not like the idea of 'uppity blood traitors' acting 'above their station' in the Serpent's Den." As the twins exchanged awed looks at the fact that the woman who led the famous Argentium Astrum of Meridiana alumni in the Blood War against the Death Eaters — not to mention personally dealing with allies of their father and aunt such as the Gibbon family of Craiglockhart, who also escaped lifetime imprisonment in Azkaban for "pleading the Imperius" after the end of the Blood War — Jody winked at them.

Hestia and Flora quickly dug into their cake...

...before a voice screamed out, "JODY CROWLEY?! AURORS! ARREST HER!"

Jody's hand snapped up...

...then a dozen wands flew into her grasp. "Are you hell-bent on losing your magic, MISTER Fudge?"

Mycroft looked over. "Oh, hello, Cornelius! Come join us!"

A gargled croak escaped the Minister for Magic as he stared wide-eyed at the ONE muggle in Britain beyond the Queen herself that he feared above all others now seated in the Hog's Head with the most hated witch in the eyes of "proper" magicals beside him, not to mention a certain Japanese girl whose mission was causing all sorts of headaches in the Ministry of Magic. As Jody calmly floated the wands back to the aurors who accompanied Cornelius Fudge to the "horrible scene" where a "respectable citizen" had been KILLED by a metahuman of all things, Amelia Bones gave her boss an annoyed look; fortunately, she had not been disarmed by the Duchess of Anglesey when Fudge moved to have Jody arrested. "All aurors, move outside and keep the crowds back!" the current regent lady of the Barony of Bute — to be eventually inherited by her niece Susan Bones — then barked out. "The Minister and I have business with the Master of the Fencibles, Lady Crowley, Lady Katabarbe and the others."

Fudge spun on her. "Now, see here, Amelia...!"

KK-KLONK!

"Oi! Volume, huh?!" Tariko snapped after the blustering man was smashed down by a cinder block. Then, with a snap of her fingers, the Trickster of the Show teleported the idiot back to his office in
London. "Umale takes a stupid pill every morning!" she then muttered.

"STUPEFY!"

KK-KLONK!

"As soon as that idiot recovers from being smacked down like that, Shack, tell him he's on rapid response duty and he'll undergo remedial training with Master Auror Moody when a proper chance comes!" Bones coldly stated after John Dawlish was smashed down by another cinder block after he tried to stun Tariko unconscious with a spell; fortunately for the people inside the Hog's Head, said spell had fizzled out long before it got close to hurting the reality warper.

"Right away, Boss," a grinning Kingsley Shacklebolt declared as he created a portkey, then he grabbed Dawlish before heading back to London.

With a shake of the head, Bones then took note of what the Carrow twins were eating; as the leader of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement, she had long been briefed on how Tariko Katabarbe did things when she found someone who was worthy of being Gifted. "May I ask what actually happened this morning?" she then calmly inquired as she gazed hopefully at Mycroft.

"Captain Power, would you please brief Director Bones," he then bade.

"Yes, sir," Amy declared before she began...

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Ōmure-jima, Welcome House, that moment (local time: An hour before supper)...

"Hey!"

Moroboshi Ataru perked on hearing that welcome voice call out from behind him, then he turned before he smiled. "Hey, yourself!" he called out with a wave, beckoning Miyake Shinobu inside his bedroom. "So what's going on with you? Still being affected by Memory?"

"A little bit," his former girlfriend affirmed before she sat down at the end of his bed, gazing around in approval at the sizable room Ataru currently possessed on the ground floor of the rotunda next to the main entrance. It was noticeably larger and brighter than his old room in Tomobiki by some degrees, which made it seem more welcoming to Shinobu, especially given how the presence of Redet Lum, her cousin Ten and the cat-ghost Kotatsuneko often crowsed Ataru back in his old residence. "Jody-san gave me a charm that would block any overt attempts at trying to make me forget that you were gone all those years. Now that I'm thinking about that, the details about the times we were 'together' in elementary and middle school were missing even when we were all brainwashed about what happened to you." She shook her head before she gazed in concern at him. "Did Margo-san find out who it was that did that to you when you came to help Rumiko-chan and Chigaiko-san be Gifted?"

"It's some secret cabal in the Public Security Intelligence Agency calling themselves 'First District' as a group," he answered as his hands darted over the keyboard of his laptop computer — one made by Hatoyama Rinrin as Shinobu was quick to confirm by the ringed "R-squared" symbol under the screen — to scan through various websites. Since he was no longer a student at Tomobiki High and since he was effectively emancipated, he had no reason to prepare to attend Stargazer West College on Ōmure-jima. With the mass of shipgirls now living at Welcome House, he would most likely serve as their den father/"admiral" until such time as they could realistically take control of their own lives. "Have no idea where they're based at; the idiot that was there when Lum came to Earth before
the Tag Race never told Baka Kā-san anything about that. As to why these people wanted us to forget Yiziba, I just can't say. The guy who came to the house last October was made to forget everything about them with a memory-wipe spell, one from someone NOT affiliated to the Eight Magical Commanderies."

She nodded; thanks to speaking to Sakurambō Sakura over the last year since the nurse/miko came to work at Tomobiki High School, Shinobu knew about how magicals in Japan governed themselves. "Do you think they might try again against you personally, Ataru? Until you're Gifted, you're vulnerable."

"Yeah, that's true," he declared with a sigh.

"If such traitors to Tennō dare show themselves, they'll be found and punished for their crimes, Miyake-dono," a strange voice then hailed from the doorway.

Shinobu turned as someone walked through the open door to Ataru's bedroom; she had been quick to note that both Tanenobu Karen's and Eigo Kaho's bedroom doors had been open when she walked into the rotunda. Turning around to gaze upon the raven-haired tomboyish girl now in a white-and-green kimono-and-hakama combination that wouldn't be out of place for schoolgirls in the Meiji era who just walked in — complete with lace up high heeled boots barely exposed under the edge of the hakama skirt — Ataru then focused on the small black top hat barely covering Taruka Tsukiko's head. "You trying to be some vaudeville performer, Tsukiko-san?" he wondered.

A shy look then crossed the girl's face as she seemed to wilt. "Boku no Shirei-kan, do you not approve?" she asked in a mannish voice that reminded Shinobu far too much of Fujinami Ryūnosuke.

He chuckled as he offered his arm. Seeing that, Tsukiko slid over to allow him to hold her close. "I'm not judging a thing. I'm just wondering where on Earth did you get such a hat and why," he assured her.

"Oh, it was the novelty store on First Street East," she assured him as she showed it to him. "It seemed to call out to me when Haruka-anegimisama took us there after we got our normal clothing."

"That must have turned eyes," Shinobu mused.

Tsukiko shrugged. "It appears the people of the island have become used to the idea of beings such as ourselves being effectively based here, Miyake-dono." As Shinobu blushed at that form of address by the reborn fourth of the Kamikaze-class destroyers, the raven-haired tomboy continued, "Which is good. The sooner our loyalty to Tennō is proven beyond a shadow of a doubt, the sooner we can form a proper tokusen rentai to see to it the Realm is forever protected from all known threats."

Ataru winced on hearing that term escape her. "Tsukiko-chan, would you PLEASE be careful bandying that idea about," he then pleaded as he gazed at her. "A lot of Yizibajohei will really have issues with the idea of any version of what Raeburn-chūjo commands now."

Shock crossed her face. "Why, Boku no Shirei-kan?!" she demanded. "Do we not have the right to properly defend ourselves against the alien slime?"

"Of course we do! But when you talk about military metahuman units, well..." He shrugged as he gave her an apologetic look. "Yiziba has had a VERY bad history about that sort of thing. You wouldn't really know this as your battle doll self was asleep during the Dawn of Power wherever it was stored, but there's no way in hell that even most Terran-borns like myself would ever join a specialized warfare unit voluntarily. Only in times of real crisis would we do that, but..."
"What if there are those who would volunteer right away to form such a unit? I'm sure all the shipgirls here on the island would band together to do such. In essence, we've already done that. We have our flagship in Nagato-dono, an effective aircraft carrier in Graf Zeppelin-dono and a small strike force of heavy vessels in Bismarck-dono, Prinz Eugen-dono and Sakawa-dono. If we could get our own aircraft carriers, so much the better; Zeppelin-dono has no real experience even if her eagerness to serve shines like Amaterasu Herself in the morning! Let us do such, Boku no Shireikan! Be our admiral! Everything you and your noble sister have done over the last decade needs support!"

"You can't deny that, Ataru," Shinobu warned.

Hearing that from his former girlfriend, he blinked before he sighed. "This is one fight scene I can't..."

"Hey, in the house!"

Everyone perked, then Ataru looked towards his doorway. "What the hell is SHE doing here?" he quietly demanded before barking out, "In here, Okano-san!"

Footfalls echoed in the hallway outside, then a smiling woman's head with shaggy short red-tinted brown hair peeked inside, her blue eyes twinkling. "Oi! So this is your getaway home, huh?!"

"Yuka-san! What are you doing here?!" Shinobu demanded.

A sigh escaped the heroine of the Ekō Girl's High School terrorist attack the previous summer. "Had to get out of Tomobiki for a bit," Okano Yuka declared as Tsukiko gave her a respectful bow.

"Things are starting to go really crazy there. With the school sealed off from anyone who's not a student or staff there, the Mizunokōji estate a smoking ruin and rumours about alien androids running around, Mendō's going crazy trying to establish some sort of control over things."

"I'd figure he'd still be unconscious after Akemi-san gave him a Rock Bottom into the engine of his command car yesterday morning," Ataru mused.

Yuka snorted as a curious look crossed Shinobu's face. "He recovered pretty quick. Your friend didn't hurt him enough," the technologically-inclined high school sophomore who was Tsuruya Rumiko's near-equal when it came to intelligence said as she crossed her arms, leaning against the wall next to the closet. "Soon as that explosion ripped through the Mizunokōji estate, we figured the best place to put ourselves was at the school itself; I overheard Momoe-san talk about Rumiko-chan rebuilding the place to block it off from all the weirdos and aliens who love to trash it all the time. Good thing, too."

"What happened?" Shinobu demanded.

"The Kuromegane were out on the streets within minutes of that explosion," Yuka explained. "When they saw us heading towards the school, they offered to escort us to Mendō's estate for our 'safety'." A snort escaped her. "He's always hated the fact that none of us ever bought into his suave act. When Kaho told them off, he just appeared right in front of her and tried to put the charm act on." As Shinobu growled and Ataru shook his head, Yuka smirked. "One low blow from Emi and we got to the school, where Nagisa-kun was. He..." Here, she stopped as her cheeks heated. "Um, she...well, you know..."

"Nagisa-san's Gifted?" Shinobu wondered.

Ataru sighed. "Something about Margo Black you need to know about right away, Shinobu. She
does NOT like ghosts whatsoever. It's a perversion in her eyes, so she does everything she can to
disperse them and force them to move on into the next life. Nagisa-chan always wanted to be a girl,
so Ayumu went to the school last night and got 'him' turned into a battle doll. She was Gifted this
morning as the Sentinel; she helped put down Soban and his idiots who were chasing down Asuka-
chan because she was dating a cross-dresser like Hikaru-chan." Seeing Yuka's eyes instantly sparkle,
he chuckled. "Got a chance to take a look him over, eh?" he then teased, his eyes twinkling.

Yuka awked. "Well, y-yeah!" she sputtered.

"Asuka-san has a BOYFRIEND?!" a wide-eyed Shinobu demanded.

Ataru chuckled. "Wait until you hear this..."

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Tomobiki High School, that moment...

"YOU CAN'T DO THAT!"

"Why can't I?"

Mendō Shūtarō blinked as he stared wide-eyed at the twenty-something financial genius who's
wizardry with money had helped see his clan become the economic powerhouse it was. And was
now threatening to totally destroy his influence over all his peers in Tomobiki with something that
was not only just legal but was well past overdue. "How dare you?!" the scion of Japan's richest
family snarled. "Do you realize the danger Moroboshi is putting those poor girls through?!"

Yumoa Reigi blinked before he laughed. "'DANGER'?!" the Yale alumnus demanded before he
leaned over to glare Shūtarō down. "The only danger Yuka-san and her friends were in after Asuka-
san's idiot mother was put down like the rabid dog she was this morning is from YOU!" As the
younger man shrieked at that accusation, the chief of staff of Toranoseishin Finances smirked. "This
comes from MY matriarch, young man. Your clan is to IMMEDIATELY submit ALL records to us
concerning how you have spent the money WE lent you to pay for your paramilitary forces and your
security forces over the last five years. Your father and your grandfather have already agreed to the
audit. Given how much you've loved to throw your money around to show everyone how rich you
are, both are now VERY concerned that you're getting totally OUT OF CONTROL!" He then
turned to stare at the small troupe of Kuromegane standing helplessly beyond the gate of the school
grounds. "Fortunately, we understand things about living expenses. Your people will be placed on
paid leave for the next month..."

"A MONTH?!" Shūtarō shrieked again.

Reigi glared again at him. "Or do we declare that your clan has defaulted on payments to us
concerning what we've loaned you people, then call all debts DUE?" he declared, an icy smile
crossing his face.

Silence fell over the scene as a hollow wind swept over the grounds. Shūtarō was staring in disbelief
at the older man, stunned that Toranoseishin Finances was prepared to go to THAT extent to force
him to heel. He ignored the very amused look from Tsuryua Rumiko, now standing by the main
doors, arms crossed; Shūtarō had miserably failed to persuade his former subordinate in the Secret
Peer Guidance Committee to lower her school-wide force-field and allow his bodyguards to sweep
over the grounds for clues as to what happened to Okano Yuka and her friends. As for his would-be
fiancée, she was hiding in the clock tower alongside her lover Sakō Hikaru, they being watched over
by Shiwatari Nagisa. After a minute as his mind tried to figure out the angle his hated rival was
taking in this latest move to see his perverted dreams come true — after all, Moroboshi Ataru HAD to be the one responsible for provoking this, hard as it was for the scion of Japan's richest family to believe that the bastard was RELATED by BLOOD to the owner of the Inshin Group! — Shūtarō snarled, "Moroboshi will pay...!"

"Miyuki-san?"

**KK-KRUNCH!**

"It's dark...it's cramped...I'm scared..."

Reigi shook his head after Fukushima Miyuki dropped a giant bell to completely enclose Shūtarō in darkness, one built of material he couldn't hope to break even with a burst of berserker strength as he had shown before. "Once he's sufficiently calmed down enough, throw him off the grounds," the chief of staff then bade as he moved to leave. "I'm sure his sister will be willing to keep him occupied once she learns her precious Kuroko will not be available to serve her for a month."

The reborn fourth of the Fubuki-class destroyers curtly nodded, not saying a word so as to help relieve the waves of nyctophobia and claustrophobia now overcoming the scion of Japan's richest family...

*To Be Continued...*

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**WRITER'S NOTES**

I said back in Part One that this story is set during the time of *Order of the Phoenix* where the characters of *Harry Potter* are concerned. However, when I composed a timeline for this story, I realized that if I wanted the Warlock (Rose Potter, né Harry Potter) to be of the same age as Tuyuki (Tariko Katabarbe, né Moroboshi Ataru), I had to adjust things around. While the events of *OOTP* occur at the time of this story, this would actually be Rose's SIXTH year had she gone to Hogwarts (during the time of *Half-Blood Prince*). As noted above, there was an international magical bazaar held at Hogwarts in what would have been Rose's fourth year, thus shifting the Triwizard Tournament (and the events depicted in *Goblet of Fire*) to what would have been Rose's fifth (or OWL) year.

Year nicknames for any cohort of Hogwarts' students (with English school form names in brackets):

**First year** (age 11-12) — **Freshman** (First)
**Second year** (age 12-13) — **Sophomore** (Second)
**Third year** (age 13-14) — **Junior** (Third)
**Fourth year** (age 14-15) — **Senior** (Fourth)
**Fifth year** (age 15-16) — **Graduate or OWL year** (Fifth)
**Sixth year** (age 16-17) — **Post-Graduate or pre-NEWT year** (Lower Sixth)
**Seventh year** (age 17-18) — **Masters/Mistresses** or **NEWT year** (Upper Sixth)

A regiment of Fencibles is an infantry unit tasked for defensive purposes against invasion by a foreign power; it is not meant to be deployed overseas. The term was derived from "defensible". Such a concept came into vogue in the mid-Eighteenth Century. Regiments of Fencibles were raised to stand in defence of Britain against Napoleon around the turn of the century. The term "Fencible" was carried over to Canada around this time: Members of the Glengarry Light Infantry Fencibles were involved in the defence of Canada during the War of 1812; their predecessors were some of the...
original Fencibles who were involved in the defence of the mother country from Scotland. They are perpetuated these days by the Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry Highlanders (SDG HIGHRS), a Militia (part-time) infantry unit based in southeast Ontario and forming part of 33 Canadian Brigade Group.

The rankings of the noble houses of the Wizengamot in this story:

**Noble House** (a magical barony) — 1 point in the Wizengamot (34 houses = 34 votes)
**Most Noble House** (a magical viscountcy) — 2 points in the Wizengamot (18 houses = 36 votes)
**Noble and Ancient House** (a magical earldom) — 3 points in the Wizengamot (10 houses = 30 votes)
**Noble and Most Ancient House** (a magical marquessate) — 4 points in the Wizengamot (7 houses = 28 votes)

Note that the earldoms and marquessates put together are traditionally referred to as a group as the Seven and Ten. Any large voting block among this group (a quorum of same would be any four of the Seven and Ten such as Lucius Malfoy [the Marquess of Avebury] or Sirius Black [the Marquess of Grimmauld]) or would have the ability to change some of the basic laws that run wizarding Britain such as the legislation which dictates how the Ministry of Magic itself is organized and who can qualify for protections and commerce rights under the Ministry; this particular act is known as The Ministry Governance Act, 1707. This is the legislation that effectively outlawed any forms of official interaction with anyone that attended the Meridiana School of Magecraft due to the more pro-normal stance of sorcerers who graduated from that school (such as the issue with pactio bonds), thus making people such as Negi Springfield an effective self-governing enclave within Britain.

The grand total of all noble houses in the Wizengamot — including those houses declared "extinct" due to the lack of magical heirs — would be sixty-nine separate houses sharing a vote spread of 128 "seat" votes. Normal wizarding families (such as the Weasley family) are formally known as Loyal Magical Houses and only have influence on the Ministry when comes time to elect Her Majesty's Minister for Magic (the only pure democratic process in wizarding Britain) every ten years (or whenever the sitting Minister is either impeached and removed from office or dies in office).

The names of the noble houses and their locations indicated here are my creation, though they have appeared in other stories where I have involved the Harry Potter characters.

Issues concerning the magical duchies mentioned in this story (also known as Very Noble and Most Ancient Houses) will be revealed in future chapters.

As for the one shipgirl appearing here:

**Captain Amy Power RN (Her Majesty's Ship Ark Royal** [pendant 91, later R91])

Of course, HMS Ark Royal (Amy Power) will resemble her Kantai Collection interpretation; while her Azur Lane interpretation looks very sharp, there's no way I'm writing about a flat-out pedophile in this story! To explain her pendant number, when Ark Royal was in commission with the Royal Navy from 1938-41, she just had the pendant number 91; such pendant (without a flag superior letter) were assigned to all aircraft carriers, battleships, battlecruisers, heavy cruisers and light cruisers for the duration of World War Two. Post-war, the pendant superior "R" was applied to aircraft carriers when the Royal Navy rationalized the system, thus Amy's pendant number would be adjusted accordingly.
The **Hollows** and **Her Majesty's Prison Gonebren** first appeared in *The Icemaidens and the Philosopher's Stone*.

The **Great Officers of State** are traditional ministers of the Crown who either inherit their positions or are appointed to exercise certain largely ceremonial functions or to operate as members of the government. All of the Great Officers are seen as members of the Royal Household. The reason there are TWO magical Great Officers of State is because of the legal separation between Hogwarts alumni and Meridiana alumni as enforced by the act that created the modern Ministry of Magic in 1707 as noted above. Because of the lack of representation in the Wizengamot for Meridiana alumni, the Magus of Meridiana serves as the "minister" for people such as Negi Springfield in the eyes of the Crown.

The **Secret Peer Guidance Committee** first made its appearance in the *Yatsura* manga story "Food Fight" (manga chapter #106).
The Imperial Countess of the River Plate

Chapter Summary

The fastest shipgirl in space comes to visit Uru, soon followed by sisters no one knew she had. Back on Earth, Heru'ur tries to attack the planet, only to face a very honourable pocket battleship, not to mention a wolf pack of subgirls...!

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In the skies over Onishuto, midnight (Tōkyō time: Suppertime)...

"Wow...!" Redet Ten gushed.

As the small troupe of Oni — most of them being members of the Union Marine Corps assigned to the on-board security force of Redet Invader's flagship, the battlewagon Kashin — gaped in awe at the sight of the badly-scared Niphentaxian destroyer being boosted away from the capital of the Ursian Union thanks to the combined efforts of Fukushima Hatsue and Ashikaga Shikuko, Hiromi Katabarbe could only shake her head. The current incarnation of the being often nicknamed the "Mistress of Morphing" on Yiziba was now riding on the back of Shigaten Benten's aircycle. Redet Lum had wanted to come see what the shipgirls were doing when an alarm had been sent warning of a pending starship crash; her new fiancée and friends had been glad to accompany her. Also seated on the aircycle between its driver and Lum's new lover was Oyuki. "Since when do the Niphentaxians do something like THIS?!!" the crown princess of Neptune wondered. "I can understand how heartbroken and disorientated they must be after your brother and sister helped thrash them so thoroughly some months ago, Hiromi-chan, but to try to unleash a HELLFIRE incident here on Uru...?" She shook her head. "That's madness...!"

"Yeah, especially with their 'goddess' living three clicks beyond city limits," Benten noted before she perked as the familiar sound of a certain polymath's disc-shaped shuttlecraft echoed from her right. Looking over, she blinked as Isaac Thomas' personal runabout came up to hover close to them, a side hatch opening to allow several people in fighting jumpsuits to emerge, they flying out to form a staggered line above the marines. "'Bout time you guys caught up with us!"

"Sorry about that, Benten!" Yáng Xiǎo Lóng called out as she came to a hover beside her new local cluster friends and the adopted sister of the woman who had effectively unleashed a second age of metahumans on Earth, making use of the special modifications Isaac Thomas inserted into her uniform to help her fly. "Much that I'm pretty fast myself, I'm nowhere in Hatsue's or Shikuko's class when it comes to reaction time when a fight scene starts." Here, the current version of the Raging Berserker, Duobyato ("Fortitude"), shook her head. She, her fellow hunters from Remnant and their new friends from Santa Clara had been stunned at the sheer speed the two destroyers-turned-teenage girls showed when the alert came to the Invader home about the runaway destroyer from Phentax Two; while some were fast like Yáng could be, none could match the Silent Blizzard or her younger
half-sister, known now on Yiziba as the Mistress of Waterspouts, R'betoba ("Shikinami").
"Damn...!"

"TOO SLOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOW...!
Everyone perked on hearing that girlish scream...

...then people were literally blasted aside as something flew past them at speeds even an intercontinental ballistic missile or a runaway photon torpedo couldn't match. Benten's aircycle was flipped over, though Yáng was quick enough to fly down and catch Oyuki and Hiromi before they went on a tumble of several kilometres to the ground; the biker girl from Bensaikyō on Fukunokami was able to hold onto her handles, twisting herself around with Lum's help to right her machine.

"HEY, YOU FUCKING ROAD HOG!" Benten shrieked. "WATCH WHERE YOU'RE...?!"
Her voice faded on seeing the destroyer literally WARPED away! "Holy fuck...!" Benten gasped.

"Did Hatsue-chan or Shikuko-chan do that?!" Ten asked, glad that he could fly so he didn't get hurt by whoever just raced past them, creating a sonic boom that — thanks to people being metahumans of one sort or another — hadn't ruptured their eardrums. "I didn't know shipgirls could move that fast!"

"Mamoru-chan's clocked Miyuki-san and her sister Urako-san at speeds of up to Mach Ten when they're in atmosphere!" Hiromi grunted as Yáng put her and Oyuki back on Benten's machine. As Lum moved to hover close to her fiancée, the film replica of Moroboshi Ataru added, "That was a blonde that just passed us. Only blondes among the shipgirls now are Luisa-san, Amélie-san and Catarina-san from the German group or Mayako-san, Sayako-san or Himeko-san from the ones Hinako-chan found."

"Mayako-san, Sayako-san and Himeko-san are silver-haired, Hiromi-onēchan," Ten advised as he moved to stay close to his future cousin-in-law. "Whoever that was had to be doing Mach TWENTY!"

"Mach Twenty-eight, kid."

Silence.
More silence.
Still more silence.
Then...

Everyone turned to see a smiling teenager now floating about a metre away from Benten's aircycle, having silently warped herself there after disposing of the alien destroyer by sending it crashing at terminal velocity onto one of the asteroids in the outer belt ringing the Oniboshi system. Slender like the other shipgirls who came to Uru over the last day were, she had long, straight blonde hair that went to her hips, grey eyes peeking out of a face with a little baby fat on it — the sign, Hiromi knew, of a shipgirl that hadn't served long as a ship — and was in a silver and sky blue uniform with a dark blue mountain insignia on her chest over her cleavage, that with the blue-piped white intertwined kanji 島風 in vertical reading formation. Her uniform was akin to what Takino Tomo wore as Warwind: A single-piece swimsuit with a high-leg cut that exposed a lot of acreage of skin, that topped with blue-trimmed silver thigh-high boots possessing red racing stripes and bicep-length
gloves of the same pattern. As Hiromi and Yáng blushed on seeing how provocative her uniform was, the newcomer then leaned up to gaze into the former's eyes. "Are you my admiral?" she asked, a hopeful look crossing her face.

Hiromi blinked while the others watching this all moaned...

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Aboard the Free Planetary State of Yiziba Starship Normandy, in orbit over Uru, an hour later...

"Permission to come aboard, Doctor?"

"Granted. Welcome aboard, Mister President."

Hozan Lana smiled as he walked over to grasp Isaac Thomas' hand. Accompanying the gregarious Oni supreme warlord who was Uru's head of state was his new chief of staff and the just-elected Speaker of the Union Congress, Major General Hoth Julan, a scarred Seishin fifty-something who reminded the Wise Lone Sage of many senior Yehisrite warlords his past-selves encountered over the centuries. "It's strange for me to actually thank one of YOUR kind, Doctor," the silver-haired beefy-looking man said as he shook Isaac's hand after he had greeted Admiral Azu Kakazu. "You said to Lana here that you might have discovered what provoked that idiot captain to try to drop his destroyer on the capital city."

"I have a strong suspicion, General," Isaac stated as he waved his visitors out of the materializer room towards the main pilotage on the ten-to-one scale replica of the original SSV Normandy from Mass Effect. "Fortunately, the newest shipgirl to join the Moroboshi siblings 'fleet' managed to crash that thing into a small-enough asteroid that the whole ship wasn't destroyed. We got the flight logs salvaged and my android crew are now retrieving bodies for autopsies."

"We'd like to have our own doctors watch over this," Kakazu warned.

"Fair enough. Just keep the Round away, please."

The visiting dignitaries from Onishuto laughed at the American's request. With the deaths of several senior members over the last day, the Imperial Round of Uru was effectively leaderless, which would allow more moderate members — people who, while wanting the restoration of the monarchy, did want to maintain the rights given to all Urusians in the wake of the Union Revolution — to take control of the group and ease off the potential threat of civil war, the unleashing of which wouldn't do the Galactic Federation any good. "Don't blame you for asking that, son," Julan said as they boarded the turbolift.

In a minute, they walked onto the main bridge of the starship, where a large mass of metahumans stood as they either chatted with each other or watched the androids Isaac created to crew the Normandy work at their stations. Redet Invader, his daughter, future daughter-in-law and Lum's best friends stood around the central display station in the middle of the bridge, it projecting a holographic image of what appeared to be a human, though the face and other elements of the body were hideously deformed. "Captain, report," Lana snarled as Invader straightened himself to attention.

"Boss," the younger warlord said with a grim nod before he contemptuously waved to the hologram before him. "Say hello to another race of 'umale' our friends from Yiziba have encountered over the years: The Sidines." As the new arrivals stared at the hideously twisted face and body, he added, "They're a race of empathic vampires according to the Doctor and Ms. Groom." As Hiromi Katabarbe blushed at being called that, the captain of the Kashin added, "They don't kill their victims, but they emphatically plunge them into deep depression to feed off the emotional output. As
far as the Doctor can conclude, this one fellow made the crew of that destroyer Commander Sumie just wrecked on Katte lose all belief in my daughter as their 'living goddess', driving them to crash their ship on Onishuto in vengeance over the 'lies' they were forced to adhere to by Ōgi and his idiots. This one's corpse was in a lifepod; he was about to eject from the hull when Commander Sumie sent it into the side of Katte."

"At least she didn't wreck the prison there," Kakazu wryly noted.

"It's like Alcatraz, you mean?"

That was Toyama Sumie, the recently-reborn experimental destroyer Shimakaze made human, who was now standing beside Fukushima Hatsue and Ashikaga Shikuko off to one side of the bridge, with Redet Ten floating close to the former's shoulder. "Same concept, Commander Sumie," Lana said with a polite nod to the woman who had effectively saved over ten million lives and prevented nuclear winter from descending over Uru. "What made you come our way, by the way?" he then asked.

The blonde shipgirl shrugged nonchalantly. "Oh, I was bored." As people on the bridge all staggered on hearing that surprising admission, Sumie added, "I was busy checking out this place where a sun was actually encased in a big metal sphere at the other side of the galaxy..." — here, she made a big encompassing circular motion with her hands — "...when some short monk teleported in and told me that there was trouble happening over this planet where Hatsue-chan and Shikuko-chan were. So I flew over here and saw them trying to push the ship away from your city, then pitched in to help. They were so SLOW!" Here, she gave her fellow shipgirls a condescending look, getting nothing from Hatsue while Shikuko puffed her cheeks in annoyance at the younger destroyer's display of arrogance. "Good thing I can fly way past light speed to get here real quick to do that."


"That sounds like a Dyson sphere of some sort," Hiromi commented.

"The Planet of Shadows."

Eyes locked on Isaac. "You mean the place where Master Kyōsur's people were said to have hidden the Sceptre of Lecasur after the Mikado took power, Doctor?" Lana asked.

"Same place, Mister President. How long before you got here did you meet this Majujjō, Sumie?" Isaac then asked. Noting the confused look cross the blonde destroyer's face, he added, "The short monk?"

She seemed to think about it, then shrugged. "Ten minutes."

That made people on the bridge — even many of the Normandy's android crew — stare in disbelief and shock at the newcomer. "You were able to warp seventy thousand light years in just TEN MINUTES?!" Mimir Shepard, the gynoid replica of the main character of Mass Effect (when depicted as a woman) who was in operational charge of the Normandy, demanded as she stared wide-eyed at the blonde destroyer-turned-teenage girl. "You must be a reality warper, Commander."

Confusion crossed Sumie's face. "What's a reality warper?"

People staggered again. "Well, it's like..." Hiromi began.

TONG! TONG! TONG!

As people perked on hearing that knocking sound echo through the bridge, the android in charge of
main sensory looked over. "Doctor, there's another woman with the bio-readings of a first generation battle doll now floating beside the main airlock. Her fighting aura matches that of Commander Toyama. It appears she wishes to come inside," he helpfully reported.

"Put an image of her here," Isaac bade as he waved to the central display.

"Yes, Doctor."

People looked over as the image of the Sidine corpse found aboard the runaway Niphentaxian destroyer vanished, transforming into a woman who could be Toyama Sumie's own twin sister save for having blonde-streaked raven hair and dark blue eyes. Her uniform was of the same pattern as what Sumie wore, thought it was black overall with dark blue highlights, gunmetal grey racing stripes on her thigh-high boots and a crescent moon insignia on her chest, with script written over it in black-trimmed dark blue. However, the script there wasn't kanji, Isaac immediately realized. Instead, there were two blocks of characters that reminded the Urusians there of formal Noukiite script:

"'Sap'ung'?" Hiromi read aloud.

"She doesn't look Noukiite!" Ten protested.


"Who is she, Sumie-san?" Oyuki asked.

"My sister," came the curt reply.

The other shipgirls gazed her way. "How?!" Shikuko demanded. "You were a one-off design!"

"Project V6."

"That was cancelled!"

"The kami were still there. Muwol-sŏnsaengnim brought them back."

Hiromi's head snapped over. "Su Muwol?!"

"Hai!"

TONG! TONG! TONG!

"Let her in, please!" Isaac bade.

"Yes, Doctor," Mimir said before barking commands.

As two of the bridge crew headed aft to receive their new visitor, Redet Lum gazed in confusion at her wife. "Who's he, Darling?" she asked.

"He's a 'she', koishii," Hiromi explained with an amused smile, instantly making Lum blush. "Su Muwol-ssi is a shaman from Taegu that Onē-san met in her travels six years ago. She was going through a shinbyŏng experience when Onē-san first met her. After she recovered, she was allowed to apprentice under an elder mudang knowledgeable in the traditional rites from her province." Grateful the ship's translator system would render the Korean terms into words the visitors from Uru and elsewhere could understand, she added, "After she began to apprentice under a cleric at Samsŏng-gung in Hadong, Onē-san gave her an offer. Ironically, she became the Yizibajohei analogue of a
Korean shaman; she even took the name 'Mudang' as her battle name. She's almost as powerful as Ō'oji-san."

"Wow...!" Ten gushed.

"Yeah!" Sumie added. "After I got my uniform after whatever it was brought me back and I found out I was faster than anything that lives, I felt Sŏnsaeng-nim call out to me from her temple. Nice place in the mountains, too." As people gazed intently at her, the destroyer-turned-teenage girl added, "Well, I was lonely since I didn't have sisters, then Sŏnsaeng-nim did some divination to find out if their kami existed. She found them — all SIXTEEN of them! — then got them drawn to the temple, where they got bodies like mine, then got Gifted!" As Hatsue and Shikuko gaped at her, the fastest destroyer in the Pacific War added, "I came up with their names since they never got named, then Sŏnsaeng-nim gave them their human names after finding out they existed in something called an 'alternate dimension'..." — here, a confused look crossed her face on saying that — "...where a nice admiral thought up human names for all the shipgirls that lived there. Sŏnsaeng-nim said he was related to a friend..."

"That's the counterpart to our admiral," Hatsue provided. "Hiromi-san's older brother, Moroboshi Ataru. All of us who came back from the Imperial Navy are with him and his sisters on Ōmure-jima."

"Oh...!"

"Ah! Ōnni! Annyŏng!"

People gazed towards the back of the bridge to see Sumie's sister standing by the hatch leading to the main corridor, her hand raised in greeting and a friendly smile on her face. "Ah! Yura-ya! You're slow!"

"Am not, Ōnni!" the newcomer said as she lowered her arm, giving her sister an annoyed pout. "I was stopped by some creepy snake over in the Carina Nebula who wanted me to bow to her because she said she was some sort of god! I had to ram the ship and blow it up so I could get the creepy snake to stop yelling in my ears like that, then snacked on it before I came here!"

"Did you get the snake's name, Sap'ung-nari?" Isaac asked.

That made Sumie's sister blush violently at such a formal type of honorific applied. "Sŏnsaeng-nim...!"

"She was adopted into the Yŏn'il Sŭng family," Sumie helpfully provided.

"Sŭng Yuna," Hiromi then concluded, nodding in understanding. "'Sap'ung' in Japanese is 'Yūkaze'. In Yizibajohei, that's read 'Yo'obo'o'. What can you do, other than move at hyperwarp speeds, Yura-ssi?"

"Yura-ya and I can make wind move in space," Sumie provided.

The non-Yizibajohei present there gaped. "You can manipulate the SOLAR WIND?!" Kakazu demanded.

"Definitely cosmic-level powers," Isaac noted.

"Is that a good thing, son?" Invader asked as he warily looked at his host.

"On Yiziba, Otō-san, we call dealing with things like this a 'sleepy episode'," Hiromi wryly noted.
"Or as they would say it on Earth, confronting something like that is 'a slow Tuesday'," Isaac added. The non-Yizibajohei present all moaned...

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**Colorado Springs Air Force Station, that moment (local time: Three hours after midnight)...**

"Thank you, my son! Thank you! THANK YOU!"

There wasn't a dry eye among any of the shipgirls in the main meeting room as Sha're's father Kasuf as he tried to squeeze the very life out of his son-in-law. As Daniel Jackson tried not to gaggle at the strength of the older man's embrace, his wife tried not to smile too much at such antics. "Good Father, please!" she then pleaded. "My husband is a man of knowledge. Even if he has worked with his countrymen in fighting the false gods, he's not as endurable as Master Teal'c is."

Kasuf blinked before he chuckled in embarrassment as he let Jackson go. He then felt his cheeks heat as appraising looks came upon him from four very beautiful women standing nearby, all looking to be his daughter's age and dressed in very form-fitting clothing that covered their bodies save their shoulders and arms. The colours on their uniforms were a mixture of primary shades, with strange gold-trimmed dark blue stadium ring-like insignia on their chests with golden words on the rings top and bottom, displaying symbols within the rings whose significance didn't make sense to the Abydonian leader. First was a sturdy-looking brown-haired woman with warm green eyes, who had a red uniform with dark blue trim, boots and belt, white stars on the trim and belt. Her slightly taller friend with long blonde hair done in twin ponytails at her temples, possessing warm dark blue eyes, wore a dark navy blue suit with green belt and boots. The third, a woman equal in height to the second, had shaggy short-cropped brown hair and green eyes, wearing a dark navy suit with gold belt and boots. And the studious one with the dark brown hair done up in a bun at the back of the head, wearing a pair of black trimmed goggles over her dark grey eyes, had a dark navy suit with a gold belt and black boots. The way all four were gazing at him made the leader of the people of Abydos wonder if they wished to court him.

Sha're had been quick to see that. "Great Ladies, you flatter my father with such appraising looks."

That instantly made the four battleships-turned-twenty-something women yelp as their cheeks flushed before they looked away, a sputter of denials escaping their lips. As Kasuf coughed to recover his own composure, Jack O'Neill shook his head in amusement while Samantha Carter hid her own smile and Teal'c remained as calm as ever. The bald Chulakian then blinked before he gazed on Margaret Penn, the reborn USS Pennsylvania. "Captain Penn, are you subject to the Dragoness' spell?"

That made Margaret perk. "What spell, Mister Teal'c? Who's this Dragoness you just spoke of?"

"She was said to be one of Destructo's Chosen, Captain Penn," Carter answered. "At the time of the Dawn of Power, she was Gifted with a total control and mastery over what Yizibajohei call the 'pure chaos' — magic, in other words — by your new body's creator in his third known incarnation. After an incident where aliens tried to steal an element of the Great Crystal of Power, she placed a spell on all Yizibajohei which blocks them even to this day from having children with non-Yizibajohei."

Margaret blinked before she gazed intently on the other shipgirls present. "Does anyone know about this particular person?" the reborn flagship of the Battle Force at the time of Pearl Harbour asked.

Everyone shook their heads. "Since their bodies were in storage deep within the Great Crystal of Power — if what Mister Caloway told us about them when Hinako found Commander Fukushima
Fujiko off Guadalcanal in the spring is true — they might be affected. They might not be," Jackson concluded. "Then again, are these girls ready to consider motherhood? They just got turned into shipgirls not a few hours ago after Ataru and his sisters retrieved Captain von Savoyen from Kwajalein. It took his sisters some months to teach Commander Fukushima and her sisters and half-sisters how to be comfortable being human, never mind being METAHUMANS, after being raised from the living spirits of warships."

"Agreed," Major General George Hammond breathed out; he was seated at the head of the table. As Kasuf was welcomed to come sit beside his daughter at the table, the commander of Stargate Command added, "I've recommended to the President that we ask Mister Moroboshi and his family to temporarily take charge of our guests to help them better get used to their new circumstances." As all the shipgirls stiffened with apprehension, the elderly pilot added, "It's not meant to say that we want to abandon you girls. It's just that we don't have the facilities or personnel here to help you better adjust to your surroundings. It's easy to create new identities for you under the auspices of the Liberty Legion Memorial Act with the help of the Federal Bureau of Investigations. It's worlds harder to adjust to having you live as people, never mind you all being women when you were crewed by men."

"What happened to the Legion, sir?" Sydney McCain, the reborn submarine USS Dentuda, asked.

Before anyone could answer, a klaxon echoed over the room. "General Quarters! General Quarters!" the voice of Master Sergeant Walter Harriman echoed over the meeting room as warning lights began to flash. "Unknown alien attack group now approaching Earth! All personnel, stand to combat readiness! General Hammond, to the control centre! All personnel...!"

Hammond was on his feet and running out of the room as quick as he could move, with the members of SG-1, Jackson's wife and father and the shipgirls all behind them. Within moments, they were in the control chamber overlooking the embarkation room, where a platoon's worth of air force security personnel were already mustering with weapons at the ready. "Report, Master Sergeant," the veteran pilot demanded as the shipgirls broke up into two groups, with the cruisers, destroyers and submarines all moving to augment the guard force in the embarkation room while the battleships and the two aircraft carriers followed the flag officer into his combat information centre.

"Sir, we just got a signal from CANSOFCOM concerning six ha'tak-class warships now approaching Earth," MSgt Harriman stated. "They're coming up from well below the plane of the elliptic," he added as he indicated the computer screen before him. "Approximate point of landfall if they maintain course would put them over the South Atlantic Ocean just beyond the Río de la Plata."

"Uruguay and Argentina," Margaret Penn declared as the other shipgirls grimly nodded. "Do we have communications with either nation to warn them that the lar'beke are coming in such force, General?"

"Unfortunately not, Captain," Hammond declared. "This project is considered above top secret when it comes to making things open to the public. No one outside certain military special forces such as our Canadian friends — not to mention all of the Terran-born Yizibajohei living on Earth now — are aware of the existence of the Goa'uld or any other group we've contacted."

"Looks like it's about to go public, sir," Yvette Stuyvesant, the reborn USS New York, noted.

"You guys feel comfortable enough to fly up there and stop them?" O'Neill asked.

The four battleships and two aircraft carriers exchanged looks. "Not really, Colonel," Dionne Doolittle then confessed with a helpless shrug. "As Doctor Jackson just said in the briefing room
before general quarters was called, it's only been a few hours since we all were transformed into this. Much that we seem to have the hang of flying around in atmosphere and teleporting into places — the subgirls helped us with that — I doubt we could feel comfortable enough pressing a fleet action against those things..."

"And hope to ensure we get them all before they could commence shore bombardment and bring people to harm, Colonel," Sarah Blasdel, the reborn USS Nevada, added.

"Damn it, Cheery, we're supposed to be ready for action at any time!" protested the last battleship, the reborn USS Arkansas now known as Jane Sevier. "We're going to let THOSE things walk over us?!

"Captain Sevier, much that I appreciate your willingness to get into the action, I have to agree with Colonel O'Neill and Captain Doolittle on this matter. It has been five thousand years since you — in part! — last fought the Goa'uld," Hammond quickly moved to calm the brown-haired adopted native of Camden (her place of construction) and Little Rock (capital of her namesake state). "Can you really look at yourself and say that you're ready to fly into SPACE — where no battleship has EVER gone before — to fight those things even if you have memories of the battles five thousand years ago?"

"Um...General...?"

Hammond looked over. "What is it, Airman?"

"Sir, I'm linking into Thoughtmistess-prime Wakefield's geosynchronous inner sensor network right now," Airman First Class Rachel Hayward — one of the several Terran-form Avalonians assigned to Stargate Command — stated as she indicated the computer screen before her. "There's a strange energy nexus now forming in the Río de la Plata close to Montevideo. Look here."

Hammond looked as others came over to see what was going on, including Margaret Penn. Noting where the nexus of energy was forming, the lead of her class of super-dreadnoughts traced a finger roughly parallel to the southern shoreline of Uruguay. "Within the twelve mile limit," the dark-haired adopted native of Newport News in Virginia (her place of construction) and Boalsburg in Pennsylvania (nearly in the centre of her namesake state, where two of her old 14 inch/45 calibre rifles were on display at the Pennsylvania Military Museum) declared. "Do any of you remember a story about a Nazi cruiser being scuttled back in '39 just off Uruguay?" she then asked her fellow shipgirls.

The others perked. "Right! One of the Deutschland-class cruisers, the 'pocket battleships'," Jane said as she came to look over Margaret's shoulder. "Third of the class as I recall, but I forgot her name..."

"Admiral Graf Spee."

Eyes locked on Daniel Jackson. "What does this mean, my son?" a confused Kasuf then asked.

The anthropologist from New York City caught himself. "Good Father, these ladies with us, as you heard earlier, are the living spirits of great warships who felt it right and proper to return to us with the aid of the Great Forge of the Tears of the Stars, being forced to assume human form as they returned to us and Gifted with great power," he said as he waved to the reborn battleships and aircraft carriers in the room. As Kasuf's eyes went wide with more than understandable disbelief, Jackson added, "The one now rising from her grave off the city of Montevideo served an enemy power of ours, but her crew fought honourably during her time in service. That will reflect in the spirit of the ship herself..."
"Can we get any local television networks there?" Samantha Carter demanded.

"We got TNU morning news right now, Captain," another Avalonian who worked at Stargate Command, Master Sergeant Joan Turner, called out as she brought up something on her screen. "Seems..."

Her voice faded as the images showing what was now happening some kilometres beyond the entrance to the Bahía de Montevideo played out before her, a panicked woman's voice — no doubt, one of the announcers on the morning news for people on this VERY unusual day in Uruguay's capital city — echoing in fast Spanish on the screen. As MSgt Turner tapped the controls to turn on the universal translation system — one of many gifts from Isaac Thomas to Stargate Command — the waters of the bay began to bubble over as if something very BIG was about to surge up inexorably from the depths...

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At position 34°58' S, 56°17' W (ten kilometres west-southwest of Punta Brava Lighthouse in Montevideo), that moment (local time: Breakfast)...

An aura of crimson energy shaped akin to an elongated domed stadium began to form over the wildly churning waters of the Río de la Plata, which made crews of the few ships anchored beyond the entrance to the Bahía de Montevideo scramble to pull up anchors and quickly manoeuvre their vessels to safety. As a helicopter from the Televisión Nacional Uruguay approached the scene, the cameraman leaned out of one of the side hatches focused on the centre of whatever it was that was surging up from the depths of the bay. As the reporter beside him described the basics of what was happening, something clearly ship-sized began to appear in the churning sediment-filled waters, it growing...

...until a large tower-shaped fore-structure burst free of the waters!

"Dios mío...el *Graf Spee*...!" the reporter gasped.

"The German ship the government wants to salvage?!" the cameraman demanded as bright silvery energy flowed and warped around the emerging superstructure of the third of the Deutschland-class heavy cruisers, making elements such as her radar and rangefinders taken off in prior salvage operations reappear, the whole hull appearing as if she just emerged from the Reichsmarinewerft yards in Wilhelmshaven, fully fitted out for service in the then-renamed Kriegsmarine in 1936.

"The same...but HOW?!"

By then, the seemingly magically-rebuilding warship had emerged from her grave up to her old waterline, her hull pristine and intact instead of having been snapped apart thanks to the scuttling charges detonated in the area forward of her aft turret mounting three 28 centimetre 52 calibre SK C/28 rifles. As energy warped over the hull to remove the rust, sediment and sea life that had grown on and inside the cruiser over a period of seventy-two years, her bright gold-white-and-red bugwappen glittered in the morning sun, displaying the crowned red cocks of the Spee Clan of Troisdorf near Cologne. Under the area of her bridge, the now bright haze grey hull got a white bordered black *K88* emblazoned there. At the stern, the ship's heckadler — salvaged in 2006 by the Uruguayan government, it being stored in a warehouse partially masked so the infamous swastika could not be publicly displayed — morphed into a modern black German bundesadler on a gold shield. As the pilot of the helicopter — who was trying NOT to let what was happening off his
craft's bow distract him to the point where he'd end up crashing into the waters below or on the deck or upper works of the reborn cruiser — manoeuvred his machine to allow the cameraman to get all the details in, the crimson energy bubble that surrounded Graf Spee began to collapse as a strange hole in space appeared over the funnel...

**Tene lomher'buo, Huberta Margareta von Spee...**

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*Approaching Earth to the southeast of Montevideo, that moment...*

"What is going on?"

The Jaffa in control of the sensors of the largest of the sextet of ha'tak now approaching the Tau'ri homeworld bowed his head to the living god approaching him. The klaxons fitted into the bulkheads of the pel'tak were blaring loudly even if the child of Ra and Hathor couldn't remember exactly what that specific signal meant. Then again, he had many underlings who could interpret such trivial things. "My lord, we're detecting a high source of ra-naquadah now forming in the sea at this bay here!" M'zel stated, pointing at the screen, now displaying the South Atlantic Ocean close to the triangular-shaped continent that once served as the heart of the realm of Supay, a system lord that later rebelled against Ra's supreme leadership and joined forces with the accursed Egeria and her "Tok'ra". "There are signs of a space warp also forming there, but the systems can't trace where the warp is coming from..."

"My lord!"

"What?" Heru'ur snarled as he gazed on the woman in command of communications aboard his ship.

"We're monitoring live communications from a country called 'Uruguay' concerning an incident near their capital city happening at this time," Tir'na responded, her eyes wide with confusion. "Supposedly, a great sea warship that was sunk off the city many years ago is now being risen from its grave, reforming to the point as if she was when she was first built. A 'pocket battleship' named Admiral Graf Spee." She then tapped controls to allow the transmission to echo over the bridge.

"«...looks as if she was just commissioned,»" a man's voice echoed over the speakers, the on-board translators rendering his Spanish to a language the ship's crew could understand. "«The crimson field now forming around Graf Spee appears to be of the same consistency as a pure ruby, but there's...»"

**Tene lomher'buo, Huberta Margareta von Spee...**

As Heru'ur turned white on hearing the voice of one of the beings that ALL Goa'uld feared, the TNU reporter's voice halted for a second, then he called out, "«A voice just called out! I don't understand the language, but it just spoke a woman's name, someone directly related to Graf Spee's namesake, the late Vice Admiral Maximilian von Spee...WAIT!»" he then cried out. "«Some sort of space warp just appeared above the Graf Spee, directly above her funnel! I...oh, my God! It appears to be some sort of mannequin or robot, a female-shaped one, now emerging from the warp...!»"

"NO!" Heru'ur screeched. "YOU WILL NOT STOP ME, ORAK'NOU! ALL WEAPONS! LOCK ON THAT WARP AND FIRE! DESTROY IT! NOW!"

As the crew leapt to action to aim the ha'tak's staff cannons to commence shore bombardment, the reporter's voice echoed over the bridge, "«OH MY GOD! The whole of the Graf Spee seems to be compressing and collapsing, its mass melting and merging into the robot or whatever—it is now...»"
floating over where she was scuttled! And the robot...! Dear God! It's transforming into a very beautiful woman, about eighteen or twenty years of age, silver-haired with a red streak over the left eye, the eyes ice blue...! I've never seen ANYTHING like this before...wait! She's having a costume form around her! Looks like what a mystery man would wear from the time before the Second World War! Green overall with a white wavy centre stripe, white belt and boots...and...and the Graf Spee's crest on her chest! My God! The Graf Spee has become a HUMAN BEING! Is this even POSSIBLE...?!»"

Nesu...SPEE BYATORITO GAEKUTO!

"NO! FIRE! FIRE! FIRE ON IT! DESTROY THE ORAK'NOU!" Heru'ur screeched.

"Again, the alien voice just spoke out!" the TNU reporter continued his attempt at describing events he barely could understand while the bridge crew moved to carry out their god's orders. "All the crimson energy that formed around the wreck of the Graf Spee has disappeared, literally flowing into the body of...well, I assume we must call her now 'Señora Huberta Margareta von Spee' if what the alien called out before this unbelievable transformation — this ACT OF GOD...!»"

"I AM THE ONLY GOD!" Heru'ur screamed in outrage.

"Lar'beke...schmutzige Schlangen...!"

"Wait! Señora von Spee is looking up into the southern sky...!"

"Weapons locked, my lord!" Ryn'tak bellowed from the main weapons station.

"FIRE!" Heru'ur bellowed...

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Over the Río de la Plata, that moment...

Margareta von Spee's eyes widened as something — was it some strange echo of her FMG 39 G(gO) radar? — picked up the incoming bolts of HUNDREDS of weapons pouring down in her direction from the squadron of ha'tak now in orbit over her planet. Realizing instantly that if something wasn't done, Montevideo and its surrounding territory would be turned into something akin to the Western Front during the Great War — how could she understand this so quickly? — the reborn panzerschiffe held out her right — starboard? — hand, allowing the storm of power that raged through her body — hull? — to lash out in a nearly invisible torrent of energy to spiral into the heavens and the oncoming attack.

As the excited reporter screeched what he was seeing into his microphone, the wave of displaced air soon widened and flattened out, forming an impossibly wide and vast shield of energy that seemed to cloak the whole of the Río de la Plata with something as hard as depleted uranium. It was just in time. As the crew of the TNU news helicopter gaped in awe and trepidation, massive nuclear-sized explosions billowed very high in the sky, spread out over a total of hundreds of kilometres from Buenos Aires across the Río de la Plata west of Montevideo all the way out beyond Punta del Este on the edge of the Atlantic itself. "¡Santa María nos preserva!" the reporter gaped. "Are aliens attacking us?!!"

"Ja, they are."

He and the cameraman turned to see Margareta gazing at them; her energy-enhanced voice echoed well in their ears despite the noise of the Bell 212's Pratt and Whitney Canada PT6T Twin-Pac
turboshaft engines. "Meine Herren, it is best you land your machine and stay on the ground until the schmutzige Schlangen now in orbit over our heads are dealt with," she advised with a mixture of Limburgish and Low Rhenish accents reflective of her namesake's ancestral home town near the border with the Netherlands. "They care not for people, only for their own greed and lusts. Your country is neutral in whatever war they wish to unleash. As a good...well...

"Here, she blushed as she looked down at her quite healthy teenage girl's body — hull? — covered with a uniform emblazoned with her bugwappen on the forest green-and-white of the Rhineland where the Spee Clan first rose. "Um...!"

"ORAK'NOU!"

Margareta's head snapped up as that booming voice echoed over the scene...

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*Colorado Springs Air Force Station...*

"Heru'ur?" Jack O'Neill asked.

Daniel Jackson nodded. "Heru'ur."

"Indeed."

Both the anthropologist and the pararescueman automatically smiled at their Chulakian friend's common assertion, then O'Neill gazed on Samantha Carter. In the background, George Hammond was now on the red phone having a very terse conversation with Josiah Bartlet at the White House; the President was now getting calls from counterparts in Montevideo and Buenos Aires asking what was going on. "What do you think, Carter?" he asked, crossing his arms with a smile.

The native of Uxbridge — she had been born in England when her father had been assigned as a junior officer at the local terminus for NATO's communications network in the like-named Royal Air Force station at London's western end — perked before she gazed at her boss. "What is it, sir?"

"Is she a battleship?" the native of Minnesota asked as he indicated Margareta von Spee's image.

She shook her head. "I'm not an expert on German warships, sir."

"I'd rate her as one now."

People gazed on Sarah Blasdel, then the others in the room nodded...

...before footfalls made people turn as a wide-eyed Amber Seligman — the reborn heavy cruiser *USS Pensacola* — charged up into the room. "What is it, Amber?" Margaret Penn then asked, seeing the panicked look on the rose-haired adopted native of her namesake city in Florida as well as her place of construction at Brooklyn. "Oh, dear! What on Earth happened now?"

"Um...all the subgirls just disappeared, Boss!" Amber said, thumbing towards the embarkation room.

O'Neill ran over to where MSgt Walter Harriman's station was, looking down to see only a bunch of very confused shipgirls, none in black diving suits. "Now, where the hell did they go off to?"

"Um, sir..."

"What is it, Airman?" Carter asked as she gazed at A1C Rachel Hayward's screen. "What the...?"
O'Neill looked over as Jackson walked over to join his co-worker. "Carter?"

"Sir, sensors now indicate seven first generation battle dolls having boarded all of the ha'tak, two on the lead ship of the formation," Carter reported as she pointed to the display showing the six Goa'uld warships now in orbit over the South Atlantic just beyond the outer atmosphere.

"The system confirmed the bio-signs for Commanders Schoeni and McCain now on the lead ship, Colonel," Hayward added as she gazed on O'Neill.

"What the hell are those sub-thieves up to now?" Jane Sevier demanded...

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Aboard Heru'ur's flagship...

"HOL! ARAY KREE!"

"AH, SHADDUP, YOU STUPID SNAKE-SLAVE!"

The Jaffa that had reacted immediately to the sudden arrival of a teenage woman in a black skinsuit with bared arms and shoulders screamed as she lashed out with her hand to rip into his abdominal pouch THROUGH his armour, grabbing the larvae inside him and yanking it out! As he then shrieked in pain as his prim'ta was removed so suddenly from him, others grabbed ma'tok staffs and levelled them on the woman with the orange-shaded blonde hair and the amber eyes. "ORAK'NOU KEK!" one of the Horus Guards screamed out as his friend collapsed into an agonized daze on the bridge deck.

Heru'ur himself spun around. "ORAK'NOU! HOW DARE YOU ATTACK YOUR...?!"

His voice caught in his throat as Paula Schoeni smirked while she held up the struggling larvae...

...then he bellowed in outrage as the adopted native of Kittery in Maine (her place of construction as USS Apogon) opened her mouth to literally BITE the larvae in half behind the dorsal fin. "FILTHY KEK'ULD!" Heru'ur screeched in understandable horror as he levelled his gold kara kesh at the reborn submarine's head while many of his bridge crew aimed their ma'tok staffs and zat'nik'tel pistols at her. "HOW DARE YOU EAT ONE OF YOUR GODS?! JAFFA KREE! ORAK'NOU KEK!"

A storm of energy fire lanced out to slam into Paula's face and body, which made her wince at the start as she recalled her crews' memories of early science fiction films such as Flash Gordon and Buck Rodgers where aliens made use of such weapons on their enemies. However, as she was a first generation battle doll created by the Healer of Destruction who had been purpose-built to destroy ha'tak and other Goa'uld starships without suffering injury in return — never mind she being the spiritual personification of a Balao-class submarine that displaced 2,429 tonnes fully submerged and armed — the assault of such man-killing weapons coming at her at machine gun speeds (never mind she being assaulted by a company's worth of enemy troopers) was no different than dealing with a summer shower in the Pacific during one of her war patrols. Within a half-minute, the Jaffa who were trying to strike her down for her act of barbarity in actually EATING a prim'ta began to realize that their assault on this creature wasn't doing her harm, which made some of them lower their weapons as they tried to conceive of how it was possible such a being could withstand their defence of their god...!

The forward part of the pel'tak then exploded inward, killing a dozen Jaffa thanks to flying debris...
even if the hand-held device Heru'ur possessed instantly threw up a shield to protect him. As smoke billowed through the space, several Jaffa spun their weapons around to assault whoever it was that just killed their brothers and sisters to send more torrents of energy at the newcomer, who soon emerged from the smoke to reveal a green-and-white jumpsuit with a proud noble bugwappen on her chest, her blue eyes glowing with rage as she gazed upon the animals who DARED tried to fire on neutral cities and towns in their mad attempt at trying to stop her from returning to duty to serve her fatherland.

"Guten Tag," Margareta von Spee called out, an icy smile crossing the pocket battleship's face for a moment before such a look melted into a glare of cold fury. "Now..." the third of the Deutschland-class cruisers then snarled. "Surrender and lay down your weapons. Or with God as my witness, I'LL FORGET THAT I NORMALLY OPERATE UNDER CRUISER RULES AND SEND YOU ALL TO YOUR WELL-DESERVED PLACES IN HELL BY SINKING YOU ALL WITHOUT CHANCE OF RESCUE!"

Heru'ur snarled as he levelled his kara kesh at her. "I AM YOUR GOD!"

A burst of brilliant energy exploded from Margareta von Spee's eyes to slam into the chest of Ra's son, pulping his armour like it was tissue paper and sending him flying at near-sonic speeds into the rear bulkhead of his bridge. His body seemed to liquefy at the harsh impact before it collapsed in pieces on the deck, making the Jaffa cry out in horror on seeing how easy it was for the pocket battleship to slay their god with just a GLARE. A hiss then made them gaze upon the shattered head of Heru'ur as his true form tried to slither out of the broken jaw, the tiny symbiote now bleeding from several wounds thanks to shattered bones from its host. Before any of the slave warriors could move to snare the struggling creature and get it to safety, Margareta walked over to pick the struggling symbiote up...then, with a look of total contempt on her face, she crushed the skull with just a simple squeeze of her hand!

"You are now DEAD, mein Herr."

Dropping the symbiote onto the deck, the third of the Deutschland-class cruisers turned to glare at the surviving Jaffa on the bridge. "I said..." Margareta hissed. "Drop your weapons. NOW!"

The clatter of dropped ma'tok staffs and zat'nik'tel pistols onto the deck echoed in her ears, making the pocket battleship nod in approval as Paula relaxed herself. "Congratulations, Captain von Spee."

That made Margareta look her way. "You are...?"

Paula quickly saluted her. "Lieutenant Commander Paula Schoeni, United States Navy; formerly United States Ship Apogon, hull number SS-308, twenty-fourth of the Balao-class fleet submarines."

Margareta returned her courtesy with a polite nod. "Honoured, Frau Korvettenkapitän Schoeni. I assume that when that strange voice called me 'Huberta Margareta von Spee' when I was fully transformed into this..." — here, she waved to herself — "...that such would be my name since I'm practically as human as any of my crew..." She then stared at her well-formed teenage breasts. "Save for my being a woman, of course," she then mused, a wry smile crossing her face.

"We're not the only ones who've undergone this, ma'am," Paula warned before she looked around, her amber eyes narrow as she reached out to find her sister. "Oi! Dentuda! Where the hell are you, you stupid eight-ball?! We got the conning room secured!" she bellowed.

"Found a baby, Apy!" a voice echoed back with a mix of New England and Middle American accents.
That made Margareta pale in horror. "A CHILD?!"

"That is the harcesis."

That was Tir'na, who was being helped by M'zel; both had been at the edge of the detonation zone when the pocket battleship smashed into their lord's flagship and ploughed her way onto the bridge.

"'Harcesis'?' both Paula and Margareta asked, clearly confused...

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Near the summit of the ha'tak's central superstructure...

"Release...us! Bow...to your...gods! Your...impertinence...!"

"Hina said 'Be quiet'!"

Agonized gargled breaths escaped the Goa'uld underlords there as they felt something as unyielding as purest neutronium seize their throats to silence them. As Eigo Kaho shook her head in pity at the sight of both Zipacna and Klorel — the latter now possessing the body of Sha're Jackson's brother Skaara — now being brought low by the power of the Spirit of Innocence, Saeru Hinako pouted before she gazed down to wiggle a finger over the burbling baby boy now in her arms. "Did the mean, scary snakes try to hurt you, Shifu-chan?" the native of Niigata cooed as she tickled the child's nose.

As Shifu giggled at that contact, Sydney McCain could only shake her head, her dark blue eyes sparkling with amusement. While the group of Jaffa that had been helping both underlords of Apophis — who were captured by Heru'ur's people when they encountered them on the once-lost planet of Kheb after Ra's son heard of the harcesis his rival helped birth with Amaunet — were now dazed by Hinako's power, the two Goa'uld were doing their best to fight off the aura of pure innocence that washed like sulphuric acid over their very souls. Noting how much they were hurting, the living soul of the fifty-first Balao-class submarine smirked. "Doesn't feel so good being at the receiving end of it, does it?" the blonde adopted native of Groton in Connecticut and Cornville in Arizona — as he had been aware of the Stargate program right from the beginning, the current senior senator from Arizona had been more than pleased to adopt the shipgirl who had been reborn from the submarine his late father commanded in World War Two as an adopted daughter — then teased as she leered at the two "gods".

Klorel sneered. "You will...not be allowed...to take...this world, Orak'nou...!"

"HINA SAID 'BE QUIET'!"

As Shifu wailed on noting that the very nice older girl holding him was upset, a shriek escaped Apophis' son as he jolted like he had just been electrified, then he collapsed to the deck. A second later, a writhing symbiote slithered out of its host's mouth, which got Sydney's attention. As Hinako and Kaho gasped, the former training submarine for the American naval reserve snared the struggling symbiote, then she stuffed the head right into her mouth, her jaws snapping off the head with just one bite! Fortunately, the two younger sisters of the Trickster of the Show had turned their heads away before Klorel was killed by the reborn submarine, though the slight distraction was enough for the namesake of the Mayan devil-god of the earth to yank up his kara keshe to strike down the little monster threatening to take away the accursed harcesis and expose the truth of the Goa'uld to the whole galaxy...

PSSSSHHEW!
A shriek of agony escaped Zipacna before he looked down to see his hand severed, the arm cauterized at the wrist, said limb now dropped to the deck off to one side. As the humming noise of a crimson-bladed sabrestaff echoed in the air, a cold voice then chuckled in amusement. "That is not allowed, weakling," an echoing woman's voice seemed to overwhelm the underlord's ears as he found himself looking up at a woman the same age as the Orak'nou that had eaten his lord's son, her face cloaked in a white hooded cape over a black uniform with red dragon-like insignia on the sides of her body.

She then gestured with her hand, causing Zipacna to croak as something crushed his throat with frightful ease, then that something literally YANKED OUT his symbiote from the body. As the host collapsed to the floor, that glowing energy blade was raised, then with one sweep, the symbiote was sliced in half before the parts were floated over to a smirking Sydney. Naturally, the submarine was more than happy to enjoy the extra snack as the Jaffa gaped in disbelief at such a terrible show of power. "What...a-are you...?" Kav'da, first prime to the now-deceased namesake of the Mayan devil-god, hesitantly asked as several of his fellows all tried to shuffle clear of that deadly killer blade.

The hooded head turned to reveal two glowing amber eyes, which made the Jaffa all croak before they prostrated themselves to what — in their eyes — was clearly an insanely powerful System Lord disguised as one of the feared Orak'nou. After a moment, the churning power of the Force faded from Hirosaki Chikage's royal blue eyes as she deactivated her blade, securing it in her belt. "I am no Goa'uld, Master Kav'da," the granddaughter of one of Japan's most famous magical warriors calmly declared as she reached out with her power to augment Hinako's own empathic aura to calm the understandably frightened warriors down and prevent them from launching a very unnecessary fight scene so close to a defenceless child. "I am many things. The sister to the one protecting little Shifu being one." As Kav'da and the others gargled at the thought of causing such a powerful being to turn her rage on them by attacking her sister, Chikage smiled as she slipped off her hood. "As you just saw and as some of you know, your 'gods' are not deities but alien parasites who forced your ancestors to bow down to them and stifled the development of your home societies to aid in their quest for galactic power and domination. You wonder why is it my adopted race cares not for your 'gods'? They have not improved themselves in the five millennia since Ra and his allies first tried to seize the Great Crystal of Power, the Forge of the Tears of the Stars, drawing the wrath of the Healer of Destruction to scatter them over the galaxy. Do not follow their doomed path in the future. It will NOT end well for you."

"The Lady Dragonheart is correct," a new voice called out, causing the Jaffa to stare wide-eyed at the infamous shol'va who betrayed Apophis to ally himself with the Tau'ri and start the current war between them and the System Lords. He had just walked up to gaze into the guest quarters/prison set aside for Apophis' children, accompanied by two of the other members of SG-1. "The Children of the Forge of the First Race do not care to acknowledge the existence of false gods. If ever the Healer of Destruction rises from the Forge, even THEY dread such a happenstance...for not even the ANCIENTS themselves would be able to stop the Healer of Destruction were he or she to rampage across the galaxy!"

That made Kav'da turn white. As a first prime, he was privy to information none of his subordinates would know of. "You mean...Batae Erba, Teal'c?!" the native of Revanna hissed out, his eyes wide.

"Indeed."

Of course, by then, both Jack O'Neill and Samantha Carter were helping the dazed Skaara up from the deck. "Oi! Daniel!" the pararescueman then called out towards the doorway to the guest room/prison as the Abydonian chief's son slowly shook his head, finally waking up from a three-year nightmare that seemed to never end. "We got Skaara back! Klorel's gone finally!"
Hearing that welcome voice, Kasuf's son looked up before his eyes locked on the older man helping him. "O'Neill!" he cried out before moving to straighten himself to give the man a proper salute.

"Whoa! Whoa! At ease, Airman!" O'Neill bade as he playfully rubbed the young Abydonian's head. "You're walking wounded now! Stand down and relax!"

"You two met, Colonel?"

That was Sydney, who was leaning against the bulkhead as she calmly enjoyed the rest of Zipacna's symbiote. "Several times, Commander McCain! By the way, nice boarding action! Warn us next time you do this, huh?" the pararescueman from Minnesota then bade as he and Carter helped Skaara sit down on a nearby chair just as running feet echoing from outside heralded the arrival of the fourth member of SG-1, who was now accompanied by the flagship of the Battle Force at Pearl Harbour.

"Skaara!" Jackson called.

Skaara looked over. "Brother!"

The two soon were embracing as tears flowed down their faces. Seeing that, even the Jaffa who once passionately served both Zipacna and Klorel found themselves smiling in sympathy at such a reunion...

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The bridge of Heru'ur's ship, an hour later...

"I am here, O'Neill of Minnesota!"

O'Neill perked on hearing that aged voice. "Hey, Bra'tac! What the hell are you doing here?!"

As Teal'c's former teacher smartly walked onto the bridge escorted by several of his students, the Jaffa already there gaped in shock on seeing the aged Chulakian greet the infamous Tau'ri warriors as if they were the best of friends. "You are also shol'va, Master Bra'tac?" Tir'na whispered.

Gazing at the wide-eyed girl who was now being helped by one of her brother warriors recover from whatever had smashed its way onto the bridge of this ship, Bra'tac sighed. "I was born a slave, young one. I will die free," he declared before gazing at the leader of SG-1. "Tell me, O'Neill of Minnesota. When were you going to inform me you had allied with other Orak'nou beyond the Wise Lone Sage?"

"We were ordered to keep silent about the presence of other Yizibajohei on our planet by General Hammond," O'Neill replied, a knowing look crossing his face as if he wanted to add, You have your secrets. We've got ours, too. You expect us to blare them out willy-nilly to everyone we know? "How on Earth did you get here from Chulak so fast? We were going to pass on what happened to Heru'ur, Klorel and Zipacna to you when it was done and things were fully secured here."

Bra'tac smirked. "One does not defy the Infinite One when she comes to you, O'Neill. Not even Apophis is stupid enough to defy the First Child of the Forge, especially if she is angered for any reason."

"How many of the Orak'nou are here, O'Neill?" Kav'da wondered.

"A lot of them," the pararescueman answered. "Mostly thanks to Madame Tuyuki."

That made the Jaffa freeze in horror. "Who was so stupid enough to anger the Trickster of the Show..."
to cause her to convince her kind to extend their protection over Earth?" Bra'tac stuttered.

"Tuyuki was not angered by any of the false gods, Master," Teal'c moved to assure his old teacher. "When she was a child, she was chased out of an uncaring home here on Earth, then adopted by one of the Nameless who lived in the old territory of Nesetimtuto who had been the lover of the old Tuyuki. Once adopted, she was given the Gift seed of her would-be father, then grew into the new Tuyuki not several months ago per the wishes of her mother." As the other Jaffa gaped at such a tale, Bra'tac's successor as Apophis' first prime smiled as he added, "Since that time, Tuyuki recruited many Tau'ri — who share the same blood as the Orak'nou — to become like her to defend Earth. The Infinite One was the first to be recruited, Master Bra'tac. As were her sisters." He waved over to where Hirosaki Chikage, Eigo Kaho and Saeru Hinako were standing, the latter holding the now-peacefully sleeping Shifu.

Staring at the child whose very existence would cause ALL the System Lords to move against Ra's would-be successor as their supreme leader, Bra'tac sighed before he gazed on the other Jaffa. "How was it possible that the harcesis was taken from the Great Oma?" he demanded.

"Our lord learned through spies among Amaunet's people that the Great Oma had again secured the harcesis on Kheb," Tir'na explained. "We had the luck to catch her unawares. Our master made use of special weapons he had built which mixed naquadah with ra-naquadah to seize the child and wound the Great Oma so the harcesis could be made hostage and force Apophis to submit to our lord's wishes."

"Then my killing of this schmutzige Schlange was for even more honourable reasons," a cold woman's voice then echoed from nearby, making many of the Jaffa there shudder in fear. Bra'tac spun around...

...then he blinked in understandable confusion. "I am familiar with the fighting uniforms of many of the Orak'nou, my lady," he then said, bowing to the silver-haired tomboy standing nearby, her arms crossed and a very displeased look on her face. "I must confess, I'm not familiar with yours. What is your battle name so I may greet you properly?" he then asked with a bow of his head.

"She is the first of a new battle-line, Master," Teal'c stated. "Her birth-name is Huberta Margareta, Reichsgräfin von Spee zu Kaldenkirchen in Nordrhein-Westfalen, a state of the Federal Republic of Germany, an allied nation to the United States of America from where my friends hail." As Margareta's cheeks went cherry red on hearing the noble title once used for her namesake applied to her human name, Bra'tac's successor as Apophis' first prime smiled. "Kapitän zur See Reichsgräfin von Spee is actually the living spirit of a great warship made human, crewed by brave sailors led by a great and honourable captain who refused to lead his crew into a mindless slaughter when she was faced with many enemies." As Bra'tac's eyes went wide with disbelief at such an assertion, Teal'c bowed to the reborn pocket dreadnought. "Her battle name is her ship name: Admiral Graf Spee."

"It is truth, Master Bra'tac," Tir'na added. "We saw it happen with our own eyes. Her hull was raised from the waters where she was destroyed by her own crew many years ago, then merged by the power of the Conservator himself with a battle doll sent from the Great Forge, creating a true safi'ra like the Great Sarcophagus Ship serving the Ra'kalach!" As the others who had been on the bridge when that particular Gifting happened nodded in confirmation, their friends turned to stare in awe at the reborn pocket battleship, making Margareta blush even more. "When our lord ordered an attack on her — which would have destroyed the city of Montevideo from collateral damage — she used her power to deflect the attack from harming the Tau'ri living below us, then charged our ship when this other one here appeared out of nowhere to attack and EAT our prim'ta." Here, she waved to Paula Schoeni.
"She is also safi'ra, Master," Teal'c added as Bra'tac gazed on the orange-haired woman relaxing on one of the still-intact control panels, an amused look on her face. "One from the United States herself."

"Um... 'safi'ra', T?" O'Neill asked.

"'Warship spirit', Colonel O'Neill."

"Oh! You mean a shipgirl, right?"

"Indeed."

Hinako giggled. "Teal'c-san, you say that too much!"

"Hinako, don't!" O'Neill gently pleaded. "We like him the way he is!"

As Hinako playfully stuck out her tongue at the older man, Shifu burbled...

...which heralded a flash of energy from one side of the bridge which nearly blinded everyone. "Oh- ha!" a woman with a familiar Ōsaka-ben accent called out.

"Hey, Ayumu!" O'Neill called back as Kasuga Ayumu walked into the bridge.

All the Jaffa gaped in awe and understandable fear on seeing the Goddess Who Walks Among Men now among them. As many prostrated themselves before the native of Wakayama, Ayumu gaped before she moaned, waving her hands. "Hey! Hey! Guys! Guys! Stop that!" she pleaded, which made the Terran members of SG-1, Hinako and her sisters burst out laughing. "You don't need to do that to me!"

"They're just being smart, Ayumu," Chikage advised.

"Eh! It's so blah, Chikage-chan!" the Infinite One then breathed out before she perked as she gazed on the wide-eyed child in the arms of the Spirit of Innocence. "Oh, there you are, Shifu-chan!" she then playfully cooed. "Here! I'll get you over to Oma-chan right now!"

Hinako nodded as she handed the baby over, then Ayumu disappeared in a flash of light, leaving behind a chorus of wide-eyed Jaffa. "The Infinite One is friends with the Great Oma?" Bra'tac asked.

"You'd be amazed at how many friends Ayumu has, Master Bra'tac," the Dark Heart of Pure Chaos stated with a cryptic smile. "In the meantime, you can remain in orbit to effect repairs. Be warned, the Academician and the Philosopher are here on Earth as well; they will be keeping an eye on you from their own ships, which now orbit this world totally cloaked from your sensors. If you're all smart — and you all seem to be that way — take heed of this warning: No funny business. Once you're ready to leave, do so and never return." She then perked. "Oh, one other thing. The only way your late master..." — here, she stared with contempt at the wrecked host body used by Heru'ur lying on the deck nearby — "...could have harmed the likes of Oma Desala was with the use of ebony mesonium in whatever weapons you employed to seize Shifu. Warn the other System Lords that if any of them contemplate doing something like that in the future, Doctor Death will go forth to kill them all."

"She means Litronie Erba, brothers and sisters," Teal'c added, which made the other Jaffa turn white on hearing the battle name of the most feared of all the Orak'nou. "She currently volunteers to serve the man Colonel O'Neill here considers his supreme lord!" As he waved to O'Neill in emphasis, Bra'tac gave the pararescueman an approving, even admiring smile at the fact that the most powerful nation on Earth had such a dark warrior serving it. "She cares not for those who cheat the coming of
Death by any means, thus she loathes the false gods as much as the Wild Warrior of Passion personally loathes the false god I once served! Do not bring the wrath of Doctor Death on you by following your false gods' selfish wishes! She will show no mercy!” He stood to attention before bowing his head to the other Jaffa, spreading his hands in a ritual stance of respect to brother warriors. "Live free."

Seeing such a display, many of the former servants of Heru'ur and his underlings bowed their heads in return. "We shall, Teal'c! And give our respects to the Lady Tuyuki when you see her next," Kav'da bade, a sad yet accepting smile on his face at the fact that he would now be seen as shol'va, a state no right-thinking Jaffa would understandably be comfortable with. "In all the years the Trickster of the Show lived to vex those who opposed her, this is the greatest prank she has ever unleashed."

"Master Kav'da, if you were confronted by beings who could overwhelm anything you or your people could use to defend yourself with no matter how much the Goa'uld tried to help you — then got the chance to use their own power against them — would you use it?" Daniel Jackson asked.

Hearing that, the native of Revanna nodded. "I would, Daniel Jackson."

The anthropologist shrugged. "Then why expect us to do differently?"

People exchanged looks, then laughter filled the bridge...

"Excuse me!"

Eyes looked over to gaze upon the studious super-dreadnought standing there. Seeing the name on her crest, Margareta smiled as she straightened herself, saluting the lead of her class. "Frau Kapitán!"

Margaret Penn returned the courtesy. "Captain von Spee. With his sincere compliments, the President requests the honour of your presence at the White House so that he can explain what just happened to you to Their Excellencies, the Presidents of Uruguay and Argentina. I'm afraid your return to service is now front page news across the world." She smiled. "I was told by my flag officer that His Excellency, the President of Germany, also wants to speak to you. He just got informed about your return, not to mention the return of five of your fleet mates a day ago, so he wants to make sure all's well." At the pocket battleship's arched eyebrow, the super-dreadnought added, "Battleship Bismarck, heavy cruiser Prinz Eugen, destroyers Leberecht Maass and Max Schultz and aircraft carrier Graf Zeppelin."

A scowl crossed Margareta's face. "There is no more Führer ruling my country?"

"Not since he so kindly killed himself in 1945, Captain von Spee," O'Neill provided.

That made the adopted native of Kaldenkirchen sigh. "Danke Gott...!"

To Be Continued...

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WRITER'S NOTES

The Sidines were created by Regina Magia, first noted on in the tenth omake to this story, "The Visions of Stargazer". Their powers are similar to that of Enoshima Junko from the Danganronpa video game series, created by Spike Chunsoft.

The list of the shipgirls appearing or being mentioned of in this part, including human name, rank and ship name:
Kapitän zur See **Margareta von Spee** KMDR (Kriegsmarineschiff *Admiral Graf Spee* [pendant K88])

**Toyama Sumie**-chūsa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan *Shimakaze* [DD-289])

**Sŭng Mijin**-jungnyŏng THMH (Taehan Minguk Kumhan *Pongp'ung* [DD-290]) (ex-THG *Minekaze* [Warship No. 733])

**Sŏng Sŏnghan**-jungnyŏng THMH (Taehan Minguk Kumhan *T'aekp'ung* [DD-291]) (ex-THG *Sawakaze* [Warship No. 734])

**Sŏng Nayŏn**-jungnyŏng THMH (Taehan Minguk Kumhan *Ch'ungp'ung* [DD-292]) (ex-THG *Okikaze* [Warship No. 735])

**Sŏng Naun**-jungnyŏng THMH (Taehan Minguk Kumhan *T'anp'ung* [DD-293]) (ex-THG *Nadakaze* [Warship No. 736])

**Sŏng Yurae**-jungnyŏng THMH (Taehan Minguk Kumhan *Ship'ung* [DD-294]) (ex-THG *Yakaze* [Warship No. 737])

**Sŏng Hwŏn**-jungnyŏng THMH (Taehan Minguk Kumhan *Up'ung* [DD-295]) (ex-THG *Hakaze* [Warship No. 738])

**Sŏng Sŏngja**-jungnyŏng THMH (Taehan Minguk Kumhan *Sŏkp'ung* [DD-296]) (ex-THG *Shiokaze* [Warship No. 739])

**Sŏng Ch'unghwa**-jungnyŏng THMH (Taehan Minguk Kumhan *Ch'up'ung* [DD-297]) (ex-THG *Akkō* [Warship No. 740])

**Sŏng Yura**-jungnyŏng THMH (Taehan Minguk Kumhan *Sap'ung* [DD-298]) (ex-THG *Yūkaze* [Warship No. 741])

**Sŏng Tukchu**-jungnyŏng THMH (Taehan Minguk Kumhan *T'aedop'ung* [DD-299]) (ex-THG *Tachikaze* [Warship No. 742])

**Sŏng Sŏng'a**-jungnyŏng THMH (Taehan Minguk Kumhan *Pŏmp'ung* [DD-300]) (ex-THG *Hokaze* [Warship No. 743])

**Sŏng Nar'ae**-jungnyŏng THMH (Taehan Minguk Kumhan *Yap'ung* [DD-301]) (ex-THG *Nokaze* [Warship No. 744])

**Sŏng Nihŭi**-jungnyŏng THMH (Taehan Minguk Kumhan *P'ap'ung* [DD-302]) (ex-THG *Namikaze* [Warship No. 745])

**Sŏng Sŏg'yŏng**-jungnyŏng THMH (Taehan Minguk Kumhan *Sop'ung* [DD-303]) (ex-THG *Numakaze* [Warship No. 746])

**Sŏng Tasom**-jungnyŏng THMH (Taehan Minguk Kumhan *T'aeyangp'ung* [DD-304]) (ex-THG *Taiyōkaze* [Warship No. 747])

**Sŏng Hyebin**-jungnyŏng THMH (Taehan Minguk Kumhan *Ilp'ung* [DD-305]) (ex-THG *Hikaze* [Warship No. 748])

Note that names given to the **Project V6** (AKA the "Shimakaze Kai" or "Super Shimakaze") class of destroyers as they will appear in this story are my choice. When the follow-on class to THG *Shimakaze* was first proposed, no names had been selected before it was cancelled. When I first introduced these characters in *The Seventh Shipgirl*, I revived "wind" names from Great War-era destroyers which had been scrapped or regulated to secondary duties by the time of World War Two. The names chosen for *Warship No. 747* (THG *Taiyōkaze* ["Solar Wind"]) and *Warship No. 748* (THG *Hikaze* ["Fire Wind"]) are my invention. When the shipgirls were summoned to Korea, they were named using the Korean readings of the kanji that would have gone into their Japanese names as chosen for them by **Toyama Sumie**. Of course, note that the internationally accepted ship prefix for warships of the Republic of Korea is **ROKS** (*Republic of Korea Ship*); the term **Taehan Minguk Kumhan** (short-form **TMK**) translates literally to "Warship of the (Great) Republic of Korea". The short-term **THMH** means **Taehan Minguk Haegun**, which is short for "Navy of the (Great) Republic of Korea".
As a quick side note, KMS Admiral Graf Spee (Margareta von Spee) takes after her Azur Lane interpretation. Naturally, THG Shimakaze (Toyama Sumie) resembles her Kantai Collection interpretation. All of Sumie’s sisters such as TMK Sap’ung (Sŭng Yura) all resemble Sumie save for differences in hair and eye colour and skin tone. As a salute to the late Senator (and captain in the United States Navy) John S. McCain III (1936-2018), the personification of the second submarine commanded by his father Admiral John S. McCain Jr (1911-81) in World War Two, USS Dentuda (Sydney McCain), would resemble a teenage version of her first commander's granddaughter Meghan McCain (born 1984), but with blue eyes hinting at Sydney's namesake fish; "dentuda" is Spanish for "large tooth", representing a large shark found in temperate and subtropical waters.

As an aside, the number of Korean family names in actual use in both the South and the North number about 280 according to Wikipedia. The family name Kim ([in hanja 金]) was used by nearly one-fifth of the whole population of South Korea as of the year 2000. To better tell where someone comes from, those bearing the same family name are sub-divided into pon'gwan ("native root"), named after the general ancestral home of these clans. The term "clan" is translated as "ssi" (pronounced /sʰi/, with the consonants sounding similar to the English "s" but with a stiff tongue and glottal opening of the vocal folds in the larynx). Hence, you get Yŏn'il Sŭng-ssi (延日承氏, "Sŭng Clan of Yŏn'il") for someone like Sŭng Yura (TMK Sap'ung).

The Senior Year and sequel story character notes: Kyōsur first appeared in the Twenty Years Later story "The End of the Circle". The Mikado first appeared in the TSY story "Dakejinzō's Story". Su Muwol is a minor character from The Ishinomaki Years. And the "Great Sarcophagus Ship" refers to the Gatherer, who first appeared in the TSY story "Lum's Lesson"; naturally, the term Ra'kalach refers to any native of Sagussa, first mentioned in the TSY story "Sakura's Class Reunion".

Translation list: Chungnyŏng — Read as "jungnyŏng" when used as a suffix honorific, this is the Korean rank title for a Navy commander or Army/Air Force lieutenant colonel; Sŏnsaeng-nim — The Korean version of "sensei" with the "-nim" honorific which serves as the local version of the Japanese "-sama"; -ssi — Basic Korean honorific, similar to the Japanese "-san" (and also meaning "clan" as noted above); Shinbyŏng — Literally "divine disease", this is the metaphysical possession of a would-be shaman (mudang) by a divine spirit that makes the victim chose to become the practitioner of the local faith; Önni — Elder sister; Annyŏng — Short for Annyŏnghaseyo (literally "Are you well"), the standard greeting between people; -ya — Korean suffix honorific equivalent of the Japanese "-chan" for names ending in vowels (for consonant-ending names, it's "-a"); Nari — Korean honorific which is the rough equivalent of "Your Excellency" in English; CANSOFCOM — Canadian Special Operations Forces Command; Ha’tak — Goa’uld battleship/carrier; Río de la Plata — Literally "river of silver", this estuary is often called the "River Plate" in English; Bahía de Montevideo — Montevideo Bay; Televisión Nacional Uruguay — National Television of Uruguay (short-formed TNU); Dios mío — My God; Heckadler — Tail eagle; Bundesadler — Eagle of the (Federal) Republic, the current coat of arms of Germany; Ra-naquadah — Literally "naquadah of the soul", this is the Goa’uld nickname for mesonium; Byatorito — Count/Countess; Gaekuto — Admiral; Panzerschiffe — Armoured ship, the designation of a German capital ship during the Weimar years (1918-33); Santa María nos preserva — Saint Mary preserve us; Pel’tak — Main bridge/pilotage; Hol! — Hold!; Aray kree! — Hey, stay where you are!; Prim’ta — Goa’uld larvae; Kara kesh — Multi-purpose hand device; Ma’tok — Battle staff; Zat'nik'tel — Energy pistol; Orak’nou kek — Kill the unspeakable devil; Jaffa kree! — Jaffa, attention!; Korvettenkapitän — Corvette captain, German rank title equivalent of a Navy lieutenant commander; Harcesis — A child born of parents both bearing Goa’uld symbiotes, inheriting the
genetic knowledge of both parents (thus normally demanding their death); **Shol'va** — Traitor; **Schmutzige Schlange** — Singular of "schmutzige Schlangen" ("dirty snakes"); **Nordrhein-Westfalen** — North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany's most populous state; **Danke Gott** — Thank God.

The nickname *Jane Sevier* (USS *Arkansas*) used for *Sarah Blasdel* (USS *Nevada*), "Cheery", comes from the latter battleship's well-known nickname, "the Cheer-up Ship". This nickname stemmed from the fact that the *Nevada* was the only vessel in Battleship Row able to get underway to try to escape from Pearl Harbour when the Japanese attack went down on Sunday 7 December 1941.

**Stargate SG-1** minor character notes: **Heru'ur** first appeared in "Thor's Chariot" (season 2, episode 6); this is where **Ryn'tak** also first appeared. **M'zel** first appeared in "Death Knell" (season 7, episode 16). **Zipacna** first appeared in "Pretense" (season 3, episode 15). **Klorel** first appeared in "Children of the Gods" (season 1, episode 1); note that his final fate as shown in "Pretense" didn't happen in the universe of this story. Of course, **Skaara** (along with **Kasuf** and **Sha're**) appeared in the original movie before transitioning to the television series. **Shifu** first appeared in "Secrets" (season 2, episode 9). **Kav'da** is my name for Zipacna's first prime, who appeared in "Summit" (season 5, episode 15). **Bra'tac** first appeared in "Bloodlines" (season 1, episode 12). And **Oma Desala** first appeared in "Maternal Instinct" (season 3, episode 20). Note that **Tir'na** is my own creation.
Return, the Seventh Carrier

Chapter Summary

Hinako goes to the White House to tell a story, Mendō Shūtarō and Lum's Stormtroopers have VERY bad days and the living spirit of the ship Tariko's granduncle served on returns to Japan...WITH her crew!

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Washington, the White House, an hour after breakfast (Tōkyō time: An hour before midnight; Colorado Springs time: An hour before dawn)...

"Captain von Spee, welcome to the White House."

Blushing from the smile the current leader of the free world just gave her, the third of the Deutschland-class heavy cruisers snapped herself to attention, clicking her heels in proper salute to the former governor of New Hampshire as she bowed her head. As she was still in her green-and-white battlesuit without any headdress, she didn't initiate a hand salute. "Herr Professor Bartlet, it is an honour to be here," Margareta von Spee stated as she held out her hand for Josiah Bartlet to shake.

As Bartlet smiled at being addressed by his well-earned academic rank — no doubt, someone at Stargate Command had briefed the reborn pocket battleship on some of the president's personal quirks and interests — the doorway leading to the Oval Office from the secretary's office opened, revealing a very amused Deborah Fiderer. "Mister President, Miss Tanenobu is here with Captain von Spee's fleet mates," the executive secretary to the American head of state announced. "Captain von Bismarck, Captain von Zeppelin, Commander Maaß and Commander Schultz. Captain von Savoyen is with them as well, as are Captain Penn and Lieutenant Commanders Schoeni and McCain. They wanted to deliver their report on the action against the Goa'uld over Montevideo directly to you."

Margareta gazed upon the native of Detroit, her eyebrow arching in curiosity. "Doesn't Eugen consider herself part of the Reichsmarine anymore, Frau Fiderer?"

"She was surrendered to us as a war prize once the war was over with, Captain," Bartlet explained, keeping his voice even so as to not anger the transformed heavy cruiser. "Given what happened in the HaShoah as organized by Herr Hitler and his subordinates before and after you were sunk..."

"Jawohl," she breathed out, a hateful scowl crossing her face at being reminded of the hideous crime the government of her land — with the horrid participation of the vast majority of the citizens of the Reich, even by the simple act of acquiescence to the visible signs of such barbarity — had unleashed on millions of its citizens due to their being not of the "master race". "Understandable."
"Send them in, Miss Fiderer."

"Yes, sir."

The door leading to the main corridor of the West Wing's first floor opened, revealing a smiling native of Okayama, currently in her fighting uniform of the Herald of Fight Scenes. "Good Morning, Uncle Jed," Tanenobu Karen said as she came over to warmly embrace the native of New Hampshire, earning her a smile from the older man as the Secret Service agents watching over this scene all grinned at such a friendly act by one of the sisters of one of the few people to actually RETURN the Presidential Medal of Freedom because of his belief that he hadn't properly earned the reward. Once she pulled away from Bartlet, Karen then turned to warmly embrace Margareta, making her madly blush. "Are you alright?"

"Ah...!" the reborn pocket battleship sputtered as she tried not to lose all sense of self-discipline in the face of such a warm and welcoming empathic aura from the young teenage girl who was a sibling to the three young girls who had watched over young Shifu after Heru'ur was terminally dealt with before Kasuga Ayumu took her back to her current guardian Oum Desala, then she shakily nodded her head. "I am well, Frau Markgräfin von Tanenobu-Moroboshi. Um...I believe the others are waiting..."

Karen giggled before she looked towards the main door. "Girls!"

A tall blonde who could easily match the definition of "Aryan" in the days of Nazi Germany appeared at the northwest doorway, clicking the heels of her jumpsuit together as she bowed her head. "Herr Professor Bartlet, this is an honour!" Luisa von Bismarck declared as she smartly stepped into the Oval Office, then stepped aside, allowing her companion from her only mission as a battleship to walk in.

Catarina von Savoyen snapped to attention and saluted. "Mister President!" she declared in accented English acquired from those of her crew who understood the language as well as the Americans who sailed aboard her after her surrender. "Heavy cruiser USS Prinz Eugen reporting as ordered, sir!"

Bartlet laughed as he returned that salute. "At ease, Captain, or I'll have you busted down to ensign by Presidential Order!" he then teased back.

That made the strawberry blonde adopted native of Paris and Vienna yelp before she covered her reddening face with a hand as she scurried into the room beside her old mission-mate. That allowed Lieselotte Maaß and Melanie Schultz to then come in, both properly acknowledging their host in the traditional Prussian manner. They were then followed by Margaret Penn, Paula Schoeni and Sydney McCain, all three acting as Catarina had done when they stepped into the sanctum sanctorum of their commander-in-chief. Once inside, the shipgirls relaxed themselves...

...before they perked on noting that someone had NOT come in with them.

"Amélie?!" Karen then called out.

A slight yelp echoed from outside the doorway just as a head of blonde hair peeked past the frame of the door. Seeing that, Luisa moaned. "Amélie Françoise von Zeppelin! Get in here, you silly woman!"

"Yeah, you stupid eight-ball flattop! We ain't got all day!" Sydney added.

"That's enough, Commander," Bartlet admonished. "It's alright, Captain von Zeppelin. I don't bite."

"Maybe we should call her 'Oberst von Zeppelin'," Margareta then leered.
That caused the eyes of Germany's only aircraft carrier to widen before she screeched, "ICH DIENE NICHT DIESEM MORPHIN LIEBENDEN ARSCHLOCH!"

"AMÉLIE!" Luisa shrieked at hearing her fleet mate utter that in front of a foreign head-of-state.

As Bartlet laughed, Karen shook her head while Amélie turned an interesting shade of red...

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**Inside the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room, that moment...**

"Hai! Hina's here!"

Saeru Hinako then blushed as C.J. Cregg then called out, "Ladies and gentlemen, this is the youngest of Moroboshi Ataru's sisters, Miss Saeru Hinako. She is now accompanied by Honorary Commander Fukushima Fujiko of the Japanese Maritime Self-Defence Force, the living ship spirit — or kami, if you wish — of His Imperial Majesty's warship Fubuki, the lead of her class of destroyers and the one hundred and fifty-third destroyer built for Japan since the Meiji Restoration in 1868."

Hinako and her escort — both of whom were in civilian clothing as there saw no real need to "dress up" — reddened as the assembled reporters and other people there applauded. "Ah! You're all making Hina blush!" the Living Spirit of Innocence complained as she scratched the back of her head, earning her a chorus of laughter from the reporters as she and Fukushima Fujiko walked over to the head of the room; fortunately for everyone, the room had been augmented with the help of Elizabeth Wakefield with a universal language translator system so that the youngest of Tariko Katabarbe's sisters could speak her native Japanese and be understood not just by the crowd of reporters there in the briefing room but by the people worldwide. As Cregg's deputy Tim Waters placed a low step stool behind the lectern, Hinako got onto it, then hugged the native of Ohio who was currently hosting the gathering of the fourth estate before she turned and bowed politely to the many nice reporters and cameramen now in the briefing room while Fujiko took a protective position to her first admiral's starboard aft. "Um...Oba-chan, what should Hina do?" she then innocently asked her host.

"Well, a lot of the reporters here have questions about Captain von Spee and what actually is causing the spirits of warships to literally come to life as human women, to say anything of being Yizibajohei metahumans," Cregg stated in her most kind and caring voice.

"Oh, Hina understands!" With that, Hinako reached into her skirt pocket to pull out her PAA. Placing that on the lectern, she then faced the reporters. "Hina will tell everyone about how she met Fujiko-chan!" she then declared as she waved to her current companion.

As Fujiko bowed to the crowd, a holographic projection then appeared well over Hinako's head. "Can the cameras get that?" Cregg then asked as she gazed to the sides of the room, waving up to the image of Hinako receiving her special "Kasa-tama" from Isaac Thomas, the native of New York shown dressed in his uniform as the Wise Lone Sage. "We want people to see it."

"Coming in clear as crystal, C.J.," one technician called out.

"Perfect! Okay, Hinako, tell us a story!"

"Hai, hai!" With that, the Spirit of Innocence faced the world...
Hina became Suiki back on her seventh birthday.

While Hina wasn't approached by Onē-tama to learn how to become a Yizibajohei, Hina wasn't hurt when she became Suiki after she found the Gift seed in a park near where Hina lived.

A couple days later, Isaac Thomas-san — who's a really, really, really smart person from New York City like some of Onē-tama's friends — came to visit Hina to tell Hina what was going on and why there were many, many, many people on Earth being Gifted. Since Hina was now a cosmic meta as Suiki, Hina needed time to grow into her Gift and be able to use it to make people really, really, really calm and at peace all over the world so that people could be happy...

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A guitar riff then softly echoed over the press room before a group of voices began to sing out...

Everybody all around the world,
Gotta tell you what I just heard:
There's gonna be a party all over the world...

I got a message on the radio
But where it came from I don't really know
And I heard these voices calling all over the world...

All over the world!
Everybody got the word!
Everybody everywhere is gonna feel tonight...!

Hinako was now as red as a tomato. "RINRIN-CHAN! HINA DIDN'T SAY TO PLAY HINA'S FAVOURITE SONG WHEN SHE TELLS A STORY TO HER FRIENDS!"

As the collective crowd in the press room all broke down laughing while people peeked inside from other rooms to see what was going on, Fujiko reached over to tap a control on the machine to tone down the volume. "Apologies to Lynne-sensei and his friends, of course," she called out, fixing her attention on the BBC's chief Washington correspondent, Gary O'Donoghue.

As more laughter filled the crowd, Hinako sighed. "So as Hina was saying..."

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Hina needed the chance to and practice with her Gift since making people feel really, really, really calm and at peace actually makes Hina feel really, really, really calm and at peace in turn. To give Hina the chance to practice with her Gift, Isaac-san gave Hina her Kasa-tama so she could go see all the really, really, really neat and wonderful things around the world that she probably wouldn't have seen even after she found out she was part of Onii-tama's and Onē-tama's family.

So Hina began to see the world.

Hina visited neat places like Niagara Falls and Victoria Falls and walking on big Uluru down in Australia and going to the North Pole and the South Pole and everywhere else she could go. And Hina always went out to find people who didn't feel happy and nice and used her Gift to make them feel really, really, really better so that people won't be angry at each other and try to hurt each other. Hina doesn't want to say where she went since Hina doesn't like it when people who don't like what Hina tried to do to make people happy go in after Hina went there to make them miserable again. Doing that is going to make Onē-tama and Ayumu-chan and all of Hina's other cosmic meta friends
really, really, really mad and you don't want to DO that! After all, the last time their old selves got really, really, really mad many, many, many years ago, Lum-san's home planet almost got turned into an ASTEROID FIELD!

Then one day in March as spring break started, Hina met Fujiko-chan...

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The holographic image over the lectern was now displaying a smiling Hinako dressed in her uniform as the Living Spirit of Innocence floating through the air due west of Savo Island north of Cape Esperance on Guadalcanal as a big red pool of light formed below her...

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Hina doesn't like visiting where warships and other ships were sunk, especially when a lot and lot and lot of people died like what happened on the Titanic...

It just makes Hina feel really, really, really sad...

Anyhow, Hina was floating in the sky over where Fujiko-chan sank back in 1942, then she felt something start to wake up deep in the sea. Hina knows there are living things in the sea who can think like people do, so she didn't really, really, really think it was weird and all that...but then the sad feeling Hina got when she felt the souls of all the people who died when Fujiko-chan sank suddenly went away as the something that woke up began to feel really, really, really happy!

And that's when the Conservator called out...

Tene lomher'buo, Fukushima Fujiko...!

After she heard that, Hina looked EVERYWHERE to see who was being Gifted! After all, 'Fukushima Fujiko' is a Japanese girl's name and Hina's Japanese so Hina had to help! But before she could look down to see Fujiko-chan rise up from the sea, the Gifting was finished...

Nesu...ROERIKE!

Hina or Hina's old-selves never heard of a battle-name like that!

And that's when Hina saw Fujiko-chan!

Waa!

She was so PRETTY!

So she floated up to put herself right in front of Hina. She looked asleep and really, really, really happy. Her eyes were closed and she just seemed to float in the sky like she wanted to to feel the nice wind move around her and let her drift around the world like Hina loved to do.

And then her eyes opened like she woke up from some nice dream.

Then she asked Hina if Hina was Fujiko-chan's admiral!

Well, Hina wasn't an admiral, but since Isaac-san was busy on Remnant helping the people there beat up those nasty Grimm, Hina took Fujiko-chan to see Hina's parents in Niigata so they could help Hina find out what happened. Of course, learning that Fujiko-chan was actually the Fubuki really, really, really shocked Hina and Hina's parents! We never expected the kami of a ship to want
to be human and be Gifted, so then we had to work to help Fujiko-chan adjust to being a girl!

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"Question."

"Go ahead, Danny," Cregg bade.

Danny Concannon looked at his iPad. "Hinako, didn't the fact that Commander Fukushima — as the *Fubuki* — was an actual *war grave* where half her crew died when she was sunk in 1942 ever influence your choice to go find her sisters?" the correspondent from the *Washington Post* then asked.

Hinako hummed. "Well, Hina's mother was worried about that, but then we asked a nice priest at a local shrine about what Fujiko-chan was and how it might have either helped or hurt the ghosts of her crew. He was surprised by what happened, but said that if Fujiko-chan wanted to live as a human being, we had no right to disagree with her since she was a kami made from the dreams and memories of all the people who had something to do with her, from all the people who built her to all the people who were her crew. Hina even asked Ayumu-chan to go look where Fujiko-chan sank to see if something bad was happening there. She didn't find anything, so there was nothing to worry about there. And when Fujiko-chan told Hina and Hina's parents that her crew were all happy that she was living the life they couldn't live because of that bad war, we all decided it had to be okay."

"So what prompted what just happened off Montevideo?" Concannon asked.

"I'll answer that."

Cregg perked. "Ladies and gentlemen, the President of the United States."

As the reporters all rose, the former governor of New Hampshire came inside as Hinako hopped off the stool so he could take his place at the lectern. "Be seated, please," he then bade. As everyone relaxed themselves, Josiah Bartlet took a deep breath as he gripped the sides of the lectern.

"This is a day of incredible revelations..."

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*Somewhere in Japan, two hours later (local time: An hour after midnight on Sunday)*...

"How DARE those filthy gaijin interfere in this?!

Hearing that from the elderly woman who was seen as the leader of First District — they always masked themselves from her behind rice paper screens even if they knew that the effectively-immortal survivor of the last HiME Festival from the middle years of the Tokugawa Era could kill them in an instant if she desired — Kazahana Mashiro could only smirk as she listened to the voice of the American president echo from a nearby television. She didn't need to see the subtitles that were being produced as Josiah Bartlet made his speech; Mashiro was versed in English thanks to having learned it from a British trader in the early years of the Meiji Restoration and kept herself fluent.

"You have to admit, Gichō-san, that you were begging for this to happen sooner or later," the child-like immortal/humanoid Child coldly observed. "To try to cage someone who had many friends willing to come to her aide is monumentally stupid, especially since she is the *Trickster of the Show* from the *World of the Forge of the First Race* at that. You've guaranteed that you'll bring down the
"We must find ways to force all of Tomobiki to put Moroboshi down again!" an elderly man declared, completing ignoring the warning comment from the current headmistress of the Fūka Academy. As Mashiro shook her head in amusement at his arrogance, he added, "This can't be tolerated! The Festival's very outcome is threatened if those maniacs from Yiziba get involved in this!"

"That gaijin devil Raeburn has returned!" another elderly man stated as he shook his fist in the air. "She will gladly carry out her master's desire to see the Obsidian Lord destroyed when the new Festival begins! We can't have any interference! If it happens, we're lost!"

The chairwoman of First District nodded. "Kazahana-sama, return to the Academy and make sure all the HiME are prepared," she then ordered.

"Hai," Mashiro said with a bow of her head.

With that, Himeno Fumi moved to wheel the crippled headmistress from the ancient house where the leaders of First District resided. Reaching the point where they could teleport back to Fūka-jima, the maid and future HiME fighter shook her head. "They are blind, Mashiro-sama," she whispered, glad that members of the Shikoku Magical Association gladly loaned them special ward bracelets that masked their conversation from eavesdroppers when it was necessary. Given the potential local, international and interplanetary interest in what was about to drop on the Fūka Academy, it was being prudent...and the mages who worked for the Shimagun respected the memory of the Immortal Master and their own ultimate loyalty to the Heavenly Sovereign over acknowledging a group of rogue grannies who couldn't see the forest for all the trees standing in the way. "Tomobiki has been freed of their influence and many girls who were classmates to Ataru-san and Tariko-sama are now or will be Gifted. Any attempts by First District to suppress them again to prevent interference in the Festival by anyone from Yiziba won't work and most likely bring Margo-sama down on their heads."

Mashiro nodded. "Still, I wish Bartlet-daitōryō blocked the revelation of what happened in Japan on Friday and why it happened." She knew that First District had extended its influence over the local media to keep what happened in Tomobiki from going public...not that such hadn't stopped people on social media from speculating wildly over what was going on. Now that the leader of the free world had confirmed that powers born within the World of the Forge of the First Race were actively involved on Earth...! "That will make their lives more difficult and the people in that city — not to mention Ataru-san's and Tariko-san's sisters — all deserve their peace and quiet now."

She hummed before she looked over her shoulder. "Find out the marks of girls now attending Tomobiki High, Fumi. Especially people such as Miyake Shinobu and Fujinami Ryūnosuke, not to mention Tsuruya Rumiko. I think Tariko-san would like it if she knows friends she can trust are available to expose what First District is doing at the Academy." A wolfish smile crossed her face. "Not to mention blunt the Foundation before it becomes a real nuisance. I don't want young Alyssa to be hurt by what her father forced on her when she was just a baby. Young Miyu seems to have earned the personal interest of Grigori-sama." She shook her head as a worried look crossed her face. "What is he...?"

"He's clearly Gifted, Mashiro-sama."

"I noticed it. He keeps it cloaked, but I can still sense something inside him. It's definitely like Mikoto in some basic way." Mashiro then sighed before she steadied herself. "I'll have to talk to him as soon as possible. He is Raeburn-shihan's student, so his being here will see Hosan-sama's promise fulfilled and Onii-san avenged." She closed her eyes as tears streamed down her cheeks.
Fumi squeezed her shoulder in reassurance as they teleported away...

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Tomobiki, the Mendō mansion, that moment...

"NO! I REFUSE TO ACCEPT THIS! MOROBOSHI CAN'T HAVE SUCH A FORCE UNDER HIS CONTROL! THIS WILL NEVER BE...!"

KK-KKRACK!

"BE QUIET, BOY!"

Mendō Shūtarō moaned after he was smashed down by his grandfather's well-worn cane as his own parents Hajime and Haruka — the latter, as always, was accompanied by her valet and full-time human parrot, Hikutsu Ōmukai, the senior butler serving Japan's richest family — shook their heads at their foolish son's obstinacy over what had just been revealed to the world. While the elder people had been surprised that the American president had publicly confirmed the presence of literally THOUSANDS of Terrans-turned-Yizibajohei living on Earth, they all understood the real target of Josiah Bartlet's words: The aliens that had haunted Tomobiki for over a year, not to mention whoever it was that had been on the possible attack on Uruguay's capital; the former governor of New Hampshire had been surprisingly quiet on who it had been that made the living kami of the third Deutschland-class cruiser to resurrect herself as a kantai musume to charge into space and save millions of lives from that attack.

"I wonder if Oyuki-sama's people are still monitoring things," Hajime then mused as he lit a cigarette.

As Haruka scowled — she hated her husband's smoking habit — the elderly patriarch of the Mendō Clan of Musashino smirked behind his octopus-shaped face mask. "Most likely. No doubt, it explains what's been going on with the Arctic and Antarctic ice caps recently, especially with Rei-gi-kun's revelations concerning Miyuki-sama's power beyond what her current body gifted her," Mendō Gennosuke harrumphed. Despite their family's many eccentricities, the former member of the infamous Kempeitai which served as both the Imperial Army's military police force and one of the old Empire's secret police agencies was very interested in environmental issues. "Miyuki-sama returned to duty in the spring as young Hinako announced when that bright lad from the Washington Post that seeks Cregg-san's hand in marriage asked about her 'shipgirl hunts'. Given her and her elder sisters' abilities and the capabilities of someone like that Kasuga girl now in Itabashi that Kenji-kun's daughter likes so much, it's clearly possible that the good princess was made to see that dumping the excess snow willy-nilly on Earth that her people have to deal with all the time on Triton isn't the best thing to do."

That made his son and daughter-in-law smirk as his grandson moaned while trying to shake off the pain from the blow to his head. Even if the Kuromegane had often been quite incompetent when it came to carrying out their duties, their ability to overhear conversations wherever they had gone in Tomobiki was top-notch. On several occasions since the spring break just before the incident with Queen Elle came down on everyone's heads, the crown princess of Neptune often complained to her best friends that snow her people had sent to Earth had been dumped right back on Triton, normally accompanied with notes from government officials declaring that the Neptunians had no dumping permit in those jurisdictions, much less had the right to go alter weather patterns like they did. That had made Oyuki — as she confessed to Redet Lum sometime after the whole affair with the Memory of Tomobiki in the core of the Tarōzakura Hill — decide to redirect the dumping of snow to the Arctic and Antarctic.
No doubt, the patriarch of Japan's richest family then mused, the living soul of the fourth of the Fubuki-class destroyers now known on Yiziba as the Cosmic Blizzard, *R'bumrike* ("Miyuki"), had a big hand to play when it came to making the princess of Neptune finally grow up a bit.

A cough echoed from nearby. "Goshujin-sama."

Gennosuke looked over to see one of the servants paid for directly by his family — thus not subject to the enforced leave from work dropped down on people such as the Kuromegane and the clan armed forces by Toranoseishin Finances hours before — standing at the doorway to the main recreation room, she giving him a polite curtsey. "What is it, child?" the retired businessman asked.

"Yumoa Reigi-sama is here right now, Goshujin-sama. He is currently being escorted by Fukushima Miyuki-sama," the pretty young woman said with a bow of her head.

"Send them in, please."

"Hai. Please excuse me."

With another curtsey, she stepped out of the room. A moment later, she returned, accompanied by a handsome twenty-something man dressed in a very impeccable Savile Row suit even if it was well past working hours at the Inshin Group's main offices. He was accompanied by a tall tomboyish destroyer-turned-teenage girl, she in her white-and-blue jumpsuit displaying the image of a dark blue iceberg over her cleavage, that embossed with her ship name 深雪 in white with blue piping. Before Yumoa Reigi could properly greet his hosts, Shūtarō then screamed out as he lunged at Fukushima Miyuki. *YOU MUST REJECT MOROBSHI, OJÔ-SAMA...!"* the scion of Japan's richest family bellowed.

In a flash of light and a blast of Arctic-level chill, he was frozen in a block of ice. "So...cold...!" eeped from a crack to ensure he could still breathe even if he now risked full-body frostbite.

Miyuki glared at him. "Shirei-kan is a HUNDRED times the man you are!"

"...lies...!"

"Shut him up, please?" Gennosuke pleaded.

"Hai, Mendō-shōsa!"

**KK-KRUNCH!**

Shūtarō found himself face-first on the floor after Miyuki smashed him into it, shattering the ice block along the way. As maids rushed in to clean up the mess before the expensive carpet would be ruined by so much water — they also sweeping away the now very dazed heir to Japan's largest family fortune — Reigi took a deep breath before bowing to Gennosuke. "Mendō-dono, again I must apologize for the current situation that forces such discomfort upon your family," he formally declared.

"Oh, don't apologize, lad," the former Kempeitai major said with a wheezing laugh. "It'll teach the stupid brats something about humility. All the people you helped us hire need a break from them at this time."

"If that is your opinion on the matter, I will speak no further about it," the chief of operations for the Inshin Group then declared with another respectful bow to his host. "I bear a letter from my matriarch with news concerning the aftereffects of one of the many incidents your grandson was..."
involved with when it came to the aliens that had plagued our poor town for so long."

"Oh? How so?"

"Do you remember anything of the incident at Tomobiki High School on the ninth of March this year?" Reigi then asked as he straightened himself. "During that time, your grandson was involved in the production of a class movie concerning school violence under Tariko-san's guidance."

That made the elderly patriarch's eyes widened before he slowly nodded. "Ah, yes! Somehow, a camera that young Lum brought in to see the movie finished malfunctioned, creating a replica of herself and several of the others in her class involved in that, including the boy!"

"Your recollection is correct, Mendō-dono. However, due to the plugged ley lines that kept so much spiritual energy in this town — thus causing many of the incidents that plagued my matriarch's beloved brother and sister since they were trapped here — the living kami of your grandson's replica survived the full deactivation of the Oni's camera, as did the other replicas created that day." As Hajime and Haruka both gaped in shock at that revelation, the Yale alumnus added, "Fortunately, the poor spirits were able to survive long enough for my matriarch's beloved sister to have them properly given human form once she was finally allowed to remember her true past. However, it was not through the Doll House controlled now by Kasuga Ayumu-sama. You are aware of the Avalonians, I believe?"

"Yes! Those poor bioroid slaves that were forced to serve those alien maniacs who put that damned antimatter bomb in the town Ginza!" A pause as the elderly patriarch considered that, then his grey eyes went wide. "I HAVE ANOTHER GRANDDAUGHTER?!" he screamed out in delight.

As Haruka broke down in tears while her valet moved to offer comfort, Reigi bowed again. "Indeed you do, Mendō-dono. Sadly, due to the security issues forced on everyone thanks to the temporal paradox issue that resulted from the Liberation of our Avalonian friends, we couldn't present Tachiko-hime to you until such time as the Oni and her friends were permanently expelled from this world." Everyone in the room was quick to sense the hatred the current chief of operations for the Inshin Group felt for Redet Lum; no doubt, he had come to focus such outrage over what had befallen Tariko Katabarbe on Onishuto. "Since the Oni are gone now, Tachiko-hime is now ready to..."

Shrieks of delight echoed from beyond the main doors to the recreation room, which made the others look over as a beautiful vision in black and gold then walked in, she accompanied by many gushing maids as they moved to fawn over the newest heiress of Japan's richest family. As Hajime gaped in disbelief at such a sight, Haruka's quiet sobs became quite loud as Ōmukai bowed to Reigi. "Reigi-san, the Mistress can only but thank you and Tariko-sama for the kindness in giving her another daughter she can care for. As you're more than well aware, after Ryōko-sama was born, the Mistress..."

"Please, Ojō-sama, there's no need to speak of such things," Reigi politely cut him off with a raised hand as Mendō Tachiko — she looked like her own effective twin brother save for being a girl, having somewhat longer hair that flowed to the level of her collar bones and possessing a very shapely body on the same scale as what Miyuki possessed — came up to stand beside him.

As Haruka continued to cry, Hajime gave the younger man a knowing look. "I assume Ataru-kun gave our daughter her name, Reigi-kun," he concluded.

"Indeed he did, Mendō-dono," the Yale alumnus affirmed with a nod.

"And given the uniform she has on now, she is clearly Gifted."
"Indeed I am, Otō-sama," Tachiko said with a voice that seemed as cultured as that of her genetic younger sister, even if it was touched with the hard edge of a street punk in reflection of her "role" in that particular movie. "On Yiziba, I am called 'Dimdite'; here on Earth, you may call me the 'Boxer.'" At that, she waved to the gold boxer gloves insignia on her chest. "I'm known more commonly as the 'Passionate Pugilist' back on Yiziba." She gave another bow to her father.

"And what have you been doing since young Ayumu and Tariko rescued you and the others from being nothing more than ghosts, young lady?" Gennosuke then asked.

"I formed a battle group with Miyake Saiko-san, Shitto Nijiko-san and Fujinami Tatsuko-san to help remove the Niphentaxians from Earth, Ojii-sama," Tachiko declared as she sat beside her grandfather, gently grasping his hand with her own gloved extremity; as she was a ki mistress with the power to unleash enough energy to bring down a skyscraper with one punch, the gloves were designed to help regulate the energy and allow her to interact with people without causing major accidents. "This was to make sure that none of them could report to their mad master back on Phentax Two that 'they who must never be named' were here on Earth in such strength, not to mention moving to begin the final liberation of my adopted race from slavery. After the last of them were expelled back in August in the wake of the Pseudo-War, we went to Yiziba to have some jousts in the Battlezone to keep our strength up and await the time that Danu-san's sister was sent back home once and for all."

"Danu being young Lum's replica, you mean?"

"Hai." Here, Tachiko then bowed her head. "I apologize for my tardiness in returning to Earth so many hours after Lum-san was sent back home, Ojii-sama, but we were caught in a fight scene that lasted much longer than we expected before we could teleport back from Yiziba."

"Oh, don't worry about that, my dear! You're home and safe! That's what counts more!"

That made Tachiko beam as Reigi and Miyuki exchanged knowing looks...

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_The Shitto home, three blocks east of Tomobiki High School, that moment...

For Shitto Kōsuke — "Perm" of Lum's Stormtroopers — the last few hours had been the closest he had come to experiencing a true hell on Earth since that crazy day the previous fall when his own private lusts for a certain warlord's daughter of the planet Uru almost cost Earth all of its oil supply. And while helping switch the blame of what had happened that day to Moroboshi Ataru — a man Perm had never really cared for until the day his classmate effectively got married to Redet Lum, which then turned that indifference to hate-filled disgust and jealousy — had been a no-brainer...

...knowing NOW that Ataru had friends who had been working to force the Stormtroopers to face the consequences of crimes they didn't commit was something Perm NEVER imagined would happen.

Especially since one of Ataru's friends...

...was Shitto Nijiko, the current incarnation of the Mistress of Daggers, _Gamtukuoku_ ("Switchblade").

A being that wouldn't have existed...

...except for the fact that a certain snobbish, rich moron that Perm hated just as much as he hated Ataru had to go and destroy the camera set aside for a school film project back in March.
A being that was forged from the synthesis of a warped copy of Shitto Kōsuke's soul put into a female bioroid body that had been cloned right off him "in case of emergency" by aliens who actually worshipped him as a "holy apostle"...then fused hard with two millennia of collected memories concerning the future incarnations of the rough equivalent of a Mafia assassin matched to powerful telepathic and empathic abilities and battle skills that could impress even the War Hawks!

A being that now looked on poor Lum-chan and her people as pieces of GENETIC REFUSE, members of a race of "sames" that ultimately deserved only EXTINCTION!

A being that won the hearts of Perm's parents Shitto Kōji and Yayoi...and they had just met TONIGHT!

Reflecting on the times the Stormtroopers had laughed themselves hoarse on seeing how indifferent Ataru's own parents had been to him when Moroboshi Muchi and his wife Kinshō fawned over Lum like they did, Perm had now come to realize that hatred had been mutual.

And with Ataru was now moving to avenge himself on the Stormtroopers for all they had done to him...

With Lum having been chased off Earth by members of the ONE race the Oni were terrified of...!

This — Was — Not — FAIR!

"So it's possible that I can gain a daughter of my own?!"

"Hai, Oba-chan, more than possible," Nijiko stated as she enjoyed the nice spiced tea that her mother had made for her while she gazed in amusement at Aisuru Satoshi's widowed mother Rui. "Now that the life expectancy of Nii-kun and his friends can now be measured in EPISODES..." — the older people now in the living room of the Shitto home knew that concept was the Yizibajohei equivalent of Earth days — "...it would be the best thing in the long term." She then glared at Megane. "Since they refuse to repent what they did to Ataru just to try to have pillow scenes with that selfish umale from Uru, it's being wise in the end. I'm sure Ayumu-chan won't allow them to get replacement bodies through the Doll House and using the bioroid factory that gave me my body will GUARANTEE a sex change...!"

"MONSTER! HOW DARE YOU INSULT LUM-SAN LIKE...?!!"

KK-KRUNCH!

Everyone smirked after yet ANOTHER cinder block smashed down to shut Megane up, making the other members of the Stormtroopers cringe at the fact that their parents hadn't ONCE objected to such abusive treatment at the hands of Ataru's supposed twin sister Tariko Katabarbe. "Oi, umale lo'obir'ba! Volume, huh?! They can hear you over in Ba'qūbah! You've already got a death mark on your head thanks to the shit YOU pulled last October! You want to push it?!!"

"IT'S ALL ATARU'S FAULT!" a now-bleeding Megane shrieked.

As Rui shook her head — she had long ago given up on any hope towards making her idiot son finally let go of his mad infatuation concerning Redet Lum — and the other Stormtroopers' parents rolled their eyes at the sheer stubbornness of the idiot that had whipped their foolish sons' passions concerning the alien monster whose presence in Japan had hurt so many worldwide into an unstoppable tsunami that just seemed to roll over any form of common sense, Nijiko smirked. "Pays to have someone who can manipulate the communications systems of this planet to let people see the truth of what happened in certain events," she then teased. Her smile then turned evil as she focused
on her brother. "Especially after I mind-probed you to get the exact memories of what happened in the clock tower last year, Nii-kun!" she then sweetly declared as she gazed intently into Perm's wide eyes.

"KŌSUKE!" Megane howled, his own eyes ablaze with an out-of-control fury that made even the other Stormtroopers wince; they had NEVER seen him like this. "HOW DARE YOU BETRAY LUM-SAN BY ALLOWING THIS MONSTER TO SLANDER US LIKE THAT?!

"YOU'RE A BLIND IDIOT, 'TOSHI! I DIDN'T KNOW SHE DID THAT!" Perm shrieked back.

"HOW DARE YOU CALL ME AN IDIOT, YOU...?!

KĻ-KŁONK!

"YOU BE QUIET, YOU STUPID BOY!" Rui shrieked after she smashed her son down with one of the cinder blocks that had been lying on the floor nearby.

"It's not your fault, Nijiko-chan," his father then snapped, making Perm gape in disbelief at yet another show by his parents that they didn't support him anymore. "Much that we're ALL about ready to throw these idiots out of our houses for their inability to see the truth of things surrounding that alien bitch, anything you can do that helps make those alien monsters think that this planet is a DEATH TRAP to them all..." Here, the sports store owner sighed. "Do as much as you can, musume-chan."

"It's already done, Tō-chan. The fight scene's won even if Nii-kun hasn't gone through his death scene yet," Nijiko stated, making Perm awk in growing horror on realizing this freak replica of him really WANTED him dead! "The video was posted on Friday at the very instant the umale were sent home by Tariko-chan. It's already had TEN MILLION views as of suppertime today." As the Stormtroopers awked in stunned disbelief on hearing that statement — they knew that a hit song by a Korean singer known to fans as "Psy" concerning a rich district in Sŏul and how people there lived a certain way was now creeping closer to ONE BILLION views on YouTube! — she reached over to the living room table and tapped the crystal on her PAA. That allowed the machine to link into the California-based video sharing website, it instantly displaying an image of the interior of the clock tower at Tomobiki High School the previous fall, focusing on the bruised and battered body of Moroboshi Ataru chained to the wall after he had been captured after running away from his abusive parents' home in the wake of the Tag Race, then dragged back to Tomobiki to act as bait to bring his "wife" back to Earth.

As the video played out, the Stormtroopers' parents — whose growing anger at their sons' behaviour when it came to Lum had long surged passed supersaturation point! — shuddered in outrage on seeing how easily the four boys had manipulated a dazed and clearly frightened young man who then wanted nothing more to do concerning his "wife" into becoming the fall guy for their own selfish desires. As the video played out, a quaking Megane was quick to conclude with his film director's eye this production had been expertly edited to ensure that what had happened to Ataru during the "world oil theft" incident was displayed in as sympathetic a light as possible to the viewer. From the scene in the clock tower to the time aboard the space taxi before they were taken back to Earth at Ataru's request, then the confrontation scene at the Moroboshi home in the wake of the start of the seizing of Earth's oil supply by that space taxi hack's buddies — where everyone and their uncle descended on the bastard's head to make him admit his fault in that incident and submit to Lum — the leader of Lum's Stormtroopers came to realize quickly that this video full of stinking LIES would win Ataru sympathy worldwide.
Especially from the Middle East!

"Just think, 'Toshi," Nijiko stated as she gazed in veiled amusement at her brother's friend/leader/rival. "Without your precious Lum-san to save you now, everyone who suffered because of what YOU started last fall are sharpening their knives in anticipation for the ONE chance to send you and Nii-kun and 'Yuki and Akira here to their well-deserved places in the Dark Gaol!" She leaned up to glare intently into his eyes. "You ever wonder what happened to Sadoyama and his idiots?!"

That made Megane blink. "Wh-what...?"

"They were caught by Tariko-chan while you were getting your bones knitted back together in that hospital in Onishuto after Ayumu-chan put you in the healer's cockpit after she saved Tariko-chan from being forced to marry that selfish umale!" the Mistress of Daggers responded. "After all, it's the Second Rule of the Great Show of Life: 'Don't fuck with Tuyuki!' She dragged that bald jerk and his buddies to the Battlezone..." A wistful smile then crossed her face. "Think of an area the size of the Sahara Desert, just as hot and dry — where EVERYONE from Yiziba go battle each other to keep their fight scene skills up — and you'll get what I mean." She then smirked as she coldly announced, "And she left them to DIE!" As Megane turned stark white on realizing that Ataru had been secretly moving to deprive Lum of all of her allies on Earth since the encounter with Queen Elle in April — even now, he refused to believe that Ataru was actually some break away soul fragment of this Tariko bitch that was the current incarnation of his precious Lum-san's worst NIGHTMARE brought to life! — Nijiko shook her head. "They didn't last a hundred scenes. That's an hour and a half here on Earth, sport!" She then hummed. "Have to ask Chisame-chan if I can get recordings of their death scenes, then send copies to all the victims of that bastard and his buddies at school. I'm sure they'll love it..."

"Murderer...!" Megane croaked out.

That made Nijiko blink. "Why thank you!"

As the leader of the Stormtroopers gaped before he croaked on realizing that this monster cloned from his friend had actually considered that accusation a COMPLEMENT of all things, the doorbell then rang, making Yayoi perk. "Who on Earth's visiting right now?" she demanded.

Nijiko looked over, focusing her telepathy on the small crowd of men who had just gathered by the front gate. "It's the police, Kā-chan," she declared.

"GOOD!"

Eyes locked on Megane, who was now starting to shiver and quake with vengeful giggles. As the other Stormtroopers patiently waited for their leader to pronounce what he found so proper about the arrival of the authorities, Rui took a deep breath. "Get them in here, Yayoi-san," she then bade. "Who on Earth's visiting right now?" she demanded.

Nijiko looked over, focusing her telepathy on the small crowd of men who had just gathered by the front gate. "It's the police, Kā-chan," she declared.

"GOOD!"

As Perm, Urayamu Akira ("Chibi") and Daremo Hiroyuki ("Kakugari") all screamed on hearing that their parents were now demanding THEIR arrest, Megane froze before wild laughter escaped him...

KK-KKLONK!

Now all that escaped the bleeding teen on the floor was a pained moan.

Gazing at Aisuru Rui, Nijiko could only shake her head.
There was no pity whatsoever in his mother's eyes...

****

A half-hour later...

Despite it being well into the middle of the night, a considerable crowd had gathered on the street beyond the front gate of the Shitto home to watch as elements of the Public Security Bureau forced the Stormtroopers into an awaiting police van for transport to Fuchū Prison and eventual trial. No official announcement concerning what charges would be laid against Megane and his clique had been made either over the twenty-four hour news networks or on social media, though many in the crowd were hissing that such formal charges could range from aiding and abetting ecological terrorism all the way to assisting in foreign aggression against the Japanese state and other nations of Earth; the latter charge was the local equivalent of what was called "treason" elsewhere. Much to the horror of some of the boys who attended Tomobiki High School watching this now — who had been alerted by frantic text messages from their friends — the four nominal social leaders of all of Redet Lum's fans on Earth were being seen by the authorities as now being no different than members of the infamous doomsday cult Aum Shinrikyō that launched attacks with Sarin in 1995 across the metropolis, killing dozens.

But with their public arrest...!

"Shit! How can Ataru do this?!" Koi Shinjin snarled from a safe distance away from the cordon of riot police who had been called out from one of the local division headquarters to help with security.

"Ataru didn't do a thing, Shinjin."

That was Kanzaki Ryūha, who was leaning against the stone wall of someone's home, his arms crossed, a contemplative look on his face. "How can you say that, man?!" Wada Keisuke snarled. "Look at this! Since when does what Megane and his guys do to Ataru suddenly gain the police's attention?! And against THEM, not Ataru, huh?! This sort of shit never happened when Lum-chan was here!"

"Because people were too damned scared to do anything that would have made the Oni go crazy on everyone like she's done before, Wada," a scornful woman's voice echoed from nearby, making the boys spin around as several of the girls from Class 2-4 came up to join then, delighted smirks on their faces on seeing that the Stormtroopers were finally getting their comeuppance for all the crap they had helped cause...and with the full support of the national government to boot! "And there was that damned bomb in the Ginza as well," Marubeya Momoe added. "Since Tariko-chan and her sisters had to keep that in mind since there was a potential temporal paradox issue as well..."

"That's a fucking lie!" Nishijima Hiroshige snapped.

"Not according to Rumiko-chan and her new friends from America and Russia, not to mention Nagisa-chan," Gekasawa Kumiko added as she gave her classmate a smile of triumph, delighted at the fact that the otaku who had fawned over Redet Lum weren't getting their way this time. And even if her favourite male classmate was being made to suffer for what was going on — Kumiko still shuddered on remembering what Ashikaga Akemi did to Mendō Shūtarō on Friday morning when Moroboshi Ataru and his sisters moved to force the aliens off Earth and get rid of that damned bomb Lum's "most faithful" planted in the Ginza — it was for the best since it had been as obvious as coal in a ballroom that the warlord's daughter from Onishuto never cared for the scion of Japan's richest family save for how useful he was in keeping her "husband" down. "Given that Lum had her own time-travel tech that she could have used to really mess up the timeline, it was necessary to keep things secret until the bomb was on its way back to the maniacs who put it here in the first place."
Would YOU have gone along with something like what this Ōgi asshole planned to do to us if Ataru finally got Lum out of his life?"

"So what?!" Hiroshige snarled as he pointed in accusation at his classmate. "If this Ōgi guy was loyal to Lum-chan like that, he'd NEVER make use of the damned thing!"

"Excuse me?!" Sugihara Nara shrialled as she gaped in horror at Hiroshige. "Did we forget that we live in one of the most earthquake-prone zones on Earth?!"

"Oh, c'mon!" Keisuke snapped back. "They probably have earthquakes on their home planet as well!"

"That bomb had to be a dud anyway!" Shinjin added.

Jaws dropped as all the girls — not to mention people like Ryūha — stared at the boy who was just as fanatic as Megane himself when it came to Lum. "What are you smoking and why aren't you sharing, Koi?!" Momoe wryly asked. "You SAW that explosion, didn't you?! That was the equal of FIVE HUNDRED MILLION tonnes of TNT that went off and wrecked that Ōgi bastard's fleet!"

"It was a fake, Marubeya!" Shinjin automatically asserted. "That Tariko bitch probably did something to make it seem as if Ōgi actually WOULD do something like that!"

A woman's voice that was as sharp as pure tamahagane steel yet echoing with a hollow moan that reminded the listeners of a winter wind then called out from nearby, "Brent-san, when you waxed poetic on the fanaticism of this so-called 'tea party' that currently vexes Bartlet-hakase and his government, I thought you insisted it was only concentrated in the United States. How in the Sacred Name of Amaterasu did such a plague come to infect the Home Islands in this manner?!"

As people turned, a voice tinged with a recognizable American Yankee accent — though speaking Japanese fluently — replied, "I honestly can't answer that question, Yoiko-san. I'd normally attribute this veneration for the alien monster Kyōsuke-san's grandniece had to deal with over the last year as typical teenage lust; despite her actions against humanity, Redet Lum is quite the attractive woman." As many of the boys listening to this snarled in outrage at that accusation, the blond, blue-eyed and quite muscular middle-aged man — who was now accompanying a near-giantess of a woman in a rather form-fitting sea green martial arts gi-like uniform with dark grey belt across her waist — shrugged. "I can understand why you'd equate their words to what those mindless maniacs love saying when they accuse the President of everything under the Sun for 'ruining' my homeland like he 'does'. Makes me wish we had laws in America like those you had here before the Second World War."

"I can see why you'd want that, Brent-san," the tall woman with the grey-streaked black hair that went to her waist and dark grey eyes akin to the most violent typhoon said, a shy smile crossing her face. As the girls from Tomobiki High took in her full measure, they were quick to see her chest emblem: A gold dhārmachakra emblazoned with the kanji 代永 in black-trimmed white vertical formation surrounding the hub. "To believe such traitors to the harmony of your great land as it was envisioned when it broke away from the English continue to scream at a man who gladly honours his oath to the Constitution even while suffering from such a degrading disease. Do your people not remember Roosevelt-daitōryō?"

"My people are far too quick to forget inconvenient facts, Yoiko-san," he then lamented as he looked up at her. "I'm sure all the doho in the crew like Yoshi-san would be happy to remind you of the all-too-many hypocrisies that forced them to return to the Home Islands as they did."

"Hai, true..."
"Are you...a shipgirl?"

That was a wide-eyed Momoe, who had found herself immediately reminded of Lum's father Redet Invader and her ex-fiancé Seq Rei (when he assumed his ushitora form) and how tall and massive they seemed when she first gazed on the very statuesque woman. "I am kantai musume, Ojō-sama," the just-arrived woman in the green-and-grey fighting uniform declared. "You will not find information about me in any public media. The Kempeitai were quite thorough in making sure that all physical evidence of my construction were wiped out long before the Americans under MacArthur-gensui got to these shores after Tennō bade his subjects to endure the unendurable and suffer the insufferable in the Gyokuon-hōsō that brought the Greater East Asia War to a final end in Shōwa-nijūnen."

Silence.

More silence.

Still more silence.

Then...

"Your crew are zanryū nipponhei?!!" Ryūha gasped.

As many of the people now moving to surround the giant shipgirl gasped on hearing that term applied to those brave soldiers and sailors of the Imperial armed forces who refused to lay down arms after VJ Day, she nodded. "You are correct, young man. My entire crew — even after the brave sacrifice of Brent-san's father in saving some of them back in Shōwa-gojūhachinen in a storm near the cove where I had been trapped thanks to glaciers since Shōwa-jūrokunen — still see themselves as under orders in Tennō's name to make war on America." As people instantly gazed on the American man beside her, she smiled. "Brent-san is honourably retired from his service, minna-san. He nearly died in a storm saving some of my crew when he came to my cove searching for his father; fortunately, my crew was able to rescue him and welcomed him as a guest while they sought to free me from my imprisonment."

"Somewhere in Russia, you mean," Mifune Hideyuki concluded.

That earned him an arched eyebrow. "You seem well-versed in such manners, young man."

The younger man chuckled as he sheepishly shrugged. Despite his own attraction to Lum, he was also quite the military otaku. "Well, it's easy to conclude, Yonaga-san. You mentioned being trapped by glaciers since 1941. That means you had to be in on the operation to hit Pearl Harbour with the Kidō Butai. What were you, Yonaga-san? Some sort of support vessel to the fleet?"

That earned him laughter from the American accompanying the warship-turned-twenty-something woman. "Now, Brent-san, stop that!" she then scolded. "They wouldn't know!"

"The Seventh Carrier...!"

People perked, then looked down a side street...

"Ojii-chan!" Momoe gasped on recognizing the patriarch of the Mendō Clan on an open-air palanquin, having been transported there by four butlers employed by his family. "What are you doing here...?"

"Why are you wearing that mask, Major?"
That was the just-identified aircraft carrier. "Wounds I took when Negako-sama was ordered by Tennō to put down those maniacs in the Black Dragon Society when the call to lay down arms was made, Yonaga-sama. I assume that when the Great Kami of the Seeker's Forge that saw Raeburn-shihan's Power Jewel created transformed you into this, you were given a human name like the other kantai musume were, such as young Hinako's companion Fukushima Fujiko."

"Itō Yoiko' is her human name, Major Mendō," the American officer stated as he stood to attention, properly saluting the older man as if he was a midshipman at Annapolis. Seeing that, people then took note of the green jumpsuit-like uniform he was wearing, the rank tabs of a lieutenant commander in the Imperial Navy on his collars; he had a blue navy hat with the proper officer's badge on his head.

That made Mendō Gennosuke blink. "I don't recall meeting you, Commander."

"You would know my late father, sir: Captain Theodore Ross."

That made the patriarch's eyes go wide. "Ted-san?! You must be Brent then! Your ex-wife is based with your fleet's commander down at the Yokosuka yards. Your daughter is in-country as well!"

That made Brent Ross visibly wince as the hand of the seventh carrier of Operation Z — who would be known now on Yiziba as the Ice Warrior of Eternity, Gaeyuo ("Yonaga") — squeezed his shoulder in a show of support. "Yeah! I suppose I'll have to do a lot of begging and grovelling with both Pamela and Sarah once they find out I'm still alive; they never liked the idea of my trying to find out what happened to Dad back in '83 when Sparta disappeared like she did without a trace."

"Brent-san, if they truly love you, they will understand your filial quest to ensure your father was well even if he was heavily burdened with soldier's heart from what Jackson-chūjo gladly saw as the 'sum of all evils'. Remember that," his companion then wisely advised.

Gazing up at Yoiko, the former intelligence officer nodded. "If only both sides recognized what really drove the hearts and minds of the other people's culture. Maybe that damned war wouldn't have happened in the first place," Brent then concluded. As many of the locals hearing this gaped at that kind observation from the retired intelligence officer, he then coughed. "Seeing as how His Imperial Majesty is no doubt asleep at this time, we'll need to seek lodgings somewhere before presenting ourselves with him with Admiral Fujita's letter reporting on the state of his crew." As Gennosuke gasped in shock on hearing that the true father of Japanese naval aviation, Admiral Fujita Hiroshi of Nagoya, was alive and well — which would be next to impossible under normal circumstances as he had been born in 1884! — Brent looked around. "It's good that we met up with you, Major. The crew always had kind things to say about you!" As the elderly patriarch of Japan's richest family flustered at that compliment, the star football quarterback at Annapolis for the 1982-83 academic year looked around. "We actually were hoping to find relatives of Tariko-san when we came here."

"Ah! Rest easy, Brent-san!" Gennosuke bade as he held up a hand. "Contact Reigi-san right away," he then ordered one of his butlers. "I'm sure that he can see to it Brent-san and Yoiko-sama will be given direct lodgings at the Toranoseishin Finances Tower."

The students around him blinked. "Where's that, Ojii-chan?" Momoe asked.

"Under a special magical masking charm to ensure that Ataru-kun's selfish mother couldn't embezzle his inheritance from his late grandmother with the assistance of her greedy brother who commanded the local kōban until he was exposed for the thief he was and imprisoned," the elderly patriarch declared. "The charm prevents me from revealing the location where young Tariko, Ataru-kun and their sisters went to get away from the madness forced on them by the aliens' presence in this town.
Hence, we need Reigi-kun to come escort them there; even if she has no allies left in this town, that yūjo will do anything to seize the money that poor Nagaiwakai-chan had set aside for her grandchildren."

"There is no need to summon Reigi, Gennosuke. Dean and I can walk Yoiko and Brent to the tower so that I can read Hiroshi’s letter to Tennō before they are presented to him later today at the Kōkyo."

Everyone save Yoiko and Brent shuddered at that toneless woman's voice before they turned, then all the students took hesitant steps away from the current steward of the Moroboshi Clan of Mutsu, the reborn Imperial Special Agent #49 that had been the one to truly end the Second World War at the orders of the late Heavenly Sovereign of Shōwa; they had all seen comments in social media made by people in Nerima when Moroboshi Negako had gone to the Tendō dōjō to help Tendō Akane finally break away from her fool father. Accompanying the private assassin of the Imperial Throne was the current grandmaster of the Tensei-ryū and the adopted daughter of the famous Immortal Master, in her modified field uniform marking her as commander of Canada’s special forces, complete with the red arrowhead formation insignia taken from the First Special Service Force on her jacket's right upper arm. Seeing the three maple leaves of a lieutenant general in the Canadian Army on her rank slip-on, Brent snapped to attention and gave Dean Raeburn and Moroboshi Negako an Annapolis-perfect salute as Yoiko bowed formally to them. "General Raeburn! Lady Negako! Good evening, ladies!"

Dean returned that salute as Negako nodded, her face as impassive as always. "Welcome back, Commander. Where the hell are Hiroshi and his crew anyway? They need any sort of medical assistance? If they were isolated all this time wherever they got stuck in..."

"Where is this 'Sano-wan' you were hiding in, Yoiko?" Negako cut in.

"On the Arctic coast of the Chukótskij Rajón in the Chukótskij Avtonómnyj Ókrug, between the villages of Ènurmino and Neshkán, Negako-sama," Yoiko automatically answered. "It was quite perfect for the purpose of keeping my hull hidden from spies. Sano-wan is heavily lined in mesonium deposits and glaciers that outmatch what can be found in Greenland. That effectively masked my hull and my crew from detection by local authorities, even the magical ones serving the NKMD."

As people’s jaws dropped on hearing where the aircraft carrier had been — if her existence had become known to Soviet authorities, that would have been grounds for all-out war...IF the security forces under Iósef Stálin didn’t decide to simply make them disappear without any trace — Dean and Negako both nodded, the former impressed that Fujita Hiroshi and his ship’s crew had survived SEVENTY-ONE years alone without support from home. As Gennosuke also nodded — he knew that prolonged exposure to high deposits of the Atom of True Life would seriously retard a person's aging process, thus explaining why someone born in the middle Meiji years was still alive at the start of the Twenty-first Century — the grandmaster of Saikō Jinseijutsu-ryū moved to wave the two new arrivals towards downtown.

Before she could bade them to accompany her and Dean to a place where they could rest, a very unwelcome voice then bellowed out, "**WHERE IS MY IDIOT SON, YOU MONSTER?!**"

As members of the police who secured the screaming Stormtroopers in a van to take them to Fuchū started to react on seeing Moroboshi Kinshō charge at the creature who seemed to personify all that she loathed concerning her husband's insane family, Yoiko snarled as she surged to intercept, her right hand glowing with brilliant crimson fire that nearly overloaded even Negako’s ki senses with the sheer torrents of energy the aircraft carrier-turned-twenty-something woman obviously commanded.
Negako then seemed to blur, immediately imposing herself between a now wide-eyed Kinshō and the charging Yoiko, an energy katana bursting from the palm of her own hand to catch the carrier's blazing blade. As people gasped on seeing that the woman who had killed dozens of metahumans in the Greater East Asia War was physically staggered by the hideous strength the shipgirl clearly possessed, a voice called out from above, "Whoa! Whoa! HEY! Knock it off with the fight scene, huh?!"

Everyone's heads spun up...

"Tariko-chan!" Momoe gasped with both surprise and relief.

A lithe form in off white-and-black descended down to land on the street close to her would-be mental house guest/quasi-adopted elder sister. As she snapped her fingers to drop a cinder block on her mother's head to shut her up, the Trickster of the Show took a deep breath. "Look, new kid," she then admonished as Yoiko pulled back from Negako, though she kept her soulsword at the ready by her leg. "I realize you don't understand how it works on Yiziba, but there's one basic rule people normally follow there: Don't butt in on other people's fight scenes. Dealing with the genetic donors is MY fight, not yours. I appreciate the sentiment, but she doesn't deserve to get her soul ripped out of her body."

That made the adopted native of Maizuru (where she had been built) and Hiroshima (where her admiral had lived before he was ordered to lead the Kidō Butai on Pearl Harbour) gape in disbelief. "Tariko-san, will all due respect, you are too merciful to this greedy leech!" she hissed out as she waved to the dazed housewife, who was now being pulled away from the scene by several of the riot police as onlookers all stared dispassionately at her. "How can you drink gall like that?! Forced to flee your home because you weren't your twin brother, then trapped once more here in this accursed place just to placate the aliens?!" She pointed in accusation at the unconscious Kinshō. "She clearly knew what was going on! Completely uncaring of all the misery she was allowing to befall the people here since she was so adamant on stealing what was not hers! I KNOW that Nagaiwakai-san would have NEVER approved of a marriage between her son and this creature! Let her die and be done with it finally!"

As Kinshō awked in horror on hearing such a dark statement from the monster that had just tried to kill her, people hearing this all glared at her, making the poor housewife cringe as she imagined how the neighbours would react. Noting that, Tariko Katabarbe wryly smiled as she glanced over her shoulder at her genetic mother before shaking her head. "Killing's too easy, Yoiko."

Silence.

More silence.

Still more silence.

Then...

Yoiko shook her head as she dispersed her soulsword. "If that is your wish, I will respect it. But if you die and she still lives, I will have her head! She is a traitor to Tennō and the nation if not the WORLD!"

With a final glare at Tariko's mother — who dropped to her knees in a daze at the fact that SHE now had a death threat hanging over her head — the seventh carrier of Operation Z turned and marched off in the direction Negako had indicated to go before Kinshō had charged in to learn where her son
currently was. As Dean moved to escort Yoiko away from the scene and people watching this all turned away from Tariko's mother — with some of the people spitting on the ground around Kinshō, uttering all sorts of obscenities that made the poor woman jolt as mindless nonsense fluttered from her lips — Negako's eyes flicked up to a nearby rooftop, where a young woman in an urban camouflage jumpsuit was now standing, her video-cam held up before her eye as she captured this scene for eventual transmission over YouTube. Given how much the world would now be hungering for any news concerning the Yizibajohei — Josiah Bartlet's briefing to the media in Washington had been very thorough in that regard — the video Asakura Kazumi was now making that helped reveal Kinshō's part in what had befallen Tomobiki over the last year would be snapped up by news organizations across the world, most likely blared out on the morning news a few hours from now. "She does not understand subtlety," the grandmaster of Saikō Jinseijutsu-ryū observed as she and Tariko moved to follow.

"How badly was Ō'oji-chan outnumbered on her anyway?" Tariko then asked Brent.

"It was considerable, ma'am," the retired naval intelligence officer warned.

A sigh answered him. "Right...!"

*To Be Continued...*

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**WRITER'S NOTES**

*The West Wing* character notes: Deborah Fiderer became a background character, taking the place of Dolores LANDINGHAM (who was killed in a car accident as noted in the episode "18th and Potomac" [second season, episode #21]). Fiderer's first appearance was in the episode "Posse Comitatus" (third season, episode #21). Tim Waters was mentioned first in the sixth season's fourth episode "Liftoff"; by that time, Waters had been relieved of his post. And Danny Concannon was a semi-regular throughout the whole series, first appearing in the third episode of the first season, "A Proportional Response".

Note that Gary O'Donoghue is a real BBC reporter who works in America.

Translation list: Oberst — Colonel; *Ich diene nicht diesem Morphin liebenden Arschloch* — I don't serve that morphine-loving asshole; Uluğu — The Pitjantjatjara name for Ayers Rock in Australia's Northern Territory; Gichō — Chairman; Daitōryō — President (of a nation); Shōsa — Navy lieutenant commander/Army major/Air Force squadron leader; Umale lo'obir'ba — One who worships a same; Dhármachakra — The Wheel of Fate that serves as the central identifying sigil of Buddhism and several other faiths; Doho — Compatriot, a nickname given to ethnic Japanese who returned to the Home Islands from other nations; Gensui — Navy fleet admiral/Army field marshal/marshal of the Air Force; Zanryū nipponhei — Literally "remaining Japanese soldiers", this is the term applied to holdouts who didn't surrender when called to lay down arms on 15 August 1945; Köban — Police box, a small neighbourhood station hosting an average number of ten police officers; Kōkyo — Imperial Palace; Chukotskij Rajón — Chukótka District, the easternmost municipal county in Russia; Chukotskij Avtonómnyj Ókrug — Chukótka Autonomous Region, a federated state of the Russian Federation set aside for the Chukchi (or Llyg"oravèl'lèn) people native to the easternmost tip of Siberia; NKMD — Short for Naródnýj Komissariát Mágicheskie Del ("People's Commissariat of Magical Affairs"), the Soviet magical ministry from 1917-52 in the universe of my stories; Kontō — Soulsword.
The "morphine-loving asshole" that Amélie von Zeppelin shrieks about in the first scene is Reichsmarschall ("Marshal of the Empire") Hermann Göring (1893-1946). As the Reich Minister of Aviation during the Nazi era (which gave him overwhelming influence on all aviation affairs in the country), Göring blocked any attempts by the Kriegsmarine to allow them to create an in-house aviation service similar to the Marine-Fliegerabteilung ("Naval Air Service") from World War One. Both the Bordfliegergruppe 196 ("196th Embarked Air Group") that flew Arado Ar 196 floatplanes off surface warships and the Trägergruppe 186 ("186th Carrier Group") that flew navalized Messerschmidt Me 109T fighters, Junkers Ju 87C dive bombers and Fieseler Fi 167 torpedo bombers were all controlled by the Luftwaffe. The latter group would never get the chance to fly off KMS Graf Zeppelin; the group would be disbanded on 5 July 1940 with its personnel shuttled into other tactical combat groups.

The members of First District were background players in Mai-HiME, responsible for helping mask Orphan incidents on Fūka-jima and helping recruit the future participants in the HiME Festival to attend the school. Given that they make use of memory-altering techniques to keep the issues on Fūka-jima secret, that they could do the same to Tuyuki (Tariko Katabarbe) — especially since she was not fully Gifted at the time of that encounter — makes a load of sense here.

Yatsura and The Senior Year character and situation notes: Hikutsu Ōmukai is my name for the elder valet/butler that often shows up in the company of Mendō Haruka. He actually first appeared in the Yatsura manga story "Trouble Drops In" (manga chapter #22). Mendō Gennosuke's past affiliation with the Kempeitai, the Imperial Army's military police corps, is my creation. As noted in Part Six, Mendō Shūtarō's twin Mendō Tachiko and Shitto Kōsuke's twin Shitto Nijiko first appeared in the manga story "Love and Violence". Miyake Shinobu's twin Miyake Salko also appeared in that story. Fujinami Ryūnosuke's twin Fujinami Tatsuko appeared in the anime story that was made based on "Love and Violence", "Lum: Rebel Without a Clue" (anime episode #72). The names and occupations of the parents of Lum's Stormtroopers are also my creation, first appearing in The Senior Year story "The Bodyguards' Denouement". And Sadoyama Keizō is the name of the torture specialist used by the Stormtroopers on Ataru in the second part of the first anime episode, "It's Raining Oil All Over Town"; his given name is my creation. Sadoyama would also appear in the first movie, Only You.

Mihama Kenji is my name for Mihama Chiyo's father. Given the wealth Chiyo's family was demonstrated to possess in Azumanga Daiō, it would be obvious that the elder Mihama would be known to Mendō Gennosuke.

Ba'qubah northeast of Baghdād was the headquarters of the Islamic State of Iraq from 2006-07. ISI's headquarters shifted to an unknown location until 2013 and the transformation of the group into ISIL, when it was noted by Western intelligence sources as being located in the Syrian city of ar-Raqqah.

The hit song reflected on by the members of Lum's Stormtroopers when they were forced to confront their parents is Kangnam Style (as would be spelled in McCune-Reischauer Romanization system I always use for Korean in my stories) as written in 2010 by Psy (born Pak Chaesang in 1977). Said song reached a billion views on YouTube on 21 December 2012.

And as for the lone shipgirl appearing here:

Itō Yoiko-taisha DNTK/DNTR (Tennō Heika Gunkan Yonaga [CVB-12])

The aircraft carrier THG Yonaga is based on the effective namesake ship that appeared in the late
Peter Albano's science fiction/action adventure novel *The Seventh Carrier*, first published in 1983. It was in this story that the lead characters of the series based on that novel, Brent Ross and Fujita Hiroshi, first appeared, both appearing in the sequels that followed until the last book, *Assault of the Super Carrier*, was published in 1996. *The Seventh Carrier* and its series are long-time favourites of mine; while the books had huge plot holes that one could sail Yonaga herself through (not to mention showed very piss-pour editing jobs in many places), it was quite the inspiration for a budding fanfic writer when he discovered the books in the wake of his release from the Canadian military in the early 1990s to attend university and start the road to write *The Senior Year* with Mike Smith's help. Of course, I've made a lot of changes with how the crew of Yonaga are depicted and how they behave; in the novels, they tended to act more like soldiers of the Imperial Army than sailors of the Imperial Navy, who were (as far as I know) far more self-disciplined and trained more on British seafaring traditions than the Prussian military traditions the land forces followed.

As for Yoiko's affiliated service as noted above, it was established in *The Seventh Carrier* that THG Yonaga was actually "commissioned" as a subordinate entity to the infamous Unit 731 (also known as the Epidemic Prevention and Water Purification Department of the Kantō Army), the Imperial Japanese Army's top secret biological and chemical warfare research and development unit then based in Manchuria. This was done mostly out of fear of Yonaga's sheer size. Unlike her sister Yamato-class vessels, the would-be Warship No. 797 had her overall length extended to 320 metres (1,050 feet) and her displacement increased to around 84,000 tonnes thanks to an additional hull section which included more boilers and two more turbines to give her a maximum flank speed of 33 knots; in comparison, Yonaga's sister carrier THG Shinano had an overall length of 265.8 metres (872 feet) and displaced 69,151 tonnes full load. Because of this, Itō Yoiko could be seen as being BOTH a captain in the Imperial Japanese Navy AND a colonel in the Imperial Japanese Army (Dai-Nihon Teikoku Rikugun, short-formed DNTR)...though she would clearly see herself properly as being a commissioned warship in the Imperial Navy; in the universe of my stories, ALL Japanese military vessels were given the ship prefix THG for Tennō Heika Gunkan ("Warship of His Imperial Majesty the Heavenly Sovereign").

As for her hull classification code and number, THG Yonaga would fall in between THG Shōhō (second of the Zuhiō-class light carriers) and THG Jun'yō (first of the Hiyō-class converted passenger liners-turned-fleet carriers) according to order of launch. Naturally, given her sheer scale and capabilities (as will be described in Part Eighteen by one of her construction engineers), Yonaga certainly deserved the hull classification code CVB (aircraft carrier, large).

Traditional Japanese year dates used by Itō Yoiko here:

- Shōwa-jūrokunen (Sixteenth Year of Shōwa) — 1941
- Shōwa-nijūnen (Twentieth Year of Shōwa) — 1945
- Shōwa-gojūhachinen (Fifty-eighth Year of Shōwa) — 1983

Brent's father Theodore "Ted" Ross and his ship, the Sparta, first appeared in *The Seventh Carrier*.

"Soldier's heart" was the common term in the American Civil War for what is known as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) today.
The Home Fleet Gathers

Chapter Summary

As Buffy reunites with her man, the sisters' host their granduncle's shipmates at Welcome House and Umbridge finds herself rendered mist by the Grand Old Lady of the Royal Navy just as Rose provokes the last fight scene with Voldemort...!

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Sunnydale in California, the former McNally home, an hour after breakfast on Saturday (Tokyo time: Two hours after midnight on Sunday)...

"NO...!"

Hearing that scream from one of the guest rooms within the former home of Xander Harris' best friend, Rupert Giles perked before he nearly ran upstairs to look inside the room where his current charge's boyfriend had been put to recuperate from being forced back to true life nearly eighteen hours before on the other side of the Pacific Ocean. Pausing at the doorway to see a wide-eyed Liam O'Connor gaping in shock that he was now being exposed to the afternoon sunlight without being dusted, the Oxford alumnus chuckled, leaning against the doorway. "Welcome back, Angel," he calmly greeted, making the linen merchant's son spin around, his brown eyes wide with disbelief. "Yes, it's all true."

Blinking for a moment as that message sank in, Angel then surged up from the bed and ran over to nearly crush the Watcher with a hug. "THANK YOU!" the now-truly human Scourge of Europe screamed, tears flowing down his eyes. "Thank you...!" he moaned before his voice broke as the many conflicting emotions that had been bottled up in his heart for over two centuries finally burst forth, overwhelming him with sobs as he leaned on Giles' shoulder.

"LIAM!"

Both men looked down to see a wide-eyed Buffy Summers staring up from the landing to the main floor, the concern on the elder living Slayer's face all too apparent. As Giles pulled away from Angel, the Mighty Maid of the Mountains raced upstairs to nearly spear her boyfriend right into the doorway of the bathroom. "HEY!" Angel cried out before his lips were nearly devoured by Buffy's.

Giles quickly scurried downstairs to allow the two a chance to be alone as they reunited after spending over ten months apart. Turning to head into the kitchen, he sighed. "I do believe he's going to recover," he stated before nodding thanks as Osamu Shirayuki handed him a cup of tea.

"Good thing that Hime made enough food for everyone so she can keep an eye on Angel-san and the others while they go through pre-Gifting," the Great Chef of the West stated before she gazed on
the stove, where a large pot of rice was cooking. Even if she was in her normal clothes, Shirayuki's hairband contained a small universal translator, so she could speak her normal Japanese and be understood by all. "Did you get a chance to look in on Bill-san and Drusilla-san?"

"Not really. And now..."

The native of Nagoya nodded. "Desu no! One doesn't interrupt a pillow scene!"

As the librarian at Sunnydale High flustered from such a statement — even now, he was NOT used to the way even emotionally young Yizibajohei spoke of affairs of the bedchamber so easily — the chef turned back to monitor the shepherd's pie she was making for her friends...

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A half-hour later...

"Hey in the house! Anyone in?!"

"Hai, Faith-san!"

"Hey, Snow White!" Faith Lehane called out as she walked into the kitchen before she stopped, her hypersensitive nose flaring at all the good smells that were emanating from the oven and the stove. "Man! What's cooking?!" she said, trying not to drool.

"Hime made some shepherd's pie with mixed vegetable rice for Liam-san, Bill-san and Drusilla-san to have once they're fully awake and can eat," Shirayuki stated as she moved to make coffee for the current incarnation of the Belle of the Wilderness, Yati ("Wildflower"), easily seen as the second-most powerful FISS-type metahuman on Yiziba. "After all, now that their bodies need regular food after so long subsisting on just blood, they need a lot of nutrition to be healthy."

The Bostonian nodded before she perked as her ears picked up gentle moaning from the direction of the room Angel had been placed in after everyone had been teleported back from Ōmure-jima. "Yeah, among other things," she leered out even if she looked away from Shirayuki to hide her smile; much that Tariko Katabarbe's sisters were pretty mature thanks to either rough childhoods or the circumstances of their Gifting, the native of Nagoya had only turned thirteen in February.

"You're lucky Sakuya-chan isn't here to egg things on between Liam-san and Buffy-san, Faith-san," she warned. "If she was here..."

"B would get knocked up by Angel right away. Yeah, Snow White, I know, I know," Faith breathed out as she gazed out the glass doors of the dining room at the calm waters of the Santa Barbara Channel; the former residence of Xander Harris' late best friend — Jesse McNally's parents had moved out of Sunnydale a month after his death over two years before — was set on a rolling hill that overlooked U.S. Highway 101 and the harbour of the small city that had possessed an active Hellmouth for decades.

"You okay?"

Faith waved her down. "I'm fine. Happy that B's got her pillow scene partner back. Wishing I had something just as good. Hey, is Magic Girl..." — that was the Bostonian's nickname for Hirosaki Chikage — "...got any idea when A-man's gonna be Gifted?"
Shirayuki shook her head. "Chikage-chan does a Tarot reading about that every day. She says it's coming, but doesn't know exactly when. And she's got no idea as to what sort of Gift Nii-sama will get."

That made the older woman nod. "Luck of the fight scene..."

"Hey in the house!"

"In here, Cor!" Faith called back.

Footfalls then heralded the arrival of the only "normal" member of the Scooby Gang even if she herself had been pre-Gifted shortly after Hallowe'en in 2010. "Hey, Shirayuki!" Cordelia Chase called out on seeing the native of Nagoya cooking away. "How are Liam and the others?"

Faith smirked as she pointed upstairs. The head cheerleader at Sunnydale High School blinked before she grinned on hearing the passionate moans echoing through the floor and down the stairwell. "Lucky her," she playfully growled with a shake of her head as she moved to sit beside her classmate, then she nodded as Shirayuki came over with a cup of tea for her to enjoy. "Now, if only nice normal girls like me can be lucky as well!" she breathed out before sipping the cherry tea; since the Scooby Gang had become close friends with the sisters of the Trickster of the Show, they had all got hooked on Susumu Marie's mixed cherry tea, even a passionate coffee drinker like Xander Harris.

"Don't give up, Cor! There are the good people out there," Faith advised.

"What's going on with your parents, Cordelia-san?" Shirayuki asked.

A snort escaped the woman who was still seen as being at the apex of the social order at Sunnydale High despite recent revelations about her father's tax evasion, which had seen him imprisoned at San Quentin even if one of the Sweet Valley Boosters, Lila Fowler, had arranged for Cordelia herself to enjoy something of a normal life thanks to the fact that the latter's mother had been university classmates with the former's father. "Oh, Mom's still in denial over what Dad did. She's grateful to Uncle George for what he's doing, but she doesn't like constantly living on charity, so she's looking for a job."

The chef hummed. "Hime can ask Reigi-san if your mother can be hired on with the Inshin Group at their offices in Los Angeles," she then offered.

That made Cordelia gape at her. "You're serious?"

"No! That Rose-chan's godfather!"

Laughter filled the kitchen/dining room at that dry joke concerning Sirius Black, which had been coined by the current Marquess of Grimmauld when he attended Hogwarts with Rose Potter's parents around the time of the end of the Cold War, during the time the Blood War launched by Tom Riddle was getting very good and was about to threaten to spill into the "muggle" world. "Speaking of which, any news about when Rose and Thérèse are finally going to put the smackdown on Riddle?" Cordelia asked.

"According to Chikage-chan, it will be this weekend, probably after midnight tonight in London," Shirayuki stated as she gazed once more into the oven to see how the shepherd's pie was cooking.

Faith pulled out her iPhone to check the world clock. "Seven hours," she announced before sipping her tea. "Well, good luck to her. Heard from Nexus there was a Brit shipgirl that came back recently."
"They're coming out of the woodwork, aren't they?" Cordelia mused...

...just as a burst of wind from outside heralded the arrival of a tomboyish girl a year younger than Shirayuki, she dressed in a dark blue bodysuit trimmed in safety orange on the belt, gauntlets and boots, a parachute insignia on her chest above her budding breasts. "Ya-ho! Shirayuki-chan!" Itō Mamoru called out as she hopped off her flying surfboard, which was named in honour of the translation of her battle name as the Star Surfer, *Dikebimomlo* ("Wipeout"). "Got some news!"

"What is it, Mamoru-chan?" Shirayuki asked as her sister leaned her board against the outer wall.

Mamoru gushed as she came inside. "They found Ō'oji-chan's ship finally!"

That made the chef gasp. "Eh?! You mean this *Yonaga*...?!"

"Yeah!" Mamoru affirmed with an eager nod as she sat down, her caramel eyes sparking with delight. "And you're NOT going to believe what she is!"

"I assume at least a shipgirl," Faith noted.

The native of Nara near Kyōto then laughed. "Well, y-yeah, that too!" she said as Shirayuki came over with some tea for her. "But she was an AIRCRAFT CARRIER! She would have been one of the Yamato-class battleships hadn't Fujita-taishō convinced the Navy brass to make her something that would make the *Shinano* look like a TOY in comparison! She was supposed to be in on the Pearl Harbour thing, but got stuck in a cove by glaciers all the way up in SIBERIA of all places!

"How the hell did the Soviets miss that?!!" Cordelia demanded.

Mamoru snickered. "The place is a damned mesonium mine almost, Sempai!"

That made the others nod. "Yeah, that'll do it!" Faith noted as she gazed at the ceiling. "Any news on when your prime minister's going to announce things about Japanese shipgirls? Since President Bartlet introduced Snow-girl to the media after that Kraut pocket battleship trounced that lar'beke before they turned Montevideo into a big hole in the Atlantic, there's got to be an announcement."

"We have to tell Tennō to get him to order Fujita-taishō and his crew to stand down," Mamoru warned.

That made the Americans nod. "Right! They're still under orders to hit Pearl," Cordelia concluded.

"Yep. At least they're on the Island now."

That made Shirayuki gasp. "How many?!!"

Mamoru gave her a warning look. "Over twenty-six hundred?"

That made the Great Chef of the West moan...even if Cordelia and Faith were quick to see the sparkle in her royal blue eyes. Feeding an INFANTRY REGIMENT'S worth of hungry sailors might make even the most passionate cook cringe. To Osamu Shirayuki, that was just a slow Tuesday. "Hime better get over there to get some good food into them!" she then declared as she pulled the cooking apron off her before she transformed into her battlesuit. "Cordelia-san, could you...?"

"I'll take care of it," Cordelia promised.

"Arigatō desu no!"
And with a flash of energy, Shirayuki teleported back to Ōmure-jima. By then, footfalls heralded the arrival of a former poet from London, who still looked understandably thunderstruck at the idea of once more being fully human instead of an undead mockery of one. "Bloody hell," William Pratt moaned on seeing that vanishing act. "If people knew there were metahumans in this town moving to fight all the creepy-crawlies in the dark, they'd run as far as they could away from the place."

"Hey, Bill! Want some tea?" Cordelia called out as she stood up.

That made Spike blink before he nodded. "Been over a century since I had a decent cuppa. Please."

As the cheerleader made some, Faith waved him over to the table. "So how's Dru? She up yet?"

"Yeah. She's just lying on the floor letting the sun wash over her," he said as he took his chair. "So where did Miss Cat Ears just disappear off to? I know she's one of Moroboshi's sisters and all that..."

"Twenty-six hundred mouths to feed now, all holdouts from the Second World War that got trapped in a cove in Siberia with their ship, Pratt-sensei," Mamoru answered. "The ship got turned into a shipgirl around the same time Hinako-chan went out in the summer to find the Akatsuki-class girls, but since they still have orders to attack Pearl Harbour..." Here, she shrugged.

That made Spike nod. Even if he didn't understand who exactly the metahuman surfer was talking about, he did understand the samurai mindset from previous visits to Japan he had made after he and Drusilla Keeble left the Scourge to seek out new game. As he contemplated that, a pair of ecstatic cries echoed from upstairs, making him look up. As Cordelia handed him the tea, a wry smirk crossed his face. "He's still a bloody poof," Spike muttered. "He's got good taste at least."

The girls gazed wide-eyed at him, then they laughed...

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Welcome House on Ōmure-jima, ninety minutes later...

"Sunrise will be at 0626 hours, Admiral."

Hearing that, the balding man with the moustache and goatee in the green jumpsuit that had become standard working day uniform on THG *Yonaga* during her imprisonment in a cove on Siberia's Arctic coast a hundred kilometres northwest of Cape Dezhnijóva nodded. "Thank you, Brent-san," Fujita Hiroshi, the would-be commander of the Kidō Butai hadn't an earthquake the eastern end of Asia in September of 1941 seen him trapped there for over seven decades, replied before he smiled as a raven-haired chartikinetic who worked pro bono for the National Diet Library came up, a tea service in hand. "You should be in bed right now, Marie-san," he gently scolded as Susumu Marie moved to serve him.

"We're all too excited at your return safe and sound to these shores, Hiiojii-san," the native of Hakodate stated as she prepared tea. To Fujita's surprise, it had the beautiful golden-yellow sheen of the very tasty cloudberries that grew in the cliffs of Sano-wan in such abundance, the fruit had become the main source of vitamin C for *Yonaga's* crew during their decades of imprisonment.

Nodding his thanks, he took up the cup of tea and tasted it, smiling as the tart texture of the raspberry-like fruit that had been the true lifesaver of his crew during their long time away from the Home Islands danced over his taste buds. While everyone had kept themselves fit and ready for action with intensive daily calisthenics on the flight deck of the fifth of the Yamato-class warships since their entrapment in 1941, nutrition had always been a worry among *Yonaga's* medical staff, especially the senior non-commissioned officer in that division, Medical Orderly First Class
Horikoshi Eiichi, a man Fujita trusted more than even his senior doctor, Surgeon Commander Hoshino Ryōtesu. Of course, with the sheer level of mesonium that had been in Sano-wan, flowing up through a thermal vent that the carrier's crew gladly tapped into to augment their power needs, the aging retardation had become noticeable sometime after the Jewel Voice Broadcast echoed over shortwave in 1945, something the overwhelming majority of Yonaga's crew refused to believe in for several decades...

"Have you had a chance to speak to your wife, Brent-san?" the Nagoya native asked as he stared at the blond American giant that had become his effective hatamoto since the day he had stumbled onto a fishing party commanded by his fellow American, Lieutenant Commander Matsuhara Yoshi of Los Angeles, when he had come into the Arctic looking for his long-missing father.

"Yoiko-san and I got into Tomobiki sometime after midnight local time, Admiral," Brent Ross replied with a sheepish shrug. "No sense in waking His Majesty up."

Laughter filled the dining room. Along with Fujita's senior adjutant Lieutenant Commander Hironaka Kenji, the would-be commander of the Kidō Butai had taken over the central hall of Welcome House's rotunda. While the officers had taken up rooms on the ground floor of the main commons and a large number of tents had been provided by Marie's sister Hatoyama Rinrin for the men to sleep in on the front and back lawns of the beautiful hostel, Sukeyama Sakuya loudly insisted that Fujita himself stay with them inside their part of Welcome House. Remembering what the effectively orphaned native of Kyōto had said when he tried to refuse such kindness, the alumnus of the Class of 1904 at the Imperial Naval Academy was immediately reminded of the one time he met his junior navigation officer's sister-in-law, the former Hana Nagaiwakai of Rishiri-tō. As the only person to survive taking the Promise of Bunka-gonen before her own transformed grandchild effectively helped see Moroboshi Negako become her own person over a decade ago, the cattle farmer's daughter had a powerful force of will that even cowered the highest levels of nobility in Japan right to the Imperial Household itself.

"Anxious to see your daughter again, Brent-san?" Hironaka asked.

"Do you blame me, Kenji-san?"

More laughter filled the room. Footfalls then echoed from the foyer, heralding the arrival of Yonaga's operations officer, Lieutenant Commander Kawamoto Masao. He was currently the "officer of the watch", leading a quarter of Yonaga's crew for the middle watch that would last until breakfast; due to the sheer number of people initially assigned to the fifth of the Yamato-class, having four sections of officers and sailors made sure that everyone got proper levels of sleep to keep them healthy. "You just took over the watch, Masao-san?" the native of Nagoya asked as the younger officer bowed to him.

"Hai, Admiral, I did. Good morning, Marie-san," Kawamoto stated with a polite smile to the native of Hakodate. "Yoshi-san is wondering when you're going to bed finally, Brent-san!" he then scolded the younger man. "You've been up since lunch...and that was in Sano-wan!"

Ross chuckled. "Hard to sleep now that we're back in civilization, Masao-san."

"With your daughter in Yokosuka, you mean? Lucky Yankee!"

Laughter filled the room from all the people in there. "You're relieved, Brent-san," Fujita then playfully scolded. "Get some sleep. You'll be accompanying my party to the Kōkyo when Tennō calls upon us to report to him about what's happened to us. By then, the news should have got down to the Yokosuka Arsenal, thus giving your daughter the relief she's long deserved. Go on."
The retired intelligence officer blinked, then he reluctantly nodded. Noting that, Fujita could only smile at the understandable willingness of someone like Brent to serve a man he now saw as an adopted father, much less experience the understandable trepidation of confronting his ex-wife and daughter. "Aye-aye, Admiral. I stand relieved, Commander Kawamoto. If you'll excuse me," he said as he stood up, then bowed to Fujita before facing Marie, then he bowed to her. "Madame Moroboshi."

The native of Hakodate returned that courtesy, then she watched as the alumnus of Annapolis from the Class of 1983 headed out. "Was it that hard, Hiiojii-san?" she then asked. "When he found you?"

"In the wake of his father's actions, it wasn't as hard as I first feared, Marie-san," Fujita answered as Kawamoto moved to sit to the admiral's right as one of the ship's yeoman moved to quietly brief him on crew status. "After all, given that Captain Ross had been a guest of the Imperial Army during the Greater East Asia War — brilliantly escaping from captivity and making his way through the East Indies to Australia on his own, by the way! — he would have had no reason to trust any of my crew that day after the second earthquake struck Sano-wan in 1983. But — even with his own crew dead and his ship floundering — he gladly dove into freezing waters to rescue one of my crew when that rogue wave overturned the boat sent out to get some fish. He had no advantages like we did staying in Sano-wan all those years." He shook his head. "He died a true samurai, Marie-san. And a true Christian as well. In the last minutes before he succumbed to hypothermia, he said one thing I will never forget:

"I'm so glad you guys escaped that damned slaughter."

"He's in Fiddler's Green now, Hiroshi. Or whatever Yank sailors call their version of Yasukuni."

Kawamoto and Hironaka got to their feet and bowed deeply as the last student of the Immortal Master came inside. As Fujita exchanged polite nods with Dean Raeburn, Marie immediately headed to the kitchen to get out a supply of Tim Hortons coffee for Earth's resident Jewel Warrior and one of the most powerful metahumans alive on the planet today. Sitting down on the other side of the circular table from the would-be commander of the Kidō Butai, the current commander of Canada's special forces pulled out a cigar and lit it; Fujita and the others were quick to see the slightly distorted bubble of air immediately form around Dean's head that showed she cared enough about second-hand smoke to not inflict others with the nicotine fumes and tobacco ashes. "May he be so, Dean-san. May he be so," Fujita then breathed out before sipping the lovely tea his host had made. "I assume you called someone at the Kōkyo to have Tennō informed of our return to Japan," he then stated.

"I first called Konoe Konoemon; he's the head of the Tōmagun in Mahora now," the native of Queenston in Ontario and adopted native of Fort Saint John in British Columbia and Prince Albert in Saskatchewan replied. "Then I gave Tsukiko a call down at her shrine in Nagasaki to pass it on to Hisamura Natsuki and the others from the Thunder Companies who are still alive. Given what's about to be blared out either later today or tomorrow about all the shipgirls living here on this island, I'd prefer that all the old school mystery men not panic and try to come down here and disrupt all these kids' lives. Especially little Hinako. She meant no harm when she found Fubuki's spirit, then went to find all the others."

That made the native of Nagoya nod in understanding. On being teleported from Sano-wan by the living goddess born Kasuga Ayumu in Wakayama in the late summer of 1995, the whole of Yonaga's crew had been overwhelmed on seeing nearly FIFTY living warship kami in the forms of VERY beautiful women. From the tall and muscular Yamamoto Reiko (the reborn Nagato, flagship of the Combined Fleet at the time of the attack on Pearl Harbour) to the heartwarming cheerful Akamatsu Inoue (the reborn Inazuma, whose captain Takeuchi Hajime passionately obeyed
Yamamoto Isoroku's order given prior to Operation Z that sailors of the Imperial Navy ALWAYS follow the TRUE way of Bushidō, which forbade bring harm to the helpless), the beautiful kami melted the hearts of every one of his command, even himself. While they had some months to get used to the idea of seeing their beloved Yonaga live as Itō Yoiko — as the great voice of the living kami of the Seeker's Forge had so called her when she was transformed in July — to see other great warships of the Imperial Navy now living in such a manner...!

Footfalls echoed from the area of the foyer; only Dean spotted the flash of a PAA teleportation. "Wir sind zurückgekommen!" a voice with a noticeable Prussian accent then called out as everyone in the dining room turned to look. "Frau Markgräfinnen?! Herr Markgraf Moroboshi?! Ist jemand wach?!

"Wir sind hier drin, Luisa!" Marie called back.

Shouts from outside then alerted everyone to the current guard from Yonaga's crew reacting sharply to the arrival of six German shipgirls well within their set security zone. Before the petty officer in charge of that watch could bark at his men to level weapons on target, a young voice called out, "STOP!"

That was accompanied by a titanic wave of empathic energy that made everyone inside and outside calm down. "Thank God for that kid," Dean muttered as she conjured up a tray to put her cigar into while Kawamoto stood up and looked into the foyer to see six women in the form-fitting sleeveless bodysuits of more modern-dressing Yizibajohei standing by the stairs to the second floor, they accompanied by the youngest of Marie's sisters and the first of the Fubuki-class destroyers reborn as a kantai musume, both of whom were now gazing in confusion at the platoon's worth of men in khaki shore patrol dress approaching the main doors, their Arisaka Type 99 short rifles at the ready.

"DON'T SHOOT! THEY'RE FRIENDS, NANODESU!"

The leader of the seaman guard watch, Boatswain's Mate Second Class Tomonaga Fujio, turned to his left as he lowered his rifle. "Inoue-chan, you know these people?" he asked.


As the seaman guards all gargled in horror, all of them turning bright red in shame on realizing that they had just about fired upon the young girl who had brought many of the warship kami back as shipgirls over the last few months, Kawamoto sighed. "Stand down, Fujio-san!" the operations officer declared, which made Tomonaga and his friends relax as Inoue walked into view. "My apologies, Hinako-chan! We didn't realize you were coming back right now. But...who on Earth are your friends here?"

Saeru Hinako focused on him, then she put her fists to her hips. "Marie-chan, who are these people?!

"They're from Ō'oji-san's old ship, Hinako-chan," Marie answered before sipping her own tea. "They were trapped in a mesonium-lined sea cove in Siberia from late September in 1941 until earlier tonight when Ayumu-chan went up to bring them back home. Their own ship was turned into a shipgirl back in the summer when you brought Inoue-chan and her sisters here to the island."

Hinako gaped. "EH?! Hina never went to Siberia! Who turned Ō'oji-chan's ship into a shipgirl?!"

"The Great Old One of the North did, Little One."
Silence.
More silence.

Still more silence.

Then...

"Lieber Gott im Himmel...!" Catarina von Savoyen gasped as she automatically moved to shield Luisa von Bismarck while a colossus of a shipgirl in dark green and grey appeared out of the darkness to stand close to what was clearly a platoon of her naval infantrymen.

Hinako blinked before she stared at Itō Yoiko. "Great Old One of the North...?" the native of Niigata repeated before her eyes went wide. "Túndra-san?!

"The very same, Little One." Those stormy grey eyes then focused on Luisa's blue orbs, sensing the question the battleship wanted to ask. "He was one of Rittmeister von Taserich's allies during the time of the Great Expulsion twenty-five millennia ago, Frau Fürstin von Bismarck."

That made Luisa gape in disbelief as Kawamoto stared in awe at the transformed battleship. "One of the Rittmeister's allies from back THEN?!" she repeated, then she chuckled, bowing politely to the newcomer. "You were truly blessed, my friend. May we have the honour of your name?"

That made Yoiko bow her head. "Fifth of the Yamato-class, first commissioned into Tennō's service during a terrible time for humanity, Frau Fürstin, I am Yonaga," the Eternal Warrior of the Ice declared. "My human name as given to me by my counterpart's admiral in another universe is Itō Yoiko, adopted of the same family that commanded my sister on her last mission in 1945."

"You guessed out my name easily enough, Frau Kapitän," Luisa noted.

Yoiko's eyes sparkled in amusement. "The rules used by my junior navigation officer's grandnephew are simple: Ships in a particular class share the same family name save if the vessel is named after an actual person, which you and your companions clearly would be so named."

"Waa!" Hinako gushed. "Yoiko-san's so smart!"

That made all of the carrier's crew hearing this laugh. "That's thanks to our admiral, Hinako-chan," Tomonaga stated as the would-be commander of the Kidō Butai got up from the table and walked over to join his operations officer. "As soon as Túndra-sama turned Yoiko-chan here into what she is now, the first thing she did was to start reading every book in his library."

Luisa blinked before she and her fellow schiffsmädchen turned to look, then they snapped to attention on seeing the solid gold rank tabs with the three silver chrysanthemums of an Imperial Navy admiral on the elderly gentleman's uniform. "Herr Admiral, our apologies!" the battleship declared as they all clicked their boots together in the proper manner. "Per the orders of our own Reich..." Here, she stopped herself. "Excuse me, our own Bundespräsident..." As Hinako snickered, the adopted native of Schönhausen finished, "We've been ordered to remain here on Ōmure-jima as guests of the Moroboshi family as we acclimatize ourselves to our new circumstances as schiffsmädchen."

"May we have the honour of your name, Herr Admiral?" Margareta von Spee asked.

"This is Admiral Fujita Hiroshi, Captain von Spee," Kawamoto introduced him.

That made Amélie von Zeppelin's eyes go wide as saucers before she screamed out in delight, then she lunged over to nearly snap Fujita's back with the strength of her hug. "AMÉLIE!" Luisa shrieked.
As the others of Yoiko's crew gaped at the sight of the blonde aircraft carrier hugging the would-be leader of Operation Z crying her eyes out, Yoiko gazed at Inoue. "Graf Zeppelin...?" she hissed.

"Hai, Yoiko-san," the destroyer affirmed with a nod.

"I see..."

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The main dining hall, an hour later...

"MORE?!

"Hai, Onii-san, I'm afraid so!"

Hearing that, Moroboshi Ataru moaned as he slammed his forehead into the dining room table, making some of the crew from Yonaga wince in sympathy at such a reaction. As Fujita Hiroshi smirked in delight on seeing the young man with the obviously gravely wounded karma react in such a manner — learning of the soul-split that had befallen the would-be matriarch of the Moroboshi Clan of Mutsu had made the native of Nagoya cringe in horror — Sukeyama Sakuya chuckled as she squeezed his shoulder. "Oh, relax, Onii-sama!" the current incarnation of the Healer of Men's Hearts declared. "If we get more shipgirls here, they can help Hiiojii-sama's crew properly adjust to the modern era!"

A sigh escaped him. "Hai, true..." Ataru admitted before he stared at the image of his transformed film replica over the PAA. "Who are we dealing with now, Hiromi-chan? And how many we can expect?"

"Seventeen altogether," Hiromi Katabarbe answered from her guest room aboard the FPSYS Normandy in orbit over Onishuto; the local time was an hour before lunch. "Shimakaze — Toyama Sumie — and her sisters, none of which were built. However, their kami had formed, but they had to be effectively summoned by Muwol-ssi at Samsŏng-gung after Sumie-san found herself 'salvaged' and Gifted shortly after Hinako-chan went through the area of Manila Bay to help Akemi-san come back to life."

"Oi, Hiromi, what about me?!

The small crowd of officers and men around Fujita perked on hearing that voice, then many automatically made warding motions as they stepped back from Ashikaga Akemi when she walked in. As the transformed eighth of the Ayanami-class destroyers shuddered in outrage at such a reaction — given her reputation as a "ship of misfortune", even the crew of the Yonaga would be wary around this one — the would-be commander of the Kidō Butai's eyes narrowed. "ENOUGH!" he roared, slamming his fist on the table, which made all his subordinates snap to attention as many instantly bowed to the man whose iron nerve had effectively seen them through seventy-one years of isolation in Sano-wan and survive it. "I remind you all that Commander Katsube formerly served on Akebono before he transferred to my staff. If he saw you treat the kami of his old ship that way, he'd be well within his rights to demand satisfaction within the Shrine of Heavenly Salvation for such an insult."

"I already saw it, Admiral."

That voice made Akemi's head snap around before she gaped. "Hakuseki-san?!

A portly middle-aged man with lieutenant commander's pips on his collars came in, now walking
with a cane due to the early onset of arthritis, his other arm looped around that of Akemi's sister Shiori, the reborn *Ushio*. Seeing the scowl on her old supply officer's face, the Orchid Nova could only smirk; she remembered how harsh Katsube Hakuseki had been to his subordinates whenever they did something stupid. Still, even if he was decent for an officer puke, the idea of him being close to her sister...!

"Oh, you shitty loggie!" the adopted native of Osaka snarked as she crossed her arms, gazing intently at him. "What the hell are you doing with my sister?!"

Shiori awked. "Akemi-chan!"

That made Katsube laugh. "Ah, no wonder you turned out so feisty, Akemi-chan!" the senior personnel officer serving the commander of the Sixth Carrier Division — which Fujita directly commanded without need of a subordinate admiral even if he had two flag captains under him in Ogawa Gorō (*Yonaga*'s commanding officer) and Aoshima Susumu (commander of the Sixth Naval Air Flotilla, *Yonaga*'s air group) — declared before he walked over to warmly embrace her.

Akemi jolted as her face turned as red as a cherry. As Shiori sent her a pleading look, the orchid-haired destroyer moaned. "Oi! Oi! Oi! You're wrinkling my uniform, you shitty loggie! Leave me be, huh?!"

Fujita chuckled. "From what Brent-san told me about how you were used in the late war, Akemi-san, I can't blame you for not trusting anyone who earned Tennō's commission. You were sloppily employed at both the Coral Sea and Leyte Gulf, much less other places as well. I trust that even if you see Ataru-san here as your current 'Teitoku', you won't treat him so bad?"

Hearing that question, Akemi took a deep breath. "He's been through as much shit over the last year as I went through in the war," she said as she crossed her arms. "Believe me, if we didn't have that shitty temporal paradox thing Haruhi-san unleashed when people kicked the asses out of the Niphentaxians back in June, I'd have done more than just Rock Bottom'd and stunned that shitty Kempeitai major's grandson for being such an elitist prick...and done it a lot sooner! Not to mention beat down the rest of the traitors to humanity in that town! They suffer too much from selective hearing and eyesight — not mention chronic stupidity! — when it came to Teitoku and all the crap the yōkai that got stuck in Tomobiki over the last year heaped on him. All because a bunch of assholes from some whacked-out version of the Kempeitai didn't like the idea of Tariko-san trying to keep us safe from the shitty aliens!"

That made the admiral perk. "What information do you have about those people, Ataru-san?"

"They're known as 'Division One', Admiral," a toneless voice called out, making all of *Yonaga*'s crew present in the dining hall hiss as Hirosaki Chikage came in, accompanied by Hermione Granger and Pansy Parkinson. "A current adjunct of the Public Security Intelligence Agency, the national external foreign intelligence group. As to the 'why', it concerns the Fūka Academy in Shikoku and some sort of 'festival' involving some 'obsidian lord'. That was all Ane-kun's mother was told when Ane-kun was captured and forced to revert to male form to placate Lum and her father when they came."

That made Kawamoto Masao perk as he remembered something, then he looked over. "Admiral, when *Yonaga* was being built at Maizuru, didn't Gennosuke-san complain about a 'special first division' of the Kempeitai that was maintaining links with the Black Dragon Society and their projects?"

"He did, Masao-san."
That was Itō Yoiko herself, now seated at the other side of the room from her admiral. Dean Raeburn was currently in the main commons recreation room, meeting up with the transformed carrier's fighter group leader, Commander Shimizu Masao; he had been an observer during the Battle of Britain alongside the man who had done the hard work of devising the battle plan for Operation Z, then-Commander Genda Minoru. "What do you remember of that, Yoiko-chan?" Fujita asked.

The carrier's grey eyes closed. "Gennosuke-san believed the members of Special Division One were committing high treason against Tennō because some had expressed hope that this 'obsidian lord' that last visited Fūka-jima in Shōtoku-sannen would do much more for the welfare of the Home Islands than Tennō's government had done since the Restoration." As her crew all hissed in disgust and outrage at such an accusation, Yoiko shrugged. "As to what happened after we left Maizuru..."

"I can approach Ojii-san and ask him, plus guarantee he remains safe from any retaliation," Chikage added as a grim look crossed her face, her royal blue eyes sparkling with sudden realization, that causing Sakuya to look her way. "If these people were so willing to attack Ane-kun and risk the wrath of all the Yizibajohi she helped get Gifted over the last decade — not to mention a possible invasion from Uru if Ane-kun lost the Tag Race — then they're clearly guilty of treason against all of humanity." She took a deep breath. "Now that I've been reminded about things by Yoiko here, it all makes sense now. My grandfather told me once about the Festival of Fūka. It's been three centuries..."

"What's this about, Chikage-chan?" Hiromi asked from aboard the Normandy.

The arch mage walked over to take her seat, with Hermione and Pansy sitting beside their schoolmate. As Susumu Marie came over with some cherry tea, Chikage took a deep breath. "Since before the reign of Jimmu Tennō, a dark kami — I assume some sort of interdimensional invader — calling itself the 'Obsidian Lord' came from a red star in the Heavens that appeared every three hundred years over Fūka-jima off the southwest coast of Shikoku. Every time this happened, twelve young maidens were blessed by creatures native to the Obsidian Lord's realm to be his consorts. They duelled each time this happened in a 'festival' of sorts to prove who was the one true consort to the Obsidian Lord, sacrificing their most precious person if they lost in battle against their sister maidens. Because of this — it sounds like some sort of battle royale in professional wrestling — the Obsidian Lord was always beaten back to his dark star by the winner of each 'festival'; no doubt, this was for revenge over the loss of a loved one. The last time this happened, as Yoiko just indicated now, was in 1713." As the people in the dining room tensed, Chikage smirked. "And New Year's is thirty-seven days away."

"To quote Kawada Shōgo in the Battle Royale manga, if they want to bring it, we'll play," Ataru said.

"Or as Bugs Bunny would say it..."

People turned to see the Trickster of the Show standing by the main doors, her arms crossed and a lethal smile on her face, her own brown eyes glittering in anticipation.

"...'Of course you know, this means war'," Tariko Katabarbe coldly announced.

The sisters snickered as Yoiko's crew in the room screamed banzai cheers for their host's success...

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Fūka-jima, in the Bungo-suidō off the western coast of Shikoku, that moment...

"Wyszynski-sensei?"
Hearing that polite voice, the elderly Western man who reminded many students at the Fūka Academy of Sean Connery in films such as *The Hunt for Red October* and *The Rock* perked before he turned to gaze on the woman with the silvery-blonde hair cut in a utilitarian style and the crimson-brown eyes behind reading glasses standing at the entrance to his office in the academic wing of one of Japan's most famous "ladder schools". Even if it was over an hour before dawn, the elderly native of Oświęcim in Lesser Poland and adopted native of Gatineau in Québec was willing to be up this early for one of his prized students...and not for anything that could be seen as improper. "Ah, Miss Greer! Do come in," Grigori Wyszynski said in barely-accented English as he waved in the yonsei-born adopted daughter of the Academy's resident priest. "I trust you were able to get away from your father's supervision."

"He doesn't suspect that you're helping me improve my programming to the point where I would be able to totally overcome any attempts at overrides by anyone in the Foundation," Miyu Greer stated as she closed the door behind her. Her considerable internal sensors were quick to detect the immediate activation of special defensive wards, both magical and technological, that would seal off the room the Polish-born Canadian scientist used for private tutorials in his advanced chemistry classes from any form of eavesdropping, either from the Searrs Foundation or Division One of the Public Security Intelligence Agency. Despite the feelings of gratitude the combat gynoid known properly as the "Multiple Intelligencial Yggdrasil Unit" felt towards her father/creator Joseph Greer and the people at the Searrs Foundation for putting in so much effort to make her what she was, Miyu had greater priorities...which had now forced her to seek an informal alliance with one of the many students of Dean Raeburn from the years immediately after World War Two for assistance.

And it all centred around Arthur Searrs' adopted daughter Alyssa.

*Ojō-sama...!*

Shaking her head as she focused her attention on the elderly man seated by the teacher's desk, Miyu tried not to smile at the ever-increasing level of emotional awareness she had achieved in the last few months. While "Father" Greer didn't care too much about how his "daughter" behaved when it came to interacting with her peers — her mission, put simply, was to protect Alyssa for when the time finally came to have the Valkyries taken into the Foundation's control with the use of an artificial "child" code-named "Artemis", thus ushering in the Golden Millennium — Miyu had long come to conclude that coming off as something of a cold fish to her classmates was the wrong way to do it.

Fortunately, the native of Oświęcim was happy to assist her in this effort given his long friendship with one of the world's top experts on Shōzoki technology, Professor George Andrews of the Communications Security Establishment Canada, Canada's national cryptography intelligence agency.

"You have Professor Andrews' final programming upgrades?" Miyu asked.

"Just arrived on Friday," Wyszynski stated as he reached into his desk to draw out a small package to hand over to the gynoid. "Fortunately, George isn't aware of my having been condemned under the Omega Protocol of the Specialized Warfare Act. I told him about you. No doubt, CSE will get CSIS to investigate the Foundation. That should make things easier for young Alyssa."

Miyu nodded as she opened the package to reveal what looked like a prescription capsule made out of particles of sparkling red crystals. She immediately swallowed it, allowing it to get into her digestive system. The crystals were ruby-pattern mesonium, filled to supersaturation point with augmented emotion emulation programming and a much greater social interaction database than her father and his friends in New York City could ever have constructed given their limited exposure to the technology of that lost planet many light-years from Earth; the true origins of the MIYU Project...
stemmed from the discovery of a Shōzoki probe buried in the tundra of Alaska by allies of the
Foundation who wanted to have oil drilling in the region curtailed to protect the environment.
Andrews himself was secretly credited for the discovery of the first known cache of Shōzoki
nanotechnology back in 1948 during a probe the Protector of All Life led; other things had been
discovered as well, but the Foundation's many spies and informers in Ottawa hadn't come close to
discovering what was actually there, even after many decades of analysis and even some "trips of
discovery" to Canada's Arctic islands.

More fool them...! she mused.

"It's starting to take effect," Wyszynski mused, his dark eyes twinkling.

Miyu felt her cheeks colour. "I'm aware of what the Omega Protocol of the Specialized Warfare Act
means, Professor. Have you been able to stabilize the ebony mesonium in your body? It's
influence..."

"It was stabilized with other forms of mesonium many years ago," he assured her. "Shortly after the
government made its first attempt at liquidating me to ensure I never 'threatened' anyone, I met
someone who was able to help me de-crystallize the mesonium in my blood. I'm in better control of
myself than any of those unfortunates in the Übermenschen Gruppe."

She nodded. Being a native of the town where the most infamous of Nazi Germany's death camps
had been built, Wyszynski knew well about the hidden metahuman side of the Second World War.
Arbeitsausbildungslager Monowitz, once a sub-camp of Konzentrationslager Auschwitz to serve as
a slave factory for I.G. Farben, was also a special training camp for the Übermenschen Gruppe, who
used prisoners that would have been condemned to die in the gas chambers as targets to practice on
before the Nazi metahumans were sent to North America to pursue Hitler's goals of crippling their
enemies' economies when they were beyond the reach of conventional military forces. Young
Grigori Wyszynski witnessed some of those monsters train on helpless Jewish civilians as he was
growing up in Oświęcim. He had been there the day near the end of 1941 when Dean Raeburn
swept in from the Eastern Front and discovered the Auschwitz concentration camp network, then
brutally wrecked the Übermenschen camp, putting all to the sword and helping the prisoners flee into
the countryside. Awed by such a display of power by the Protector of All Life, the young native of
Oświęcim eventually migrated to Canada after the end of that war and apprenticed with Raeburn
before serving for a time as a civilian scientific advisor to the 7th Canadian Specialized Warfare Unit
that was active in the Dominion in the late 1950s. Miyu discovered through connections with the
Sears Foundation that Wyszynski might have also had a hand in empowering members of future
specialized warfare units; such suspicions had not been proven by the Foundation's observers in
Canada due to the extremely heavy levels of secrecy the Canadian government practised when it
came to its own metahuman warfare specialists.

Due to her own pressing needs when it came to fulfilling her mission with Alyssa, the gynoid never
asked the older man about his own remarkable history.

"I suggest you go be with young Alyssa, Miyu," Wyszynski bade as he gave his guest a knowing
look. "You don't want your father to start getting suspicious."

Miyu nodded. "Thank you, Professor."

He smiled as she walked out. Watching her go, he sighed as something sparkled deep in his eyes.

"No, Miyu. Thank you..."
"Now, see here, Mycroft!" Cornelius Fudge exclaimed. "You can't deny us in this manner! She deliberately attacked two outstanding citizens for no reason...!"

"YOU BLOODY HELL BE QUIET, YOU STAEBLOOD FOOL!"

A certain adopted native of Birkenhead had risen from her chair to glare down at a now quailing minister for magic. As Amelia Bones, Saul Croaker and Albus Dumbledore secretly smiled at the fact that the head of wizarding British society was showing his true colours in the face of something that didn't make any sense to him, Amy Power's blue eyes seem to burn with outrage. "As far as I can recall when it comes to matters of criminal activity, it is the officer in charge of Her Majesty's Corps of Aurors — in other words, Regent Lady Bones here — who has FINAL say when it comes to seeking arrest of anyone suspected of a crime, not the Minister FOR Magic." She emphasized that due to Dolores Umbridge — who now had a cast over her regenerating hand — using the improper term "Minister OF Magic" when she tried to impress on the reborn aircraft carrier about the "true" order of things. "Since both Commander Ashikaga and I simply can't have our memories modified by magical means — mesonium is truly one's friend in THAT regard — the truth of what happened at Master Aberforth's establishment has been proven to her satisfaction. Must I appeal to Her Majesty concerning this?!!"

Umbridge shuddered. "That muggle woman has NO...!"

A savage kick by the redhead sent the native of Hampstead in London flying back-first into the wall next to the doorway to the headmaster's office. As Umbridge sank into a semi-conscious daze to the floor, Amy then smiled at the portrait of the last Slytherin alumnus to be headmaster of Hogwarts, Phineas Nigellus Black, which had been shaken by the blow. "I do apologize for that, Headmaster Black," the carrier then said with a proper curtsey to the former Marquess of Grimmauld.

A harrumph escaped him. "Don't apologize, Lady Ark Royal. That girl's a total shame to Slytherin. She has ambition, but her shame concerning her ancestry makes he as vile as that idiot Riddle became!"

As Croaker nodded, Bones' eyebrow arched. "She's a half-blood, Professor?"

"Same type of ancestry as Riddle himself, my dear, though she had a muggle mother in lieu of a muggle father as Riddle did," Black answered as he glanced over to Lucius Malfoy, who was trying not to quake in outrage at the insane lies being issued to call his own lord's ancestry into question in such a manner. After all, there was just no way that the true blood descendant of the greatest of the Founders was actually a HALF-BLOOD, to say anything of being a BASTARD CHILD of all things!

Severus Snape — who had attended this meeting as Hestia and Flora Carrow's head of house — smiled before he firmed up his Occlumency barriers to mask his glee at the fact that people were willing to be more public about the truth surrounding the Dark Lord was causing such agitation among his chief supporters. Voldemort had completely lost it when he learned of Amycus Carrow's death at the hands of Ashikaga Akemi — to say anything of Alecto Carrow's banishment to THAT PLACE for life...and on the charge of Treason Against Magic of all things! — thus had ordered his people to prepare for a quick strike on the Hall of Prophecies in the Department of Mysteries later this evening. On telling Dumbledore about this as soon as that meeting in Riddle Manor in Yorkshire was complete after lunch, the current head of Slytherin was assured that forces allied to the Order of the Phoenix were ready to go into action the instant the Death Eaters made a huge mistake of attacking the Ministry.
Snape himself wouldn't be involved in that attack some hours from now — his position as a "spy" was seen as more vital — and given the sheer arrogance of people fighting under the man born Tom Riddle, he didn't doubt that such an act would make certain matters go public and effectively exonerate Neville Longbottom from accusations of lying concerning the Dark Lord's resurrection at the end of the Triwizard Tournament. As to the "who" would get involved in the upcoming fight, the current head of Slytherin had no exact knowledge of names, but suspected that Hogwarts' growing population of adopted Yizibajohei metahumans would be involved; he knew of Luna Lovegood, Ginny Weasley, Hiroaki Chikage and Hermione Granger. With the latter two off in Japan for the weekend as the sisters of Tariko Katabarbe moved to secure the planet after the banishment of the aliens that had haunted that poor woman for over a year, Hogwarts' "star" lesbian couple would be up to bat...

"This thing should be arrested right now, Amelia!" Malfoy snarled as he pointed at Amy, his own disgust at her as clear as neon to everyone else. "Assaulting the Senior Undersecretary..."

"Who has no business being at this meeting!" the carrier cut him off, her voice as sharp as any drill petty officer ripping into the nozzers at HMS Raleigh. "All the Senior Undersecretary is supposed to do is help manage the Minister's personal staff. THAT IS IT! I always knew how corrupt the Ministry can be in places — the memories of the nimmibs that served in my crew told me that — but to see how far you've fallen in the wake of what that Grindelwald fool unleashed...!"

"Ah, that, Captain, we must actually blame Gellert's wonderful ally from Japan who moved to capitalize on his own actions in Europe," Dumbledore jovially stated. "Marshal Yomigawa Tsukiko." As Fudge and Malfoy gargled on hearing the name of the Dark Lady of the Orient, the elderly transfiguration master added, "While people in Europe were distracted by Gellert, Tsukiko's forces swept across Asia and the Pacific to free the magicals in the colonies; I'm sure those of your crew who maintained links to wizarding Britain heard of the loyalty stone system that so riled people up after Enid Geraint discovered the Spanish system during their civil war in the 1930s." As Amy nodded, Dumbledore smiled. "Millions of lives were liberated during that part of the Wars of Liberation. Millions more were also liberated by my old friend Marshal Svetlána Múrometsa when she and her troops swept in from Russia to overcome Gellert's people." As Fudge stared in disbelief at the former chief warlock for showing such approval towards what the Bloody Siberian She-Bear had done throughout central and eastern Europe in those dark years, Dumbledore added, "Not to mention the thousands of lives liberated by our American and Canadian friends under General Mollie Bean's command; you might know her as the American magical marshal from North Carolina who accompanied President Lincoln during the Score and Four."

That made Amy nod in approval. "Well, that's good." She then snidely gazed at Malfoy. "Oh, did you lose MONEY when those poor unfortunates were freed of that madness, my lord?" she then teasingly asked as she moved to approach the blond native of Wiltshire, her fists clenching. "No wonder your father fell in with that maniac Riddle. You couldn't enslave the poor people of Africa and India anymore, so you decided to go after the normal-borns and those who wouldn't kiss your feet just because you're of 'noble' blood!" Here, she made air quotes with her fingers as she gave him a mock sympathetic look. "Did you know that ALL the nimmibs who proudly served in the Royal Navy fervently wished Master Gellert SUCCEEDED in having his Black Maidens — may God rest their brave and noble souls — sweep through this country to remove the staleblood FILTH that stinks up this land!" As Malfoy jerked while his hand reached for his wand, the carrier's eyes narrowed. "Oh, do try it. From what Her Ladyship told me, your son has a good head on his shoulders. He'd make a better Marquess of Avebury than you've EVER been. How much of your coffers have been drained to feed that maniac's war effort, eh...?"

Malfoy's grey eyes flared. "You muggle freak...!"
"Staleblood trash...!" Amy sneered back before she smiled. "See? I can do it, too!"

As Dumbledore and Bones both laughed and Croaker grinned at that war of words between Voldemort's chief financial supporter and the reborn aircraft carrier, Fudge spun around to glare at the only normal person in the room. "Mycroft! Do something!" the minister snapped as he waved at Amy. "Reign this damned thing in! She has no right to provoke Lucius like that!"

Before the Master of the Fencibles could reply, a powerful wave of empathic energy washed through the office. As Snape hissed lightly while that surge of power ripped into the Dark Mark on his arm, Malfoy jolted as if he was being attacked by his own lord's Cruciatus Curse. Dumbledore blinked before he smiled. "I wonder what brings her here today," he breathed out as Fawkes leapt off his perch and began to trill in happiness as he flew in a circle overhead. "Do come in, Miss Saeru!" he called out, magically unlocking the door to allow the youngest half-sister of the Trickster of the Show inside.

The door swung open, revealing not Saeru Hinako but a smiling Padma Patil, one of Chikage's closer associates. "Excuse me, Headmaster," the native of Kozhikode near the southern tip of India — her family now lived in the London borough of Harrow — called out with a graceful bow. "Miss Saeru is here to see you. She seems rather annoyed. I can't say why, though. She has a pair of guests with her as well, but I don't recognize them. They're dressed somewhat like her, though." She indicated Amy.

"Send her in, Miss Patil. Hello, Hinako!" the headmaster called out.

"Konban wa, Kōchō-sensei!" Saeru Hinako declared as she tried not to huff.

As Malfoy gargled on being directly exposed to the empathic aura of the Spirit of Innocence, Snape winced as the potions master sat down by the doorway leading to his boss' living quarters. Seeing the girl who effectively started the process of having ship spirits reborn as metahumans, Amy's eyes sparkled. The reborn Japanese destroyer who killed Hestia's and Flora's father had gone on and on about this girl, how not even the most evil person couldn't stand up to her. In one instance when she had been flying about near Azkaban, some stray Dementors who had been instantly attracted to Hinako's aura of pure joy and innocence BURNED UP on getting within fifty metres of her, their own powers having not affected her at all. Given how much Malfoy was now suffering from Hinako's aura — Amy knew Snape was a spy who swore himself to Dumbledore in vengeance over what happened to his old girlfriend Lily Evans — the carrier hoped that the Spirit of Innocence would calm things down.

Now, who on Earth were those two reborn warships outside...?

"Who on Earth rejoined us this time, Hinako?" Mycroft Holmes then asked as he sipped his tea.

Hinako winced. "It's not Hina's fault!"

"What happened, my dear?" Dumbledore asked, a compassionate tone in his voice.

A sigh escaped the Niigata native. "Well, Hina was going to bed after helping Hiiojii-chan's ship and her crew get settled into Welcome House when Mark-san called Hina and told her that there was a ship being reborn as a shipgirl near Iceland," she explained. As Holmes' and Dumbledore's eyes arched — they both knew that Tariko Katabarbe's granduncle Moroboshi Kyōsuke had served on an unknown type of warship named *Yonaga* as her junior navigation officer until they disappeared some months before the Greater East Asia War started — Hinako added, "So Hina teleported there and watched as Mary-san came up from the sea and was Gifted!" She then physically winced as the images of what she just saw in the evening twilight four hundred kilometres south of west from
Reykjavík replayed in her mind. "It was horrible, Kōchō-sensei! Her hull was so badly torn up and all that before the Conservator made her whole to Gift her! Hina couldn't believe her kami was still able to come back...!"

"Mary?" Amy asked.

"Off Iceland," Holmes wondered. "The hull was in three pieces with a separated superstructure?"

Hinako blinked as she thought back, then she nodded. "Hai!"

"And her ship's crest has a black crow on it, holding an anchor?"

"Hai!"

"HOOD?!!" Amy gasped in delight.

"Unfortunately..."

Hearing that tired voice with its slight Scots brogue, people turned...

...as a tall and slender woman in a dark blue traditional sleeved jumpsuit with gold belt walked into the room, black boots on her feet and the proper crest of one of the most famous warships of the Royal Navy over her heart. As Malfoy scowled at the sight of yet ANOTHER freakish creature stepping into the room, Dumbledore rose to bow politely to the reincarnation of the only completed Admiral-class battlecruiser/fast battleship to serve the Crown. "Lady Hood, welcome back, my dear."

Hearing that polite greeting, the blue-eyed woman with the long blonde hair done as a ponytail over her right shoulder gazed up at him with eyes filled to the brim with a tsunami of guilt and shame. "You're courteous, Headmaster...even if I didn't deserve to come back in this manner," Mary Hood, the adopted native of Clydebank near Glasgow (her place of construction as HMS Hood) and Butleigh in Somerset (the birthplace of her namesake, Admiral Samuel Hood), quietly declared.

"Well, if a creature like you doesn't want to live...!"

Hinako spun around as Dumbledore, Bones and Croaker drew their wands. "DON'T YOU DARE, YOU EVIL CREEP! LEAVE MARY-SAN ALONE!" the Spirit of Innocence barked out.

Malfoy shrieked in mind-numbing agony as Hinako focused her power on him directly, he dropping to his knees as his wand clattered on the floor. As Fudge scrambled back from the shuddering native of Niigata, Amy spun around to her new commanding officer. "Master Mycroft, do I have the power to summon the Hollows?!!" the transformed aircraft carrier demanded.

As all the magicals save Dumbledore croaked on hearing of THEM, Holmes sighed. "No, you do not, Captain," the Master of the Fencibles stated, which made Bones and Croaker relax themselves; they knew that Holmes did respect both of them...but having the threat of the magic-sucking monsters of That Place unleashed was something that scared the living devil out of any British magical. "However, if Mister Riddle and his friends continue to be idiots, that can be easily changed," he coldly warned.

"YOU HAVE NO RIGHT!" Fudge bellowed.

"NOW SEE HERE, SIR!"

Heads snapped around...
...then the minister found himself snared by the neck and boosted into the air by a shuddering woman with long blonde hair — part of it done in miko-like braids tied at the back of her neck — and blazing blue eyes. She was dressed in a traditional sleeved jumpsuit as well, though her uniform was dark green overall with gold belt and boots. Much to Dumbledore's and Holmes' surprise, the reborn second of the Queen Elizabeth-class battleships from the time of the First World War had something extra on her fighting uniform beyond her beautiful ship's crest: Flocks of European green woodpeckers forming two streams up the sides of her body from her boots to flock past each other in an "X" formation under the "V" of her top to flow onto her shoulders and down her sleeves to her wrists; such looked like how the white doves were shown of Jessica Wakefield's uniform as the Charging Belle of the Heavens.

As both Kingsley Shacklebolt and Nymphadora Tonks moved to protect their principal, Bones snapped, "Sergeant Shacklebolt! Auror Tonks! Stand down!"

As the two auror members of the Order of the Phoenix relaxed themselves — earning them hidden smiles from Croaker, Dumbledore and Snape; all three had sensed that neither of the younger aurors wanted to do much to interfere with a reborn SUPER-DREADNOUGHT moving to properly thrash their complete idiot of a minister — the adopted native of Devonport on the English Channel coast smiled. "Thank you," the woman now named Charlene Boleyn declared with a polite nod, then she drew Fudge to force him to glare into her eyes. "Now, see here, sir! I was still 'alive' when the Specialized Warfare Act was passed, along with a MAGICAL ROYAL PROCLAMATION issued by the King to make sure you lazy arse magicals NEVER INTERFERED in the affairs of His Majesty's Fencibles! As Lady Hinako has identified Master Holmes as His Majesty's..." She caught herself. "Sorry! Her Majesty, I mean...!" As the others in the room chuckled save for the moaning Malfoy and the quaking Fudge, Charlene icily smiled. "As he is the Royal Master of Her Majesty's Specialized Warfare Fencibles and I am subject now to that Act, you have no bloody say in what I do, much less what Ark and Hood here do!" She then stared at Dumbledore. "Now, Professor, Mister Caloway was so kind to tell me there's a new magical rebellion underway in this country against Her Majesty and the peace of the Realm. Where exactly is this traitor Riddle so I can go and properly punish him for his audacity of rising against the Crown...?!!"

"AVADA KEDAVRA!"

A bolt of green energy lashed out to slam into the super-dreadnought's side by her liver. As the magic sparkled into nothingness, Charlene's eyes then locked on Umbridge, who had recovered enough to see her "dear Cornelius" being nearly choked to death by another of these metahuman monsters that were making lives miserable for every right-thinking magical in the land. Blinking for a moment, Charlene focused her attention on the current regent lady for the Barony of Hampstead. A grin crossed her face as she raised her free hand, energy blooming over her index finger. "I do believe self-defence is an excuse in this land still when it comes to rebel magicals using Unforgivables, Master Holmes?"

"Indeed it is, Captain Boleyn," Holmes coldly declared.

"Fair enough..."

"NO...!" Umbridge screamed...

...before she was hit with a bolt of energy that had the same sort of power as any of the reborn super-dreadnought's BL 15 inch Mk I naval guns. Such a blow literally LIQUEFIED the senior undersecretary's body into a boiling mass of blood and gore that was made to smash through the main door of Dumbledore's office, then punch through the outer wall of the administration tower. As Fudge pissed himself on seeing his closest supporter being SLAUGHTERED like that, a wide-eyed
Malfy summoned what strength he had and lunged for the fireplace, drawing out floo powder from his pocket. "MALFOY MANOR!" he screamed out after tossing the powder into the flames to open a portal to Wiltshire.

As Amy moved to race after him, Dumbledore barked, "AMY, STOP!"

The aircraft carrier skidded to a halt. "Headmaster?!"

"I'll explain in a moment," the elderly transfiguration master declared before he glared at the reborn HMS Warspite. "Captain Boleyn, could you PLEASE put Cornelius to sleep?" he asked, causing Fudge to gargle in horror...before he was pitched head-first into the ceiling!

As he dropped unceremoniously to the floor, the second of the Queen Elizabeth-class battleships smiled. "He's asleep," she declared, making others in the room laugh.

"Thank you, my dear. I assume the rudder issues you endured as a warship since Second Dogger Bank..." Here, the headmaster caught himself. "Sorry! The Battle of Jutland, I mean!" As Charlene gave him a curious look, he smiled before explaining. "The crew of the Leviathan Homicidae who kept the crews of you and your fleet mates safe — not to mention the crews of the Hochseeflotte that were there that evening — always refer to that battle by a neutral title."

"Ah, I understand," the adopted native of Devonport said as her eyes twinkled with curiosity; even if she herself had nimmibs serving on her crew, she couldn't recall any names applied to those four incredible battleships that had charged in to keep away the sea leviathans — literal soul-sucking monsters that would make even a flock of Dementors seem like ants — from both the Grand Fleet and the High Seas Fleet in that clash of fleets on the last day of May in 1916. "And yes, my rudder — my legs, I mean — seem to be still causing me issues! Both Mister Caloway and Lady Hinako here tried to dispel it..."

"Allow me, then."

A beautiful chair was then conjured for Charlene, then both Amy and Mary came over to help her into it. "Ah, thank you, Professor Dumbledore," the eldest of the reborn British shipgirls declared before taking a deep breath. "May I have a spot of tea, please? Lady Hinako was happy to bring some of her sister's delightful scones from her home near Tōkyō, but my throat's dry..."

"Lizzy!"

A pop! heralded an elderly house elf appearing next to the headmaster's desk, dressed in a dark cassock with the Hogwarts crest over her heart. "Yes, Master-Headmaster?" Lizzy, the senior elf in the castle, stated before she blinked, then she stared wide-eyed at the three shipgirls. "Who is...?" She then gasped on seeing the smiling young girl in the white jumpsuit nearby. "Ah! Miss Hinako! Lizzy and all the elves sensed it when Miss Hinako came to the castle! Castle feels so much nicer now!"

She canted her head on seeing the wrecked door and the large hole in the side of the administration tower. "Ah! Who did that?!" she demanded before snapping her fingers.

Several other house elves appeared, then Lizzy barked orders to them to repair the damage. Seeing the little fellows immediately go to work, Charlene then chuckled. "I do apologize for making a mess, Mistress Lizzy, but the idiot whose blood and entrails your wonderful subordinates are now cleaning from the stairs and the walls of the tower here attacked me with a Killing Curse." As Lizzy gasped in horror on hearing that, the blonde super-dreadnought smiled. "Self-defence, of course!"

"Stupid toad attacks Lady Warspite with Killing Curse?!" the elderly elf shrilled. "She deserves being turned into paste for doing such a horrible thing! Always trying to torture the poor
muggleborns here...!"

"I'll have to examine her quarters when the chance comes, Albus," Bones then warned.

"You shall have your chance, Amelia," Dumbledore said before taking a deep breath before he
gazed apologetically at his guests. "I am very sorry for the mad level of secrecy that I've followed
since this whole insanity effectively began back in 2007, my friends, but — as I'm more than sure
that Saul here knows of by now — there is a prophecy in effect that promises the final destruction of
Voldemort."

"Hence the reason you've always kept silent about what really happened to Lily's son," the chief of
the Unspeakables then concluded. "Much that his magical signature couldn't be traced down by what
blood that Barty Crouch was able to obtain last year from the records bank at St. Mungo's after he
disguised himself as Alastor Moody, I never believed he was dead." He blinked before he gazed on
Mycroft, then looked to see a smiling Hinako, a knowing look on her face. "Harry's ALIVE...?!"

As Snape gasped in dumbfounded delight before he stared wide-eyed at his boss in admiration at
such a wonderful deception, Dumbledore sadly nodded. "Indeed Harry is alive, Saul," he breathed
out, his own eyes tearing. "But he's nowhere close to what he could have been in the wake of my
feeling I had no choice but to leave him with Lily's sister to keep him away from the chaos that broke
out after Voldemort was disembodied by Lily's protective spells." A wry smile then crossed his face.

"Lady Tariko got to him," Bones concluded. "Gifted?"

"Yes. As Yiziba's sorcerer supreme, in fact: The Warlock."

That made the visitor's jaws drop. "The 'power he knows not', you mean?" Croaker then concluded.

"Indeed so, Saul. But Harry had to undergo quite the change to become such." Here, Dumbledore
gazed knowingly at Hinako. "In the very same manner as Hinako's beloved brother underwent when
Lady Ayone Katabarbe came by Tomobiki and saved him from his own abusive parents."

"He's a woman now?" Bones asked.

"Harry-san is now Rose-san!"

Eyes locked on Hinako, then Snape began to laugh, clapping his hands. "Oh, WELL DONE,
Albus!" the potions master declared. "Well done indeed! When did you find out?!!"

"Back after Mrs. Weasley was so nice to kill off Master Salazar's familiar after Mrs. Lovegood got
her Gifted as Soulfire. Rose was there as well to trace down the horcrux Tom created using his own
school diary, which possessed Mrs. Weasley to unleash the basilisk that Master Salazar left down in
the Chamber of Secrets." As Bones blinked in stunned confusion and Croaker gaped in horror,
Dumbledore sighed. "Again, my friends, I deeply apologize for all the secrecy I had to maintain over
how Voldemort was able to survive all this time without a body. I'm sure you can explain things to
Amelia, Saul."

"Indeed I will. I trust you two understand the need to keep secret about this? Kingsley? Miss
Tonks?" the chief unspeakable asked the aurors standing nearby who had accompanied Fudge to this
meeting.

"We're all under an information Fidelius, Professor," Shacklebolt affirmed as his partner nodded.

Hearing that, Croaker nodded in delight. "Good!"
Hinako then perked. "Rose-san?"

Fawkes trilled out in delight as the shadows close to where Holmes was sitting morphed into a woman wearing a hooded red cape lined in gold runes. "I take it Drake's dad just fled to that death cheater to warn him about we having such a beautiful fleet of shipgirls now here to protect the Realm, Professor?" the Sorcerer Supreme of Yiziba then playfully asked as she slipped of her hood to reveal a head of shaggy raven hair and the deep green eyes of the Killing Curse under protective goggles...and no "sig" rune scar over the right eyebrow as had been on Harry Potter's head when he had been found on Hallowe'en night in 1996 by Sirius Black when Voldemort had fallen at his mother's hands.

"Indeed he did, Rose," Dumbledore stated as both Bones and Croaker gaped in awed delight on seeing the unintended hero of the wizarding world who had "helped" to end the Blood War that dark evening still alive...even if quite incredibly transformed and empowered. "I trust Thérèse is ready to claim what is rightfully hers?" he then asked as he winked in assurance to his guests.

"She's ready, Professor," the native of Godric's Hollow said before she focused her attention at her mother's childhood friend, making Snape stiffen. "So it's time to get the fight scene started."

Hearing that made the potions master take a deep breath. "What do you need me to do, Har-...?" He stopped himself before he calmly asked again, "Rose?"

"Convey a message to that death cheater," the mistress of the Cosmic Mage Guild coldly declared. "Tell him Harry Potter will be in the Atrium of the Ministry of Magic tonight at one o'clock. If that thing doesn't show up, Harry Potter's WIFE — who is another victim of that death cheater — will use the Praeda Bellica to claim all the power and belongings of the Very Noble and Most Ancient House of Slytherin of Kyme Eau! And once THAT is done, she will join forces with the current head of the Very Noble and Most Ancient House of Mônnewydd of Ynys Môn to bring back together all of the magics of the United Kingdom under one roof...with NO special privileges to his staleblood supporters!"

"Your WIFE...?!!" a wide-eyed Bones exclaimed.

"Born from the soul fragments that Voldemort made when he created his horcruxes, fused together thanks to the power of the Doll House and the ultimate mercy of Miss Kasuga Ayumu," Dumbledore explained, making Croaker's eyes go wide while Shacklebolt and Tonks stared in awe at their reborn "saviour". "Bound now in a soul-bond to Rose here as her wife, Lady Thérèse Peverell. Who — once she rips it all away from Voldemort — will become Duchess of Kyme Eau, Countess of Gonebren..."

"And Lady Great Steward of Hogwarts!"

That was a grinning Phineas Black as he gazed in amusement at his successor. As both Bones and Croaker grinned in clear delight on noting that there was a true heir to the Founders of Hogwarts out there — and bound to the transformed Boy Who Lived atop that in a magical SOUL BOND of all things! — Snape could only shake his head. "You are Slytherin to the BONE, Rose! Thérèse clearly taught you all too well! Your fool father would be turning over in his grave if he knew of this!"

"I wouldn't care what that reckless idiot would think is proper, Uncle Severus," Rose snarled as she stared in sympathy at him. "Neither he nor my 'godfather' had any right to force you to confront a mangy WEREWOLF of all things as a 'prank'! Get that message to the death cheater and I consider whatever debt you feel you owe my family repaid in full!" As Snape gaped at her at such a boon, she pointed to his arm. "Hinako can get rid of that mark on your arm so you can go live your life finally!"
Hinako then perked. "Ah, Hina forgot!" As people looked her way, she pulled out her PAA, put it on Dumbledore's desk, then tapped the crystal, allowing a beautiful metal armband to appear in her free hand. "You wear this, Sensei! Chikage-chan made it to protect you from that silly man!"

Snape's dark eyes sparkled with delight as he slipped the armband on, sensing several mesonium-powered magical protective fields immediately form around him, including the equivalent of a portkey spell. "How is it you people on Yiziba say it again, Miss Saeru?" he then asked. "Taeim...?"

Rose smiled. "Taeim letam," she hissed.

"Let the Show begin...!" Dumbledore translated...

To Be Continued...

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WRITER'S NOTES

Buffy the Vampire Slayer character notes: Jessie McNally first appeared in the premier episode of the series, "Welcome to the Hellmouth" and would be killed in the following episode, "The Harvest". And Cordelia Chase was a background character throughout the series as well as its various sequel graphic novel series and the television series Angel.

Sweet Valley High character notes: Lila Fowler was a background character throughout the series, as was her father George Fowler.

Translation list: Taishō — Navy admiral/Army general/Air Force air chief marshal; Hatamoto — Normally translated as "bannerman", this was the title given to the immediate retainers of a local lord; Wir sind zurückgekommen — We have returned; Markgräfinnen — Plural of "Markgräfin" (countess of the march/marchioness); Ist jemand wach — Is someone awake; Wir sind hier drin — We are in here; Lieber Gott im Himmel — Dear God in Heaven; Bundespräsident — Federal President; Loggie — Nickname for a logistician, who serves as combat service support in realms of transportation and supply to any military service; Shōtoku-sannen — Third Year of Shōtoku (the year 1713 CE); CSIS — Short for the Canadian Security Intelligence Agency, the Canadian national civilian intelligence group; Arbeitsausbildungslager — Labour education camp; Konzentrationslager — Concentration camp; Hochseeflotte — High Seas Fleet, the main tactical formation of the Kaiserliche Marine (Imperial Navy) of Germany from 1907-18; Praeda Bellica — Spoils of war.

The Seventh Carrier character notes: Kawamoto Masao appeared in the first book of the series, as did Hironaka Kenji, Aoshima Susumu and Shimizu Masao; Captain Ogawa Gorō was dead by the time period of the first novel. Also appearing there is Pamela Ward; in the novel, she was Brent Ross' first lover but in the reality of this universe, she late became his wife. Horikoshi Eiichi first appeared in the second book, The Second Voyage of the Seventh Carrier; note that in the book series, all of Yonaga's medical staff save Horikoshi were dead by the time of the escape from Sanowan in late 1983. The Second Voyage is where Brent's best friend Matsuhara Yoshi first appeared; he would be a primary character for the remainder of the series. Katsube Hakuseki first appeared in the fourth book, Quest of the Seventh Carrier; it was here that Yonaga's chief surgeon, Doctor Hoshino Ryōtesu, was also mentioned. Note that Tomonaga Fujio is my own creation.

As an aside, many thanks to Harry Leferts at the SpaceBattles website for his speaking to be about
cloudberries (*Rubus chamaemorus*) as being a possible source of Vitamin C for the crew of *Yonaga* during her entrapment in Sano-wan.

Notes on magical characters spoken of here: Professor Konoe Konoemon was one of the adult supporting case in *Mahō Sensei Negima*. Yomigawa Tsukiko was first mentioned in my story *The Icemaidens and the Philosopher's Stone* and first appeared in *Wizards and Avalonians II*. Hisamura Natsuki first appeared in *The Seventh Shipgirl*; he is based on the admiral character in *KanColle* dōjinshi published by Munmu-san which can be viewed at Danbooru. Túndra is based on the same "great beast" that appeared in John Byrne's run through Marvel Comics' *Alpha Flight* series in the 1980s. Events concerning the Great Expulsion were described in *Magic and Canada*; it was that war that saw the Old Ones (from *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*) banished from Earth to allow the final rise of modern man. Saul Croaker was first mentioned in *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*; his given name was revealed in JKR's article about time turners in Pottermore. Enid Geraint first appeared in *Wizards and Avalonians III*, as did Svetlána Murometsa. In the universe of my stories, Mollie Bean was a magical who served as a magical federal marshal (as noted in *Magic and Canada*); in real life, she was a woman who disguised herself as a man and served in the Confederate Army (as shown in *Harry Turtledove*’s famous alternate history novel *The Guns of the South*, my favourite novel of that genre).

Genda Minoru (1904-89) was one of the men who helped plan the attack on Pearl Harbour in 1941. He rose to the rank of captain in the Imperial Navy, then joined the Japanese Air Self-Defence Force after it was formed and served from 1954-62, rising to the rank of general. Note that in the canon of *The Seventh Carrier*, Genda worked with Fujita Hiroshi and Susumu Masao in the final plan for the attack.

Grigori Wyszynski was not originally my creation. He was created by a former schoolmate of mine, Graeme Burk, when we tried to collaborate on superhero characters when we attended Robert Land Academy in the early 1980s. These days, Graeme runs a *Doctor Who* fan podcast, *Reality Bomb*. Many thank to Graeme, of course.

And the shipgirls introduced here:

Captain Charlene Boleyn RN (*Her Majesty's Ship Warspite* [pendant 02, later pendant 57])
Capt Mary Hood RN (*Her Majesty's Ship Hood* [pendant 51])

Note also that I base the physical looks of *HMS Hood (Mary Hood)* on her *Azur Lane* self, which is very pretty yet also stately, which definitely fits the "pride of the Royal Navy" quite well. As for *HMS Warspite (Charlene Boleyn)*, she is based on her *Kantai Collection* interpretation, which fits her very much as the "grand old lady" of the Royal Navy. As for the change of Charlene's pendant number to the one she possessed during the Great War, the explanation will come in the side story *The Fall of Gashleycrumb*.

*Her Majesty's Ship Raleigh* is a "stone frigate" (naval shore establishment) located in Torpoint on the English Channel coast of Cornwall, on the opposite side of Plymouth Sound from the city of Plymouth in Devonshire where *Her Majesty's Naval Base Devonport*, the primary operational base of the *Royal Navy* (RN), is located. *Raleigh* serves as the basic training facility for the Senior Service and has done so since 1940. Also conducted at *Raleigh* is training for the Royal Navy's logisticians as well as submarine training, including the infamous *Perisher* (the nickname of the *Submarine Command Course* for all prospective submarine captains).

The story of the *Leviathan Homicidae* ("Leviathan Slayers") and the *Second Battle of Dogger*
Bank is described in *Magic and Canada*.
Chapter Summary

Oyuki makes a deal with Isaac, Kurama gets scolded by Admiral Fujita, Benten reveals her deepest desire, Yoiko (Yonaga) puts down Ran and Rei, the Big Dog stops a replay of the Battle of Midway and Tariko's parents reunite with her granduncle...

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In orbit over Onishuto on Uru, aboard FPSYS Normandy, noon hour (Tōkyō time: A half-hour before dawn)...

"Isaac?"

Isaac Thomas perked on hearing that voice, then he moaned as he rubbed his eyes clear; he had taken a nap after last night's fun. "Come in, Mimir," the Wise Lone Sage then bade. "What's going on?"

"Well, it's good that you got some sleep," the gynoid with the well-groomed red hair and the glittering green eyes stated as she tenderly kissed her creator's cheek. "Princess Oyuki wishes to see you."

"Oh?! Send her in, please!"

Mimir winked playfully before she stepped out of the cabin. A moment later, a silver-haired regal teenager stepped inside, dressed properly in her work kimono-like uniform. "Are you aware of how much she loves you, Doctor?" Oyuki playfully asked as her host waved her over to the guest chair beside his work desk as he moved to prepare some tea for the crown princess.

"She was my prototype replicant, Your Highness," he explained. "I created her just after I had this ship built and I've spent the most amount of time with her helping her mature." He shrugged. "It's almost to the point now where I'd consider giving her the option of experiencing the Doll House to ultimately make her organic or ask the Avalonians to provide a replacement body for her, but she'll refuse me." He winked conspiratorially at her. "She's more like an older sister and mom figure for me instead of a potential wife. I've needed it a lot since I lost my parents back in 2004."

An amused look crossed the Neptunian's face. "I'd make sure of that if I was you, Doctor."

"Okay, okay!" he vowed. "So what does bring you here?"

Surprise crossed her face. "You can't predict that?"

A wry smile crossed his face. "I just woke up, ma'am. And I don't know you well enough to be able
to do that, not like I can Nirrti or people like her."

That made Oyuki titter before her face melted into a mask of worry. "Doctor, would the Academician be willing to allow us to teleport the excess snow that develops on Triton back to Earth as we did before?"

That made Isaac blink. "Have you ever considered teleporting that snow to Mars instead?"

"The Martians never cared for that," she advised.

He nodded as he handed her the tea he prepared; he had long suspected that there were sentient beings living in underground locations on Mars away from those places where space probes from Earth had explored, but hadn't had the time to examine such things in detail. As she smiled in thanks, he took his seat. "I hope you now realize what WE feel about that, Your Highness. Even if you later moved to dump the snow only in the Arctic and the Antarctic thanks to what Hatsue's sister Miyuki began to do with Ayumu's help, it still affected local weather patterns. While I'm sure Napaqaqtuarunnanngittuq didn't mind all the snow and ice you dumped in the Arctic, the additional water..."

He paused on seeing Oyuki shudder. "He...EXISTS...?!" she then squeaked.

Isaac stared at her, then he sighed, shrugging in amusement. "He exists. Or she. Or it. Something like Napaqaqtuarunnanngittuq doesn't really fit the humanoid definitions of gender assignment as you or I could," he lamented before sipping his own tea. "Ayumu knows him, of course, as does Miyuki. Miyuki sees him as the 'Great Kami of the Arctic' and is always respectful of him whenever she's gone there with Shirayuki — that's the second of the Fukushima sisters, not Hiromi's sister — to help clear the pollution that's gathered in the Arctic over the years. Ayumu thinks of him as a 'big teddy bear', which really confuses the poor thing at times." He shrugged. "What do you expect of someone like her?"

She slowly nodded. "Still..."

"Did your ancestors ever have any problems with weather like that on Neptune?"

Oyuki blinked before shaking her head. "No, never."

"Then we should concentrate our efforts in getting you people back to living on Neptune," Isaac proposed, which made the crown princess gape. "It's a pity that too many past-selves of people like myself never went out of their way to help you people reclaim your home planet again." He shook his head. "All because of that damned 'everyone stands up for themselves' attitude that came into vogue after the Show got started in earnest. If that hadn't happened, people like the various incarnations of the Young Guns wouldn't have suffered like they did." He sighed. "Let me work on that; I haven't had much time to concentrate on affairs in our solar system since I've been so busy on Remnant..."

The ship shook as the clanging noise of weapons fire echoed through the hull. "We're under attack!" Oyuki called out as the on-board klaxon began to blare while Isaac turned to his own terminal.

"Yes. By Kurama, in fact," the Wise Lone Sage stated.

The crown princess of Neptune turned to see the image of a cone-shaped silver starship with crow-like wings now hovering close to the Normandy's port side, its own assault battery of heavy turbolasers glowing with energy as another salvo was prepared to be fired. Before she could suggest what to do with the very arrogant crown princess regent of the Karasutengu, a brilliant flash of warp
energy well beyond the cruiser's starboard aft burst before a streak of light slammed into the vessel's engine compartment, making the poor ship begin to tumble at speeds that the Wise Lone Sage realized was just too much for internal gravity systems to properly compensate for.

"I wonder who's visiting..." Isaac then mused...

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_Aboard the Kingdom of Karasutengu Starship Eternal Nest, that moment..._

"MAKE THE SPINNING STOP!"

"W-w-w-we c-c-can't, Pr-pr-princess K!" the elderly avian known more commonly as "Old One" stammered out as everyone on the darkened bridge of the flagship of the kingdom's small navy was pitched around like gumballs inside a bowl being tossed around by two playful children. "Th-the inertia stabilizers are off-line..." he stated as he moved to hover in the centre of the large space, thus avoiding being smacked on the head by some overhang, "...and we can't get control over the thrusters! Whatever or whoever just attacked us now has as much power as any incarnation of the Untameable One...!"

He squawked as Kurama's head slammed into the lectern she used as her command post, sending her stumbling onto the deck before the yawl of the ship saw her fly into a bulkhead. "PRINCESS K!"

The whole of the ship then squealed as the pitching motion halted!

As some of the crew groaned from the injuries they had taken, Old One blinked before he fluttered over to the main sensory station; the younger Tengu who had control of that post had wisely fluttered clear when the ship started flipping around like a runaway top. Before he could take in what just happened, the whole of the *Eternal Nest* shuddered violently as something smashed into the main hull via one of the cargo bays, which was well clear of any habitation level. "Oh, dear..." the elderly Tengu moaned as internal sensors locked in on the person that just boarded their ship. "A first-generation battle doll...?"

That made the other bridge crew gape. "Sir, weren't they the ones used by the second Healer of Destruction to force the Goa'uld away from Yiziba?!!" the operations officer then demanded.

Noting some of the bridge crew moving to help Kurama recover, Old One nodded. "The same! Yet this one is fully Gifted and organic..." He blinked. "Not to mention making her way to the bridge now..."

A crashing noise then echoed from the rear of the bridge...!

"Annyŏng!"

Heads snapped around...

"Now, what are you silly kkama'gui doing firing on Sŏnsaeng-nim's ship?!" a visibly annoyed teenage girl with the long green-streaked blonde hair and the turquoise eyes — dressed in a VERY racy battlesuit akin to what the Wild Warrior of Passion would wear, that dark green overall with grey belt, thigh-high boots and bicep-high gloves, the boots and gloves streaked with silver — demanded as she crossed her arms. On her chest was a grey hurricane symbol, that embossed with what looked like formal Noukiite characters: . "If you wanted to start a fleet action with us, all you had to do was ASK!"
A flash of energy then made the living kami of the prototype to what could now be seen as the "Pongp'ung-class" destroyers appear beside the fourteenth of that class. "Ah! Sŏg'yŏng-a! Where have you been?! You're so slow!" Toyama Sumie then scolded.

A playful tongue got stuck out in return. "Am not, Ōnni!" the woman who would now be known on Yiziba as the Cosmic Marsh Storm, R'buobo'o ("Sop'ung") — the human name assigned to her by Su Muwol when the kami of the ship known only as "Warship No. 746" in Imperial Japanese Navy records was given true life was "Sŭng Sŏg'yŏng" — replied as she gave Sumie a look. "When I heard your call to come here, I had to stop in one system to prevent a big asteroid from crashing onto a planet! So there!"

That made Japan's fastest destroyer blink. "Oh! That's okay...!"

Nodding in delight, Sŏg'yŏng then turned to glare at the crow-like beings now moving to flutter closer to her and her sister...while still maintaining a safe distance from a being that literally WARPED into space over Uru, then smashed her way to the pilotage like she was taking a constitutional in the woods. "Now, what are you silly kkama'gui doing firing on Sŏnsaeng-nim's ship?!" she repeated her question.

"HOW DARE YOU...!!"

KK-KRUNCH!

A pain-filled shriek nearly burst the eardrums of all the tengu on the bridge as both Sumie and Sŏg'yŏng looked over to see Kurama now on her knees; the crown princess regent of the Karasutengu had surged up to smash down the impudent creature that attacked her starship with her large leaf fan...and nearly shattered her wrist on hitting something that seemed to possess the density of carbonized NEUTRONIUM! Before anyone could say anything more, another flash of light allowed someone else to teleport onto the bridge. One that the crew was quick to recognize. "Mister Groom?" Old One exclaimed as Moroboshi Ataru came over to stand close to the moaning Kurama. As the crown princess gasped on hearing the name of her would-be "husband" — who would only serve as a mere mate to allow her to birth children to ensure the ruling line of humanoids on her planet could continue — Ataru calmly moved to help her back to her feet. Then, before Kurama could react, a deadly smile crossed his face...before his arm cocked back before his fist flew right at her cheek!

KK-KRACK!

As the whole bridge crew gasped in shock on seeing a man known across the local cluster for NEVER physically harming a woman actually HIT their princess, Sumie and Sŏg'yŏng nodded in appreciation.

"Is he our admiral?" the latter asked...

...before she gasped in wide-eyed shock on seeing said man literally MORPH into a beautiful girl who clearly looked as if she was Ataru’s fraternal twin sister, she dressed in a hooded jumpsuit. "No, Sŏg'yŏng-a, she's our admiral's kid sister," Sumie supplied.

Hiromi Katabarbe smiled at the newcomer before she turned to glare at Kurama, who was now gaping in terror at the fact that her "husband" clearly now had links to the ONE planet whose residents could crush her people with little thought and without any consequences. "THAT, Your Highness...!" — the voice of the current incarnation of the Mistress of Morphing now DRIPPED with disgust — "...was for all the times you hurt Onē-san and Onii-san trying to 'civilize' them!"
Here, she made air-quotes with her fingers. "Surprising that you and your crew never ONCE sensed that Onē-san was pre-Gifted to become Tuyuki...not to mention the fact that whenever you ran into Onii-san, he was a BATTLE DOLL!"

Kurama blinked before she fainted! As Hiromi grinned and the tengu goggled at the idea of how close their princess had come to her own destruction, Sumie and Sŏg'yŏng exchanged shrugs...

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**The Invader house outside Onishuto, an hour later...**

"So this woman claims to be the daughter of Minamoto no Yoshitsune?!"

"We did find that out, Hiiojii-san."

As the people now seated or standing inside the living room of the Invader home gazed upon the image of a scowling Fujita Hiroshi now in the dining hall of Welcome House's rotunda, the would-be commander of Operation Z looked to his left. "Explain, Ataru-san."

"After we kissed her awake and became her would-be mate, Kurama-sama began a campaign to try to 'civilize' us, not realizing that we were already 'civilized' in the Yizibajohei style even if we had been brainwashed into forgetting our life on Yiziba," Moroboshi Ataru reported from somewhere away from the range of the PAA camera. "It turns out she is Minamoto-sama's daughter through her mother, then-Crown Princess Kifune, who was on her own husband-quest to continue the line."

"There were two unknown daughters of Minamoto-sama, Teitoku," an unknown woman's voice that seemed even chillier than Oyuki's at her most enraged then declared, also from off-screen. "One of them could be Kurama-sama," she then warned.

"I see," Fujita breathed out before he focused his dark eyes on Kurama's own grey orbs, making the not-a-teenage woman cringe at such a disapproving look. "Your Highness, what in the name of all the Kami of the Universe persuaded you to attempt to attack Thomas-sensei's ship? Did a past incarnation of Doctor Renaissance cause your people harm in previous years?"

"Um, n-n-no, Fujita-taishō!" she stammered. "It was n-n-nothing personal against the D-d-doctor...!"

"Then why try to initiate a WAR between your kingdom and the Free State?"

Old One took a deep breath. "Lord Admiral Fujita, the Princess wished to visit Earth in hopes of locating a suitable mate to be the father of her future child, thus allow the House of Sōjōbō to continue to reign over our people as they had done since the day we were effectively saved from the Seifukusu monsters by what was happening on Yiziba two sagas ago." As Fujita and his current command staff all blinked in confusion on hearing the official name of the royal house that governed the Kingdom of Karasutengu — which matched the name of the tengu king legends stated had trained the famous Genpei War general when he was a child — the elderly aide added, "Such has been our tradition for all those seasons. And while the crown princes and princesses would have gladly mated with one native to the Forge of the First Race given their many strengths, the spells the Guardian of the Borderlands of the Pure Chaos unleashed to prevent Gift thievery are strong, forcing those of the Princess' line to seek out mates on the planet bearing the second-largest source of mesonium in the known Universe: Earth itself." As Fujita's eyes went wide with surprise, the elderly tengu bowed his head. "As for the attack on the Wise Lord Sage, I can only apologize as we never suspected the Trickster of the Show was moving to see natives of Earth Gifted. It has long been believed that the ONLY way one can get the attention of the Yizibajohei is to initiate a fight scene." He helplessly shrugged. "No matter the risk."
That made Fujita — who was now framed by his flagship's captain Ogawa Gorō to his right and his chief personnel officer Katsube Hakuseki to his left — roar with laughter. "Like eager young samurai you are, Elder!" he declared as his subordinates chuckled at such a statement. "Well, if Thomas-sensei doesn't take offence at your attack, the issue is closed." He fixed his attention on Kurama. "Young lady, from what Ataru-san's and Tariko-san's sisters have explained to me about your past interactions with them and their peers while seeking your mate, you need to learn something called 'self-discipline'. If you desire respect from us, you need to act in a way that will EARN that respect. Much that I understand and acknowledge your desire to honour your culture's traditions, your actions — and yes, the actions of others such as Ataru-san's 'wife' and her peers — speak loudly against you. Remember that!"

Kurama winced while Oyuki, not to mention her friends, gave her sympathetic looks. "H-hai...!"

"Speaking of seeking out a suitable mate, I do believe you can go visit New Avalon to try your luck there, Your Highness," Isaac stated; he was seated to one side of the living room with the leaders of the Camelot Wondercolts and the Hunters of Remnant, Tara Silva and Ruby Rose respectively. "I know there are many single male Avalonians — in truth, Niphentaxian/Avalonian hybrids who take FAR more after their mothers — who could serve as both marei'cha and surei'cha to you."

That made Kurama gape in shock at the man she had tried to make submit to her in outrage over being blocked by his sister hyper-genius polymath Elizabeth Wakefield from visiting what she viewed as her second home planet. "Really...?" she asked, hope in her voice.

"Hai, there are many possibilities there, Kurama-sama," Hiromi affirmed from beside her wife Redet Lum, making the crown princess gaze upon her. "I met a whole slew of handsome fellows who flirted with me after the Liberation because I was a male soul stuck in a woman's body, never mind my NOT being bonded and yet to have taken a Gift to be like Onē-san. I still keep in contact with them. As an apology for my hitting you — even if I was well within my rights to do so for all the embarrassment you caused Onē-san and Onii-san during the times you visited Tomobiki...especially with that sex-change gun of yours..." — hearing that made Kurama wince — "...I can serve as a nakōdo in this instance. I know of a few possibilities that would melt your heart once you lay your eyes on them."

"Oi, Darling...!"

Shigaten Benten stopped herself as her cheeks went as red as cherries while everyone gaped at the biker-babe from Fukunokami. Before anyone could say anything more, she gargled before racing out of the house. Seeing her go, Hiromi then lowered her eyes. "Oh, dear...!"

Lum squeezed her shoulder as others looked to where Benten had run off...

****

Outside...

Oh, shit! Shit! SHIT! How the fuck could I have screwed up like THAT?!

Sitting now on her airbike, which was slowly rising from the ground some distance from the Invader home, a shuddering Benten could only hug herself as she tried not to scream in angry frustration at the fact that she just let something like THAT slip from her tongue. Bensaiten's Grave, seeing Dar-...! — here, she caught herself before shaking her head — Yeah! Seeing Hiromi offer that to Kurama like she did just made me want her all the more! But she's not Darling! She's some replica of hers, created because of some camera Lum loaned over for some school project Darling was working on! Who...?!
She gasped as a hand landed on her shoulder, making her spin around as her fist cocked to strike...

...before she gaped on seeing who was now sitting on her bike. "Darling...?" the Fukunokami hissed.

Moroboshi Ataru — the REAL one, Benten realized on seeing his normal clothes; both his sisters would be wearing battlesuits while on Uru — tried not to sigh as he gave her that lanky smile of his, one that always turned the biker babe's heart to mush every time she saw it even if she did everything she could to fight down the urge to jump the guy and screw his brains out regardless of how doing such would have cost her whatever friendship she had with Redet Lum. Before she could say anything, he reached over to gently touch her head, pushing her forehead against his as they gazed into each other's eyes. "I have to confess that I never would have suspected you had THOSE sorts of feelings for me."

She gulped as she felt her heart accelerate being so close to him...and KNOWING that this time, she didn't have to worry about Lum's overzealous reaction to someone trying to poach her "husband". After a moment, she then chuckled. "Do you blame me?" she then asked before she blinked, then she sighed. "Oh, to Hell with it!" she then breathed as she leaned in.

The kiss was deep, passionate and full of tongues on both sides. After a minute, Ataru gently shoved himself closer to her so he could warmly embrace her, earning him a delighted purr from the biker-babe from Bensaikyō. Then as both felt the need to breathe properly overcome them, they slowly pulled apart, a tiny string of drool connecting their lips. Seeing that made them blush before laughter escaped them both, then Benten stared into his eyes. "I love you, Darling." She then shook her head. "I don't know when this all started, but I fell head over heels for you — you and Tariko together, you alone, even Hiromi that one time I visited before you all popped the big surprise on us all — and I want you! I..."

He blushed. "I'm flattered beyond belief, Benten-san. Believe me, during times when we could control what was going on with our libido..." — here, she knew he was speaking of the period between the Tag Race and the encounter with Elle — "...and afterwards when I was with everyone at school whenever Onē-san wasn't in the mood to 'slum with the norms', I always was envious of the fact that Lum had such a wonderful friend. We never suspected your real feelings. After our memories were restored by Yomi, we recalled your long-time crush on Nassur." As she jolted on hearing the name of the man she saw as one of the greatest warriors bar none in the local cluster, he reached up to tap the end of her nose. "How could an ordinary guy like me compare to that?" he then teased, his eyes sparkling.

She shook her head, reaching over to rub his hair. "You were you, Darling. You did whatever you wanted whenever you wanted. A real windrider as the Zephyrites would call you." She shrugged. "And you accepted Lum even if it was easy for me to figure out that she forced herself on you at the start with the way you were always denying you were married to her. I liked that. I really admired that. And I fell in love with that. But I couldn't risk losing Lum's friendship if I tried anything..."

"And she was always paranoid when it came to people she believed would 'poach' me from her," he stated as he shrugged. "Onē-san and Hiromi sensed it from her all the time. I guess Lum's desire to be loved for what she is and not because she's Uru's 'marble lady' is what triggered Hiromi's marei'cha desires for her." His eyes twinkled. "Want to go somewhere private?"

"Back to Earth?"

"It can be allowed," he noted as he pulled out his PAA from his pocket. "Besides, being close to Lum..."

"ATARU! DIE!"
Both of them gasped as a green-and-grey blur whipped past them to intercept the roaring ushitora that was moving to lunge at them, a jet pack wrapped around his massive body to help him fly since he was crippled in that regard. Before Ataru could say anything, said blur became Itō Yoiko, who stopped to hover herself between Seq Rei and his target, contemptuously whipping her hand around to back-slap the transformed frontier pilot, sending him tumbling off to the north towards the ruins of old Onishuto that had been totally devastated during the Mother of All Fight Scenes. As Ataru breathed out in relief and Benten laughed on seeing Lum's old fiancé given such nasty treatment by the kami of her would-be lover's granduncle's ship, a scream of outrage escaped the woman now on her own airbike heading their way as she yanked out her personal anti-fortification weapon. "YOU BITCH!" Aruka Ran shrieked as her fangs splayed. "HOW DARE YOU HURT REI-SAMA LIKE THAT?! DIE!"

Yoiko's grey eyes focused on her new attacker as a titanic wave of empathic energy burst from her like an exploding bomb, overwhelming the partially-orphaned naval infantry officer's daughter with an aura of bone-chilling TERROR. Benten howled with delight as Ran lost control of her machine, it careening right at Yoiko. As the attacking native of Shingetsu got close enough to grasp, the transformed aircraft carrier's arms again became a blur, one of her limbs smashing the airbike away to send it flying into the Terrible Swamps many kilometres away while the other hand snared Ran by the neck, nearly snapping her head off from the whiplash effect of such a grab. As the gasping pink-haired woman dropped her weapon on begin made to face the seventh carrier of Operation Z at such close range, her dark purple panties instantly were soaked with urine and fecal matter, the smell of which made Yoiko scowl in clear disapproval while Benten nearly fell off her airbike as she laughed her guts out on seeing that there was SOMEONE willing to put the psychotic idiot down once and for all; fortunately, Ataru was willing to hold her in place as a crowd of people came out of the Invader home to see what was going on.

Yoiko's face didn't change as she allowed herself to descend to the ground as gently as she could. Once touching the orange wildgrass that surrounded the Invader home, the transformed aircraft carrier contemptuously shoved Ran away from her, sending her back-first into the lawn. As a disgusted snort escaped Kurama and snickers echoed from Hiromi Katabarbe and some of the other Yizibajohei who had been visiting the Invader family at the time, Yoiko's lips turned into a slight smile. One that promised an ETERNITY of pain in Ran's eyes.

"Aruka-dono..." the carrier then declared, making the people at the doorway perk on recognizing the voice who had confirmed certain aspects of Kurama's ancestry. "If that thing you so desperately desire as a husband DARES contemplate attacking my junior navigation officer's relatives in the future — either Ataru-san, Tariko-san or Hiromi-san — I will FLAY HIM ALIVE!" As Ran croaked on feeling the aura of pure space-cold malice escape Yoiko at that declaration, the adopted native of Maizuru and Hiroshima added, "You loath the fact that you were expelled from Earth because while you were living in Tomobiki, you were seen as someone important...where as here, you are NOTHING!" As outrage flashed in Ran's chestnut eyes at that very accurate description of her current circumstances, the carrier seemed to blur again, putting herself right into the young woman's face. "Killing you would be too much a mercy to someone who has NOT earned an honourable death!"

As Ran turned as white as a sheet, Yoiko stepped back. With a wave of her hand in their direction, Benten, Ataru and the former's airbike vanished, making Ran gape at such a "display" of power.

Silence.

More silence.
Still more silence.

Then...

"Run."

Hearing that simple word from the fifth of the Yamato-class, Ran screamed out as she turned and raced off towards Onishuto, the stench of her bowels and bladder having long ago vacated her body marking her trail. Seeing that, Yoiko turned to teleport herself away, though she paused to stare at the wide-eyed young women who had haunted Tariko Katabarbe's life for a year.

"Learn from this."

And with a flash, Yoiko teleported off Uru.

"Wow...!" Redet Ten hissed out from beside Isaac.

"Yeah," the Wise Lone Sage breathed out...

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Dear Diary,

Wow! Yoiko-san really can scare anyone!

Oh, that's right! You didn't know the story about Yoiko-san and Yonaga.

Ever since the start of spring vacation on Earth, Hinako-onētama has been on a quest to locate the living spirit of warships that were sunk in the Second World War and have them revived. This started by accident when the spirit of Earth's first modern destroyer, the Imperial Japanese Navy ship Fubuki, came back with the help of a first generation battle doll — the same type used by the second incarnation of the Healer of Destruction against the Goa'uld five thousand years ago — to serve as a new body for the ship spirit to inhabit.

So the spirit of Fubuki became Fukushima Fujiko, just as the spirit of Fubuki's sistership Hatsuyuki became Fukushima Hatsue.

When I was sent back to Uru by Tariko-onēchan, there were a total of nineteen 'shipgirls' — that's what Tariko-onēchan's sister call the resurrected warship spirits — living on Ōmure-jima: Seven of the Fubuki-class destroyers, eight of the Ayanami-class destroyers and all four of the Akatsuki-class destroyers.

And they all got 'human names' since it was kinda ridiculous to refer to someone like Hatsue-chan as 'Hatsuyuki' when she didn't at all LOOK or FEEL like any sort of warship, to say anything of being even a gynoid!

Thanks to their also being Gifted through the Great Crystal of Power, the shipgirls all became true metahumans. Fujiko-chan and Hatsue-chan, for example, both became cryokinetics. Kisaragi Utako-chan — or 'U-chan' as she likes to be called — became a meteorkinetic.

Oh, that's right! I forgot to tell you about the other shipgirls!

Right after Lum-cha and I got back to Uru and Lum-cha met Hiromi-onēchan, we learned that another group of twenty-one first generation battle dolls came back as shipgirls. Through them, the spirits of eleven of the Mutsuki-class destroyers and all ten of the Shiratsuyu-class destroyers came back; U-chan was originally the Mutsuki-class destroyer Uzuki. Of course, Hinako-onētama didn't go out to find them on purpose; after she went and brought back the Akatsuki-class destroyers as the Akamatsu sisters Tsukiko (Akatsuki), Himeko (Hibiki), Ikue (Ikazuchi) and Inoue (Inazuma) in the summer, she promised the Heavenly Sovereign of Japan she wouldn't do that sort of thing again without permission.

However, when girls like U-chan came back on their own, Rinrin-aneki was persuaded by Himeko-san to do a special experiment concerning the old German heavy cruiser Prinz Eugen — which had
been given to the Americans at the end of World War Two as reparations, then sunk in a nuclear bomb test — which saw her come back as Catarina von Savoyen, a pretty girl who looks to be Oyuki-cha's age!

And she fell in love with Ataru at first sight!

Atop that, doing THAT with Miss Catarina made the spirit of the famous German battleship Bismarck come back as Luisa von Bismarck...which seemed to herald the return of a German aircraft carrier, one of their 'pocket battleship' large cruisers and two destroyers as shipgirls, never mind all the other ships sunk at the same atomic test that sank Prinz Eugen coming back to join forces with Colonel Jack O'Neill and the Americans' Stargate Command!

Along the way, the spirit of the ship Tariko-onē-chan's granduncle Lieutenant Moroboshi Kyōsuke served on came back as a shipgirl.

That was the large aircraft carrier Yonaga, now Itō Yoiko.  

Even better, all of Yonaga's crew are still ALIVE thanks to their being trapped in a mesonium-lined cove in far eastern Siberia — which couldn't be detected by the Soviets or the Russians — for over SEVENTY YEARS! And they stayed alive and healthy — not to mention had their aging processes retarded by living there with very little contact with the outside world save for the native people who lived in that part of the world — ready to carry out their original mission, which was to help start the Pacific side of World War Two at Pearl Harbour!

Wow!

Even the most passionate Yehisrite warrior would be in awe of that!

And after meeting Admiral Fujita Hiroshi — who would have actually led the attack on Pearl Harbour from Yonaga — I'm really hopeful that Tariko-onē-chan, Ataru and their sisters will have help with all the shipgirls coming back.

I just hope that those ship spirits whose crews were slaughtered in battle don't come back all angry over what happened to them.

Er...!

Maybe I shouldn't have written that!

Sorry, everyone...!

****

The Invader home, an hour later...

"Do you believe that the number of kantai musume now on Uru will be enough if this yakuza Apophis moves towards that planet to seek vengeance after he witnesses Asakura-sensei's filming of Captain Doolittle actually EATING his wife Amaunet, Thomas-sensei?"

"Given their overall power, Admiral, I think we'll do good," Isaac Thomas answered as he relaxed in his chair gazing at the image of Fujita Hiroshi, who was relaxing in the dining hall at Welcome House having some morning tea. Background noise indicated that Osamu Shirayuki and eager helpers like Fukushima Shirayuki and Ashikaga Namiko were busy with serving a big and nutritious feast to the large crew of Yonaga before they would await the decision of the Heavenly Sovereign concerning their final fate. "Each first generation battle doll has the power by herself to deal with a Goa'uld ha'tak-class mothership with pulse energy attacks. Given what Rinrin told me about how their powers were enhanced once they were Gifted and became fully organic, their strength will give them the ability to lift the CUBE of their original mass as a warship. How much did Yonaga displace?"

"At full load, 86,750 tonnes," Captain Ogawa Gorō answered from Fujita's right. 

The Wise Lone Sage hummed. "Then she could potentially dead-lift the equivalent mass of 652,842,546,875,000 tonnes, Captain. Over half a QUADRILLION tonnes," he stated after a few seconds' calculation. As Fujita, his flag captain and his senior scribe Lieutenant Commander
Hironaka Kenji gaped in disbelief at that, the New Yorker added, "By the way, a quadrillion tonnes is the theorized mass of all the diamonds that exist on Earth itself, buried deep under the crust."

Hironaka screamed as he leapt up to his feet, "YONAGA BANZAI!"

"Kenji-san!"

The scribe jolted as the tall, muscular shipgirl who was the living personification of the ship he lived on for seven decades came into the dining room, a disapproving scowl on her face. "Y-y-Yoiko-chan...!

Itō Yoiko moved to loom over him, she giving him a look that would impress the hell out of the drill petty officers at the Imperial Naval Academy near Hiroshima. "Kenji-san, a true samurai does NOT brag uselessly about his skills and abilities unless his daimyō, the Shōgun or Tennō Himself demands to know such attributes. It is not the least bit proper to disturb the peace our gracious hosts now desire so they can enjoy their breakfast, not to mention absorb the revelations concerning Shigaten-dono's desire to seek Ataru-san's hand! They wish to concentrate on that issue! Do not distract them!"

"H-h-h-HAI!" the scribe sputtered out, bowing low to the transformed carrier.

"Tadaima...Hina's back...!"

Isaac instantly winced on sensing the pained moan in Saeru Hinako's voice...

****

Welcome House, that moment (local time: Breakfast)...

"What's wrong?!" Moroboshi Ataru asked as heads turned to gaze towards the dining room's doors.

Saeru Hinako sighed before she looked over at her brother, then she blinked. "A-ri-ri? Benten-san?! What are you doing here in Welcome House?!" she demanded.

That made a certain biker-babe from Fukunokami blush before she gave Ataru a hopeful look, which made the Spirit of Innocence gape. "Eh?! Benten-san wants to be Onii-tama's girlfriend?!

Giggles filled the dining hall from the other sisters as they enjoyed their breakfast. "For the longest time, Shigaten-dono was stymied because of Redet-dono's passionate desire to seek your brother's hand in matrimony, Little One," Yoiko said as she gave the visiting teenager from another world an admiring look. "Her restraint driven by her desire to maintain her long friendship with Redet-dono proves that under that bōsōzoku exterior of hers, she is as civilized and cultured as her near-namesake among the Shichi-fukujin." Here, the aircraft carrier then shook her head. "How curious that names are so common on planets separated by sixty-seven light years of space. The Goa'uld, perhaps?"

Shigaten Benten shrugged. "I honestly wish I could answer that, Captain Yoiko. I mean, when I first came to Earth after I met Darling, it shocked me that I had a GODDESS of all things as a near-namesake!" As the others in the room laughed on hearing that admission, she shrugged. "I even had loads of fun doing the Terran version of Setsubun — on my planet, that celebrates the peace my ancestors made with the more progressive elements of the Urusian Empire after they got their butts kicked by the Yizibajohei in the Mother of All Fight Scenes — when it came around a couple months before we ran into Darling's other 'fiancée'," As Ataru moaned on being reminded of Elle de Rosenbach, the native of Bensaikyō shrugged again. "Don't matter to me right now. With Lum..."
getting a version of Darling in Hiromi and Tariko now finally free to live her life, I'm making my move and claiming my man." She then gazed on Sukeyama Sakuya, visibly wincing. "With your permission, of course."

"Nice save, Benten," the Healer of Men's Hearts stated even if her lips twitched in an approving smile; her empathy had been quick to sense how honest the visitor from Fukunokami was.

"Of course, Benten, you best understand that if you do ANYTHING that breaks Ani-kun's heart, we ALL will punish you most severely," Hirosaki Chikage then warned, making the room instantly chill as the Dark Heart of Pure Chaos stared intently at her would-be sister-in-law. "It will be to the point where you will BEG Yoiko there to act as your kaishakunin," she coolly added.

"Chikage-chan, PLEASE stop talking about that nasty stuff!"

Eyes locked on the youngest of the sisters, then people winced on seeing the weariness on her face. "What is it, Hinako-chan?" Eigo Kaho asked as Sakuya walked over to hug Hinako.

A moan answered the Maiden of the Parade's question. "Oh, it's even MORE shipgirls, Kaho-chan!"

"Who has returned, Little One?" Yoiko asked.

"That would be us, Captain Itō."

Heads turned over...

"I assume Mycroft sent you girls over?" Yotsuba Dunn asked, a knowing look crossing her face.

"Indeed he did, Lady Dunn," Charlene Boleyn stated as she walked in on a cane conjured for her by Albus Dumbledore, accompanied by a smiling Amy Power and a visibly depressed Mary Hood. As Yoiko and her crew quickly read the names on the ship's crests on the chests of the British shipgirls, the reborn second of the Queen Elizabeth-class battleships turned and bowed to Sakuya. "Lady Sukeyama, on behalf of my fleet mates, I sincerely apologize for intruding on you in this manner."

Sakuya blinked, then she shrugged. "Oh, well...!"

"Frau Kapitän Hood."

That made the reborn Admiral-class battlecruiser perk before she spun around...

...then on seeing the tall, blonde Aryan beauty standing behind her, the adopted native of Clydebank and Butleigh blinked several times before a pained smile crossed her face. "Ruddy good shooting," Mary said as she squeezed Luisa von Bismarck's shoulder in reassurance.

As the adopted native of Schönhausen — now accompanied by her fleet mates — gaped at such words, Mary walked out of the rotunda, the depression weighing on her heart following her like a shroud.

Fujita had been quick to notice. "She wants to die..." he whispered.

Hearing that, Yoiko nodded. "I'll see to her, Teitoku," she quietly declared.

The admiral nodded as others in the room exchanged worried looks...

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_Sand Island in the Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge (1800 kilometres west-northwest of_
Honolulu), that moment (local time: Noon hour on Saturday)...

"How long are you going to be there, Joe?! We have the weekend off...!"

A chuckle escaped the Samoan-descent native of Pensacola as he took a look around the abandoned Navy air station set up on the largest of the atoll islands located near the middle point of the direct route between San Francisco and Tōkyō. The whole area was quiet save for the squawking of a massive flock of albatrosses that used Midway Atoll as a place to breed and rest, not to mention the yelping noises of seals that were on the beaches of Sand Island raising their pups. "Since this Yonaga got back — especially knowing she was meant to be part of the original attack on Pearl back in '41 — the chances of the other carriers that were in on that attack coming back as shipgirls are...!"

He paused as his dark hazel eyes picked out three figures now approach the atoll from the north. "Well, I'll be fucking damned," the man born Joseph Anoa'i breathed out as he raised a pair of goggles — the same model that hyper-genius polymaths like Isaac Thomas and Elizabeth Wakefield used — to slip over his eyes, focusing on the three women. Two were teenagers, one with long silver hair and blue eyes, the other had long strawberry blonde hair in a ponytail and green eyes peeking out of a face that had a native American tan on it. The third woman was much more mature in looks, also possessing long silver hair and blue eyes. The badges on the chests of the uniforms the two silver-haired women were wearing were the stadium-shaped blue rings with gold ship's rope on the outside used by American warships; the third woman had the circular crest with naval crown topping it of a British or Commonwealth warship. As they got closer, the man known to fans in World Wrestling Entertainment now by the ring name "Roman Reigns" peered closer to read the words written on those badges:

**USS YORKTOWN**
**CV 5**
**USS HAMMANN**
**DD 412**

Okay, those two, he had suspected would appear. Now the third...?

**ATHABASKAN**

Blinking in confusion, Roman shifted his PAA around. "Gotta cut the link, Danny," he then warned his tag team partner. "Something weird is going on here."

"What is it?" his partner in the Shield called back from the hotel in Lafayette in Louisiana; it was in the stadium there that the newly-formed "bodyguards" to the infamous C.M. Punk would make their **Monday Night RAW** debut two nights from today.

"I got Yorktown and Hammann coming in. They were the two ships on our side that sank back in '42. But there's a third one with a Commonwealth badge. Name is Athabaskan. Gotta check the database."

"Chill, man! We got it!" the man born Danny Lopez and known to fans more as "Seth Rollins" assured his partner. "Jon's checking his PAA out right now. If this one's a World War Two gal...!"

"Found her!" the third of the Shield, Jonathan Good — "Dean Ambrose" — called out. "She's Canadian, Joe. HMCS *Athabaskan*. Three of them over the years. First one was sunk two months before D-Day off the north coast of Brittany in a gun fight. Got a hull number, Joe? This girl might be the second one; she didn't get decommissioned until '66 and was scrapped in '70."
"Hold on a sec'..."

Roman concentrated on the native-looking shipgirl, who was drifting a half-metre off the calm waves of the lagoon. Much to the amusement of the man who was now known on Yiziba as the Spectral Hound of the Dark Gaol, Rimna (the "Grimm"), a small flock of young seals were trying to leap out of the waters to pull the Canadian destroyer in so they could play with her, many barking in excitement. As the reborn first of her class of aircraft carriers and the reborn fourth of the Sims-class destroyers laughed at their companion's willingness to place nice with the seals, Roman's eyes focused on the letter-number combination in white painted on the thighs of the reborn Athabaskan's scarlet battlesuit.

"Got G07 here, Jon," Roman then called out.

"That's the first one," Dean called back.

"Got human names?"

"Yorktown is 'Anna Eleanor Livingston'. Hammann is 'Charlene Hazel Hammann'. And Athabaskan is 'Randi Georgette Stubbs'."

"Thanks, man. Call over to the SGC and warn them."

"On it," Seth called back. "Watch your ass, Joe!"

"I'll be cool, man."

Closing off the link, the man with the stringy black hair, moustache and goatee slipped off the goggles and put them into the back pouch of his battledress. Black overall like his in-ring attire with gunmetal grey belt and boots, it was styled to display the beautiful tattoos marking his Samoan ancestry on his right arm and chest beyond the edge of the top, with a sea turtle on his inner right wrist. On his chest was the front-view image of the head of a yuoti-suo, a mythological soul-devouring spirit renowned in stories common to the central equatorial continent of Yiziba before the Dawn of Power as one who readily devoured all evil. While not a soul-vampire of any sorts like Aruka Ran, Roman's metahuman abilities made him as deadly to all non-corporeal beings and parasitic creatures as Margo Black was to all living beings. Atopt that, he was one of many Named from Yiziba who loved to hunt down "roenor'beke" from the Crab Nebula — they called themselves "Mor-Tax" as a race, but Roman didn't give a shit about that — whenever they stuck their tentacles into the affairs of other peoples in the local cluster. Since the Mor-Tax were "rivals" to the Goa'uld and would gladly provoke a multi-planetary intergalactic war to press the advantage over the "gods" that dominated Earth in millennia past, representatives of that species had come to eye the Great Crystal of Power as a source-point of energy and strength to overwhelm what the Systems Lords could unleash in retaliation.

As Takino Tomo once lamented to him when they discussed dealing with such beings, "They're all Gift thieves, Roman-kun! If you find them, put 'em through their death scenes! It's all the slime deserve!"

While the Spectral Hound had scented some Mor-Tax possessing humans in his travels...

"Tea...!"

The native of Pensacola jolted, then spun around...

"Tea...?!"] the pale twenty-something woman with the quasi-Occidental looks on her face framed by
long brown hair — with an ahoge sticking out of the top of her head fluttering with the strong ocean breeze, part of the bangs held back by a gold headband and a lot of that mass tied in two braided buns behind her ears — pleaded as she stared hopefully at him, her body swaying as if she hadn't drunk or eaten anything for a WEEK! Noting the white uniform with the red belt and black boots, he quickly focused on the redwood-shaded torii on her chest, that topped with the kanji 金剛 in vertical format bracketing the kasagi and nuki where a shrine's nameplate would be posted. "Tea, please...?" she tearfully pleaded again in British English with a quasi-Scots pitch to her words.

Roman was there to catch the staggering reborn fast battleship — he recognized the kanji on her top, marking her as the first of her class of warships that had been in the thick of the action throughout most of the Pacific side of the Second World War — then he moved to sit her down on the ground before yanking out his PAA. "Oi! Shirayuki! Pick up!" he called out after tapping the crystal on the device to send off a signal many thousands of kilometres to the west.

A second later, a young girl's image appeared over the crystal. "Ah! Roman-san! What is it?!" Osamu Shirayuki called out from the kitchen at Welcome House.

"You got some tea — preferably whatever folks in England drink — with you now?"

"Did that man say 'tea', Lady Osamu?" a strange woman's voice then called out.

"Hai, Charlene-san!"

"W-w-Warspite...?!"

That was the dazed lead of her class of fast battleships, now leaning against the native of Pensacola. "Indeed it is, Kongō," the second of the Queen Elizabeth-class battleships called back from Ōmure-jima.

"What's her human name, Ataru?" a man with an American accent called out; no doubt, Roman realized, that was the retired Navy intelligence officer who had run across Yonaga's crew in the Arctic.

"'Chihaya Anne', Brent-san," Yotsuba Dunn answered. "By the way, if her sisters show up, Roman-kun, Hiei is 'Chihaya Sarah', Kirishima is 'Chihaya Isabel' and Haruna is 'Chihaya Heather'."

"Sending some tea over, Roman-san!" Shirayuki called out.

A flash of teleportation energy saw a beautiful tea service with all the fixings appear nearby, it sitting on a nice low table. Sensing that, Chihaya Anne blinked in confusion before she looked over...then her whole body quaked in delight as Roman shifted her closer to the table before sitting beside her, then he moved to prepare some for the shuddering fast battleship. "Since you served in Japan for so long, it surprises me that you didn't ask for sencha, Miss Chihaya," he commented.

That made Anne's eyes sharpen before she chuckled. "Oh, relax, Admiral! Relax! I'm an English-born returnee! Tea is in my pipes...!" She paused to look down at her cleavage. "Er...my blood, I guess..."

That made the wrestler and alumnus of the Georgia Institute of Technology chuckle. "All shipgirls go through that once they realize what's happened to them, Miss Chihaya," he said. "Lucky thing I learned how to prepare this stuff when I met other folks like myself." At the curious look of the adopted native of Barrow-in-Furness in Cumbria (her place of construction) and Chihayaakasaka south of Ōsaka (where her namesake volcano was located), Roman added, "I'm a metahuman. You'd know me as a 'mystery man', Miss Chihaya...though I normally don't go out like the Liberty Legion
did before the war and do stuff like that. I'm a behind-the-scenes guy. Roman Reigns," he then introduced himself.  

She shook his hand with an eager smile. "Do you know the angel or kami that turned me into this, Mister Reigns?" Anne then asked, waving to herself. "I was a broken wreck in the Formosa Strait until a week ago when something pulled my hull out of the water, merged it with some sort of mannequin-like thing, then I felt fully human...even if I turned out to be a girl who could FLY!"

"Did you hear a voice call out 'Tene lomher'buo, Chihaya Anne'?"

An eager nod answered him. "Yes, I did!"

"And after you got your uniform and felt full human, that same voice called out, 'Nesu'...then paused before calling out the translation of your ship name. I think it'd go 'Tumtuo'..."

Another eager nod answered him. "The exact words that angel said."

"Well, no one knows if it's an angel or a metahuman like me. We call that person the 'Conservator'. He always announces it whenever someone winds up Gifted to become a metahuman through the Great Crystal of Power. The place where the Power Jewels like General Raeburn's were made billions of years ago." As Anne's eyes went wide, he added, "A planet formed around it sometime after the First Race disappeared, then people were settled on it about twenty-five thousand years ago. From Earth, in fact. Trying not to smirk on seeing her dropped jaw and wide eyes, he winked, which made her fluster. "It's a really crazy story. You've missed out on seven decades of stuff, Miss Chihaya."

She considered that, then confusion crossed her face. "There are others like me?"

"Yep. Loads others..."

"Excuse me, sir!" a voice with a strong Virginia Tidewater accent challenged, which made Roman wince. "This is a Navy reservation! What are you doing here?! And what the hell is this JAP doing here?!"

"Um...Roman-san, did you forget something?" Shirayuki helpfully asked from Ōmure-jima as Roman hesitantly looked over his shoulder to see the reborn first of the Yorktown-class carriers standing nearby, an ugly look on her face. The reborn fourth of the Sims-class destroyers and the reborn second of the Canadian Tribal-class destroyers were at the carrier's side, a somewhat fearful look on the former's face while the other seemed to be gaping in confusion at him.

A moan escaped him. "Another day in the damned office...!"

That made all the shipgirls now on Sand Island blink in confusion...

****

An hour later...

"So we lost the war? Why am I SO not surprised?"

"Your people fought valiantly right to the end, Captain Chihaya."

Chihaya Anne perked on hearing that admiring statement from the man with the stench of the lar'beke all over him — though Roman Reigns had been quick to defend Teal'c as a former slave of the monsters who tried to invade the planet where the fast battleship's current body was built five
millennia before, he having betrayed his "god" — then she blushed. "The idiots leading the fight in
the name of His Majesty were deliberately sending us to our deaths, ignorant of how powerful
America really was."

"As so many predicted even before that war began."

"Including Admiral Fujita?" Anne asked as she stared at the strange carrier she NEVER knew
existed; after all, as far as she knew, all moves to have Warship No. 797 built were ended before a
keel was laid.

"Indeed so, Anne-san," Itō Yoiko stated before sipping the cloudberry tea that had been made by
Osamu Shirayuki. Both the seventh carrier of Operation Z and the Great Chef of the West had
teleported to Midway to serve as spokespersons for the reborn first of the Kongō-class fast battleships
when a delegation from Stargate Command came to the atoll to meet up with the two reborn
American warships and the lone Canadian warship that met up with them north of Midway a day
ago. "Still, we all had orders given to us in Tennō's name." Here, the fifth of the Yamato-class made
use of the proper Japanese honorifics for the Heavenly Sovereign while her fleet mate used English
translations. "Even if the orders could be seen by other military leaders as insane or suicidal, Bushidō
ruled all our lives."

Anne snorted. "Especially the warped version of it that got into vogue after his father died."

"Taishō Tennō, you mean."

That was Daniel Jackson, who had been more than eager to come to Midway to meet such a
remarkable group of personalities like the aircraft carrier that had been trapped in a Siberian cove for
seventy-one years while her crew had remained locked on their mission to attack Pearl Harbour,
ever mind the British-built battlecruiser-turned-fast battleship who clearly wanted to honour both
sides of her effective ancestry. "The same one, Doctor," Anne said as she flashed the New Yorker a
smile, which made the archaeologist blush at such wholesome beauty. "It all seemed to go well until
he passed on..."

"Hai, true," Yoiko affirmed before she gazed intently at the reborn fast battleship. "And stop flirting
with Jackson-hakase, Anne-san! He's a married man, having just recovered his wife from the grasp
of the Goa'uld! Set your sights elsewhere! Perhaps Reigns-sensei here...!"

As Roman gargled while his cheeks flushed, Shirayuki giggled before she prepared a new cup of
Darjeeling tea for the reborn fast battleship. "You're lucky that Sakuya-chan isn't here, Roman-kun!"

"HEY!" the native of Pensacola croaked.

"Something we're missing, kid?"

People turned as Dean Raeburn walked over, she accompanied by a madly-blushing Randi Stubbs,
the reborn HMCS Athabaskan. When everyone had gathered on Midway, the adopted native of
Newcastle upon Tyne in northern England (where she had been built) and the united nations of the
Athabaskan peoples (which were spread across a large swath of western and northwest Canada) told
everyone that after she had been reborn shortly after the spirit of the destroyer KMS Leberecht
Maass became Lieselotte Maaß, she had flown all over Canada trying to trace down either Raeburn
or the Ontarian's old fighting companion Heather Thompkins to report back to duty with the Royal
Canadian Navy despite her being a metahuman woman. When she was in the British Columbia
provincial capital Victoria a day ago, Randi overheard sailors based out of the navy base at nearby
Esquimalt speak about the former leader of the War Hawks having gone to Japan for some reason.
Such convinced the reborn Tribal-class destroyer to cross the Pacific. However, being a destroyer,
she elected to stop at Midway to replenish herself...which is when she ran across Eleanor Livingston and Charlene Hammann.

And given that both American shipgirls had been sunk at Midway...!

"Those two settled down?" Roman asked as he gazed over his shoulder to where Eleanor and Charlene were standing close to Major General George Hammond, who had come to Midway to bring the moral weight of a flag officer down on the returned warships so they didn't go charging off half-cocked towards Tōkyō to reignite the Greater East Asia War. Accompanying the elderly pilot from Texas along with Jackson and Teal'c had been Margaret Penn, who had her own moral weight as the former flagship of the United States Navy Battle Force at the time of the Pearl Harbour attack; as USS Pennsylvania, Margaret had been part of a backup force that would have deployed towards Hawai'i hadn't Eleanor (as Yorktown) and her sisters stopped the Japanese attack on Midway.

"Yeah, somewhat," Dean said after sitting down at the table while Shirayuki moved to make some coffee for her while Anne sipped her tea. Looking over her shoulder, she then winced on seeing Margaret pull out her PAA, using that to project an image of a wrecked Hiroshima to Eleanor and Charlene, which made the two Midway veterans turn especially pale on hearing what the effects of a nuclear bomb were like. She shook her head as the reborn destroyer covered her mouth, then sprinted off to a nearby bush at flank speed to throw up whatever breakfast she had fished for herself. "Idiot..."

"Truth, no matter how hard, is the one thing warriors must accept, Shihan-sama," Yoiko sagely advised.

Dean gave her a curious look, then she shook her head...before she perked on sensing something approach their position from the south. "Oh, great," she breathed out as she focused her attention — augmented by her Power Jewel's impossibly deep reservoir of energy which made her the equal power-wise of both the Last Son of Krypton and the World's Mightiest Mortal in another universe — towards the beach south of the main landing strip of Sand Island. "Newcomers..."

"Oh, Hime better make some tea," Shirayuki then mused.

Roman was focusing his own abilities in that direction. "They feel just like you, Miss Chihaya."

Anne perked. "My sisters...?"

"Listen," Dean bade.

Voices then drifted over the scene...

"...sensed it! Onē-sama is here!"

"We have to be watchful, Hiei! This IS an American navy base!"

"Haruna keeps telling her sisters! The war is over! Haruna's sure Onē-sama is safe!"

"Hey, wait a minute! If this is a Navy base, where are all the sailors?!!"

Hums escaped the other two girls. "The whole place looks like it's been abandoned for years now," the second voice, possessing a very studious tone to it as well as a noticeable Kyūshū accent, then contemplated. "I wonder what happened here. Why would the Americans abandon Midway?"

"Well, with the war over, Haruna thinks the Americans decided to leave Midway to the kawaii seals and albatrosses," the third voice, childish and reminding Shirayuki of her younger sisters by her
speaking of herself with her ship-name — not to mention possessing a Kantō accent thanks to her namesake volcano being in Gunma prefecture north of Tōkyō — then said. That comment, everyone who was eavesdropping on that conversation, had been accompanied by the yelping noises of young seals.

Sighing, Yoiko rose and marched towards the airfield, with Anne getting up to follow her long-secret would-be fleet mate. Seeing that move by the two Japanese shipgirls, Hammond sighed before he gazed at Dean. "Don't tell me more have come, General Raeburn," the Texan breathed out.

"It sounds like Miss Chihaya's sisters are here, General," Roman explained.

"AH! ONĒ-SAMA!"

Screams of joy echoed through the air from the direction of the airfield before they turned into yelps and cries accompanied by the sounds of people's bodies hitting the broken pavement of the taxiway where Anne just encountered her sisters, then they dog-piling her with hugs. As the seals who had accompanied the younger Kongō-class fast battleships yelped as they tried to get in on the "action", Shirayuki sighed as she reached over for a tray of her freshly-baked scones, then walked over to see the cuddle-pile of fast battleships as poor Anne tried to calm her sisters down while a VERY displeased Yoiko stood nearby, shaking her head at such an undisciplined show of childishness with two senior general officers — one of whom being a personal friend and traditional feudal servant of Tennō Himself! — not several yards away. Before she could scream out at the four to stop acting like idiots...

"ANNE! SARAH! ISABEL! HEATHER! CEASE THAT, NOW!"

Yoiko yelped before she looked over her shoulder as the four fast battleships froze themselves...

"Onē-tama! You didn't need to yell at them like that! You scared them!"

The seventh carrier of Operation Z sighed. "Many thanks for coming, Negako-sama," she then declared before bowing her head. "My apologies, Little One. You did not deserve to come here and be forced to see such an undisciplined display by my fleet mates..." — here, she turned to glare intently at Anne — "...which I personally know would NEVER be tolerated even in the ROYAL NAVY, Captain!"

As Anne yelped, her sisters blinked. "Haruna doesn't know you!" the third of her class (in order of the laying of her keel) said as she pulled away from her sisters. She had long, straight silvery-black hair and chestnut brown eyes. Her uniform was the same general style as her older sister, though she had red boots in lieu of Anne's black pair. Like Anne, the woman now known as "Chihaya Heather" had a redwood torii insignia on her chest framed by the kanji of her ship name in red kanji,榛名. "Who are you?!" she demanded as she walked over to glare up into Yoiko's stormy grey eyes.

As Moroboshi Negako shook her head at such useless bravado — never mind the height difference as Heather was only a little over 173 centimetres high while Yoiko stood at a towering 220 centimetres — the ninjutsu grandmaster's companion moaned as she waved her hands. "Heather-san!" Saeru Hinako called out, her own empathy reaching out to calm down all the shipgirls there. "Stop that!"

That made the four fast battleships wince before embarrassed blushes crossed their faces, then Anne and her sisters quickly separated themselves before getting back to their feet. As the seals started to yelp again to get the newcomers to play with them, Shirayuki sighed as she came up, holding out her tray of scones, the piping hot smell making Anne and her sisters all gasp as their stomachs instantly rumbled their desire for nourishment. "Well done, Shirayuki," Negako bade.
"Thank the Kami it's Sunday..."

Yawning as he stretched himself, Moroboshi Muchi moaned as he took his seat by the living room table. The Sunday morning news was on NHK Tōkyō, with the announcer making a report with the image of a smiling brown-haired, brown-eyed girl reported to be the kami of the world's first modern destroyer, she displayed as appearing in the press briefing room at the White House ten hours before. Staring at the image of Fukushima Fujiko, the father of the most infamous teenager alive in the world — in the eyes of many within Tomobiki; much to the shock of many within the town, people from elsewhere gladly removed the "in-" prefix when it came to describing Moroboshi Ataru...especially when one factored in the actions of Lum's Stormtroopers in the wake of the Tag Race the previous fall — could only shake his head as he reached for the Sunday edition of the *Morning Yomiuri* so he could scan the news.

"You should be proud of your children for what they've done for all of those poor kami, lad," an aged man's voice echoed from nearby.

Muchi tried not to wince as he gazed upon Sakurambō Hayao. Much to his wife's annoyance, the monk who had trained for years under the Jōdo-shū school of Buddhism appeared once breakfast had been served. Muchi himself didn't really mind the elderly monk normally called "Cherry" by everyone who knew of the man. Despite Kinshō's flat out hatred of his own late mother, Cherry had been very close to Moroboshi Nagaiwakai; interacting with him in private sessions had long helped the poor salaryman overcome his own feelings when it came to his mother. "How many is it now?" he breathed out.

"More and more come return from the sea by the day, my young friend," Cherry solemnly stated as he gazed on the television screen, which now showed a listing of shipgirl numbers, broken down by nationality, type and class as of two hours before. "I see one of young Tariko's friends from Korea has moved to welcome the would-be sisters of the swift Shimakaze-sama into the fold..."

"I HAVE NO DAUGHTER, YOU OLD...!"

**KK-KRUNCH!**

Muchi moaned; his wife had just got clocked by his transformed child's usual "cinder block in the head" trick before she could threaten Cherry. "Honey, stop yelling like that! The neighbours will complain!" He then slumped down on himself as he muttered, "Not that they're already complaining enough about what Ojii-san's ship said this morning when those boys were arrested...!"

As Kinshō moaned, Cherry shook his head. "It is Fate..."

"Your message, old friend, hasn't changed in decades."

Silence.

More silence.

Still more silence.

Then...
Cherry was now gaping in shock at the man in the green jumpsuit-like fatigues now standing in the foyer, the rank insignia of a lieutenant in the Imperial Navy on his collars. He was accompanied by a half-dozen men in shore patrol dress, Arisaka Type 99 rifles at port arms. Blinking in shock on seeing someone who looked like Moroboshi Ataru save for being in his late twenties with a trimmed moustache and goatee covering his face, the elderly monk gaped. "Sacred Buddha!" he hissed out as he reached out with his own mage-senses to probe this living ghost. "Kyōsuke...dear Buddha, is that you...?"

A lanky grin crossed the officer's face, not so different than what Ataru looked like when he smiled. "Hai, old friend, it is I!" Moroboshi Kyōsuke declared as the shore patrolmen accompanying him all bowed in respect to the good friend of their ship's junior navigation officer even if they kept their rifles at the ready. "Saved by a sea cove full of mesonium and the blessings of a massive flock of gamajun who sought shelter there even if my crew and I were trapped there thanks to an earthquake..."

"Since Shōwa-jūrokunen?!" Kyōsuke came over to sit beside his old theological studies classmate from Hanadera Boy's Academy in nearby Musashino, then he shrugged. "As you were so fond of saying it back then, Hayao-san..."

Cherry sagely nodded. "It's Fate indeed!"

They looked at each other, then laughter filled the living room as Muchi gaped in shock while his uncle — whom he assumed DIED years ago! — embraced the old monk that had been one of the banes of his child's life during his/her time living with his parents over the last year. As the seaman guards nearby screamed banzai cheers at such a reunion, Kinshō moaned as she tried to get back up...then she froze on seeing the khaki tabi shoes covering the feet of strange men now invading her domain. With a snarl, she leapt up and drew her handy chef's knife to chase away these idiots...then she squawked as the points of a half-dozen Type 30 steel bayonets were levelled at her throat, making her drop her knife!

"Stay right where you are, you selfish yūjo!" the chief of the seamen guards who had accompanied Kyōsuke to his nephew's home, Yeoman Third Class Hachirobe Kiyonaga, snarled as he threateningly moved towards her. "Our officer has business with his nephew. Be quiet!"

As Kinshō nearly soiled herself from the almost-fanatic looks that Hachirobe's men were now sending her — as if they WANTED her to defy such an order! — Muchi took a deep breath. Given all the insanity that had haunted his life since his transformed child's return — not to mention Cherry's reaction — he had no choice but to realize that his uncle was alive and here now in his house. "Oji-san..."

"Quiet, boy!" Kyōsuke snapped, making the salaryman wince. "Your mother must be ASHAMED of you! I can understand hesitance when it comes to our sacred duties for Tennō, but to ABANDON her like your daughters and Negako-chan told me you did — never mind you ignoring her warnings and marrying this selfish woman here..." He contemptuously waved at Kinshō in emphasis.

"HEY!" Kinshō shrieked.

"SILENCE, WOMAN!" Hachirobe bellowed.

As Muchi winced again, Kyōsuke shuddered...

...before he noticed something out of the corner of his eye. Gazing then at the television nearby, he
then gaped in wide-eyed awe on seeing a tranquil scene in some harbour somewhere, where a white covered bridge-like structure with a sag in the middle was now covered in a brilliant ruby dome of energy. The same type of energy that had covered his own beloved ship months before back in Sano-wan when the power of Earth's oldest living being had helped transform Yonaga into Itō Yoiko.

"Hayao, where is that?" he demanded, pointing.

Cherry's head snapped over, then his eyes went wide. "Oh, Buddha...!"

"Another kantai musume is rising, Kyōsuke-san?!" Hachirobe demanded.

"Not just any kantai musume, young man," the aged Buddhist monk warned. "That is Pearl Harbour!" As the members of Yonaga's crew hissed on hearing the name of the strategic harbour on O'ahu that had been their original target back in 1941, Cherry's eyes closed. "That memorial now stands over the wreckage of the one ship sunk in that attack that came to symbolize the RAGE the Americans felt when they had been struck in such a fashion, WITHOUT ANY WARNING FROM US!"

"LIES!" Hachirobe's second-in-command, Seaman First Class Shinozaki Nobuyori, snapped, his whole body shuddering with outrage. "Yamamoto-taishō's orders FORBADE that!"

"It is how it turned out," Cherry coldly declared.

"Which ship is that?" Kyōsuke wondered.

"The Arizona."

Eyes locked on Muchi, who seemed to be deflating on himself. "Where over a THOUSAND of her crew were killed by ONE BOMB STRIKE on her powder magazine, Oji-san!" the salaryman added as he gave his uncle a weary yet warning look. "If she returns like your own ship did..."

Hearing that, Kyōsuke grimaced before he drew out a PAA loaned to him by one of his grandnieces. "Yoiko-chan!" he called out after tapping the crystal, knowing his transformed ship would be listening in. "You best warn Hammond-shōshō! There's an incident at Pearl happening now...!"

To Be Continued...

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WRITER'S NOTES

Translation list: Napaaqtuqarunnannngittuq — Inuktitut translation of "tundra"; Kkama'gui — Crow; Marei'cha — Literally "the one who helps raise a child", the lover of the parent of a child in a Sagussan family (as previously explained in Part Nine); Surei'cha — Literally "the one who helps birth a child", the genetic co-parent of a child on Sagussa; Daimyō — Literally "great landlord", these were the regional warlords that controlled provinces in old Japan under the Shōgun ("supreme general") that ruled in the name of the Heavenly Sovereign; Bōsōzoku — Literally "violent running (out of control) tribe", this is the Japanese euphemism for a motorcycle gang; Shichi-fukujin — Seven Lucky Gods of Fortune; Kaishakunin — Literally "one who corrects a mistake", the person who beheads one committing seppuku to stop the pain; Yuoti-suo — Soul wolf; Roenor'beke — Jellyfish leech; Kasagi — The lintel at the top of a Shintō shrine's torii gate; Nuki — The tie beam keeping the pillars (hashira) of a torii gate together, always inserted below the kasagi.
Kurama and the Karasutengu first appeared in the Yatsura manga story "Just Like a Woman" (manga chapter #16). Her relationship with the Genpei War (1180-85) general Minamoto no Yoshitsune (1159-89) was revealed in the manga story "Father, You Were Strong!" (manga chapter #18). Of course, the name of Kurama’s royal house and her mother’s name are my creation.

The members of the Shield — Roman Reigns (born Joseph Anoa’i), Seth Rollins (born Daniel Lopez) and Dean Ambrose (born Jonathan Good) — made their first appearance as a group in the 2012 edition of the Survivor Series, which was shown on pay-per-view on 18 November that year (the Sunday prior to the start of this story). At the time of this story, they were scripted to serve as "bodyguards" to C.M. Punk (born Phillip Brooks) during Punk’s 434-day long second reign as WWE Champion.

As noted above, the three members of the Shield would make their first appearance on Monday Night RAW on 26 November 2012 in Lafayette in Louisiana.

List of shipgirls appearing in this part:

- Captain Eleanor Livingston USN (United States Ship Yorktown [CV-5])
- Chihaya Anne-taisa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan Kongō [CC-1])
- Chihaya Sarah-taisa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan Hiei [CC-2])
- Chihaya Isabel-taisa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan Kirishima [CC-3])
- Chihaya Heather-taisa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan Haruna [CC-4])
- Commander Charlene Hammann USN (United States Ship Hammann [DD-412])
- Commander Randi Stubbs RCN (Her Majesty's Canadian Ship Athabaskan [pendant G07])

Note that the looks of USS Yorktown (Eleanor Livingston) and USS Hammann (Charlene Hammann) are based on their Azur Lane interpretations. The version of HMCS Athabaskan (Randi Stubbs) appearing here takes after a fan’s interpretation of Athabaskan as she might appear in Kantai Collection, drawn by the artist Myuto; such can be seen at Danbooru at post #2738712. Of course, the "Quacky Quartet" composing the Kongō-class battlecruisers/fast battleships (TH Gunkan-tachi Kongō [Chihaya Anne], Hiei [Chihaya Sarah], Kirishima [Chihaya Isabel] and Haruna [Chihaya Heather]) take after their KanColle interpretations, both in looks and personalities.

Note also the hull classification symbol CC was set aside for battlecruisers by the United States Navy in the 1910s in preparation for the commissioning of the never-completed (or converted) Lexington-class ships from which USS Saratoga (Dionne Doolittle) was deprived; before she was rebuilt as an aircraft carrier and designated CV-3, she had been designated CC-3. The "CC" code was changed to mean a command cruiser in 1961. These days, there are no command cruisers active in the United States Navy.

The Mor-Tax spoken of in the narrative are the aliens who appeared in the two-season television series based on H.G. Wells' famous novel The War of the Worlds. Said television series appeared from 1988-90. Note that in the television series, the Mor-Tax (or Mor-Taxans) were reported to have come from a world forty light years away identified as being part of the constellation of Taurus as viewed from Earth. I changed that to make them natives of a world that can be located in the Crab Nebula, which is also in Taurus, but is approximately 6,500 light years from Earth. Since the Nebula is the remnant of a supernova that exploded in 1054, that being the origin point of the Mor-Tax made more sense to me.
Taishō Tennō (1879-1926) is the posthumous name of the 124th Heavenly Sovereign of Japan; his personal name was Yoshihito.

The heights of shipgirls I use of here is based on a chart made by Jaws7 noted on in the chat for the Harry Potter/Kantai Collection crossover series Harry Potter and the Shipgirls. It can be linked through at SpaceBattles post #42394924 (number #30138 in the HP&SG snippet collection thread).

Gamájun are prophetic bird-like creatures symbolizing wisdom and knowledge in traditional Slavic folklore. The name serves as the inspiration for the "lower-class" magical school for Russian wizards and witches in my stories, the Akadémija Volshebsvá "Gamájun" (Gamájun Academy of Magic); the "Bloody Siberian She-bear" Svetlána Múrometsa (mentioned in Part Twelve) is an alumnus of this school. In the universe of my stories, gamájun can transform from pure avians to pure humans, though they can also assume a therianthropic form with a human head and avian body.

Chapter Summary

The Duchess of Kyme Eau

The Martyr of Pearl Harbour is reborn with the help of MACUSA’s biggest mistake in recent years...while the Cosmic Mage Guild delivers the final smackdown on the Death Eaters, allowing the true Heiress of Slytherin to return...

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On Ford Island in Pearl Harbour next to the old Bachelor Officer's Quarters at Naval Air Station Ford Island, opposite Quay F-7S, two hours after lunch on Saturday (Tōkyō time: An hour after breakfast on Sunday)...

"LOOK! THE ENERGY'S FORMING AROUND HER! SHE'S COMING BACK!"

As a wild chorus of screams escaped all the people who had gathered around the small plaque set up in a clearing that overlooked the part of the harbour where the ship named after the Grand Canyon State had been destroyed nearly seventy-two years before, the CNN reporter who had rushed over to Ford Island to record this incredible moment in history faced the camera. "As you can see right now, the initial stages of what our friends from Yiziba call the 'Gifting' have begun," Nicole Chavez declared, waving towards the harbour as the waters around the wreck of the second of the Pennsylvania-class battleships began to bubble. "Thanks to the outburst of what pundits are now calling 'Shipgirl Fever' that exploded over social media in the last few hours thanks to the introduction of the reborn living spirit of the Japanese destroyer Fubuki in the person of Commander Fukushima Fujiko of the Maritime Self-Defence Force as she was introduced to the world by President Bartlet at the White House, people have flocked to Ford Island over the last few hours to pray to the spirit of one of the most tragic warships to serve in the United States Navy for her safe return as a shipgirl."

As chants of support escaped the sailors and Marines manning the rails on all the Navy ships currently in the harbour as well as standing on the shoreline, the reporter turned to gaze upon a smiling Navy chaplain, commander's silver oak leaves on the epaulette covers of his flight jacket. "Reverend Cole, how do you describe what was said at the Vatican an hour ago concerning the return of ship spirits as shipgirls?" Chavez asked. "Do you agree to the concept of these incidents as acts of God?"

"Acts of God, Acts of all the Kami of the Shintō faith, Acts of Buddha...and most of all, an Act of the living spirit of the Great Forge of God's first people, the Seekers, who created the Power Jewels all those billions of years ago, like the one General Dean Raeburn found on her twenty-second birthday back in 1889," Reverend Louis Cole, an Episcopal minister from Tuscon who had been deployed to Joint Base Pearl Harbour-Hickam over the last year from the navy operational support centre in his hometown to serve with the headquarters of United States Third Fleet, answered with a
delighted smile. "While there will be some people who would disapprove of the idea of disturbing war graves in this way, I think all the combined metahuman events that touched humanity before and during the Second World War can convince even the most harsh skeptic that there is truly something divine at work here. As Commander Fukushima explained at the White House, when she felt young Miss Saeru's aura of peace and tranquility, the spirits of her lost crew told her it was alright to seek resurrection — which is a core belief of Buddhism, by the way — and live the life they were cruelly denied at the Battle of Cape Esperance. The others who followed her — her sisters and half-sisters, the good shipgirls of Germany such as Captain von Bismarck and Captain von Spee, our own adopted daughter Captain von Savoyen...and now the living spirit of this aircraft carrier Miss Saeru's granduncle served on which was trapped in the Arctic for so long — have been blessed in the same manner."

"Damn straight the crews would want it!"

Both turned to see a gruff-looking man looking to be in his nineties, now seated in a wheelchair gazing at the sight of his old ship being reborn as a living person. His baseball cap had the image, name and hull number of the second of the Pennsylvania-class battleships on its front over the bill. Noting he wanted to say more, Chavez faced the camera. "With us right now is one of those who can proudly say they served on USS Arizona before she was sunk on December 7th in 1941: Quartermaster First Class Wayne Hunt, who hails from Scottsdale outside Phoenix. He's currently accompanied by his great-granddaughter Donna Reese, a sophomore studying at the University of Arizona in Phoenix for her doctor's degree." As the young lady currently with her relative waved, the reporter turned and knelt beside his wheelchair. "Quartermaster Hunt, what brought you here to Pearl in the first place?"

A tired sigh escaped him as he considered what to say to the reporter before he shrugged, a shy smile crossing his face. "Oh, what all of us who had served on her — those who were there that day and those who were all transferred off beforehand — want to do if they get the chance," he lamented...

...as the waters in Pearl Harbour began to churn wildly. The cheering crowd suddenly hushed as the silver bridge-like memorial that had been strung over the sunken battleship's hull for decades was inundated with the ruby energy that was now moving to rebuild the shattered wreck and allow her to return to the surface intact and whole. While cameras and cell phones were brought out to film the moment, said memorial glowed before it began to melt into jets of metal as the wrecked hull surged out of the mud that had helped entomb her for so long. Flashes of energy then saw the collapsed hull ahead of the boiler rooms literally stretch out, revealing gaping places where the decks and bulkheads had been atomized when hundreds of tonnes of powder went up thanks to a converted battleship shell dropped from a Nakajima B5N torpedo bomber launched from the carrier Hiryū then assigned on a level attack mission. Seeing the gaping spaces where so much had been, Wayne blinked; as part of the navigation department of the second Pennsylvania-class ship, he knew her insides like the back of his hand. "Good Christ! What the hell did people do?! Store the powder OUTSIDE the magazines?!!"

People screamed as currents of energy flowed over Ford Island from the Waipi'o Peninsula to the west. Seeing that, people were quick to note elements of the superstructure that had been cut away in the years after the war to make room for the modern memorial — which had been placed in an area on the peninsula behind high fences so it wouldn't be taken by unscrupulous persons who wanted to make a fast buck out of such a tragic moment in history — drifting over their heads to merge with the rebuilding hull. As they settled in place, the now melted memorial bridge was remoulded into the reforming superstructure. That was followed by flashes of energy like camera lights going off, revealing steel and other elements being teleported in to fill the empty spaces in the hull, not to mention the weapons taken off her in the wake of her sinking. "Damn...!" Hunt breathed out. "Whoever can do THAT...?!!"
"We just heard the voice of the Conservator, the unknown being who announces the rise of new metahumans on the planet Yiziba, declare the starting of the Gifting process!" Chavez declared as Arizona seemed to rise slightly above her waterline while a warp appeared over her restored funnel. "As you just heard in that announcement, the Conservator called forth Arizona's human name, Sonia Lily Owings," she added as the energy that restored the battleship moved to collapse 38,258 tonnes of steel, wood and other materials — including all the oil that had been in her fuel bunkers the day she was sunk and which had been leaking into the harbour as her "tears" in the years since that dark Sunday morning — then merge it into a glowing humanoid body that was teleported through the warp over the funnel. "As to how it's possible such a being would know what Moroboshi Ataru's counterpart in a parallel universe where shipgirls are also known to also exist would know such a name, it's unknown..."

"WHOA!" Hunt screamed out as the energy bubble that was busy remoulding the battleship into a living being turned from a brilliant ruby into something that seemed to equal the heart of the Sun itself!

As people screamed, turning away from such a burst of power...

Nesu...R'BUOLIM!

People perked, then turned to look anew...

SPLASH!

...before many of the people who had seen that incredible Gifting cried out in horror as a woman with shaggy caramel brown hair to her neckline and matching eyes literally dropped like a stone into the harbour! As screams of fright and surprise escaped the crowd, several sailors and Marines in their camouflage working uniforms immediately raced down into the harbour to rescue the resurrected battleship. Before the first of them could dive in, a streak of compressed air slammed into the harbour and saw the reborn battleship LIFTED out of the harbour, dropping in a mortar shot flight path to land on Langley Avenue behind the crowd. People spun around to look...then they winced as Sonia fell on her butt when she slipped out of her rescuer's arm. "OW!" the reborn battleship yelped in embarrassment before she blinked several times, then she looked up to see who had pulled her out of the drink.

Silence.

More silence.

Still more silence.

Then...

"Who the HELL are you, sailor?!" Sonia then demanded.

That question was also on the minds of the crowd as people moved to gather around her. Sailors and Marines based at Pearl immediately moved to form a ring to keep the growing crowds away from the resurrected battleship and the person who just pulled her out of the harbour so easily. Now that she was still, many people quickly moved to take pictures of Sonia in her traditional sleeved battlesuit. Such was patterned in a very beautiful reflection of her namesake state's flag: Gold top with thirteen red rays radiating like sunbeams from her ship's crest with some of the rays reflected on her sleeves, a
copper-tinted belt around her waist with a star-embossed buckle, dark blue pants and gold boots. Her crest had **USS ARIZONA** and **BB 39** in gold on the blue stadium ring framed in gold ship's rope, that surrounding a direct replica of her namesake state's flag in a shield, such held aloft by an eagle, flanked on both sides by heraldic dolphins in copper. The whole was set on a white field over a blue motto scroll with **DITAT DEUS** in gold, that intertwined with a multi-coloured ribbon denoting the campaign medals awarded to USS Arizona during her time in commission: The World War One Victory Medal (with **ATLANTIC FLEET** clasp) and the Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal (with one battle star).

As people then turned to look at the other person, however...

**FWOOSH!**

People blinked on seeing an empty space to Sonia's left.

Silence.

More silence.

Still more silence.

Then...

"Damn! Now THERE goes a real mystery man!" Hunt breathed out as he gazed skyward, noting a very tiny human-shaped speck racing off like a missile into the early afternoon sky, that soon disappearing behind high-level clouds way above the Punchbowl Cemetery to the southeast...

****

On the Mount Greylock Range in Massachusetts (130 kilometres west of west-northwest from Boston), that moment (local time: Over an hour after supper)...

"MERLIN! Did you see how fast she moved?!"

The other senior researchers working at the Mount Fitch headquarters of the Magical Advanced Research Projects Agency — the Union's equivalent to the Department of Mysteries in Britain's Ministry of Magic — could only gape at that live-time feed from the CNN camera on Ford Island which had just depicted the rescue of the living spirit of the country's participation in a war that spanned the normal, magical and metahuman worlds all together. Even if the cameras — and no doubt, all the cell phones that were used by the witnesses who had seen such a spectacular rescue even if Sonia Owings wouldn't have been harmed being forced to learn how to swim in Pearl Harbour like that — did pick up some details of the mysterious metahuman that rescued her, they hadn't got all the necessary details. Especially when it came to THAT metahuman's ship's crest.

But now that the most glaring mistake unleashed by the idiot stalebloods that were trying to once more seize control of the Magical Congress of the United States of America and reimpose Rappaport's Law onмагs nationwide had just made her first PUBLIC appearance among no-majs...

"Bets on what Lady Tariko is going to do when she finds out?" one scientist, Peter Candlewick, asked before he turned back to his magically-hardened laptop computer to compose a report.

"Ten dragots say Lady Tariko finds some no-maj-born kid that worships the memory of Regina
Mitchell and the other Black Maidens, then gets her or him Gifted. Most likely like she had to have done to Harry Potter all those years ago," another scientist, Donald Fischer, mused before he turned back to finish his report for the current chief of MARPA, Professor Stacey Waterstone.

Laughter filled the room as people assigned to the current events monitoring group within MARPA’s Intelligence Technomancy Office turned back to their own work as they waited for the CNN report concerning the reborn USS Arizona to end. Even if there were recording devices that would take in all that was being transmitted from CNN — as other devices were recording things from social media networks like Facebook and Twitter — no evaluation of this encounter between a "normal" American shipgirl and the being forged from the living soul of a warship that was the first in several respects when she had been launched at the Fore River Shipyard in Quincy in 1959 would be written yet.

Given what the arrogant stalebloods in MACUSA originally planned for said ship spirit when she had been effectively "summoned back to duty" in the summer just past, after informants among the Eight Imperial Magical Commanderies of Japan reported on what a certain young girl from Niigata had been doing all over the Pacific basin since the spring ultimately ended up unleashing...!

Considering that, Candlewick paused before he smirked, then he turned back to his computer. In the years since the end of the Wars of Liberation in 1945, magical society in the Union had been forced to advance itself in ways that the traditional pureblood gentry that had risen thanks to Rappaport's Law desperately wanted to reverse, all thanks to both external circumstances and renewed intensive White House interest in what mugalophobes in MACUSA tried to keep hidden for nearly two centuries. Fortunately, it hadn’t led to the rise of a dark lord like that Voldemort idiot that the British had to deal with before the turn of the millennium. No matter what people in America believed in when it came to no-majs, the idea of slaughtering those who didn’t have the "right" blood NEVER got off the ground in the Union. That was pretty much thanks to the majority of the founding peoples of then-British North American magical society being muggleborns who fled the homeland during the Seventeenth Century to live their lives BEYOND the influence of purebloods, just as then-New French muggleborns who were the true founders of modern day Canadian magical society had desired in that same time period.

Even with the ups and downs of relations between what was legally addressed as the "Department of Magic of the United States of America" and the President of the United States over the years and decades — from the cooperation between Allison Goldstein and Abraham Lincoln during the Civil War dealing with the daywalker vampire revolt led by Adam Sewell, to the total break of relations with the White House thanks to Woodrow Wilson and his love of Jim Crow laws launching the Panic of 1914, to the effective rescue of the American magical government shattered by the Übermenschen Gruppe thanks to Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Magical Executive Order 9010 in 1942 — there were certain things that were NEVER done in America, even under the guise of keeping the truth about magic secret from normal people. Especially in the face of a growing number of metahumans living in the Union.

Actually STEALING the stripped hull of a nuclear-powered missile cruiser from the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard in Bremerton near Seattle — and out of some mad hope of trying to literally do what almost all self-respecting Yizibajoei loathed above all else to see other reborn ship spirits around the world destroyed — definitely topped the list of "stupid staleblood bonehead stunts" in recent years.

Shaking his head, Candlewick smiled as he got back to work.

Oh, yes, President Bartlet would DEFINITELY have some words to say to people in MACUSA. Preferably in a Magical Executive Order!
"Naomi?"

A tired sigh responded from the elderly man in the dated clothing. "Naomi. Couldn't see the badge but the flowered red-and-gold jumpsuit with the flared sleeves and the bell-bottoms trousers are pretty unique even among Terrans-turned-Yizibajohei, Josiah. And Captain Owings did sense what she was."

Hearing that, Josiah Bartlet could only shake his head. On the one hand, he was more than grateful that the Heavenly Sovereign of Japan had asked Saeru Hinako to stop trying to intentionally resurrect ship spirits like she did in the spring and summer after her encounter with Fukushima Fujiko near Guadalcanal. On the other hand, he now realized that once THAT genie had been uncorked, it was now impossible to put it back into the bottle without consequences. Thanks to a certain Goa'uld system lord that elected to be STUPID and try to force the most powerful of that number to heel by kidnapping his CHILD, there was now NO WAY that the shipgirl genie was EVER going back into the bottle.

Especially not after what Margareta von Spee had admirably done.

"It just amazes me, how fast people were willing to demand the spirit of Arizona live again so soon after the world was introduced to Fujiko and the shipgirls from Germany," Professor Samuel Quahog, the 1929 alumnus of Ilvermorny that had been Secretary of Magic since the 1989 elections, said as he sat back in his guest chair in the Oval Office. "Given how many people died on her the day of that attack and how people have always seen her wreck as a living monument to America being forced into that war — in all respects — the idea of seeing her live as Sonia Owings..." He shook his head. "Strange."

"Not so strange, Mister Secretary. That's the influence of Star Blazers."

Hearing Josh Lyman's analysis of it, the people in the Oval Office — it was a special group of advisors from the executive staff under Leo McGarry, members of the Cabinet and the military chiefs that had been formed together once the existence of Fukushima Fujiko became known — broke down laughing. "How in the name of Merlin did you determine THAT, Joshua?" Quahog then demanded.

Lyman smirked. "As soon as the first tweets came in over Twitter after Commander Fukushima was introduced to the world by Hinako this morning, Mister Secretary, I put out a special questionnaire on the White House website about what American ship spirits would people want to see reborn. Arizona was in the top ten, even by people wary of the idea of disturbing war graves as this process does."

"According to a good sampling of tweets and e-mails we've seen, it was the simple fact that Captain von Spee was happy to fight the Goa'uld like she did — despite her Nazi 'taint' — that pretty much won over even those conservative evangelicals who would have VERY strong objections towards this sort of thing happening," Toby Ziegler added from his seat next to Lyman's. "That's not to mention Captain von Bismarck's public applauding of her old fleet mate's actions this morning. Add that to the automatic support of most environmentalists who have long been worried that the warships and other vessels sunk in World War Two will soon unleash all sorts of ecological disasters once their oil tanks vent themselves into the sea thanks to corrosion — as the EPA has warned many
times when it came to how much fuel was in Arizona's tanks which has been *constantly* leaking into Pearl Harbour since her sinking — it became a done deal. Only real objectors in that range are the far-right fanatics."

"And we have the 'kawaii' factor to bring into this, too," Lyman added.

"'Kawaii' factor, Joshua?" Quahog asked.

"The simple fact that the living spirit of a sixteen year old destroyer — if we count her age from the moment her keel was laid to the moment she sank — turned out to be a *very* beautiful, wholesome-looking teenage girl, Professor," C.J. Cregg noted. "Given also that despite her being built to a size that totally *violated* naval arms treaties at the time, Captain von Savoyen's very passionate renunciation of affiliation with the Nazis — as echoed by Captain von Bismarck and the other Kriegsmarine veterans — projects an image of shipgirls being really of the 'good'. Few people from what we've seen so far have disagree with that. Save for lunatics like those who belong to Reverend Phelps' organization."

Scowls crossed people's faces on hearing that reference to the Westboro Baptist Church in Topeka, whose rabid primitive Baptist fundamentalism was something that even sickened Lyman's old television debate opponent Mary Marsh. "So how do we explain Captain Haight-Ashbury?" Admiral Percy Fitzwallace, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, asked from beside Secretary of Defence Miles Hutchinson. "Given HOW she turned out and WHO were the ones who provoked that...!"

"No need to worry about 'icing magical squares' to borrow Mama Cass' words for it," Lyman mused.

"Josh, WHY do you call her that?!" Bartlet demanded as he sent the younger man an annoyed look.

A shrug responded. "It's what she likes to be called, Mister President."

More chuckles filled the room...

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*London, the Ministry of Magic (located under Northumberland Avenue in the City of Westminster), an hour later (local time: Sunday, an hour after midnight)*...

Eric Munch sighed in contentment as he set aside the copy of *The Quibbler* before he sipped the tea that had been made by a house elf working with the Ministry caretaker staff under Reginald Cattermole, then he stretched, wishing yet again that he had earned the necessary work points to finally get off the damned midnight-to-noon shift watching over the Atrium of the Ministry and could work more decent hours. Thinking on that, the native of Tinworth Beach in Cornwall then shook his head. Even now, decades after the end of the Wars of Liberation, memories were still quite long in the eyes of senior staff at the Ministry. After being captured in the Battle of Calcutta by the forces of Yomigawa Tsukiko in 1943, he had been transported to the island prison the infamous Kyūshū archmage had made of the old Mahōtokoro School of Magic on Minami-iōtō, where he spent the rest of the war. While others who had lived in old British India at the time had screamed bloody murder after what happened which turned the native magicals against them in that time, Munch loudly praised his captors for their humanity, even going so far as to declaring that Yomigawa had been more than justified to launch her campaign to free the magicals of Asia — and by extension Africa and elsewhere — from the loyalty lock ward stone systems which had been destroyed by Gellert Grindelwald's infamous Schwartzte Mädchen.

Ever since that time...
Soon as this current row with You Know Who is done with, maybe there will be a REAL change in our society, the night watchwizard mused to himself as he moved to pick up the copy of The Quibbler to read what was there. Much that Xenophilius and Pandora Lovegood's monthly magazine often gave him a good laugh, Munch was old and experienced enough to understand all the hidden messages lying in the tabloid-like stories contained within. Having been a "guest" of the Greater East Asia Liberation Army for a couple of years, he wasn't as analytically blind as many "stalebloods" these days actually seemed to be, borrowing the term for conservative purebloods the Protector of All Life herself devised during the Miracle of 1889 after she was empowered, when she moved to protect the Canadian Ministry of Magical Affairs from interference by the International Confederation of Wizards. That attitude had pretty much also led to his being condemned to the midnight shift at the Ministry for decades.

Stalebloods didn't like it when they were shown to be the idiots they were.

Munch perked on hearing the sound of an elevator echo from the hallway where specially-enchanted lifts that connected the Ministry to the normal world beyond landed to drop off passengers. Sure enough, one red telephone booth-shaped car was coming down, a single person inside. Grunting as he fingered his wand — shift change had been over an hour before, so this person was running quite late — he rose as he projected his most stern look at the newcomer to make sure he obeyed...

Wait...

What the devil...?

Oh...

Oh, dear Merlin, was it...?!

"Good morning, Sergeant Munch."

As Munch's eyes went as wide as saucers behind his glasses on recognizing the teenage man with the visible "sig" rune scar over his right eye, the messy black hair that denoted descent from the late Lord James Potter and the evergreen eyes behind spectacles indicating his relationship to Lord Potter's lovely muggleborn wife Lily, the car doors opened to allow Harry Potter to step onto the polished wood floor of the hallway before he came directly over to the old watchwizard's station. After a moment as his mind tried to catch up to the fact that the famous Boy Who Lived — who had been reported DEAD sometime prior to Christmas in 2011 — was now visiting the Ministry, looking very hale and hearty...

"Ah! Lord Potter, there you are!"

Harry's head turned towards the nearby internal elevators, then he smiled as the elderly man in the dark cloak approached him. "Professor Croaker," he called out, waving.

Munch blinked as Saul Croaker came up. "Um, Professor, is this REALLY...?!" the veteran of the Wars of Liberation wondered as he indicated the living ghost in front of his desk.

The elderly chief unspeakable smiled. "Indeed he is, Eric. As you know, because of all the idiots that once followed You Know Who possibly desiring to avenge their lord's 'death'..." — the watchwizard was quick to note the derision in the senior researcher's voice when he said that last word — "...Lord Potter here was moved to safety in the muggle world by Professor Dumbledore. Sadly, Albus didn't predict that Lord Potter's relatives would end up turning him into a practical house elf. Fortunately for him, when Lady Katabarbe swept through Surrey on her search to find people to become metahumans..."
That made Munch gape. Another reason he wasn't so well-liked among his peers was his sympathy towards the new generations of metahumans, who didn't have a proper government structure beyond the Specialized Warfare Act of 1949 to administer their lives. As he always said to those who asked, it wasn't the fault of anyone who became a metahuman for becoming such as much as it wasn't the fault of any muggleborn to gain magic. "Lady Katabarbe got to you, Lord Potter?! You're Gifted?!"

"Indeed I am," Harry said as his voice took on a female tone, which made Munch blink. "I was changed as much as Tariko was when she was pre-Gifted. But since I'm not recognizable as I live now..."

That instantly made the watchwizard tense. "You Know Who?"

A deadly smile crossed the transformed Rose Potter's face as her eyes glittered in anticipation. "It's long since time for that death-cheater to TERMINALLY check out of the hotel," "he" advised as her eyes flashed with the cauldron of power she possessed as the Sorcerer Supreme of Yiziba. "Here," she then bade as she handed over a bracelet. "Put that on. It'll shield you from anything those umale will toss your way. Things are going to get a little messy here in a few scenes, Sergeant. Get ready."

Munch smiled as he automatically slipped the bracelet on, his own mage-senses picking up the many invisible wards and shields now forming around him. "If you can sign here, Lady Potter," he then said as he turned his clipboard over. "I assume you possess no wand."

"No, sir," Rose declared as "he" signed her real name. "Too powerful for one."


"If I get hurt, Sergeant, my wife will NEVER let me hear the end of it."

That made the elderly wizard gape before he grinned. "Congratulations, Lady Potter!"

"Thank you, Sergeant. Shall we go, Professor?"

"Right this way, Lady Potter," Croaker bade.

With that, the two headed to the elevators that connected to various levels inside the ministry complex itself while Munch sat down to continue his watch. Stepping into one car, Rose took a deep breath before "his" eyebrow arched. "Miss Skeeter, I hope you're ready to duck and hide when the spells start flying," the transformed Sorcerer Supreme of Yiziba said as she focused on a very bright blue beetle that was perched on one of the car's frames. "You're about to get one hell of a big exclusive."

As the transformed reporter for the Daily Prophet shifted slightly, Croaker looked at her. "Don't change back now, Rita. You're not very good with defensive spells and you'd be an automatic target the instant Voldemort's people see you there. They don't want their beloved 'reputations' shattered, after all." A dry chuckle escaped him as the elevator came to a landing at Level Nine, they stepping out into the long corridor that connected to the main entranceway to the work area of the Unspeakables.

The two walked down the hallway, with the beetle fluttering over to land on Rose's shaggy hair. Sitting on a chair by the door leading into the main work area of the Unspeakables reading a copy of The Quibbler was a middle-aged man with ginger hair and dark eyes, a relaxed look on his face. He perked on sensing Croaker and his companion approach. "Ah, Professor!" Arthur Weasley called out...before his eyes fixed on the young man currently accompanying the senior unspeakable. "Who...?"
As the face of the patriarch of the Weasley Clan of Ottery Saint Catchpole immediately paled in both disbelief and surprise, Croaker chuckled. "Yes, it's him, Arthur. A little deception play Albus and I gladly arranged after Lady Tariko got to Harry after Hallowe'en in 2003 because of his muggle guardians' abuse of the lad. Harry, I do believe you know of Ginny's father Arthur."

"Glad to finally put a face to my friend's father, Uncle Arthur," Rose said as "he" offered her hand.

Quickly recovering, Arthur chuckled as he warmly shook that hand. "Well, that's utterly smashing!" he declared before curiosity crossed his face. "Gifted?"

"With Tariko saving me from those umale lo'obir'ba? What do you...?"

A hissing noise erupted from behind the three men...

**KK-KRUNCH!**

"**PUPPUKUPU! U-CHAN'S FISHING FOR SNAKIES, PYON!**"

Rose moaned before she looked over "his" shoulder...

...then she winced on seeing a very DEAD magically-enhanced green sea snake about ten metres long nearby, the area behind the head effectively crushed thanks to the boots of the Rainy Scrapper of Spring, who had a giddy smile on her face after teleporting in to literally save the day. As Croaker saw the tiny black mist indicative of a horcrux soul fragment being forced out of its host and dispersing, Rose sighed. "U-chan! This is MY fight scene, alright?! What are you doing here?!!"

Kisaragi Utako impishly shrugged as she stepped off the now-dead Nagini. Despite her being in her dark blue jumpsuit with the black belt and boots and the gold-and-grey clouded moon insignia with her ship name 卯月 in white-framed black on her chest, she had her "fishing" stasis bucket with her in one hand. "U-chan heard there were snakies to eat here, Rose-chan!" the adopted native of Chūō in Tōkyō (where she had been built at the Ishikawajima Shipyards in the mid-1920s) answered before she knelt down to reach into the wound in Nagini's neck, yanking out some of the flesh under that magically-hardened scaly skin. Without hesitation, she took a bite of the raw meat, munching on it, humming.

"**FILTHY MUGGLE MONSTER! AVADA KEDAVRA!**"

Everyone by the doorway quickly ducked clear as a bolt of green energy slammed into Utako's back, making her jolt for a second before the death magic dispersed into nothingness. Blinking in confusion, she looked over her shoulder to see the haggard-looking man in the black robes standing by the elevator landing, staring in wide-eyed disbelief at the fact that his killing curse hadn't harmed the creature that had so effectively slain his lord's beloved pet. "Impossible...!"

Croaker hissed. "Augustus...!"

"The idiot who betrayed his oaths to never divulge anything that your people do here?" Rose asked.

"Same one, Lady Potter!"

As Arthur blinked again, the Sorcerer Supreme of Yiziba sighed. "Fine!"

She snapped her fingers...

...then everyone in the hallway was teleported back into the Atrium, with Augustus Rookwood finding himself a couple metres above the floor. As the disgraced unspeakable found himself
rediscovering that VERY rude thing called "gravity", Rose looked over to Utako, who was now
drawing one of Osamu Shirayuki's cooking knives to start harvesting Nagini's body. "Taste okay, U-
chan?"

"Needs seasoning," the Rainy Scraper of Spring calmly answered.

"Rose!"

Everyone's head turned as flashes of energy heralded the arrival of two of Rose's peers in the Cosmic
Mage Guild, both in their fighting costumes even if their hoods were drawn away from their faces.
Despite the protective goggles over their eyes, Arthur was quick to recognize them both. "Ginny!
Luna! When were you going to tell me you were both GIFTED of all things?!" he demanded.

Ginny Weasley blushed. "Sorry, Dad!" the Mistress of the Fires of Passion said as she skipped over
to join her transformed leader hand-in-hand with her wife, she then reaching over to wrap an arm
around her father's. "Until we finally deal with that death-cheater, it had to stay secret!"

Luna Lovegood nodded. "I am sorry about that, Father! Now comes the teasing scene!" she declared
before holding out a crystal ball. "One prophecy orb, my leader," she said as she bowed towards
Rose.

The Sorcerer Supreme of Yiziba nodded as she held out "his" hand, allowing the seer to hand it
over...

"Very good, Mister Potter! Now give that over to me."

Rose blinked, then she looked to her left...

...as disillusionment charms instantly fell, revealing two dozen people in black robes, many of them
having their faces covered with skull-like masks. As Arthur snap-drew his wand to defend himself
and his daughter, the leader of the group — the only one unmasked — snapped, "WANDS
DOWN!"

"Malfoy..." Croaker hissed.

As footfalls heralded the arrival of one of the unspeakables from the level below — Croaker was
quick to recognize him as Broderick Bode, who had been a classmate of Arthur Weasley's at
Hogwarts; no doubt, the poor fellow had been overtaken by an Imperius Curse — Lucius Malfoy
smirked as he approached his targets. "No need to pretend you care, Professor," the patriarch of the
Malfoy Clan of Avebury stated. "Even if you defeat us, all the right-thinking wizards and witches of
the land will NEVER stand for this unholy alliance that fool Dumbledore is making with these
freaks!" He sneered at Luna and Ginny. "How far the blood traitors fall, Weasley! Your daughter
and daughter-in-law...!

"Did you just call my friends 'freaks', umale r'betike?"

That ice-cold voice nearly froze the room as the Death Eaters all turned as one to stare wide-eyed at
the "Boy Who Lived", whose green eyes were now glowing with the raging inferno of power that
was barely contained within "his" body. As wands were levelled on her, the Sorcerer Supreme of
Yiziba fixed her eyes on Lucius. "That's NOT the thing to say in front of me, STALEBLOOD!"
"he" snarled as a wave of energy lashed out from her body to wash over everyone else in the Atrium.

Both Arthur and Croaker — not to mention the disguised Rita — shuddered as the condensed
memories of over seven years of abuse, loneliness, bewilderment and a complete lack of
understanding towards WHY Harry Potter was forced to endure living with a family that didn't want him intruding in their "perfectly normal" lives, Rose shook "his" head. "Doesn't feel so good, does it?" she wondered as she walked towards the now-quaking Lucius, who had dropped to his knees, eyes wide as he was made to mentally experience ALL of what the "Boy Who Lived" endured before his rescue by the Trickster of the Show. Nearby, Broderick had also collapsed, his eyes widening in confusion as the Imperius that had been placed on him by Lucius months before was shattered. "While you were prancing around laughing your asses off at the fact that you tricked the idiots who run this sick society of umale by 'pleading the Imperius', I was forced to experience things no child even on YIZIBA should endure! Don't start bragging scenes about how 'better' you are! You — don't — know — SHIT!"

"Th-then wh-why fight u-us, child? D-d-Dumbledore l-l-left you th-th-there...!"

That was a shuddering Walden Macnair, who was trying to keep his grip on his executioner's axe as he moved to slide himself against the wall close to one of the floo portals where people teleported into the Ministry complex. "You're right, Granduncle," Rose said as "he" slowly walked over to kneel before the official executioner of rogue creatures serving the government of the land. "I do hate the professor for leaving me there without even ONCE looking in on me. You should have heard the kobaloi in Gringotts swear and scream and carry on after I was Gifted, then visited them to claim my family ring." Here, "he" held up the glowing ring that marked her as the Marchioness of Taunton Deane and one of the Seven and Ten who were the real lords of the Wizengamot. "My parents' will was IGNORED...and all because the professor was paranoid about what might have happened to me had it been executed and I was raised among you umale to become something like Uncle Lucius' son PRETENDS to be!"

Lucius' eyes widened. "Wh-what...?"

A dry, humourless chuckle responded. "You think Drake is THAT ignorant, Uncle Lucius?" she demanded as she stared in amusement at him. "Don't you read your own laws?! The instant you got that cute tattoo on your arm, you ENSLAVED yourself to that death-cheater you call a 'dark lord'! Which would have seen your family wealth turned over to him if he so asked for it, leaving Drake a PAUPER!" She shook her head. "Even if he's refused offers several times made by Hermione to be Gifted, he's no fool. He's been waiting for this day so that you'd FINALLY get out of the way and he can ascend to your family seat!" Her eyes then fixed on Malcolm Parkinson, who was trying to stand. "As Pansy wants you out of her way, Uncle Malcolm! Or did you forget that she owes Tariko a LIFE DEBT?!

"WAIT! WHAT?! PANSY'S LIKE US?!

That was a wide-eyed Ginny, who was staring in shock at her team leader. "You know Tariko doesn't kiss and tell, Ginny," Rose said as "he" gazed at her subordinate...

...just as the very shadows of the Atrium began to shift and wreathe around. "Oh, my!" Luna said as some of those now semi-solid shapes moved to help unmask and restrain the Death Eaters, making them shriek as they felt a biting cold rip through their bodies akin to what they heard victims of That Place endured when they were in the grasp of the Hollows. "Lady Silhouette! Do join us, please!"

"Have every intention of doing so, Lady Prophecy!"

Malcolm jolted. "Pansy...?!!"

The shadows at the end of the hallway morphed, allowing a woman dressed in solid black from neck to toe save her shoulders and arms to step in after teleporting herself from Ōmure-jima, a savage smile on the face of the current incarnation of the Shadow Hunter. She was holding the hand of her
wife, now dressed in the gold rune-trimmed dark red uniform of the Bright Seamstress of Spells. On recognizing Hermione Granger, Malcolm snarled, "PANSY! What in Merlin's name are you doing holding that filthy mudblood's hand?! Stop standing there and help free us! Your lord demands it...UURKK!"

That was thanks to the shadows holding the current Earl of Keerford down, who smashed his head against the stone wall of the hallway to shut him up. Staring at the mere shell of a man that her father had effectively become back in spring on the revival of his former master, Pansy could only shake her head. "I am SO glad I allowed myself to be Gifted shortly after Drake's father allowed that death-cheater's horcrux to possess Ginny here in 2009," she declared. As the other Death Eaters gaped at her, the Shadow Hunter smirked as she allowed her wife to lean against her. "Not only did it allow me to see you pathetic homr'bu umale for what you REALLY are, it got me one hell of a hot WIFE in turn!"

"Aren't soul-bonds just wonderful?" Luna passionately declared.

"Oh, they are!" Hermione purred before she and Pansy kissed.

As the trapped Death Eaters hissed at the sight of their friend's daughter showing herself now as a true "blood traitor", Arthur quickly stood to attention, then bowed formally to the beautiful couple. "Lady Parkinson. Mrs. Granger," he called out, making them look his way. "My deepest congratulations at your soul-bond. I can guess why you were forced to keep things secret given your soon-to-be deposed father's words just now. Still, I pray for a most happy marriage for you both in the future."

"Hah!" That was a wide-eyed Malcolm, who had managed to fight off the shadows' grasp on his mouth. "That thing who WAS my daughter won't get a thing, Arthur! My son will see to it that happens...!"

Pansy smirked as she snapped her fingers. "You mean THIS son, Father?"

Shadows morphed to reveal a dark cell somewhere, though clearly not within the fortress of Azkaban out in the North Sea. As the Death Eaters looked, a young man with features clearly indicating he was a relative of both Malcolm's and Pansy's writhed as silvery ghost-like beings held him in his seat, several warping through him while he silently screamed in agony. "Condemned to 'A' Block at Her Majesty's Prison Gonebren for TREASON AGAINST MAGIC and TREASON AGAINST THE CROWN, Father-in-Law!" Hermione snidely declared as she pulled away from her wife to kneel before Malcolm, she leaning into his face with a vengeful smile. "That's MY revenge against you for your pathetic attempt at trying to kill MY parents during the summer, you staleblood son of a bitch!"

His eyes went wide. "I n-n-ever did anything a-a-against your family...!"

"Oh? Explain the dementors that tried to eat their souls, then?!"

"He wouldn't have any influence on that, Mrs. Granger."

Hermione's head snapped over. "What...?" she hissed as she focused on Croaker for a moment, then her eyes went wide as the other possibility for such an act came to her. "Umbridge...!" she then snarled as her own brown eyes glowed a very bright gold. "I'll MURDER that toad...!"

"Um, Hermione-chan, you're too late, pyon!"

People gazed at Utako, who was now relaxing on a bench beside Nagini's bloody corpse, nibbling
on some flesh after carving up several thick steaks. "What do you mean, Commander?" Hermione asked as she stood up, walking over while conjuring up a very large carving knife.

The fourth of the Mutsuki-class destroyers nodded as she took that deadly blade in hand, then she knelt down to finish slicing up the giant sea snake. "That cross-breed of a *kanazuchibō* and a *gamanoke* was stupid enough to attack Charlene Boleyn-taisa after she and Mary Hood-taisa reported to Mycroft Holmes-dono at Hogwarts in the wake of their return to duty and Gifting." She then stared in bewilderment at the people next to Rose. "I thought you Brit wand-wavers had ancestral requirements when it came to serving your government. I'd hardly call something like that Umbridge thing HUMAN!"

"What does that make YOU, you freak monster?!"

Rose looked over, then "he" smiled a death's head grin. "Oh, Aunt Bellatrix!" she then playfully cooed as she walked over to kneel in front of a shivering middle-aged woman who clearly bore the visible signs of having spent over a decade in Azkaban at the mercy of the dementors despite her naturally cool beauty. "*There* you are! I heard you and your friends were looking for some better accommodations! If you just wanted to move over to 'A' Block in Gonebren, all you had to do was ASK!"

Bellatrix Lestrange — she and almost half of the active Death Eaters here tonight had been broken out of Azkaban at Hallowe'en; such an occurrence had been kept top secret by the leaders of the Ministry of Magic out of Cornelius Fudge's blind fear that public faith in his government would plummet to the basement if such information got out — snarled as she tried to wrest herself free of the shadows holding her down. "YOU FILTHY HALF-BLOOD FREAK!" the current Viscountess of Barnet shrieked as she tried to spit at the being that had hurt her beloved master so badly in the autumn of 1996. "YOU DARE MOCK YOUR BETTERS?! ONCE OUR LORD COMES AND KILLS YOU FINALLY, POTTY, WE'LL REMOVE THE PATHETIC FILTH FROM THIS WORLD AND MAKE IT OURS!"

"Wow! You have to admit, she definitely needs a better scriptwriter, Rose!"

Silence.

More silence.

Still more silence.

Then...

"Neville...?!!" Hermione hissed out as people turned...

...then they blinked as the flash of a PAA finally faded, allowed a very muscular teenage man to appear at the end of the hallway. Seeing the dark green and brown battlesuit now being worn by the current heir to the Marquessate of Holdenhurst near Bournemouth in Dorset, complete with hooded green demi-cape hiding his dirty blond hair, hazel eyes and very rugged face, Ginny moaned. "You had to be Gifted as THAT?!!" she demanded. "When the hell did Tariko get to you, Longbottom?!"

An amused and VERY mature chuckle escaped the current incarnation of the Master of Plants, *Ukor'be Dumdyatosi* ("Vinclozolin"), as he paused beside Utako to watch while she rendered the corpse of Voldemort's familiar. "Oh, the same day my uncle decided to drop me out of a TWO STORY window to 'scare' the magic out of me,? Neville Longbottom stated as he stepped around the mangled sea snake to stand close to the transformed Rose. "Bella, Bella, Bella!" he teased. "You
look stuck in the shadows!” He clicked his tongue as he wagged his finger, clearly not viewing the woman who helped torture his parents into insanity years ago as a threat. "You should learn to be careful walking around at nights!"

Bellatrix's grey eyes flared. "Neville Longbottom, isn't it?" she teased back before a vicious smile then crossed her face. "How are your mummy and daddy?!" she sneered out.

Neville smirked as he held up his PAA, tapping its crystal. As a holographic image appeared over the device, his smile then faded. "Glad that after tonight, they can live in the open and LAUGH at the fact that they were cured LONG AGO of what you, your staleblood husband and brother-in-law and Crouch's fool son did to them, Bella-wella!" As the other metahumans in the Atrium laughed at such a silly nickname for the infamous rogue hit-witch who was seen as Voldemort's most loyal and passionate fighter, Bellatrix stared in shocked disbelief at the sight of a pair of very alive and healthy retired aurors now in the Longbottom manor house, enjoying evening tea with his paternal grandmother Augusta. "You can't COUNT the number of times we LAUGHED at all the idiots who 'pleaded the Imperius' and all their lapdogs when they mocked me because my poor, poor, poor parents were still in Saint Mungo's, supposedly permanently comatose!" he then mock-sobbed as he reached up wipe a non-existent tear away from his eye. "Especially when I really played my game up and fooled that arrogant moron Snape into thinking that I was totally pants at potions!" he then added with a vicious smile.

"How could you have fooled the healers at Saint Mungo's, lad?"

That was a wide-eyed Croaker. "When you're Gifted with two thousand years' worth of knowledge when it comes to being the master of ALL forms of plant life and their uses — including creating very lifelike replicas of living and breathing beings — you can get away with practically next to ANYTHING, Professor!" Neville assured him as he stepped back from Bellatrix, turning off his PAA. "Um, Rose, if you wouldn't mind, I think it's time for these umale r'betike to see what you really look like!"

"Aw, c'mon, Rose! I'm a teenage man! I have needs, you know!"

"HOW DARE YOU TRY TO STEAL MY WIFE, BLOOD TRAITOR?!"

That was Bellatrix's husband Rodolphus Lestrange, who was snarling as he glared murderously at the son of the aurors his master wanted dead when the prophecy now contained in the crystal ball being held by Rose Potter had been uttered. Staring at him, Neville blinked before he gazed at Bellatrix. "You don't need to lie anymore, Bella-wella! I know how much you've got the hots for old Snake-Face over this useless piece of flesh here!" He thumbed Rodolphus, who shrieked in outrage at such an insult. As Bellatrix sneered, the Master of Plants smirked. "After all, I KNOW ABOUT DELPHINI!"

Silence.
More silence.

Still more silence.

Then...

"YOU FREAK MONSTER! YOU LEAVE MY DAUGHTER ALONE! THE DARK LORD WILL KILL YOU FOR YOUR IMPERTENANCE, LONGBOTTOM! ALL OF YOU...!"

"Oh, do shut up, please!"

Bellatrix's voice was instantly cut off by a wave of Rose's hand while the other Death Eaters all paled at the fact that Neville currently planned to target their lord in a manner that would be expected of any of Voldemort's people, not from one of the "light". "Before you chastise Master Longbottom for his plot to seize Lady LeStrange's child in just reparations for what she, her husband, brother-in-law and the late Lord Crouch's son did to Master Longbottom's parents back in 1996 after Lady Potter was orphaned, you better know one simple thing," Pansy then coldly declared. "As Vinclozolin, he's normally a HEEL!" She smiled at her father, who recoiled from that icy glare. "Just like I normally am, Father!"

"Then why fight for Dumbledore?!" Lucius demanded.

"Who's saying we're fighting for him?"

That was Rose, who was now walking towards the Fountain of Magical Brethren in the middle of the Atrium itself, her hands holding the prophecy orb behind her back. As people gazed her way, Eric Munch — who had remained at his station despite the arrival of the Death Eaters, enjoying his evening tea and reading his magazine — then blinked. "You're just fighting for revenge, aren't you, lass?"

"Yeah, you can say that, Sergeant," the Sorcerer Supreme of Yiziba said as she tossed the prophecy orb into the air as if she would play around with a baseball. As some of the Death Eaters hissed on seeing that — Voldemort had promised them untold pain if that particular orb was destroyed when he sent his people into the Ministry to obtain it while preparing to deal with the long-missing "Boy Who Lived" — Rose did some interesting tosses with the orb. "After all, as it is said so often on Yiziba, there's nothing that gets the fight scene going better than a revenge quest!" Catching the orb, she then gazed upon the statues in the Fountain. With a smirk, she reached out with her free hand.

Energy warped around the statues. As the real Death Eaters and the others watched, the "helpless" centaur, goblin and house elf that had been depicted always gazing adoringly at the "wise" human magics guarding over them transformed. The centaur now wore hard boiled leather battle armour in protective plates over his body, a loaded crossbow in hand. The house elf became a forest elf, looking taller and stronger as well as being dressed in very ornate battle robes. The goblin was now in full battle armour, which looked akin to what legionnaires serving the Roman Empire would have worn, brandishing a sword. Before the eyes of the stunned "normal" magics, the creatures were changed to depict themselves standing dominant over the witch and wizard — both transformed into robed Death Eaters complete with their masks — as they were made to submit to more powerful beings.

As the real Death Eaters snarled, Hermione came over. "Can I add to this, Rose?" she asked.

"Please, 'Mione, go ahead!"

"Okay!" And with a wave of her hand, the Bright Seamstress of Spells conjured the images of two
British Army soldiers in proper field camouflage, holding bayonet-equipped L85A2 assault rifles, they both stabbing two additional Death Eaters in the heads with their weapons. "Perfect!"

"My turn!" Luna called out as she waved her hand.

Magic escaped the Far-Seer's hands to produce a dozen or so magical creatures, including a Welsh green dragon! They were then depicted attacking not only more Death Eaters, but a flock of dementors, a coven of vampires and a pack of half-transformed werewolves. Seeing the "dark" creatures being trampled down without mercy by all the "lesser" beings made the Death Eaters hiss at the VERY public statement their metahuman opponents were now making...even if some knew deep in their hearts that this sort of thing would NEVER be tolerated by all "proper" wizards and witches living in Britain.

"Wait! Have to add to that!" Pansy then called out.

Her shadows immediately flooded around the transformed fountain, allowing a slender female figure to appear close to the centaur, she depicted to be physically yanking apart the face of one werewolf, said person dressed in the same model uniform as Kisaragi Utako now wore. As the Death Eaters spun around to stare wide-eyed at the fourth of the Mutsuki-class destroyers, a curious look crossed her face. "Um, Pansy-san, why on Earth are you putting Liese-kun there, pyon? She's German!"

"Because she was the one who unleashed the Whitby Werewolf Massacre, Utako."

Looks of nausea crossed the faces of many in the room as they immediately recalled what they had seen in The Daily Prophet before Hallowe'en. "I hope the poor lass wasn't infected," Munch said.

"Her body was built to destroy STARSHIPS that make the Great Pyramids of Giza look like child's toys, Sergeant," Rose said as she walked around the transformed fountain, nodding in approval at what it had been transformed into, she slipping the prophecy orb into one of the pouches on her belt under her cape. "Pathetic little infected puppies like Greyback and his ilk weren't worth more than two minutes' exercise to Lieselotte. Then again, she is Prussian in her heart! Being quick to make war to protect the helpless is the hallmark of all true Prussian warriors. She has a reputation to live up to."

"Oh, Merlin! I've got to take pictures of this!"

Hearing that voice, Rose looked up, her mage-sight picking out the magically-masked Nymphadora Tonks now relaxing on a ledge overlooking the Atrium. A glance around the room revealed other members of the Order of the Phoenix also there, masked by disillusionment charms and clearly ready to fight. "Wait for it, Dora! We're not done with this yet!" she called out.

"What else could you add, Lady Potter?" Croaker wondered, glad to note that Albus Dumbledore's allies were present to help, but definitely NOT moving to interfere in Rose's fight.

"Something my wife wants to add, Professor. But first..."

She snapped her fingers...

...heralding a shriek of outrage as someone was literally YANKED out of nowhere to crash down on the floor close to a huge banner depicting Cornelius Fudge hanging off the wall closest to the interior elevators. As the Death Eaters all screamed on seeing their lord and master treated in such a manner, the man born Tom Riddle roared as he rolled to his feet, sending a stream of curses at the monster that he had sought to destroy on Hallowe'en evening in 1996. When Arthur snapped up his wand to send some curse towards Voldemort, Ginny's hand snared her father's arm and shoved it down. "It's
HER fight scene, Father!" she scolded as he stared wide-eyed at his youngest child. "Don't butt in!"

As the current manager of the office responsible for preventing normal objects from being cursed blinked as he took that in, Rose yawned as the storm of energy from Voldemort splashed harmlessly off an opaque field of energy protecting her. While the Death Eaters screamed their support for their leader as he tried to bring down the transformed "Boy Who Lived", Rose's fellow metahumans were all laughing in delight on seeing how much even a well-experienced and self-taught arch-mage like Tom Riddle didn't have even an iota of the power needed to try to take Yiziba's sorcerer supreme down.

Of course, Rose decided to rub it in.

"WHAT IS THIS?! A CLOUD OF MOSQUITOES TRYING TO BITE ME?!" she demanded. "YOU CALL THAT LOMTUMSAM, VOLDEMORT?! I COULD DO THIS IN MY SLEEP!"

"HOW DARE YOU CALL OUT THE DARK LORD'S NAME, FREAK?!" Bellatrix screamed.

"OI, LONGBOTTOM! YOU GONNA TURN THAT YAPPY BITCH INTO A SEX DOLL OR WHAT?!"

"I DIDN'T WANT TO INTERRUPT THE REVENGE SCENE, POTTER!"

Rose teleported over to slap Neville across the back of the head. "Dummy! It's YOUR revenge scene, too, Neville!" she snarled as she glared intently into his eyes.

As Voldemort screamed in outrage at being IGNORED like that, he moving to charge towards Rose's back, the Master of Plants smiled. "My thanks, my lady!" he said with a very dramatic bow to his friend before he spun around, hand reaching out towards the screaming renegade hit-witch's face.

A bolt of sap-like liquid burst out of his palm to to punch right into Bellatrix's forehead, making her jolt as something washed through her brain with the speed of hot sulphuric acid. As Rodolphus and his brother Rabastan howled in outrage on seeing the former's wife so brazenly attacked like this, Voldemort growled as he instantly sensed what Neville's power was doing to his most passionate fighter. "Stupid boy! AVADA KEDAVRA!" the dark lord howled as he sent a bolt of energy at him.

A black-dark blue-and-red blur zipped in front of that attack, the bolt disintegrating into nothingness on impacting the severed head of Nagini, which made Voldemort shriek on finally noticing that his familiar was nothing more than chopped snake meat. "Thank you, Mister Snake-man, pyon!" Utako teased as she tossed the burned skull over to clatter on the floor by the dark lord's feet. "U-chan had no use for that, pyon! U-chan's sure your snaky will be REALLY good to eat once it's cooked, pyon!"

"AVADA KEDAVRA!"

Another bolt of energy slammed into Utako's face, leaving no mark on her. "What was that, pyon?! A piece of paper?!" she then demanded, putting her fists to her hips.

"IMPERTINENT MONSTER!"

"Nope! U-chan doesn't want to eat your impertinence, pyon!"

"DIE!"

"HEY, RIDDLE! YOUR FIGHT SCENE'S WITH ME, REMEMBER?!!
Voldemort spun around...

...then he howled as a glowing chain of energy with a kama scythe-like ending snared him in a loop. With a yank, Rose sent him flying into one of the clear elevator tubes, shattering it. The dark lord screamed in agony as his supporters all helplessly shrieked at such "muggle" fighting by the Sorcerer Supreme of Yiziba while Rose dispersed her version of the psychic kusarigama ki-powered grappling manoeuvre she learned from Moroboshi Negako. "Damn, he's tough!" she snarled before staring at Neville. "Oi, Longbottom! Didn't you promise me he wouldn't take your blood when that idiot Pettigrew yanked you out of the stadium back in the spring?! There's such a thing as Gift thievery, you know!"

"You think I don't bloody hell know that, Potter?!" the Master of Plants snapped back as the damaged elevator tube began to shake violently while Voldemort tried to get free of the wreckage. "The only blood that bastard child's pet rat took was a sample my dad gave me for the occasion!"

"BLOOD TRAITOR! HOW DARE YOU CALL THE DARK LORD THAT?!!"

"Oh, shut the bloody hell up, Lestrange!" Neville snapped at Rabastan. "Didn't your father ever tell you the truth of his old school buddy Tom Riddle?!" A hollow grin crossed his face as he leaned over to glare into the older man's eyes. "Remember?! His friend, the orphaned muggle's son?!"

"LIES!" all the Death Eaters shrieked out...

...save a wide-eyed Bellatrix Lestrange, who had been literally TRANSFORMED into a vibrant, healthy teenage version of herself, complete with flowing raven hair and a well-formed body, still hidden by the dark battle robes she had worn. As Pansy gestured to make her shadows let the Viscountess of Barnet go, Bellatrix meowed playfully as she rolled to her feet, snaring her wand. Seeing that, Rodolphus and Rabastan howled with delight. "Quick! Free us, Bella!" the former called out...

...before he eeped as she levelled the tip of her weapon at him. "Bella...?"

"MORSMORDRE CRUCIO!"

ALL the Death Eaters shrieked as Bellatrix's curse lanced into her husband's Dark Mark, the energy of that hideous magic being instantaneously magically transmitted and amplified through the links that kept them all bound to their lord to burn their nerves in ways they couldn't HOPE to defend themselves from. Noting that, Arthur turned to gaze on Croaker. "Um, Professor, is that legal?" he quickly asked.

"She's attacking a magical construct, Arthur," the senior unspeakable stated as the area around the elevator tube Rose sent Voldemort flying into began to glow ominously while the dark lord moved to burst free. "It's not her fault that their very LIFE FORCES are tied to those things!"

"Oh...!"

"HOW DARE YOU?!!"

The remnants of the landing under the elevator tube that Rose had pitched Voldemort into exploded, revealing the serpent-like yeoman's son from Yorkshire as he fully teleported himself into the room. As he quickly moved to make sense of what was going on, he instantly focused on the hideous tableau that his enemy had made of the Fountain of Magical Brethren. With a roar, he summoned his magic to send a massive burst of energy to destroy such a hateful image. "YOU WILL NOT WIN,
Rose smirked. "Sucker!" she hissed. "NOW, THÉRÈSE!"

Voldemort paused as he looked around. "No...!"

"CURSE YOU, POTTER...!"

...PRAEDA BELLICA!

The dark lord then screamed in mortal agony as energy just EXPLODED from him, making the whole Ministry complex shake violently. As people peeked out from windows and galleries overlooking the Atrium from the upper levels — including a wide-eyed and very dishevelled Cornelius Fudge, who was currently accompanied by Percy Weasley and several members of the Wizengamot; they had been meeting to prepare emergency legislation to declare all-out war against the metahumans who were obviously moving to destroy wizarding Britain — Voldemort’s shriek of pain was soon joined by the cries of all his followers save Bellatrix Lestrange; Saul Croaker had noted that her arm no longer bore the snake-and-skull tattoo the Death Eaters normally wore to mark their allegiance to the dark lord. Among those who were affected was Hercules Avery, one of the Wizengamot members; Rose knew he had been one of Tom Riddle’s classmates in the 1940s and currently held the seat for the Barony of Tunstall in modern-day Staffordshire. Also among those who were having their magic drained out of them because of what was happening to their master was Corban Yaxley, the chief of Wizengamot Administration Services, clerical/research staff for people such as the elder Avery. As Fudge gargled in horrified disbelief on seeing that one of his close political allies among the members of the legislative side in the Ministry of Magic suffering by whoever had called out the Praeda Bellica invocation of all things — not to mention the fact that You Know Who himself was SOMEHOW standing in the Atrium of the Ministry complex even if he was clearly the target of said benediction! — Rose calmly walked over to Eric Munch’s desk, reaching up to take the beetle that had been riding in her hair all this time, then she placed her gently on the desk. "Stay there," she quietly bade. "You’ll be safe."

As the watchwizard blinked, a bubble of energy burst free from Voldemort’s body to form a nebulous cloud in the air above the floor of the Atrium. As a gasping scream of relief escaped Pius Thicknesse — he was one of Amelia Bones’ senior aurors; seeing what just happened, Croaker realized right away that he had also been under the Imperius, no doubt thanks to Yaxley — the dark lord collapsed to the floor as his now-powerless followers passed out from the horrible pain they endured thanks to whomever Rose called out to unleash the Praeda Bellica. Silence quickly fell over the scene as people seemed to hold their breath while watching that ball of magic that had been yanked from Voldemort float there, wondering what was going to happen with the dark lord who had haunted their lives now at the mercy of someone who looked like Harry Potter had the Boy Who Lived actually been born a GIRL!

"WHO CLAIMS THE SPOILS?!"

That was Albus Dumbledore, who was now calmly walking from where he had apparated himself in, accompanied by both Minerva McGonagall and a very relieved Severus Snape. As people looked around for whoever had been the one who had called forth the Praeda Bellica, Rose quickly glanced a question at the potions master, getting a reassuring nod from him with a wink.
"WHO CLAIMS THE SPOILS?!"

That was Percy Weasley as he stepped away from his principal to look around. Seeing that, his father nodded in delight, glad to see his rule-abiding son acting properly in this situation.

"WHO CLAIMS THE SPOILS?!"

That was Saul Croaker, who had been joined by a relieved Broderick Bode; the latter had been looked over by Pansy Parkinson's shadows after the Imperius that had been used on him was broken.

"My wife claims the spoils."

Eyes locked on a now-smiling Rose Potter. Hearing that, Percy blinked before he apparated down to the floor of the Atrium, walking smartly over to the beautiful girl in the red uniform with the very nice rune-lined cloak. Stopping before her, he bowed low as she offered her hand. Noting the ring that was on her finger, his eyes widened before he looked up at her. "My Lady Potter, forgive my impertinence, but were you born Harry James Potter back on the thirty-first of July in 1995?"

"I was he, Master Weasley."

As people gasped on hearing that — though none were going to do anything to offend someone who claimed the person who had just effectively defeated VOLDEMORT as her WIFE, even by speaking out against such a transformation — Percy bowed his head respectfully. "May I also assume it was the Lady Tariko Katabarbe of Mutsu, born Lord Moroboshi Ataru on the thirteenth of April in 1995, who rescued you from your relatives after Hallowe'en in 2003, thus seeing you turned into as you are now?"

"Indeed you are correct, Master Weasley." Rose's eyes then sparkled with mirth before she winked at him. "May I wonder in return if the Sorting Hat placed you into the wrong house when you began studying at Hogwarts in the late summer before I was saved by my friend?"

Percy flustered in surprise at that question while people laughed at that teasing comment from the Sorcerer Supreme of Yiziba. "It was offered by the Hat, my lady. I felt it more necessary to seek the courage of Gryffindor to see to it the corruption that no doubt helped chase you away from our society after your Gifting was forever removed from our land, rather than the thirst of knowledge befitting one of Ravenclaw, not to mention the necessary cunning one of Slytherin would require."

_Tene lomher'buo, Thérèse Ariana Peverell...

People looked up. "Thérèse held off until NOW?" Ginny demanded.

"All to make it better, Ginny!" Luna chided...

...before other people in the room cried out as silvery energy surged out from the floor of the Atrium around the transformed Fountain of All Brethren to wrap around the new tableau the Sorcerer Supreme of Yiziba and her friends made to mock Voldemort and his followers, not to mention their allies who wouldn't dirty their hands even if they wanted the very same things that the Death Eaters gladly killed THOUSANDS years before to obtain. As the chill of HUNDREDS of the Hollows of Gonebren flooded the hall, a huge geyser of white energy came up from the floor to Rose's left to absorb the magic that had been brutally yanked out of Voldemort's body, it immediately transforming into the brightly glowing body of a beautiful teenage woman the same age as the transformed Boy Who Lived.

_Nesu...NALOKROR'BE!_
People screamed as that glowing figure was draped in a dark green costume complete with the same style of hooded, rune-lined cape as her wife...

...just as Voldemort's body began to disintegrate, a moaning wind echoing in the background as a final cry escaped the man born Thomas Marvolo Riddle in an orphanage somewhere in London.

Within a second, he was no more...

...and Thérèse Ariana Peverell, the current incarnation of the Major Domo of the Cosmic Mage Guild, **Nalokror'be** (the "**Thaumaturge**"), calmly stood in his place.

Silence.

More silence.

Still more silence.

Then...

"Master Weasley, I think you recognize my ring?"

Percy blinked, then gazed at Thérèse's offered hand, which had a very ancient ring design on it. Gaping at the emerald-studded serpent in the same general shape as what people who were sorted into Slytherin wore on their uniforms, he then bowed low; as an administrative officer serving in the Ministry of Magic, he had been trained to use his mage-senses to identify properly blessed head of house rings no matter what house the wearer was claiming to be the head of. "I do, Your Grace."

As people hearing this cried out in shock on hearing that honorific style being used for this muggle-looking woman with the silvery hair done in bushy twintails over her ears, deep blue eyes and the Mediterranean-like tan on her skin, Rose smiled as she leaned over to kiss her wife's cheek, making people exclaim again at such a show of warm love towards Voldemort's killer...

"**NO! THIS IS SOME FOUL TRICK! YOU CAN'T CLAIM TO BE LADY SLYTHERIN!**"

People instantly looked up to see a sputtering Cornelius Fudge glaring wrathfully at the strange woman who had just appeared among them in the wake of Voldemort's effective downfall. As Amelia Bones and several other people — including Pius Thicknesse — moved to stun him...

"**FUDGE! YOU'RE FIRED!**"

Heads snapped over to Thérèse...

...before a pained shriek escaped the minister for magic as something akin to what had exploded from Thérèse's other-self moments before burst free from his body! As people gasped in shock on seeing a good portion of the poor man's magic ripped from him, the large banner displaying a picture of Fudge off to Thérèse's left snapped clear of its support ropes, then collapsed to the floor of the Atrium. While some people tensed on realizing that this strange woman who unleashed the Spoils of War benediction on Voldemort had the power to REMOVE a sitting Minister for Magic, others relaxed themselves.

"**Welcome back, Lady Potter,**" a voice then declared, making people gaze up at Pius Thicknesse. As Rose and Thérèse looked themselves, the veteran former Auror bowed his head. "And welcome at last to our long suffering society, Lady Slytherin. I assume you're mug-..." He quickly caught himself before giving her an apologetic look, bowing his head. "I assume you're **normal**-born, my lady?"
"I am, Master Pius," Thérèse declared before she gazed on the spot where her other-self had fallen. "I lived when he didn't want me to live after he learned that I too possessed the blood of Master Salazar even if my ancestors had been normals for generations. That, it seems, was enough to seize the spoils of my enemy and strike him down," she added, which made people's eyes brighten in understanding.

"It's been obviously proven by Gringotts per the Treaty of 1779, Mister Thicknesse," Percy warned as he gazed upon the older wizard. "Lady Thérèse couldn't wear the ring otherwise."

"Indeed you're correct, Percy," Dumbledore called out, making people look his way. As many onlookers then found themselves giving the elderly headmaster apologetic looks for believing the stories that had been printed in the Prophet concerning what Fudge and his supporters had claimed concerning the man who had defeated Gellert Grindelwald in 1945 and his "dastardly plot" to overthrow the Ministry, the native of Mould-on-the-Wold on the coast of the Bristol Channel near the border between Somerset and Dorset smiled. "Ladies and gentlemen, I'm sure you ALL have many questions as to what just happened this evening. They WILL be answered to the best of everyone's abilities while ALSO maintaining certain necessary secrets to prevent the rise of ANOTHER dark lord such as Voldemort..." — he ignored the shudders of fear from many people on hearing that battle name — "...anytime in the future. Please, I beg you, don't pester either Lady Potter or Lady Peverell about what's happened."

"Besides, some of us really need to get our BEAUTY SLEEP now!"

That was a grinning Luna Lovegood. As people stared at her, laughter then burst from the crowd...

To Be Continued...!

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WRITER'S NOTES

A **Navy Operational Support Centre** (NOSC) in the United States Navy Reserve is the equivalent of a "stone frigate" in the Royal Canadian Navy Reserve; it is a training facility which serves as a training and administrative unit for naval reserve personnel in any particular state or region. Each state in the Union possesses at least one NOSC to service reserve personnel. Unlike RCN stone frigates such as HMCS *Star* (the naval reserve division for Hamilton in Ontario), USN NOSCs are not given ship names.

The lone shipgirl appearing and identified here:

**Captain Sonia Owings** USN (*United States Ship Arizona* [BB-39])

The version of **USS Arizona** (*Sonia Owings*) that appears here is based on how she is depicted in the Kantai Collection fan work *Pacific: World War II US Navy Shipgirls*. A perfect portrait of the second of the Pennsylvania-class battleships as shipgirl can be found on Danbooru at post #2031169.

Translation list: **Ditat Deus** — God Enriches, the official motto of the State of Arizona; **Dragot** — The American magical equivalent of a galleon, which is given the monetary sign D; **Umale r'betike** — Literally "dead blood same", this combines the standard Yizibajohei insult with an equivalent translation of "staleblood"; **Lomtumsam** — Literally "pure chaos", the Yizibajohei term for magic; **Mormordre Crucio** — The spell invocation that uses the Cruciatius Curse upon a Death Eater's *Dark Mark* to attack their nerves through the altered protean charm that created the Mark.
The concept of MARPA (Magical Advanced Research Projects Agency) was first introduced in the omake Magic In Miami: The Sunshine Troupe Assembles. Regina Mitchell and the Schwartzte Mädelchen (Black Maidens) first appeared in Wizards and Avalonians III; Mitchell's story is better explained in Magic and Canada. Also explained there are things such as the magical side to the Civil War and the Panic of 1914; I have yet to get to writing on what provoked Magical Executive Order 9010 as of the time this part of the story was posted (16 August 2018). Of course, the whole concept of MACUSA (Magical Congress of the United States of America) was first introduced in Pottermore, though in the universe of my stories, MACUSA simply serves as the legislative branch of what is properly called the Department of Magic of the United States of America (DOMUSA), whose origins are also described in Magic and Canada. Pottermore is also where the current Secretary of Magic/Magical President, Professor Samuel Quahog, was introduced.

Read over The Seventh Shipgirl to guess who "Naomi" is. Thanks to IJNFleetadmiral for creating the original version of her in his fanfic story Gaijin Teitoku.

The West Wing character notes: Mary Marsh first appeared in the pilot episode of the series, then later appeared in "Shibboleth" (season 2, episode 8). Admiral Percy Fitzwallace first appeared in "A Proportional Response" (season 1, episode 3) and would appear sporadically for the first five seasons of the series. His administrative boss, Secretary of Defence Miles Hutchinson, was first mentioned in "A Proportional Response", not appearing until the first part of "Inauguration" (season 4, episode 14).

Harry Potter minor character notes: Eric Munch was mentioned in Order of the Phoenix; the details of his back story are my creation. Rita Skeeter first appeared in Goblet of Fire; it was also in that book that Augustus Rookwood and Broderick Bode were first mentioned (they would appear in Order of the Phoenix). Walden Macnair first appeared in Chamber of Secrets. I took the name for Pansy Parkinson's father, Malcolm Parkinson, from Jeconais' fanfic White Knight, Grey Queen. His son Michael Parkinson is my creation and first appeared in The Icemaidens and the Philosopher's Stone. Bellatrix Lestrange first appeared in flashback in Goblet of Fire and would fully appear in Order of the Phoenix; her husband Rodolphus Lestrange and brother-in-law Rabastan Lestrange were introduced into the series the same way. Bellatrix's love child with Voldemort, Delphini Lestrange-Riddle (AKA Delphi Rowle), first appeared in the stage play Harry Potter and the Cursed Child. Hercules Avery (his given name is my invention) appeared in flashback scenes in Half-Blood Prince; it was also in that book that Corban Yaxley first appeared. Pius Thicknesse first appeared in Deathly Hallows.

A kanazuchibō ("hammer priest") is a yōkai from Japanese folklore which is often portrayed as a grotesque, misshapen goblin-like creature that carries a mallet. Given the lack of true descriptions concerning what it did from the many portraits made of it, it is believed these days to have served as an icon of cowardice, which struck me as befitting when it comes to Dolores Umbridge. More befitting for Umbridge is her being called a gamanoke ("frog spirit"), which is more properly called an okka; this is a baby-talk corruption of the term obake ("monster"). Given Umbridge's toad-like appearance...

The Praeda Bellica ("Spoils of War") benediction has appeared from time to time in various Harry Potter fanfics; as to which story used this first, I can't say. In the universe of my stories, this is one of the few spells that requires an invocation (as done in Mahō Sensei Negima) before the benediction itself is called on. As shown above, said invocation is Marte Cruentum! Peto Iure Victoriae! ("Bloody Mars! I claim my right of victory!"). which calls upon the blessings of the Roman god of war.
The first version of the living spirit of the horcrux within Harry Potter's curse scar made human, Thérèse Ariana Peverell, appeared in *The Icemaidens and the Philosopher's Stone*. 
Yoiko learns of the fate of her sister when the rest of the Operation: Ten-gō veterans visit Welcome House while Apophis has a run in with America's most successful shipgirl...

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Ōmure-jima, Welcome House, an hour before lunch (London time: Two hours after midnight)...

"PUPPUKUPU! PYON, PYON! U-CHAN'S BACK WITH A BIG SNAKY TO EAT, PYON!"

Hearing that excited shout from the transformed fourth of the Mutsuki-class destroyers after she teleported into the main recreation room of the commons which had now been taken over by Yonaga's officers and all the reborn shipgirls to date, Yamamoto Reiko looked over. "Commander Kisaragi, report," the transformed flagship of the Combined Fleet at Pearl Harbour ordered even if her nose was flaring with interest at the scent of raw snake meat. "You just disappeared on everyone like that!"

Hearing that statement from the adopted native of Kure (her place of construction as THG Nagato) and Shimonoseki (the traditional capital of her namesake province), Kisaragi Utako blushed before she stood to attention, then saluted the older-looking shipgirl. "U-chan's sorry about that, pyon! But when Shirei-kan's friend Rose Potter-sensei put out the news about this big magical sea snaky that yōkai Voldemort had as a pet and familiar, U-chan went to London to find and kill the snaky, pyon!"

Reiko blinked before returning the salute. "Until we get enough light cruisers back to serve as torpedo squadron and destroyer division leaders, Commander, you will report directly to your eldest sister before doing things like this," she then bade, making the senior officers from the fifth of the Yamato-class ships blink in confusion at such leniency from the transformed battleship. They then found themselves nodding as Reiko's chestnut eyes softened, the concern flashing across the
battleship's face quite apparent to all. "Please, we can't afford to lose track of any one of us, U-chan, not at a time like this. We may soon face a version of the Kantai Kessen our admirals and officers had long predicted we had to endure." As Utako's breath caught in her throat on hearing the phrase for the "decisive battle" that the leadership of the Imperial Japanese Navy always envisioned had to happen once the final confrontation with the Americans for overall control of the Pacific Ocean basin began, Reiko lowered her arm. "Again, as I ordered just now, make sure that you report at least to Mutsuko-chan before you go somewhere for a 'fishing' expedition. And don't be shy to ask for help if you feel you need it."

Utako nodded. "Hai! U-chan promises, pyon!"

"Ah! U-chan! Where have you been, oyo?!"

Reiko smiled as Utako's elder sister Mutsuko came into the lounge from one of the stairs to the upper floors where the shipgirls now resided. As the Rainy Scrapper of Spring grabbed the hand of her older sister and practically towed her out of the commons to tell her about the fight within the headquarters of Britain's magical ministry not an hour before, Ogawa Gorō came over to stand beside the transformed battleship. "That's being gentle, Reiko-san," Yonaga's captain quietly warned.

A nod of acknowledgement answered him. "Hai, Ogawa-taisa. But as soon as they got here, all the destroyers that came back on their own began to gravitate to those destroyers Hinako-chan helped restore to life in the spring and summer. Given how much our hosts went out of their way to show girls like Fujiko-chan how to enjoy life as human beings — especially given how much our land and culture has changed in the decades after the war ended — a softer hand is needed for the others. Not those such as Yoiko-san and myself, of course. But given that those such as U-chan are teenagers in body, their souls are clearly moving to adjust to live as teenagers. Seeing how free people are these days..."

"It was something we all despaired about while we were in Sano-wan," combat officer Kawamoto Masao mused, enjoying cloudberry tea after the pleasant morning watch in the rotunda. "Hearing all the signals from NHK even up there, noting how much things were changing at home thanks to what the Americans did after Tennō issued the Rescript to finally end the war..." Here, he scowled as a touch of revulsion flooded his heart concerning that particular broadcast, which for DECADES he refused to consider had really happened. "It is as if our home country was becoming as alien as the Americans seemed to us at times." He chuckled. "Even Brent-san was rather apologetic about that."

"He was?" Reiko asked.

"I was indeed, Captain Yamamoto."
Everyone looked up as a smiling blond, blue-eyed alumni of Annapolis came into join them, accompanied by his best friend among Yonaga's crew. As Reiko's eyes twinkled in obvious interest on taking in Brent Ross' quite handsome features, the retired intelligence officer tried not to fluster, which made his friends among the crew of the fifth of the Yamato-class ships laugh, especially his best friend. Matsuhiro Yoshi, Reiko knew, was a doho from Los Angeles, a graduate of UCLA who was as much a master at haiku as he was a skilled pilot with the A6M2 Zero-sen; his position in the Sixth Naval Air Flotilla made him deputy commanding officer of the 296th (Fighter) Air Group under Shimizu Masao.

"And we're glad you were, Brent-san!" Konoe Nobutake, a lieutenant who commanded one of the squadrons of the 296th Air Group, stated as he toasted the American who had effectively become Fujita Hiroshi's adopted son with his cup of tea. "Even if Kyōsuke-san's grandnephew and grandnieces have been very sympathetic to us all, from what I've seen since coming back...!"

"I know, Nobutake-san, I know," Ross breathed out as he moved to make tea.

"What's going on?"

Everyone snapped to attention as footfalls heralded the arrival of the leader of the War Hawks, she escorting four tall twenty-something women in white jumpsuits with redwood torii insignia on their chests, they accompanied by what looked like a native Canadian teenager in a red jumpsuit with white belt and boots. As she accepted their salutes, Dean Raeburn smirked. "At ease, people," she bade before gazing on the reborn fast battleships. "Got some strays to bring over."

Reiko beamed in delight on seeing the kanji written on the four transformed fast battleships' chests. "Welcome back, girls!" she stated as they gaped on seeing her before smiles crossed their faces on realizing who obviously had to be in effective charge of all the shipgirls now on Ōmure-jima. "When did you all come back and how did you run across Raeburn-shihan here?"

"Oh, that strange kami on the planet where Raeburn-shihan's jewel was created turned me into this a week ago," Chihaya Anne said as she waved to herself. "After I spent some time in Táiběi with some of the local magicals who realized what I was, I felt something weird happening out in the area of Midway, then flew over to investigate." She flustered, instantly feeling the hands of her youngest sister Heather squeeze her shoulders. "Didn't bring tea with me, but Reigns-sensei was happy to ask Shirayuki-san to send some Darjeeling over when I made landfall on Midway, when these three caught up."

"Both Sarah and I awoke at the same time, shortly after we sensed Onē-sama being salvaged," Chihaya Isabel, the reborn THG Kirishima, added. "We tried to trace her down, but couldn't find her. After going to Kure to see what was happening, we watched as Heather was restored to life..." — here, she waved to her youngest sister Heather, the reborn Haruna — "...then we felt Onē-sama..."
heading towards Midway. Since we still believed the war was still on, we went out to rendezvous with her."

"Haruna kept telling Onē-sama-tachi that the war was over and there was peace with America, but they wouldn't listen until we met Negako-sama on Midway after Reigns-sensei was so nice as to get some tea for Onē-sama," Heather added with a genki smile as she first indicated Isabel and Sarah (the reborn THG Hiei) before indicating Anne. "It's a good thing that when Negako-sama came to Midway to speak to us, she brought that very, very, very nice little sister of hers as well to keep everyone calm." As Reiko nodded while her heart fluttered on hearing Heather speak of Saeru Hinako, the fourth of the Kongō-class added, "Since that strange carrier Haruna never knew about had written orders from Tennō Himself to not press any sort of fleet action against the Americans, Haruna was able to finally make Onē-sama-tachi listen, then come back to Japan with Onē-sama."

She then blinked in confusion. "Is Reiko-san really sure that Yoiko-san is actually a Yamato-class ship? Yoiko-san's too BIG!"

That made Ogawa and his subordinates laugh. "Are any of you girls telepaths?" Ross then demanded as he crossed his arms, making the Chihaya sisters gaze in confusion at him. "I'm not sure if you can do that for us, General, but if your Jewel can make these girls see our memories of Yoiko-san before...!"

Shouts from outside made heads snap around before Reiko headed out the main doors and down the steps onto the driveway that encircled the fountain on the front lawn. She immediately spotted a group of seaman guards in their field uniforms, weapons drawn as they surrounded an older teenage woman — whose stature reminded Reiko of Catarina von Savoyen in a way — in a very dark grey jumpsuit dotted with glittering silver stars, lighter grey belt and boots, a full moon on her chest topped with the kanji 凉月 in two-tone grey. She had long silver hair with a side ponytail over the left ear, a black hachimaki bearing the golden kanji 第六十一駆逐隊 in traditional right-to-left reading format tied around her head to keep some of that hair back. Blue eyes peeked out of a mature face twisted with confusion, fear and the obvious signs that this particular shipgirl clearly hadn't eaten at all for some time; seeing her glance hungrily at the many buffet tables laid out for Yonaga's crew told the story.

Reiko sighed. "I assume you just came back, Suzutsuki-san?!" she called out.

That made the newcomer's head snap over before her eyes went wide, then she snapped to attention, giving the former Combined Fleet flagship a smart salute. "Just a couple hours ago, Nagato-san," the third of the Akizuki-class air defence destroyers called back, her voice cracking. As the seaman guards relaxed after they were waved down by Ogawa and Kawamoto, she added, "Apologies for not signalling ahead after that strange kami turned me into this..." — she waved to herself in emphasis, clear confusion crossing her face — "...but given that I started hearing Yahagi-senpai, Kasumi-san, Isokaze-san, Asashimo-san and Hamakaze-san cry out that something bad's happened to Yamato-sama...!"
"What of my sister?"

She paused, then slowly turned...

...before she seemed to shrink on herself on seeing the colossus of a shipgirl now staring intently at her from just a couple metres away. Before the destroyer could ask who this was — the kanji on the wheel of Fate insignia emblazoned on this tall and muscular woman's green top was unknown to the third of the Akizuki-class destroyers — the very cute pre-teen girl in the white jumpsuit with the red heart standing beside the tall shipgirl moaned. "You're scaring her, Yoiko-san!" she admonished.

People blinked...

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The rotunda, minutes later...

"F-f-f-for m-m-me...?"

"Hai desu no! Suzumi-san looks really hungry! Bon Appétit!"

"F-f-f-for m-m-me...?"

A twitch of tendons was instantly noticed appearing over Osamu Shirayuki's eye. "Hai desu no...!"

"Um...Shirayuki-san...!"

"Hai desu no?" the Great Chef of the West called out as she gazed on Ashikaga Shiori.

The raven-haired, blue-eyed and well-developed woman now known on Yiziba as the Twister of the Oceans, Or'beu ("Ushio"), blushed as she walked over to place a comforting hand on her just-returned fleet mate's shoulder. "Back during the last year of the war and in the wake of the surrender..." — she ignored the stiffening of bodies among the members of Yonaga's crew in the
rotunda on hearing THAT word — "...rationing was very strict, even among members of the armed forces. Suzumi-san just isn't used to the idea of being fed such a full meal, even if it is her first full meal as a shipgirl."

"Wh-wh-what about m-my sisters?!" the woman now bearing the name Akiyama Suzumi, who would be seen on Yiziba as the Icy Warrior of the Night, Suodate ("Suzutsuki"), then demanded as she gazed in bewildered awe at the full plate of food — a mixture of Oriental and Occidental dishes chosen to ensure that a just-woken and Gifted battle doll wouldn't suffer from any sort of malnutrition so soon after the Gifting — now set before her. "Wh-wh-what about Y-y-Yahagi-sempai and th-th-the others?! Wh-what about Yamato-sama?! They need to eat, too! I can't have all this to myself...!"

Sniffles echoed from the teenage chef. "Suzumi-san doesn't like Hime's cooking...?"

The silver-haired destroyer nearly choked on her breath on seeing that, then she quickly dove in. As the other sisters and Ataru grinned on seeing Suzumi eat the food quickly even if she was obviously enjoying every morsel, the members of Yonaga's crew — not to mention their transformed ship — tried not to chuckle at Suzumi's acquiescence. They wouldn't openly laugh, of course. Hearing Suzumi voice her concern for her missing fleet mates and her willingness to see to their needs before her own clearly demonstrated how much of the samurai spirit burned brightly within the adopted native of Nagasaki. At both ends of the table, Fujita Hiroshi and Dean Raeburn shared knowing looks while people moved to get on with their day. Some of the crew of the seventh carrier of Operation Z were in their dress blue uniforms in preparation for a march on the Imperial Palace in the afternoon where they would be formally received by the Heavenly Sovereign and allowed to finally stand down after seventy-one years of being ready to carry out the mission set for them by Fujita's late classmate Yamamoto Isoroku.

A small gaggle of destroyer shipgirls were standing by the entrance to the dining room as they took a chance to gaze upon the third of the Akizuki-class destroyers enjoy her first meal as a shipgirl, then Fukushima Fujiko waved her sisters and friends out of the rotunda. "Was it really that bad when the war came to an end, Himeko-chan?" she then asked Akamatsu Himeko, who was the only one of the extended "special-type" destroyers beyond Shiori to see the war's end.

"Da," the silver-haired adopted native of Maizuru (where she had been built as THG Hibiki) and Nakhódka in Primórskij Kraj (where she had been accepted into Soviet service after the war as ÈM Vérynyj) breathed out as she adjusted the white sailor cap she normally wore with her "civilian" seifuku. "As Sióri Jósitakovna just said, the amount of food even served to our crews by war's end was so short in nutrients, many ended up being forced to grow food in gardens set up in the naval districts as well as fish for what they could. At least Sióri and I remembered the better times before the war. Súdeumi Sídeuovna never knew such a life since she was built in 1942, after things turned against us."
"Whoever gave the fucking orders to start that shitty war in the first place?" Ashikaga Akemi snarled as she crossed her arms, leaning against the outer wall of the rotunda. "I can't believe Tennō could be hoodwinked so damned easily by those shitheads in the Army to start that crazy shit in the first place! To take on America?! Yeah, the dopes from Europe seemed easy pickings after Hitler's troops waltzed over them like they did, but America was going to let go of the Philippines...!"

"We have to really think hard about our attitudes, Akémi Minórovna," Himeko warned as she gave the profane orchid-haired destroyer a warning look while the others moved to sit on chairs that had been laid out close to the entrance of the rotunda for people to relax in. "We had no right to take over Korea and Taiwan like we did, never mind that madness we unleashed in China and elsewhere! Remember, Sumié Khirómovna's half-sisters all see themselves as Korean now. If they come back and hear about any support towards what we did to their adopted nation said from any of us, they'll take us to task for it! And given how powerful they're said to be according to what Isaák Fomích warned everyone...!"

"What about Yoiko-sempai's crew?" her younger sister Inoue wondered as she gazed out towards the mass of tents set out all over the front lawn of Welcome House where members of Yonaga's crew had been resting since their being moved down to Ōmure-jima from Sano-wan shortly after midnight. "Do they still believe in all that nonsense about our war being 'just'...?"

"They will believe what honour demands them to believe, Inoue-chan."

The destroyers turned before they gaped as the fifth of the Yamato-class moved to sit with them. "But they could cause issues, Sempai!" Inoue warned as Itō Yoiko moved to sip from her cup of cloudberry tea. "After all, they were trained to never consider things like surrender. It's a miracle they didn't want to charge on Pearl Harbour the instant Ayumu-san got them out of Sano-wan! Even now, they're preparing themselves for a fight! Even if Tennō orders them to stand down..."

"I know, I know," Yoiko said as she squeezed the young destroyer's shoulder in reassurance, a smile crossing her face. "For so long, I too believed there was no choice but to press such a war with America no matter what. With the xenophobia that's ruled our people since the Black Ships of Perry-taisa came to our land in Kaei-rokunen having built up like it did back in those days, the fear of the Western powers combining forces to shove us into a corner and submitting to them as they had done to China was just too much for people to take. At first, it was for noble reasons. For so long, we had benefited from the wisdom that had been transmitted to us from the Middle Kingdom — and yes, the Land of the Morning Calm as well — that it seemed only proper that we would want to protect them in return when the 'southern devils' came at us like they did with their unequal treaties. Seeing China sliced apart like that, seeing Korea plunge into chaos because they didn't have China to stand strong for them..." She shook her head. "It was all too easy for the power we gave ourselves to go to our heads like it did. Even now, it's hard for ME to believe such things...and I have the wisdom of people like Teitoku and my crew — hai, even Brent-san and his father — to fall back on to try to really understand things..."
"Frau Kapitän Itō!"

Yoiko's head snapped up to the sky in the direction of Stargazer Hill and that very gaudy pigmy-like statue at its apex, seeing a silver-haired tomboy in her battle uniform fly down towards them. "What is it, Frau Fregattenkapitän Maaß?!" the transformed aircraft carrier demanded.

Lieselotte Maaß came to a landing nearby, then snapped to attention, saluting the carrier. "Begging to report to you, Frau Kapitän!" the adopted native of Kiel (where she was built) and Budzieszowce in the Polish province of West Pomerania (her namesake's home town) declared. "My sister and I just spotted a force of schiffsmädchen approaching from the southwest, all clearly Japanese if their facial features and their uniform badges say anything about it! One light cruiser and six destroyers by the 'feel' we got from them! Frau Kapitän von Bismarck and Frau Kapitän von Savoyen are moving to shadow them with Frau Markgräfin Mamoru. Sadly, neither Melanie nor I are knowledgeable in Chinese characters...!"

"Fujiko-san? Kodachi-san?"

"Poi!"

"Hai, Sempai! C'mon, Liese-chan!"

With that, Fujiko raced into the air after Lieselotte to the south, they followed by Hamamoto Kodachi. "Could they be the ones that Suzumi-san sensed when she was Gifted, Sempai?" Inoue asked as everyone gazed in awe at how fast Yoiko had moved to assess the situation, then deploy forces to protect the island and its inhabitants from a potentially dangerous situation.

"That's a possibility..."

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Twenty kilometres south of Ōmure-jima...

"They're sensing all the schiffsmädchen on the island, meine Schwester."
"Ja, I see that. Don't approach them too closely, Catarina."

"Jawohl."

"So who the hell are they?" Itō Mamoru wondered as she focused on the arrowhead formation of shipgirls holding about a kilometre's altitude above the waters of the Sagami Sea as it flowed into the wider Pacific Ocean. Glad that she had been convinced by Hatoyama Rinrin to wear a pair of specially-designed goggles with her battlesuit as the Star Surfer, the tomboyish twelve year old could only scowl. "Yeah, they seem to be Japanese. Why can't one of them just turn around...?"

Her voice faded as if in answer to her prayers, the aft girl of that formation paused, then spun around to gaze intently at them. Once she had revealed herself, the two German shipgirls and the ninth of Tariko Katabarbe's half-sisters were quick to see that she had the teenage looks of a destroyer, with bob-cut chocolate brown hair and caramel eyes. She had a white battlesuit with dark blue trim and boots, a hurricane-like insignia in dark blue on her chest, that topped with a white-outlined 雪風 in blue.

"'Yukikaze'?!" Mamoru read. "That was one of the Kagerō-class girls! She survived the war...!"

In a blur of white and brown, said destroyer was now about three metres in front of Luisa von Bismarck, her eyes wide with curiosity and hope. Before the adopted native of Schönhausen could react, Catarina von Savoyen instantly dodged around in front of her old mission mate, a determined look on her face. Reading the ship prefix on her crest, a flash of outrage crossed the destroyer's face as she raised her fist, the air around her instantly cooling to sub-zero temperatures. She then caught herself as recent memories took over. "'Purintsu...Oigen'...?" she tried to read the English script on Catarina's chest before she lowered her arm. "Hey! How come you have an American ship's crest?!" she demanded.

"She was surrendered to the Americans at the end of the war, just as you were to the Chinese, Frau Fregattenkapitän," Luisa explained as distant shouts from far behind the newcomer made Mamoru look to see the others of her formation spin around and soar their way. "The war's long since over, meine Freunde. Frau Markgräfin Mamoru, what is her human name?"

Mamoru hummed. "Yuhara Yukiko, I think..."

That made the newcomer gape. "Eh?! You know of the kami that turned Yukikaze into this?!" she exclaimed as she indicated her own chest to emphasize what happened to her.
That made the Star Surfer laugh. "Yeah! The Conservator — that's his name — did the same thing to my sisters and I, not to mention Luisa-san and Catarina-san here!" She then gave the adopted native of Sasebo (where she was built) and Jīlóng on Taiwan (where she had been based out of after the Chinese Civil War in 1949 as ZMZ Dānyáng) a curious look. "So what'cha doing heading our way, Yukiko-chan? Yeah, we got a whole bunch'a you at Welcome House...!"

Hearing that question, Yukiko's eyes swelled up in tears as the rest of her fleet mates from the ill-fated Operation: Ten-gō came up to float close to her. "It's horrible, Ojō-san!" she nearly sobbed. "It's just horrible! Yamato-sama is being held prisoner by some evil kami!"

That made Mamoru, Luisa and Catarina gape with both surprise and disbelief. "What?!" the former demanded. "What the hell happened to Yasuko-san?! Where the hell is she, anyway?! If Yoiko-san's any indication, I can't believe Yasuko-san could be held down like that!"

"No, Ojō-sama, she's not like we are now!" the light cruiser — easily noted because of her more mature looks — declared as she formally bowed to the nice girl...then she perked. "'Yasuko-san'?"

"And who the fuck is Yoiko-san?" the girl with the long greyish-silver hair in a side ponytail over her right ear demanded. Her uniform was a stormy grey with gunmetal grey boots and belt, the black kanji霞 on her chest. She possessed the same sort of emotional aura that Ashikaga Akemi projected to all around her; this was a scrapper who didn't give a flying damn about any sort of official folderol and would come crashing down HARD on any sort of idiocy from the brass.

"That's Yasuko-san's sister, Kasumi-chan. You wouldn't know of her," Mamoru said.

Silence.

More silence.

Still more silence.

Then...

"You mean...Warship No. 797?!" a wide-eyed Yukiko demanded.
"Ja," Luisa affirmed as three more destroyers flew over to join them, they staying quiet so as to not alarm Yukiko and her friends. "Her existence was kept top secret by your army and navy military police corps as she was intended to play a special rôle in that brilliant attack on Pearl Harbour as planned by Herr Großadmiral Yamamoto with help from Herr Admiral Fujita...!"

"WHAT?!"

That was the girl who asked about Itō Yoiko. "Ja, Frau Fregattenkapitän Akatsuka," Luisa affirmed.

That made the silver-haired destroyer blink. "Hey! How'd you know THAT?!"

"Because Anii was the one who came up with those names, Kasumi-chan!" Mamoru declared, not bothering to confuse the just-returned former Operation: Ten-gō participants with concepts about alternate dimensions and the like at this early stage of the game.

That made Yukiko and her friends blink...before a polite cough made them all spin around suddenly to see Fujiko, Kodachi and Lieselotte now calmly floating nearby. "Fubuki...?!" the cruiser breathed out on seeing the kanji on the chest of the Blizzard of Death.

"Hai, Yaeko-san," Fujiko said with a warm smile, addressing the reborn THG Yahagi by her human name, Ōkawa Yaeko. She then bowed to her fleet mates. "Welcome back, minna-san. I'm sure Fujita-taishō will be happy to know that you're all alive and well. So what's going on with Yasuko-san?!"

That made the newcomers all gape in understandable confusion...

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The rotunda at Welcome House, an hour later...

Hands were clapped in thanks. "Gochisō-sama deshita!"

Hearing that praise from the seven newest shipgirls to have joined the "fleet" now on Ōmure-jima, Osamu Shirayuki smiled. "Osomatsu-sama desu no!" she said as her cheeks flushed with
embarrassment at the just-arrived shipgirls' show of thanks before she headed into the kitchen.

As the newcomers blushed while applause and banzai cheers escaped all the people inside the dining room, Fujita Hiroshi took a deep breath. At his request, the current commander of Canada's special forces was seated to his right; both Itō Yoiko and Randi Stubbs stood protectively behind their principal flag officers. "Captain Ōkawa. Commanders," the would-be commander of Operation Z — and in the eyes of the Japanese shipgirls now present, their effective administrative boss even if many saw Moroboshi Ataru as their operational boss — declared as he fixed each of them with a level stare while Shirayuki's own namesake among the Fubuki-class destroyers, Fukushima Shirayuki, helped Ashikaga Namiko clear the plates set out for Ōkawa Yaeko and her mission mates. "I'm sure Tennō will be quite pleased to learn that you have all returned to duty in defence of the homeland and all of humanity from the alien devils our gracious hosts' brother had to deal with over the last year and more. I am disturbed at the idea that my flagship's sister is now being held against her will, effectively being blocked from transforming herself into a kantai musume as all of you have done. Where is she now?"

"In Onomichi, Teitoku," Yaeko answered. "Docked at an empty fishing peer in Matsunaga Bay."

"Can you tell us what started this situation, Captain?" Raeburn wondered.

The light cruiser blushed at being addressed by the Immortal Master's adopted daughter, then she blinked as her younger sister Sakura (the reborn THG Sakawa, who had been a "mission mate" of Yamamoto Reiko's and Catarina von Savoyen's at Bikini Atoll for the Crossroads tests in 1946) squeezed her shoulder in support. "Well, this started about a month ago, Shihan-sama. My spirit — along with that of the Commanders Yuhara, Commander Kumasaka and Commander Akatsuka here..." — here, she indicated Yuhara Yukiko's sisters Yuhara Izumi and Yuhara Hama, then Kumasaka Asami and Akatsuka Kasumi; respectfully, they were the reborn destroyers Isokaze, Hamakaze, Asashimo and Kasumi — "...were first woken in our wrecks about a month ago when a kami awoke Captain Itō's kami and allowed her to sail to the Home Islands. She's been in Onomichi ever since!"

"I'm not sure if this has any relevance...!"

"Commander, wait your turn!" Kawamoto Masao snapped, causing Yuhara Hama to yelp.

That made Kasumi bolt up. "Oi! Shihan-sama needs to know this...!"

"COMMANDER...!"
"ENOUGH!"

That was both Raeburn and Fujita, making everyone else in the room jolt as they stared warily at the two flag officers, both of whom looked very upset. "I don't mind people speaking up, Commander Kawamoto!" the Canadian officer coldly stated, making Kawamoto cringe as he sensed the annoyed tone in her voice. "She feels it necessary to add to the captain's report. Let her talk." As Yonaga's operations officer bowed apologetically to her, Raeburn nodded. "Go on, Commander."

Hama's pale cheeks flushed to the shade of deep cherries at the willingness of the leader of the War Hawks to protect her like that. Taking a deep breath, the girl with the bobcut silver hair and deep blue eyes bowed her head. "I do apologize to you all for speaking so suddenly like that," she declared. "The nature of what I wanted to add to Yaeko-san's report made me forget myself...!"

"Stow the apologies until later. Make your report, Commander."

Hearing that, the adopted native of Yokosuka (where she had been built at the Uraga Dockyard Company at the start of the Greater East Asia War) nodded. "Well, shortly after Yasuko-sama returned to the Home Islands like she did, the kami of a fishing boat came back into the area where we were all sunk, boasting to practically anyone who'd listen that Yasuko-sama gave her leave to become the spiritual 'flagship' for all the kami of the ships that were sunk in and around Okinawa."

"What was the name of this fishing boat, Commander?" Fujita asked.

"The Mitsuba-maru, Teitoku."

That made Ataru's sisters blink as they shared looks with each other. "Oi! Didn't Hinako-chan run into the ghost of a ship by that name once?" Itō Mamoru asked.

"Hai, Mamoru-chan, she said she ran into something like that when she passed over the Ryūkyū Islands the weekend after Tennō asked her to stop bringing ship spirits back as shipgirls," Tanenobu Karen stated as she rose from her chair off to the side of the room. "I'll ask her."

The Herald of Fight Scenes ran out of the dining room to go see her youngest sister. "Man-o-man!" Shigaten Benten breathed out from beside Ataru. "To believe that the ch'uongtechhu on this planet can be so feisty! You never hear of this sort of shit on Noukiios!"
Eyes stared at the biker-babe from Fukunokami. "And what is that, Benten-san?" Ogawa Gorō asked.

"It literally means 'house angel', Oji-san," Ataru answered for her would-be lover. "Noukiites are pretty much seen as the most spiritual beings in the whole local cluster. They believe houses are protected by angels of the Lord of Heaven that ensure the families that live within them enjoy good luck, health and wealth. Ships — including warships and spaceships — are likewise seen as being blessed by house angels. As soon as news of what Hinako-chan was doing got to Ryekkyuk..."

"**EH?! WHAT HAPPENED TO YASUKO-SAN?!!**"

Everyone jolted on hearing the muffled shocked cry of the Living Spirit of Innocence from the direction of her bedroom directly behind Yaeko, then running footfalls soon heralded the arrival of the youngest of the sisters as she stormed into the room, looking weary for being up so much in the last day or so. "Shirayuki-chan!" the native of Niigata called out as she tried not to quake. "Can Hina have a big pot of water, please?! Hina's gotta yell at that silly fishing boat ghost she once met!"

As the people in the room save Raeburn winced on hearing the anger in Hinako's voice — given her cosmic-level powers, sensing such emotions radiate from her would affect ANYONE — running feet soon produced the Great Chef of the West with a cooking pot full of water. "You mean that kami that boasted she would protect the kami of all the sunken ships near Okinawa, Hinako-chan?!!" Shirayuki demanded as she placed the pot on the table between Fujita and Yamamoto Reiko.

"Hai, same one!" Hinako growled as she yanked back one of her pyjama top sleeves, then plunged her hand into the water as if she was trying to grab a fish.

As Hirosaki Chikage whispered a spell to allow everyone to see what Hinako was metaphorically doing, a croaked youthful gasp echoed from the pot. The Spirit of Innocence smirked as she pulled her hand back, pulling out what looked like a normal wooden fishing boat of the type that sailed around the Home Islands of Japan in the years before the Greater East Asia War...though this one had a human face at the bow. "HEY! YOU CAN'T JUST...uurkkk!" said kami then nearly croaked as Hinako's empathic aura washed over her metaphorical hull like a full-on tsunami. "Um...H-h-h-Hinako-s-s-san...?!"

Hinako's eyes glowed. "Mitsuba-san..." she began, her voice quiet. "What happened to Yasuko-san?"
Confusion responded. "Who...?"

"Yamato," Reiko said as she rose up, moving to stand close to Hinako.

The kami of the long-lost fishing boat looked over...then gargled on instantly sensing what this tall, mature woman was. "N-n-n-...?" she sputtered.

"Hai, Mitsuba-san, Reiko-san was Nagato!" Hinako stated before she waved over to the transformed aircraft carrier who had been standing close to her admiral, who immediately moved to stand close to the youngest of the sisters. "As Yoiko-san here was Yasuko-san's sister Yonaga!" As the kami of the Mitsuba-maru gargled in shock as she started to sense the aura of power now radiating from the seventh carrier of Operation Z, Hinako then pulled said kami right into her face. "Now, Hina promised Tennō that Hina wouldn't go out and find more ship kami to have them become shipgirls like Reiko-san and Yoiko-san are now. Even if lots more shipgirls like Reiko-san and Luisa-san and Charlene-san and all the others here now came back on their own, Hina promised Tennō that she would help make sure all ship kami that were still in their wrecks were left alone! So who's holding Yasuko-san now?!"

The fishing boat sputtered. "Um...Y-y-Yurie-sama is, H-h-h-Hinako-san...!"

"Hitotsubashi Yurie, you mean?!"

That was a VERY annoyed Chikage, who was now glaring at the kami her sister pulled into Welcome House with a look that could melt neutronium. "Chikage-chan knows this person?" Hinako asked.

"Um...h-h-hai...!" the kami of the Mitsuba-maru stammered.

A groan escaped the Dark Heart of Pure Chaos. "Let that one go back to where she belongs, Hinako," she bade before drinking her tea in one go, which made everyone gape at her. As Hinako did — which allowed the kami of the fishing boat to disappear through the metaphysical warp that had been used to bring her to Ōmure-jima from the area of the Ryūkyū Islands — Chikage rose from her chair. "I'm going to have to go yell at the idiots in the Chūmagun!" she then snarled.

"HEY!" Sukeyama Sakuya barked. "What the hell's going on here, Chikage-chan?!!"
The arch-mage stopped herself, glaring at her sister over her shoulder. "Hitotsubashi Yurie is a middle school student from Onomichi that literally was transformed into an honest-to-goodness arahitogami six months ago, Sakuya!" she snapped before walking out.

The native of Tōkyō left behind a chorus of stunned looks from everyone else. After a moment, Brent Ross took a deep glance around the room, hooding his eyes with a hand. "Um...Brent-san, what are you looking for?" Fujita's chief scribe Hironaka Kenji wondered.

"Rod Serling, Kenji-san," the retired intelligence officer replied as he gave his friend a wry smile. "Even with all the crap we've been through since our ship was turned into Yoiko-san, I'd swear right now that we all just got sheep-dipped into the Twilight Zone!"

People stared at the Annapolis alumnus before laughter filled the room...

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The planet Abydos (approximately 2,000 light years inspin from Earth), that moment (local time: Dawn)...
test in 1946, mused as she looked around. "Better we stay here for the time being."

"We're pretty far from any sea, Hallie," Daniel Jackson advised as his wife Sha're warmly hugged his arm while her brother Skaara and father Kasuf stayed close. "What you're hearing now is a sandstorm, not a typhoon. Pretty similar effects, though."

"Give them time, Daniel. Let them get their land legs first," O'Neill teased as he winked at Hallie.

Chuckles filled the room. "Given all the tales of the original Orak'nou that I've heard over the years, O'Neill, the Lady Lamson of Iowa would find even the worst sandstorm no different than a spring shower," Bra'tac quietly mused as he moved to inspect the Stargate's dialing control unit, located several metres from the stairs that led up to the wormhole portal.

"Lady Lamson, I have a question for you."

Hallie looked over at Tir'na, who was staying close to Teal'c as he moved to scout the hallways leading into the Stargate room. The warrior who had formerly served under Heru'ur had volunteered to accompany everyone to Abydos to see Jackson's father-in-law and brother-in-law reunited with their people. To everyone's surprise, Tir'na was also a native of Chulak and wanted to get home as quickly as possible to ensure all of her family were well. "What's your question?"

"You claim both the American kingdoms of Maine and Iowa as your home," the young Jaffa said, making the other shipgirls who had come with SG-1 grin. "Are you named after a great lord of America who owned land in both those kingdoms?"

"Knock it up, Laughing Boy!" Hallie snapped at her sister Gwenaëlle Conyngham, who looked ready to keel over at such a silly mistake by the Chulakian warrior. "She don't understand!" At that, the blonde tomboy with the hawkish looks and the ice blue eyes shuddered before she collapsed in a peel of screams as Dionne's other escorting destroyer Joan Mugford just shook her head, holding up her hands in an "I'm innocent" pose. Taking a deep breath, Hallie came over to squeeze Tir'na's shoulder. "Look, I was built in Bath in Maine, so that's kinda like my real home. But the man I was named after when I was launched comes from Burlington in Iowa, so I could claim to be an Iowan as much as I'm a Mainer." Her eyes then sparkled as she gazed on the still-snickering Gwenaëlle. "At least I was named after a real American, Laughing Boy!" she then yodelled as she pointed to herself. "YOUR namesake was a freaking PIRATE of all things! And from Ireland, too!"

That made Gwenaëlle yelp as her pale cheeks turned red. "HEY! TAKE THAT BACK!"
"Knock it off, eight-balls!" Dionne snapped, making the two Mahan-class girls jolt before they ducked the carrier's annoyed look. "Not a word out of you, Mugford!" she then said as she glared at the pale-eyed brunette, making Joan wince as she waved off the carrier's annoyed look.

"Aye, ma'am...!"

Seeing the interplay between the destroyers and their flagship, SG-2's team leader Major Louis Ferretti chuckled as he moved to stand close to his old squad boss from the original mission to this world years before. "I have to say, Colonel, if all shipgirls from the States are like this, these sorts of jobs are going to really skid into the weird from now on!" the younger officer warned.

"Well, it's good to keep a good sense of humour about this sort of thing, Lou," O'Neill noted before he noticed Ferretti's second-in-command, Major Carl Warren, glance down one hallway, night vision devices over his eyes. "Carl?" he then called out.

"Got something here, Colonel..." the native of London in central Ohio quietly warned...

...before the very air over his head seemed to roll as something leapt over him to drop down a few metres ahead in the hallway, then someone in solid black from neck to toe topped with streaked wavy red-and-blue hair appeared, charging at something that was barely registering on Warren's NVD. "Holy SHIT...!" he exclaimed as O'Neill and Ferretti came over with MP-5s at the ready, joined by Teal'c with his ma'tok staff. "I thought the subgirls were all staying back on Earth...!"

"What are...ARRGHH!"

The Air Force officers blinked...

...then they ducked as someone dressed in local clothing was literally tossed through the air over their heads by Rosemary Close, the living spirit of the eighty-eighth of the Balao-class fleet submarines. "SICK ONE, LAMSON!" she shrieked out in warning.

Seeing that falling form come in, Hallie's nose flared as a very ugly stench seemed to cloak the target, then she shoved Tir'na away while her other hand back-slapped the flying figure into the wall. As the others winced on seeing the body nearly crush itself from the sheer combined force of Rosemary's throw and Hallie's hit, Bra'tac's eyes went wide on seeing an oily black-like substance leak out from the possessed human's wounds. "SAFE'MKAH!" the elderly warrior barked out.
Tir'na screamed in terror as Teal'c spun around, his ma'tok discharging several times to burn the corpse into ashes. As the normal Terran explorers and the natives of Abydos all blinked in confusion, Jackson's eyes widened in horror as his mind quickly came up with the translation of that particular term. "The Dust Sickness...?!" he hissed, which made Samantha Carter's own eyes widen in shocked disbelief. "No System Lord would be insane enough to USE something like that...!"

"The Ra'kalach have been dead for millennia and the Kal'ma Ra'kalach have only just been freed from their own slavery to the Kek'uld," Bra'tac finished as he came over, his own ma'tok ready as he stared with concern at Hallie. "Are you stained, Lady Lamson?"

Hallie shook the hand she used to smack away the now-cremated possessed Abydonian as she tried to reach out with her mind to see if any of his infected blood had got on her skin; while it wouldn't affect her, she didn't want to infect her friends. "Can you give me a blast there, Chief?"

"Of course, my dear," the elderly Chulakian said as he levelled his weapon.

O'Neill's eyes widened. "Hey, wait a...!"

Teal'c's hand held the pararescueman back as Bra'tac's staff discharged, sending a burning bolt of energy into the back of Hallie's hand. As the others watched, the energy seemed to wash over that meson-hardened skin for a moment before it faded into nothingness. Shaking her hand again, the fourth of the Mahan-class breathed out. "Feels now like it did after the Conservator got finished refitting me back for service," she noted as Tir'na got up to gaze closely at the extremity.

"Ah! Yah-hoo!" the leader of SG-1 called out. "What's going on here?!

"The Dust Sickness, Jack," Jackson explained. "It's a biological weapon that was created by ancient enemies of the Goa'uld — by what Master Bra'tac just hinted at right now, they have to be the old Sagussans, the predecessor race to the Avalonians — which nearly decimated the System Lords millennia ago, almost destroying the whole Goa'uld Empire. It doesn't surprise me Rosemary knows of it. It's been used by other enemies of the Goa'uld against them ever since that time."

"What does it do, Daniel?" Warren wondered as Rosemary came up to join them.

"It basically is designed to shatter whatever power a Goa'uld symbiote has over its host body, literally trapping it as the host melts from the inside out, Carl," the archaeologist answered as all the
Jaffa in the room grimaced at hearing that explanation. "Ultimately, it literally drives the symbiote insane by forcing it into a mental state of complete isolation from all outside sensation, which kills it before the host body is effectively melted away. To a Goa'uld or a Jaffa, it's lethal and seen as totally incurable."

"Could this sickness infect my people, my son?"

Eyes locked on Sha're's and Skaara's father. "No, Good Father," Jackson assured as he reached over to gently squeeze Kasuf's shoulder in reassurance. "It's specifically made to target only the Goa'uld or the Jaffa. Your people will be safe from such a thing."

"So who'd use that stuff here, Doctor?" Master Sergeant Garvin Casey, the heavy weapons expert in SG-2, then asked as he shifted his M-249 Minimi to port arms.

"We better find out," Dionne noted. "P-Fish?!

"Yo!"

"Can you do a patrol of Nagada to see if more of these creepy-crawlies are there?"

The adopted native of Kittery on the Piscataqua across from the Navy yard named after Portsmouth in New Hampshire (her place of construction as USS Pilotfish) nodded. "How far away, Doc?"

Jackson pointed to the southeast. "About ten kilometres..."

He looked back to see no one standing next to Walker. "Wow! Some trick!" O'Neill mused before he gazed on Dionne, his eyebrow arching in curiosity. "You didn't look surprised that Rosemary came along with us, Dionne. I thought you didn't care for 'sub-thieves'."

"After what they did to Tir'na's friends, Colonel?" the aircraft carrier asked.

Snickers filled the room...
In orbit over Abydos, that moment...

"The Orak'nou are on the planet?!!"

"Five of them, my lord. I...wait!"

Hearing the surprised tone in his young sensor officer’s voice, the handsome dark-skinned man with the deep brown eyes and the wiry black hair gazed intently at the Jaffa. "What is it?" Apophis hissed out.

"One of the Orak'nou just vanished from the Stargate room, my lord!" came the reply from the shuddering Jaffa. "I...wait!" he then called out. "That one just reappeared in the city of Nagada, right close to the main gate! But there was no sign of the use of one of Lady Daturie's teleportation devices, what the People of the Forge call a 'PAA'. It might be some sort of Gifted ability!"

As that message sank in, Ra's sibling could only shudder as his mind replayed the shocking scene inside the main meeting room where the infamous SG-1 was based on the Tau'ri homeworld. How Tash Ri of all people literally drew out his beloved wife's symbiote from Sha're Jackson's body, about to hand it over to one of the strange beings that some of his subordinates claimed were safi'ra, the living spirits of Tau'ri sea warships somehow made human, fused to bodies of the true Orak'nou, beings created by the second incarnation of the Healer of Destruction to lay waste to the Goa'uld fleet then trying to conquer the World of the Forge. How said being — calling herself "Kisaragi Utako" and having gained the battle name Nyuodake; she had returned to her homeworld from the homeworld of the Shatan'af after a "fishing expedition" that netted her HUNDREDS of symbiotes who had been agents of Nirrti sent to investigate the world which had taken profound interest in Earth over the last year — was vowing to COOK his wife and the others she captured in a massive feast for others like her.

And then...!

How an older-looking woman had snared Amaunet right out of the air...

...and then ATE his beloved wife's symbiote without a second's hesitation!
Remembering Jack O'Neill's statement about his hoping someone had filmed such...

Which had been done by the accursed Bo'odurba of all people...!

The namesake of ancient Egypt's god of chaos could only shudder as he fought back tears, moving to sit on his throne as the image of the beauty that devoured his wife replayed deep in his mind.

Dionne Doolittle.

A safi'ra risen from the soul of a Tau'ri aerospace craft carrier called Saratoga; the name translated Tietutorim in Yizibajohei.

Oh, would she EVER suffer...!

"My lord."

Apophis looked up to see his first prime Kintac standing nearby, a delighted smile on the Chulakian warrior's face. "What is it?"

"We were able to tap into the listening devices inside the Stargate room on Abydos, my lord," the young warrior stated. "The one you seek for the murder of your beloved wife is on Abydos right now."

That made Apophis' eyes widen before he smiled. "Well done, my friend..."

"Do you wish us to charge the creature and destroy it?"

A simple shake of the head answered him, making Kintac gape. "No," Apophis said as he got up from his chair. "You have not seen these things in action as I have, Kintac. I thank you for the kind offer, but there is a different way to deal with this particular breed of Orak'nou." He smiled. "If their souls are merged with that of safi'ra from Tau'ri warships active during their second world war, their devotion to protecting normal Tau'ri will be absolute. That, we can use."
"A 'hostage scene' as the People of the Forge call it, my lord?"

Apophis' eyes widened on hearing the communications officer gaze knowingly at him. "Exactly," he hissed as his eyes twinkled in anticipation. "Lock in on the bio-readings of Teal'c and his friends from SG-1. Leave the others be. I want Lady Tietutorim to see this herself!"

"As you command, my lord!" Kintac declared, bowing his head...

****

_The Temple of Ra on Abydos, minutes later..._

The rumbling noise of the Stargate activating made everyone in the room tense as they spun around to see the inner ring of the ancient wormhole device begin to swirl around. "We got backup coming in from Earth, Colonel?" Louis Ferretti demanded as he tensed himself.

"No, we don't!" Jack O'Neill snarled. "Everyone, take cover!"

People immediately moved to assume positions safely away from the Stargate, weapons coming out and aiming on target. "I cannot tell where this is coming from, O'Neill," Bra'tac declared as Daniel Jackson immediately urged his wife and in-laws to hide themselves in the corridor where Rosemary Chase had caught the infected Goa'uld moments before.

"Well, we'll find out..."

In four bright flashes of energy, all of SG-1 vanished!

Silence.

More silence.

Still more silence.
Then...

"COLONEL!" Garvin Casey screamed as the second chevron locked in place.

"WHAT THE FUCK JUST HAPPENED?!
" Carl Warren demanded.

"ENOUGH! STOW IT, FLYBOYS! KEEP IT TOGETHER!"

That was Dionne Doolittle, who was scanning around the room, her blue eyes narrow as she reached out with her mind to scan every nook and cranny inside this large space. As Sha're Jackson dropped to her knees in horror at the idea of losing her husband so soon after she gained her freedom — she being immediately comforted by her father and brother — Ferretti came over to join her. "What the hell could that have been, Captain?" the special tactics officer from Mountain Pass near the Nevada border in southeast California demanded. "I've never seen anything quite like that since I joined this gig...!"

"Transportation rings, Ferretti of California!"

Eyes locked on Bra'tac as he came over to join them just as the third chevron locked into place. "What the hell are they, Chief?" Hallie Lamson demanded as she moved to stay protectively close to Tir'na.

"They're similar to the Stargate here, Lady Lamson," the elderly Chulakian warrior explained. "But only create short-range wormholes to transport someone to and from the surface of a planet to an orbiting ha'tak or other such vessel controlled by one of the System Lords..."

"Oh, shit! We got someone in orbit?!" Joan Mugford demanded.

"Stay here, Mugs!" Dionne ordered before she gazed at Hallie, then at Gwenaëlle Conyngham. "You as well, Conyngham! If this bozo up top wants to start shore bombardment, we can't leave thousands of innocent people standing out in the open right in the damned line of fire!"

That made the destroyers blink as the fourth chevron locked into place, which made Skaara want to speak out about what could be possibly coming in to visit them. "Can we do what Graf Spee did to
save Montevideo, Sara!" Gwenaëlle demanded as she gazed on her task force boss.

"Do not concern yourself, little safi'ra."

People perked. "Oh, fuck me...!" Warren moaned. "Apophis...!"

"Who?!" Joan demanded.

"The captain ate his WIFE back on Earth, Joan."

"Indeed so, Major Warren!" the voice of the namesake to the Egyptian god of chaos declared from all around them. As the destroyers tried to focus in on the source points, a wry chuckle echoed over the chamber. "I must confess, if this is some experiment by the current incarnation of Batae Erba, it is most curious! Actually animating the souls of warships to become living beings?! A strange thing to do indeed! As for you, Tietutorim...or do you prefer your old name 'Saratoga'...?"

That made Dionne shudder. "What do you want, snake?"

"Your DEATH, of course!" Apophis snarled back as the fifth chevron locked into place. "As you killed and ATE my wife, so shall I kill you! But I want you to SUFFER for your impertinence first, you filthy monster! Then, once I have your corpse, I will finally learn the secrets of the Orak'nou, then go forth to bring the World of the Forge under my control! Your defiance of your gods has gone on long enough! The defiance of the Tau'ri has gone on long enough! This galaxy is OURS! And I will demonstrate to ALL the lesser beings that no doubt alarmed Lady Tuyuki when she was a child to proceed and have other Tau'ri Gifted that THEY are not the rulers of this galaxy!" A dry chuckle escaped him. "I think I'll start with the Shatan'af on Uru first, since they had the audacity to try to 'invade' what has always been rightfully OURS a year ago...!"

"What have you done with Colonel O'Neill and his friends?! Why take them?!"

"They DEFY me, Saratoga! They have defied me for three years, causing me setback after setback since I sought to find a new host for my wife, the one YOU KILLED AND ATE!" Apophis shrieked as the sixth chevron then locked into place. "And they will be there when I go to Uru and destroy the Shatan'af before I move on to seek out those Lady Tuyuki have Gifted on the
"CAPTAIN! THE STARGATE!" Skaara screamed out.

«As a famous mud-eating paratrooper from my country said it once, snake...!»

Dionne's eyes widened. "No way...!"

«NUTS!»

A thunderous crashing noise echoed through the Stargate chamber...

...just as the seventh chevron locked into place!

****

In orbit...

Apophis screamed as the deck underneath him heaved heavily as the spiritual mass of a 29,084 tonne warship compressed into human size slammed into the side of his flagship, causing everyone to be pitched right off their feet as the large ha'tak was nearly flipped keel-over-foretop by the sheer force of the impact. As many of the crew on the bridge of the great warship moved to right their vessel, something happened deep in one of the cargo bays which had just been vented to the vacuum.

A powerful naquadah bomb prepared to be transported to Abydos to devastate the old Temple of Ra — and hopefully kill off some of the Orak’nou who had accompanied Dionne Doolittle to that world — found itself flung out of the hole just made by the gorgeous woman with the waist-length sunflower blonde hair and the sky blue eyes, she dressed in a dark blue uniform with grey belt and boots. As her whole body glowed brightly thanks to her summoning the nearly-limitless energies that she had been taught to tap into thanks to a remarkable teacher who served in a war that went crazy some years after she was scrapped, the bomb just ejected out of Apophis' ship exploded, shaking the giant vessel again...
...and sending the adopted native of Newport News in Virginia and River Vale on the border between New Jersey and New York not so far from the Big Apple stumbling right through the Stargate!

****

The Temple of Ra...

A titanic surge of energy made the event horizon of the wormhole connecting Abydos to Apophis' ship glow star bright, making all the people who weren't first generation battle dolls scream out as they covered their eyes. Instantly, Dionne's hand snapped up as a force field that seemed like a modern version of her old suite of air defence weapons creating a virtual "zone of death" against attacking aircraft as had happened many times during the Second World War formed to cover the entire room just as cracks appeared in the ring device itself. "Impossible...!" Bra'tac exclaimed...

...just as a streak of blonde, dark blue and grey burst through the wormhole!

A titanic explosion literally SHATTERED the millennia-old device, the force of the blast shooting in both directions to slam into Dionne's shield just as everyone else in the room hit the deck and covered their heads. In the other direction, the sheer concussive force of such a detonation literally disintegrated the outer wall of the temple, creating a half-mile long jet of hot flame that furrowed the sands beyond the old pyramid. As the screaming moan of the sandstorm still raging outside assaulted everyone's ears, the person who just got pitched through the Stargate from Apophis' ship rolled to her feet, reaching out with her own mind to reinforce the shield that her old fleet mate was making.

"LIZ! WE NEED TO GET OUT OF HERE! BEAM US ALL UP!" said woman barked out.

In flashes of energy, everyone who had been in the Stargate room vanished!

****

In orbit...

"MY LORD! AN ALIEN VESSEL STALKS US!"
As Apophis moaned after smashing his head against his own throne on the bridge of his flagship, Kintac looked over to see an insanely slender silver vessel with a spherical prow, a large transmitter assembly amidships and a massive hyperdrive system aft appear on the main view screen. Staring in disbelief at such a thing, he then tensed as a woman's voice echoed over the whole bridge, "Apophis, this is the Academician! Turn over your prisoners to us right now or be rendered stardust!"

"Daturie...!" the first prime croaked. "HYPERDRIVE, NOW!"

"Where?!" the helmsman asked.

"ANYWHERE!"

****

On the bridge of the Free Planetary State of Yiziba Starship Discovery...

"She's powering up hyperdrive, Liz!"

"Billie! Lock in on Jack's life signs...!"

In a flash of Cherenkóv radiation, the ha'tak vanished!

"Shit!" Jessica Wakefield snapped from her place near the helm station.

"Calm down, Jess!" her sister Elizabeth snapped. "Peggy, did you get a track on where he was going?!

The gynoid replica of Peggy Callahan as she was portrayed by Jennifer Darling in both The Six Million Dollar Man and The Bionic Woman tapped controls. "Directly for the Oniboshi system, Liz," the hazel-eyed blonde tomboy answered as she gazed back at her creator.

"Sorry, Liz! I couldn't lock in on Colonel O'Neill and the others," came the voice of Billie Sands —
Elizabeth gave the tall blonde the family name of the woman who portrayed her during the "Fembots In Las Vegas" storyline in *The Bionic Woman* — from the transporter room in the heart of the spheroid bow of the ten-to-one scale hyper warp-capable replica of the USSC *Discovery One* from 2001: A Space Odyssey. "I got everyone else save Lieutenant Commander Close."

"Luck of the fight scene, Billie. Katy, go down and look in on them."

"Of course, Liz," Katy Franklin said as she stepped off the bridge.

"Liz, should I warn Isaac that Apophis is coming?"

The Wise Genius sighed. "Do it, Tami," she bade. "I'm sure Tomo will LOVE to hear this!"

Laughter filled the *Discovery's* bridge as Tami Cross opened a hyperspace link to the *Normandy*...

****

*The main transporter room...*

"Where are we, Ferretti?!"

"Welcome aboard the *Discovery*, Master Bra'tac of Chulak."

Hearing that friendly greeting, heads snapped around...

"Hey, Billie! Thanks for the save!" Louis Ferretti called out as he and the other members of SG-2 came off the circular transporter pad that they had appeared on after they were beamed up from the Temple of Ra. "What are you ladies doing here?!" the special duty officer from California asked.

The tall gynoid with the blonde hair styled in a small bun at the top of her head smiled, her brown eyes twinkling. "Liz heard you were being sent this way, Major, so she decided to come out and help."
"Whoa! This is actually OUR starship?!"

That was a wide-eyed Hallie Lamson, who had moved protectively close to a clearly-unnerved Tir'na as she took in the medically-white surroundings. Before Billie Sands could answer, footfalls heralded the arrival of the chief "fembot" now serving aboard Discovery. "Indeed it is, Commander Lamson," Katy Franklin stated, her own blue eyes sparkling with amusement as she gave the newcomers a friendly smile while the natives of Abydos picked themselves off the floor. "Captain Doolittle, do you have any means to contact Lieutenant Commander Close so we can get her aboard and be debriefed?"

"Yeah, just a second..." Dionne said as she pulled out her PAA. "P-Fish?!"

"Yo?!" came the reply from an alley in Nagada.

"We're bringing you aboard a starship right now..."

A subtle shift of the air over the pad soon revealed that the eighty-eighth of the Balao-class fleet submarines had calmly teleported herself aboard. "No need," Rosemary Close said as both Katy and Billie gaped in disbelief at the fact that the adopted native of Kittery just teleported herself aboard the Discovery without being stopped by the many layers of defences their creator had built into the starship. "Heard the damned Stargate blow up all the way from town! What the hell happened?!"

"From what we saw, Commander Close, it transported Captain Swanson from Apophis' ship to the planet while she was busy energizing herself to try to cripple that ship before it could escape with Colonel O'Neill and the others," Katy replied as she crossed her arms.

That made the newcomers blink...

...before a moan made everyone turn as the blonde who had just done the nearly impossible and WRECKED a Stargate after passing through its event horizon slowly pulled herself to her feet. "Damn...feel as bad as I did after going through Santa Cruz in '42," she muttered with a weird mixture of Virginia Tidewater and Brooklyn accents as she slowly turned around. "Sorry about that, guys..."

As soon as her ship's crest came into view, revealing a well-known name, the members of SG-2 found themselves gaping. "Holy shit...!" Garvin Casey exclaimed. "When the hell did SHE get back
A chuckle answered him. "That, Master Sergeant, is a bit of a long story..." said shipgirl answered as she wiped the dust thrown up from the floor of the Stargate room off her clothes.

"Who is this one, Ferretti?!" Bra'tac demanded.

A chuckle escaped Dionne Doolittle as she walked over to wrap an arm around the shoulder of their rescuer, she then leaning in to deliver a sloppy kiss to the smaller woman's cheek. "An old friend, Chief," the adopted native of Camden and Saratoga Springs called out. "Welcome back, E!"

"I've been back for a bit, Sara," replied the reborn spirit of the second of the Yorktown-class aircraft carriers...who on Yiziba, would be always known by the moniker she earned in the Second World War:

The Grey Ghost, Leduo...

Enterprise.

"Damn! We're gonna WIN this one for sure!" Joan Mugford declared.

A wild whoop escaped the other destroyers and Rosemary as the woman now known as "Yvonne Swanson" madly blushed while the non-Terrans all looked understandably confused...

To Be Continued...

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WRITER'S NOTES

For those who don't understand, the concept of the Kantai Kessen ("naval fleet decisive battle") was a strategy that was effectively developed by leaders of the Imperial Japanese Navy in the wake of the
Battle of Tsu-shima (27-28 May 1905) during the Russo-Japanese War. The basic strategy called on the creation of a strong force of battleships that would engage and destroy an enemy battleship force in a final decisive battle after said enemy was worn down by layers of defensive lines and small engagements unleashed to carry out a campaign of attrition to even the odds and make victory possible. Ironically, the hard adherence to the concept of the Kantai Kessen strategy even with the proven success of carrier tactics — leaders such as Grand Admiral Yamamoto Isoroku (1884-1943) strongly opposed such a concept — helped contribute to Japan's final defeat in World War Two.

Seventh Carrier character and situation notes: Konoe Nobutake first appeared in Return of the Seventh Carrier. Note that his name in the series is spelled "Konoye" in following a more traditional Romanization, but the "ye" is actually pronounced as /e/ in the International Phonetic Alphabet. Also note that the numbers of all squadrons and groups assigned to THG Yonaga are my creation.

Note that when I write Chinese names in my stories, I use the Hányǔ Pīnyīn Romanization of Mandarin, which is the standard method of rendering Chinese characters into Latin letters both on the mainland and Taiwan. However, like with Japanese and Korean, there have been many different ways of rendering a local name. Táiběi is actually Taipei, capital of the Republic of China. Jīlóng is the port of Keelung near Táiběi. And the name given to THG Yūkikaze (Yuhara Yukiko) upon her transfer to the Republic of China Navy after World War Two, ZMZ Dānyáng, was normally written as "Tan Yang" in English. As an aside, in real life, the standard ship prefix for vessels of the Republic of China Navy serving the government on Taiwan is ROCS (Republic of China Ship). In the universe of my stories, it's rendered ZMZ for Zhōnghuá Mínguó Zhànjiàn ("Warship of the Republic of China").

Translation list: -tachi — The Japanese language mark that indicates more than one thing (hence, Onē-sama-tachi would mean "Elder Sisters" while Onē-sama is "Elder Sister"); 第六十一駆逐隊 — Sixty-first Destroyer Division (read Dai-rokujúichi Kuchiku-tai); Kaei-rokunen — Sixth Year of Kaei (the year 1853 CE); Purintsu Oigen — Romanization of the katakana プリンツ・オイゲン, which is how "Prinz Eugen" is read in Japanese; Großadmiral — Grand Admiral; Gochisō-sama deshita — It was a feast; Osomatsu-sama desu no — Shirayuki's way of saying Osomatsu-sama deshita ("I believe that meal wasn't a feast"); Chūmagun — Short for "Chūgoku Teimajutsu-gun" (Imperial Magical Commandery of Chūgoku, also known as the Chūgoku Magical Association).

List of shipgirls introduced or noted on here:

Captain Yvonne Swanson USN (United States Ship Enterprise [CV-6])
Itō Yasuko-taisa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan Yamato [BB-34])
Ōkawa Yaeko-taisa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan Yahagi [CL-50])
Akiyama Suzumi-chūsa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan Suzutsuki [DD-259])

Yuhara Yukiko-chūsa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan Yukikaze [DD-210])

Akatsuka Kasumi-chūsa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan Kasumi [DD-202])

Yuhara Izumi-chūsa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan Isokaze [DD-214])

Yuhara Hama-chūsa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan Hamakaze [DD-215])

Kumasaka Asami-chūsa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan Asashimo [DD-237])

Haruguchi Hatsuyo-chūsa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan Hatsushimo [DD-180])

As always, many thanks to sasahara17, the creator of the very popular KanColle fanfic story Greatest Generation, for the human name of the Grey Ghost. Also note that I base the physical looks of USS Enterprise (Yvonne Swanson) in the universe of my stories on the portrait done of her by the artist RealmBW; such can be found at Danbooru at post #1705675.

Patronymics used in this chapter:

Sióri Jósitakovna — Shiori, daughter of Yoshitake

Súdeumi Sídeuovna — Suzumi, daughter of Shizuo

Akémi Minórovna — Akemi, daughter of Minoru

Sumié Khirómovna — Sumie, daughter of Hiromu

Isaák Fomích — Isaac, son of Thomas

Kamichu! character notes: The kami of the fishing boat Mitsuba-maru first appeared in the episode "Crossing the River of Time" (anime episode #9). Note that the events in that episode happen in the universe of this story as they did in the anime save for the fact that the kami of the battleship THG Yamato (Itō Yasuko) speaks in a female voice, not male. Of course, Hitotsubashi Yurie is the main star of the series, appearing in the first episode "The Spite of Youth".

Stargate SG-1 character notes: Louis Ferretti first appeared in the premier episode of the series, "Children of the Gods". It was also in that episode that Carl Warren and Garvin Casey also appeared; note the latter's given name is my creation. Also note that origin information about Ferretti and Warren are my invention. Kintac first appeared in the episode "Jolinar's Memories" (season 3, episode 12).
Six Million Dollar Man/Bionic Woman character notes: Peggy Callahan was a background character throughout both series; her fembot replica first appeared in the Bionic Woman storyline "Kill Oscar". Billie appeared, as noted above, in the Bionic Woman two-part episode "Fembots in Las Vegas"; her family name is my invention, taken from her actress' name. That two-part episode is also where Tami Cross and her fembot replica appeared.
The Seventh Carrier's Surprise in Onomichi

Chapter Summary

A certain arahitogami helped bring back the living soul of Japan's greatest battleship to the Home Islands. That's not all she did as Amélie von Zeppelin soon discovers...

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In orbit over Onishuto on Uru, aboard the Free Planetary State of Yiziba Starship Normandy, an hour after supper (Tōkyō time: An hour after lunch on Sunday; Colorado Springs time: Three hours before midnight on Saturday)...

"I hate to be the bearer of that sort of news, Mister President."

Hearing the apologetic tone in the Wise Lone Sage's voice, the current president of the Union of Uru snorted. "Pay it no heed, Doctor," Hozan Lana stated as he sat back in his chair. "The Goa'uld, for all their advantages, love to make war on each other far too much that I strongly doubt that Apophis would be able to muster a force large enough to worry us. A 'sleepy scene' as you'd call it."

Isaac Thomas' eyebrow arched. "I respectfully disagree, sir."

"What do you mean, Doctor?" Azu Kakazu asked from beside her leader.

A deep breath responded. "Much that I do agree that the Goa'uld seem to enjoy making war on each other to jockey for standing among the High Council of System Lords — or for those who haven't been invited to join the Council, gaining a seat there — the visceral hatred of my kind they feel is as ingrained in their hearts as that hypnosis you people subject yourselves to was to you. What's worse, because the Goa'uld continuously subject themselves to the sarcophagus technology created by Telchak millennia ago, they're creeping closer to the point where all sorts of rational thought will
ultimately elude them. I wouldn't be so quick to dismiss this threat. They ALL might be coming this way."

The two senior leaders of the Union of Uru took a moment to consider that warning. "He's right, Lana," the tomboyish Oni-turned-Avalonian chief of staff then said as she gazed on her boss.

Lana considered that, then he sighed. "Alright, there's nothing wrong with being extra cautious. I'll alert my fellow heads-of-state to give them the heads up. How soon do you think they'll be here?"

"According to Liz, Apophis' ship could arrive in system in two days."

"We'll be ready for them."

The communications link was then cut. Staring at the blank screen before him, the native of Queens could only shake his head, a touch of uncertainty at what was about to happen in forty-eight hours time surging up from his stomach. He was prepared to fight as any Yizibajohei would ever be, Named or Nameless. But his sojourn in Roanapur after he was Gifted showed Isaac that to win fight scenes, he had to always outsmart his opponents; that had driven him in everything he did since those days. And he would have to be VERY smart, especially in something as potentially apocalyptic as what was soon to come. He knew deep in his heart that what happened to Amaunet at the hands of Dionne Doolittle was something NO Goa'uld would EVER tolerate. And while those of that species calling themselves "Tok'ra" were far more civilized their normal kin, they also could recall memories the attempted invasion of Yiziba five millennia ago through what was passed down through their own genetics from mother to child. Would they find it in their better interests to join their brethren in a war against Yiziba...?

Shaking his head, he tapped controls on his work desk. "Mimir?"

"Yes, Isaac?" the Normandy's gynoid mistress called down from the bridge.

"Open a channel to Thor, please."

"Certainly."

Seconds later, the image of a dwarfish, pale-skinned humanoid that resembled the reports of Roswell greys that came with the first contact between Terrans and aliens in 1947 appeared.
"Greetings, Isaac Thomas," the supreme commander of the Asgard fleet said as he bowed his head to the Wise Lone Sage. "Regretfully, I must report that almost all of the Supreme Council are still not convinced that what you and Elizabeth Wakefield have proposed to save our race will actually work." Isaac was quick to sense that the multi-millennia old would-be "god" to people like the Cimmerians would gladly partake in what Isaac and his fellow American hyper-genius polymath had conceived of, but given Thor's loyalty to his people...! "I doubt there will be time to convince them fully before it is truthfully too late."

"It saddens me to hear that, Thor. I know Jack will be saddened as well," the Wise Lone Sage stated before an amused smirk crossed his face. "I have news that might give you some hope, though."

"And that is?"

"Issues concerning the Goa'uld might be resolved a lot sooner than your people foresaw."

Thor's head tilted slightly as he considered that before he nodded. "Given what just happened to Amaunet at the hands of Dionne Doolittle and Tash Ri, you mean."

Isaac nodded in return, his own smile widening. "Exactly. I just got a signal from Elizabeth. Apophis is heading for Uru; he'll be here in two episodes. He was chased out of Abydos by the first generation battle doll Elizabeth acquired for her 'project' done at our president's request."

"Indeed?"

"Said person literally DESTROYED a Stargate, Thor."

If the elderly Asgard could show total shock at that revelation, he would. "I believed only Naomi Haight-Ashbury capable of that level of power, Isaac Thomas. Or perhaps this Itō Yoiko that Tariko Katabarbe and her siblings just encountered, formed from the spirit of the warship their long-missing granduncle was assigned to seven miniseries ago before all traces of her were lost. Given it was the Great Old One of the Arctic that saw Itō Yoiko transformed from Yonaga, it is quite simple to conclude."

Isaac smirked. He had been glad to link Thor and his allies into the systems that ran entertainment networks on Yiziba which served as a window to the Great Show of Life. Revelations concerning what had been discovered about the seventh carrier of Operation Z and what had happened to her and her crew got out thanks to Asakura Kazumi the instant that Tariko Katabarbe had encountered
the reborn spirit of her granduncle's ship half a day before. Shaking his head at how fast things could change, the New Yorker took a deep breath. "I will ensure you're kept up to date on things, Thor. And I will try to find out what Elizabeth did and who's with her now. But I have to speak to some other people. Please stay in touch about the debates on Othala considering what Elizabeth and I offered your people."

"I will do so, Isaac Thomas. May the fight scene go your way, my friend."

"My thanks for your good wishes."

The transmission with Thor's flagship was cut, then Isaac tapped controls to make a call out beyond the Galactic Barrier to a certain planet orbiting a rather enlarged K-class star that had been made to absorb the mass of its red dwarf secondary in a cataclysmic five century-long civil war well over thirteen thousand years ago. The results of that horrible conflict having helped influence many decisions made by the current Trickster of the Show when she began her quest a decade before...

"Yes, Isaac?" a cultured man's voice echoed over the speakers.

"Hello, Henry. I need a favour from you..."

****

Welcome House on Ōmure-jima, that moment...

"BANZAI FUJITA! BANZAI! BANZAI!"

The people framing both sides of First Street West from the gate of Welcome House to the old ferry landing that connected the island to the reclaimed lands dredged by the Americans after the end of the Greater East Asia War screamed their delight on seeing the proud figure astride a beautiful Yizibajohei raebimi-ona, a being slightly more muscular than a purebred Andalusian horse. All the mounts being used by Yonaga's officers for the march on Tōkyō had been brought to Earth from a farm run by one of Tariko Katabarbe's friends an hour before so that they could stand proud and tall, dignified in a way they had long deserved for "standing the watch" like they did for seventy-one years in Sano-wan. As Fujita Hiroshi waved at the crowds, the clatter of hooves made him turn as his flag captain came up to join him. "A fine day to ride, Admiral," Ogawa Gorō declared as he saluted his admiral with his sword.
"A fine day indeed, Gorō-san," the adopted native of Hiroshima declared as he returned his flag captain's courtesy, then he smiled as he patted his white-furred mount. "Did you ever imagine the people of the land greeting us like this after it finally sank in?"

Hearing that, the native of Fukuoka blinked before tears appeared in his eyes, then he shook his head. "No, Admiral, I have to admit that I feared that too many in this land would call us 'baby killers', like what Brent-san said had happened to veterans of the Americans' war in Vietnam when they returned home in the 1970s." He shook his head as he gazed at the crowds just as Aoshima Susumu rode up on his own steed, saluting his admiral with his blade. "To be welcomed like this...!"

"It is a good omen, Admiral," the captain in charge of the Sixth Naval Air Flotilla stated with a delighted grin. He then sighed. "If only Ted-san had lived to see this day. Given what he said before he died...!"

Fujita bowed his head. "After all those idiots in the Army tried to do with that man when he was their captive..." he quietly hissed. "After all the issues he had with his temper — you remember Brent-san's tales about how Ted-san reacted after he lost his wife Katharine-san..." He shook his head. "We were not worthy of his forgiveness or his sympathy, Susumu-san..."

"Brent-san disagrees...ah! There he is...!"

Aoshima's voice caught in his throat on seeing Brent Ross ride towards them from the old ferry landing on the back of a brown-furred steed, dressed in blue service dress with his retirement rank of lieutenant commander on his sleeves, the inverted gold star of a line officer — even if he had been a restricted line officer due to his service with the Office of Naval Intelligence throughout most of his career — over his gold stripes. His chest had a modest "salad bowl" of medals; out of respect for his adopted shipmates, he didn't wear full medals today. As soon as he stopped a respectful distance from Fujita and his flag captains, Ross drew his sword and saluted them. "Admiral Fujita, good afternoon, sir," the adopted native of Norfolk — he had been born there when his father had been posted to the base, but never saw himself as a real Virginian at heart — said as he bowed his head to the older man.

Fujita returned the salute. "Commander. You look excellent today." His eyes twinkled. "Somehow, I suspect Vice Admiral Swift was able to get your uniform from your ex-wife so you can parade with us."

"Indeed he did, sir," Ross stated before the smile dropped from his face. "I have some news. As soon as my survival and my current circumstances came to be known in Washington, President Bartlet signed an Executive Order reactivating my commission and having me assigned to the Navy
Operations Support Centre in Washington..." He then held up a finger with his free hand as Ogawa and Aoshima both gasped in shock at such an action. "Though I'm permitted to cut my own orders.

That made the admiral laugh. "Thus you'll stay!"

"Yes, sir." Ross' blue eyes then twinkled. "Though I honestly wish that Admiral Fitzwallace had warned the President ahead of time about certain things." With that, he saluted them, then sheathed his sword before unbuckling it from his dress belt, cradling it in his hands. "As you and your command still see yourselves on a war footing and I serve the nation you are still technically under orders to strike at, I therefore surrender myself to your custody until properly exchanged, Admiral."

The sword was handed over, making the crowd hush as they stared wide-eyed at this scene. Fujita's eyes twinkled at his spiritual son's act, then held his hand up. "As General Grant refused to take General Lee's sword at Appomattox Court House in 1865 since it had been used by General Lee's father in your nation's fight for independence, I will not see you disarmed as we visit His Majesty, Commander. I'm sure your President meant no harm by seeing your commission restored. Given his honourable actions since he took office in 2009, I will not see an honest mistake by His Excellency blown out of proportion at a time like this." He then winked at Ross as both Ogawa and Susumu tried not to snicker. "Besides, His Majesty is very anxious to meet you, Brent-san," he added. "I don't want to present yourself to him as my prisoner. I doubt His Majesty would understand. You may keep your sword."

Ross blinked, then he hand saluted the older man before restoring his sword to his belt. "I will keep it sheathed, though," he stated. "I will not make the mistake that Lord Asano of Akō was tricked into making in the Fourteenth Year of Genroku." His blue eyes then became hardened steel as he added, "Unless either His Majesty or you order my sword to be drawn, Admiral. Given what must be told to certain authorities in Japan and also in Russia about those incidents in Sano Bay..."

Grim looks crossed the older officers' faces as they remembered what their friend was referring to. "We will speak of it with Professor Konoe once we are done at the Kōkyo, Brent-san," Fujita said. "If you will fall in with Kenji-san, Hakuseki-san and the others, we can get on the march."

A salute was given. "Aye-aye, sir!"

As Ross rode back to join the admiral's staff behind the growing formations of sailors that were now in departments and divisions for the march from Welcome House to Odawara Station on the mainland so Yonaga's crew could board trains to Tōkyō for a short parade to the Imperial Palace, footfalls heralded the arrival of the living personification of the fifth of the Yamato-class ships, she currently in her green-and-grey battlesuit. "A pity I couldn't come with you, Teitoku," Itō Yoiko said as she exchanged salutes with her beloved admiral. "I'll hopefully have Yasuko-san out of Yurie-san's grasp before you arrive at the Kōkyo, then transport her and her formation there to present
ourselves to Tennō."

Fujita nodded. "Try not to make a mess of things, Yoiko-chan," he bade. "Even if Chikage-san was quite annoyed on hearing of this young arahitogami’s actions with your sister, I suspect she allowed your sister’s kami to reside in Onomichi out of innocent or even honourable intentions. Do not allow your true power to be known, Yoiko-chan. It is your final ace card to play."

Yoiko’s eyebrow arched. "You are concerned about this other kannmusu Wakefield-sensei used to chase away that lar’beke Apophis from the home planet of Jackson-hakase’s wife," she quietly commented.

"Did you ever sense her before?"

A shake of the head responded. "No. I barely sensed the other one that the fool magicals who can’t be bothered to read their own Constitution resurrected from one of the hulls in storage at Bremerton. I have to confess, the naval authorities at Kitsap superbly hid who that was even after those would-be traitors did what they did in the summer. Yoiko sighed. "The couple of times I did sense her — most recently when she rescued Sonia-san from her unscheduled swim in Pearl Harbour after her Gifting some hours ago — she seemed as serene in her own way as Ayumu-san initially appeared to me after she brought you all down from Sano-wan so that you could finally present yourselves to Tennō."

"Possibly another of the Great Old Ones blessed her?" Ogawa asked.

"Hai, Shirei-kan, a possibility."

Fujita nodded. "Keep that in mind. You have your orders, Captain."

The tall transformed carrier snapped to attention, saluting him. "Hai, Teitoku! Excuse me, please!"

With that, she headed back towards Welcome House. As the crowds watched, many of Yoiko’s crew reached out to squeeze her arm for good luck as she proceeded to rejoin her fleet mates. Noting this by the gate, Tenhiro Haruka’s best friend Kakinomoto Sayaka blinked before she turned to gaze on the Quarterstaff Mistress, now dressed in a furisode kimono for the occasion. "Hey, Haruka-chan, is Yoiko-san okay?" the blue-eyed brunette who was a member of the Stargazer West College Martial Arts Club — she specialized in kyūdō and naginata-dō — asked. "She seems bothered by something."
"The kami of Yoiko-san's sister Yasuko-san is trapped in a harbour near Hiroshima, Sayaka-chan," Haruka explained as she waved her friend with her to pass through the gate so the former could rejoin her sisters and brother. "Yoiko-san and her friends are going to rescue her."

"'Yasuko'..." Sayaka then gaped. "Yamato?!"

"Young lady."

Both turned as Kawamoto Masao leaned down from his horse. "Please don't shout that out too loud," Yonaga's operations officer pleaded, lowing his voice in emphasis. "If something nefarious has happened to Yoiko-chan's sister, she needs the element of surprise."

Hearing that, Sayaka blushed as Haruka giggled. "Pay it no mind, Oji-sama," the German-raised traditional staff fighter assured him with a reassuring wave of her hand. "All the people on the island were warned ahead of time by us to not upload things onto social media until you were at the Palace and meeting Tennō. That's in two hours. Given how nasty Chikage-chan is with her hexes, I doubt there will be a single person who'd 'spoil the reveal scene' before the right time."

Hearing that, the native of Ōchi in Shimane prefecture breathed out. "So much to learn..."

"We're all here for you, Oji-chan," Sayaka promised.

Kawamoto nodded his thanks before moving his horse out of their way so they could join the gaggle of shipgirls and Haruka's siblings by the rotunda overlooking the old sea wall. Standing in the heart of that group were almost all of the sisters and Moroboshi Ataru, joined by Shigaten Benten, Pansy Parkinson and Hermione Granger; the latter two had teleported from London a half-hour ago. The "flagships" of this operation — Yamamoto Reiko, Charlene Boleyn and Luisa von Bismarck — were in a group close to Sukeyama Sakuya. "I trust all's well with Captain Itō's crew, Lady Tenhiro," the reborn spirit of the second of the Queen Elizabeth-class super-dreadnoughts asked as the Quarterstaff Mistress and her friend came over to join them. "It shocks me that they've been so accepting of all this."

Haruka sighed before she turned to watch as the last of Yonaga's crew formed up. "Hai, Charlene-san, it shocks me as well. But even if they've been isolated from home for so long with only each other, their friends among the Llyg"oravëttl'èn close to Sano-wan itself and the gamájun flocks who went there to escape being killed by magical poachers, the basic virtues of hospitality that rules my people have remained essentially the same since well before their time to this very day. Atop that,
even if there will be those who could see them as a very unwelcome reminder of a past that will
darken our history for years to come, common humanity dictates that they be shown all the courtesy
and respect they've long earned. All other zanryū nipponhei who have returned to the homeland in
the years after the end of the war have been treated the same way even if they had problems
adjusting to modern society."

"Let's hope there are other relatives who are willing to welcome them back," the adopted native of
Devonport said with a twinkle in her eyes as she reached over to pat the younger woman's shoulder.

"...going to be alright, Mary-san. I'm sure that Élisabeth-san and the others you hurt will understand."

Hearing the voice of the Spirit of Innocence, Charlene, Haruka and Sayaka looked over to see a
morose Mary Hood seated at a chair close to the old sea wall, a sympathetic Saeru Hinako squeezing
the transformed battlecruiser's hand while the youngest of the Akamatsu sisters squeezed her
shoulders in a show of support. "I really wish I could believe that, Hinako," Mary then said as her
blue eyes teared anew while Akamatsu Inoue hugged her around her neck. "I really do..."

"Oh, Good Lord!" Charlene snarled as she immediately walked over, leaning on her cane before she
glared at the battlecruiser. "Get yourself back into proper order, you fool!" she snapped, making
Mary jolt as she stared wide-eyed at her fleet mate. "If you haven't forgotten, Captain, you
volunteered to help with the rescue of Captain Itō's sister from that young girl-angel near Hiroshima.
You can't let what you were forced to do at Mers-el-Kébir distract you, not at this time! Shape up,
woman!"

Mary winced. "Mary-sempai's just worried that if Arizona could come back, so could Bretagne,
Sempai," Inoue explained as she rubbed the battlecruiser's blonde hair. "We don't know what Sonia-
sempai feels like right now. None of our friends from America have told us what happened to her
after that strange cruiser came out of nowhere to pull her out of Pearl Harbour and leave her on Ford
Island like she did. If Élisabeth-sempai comes back in the same way, how would she feel?

Hearing that, the second of the Queen Elizabeth-class battleships could only scowl. In the wake of
the surrender of France to the Nazis in the late spring of 1940, the fate of the republic's respectably-
sized navy became of great import to Britain. So much so in fact that Winston Churchill felt he
simply had no choice but to order the Royal Navy to capture or sink the combat vessels of his
defeated ally to ensure they couldn't be used by the Kriegsmarine. The attack on Mers-el-Kébir in
Algeria at the start of July in 1940 — where the super-dreadnought GC Bretagne was sunk due to a
magazine hit from shells fired either by HMS Hood or two of the other members of Force H there
that day; one of them had been Warspite's sistership HMS Valiant — had been a dirty business
indeed. No doubt, given how sudden such an event was, Hood's crew felt ashamed at being part of
such needless slaughter, which now...!
Sanba-chō in Onomichi (forty-five kilometres due east of Hiroshima), that moment...

It's such a pity that we never were able to sail together as a group, Onēsan-tachi...

Ah! Such is fate, Shinano-chan. We're together now...and with Izumi-chan, too...

Onē-san...?

I only wish Onē-sama was with us, Musashi-san...

If someone told Gen Kiyonobu he would actually get the chance to literally SPEAK to the living kami of the battleship he had helped build and served on during the Greater East Asia War before he would join his beloved wife in Heaven, he would have called that person stark raving mad.

Of course, in a beautiful shrine town where there was a living arahitogami in the person of his young assistant's classmate Hitotsubashi Yurie, such would eventually become true in a way that made the long-retired Imperial Navy construction engineer weep with joy.

Especially when Yurie had also located the kami of Yamato's sisterships Musashi and Shinano...

...and in doing so, allowed the spirit of the incomplete member of their class to also return...

And yet...

Yet...

"You had another sister, Yamato-san?"
Hearing the voice of the middle school sophomore who effectively had the whole Universe slammed on her young shoulders a few months ago, Gen turned to gaze intently upon Yurie, who was seated on a bench at the old fishing boat dock, gazing upon the grey mass anchored alongside it; the manifestations of the kami of Yamato's sisterships were anchored beam abreast of her, stretching out into the bay. Grateful that Yurie's shrine maiden friend Saegusa Miko had created the necessary charms to allow him to gaze on the living kami of his old ship and her sisterships, he turned back to fixing the old beach house he ran along with Yurie's would-be boyfriend Ninomiya Kenji during the warm months of the summer; even if winters were often mild in Japan, it was always good to make sure the maintenance was done early so that there was no need to run around like idiots in springtime.

_Hai, Yurie-sama_, the voice of Yamato answered. _My sisters and I sensed another like us being built elsewhere in Japan. We never knew her name or anything like that, but like Musashi-san, Shinano-san and I, she was completed and commissioned. This actually happened before even I was welcomed into the Imperial Navy just after that horrible attack on Pearl Harbour._

"Ah...!" Gen growled as he finished hammering in the last nail in the roof panel he was working on before he came down from the roof to get some water to drink. "That sounds like Warship No. 797, old friend," the retired construction engineer mused. "But where would she have been built?"

_It was to the north-northwest of where I was built, Gen-heisōchō, _the childish voice of the third of the Yamato-class ships, Shinano, answered from outboard of the second of that class, Musashi.

That made Gen blink. "Maizuru, you mean?!"

An embarrassed chuckle responded. _W-well, I never sailed there...!_

_Some of the submarines that were built from my hull did, Shinano-onēsama, _the voice of the fourth of the Yamato-class ships — which was only known as Warship No. 111 in the history books; after being asked by Yurie and her friends as to what sort of name she wanted, she had chosen Izumi — then spoke up, her voice even more timid than Shinano's. _And I can understand Gen-heisōchō's confusion at the matter. Maizuru Bay is far too small for any one of us._

_None the less, they did build Onē-sama there, Yamato spoke up, _a touch of joviality in her voice. I wonder if they decided to avoid what happened to you when you were launched, Musashi-san._
If the second of the Yamato-class ships could blush, she would. *Yes, Onē-san, that was not the way for this Musashi to be properly embraced by Susano'o-sama,* she said, her voice rough and touched by a Kyūshū accent given her birthplace at Nagasaki, never mind the very formal samurai-way of speaking the near-namesake of Japan's most famous swordsman always used.

Yurie giggled before she looked over to watch as Kenji continued to practice on his calligraphy. Blushing while she took in his handsome features as he concentrated on his work, she could feel the metaphorical smiles emanate from the kami of the four warships she had helped bring to Onomichi over the last month or so in the wake of her visit to Izumo. Also watching this from nearby were many of the town's inordinately large population of yōkai, they also smiling in delight that the younger of the two kami who ultimately watched over their home town was clearly interested in the young lad in a more than platonic way. "Yurie-sama, you shouldn't be so obvious about it," the elderly nurarihyon who served as the unofficial "mayor" of Ōnomichi's yōkai population teased from beside the young arahitogami on the bench overlooking the dock and Matsunaga Bay beyond.

She squawked as Kenji blushed. "Nūri-san!"

Laughter echoed over the dockyard before excited girls' voices made Yurie look over her shoulder as her closest friends came down to join her. "Ah! Mitsue-chan! Matsuri-chan! Miko-chan!" the young arahitogami called out on seeing who was coming her way, waving.

She then stopped, blinking in confusion on seeing the wide-eyed, disbelieving looks on her friends' faces. "Oi! Yurie-chan! You've never going to BELIEVE this!" Saegusa Matsuri, Miko's older sister and the one in charge of Raifuku-jinja where all worship concerning her classmate had been concentrated, called out as she pulled out an iPad, tapping on the screen to get to picture files.

"What is it?"

"It..." the shy Miko began before she flustered as she blushed.

Shijō Mitsue, Yurie's true best friend, took a breath before she gazed at Yamato. "Oi! Yamato-san! When on Earth were you and your sisters going to tell us all that you had ANOTHER sister out there?!"

Silence.

More silence.
Still more silence.

Then...

_Onē-sama...?!_ all four warship kami gasped in disbelief.

"What?!" Gen called out. "You mean someone found Warship No. 797?!"

"Yonaga."

"Huh?!"

"That's her name," Matsuri affirmed.

Gen blinked for a second as that name sank in...

...then he gasped in shock as he reached for his head, his hand letting go of the water bottle he was holding. "Gen-san!" Kenji cried out as he lunged over to help steady the older man.

The retired construction engineer seemed to rock on his feet for a moment before he shook his head as his breathing evened out. "I'm alright! I'm alright!" he gasped before blinking a couple times while the mental fog that he hadn't known had masked some of his memories for over seventy years suddenly cleared up, allowing the Sun's rays to reveal something he had once been incredibly proud of...but given certain mission parameters imposed on what he had ALSO been involved in, had to be blocked from all attempts at trying to pry it out of his mind. By normal, metahuman and _magical_ means...!

_Gen-heisōchō...?_

Hearing _Izumi_'s worried voice, Gen took a deep breath. "I'm alright, Izumi-chan," he said as he gazed warmly at the image of the only incomplete member of the Yamato-class. "I'm alright! It's just that all my memories of my division's involvement in the construction of your sister _Yonaga_ was..."
magically blocked in my mind until I heard her name mentioned by Matsuri-chan here."


"What do you mean by that, Nūri-shichō?" Miko asked.

"All battleships that served Tennō — even those transformed into aircraft carriers like Shinano — were named after old Imperial provinces. Why did this Yonaga get such a name? And how was it written?"

"'Era of Eternity'. And it was necessary, Nūri-san. Especially for her."

Eyes locked on Gen as he moved to sit beside Yurie as Kenji moved to get him another bottle of water. "'Necessary'?" the young arahitogami asked. "What do you mean, Gen-san?"

The retired construction engineer sighed. "As I've long explained to you all while I taught you kids everything about the Greater East Asia War and why things happened like they did, there were strong opponents to the whole concept of Kantai Kessen that the leaders of the Imperial Navy at the time believed was the ONLY way to defeat the Americans. We couldn't out-build them, so we'd go for quality over quantity." He gazed on Yamato for a moment. "Yamato-san and her sisters were originally meant to serve as the core of that very philosophy...but both Yamamoto-gensui and an old classmate of his led a group who wanted to create a strong enough carrier force that could balance the battle fleet and strike from a distance. Since we had the experience already with ships like Akagi and Kaga, the leaders of the Navy allowed Warship No. 797 to be rebuilt into the greatest aircraft carrier ever constructed, worlds beyond even the Essex-class and Midway-class carriers the Americans would later build.

"That...was Yonaga."

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Ōmure-jima, that moment...

"AH-CHOO!"
"Bless you! Are you alright, Yoiko-san?!"

Itō Yoiko moaned. "Someone's talking about me..."

As the other shipgirls gazed at the fifth of the Yamato-class, a certain adopted native of Konstanz and Friedrichshafen in the German state of Baden-Württemberg blinked as she gazed west-southwest.

Before anyone could note on what was happening, Amélie von Zeppelin faded out of existence...

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**Onomichi, a half-hour later...**

**Onē-sama sounds so INCREDIBLE...!**

"Hai, she was!" a beaming Gen Kiyonobu declared after hearing Shinano gush like that after he spent some time describing what the 15th Construction Division helped create in Maizuru between 1937 and 1941 before their memories were masked, then they were sent to Kure to assist with the completion of Yamato. "She could take a naval air flotilla — a HUNDRED AND FORTY aircraft with ground crew! — with no problem! She could operate on her own without resupply for MONTHS! She was just WORLDS ahead of her time! Only when the Americans built their Forrestal-class supercarriers did they equal Yonaga in capabilities!" He then sighed before gazing at Saegusa Matsuri. "What's happened to her?!

The raven-haired elder shrine maiden smiled. "It turns out that those new metahumans who've been Gifted through the Forge of the Seekers where Raeburn-shihan got her Power Jewel from have ALSO been going around to find the kami of warships to bring them back as 'kantai musume'. They're all now metahuman women with incredible powers," she declared, making everyone hearing this gape. "Even if Tennō asked them to stop going out to do that, it ultimately started a waterfall of ship kami coming back as metahumans themselves! Yonaga-san is one of them!" She turned her iPad around to show a picture that had been taken very early that morning in Tomobiki, shifting herself so that everyone could see the image of the tall and muscular woman with the silver-shot raven hair and the eyes of the most thunderous typhoon, she dressed in a curious martial arts gi-like jumpsuit with her ship's name over the Wheel of Fate as an insignia on her chest below the "V" of her collar. "It turns out that after she left Maizuru, she deployed to a cove in SIBERIA of all places to hide her, where an earthquake trapped her and her crew some months before the Pearl Harbour attack!" She paused as the people listening to this all gasped or screamed on hearing of such a fate befalling that incredible ship.
Onē-sama...how horrible...! the kami of Izumi moaned.

"Ah! Relax, Izumi-chan! It turned out great!"

"Huh?!" Yurie gasped. "How, Matsuri-chan?!"

"The cove was a diamond mesonium miner's dream, Yurie-chan!" Matsuri answered. "It kept the ship AND THE CREW fresh and young until some great old kami up north contacted the kami of the Forge to allow her to be reborn as a metahuman! This is what she looks like now!" She pointed to the iPad screen in emphasis. "But because the crew still have orders to attack Pearl Harbour, they have to be told by Tennō to stand down finally! They're going to the Kōkyo right now to do that!"

"There were almost THREE THOUSAND people on that ship, child!" Gen snapped. "How in the name of the Kami did Fujita-taishō and his crew get down here from SIBERIA?! If Yonaga-san is like that...!"

"Oh, Ayumu-sempai handled that!"

Hitotsubashi Yurie blanched. "Ayumu-sempai...?!"

Matsuri moaned. "Yurie-chan, you've got to stop being so scared of her...!"

"But she's Infinity, Matsuri-chan...!"

"Ich verstehe...Ich bin nicht allein..."

Hearing that voice with its rich Alemannic accent, heads turned to the east...

...then people blinked in confusion on seeing a blonde Western woman with pale grey eyes standing at the end of the fishing boat dock, her gaze fixed on the ghostly kami of the third and fourth of the Yamato-class ships. As people blinked again on taking in her Aryan-like features and the somewhat lost look in her eyes — not to mention the form-fitting sleeveless jumpsuit with its decorative clash of

Gen spun around to stare wide-eyed at her. "Germany's first aircraft carrier?!!"

"Hai! She was turned into a kantai musume back in the summer, but came to Japan just before lunch yesterday looking for the kantai musume that our own metahumans found and brought home! She landed in Tomobiki, then destroyed the Mizunokōji mansion because of some stupid thing that dork feminazi that runs that family was trying to do at Tomobiki High!" As people listening to this gasped on hearing what happened in Japan's most infamous town, Matsuri added, "There are more German kantai musume here! Bismarck is here! So are Prinz Eugen and two destroyers! And Graf Spee, too!"

To meet Bismarck...!

Yurie looked over. "You want to meet Bismarck-san, Yamato-san?"

Hai, Yurie-sama! the kami of the first of her class declared. She was the finest battleship ever built in Europe. The largest of them all, too! On her first and only mission, she went out and destroyed a battleship by herself! The British sent a whole FLEET after her! Her crew stood their ground when she was cornered, but they couldn't sink her no matter how hard they tried! But...! Here, a sigh escaped Yamato. She was too badly damaged to return home in that fight. Her rudder had been shot off and she couldn't be steered. The British would have captured her, so her crew had no choice but to scuttle her, still so far out of range from being saved by the German air forces...!

"That's terrible...!" Shijō Mitsue whispered.

"Luisa's crew allowed her to return so she could live the life that they were denied, meine Freunde. As much as you and your sisters should be allowed to live again. To live the lives your crews were denied."

Eyes locked on Amélie von Zeppelin, who was gazing in sympathy at the kami of the first of her class of super-battleships. Luisa...? Yamato then asked, the confusion in her voice more than understandable.

"Ja. Being human now in body, it's seen as simply ridiculous to make use of our ship names as our proper names in this life. I was given a 'human name' so that I could live as a normal person despite
"'Itō'?" Gen wondered before his eyes widened. "Ah! After Itō Seiichi-taishō!"

*My admiral...?!* the kami of *Yamato* gasped.

"Jawohl, mein Herr." Here, Amélie waved to *Yamato*, she turning to bow formally to the considerable crowd listening in on this while doing introductions. "Frau Kapitän zur See Yasuko, Freidame von Itō zu Washū und Geishū." To Musashi. "Frau Kapitän zur See Mutsuko, Freidame von Itō zu Bushū und Hishū." To Shinano. "Frau Kapitän zur See Shizuka, Freidame von Itō zu Shinshū und Sōshū." Then to Izumi, where Amélie stopped, her cheeks suddenly flushing. "Um, forgive me, meine Freunde...?!"

*I am Izumi, Teikoku-hakushaku-sama...*

"Ah, danke!" Here, Amélie coughed before she waved to the fourth of the Yamato-class. "Frau Kapitän zur See Izumi, Freidame von Itō zu Senshū und Geishū," she then finished.

A chorus of awed gasps escaped the people who had heard this. "You are most well-educated, Amélie-san," Nūri then declared as many of the yōkai all nodded in approval.

Amélie blinked before she giggled, she reaching up to scratch her hair in embarrassment. "Well, one of my wonderful hosts, ihre Erlaucht Haruka, Markgräfin von Tenhiro-Moroboshi zu Ōshū und Berg, explained to me all the ancient provincial names of this lovely country."

"Wait! 'Tenhiro-Moroboshi'?! Is she related to Moroboshi Ataru-senpai?!"

That was a wide-eyed Mitsue. "Jawohl, meine Frau," the transformed German aircraft carrier said with a delighted smile. "Frau Markgräfin Haruka is Herr Markgraf Ataru's and Frau Markgräfin Tariko's younger half-sister. As so arranged by Her Markgraf Ataru's late grandmother, ihre Erlaucht Nagaiwakai, Markgräfin von Moroboshi zu Ōshū und Ezo, to ensure the proper succession of the leadership of her imperial clan from herself to a worthy granddaughter as it has always been done."
"Properly adopted, I hope!" Gen noted.

"Jawohl, mein Herr!" Amélie then blinked. "You were in the Imperial Navy, ja?"

One of those who helped build myself...as much as he also helped build Onē-sama in secret, the kami of Yamato then proudly declared.

Introductions were immediately done. Amélie then accepted Gen's formal salute. "Honoured, Herr Oberstabsbootsmann Gen!" she declared with a nod. "You and your co-workers certainly did excellent work, both on Frau Freidame Yasuko and Frau Freidame Yoiko."

Gen blushed at that compliment before he blinked. "'Yoiko'?!"

"Hai! That's Yonaga's human name," Matsuri declared.

"How would it be said in German, Amélie-san?" Yurie then asked.

Amélie smiled. "Frau Kapitän zur See Yoiko, Freidame von Itō zu Tanshū und Bishū. The second provincial name taken from the home province of Herr Admiral Fujita Hiroshi, who was meant to command the erste Marineluftflotte on the Hawai'i mission." She shrugged. "After all, such a divinely-inspired name as 'Yonaga' has no real provincial equivalent, ja?"

More laughter echoed from the crowd...

"Napaaqtuqarunnanngittuq...!"

Eyes locked on Yurie as all the yōkai present seemed to look as if Doomsday itself was about to fall on their collective heads. "Yurie-sama! Be careful!" Nūri hissed out as those yōkai with arms began making warding signs. "To say HIS Name is to bring His Wrath on us all...!"

"It's alright, Nūri-san," the arahitogami said as she gazed on the quivering nurarihyon. "I actually found myself speaking to Napaaqtuqarunnanngittuq-sama once when I went to the Kannazuki last month in Izumo. I impressed everyone because I actually won his attention." As all the yōkai gasped on hearing that their young arahitogami won the interest of the oldest sentient being on Earth, Yurie
added, "He asked me if I would allow gamajun from his domains to come visit Onomichi. Since they’re magical creatures and are often hunted by poachers in Russia for their feathers, I said 'yes'."

"Oh! I get it now...!"

Eyes locked on Matsuri. "What is it, Matsuri-san?" Kenji asked.

The shrine maiden gazed on the aircraft carrier from Germany. "Ne, Amélie-san, when did Yamaroso's sister get turned into this?" she asked as she indicated the picture of Itō Yoiko on her iPad.

"Um...back in the summer, meine Frau."

Gen blinked before he laughed. "Ah! Now I understand! This particular kami wanted to reunite Yonaga-san with her sisters! That's a cunning way of doing that!"

People looked on the retired construction engineer as they considered that, then laughter filled the crowd. You mean...Napaaqtaqarunnamngittuq-sama wished us to be together with Onē-sama?! the kami of Izumi squealed like an excited teenager meeting an idol star.

"It does seem like it, meine Frau," Amélie responded.

Suddenly, the ethereal body of Izumi began to glow. Yes! Yes! YES! I want to be with Onē-sama!

Izumi-chan! STOP! her oldest sister present called out. What are you DOING...?!

"OH, YE GODS! LOOK!"

Everyone jolted on hearing Mitsue's shocked cry, then spun around to gaze into the sky over the bay...

...then they gaped in disbelief as massive amounts of steel and other materials seemed to fly in from EVERYWHERE, it forming a shapeless mass over where the spirit of the fourth of the Yamato-class
ships was now floating in the harbour. Before anyone could ask any questions — and with the shouts of thousands who could see this from every vantage point within visual range of this incident echoing in people's ears — said mass began to brightly glow as it morphed and transformed into a VERY recognizable ship's hull, complete with a modernized weapons outfit than even what had been fitted in her oldest sister present on her last mission in 1945. As the flashes of camera phones went off like sparkles in the afternoon air, the excited cries of the being who would assume the human name "Itō Izumi" began to echo over the scene, which made people start to scream with delight.

_Tene lomher'buo, Itō Izumi...!

Hearing that booming voice, Amélie smiled. "So fängt es an..."

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_Ōmure-jīma, at Welcome House, that moment..._

"MINNA! WE GOT A PROBLEM!"

Heads snapped up from the table where the current plan to rescue Yoiko's sister was being hashed out to gaze at the open window of Hatoyama Rinrin's room. "What is it, Rinrin-chan?!" Sukeyama Sakuya called back as the Technological Sorceress of the East leaned out to look at them.

"There's something happening in Onomichi, Sakuya-chan!" Rinrin called back. "One of the Yamato-class ships is being Gifted! I'm sending the images down to Marie-chan's PAA! Let Yoiko-san see it!"

Heads then turned to where Susumu Marie was seated. As Yoiko walked over to put herself behind the Paper Sorceress, with Luisa, Charlene and Reiko joining her, the native of Hakodate called up a holographic screen, it showing the breaking news report from JOFK-TV in Hiroshima, NHK's local affiliate station. As the image of a huge mass of steel being transformed into the shape of a Yamato-class warship over the western reaches of Matsunaga Bay played out over the screen, a reporter's voice excitedly called out, "...right now, it appears the living kami of one of the Yamato-class battleships is now forming well within the safety of Matsunaga Bay. Unlike other times this particular scene has played out as was reported concerning what happened to both the German heavy cruiser _Admiral Graf Spee_ and the American battleship _Arizona_ in recent days, the sheer mass of this particular ship is being drawn together solely from scrap steel that has been brought in from EVERYWHERE! Could this mean that the kami of the fourth of the class, the unnamed Warship No. 111, has formed...?!"
"Tene lomher'buo, Itō Izumi...!

"Ah! The Conservator, the living kami of the Great Crystal of Power on planet Yiziba, has called out this reborn kami's human name! As to what the ship name of this particular vessel could be...!"

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Onomichi, that moment...

Nesu...PALIM!

The whole sky over Matsunaga Bay glowed as bright as the noonday Sun for a moment as the mass that had been forged together and merged with both the living kami of the fourth of the Yamato-class battleships and a first generation battle doll teleported in from Yiziba all came together in a titanic fusion of energy that literally overwhelmed the meta-senses of anyone who could truly See this event, even from many kilometres away in the mountains of Honshū and Shikoku...

...then the energy faded, revealing a tall and muscular woman with very long black hair tied in double buns over her ears with black ribbons that fluttered in the breeze stirred up thanks to the vacuum left behind by the disappearance of over 73,000 tonnes of steel and other materials when it was merged to create the current body of Itō Izumi. Her face was soft and teenage-like even if she had the body proportions of a young adult; some of the people who were seeing this through telephoto lenses immediately thought of various gravure models who had draped the covers of magazines across Japan when they took in such beautiful features. Her eyes were a perfect shade of chestnut brown and there was a single prominent canine in her mouth, the only thing that seemed to mar such perfect looks.

Her body was currently draped in a black jumpsuit in the modern Yizibajohei pattern, with shiny silver belt and boots. Matching silver finger-less gloves covered her hands. On her chest was a depiction of the mythical White Tiger of the West standing over a representation of the Hall of the Heavenly Kings with his head facing the viewer's left, the whole embossed with the kanji 和泉 in silver-framed black. Topping it off was a beautiful white demi-cape with a hood tied around her neck.

"IZUMI-SAN!"
The current incarnation of the Great Guardian of the Fountain of Heaven, Palim ("Izumi"), jolted on hearing the shout from the arahitogami that had done so much to shape her from the nearly-formless kami of a vessel whose hull was recycled into other ships into an effective living if non-corporeal being, then she looked before she willed herself to float gently to the fishing boat dock where Yurie stood, waving in delight. Once her feet touched the concrete of the dock, Izumi moved forward to kneel before the younger of the two guardian kami of her home port, bowing her head. "Onomichi-no-Yurie-sama, please forgive this unworthy one for causing such a disturbance in your domain...!"

Yurie blushed at such a formal act of reverence, then she blinked before she placed her hands on Izumi's hair, she closing her eyes as she willed up her divine power from deep within her heart...

"KA-...MI-...CHU!"

Izumi glowed as bright as a sun as energy flowed into her, her mind linking briefly with that of Yurie's to allow all sorts of vital knowledge needed to live as a human — to say anything of being a human GIRL! — flood her mind. People averted their eyes from the sheer brilliance of the energy now pouring into the fourth of the Yamato-class battleships, then they relaxed as the glow faded, Yurie stepping back to allow the much taller woman — as a human being, Itō Izumi stood an impressive 183.5 centimetres tall without the slight boost her buccaneer boots gave her in the heels — to rise to her full height, then she bowed again formally to the young arahitogami before her. "Dōmo arigatō gozaimashita, Yurie-sama!"

"IZUMI BANZAI!" Gen screamed out.

Three loud banzai cheers echoed over Onomichi...

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Ōmure-jima, that moment...

"Um...Yoiko-san?"

"What is it, Yaeko-san?"

"Do you think Yurie-sama was the one who helped Izumi-san be...um, completed?"
Hearing that question from the light cruiser that served as her sister's chief escort on Operation: Tengō, the fifth of the Yamato-class hummed as she crossed her arms. Itō Yoiko had immediately approved of her "incomplete" sister's quite exceptional choice of name. Izumi Province — often called "Senshū" — was one of the five provinces of the Kinai, the capital region of pre-Meiji Japan; another of those domains was Yamato Province. Given the markings on her sister's fighting uniform, Yoiko wondered if the kami of the ancestor to one of the feudal families that ruled over Senshū, Watanabe no Tsuna — a retainer of Minamoto no Yorimitsu during the middle years of the Heian period — had a hand in moulding young Izumi's soul as she was properly formed. In latter legends, Watanabe had been seen as a spiritual equal to the legendary deity Virūpākṣa — "Kōmoku-ten" in Japan — one of the Four Heavenly Kings denoting the cardinal directions in classical Buddhist myth.

Was Hitotsubashi Yurie's blessing of her sister a way of further empowering Izumi...?

"AMÉLIE?! WHAT IN GOD'S NAME ARE YOU DOING THERE?!!"

Yoiko's head snapped over to see a mortally-embarrassed Luisa von Bismarck now staring at the holographic screen, which now depicted the just-transformed Izumi — now as red as a tomato — having her hand kissed by the living personification of Germany's first aircraft carrier. As the other schiffsmädchen gargled at the thought of their fleet mate actually making her way to Onomichi like she did without their noticing it, Yoiko reached over to squeeze the blonde battleship's shoulder. "I realize it is not in Ordnung, Luisa-san," the adopted native of Maizuru said as Luisa stared her way. "But the Fates can be like this. If it was meant for Amélie-san to go down there, she had to go down there."

"Still...!" the adopted native of Schönhausen moaned.

Yoiko smiled as she held up a finger to mark her point. "My friend, I strongly applaud your desire to acknowledge appropriate ways of doing things...but given what's happened to all of us since young Fujiko-san was made human in the spring, is there ANY proper way of doing ANYTHING?!!"

Luisa grimaced as she crossed her arms, she giving the carrier a warning look. "Chaos is not a thing any of us should ever welcome, meine Freunde...even if — no, ESPECIALLY if! — we are empowered by the living spirit of the core of a planet that seems to relish living in perpetual anarchy!"

"She has a point, Yoiko-san," Ōkawa Yaeko mused.
"Well, one reporter's going to get some answers."

Hearing Susumu Marie's comment, the shipgirls gazed on the screen...

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_Onomichi, that moment..._

"...is Sakurayama Momoko of NHK in Hiroshima, now on the waterfront in Onomichi’s Sanba-chō, where an incredible event has just overtaken this town. Already known as the home of the living arahitogami Hitotsubashi Yurie-sama — whom, as people will recall, was blessed with the powers of a true kami some months ago — Onomichi has become yet the latest city in the world to witness the REBIRTH of the kami of a warship from the Greater East Asia War in the form of a metahuman warrior," the smiling brown-haired twenty-something woman in fashionable clothes said as she faced the camera, with a crowd of people standing off to her right rear, including two women in Yizibajohei-style battlesuits. "This 'shipgirl' — as such beings have come to be called worldwide — is especially interesting. Not only is she the sister of the ship — now a shipgirl as people in Tomobiki learned very early this morning — whose crew are presently marching from Odawara to the Imperial Palace in Tōkyō after SEVENTY-ONE years away, trapped in a cove in Siberia awaiting the chance to play their part in the attack on Pearl Harbour that started the Greater East Asia War...but she is ALSO the first known shipgirl to rise from the spirit of a vessel that not only was NOT completed to serve in that war, but was SCRAPPED on the construction ship in nearby Kure, where her more famous sister Yamato had been built."

She looked towards the two women in jumpsuits. "Having just joined Itō Izumi-taisa — the living spirit of Warship No. 111, who can now be properly entered in all the history books as Tennō Heika Gunkan Izumi — is another 'incomplete' warship who came back to life as a shipgirl. She is the first known foreign warship to become a shipgirl as revealed hours ago at the White House in Washington, Amélie von Zeppelin-taisa, the living spirit of Kriegsmarineschiff Graf Zeppelin, Germany's only aircraft carrier. Right now, Zeppelin-taisa and Itō-taisa are speaking with Yurie-sama and her closest friends, including retired Imperial Navy construction engineer Gen Kiyonobu-heisōchō. Gen-heisōchō, a member of the 15th Construction Division in the Imperial Navy during the war, helped complete work on Yamato in 1941 and sailed on her for a couple years, being forced off due to injuries before her tragic final mission on Operation: Ten-gō." Here, the pretty reporter turned to gaze knowingly at the camera. "By the looks of it, Gen-heisōchō is more than happy that the spirit of one of his ship's sisterships now truly lives. Let's ask him about the other Yamato-class ship that's returned to Japan. Excuse me!"

Heads turned over to stare her way. "Ah! Momoko-san! C'mon over!" Saegusa Matsuri called out, waving the reporter over. "We hoped it was you coming down to talk to Izumi-chan and the others..." She then looked out to the harbour. "As soon as the others are able to be seen normally, of course," she then added with an amused smile as she turned back and winked at the reporter.
Silence.

More silence.

Still more silence.

Then...

Momoko was gaping. "Um...excuse me, Matsuri-chan, are you saying that...?!

"Hai, Sensei," Yurie affirmed. "Yamato-san, Musashi-san and Shinano-san are here in the harbour."

Seeing nods from the arahitogami's friends, the reporter shook her head. And I thought the stories from Tomobiki and Nerima were weird...?! "So...what's preventing them from becoming shipgirls?"

"I'm really sorry, Sensei," a quiet woman's voice then spoke up. "Until Matsuri-san came by with news about Onē-sama and what happened to her, none of us knew we could BECOME kantai musume."

Eyes locked on Izumi. "Hai, Momoko-san, it's true," Yurie affirmed with a nod.

"Didn't you sense what was going on, Yurie-sama?" the reporter demanded.

"You have to understand, Yurie-sama is only six months removed from being a normal woman, Sensei," Matsuri's sister Miko then quietly explained. "Even now with her experience meeting the various kami in Izumo last month and meeting Yashima-sama and the yōkai who live here in Onomichi since she was gifted by the Fates to become an arahitogami in July, it's still very hard for Yurie-sama to absorb ALL that happens in her domain, to say anything of anywhere BEYOND it!"

"We honestly didn't know about shipgirls and all that until the news got out about what happened in Uruguay," Matsuri added. "I have to admit, what Spee-taisa did to those aliens last night was really awesome!" She then thumbed the blonde aircraft carrier standing close to the just-reborn battleship.
"Not to mention what Zeppelin-taisa did in Tomobiki yesterday!" she added with a wink.

As Amélie blushed, Momoko gazed on her. "Um, Zeppelin-taisa, what DOES bring you to Onomichi anyway?! Where have you and your fleet mates been staying since your visit to the White House?!"

The aircraft carrier instantly froze, her grey eyes wide with fright...

"Hina can explain, Sensei!"

Everyone jolted...

...then people relaxed as the camera panned around to see a smiling pre-teen in a white jumpsuit with a red heart nearby. "Ah, Hinako-chan!" Momoko called out. "Saeru Hinako-chan's come to visit!"

"Hai!" the Spirit of Innocence declared as she walked over.

As people who had the charms that allowed them to see the yōkai that haunted Onomichi were quick to note, dozens of those creatures were flocking close to the young native of Niigata as she approached Izumi and Amélie. To the sharp eyes of Yurie and her friends, all of those creatures looked as if they had been given TEN YEARS' worth of festival offerings all at ONCE! As the German aircraft carrier clicked her heels in salute to the cosmic meta, Izumi deeply bowed. "F-f-f-forgive my impertinence, Hinako-sama, b-b-but are you a k-k-kami...?" the fourth of the Yamato-class stammered out.

Hinako blinked as she sensed the wariness in the just-transformed battleship's heart. "No, Izumi-san! Hina is Hina!" she asserted, which made Izumi gape and many of the people seeing this stagger in shock at such a declaration. "Hai, Hina has cosmic powers, but Hina can die just like any person can die! If Hina becomes a death cheater, Onē-tama's and Onii-tama's friend Margo-san will get upset and Hina doesn't want that! Stop being silly!" She then sighed. "Yasuko-san...?!"

Her eyes then glowed...

...as the ghostly image of Yamato and her two complete sisters that had been sunk in the Greater East Asia War appeared to EVERYONE, with the grey mass of Japan's first super-battleship causing some people to drop on their butts in disbelief and awe at being so close to the object that had long
come to personify how great their nation had climbed before being brought down in the flames of World War Two. Before Momoko could demand to know what was happening and how it was possible for someone who seemed quite normal like Saeru Hinako to make the living kami of *Yamato* appear like that, a voice with a noticeable Chūgoku accent then stammered out, *H-h-h-Hinako-sama...?*

"**STOP CALLING HINA 'HINAKO-SAMA'! HINA HATES THAT!**"

As Izumi’s sister yelped at that shouted protest, Amélie cleared her throat. "Frau Kapitän Itō, Frau Markgräfin Hinako is a very modest person deep down. It is one of her most endearing qualities."

Hinako’s cheeks flamed. "Amélie-san! Stop making Hina blush like that!"

People blinked, then Gen roared with laughter. Soon enough, the whole crowd was madly giggling; even the yōkai who were present were screaming in mirth at such humility by someone who was Yurie’s equal in power in so many ways. *Ah...h-hai, Hinako-chan!* the kami of *Yamato* then sputtered out as a deep rumble that had to be her next-younger sister’s own stifled guffaw echoed over the scene. *Forgive me, though...given how powerful my sisters and I can sense you are...!*

Hinako sighed. "Yasuko-san! Hina doesn't care about that! Yoiko-san doesn't bother Hina about it!"

*Onē-sama's with you now, Hinako-san?* Er...*where you live?*

A nod answered *Shinano*. "Hai, Shizuka-san, Yoiko-san's watching this now where Hina, Onii-tama and Hina's sisters now live with all the shipgirls that have come back since Hina found Fujiko-san by Guadalcanal back in the spring. Amélie-san's friends are there, too!" Hinako then put her fists to her hips as she focused on *Yamato*'s towering bridge, her foot then tapping impatiently. "Yasuko-san, did you go and forget something when you asked Yurie-san to help you come back home?!"

A wave of confusion answered the Spirit of Innocence. *Wh-what...?*

"Hina's thinking of Yaeko-san and Suzumi-san and Yukiko-san and Kasumi-san and Asami-san and Hatsuysan and Yukiko-san's sisters Izumi-san and Hama-san, too!" Hinako complained before she crossed her arms. "You know! Your friends from that silly trip to *Okinawa*?!!"
Silence.

More silence.

Still more silence.

Then...

The voice of the kami of Japan's first super-battleship now cracked with understandable surprise and embarrassment. *You mean...Yahagi-san and the destroyers...?!

"Hai!" Hinako called out, nodding in affirmation. "Suzumi-san wrecked the dock in Fukuoka where her hull was being used as a breakwater when she heard Yaeko-san and the others call to you when you disappeared like that, Yasuko-san! How could you forget your FRIENDS?!

If the spirit of *Yamato* could hide herself from that accusing glare from the young metahuman who was now publicly admonishing her like that, she would do it in an instant. *I...I never sensed they were awoke when I became self-aware, Hinako-chan...!* she sputtered.

"Um, Hinako-san...?"

"Yurie-san, you be quiet! Hina's talking to Yasuko-san here!"

Yurie yelped as people native to Onomichi gaped in shocked disbelief at the fact that a "mortal" girl had told her to completely butt out of this conversation like that. As the yōkai all quailed as they sensed the annoyance the Spirit of Innocence was now radiating from her body, a beeping noise then echoed from somewhere on the young Niigata native's uniform. "Moshi-moshi, Hina desu!" Hinako then called out as she pulled a PAA from her belt pocket to hold it close to her ear.

"I think you've admonished my sister enough, Hinako-san."

People perked on hearing that mid-winter ice-cold voice. "Who...?" Izumi hesitantly asked.
"That's your older sister, Frau Izumi!" Amélie hissed.

The transformed aircraft carrier hadn't been quiet enough, unfortunately.

As Yurie and her friends were all quick to note, the yōkai immediately started to shuffle away as they felt a wave of sheer power that could ONLY come from a being directly touched by the Great Old One of the North now radiating from the communications device the Spirit of Innocence was now holding close to her head. Sensing that as well, Hinako sighed as she pulled the PAA away from her, tapping the crystal to allow the image of the transformed fifth of the Yamato-class to appear.

Onē-sama...? the spirit of Yamato then eeped.

Yoiko sighed, the look on her face turning to exasperation. "Yasuko-san...I am VERY displeased at what you've done since you allowed yourself to return to the Home Islands," she declared in a voice that brooked no defiance. As a squawk escaped the kami of Japan's first super-battleship, the seventh carrier of Operation Z added, "As Hinako-san just told you, your ignorance of your fleet mates — five of whom were SUNK on the very same day you were in Shōwa-nijūnen! — caused them to panic and force Giftings on themselves when they believed the WORST happened to you! They even cast most dark aspirations on this young arahitogami that brought your kami and your sisters' kami to Onomichi!" As the natives — human and yōkai alike! — gasped at those words, Yoiko's head canted over. "Mutsuko-san?! Shizuka-san?! Please don't tell me YOU forgot friends that were sunk when you were!"

No, Onē-sama! This Musashi didn't leave...! the spirit of Musashi stammered.

"Yoiko-sempai! Stop that!"

Yoiko turned left as a beautiful teenage girl in a white jumpsuit with blue trim and the hurricane insignia on her chest came into the range of the PAA camera. Yukikaze-chan...?! the spirit of Yamato gasped...

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Somewhere...
"Man! Big Y, you and your commune are just WAY too square at times...!"

Fingers were then snapped!

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*Onomichi...*

"Hai, Yasuko-san, it's Yukikaze," Yuhara Yukiko said as she turned to face her flagship...

...then everyone screamed out in shock as a brilliant flash of light blinded everyone, that accompanied by the sudden splashing sounds of very large masses of matter hitting the bay in front of them!

*Tene lomher'buo, Itō Yasuko...Itō Mutsuko...Itō Shizuka...!*

"AH! CONSERVATOR-SAN! DON'T...!" Saeru Hinako screamed out...

...before an even brighter flash of energy seemed to eat up all of Matsunaga Bay!

*Nesu...GAPA!*

The sound of a body slamming into the concrete of the dock then made people jolt. "ITTAI!" the now-HUMAN voice of the kami of the first of Japan's super-battleships gasped.

*Nesu...NOLUO!*

Another body slammed into the dock. "AH!" came the scream of the second of the Yamato-class as the radiance began to slowly fade. "This Musashi...wasn't prepared to become this...so soon...!"
And the only known carrier of the Yamato-class until the revelations concerning their long-missing sister went public found herself hitting the dock. "ITTAI!" she moaned. "Who did that to me...?!"

Silence.

More silence.

Still more silence.

Then...

"Hina didn't do that!"

Eyes locked on Hinako, then they turned as the three just-transformed warships — now in jumpsuits that bore their ship names on their chests, all of them looking to be incredibly beautiful twenty-something women — started to pick themselves off the dock where they had been dropped on their butts. "Um...Frau Markgräfin, if you didn't do that to them, who on Earth DID?" Amélie von Zeppelin demanded as Izumi helped the just-transformed and understandably shaken Itō Shizuka to her feet.

As the Saegusa sisters helped Itō Mutsuko up while Hitotsubashi Yurie and Ninomiya Kenji moved to help her sister Yasuko, the air close to Hinako seemed to warp and shift as someone teleported herself in from Ōmure-jima. Instantly sensing the POWER of the fifth of the Yamato-class and what ancient being had blessed her some months before in the ice cold of Siberia, all the yōkai screamed in horror before they raced away from the scene as fast as they could move. Sending them an annoyed look, Yoiko could only moan before her grey eyes narrowed as she reached out with her well-developed ki senses to try to detect who it was that had forced such a sudden transformation upon her own sisters...

"Yoiko-san...?"

Hearing the worried tone in the Spirit of Innocence's voice, the seventh carrier of Operation Z sighed as she squeezed the young woman's shoulder, a reassuring smile crossing her face. "Be at peace, Little One," she said as her sisters all turned to stare wide-eyed at her. "No one that was here right
now was responsible for keying the kami of the Forge to Gift my sisters in this manner."

Her eyes then narrowed dangerously. "But I think I know who did...!"

People all stared at her...

To Be Continued...

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WRITER'S NOTES

Stargate SG-1 character note: Thor first appeared in the episode "Thor's Hammer" (season 1, episode 10) in disguise; he would appear in his proper form in "Thor's Chariot" (season 2, episode 6).

The Senior Year character note: Henry is the name of the sentience of the Gatherer, who first appeared in "Lum's Lesson".

Translation list: Raebimti-ona — Literally "horse of the western districts"; Heisōchō — Literally "battle sergeant major", this Imperial Japanese Navy rank title is translated as "Warrant Officer" in English and has the equivalent NATO rank code of OR-9; Susano'o — Short for Susano'o-no-Mikoto, he is the Shintō god of the seas and storms; Shichō — Mayor (of a city); Ich verstehe — I understand/I see; Ich bin nicht allein — I am not alone; Freidamen — Plural of Freidame ("free lady"); Teikoku-hakushaku — Literally "countess of the empire", the Japanese rank title equivalent of the German noble title Reichsgräfin; Ihre Erlaucht — His/Her Illustrious Highness; Oberstabsbootsmann — Leading Staff Boatswain, the German Navy equivalent rank title to the Imperial Japanese Navy rank of Heisōchō; Erste Marineluftflotte — First Naval Air Fleet; So fängt es an — That's how it starts/So it begins; Kamichu — Abbreviation of the phrase Kami-sama de Chūgakusei ("A deity as a middle school student") which serves as both the series title and Hitotsubashi Yurie's activation phrase to make use of her powers; In Ordnung — In order; Capitaine de Vaisseau — Ship of the Line Captain, the French and Canadian French terms for a naval captain (NATO rank code OF-5); MN — Short form for Marine Nationale ("National Navy"), the official name of the French Navy; Grand Cuirassé — Large Battleship (short-formed GC), the classification of a dreadnought battleship in the French Navy in the universe of my stories; CB — Short for "Cuirassé à Batteries" ("artillery] battery battleship"), the local term for a broadside ironclad warship similar to CSS Virginia of the Confederate States Navy.
Note that at the time of this story, Scott H. Swift (born 1957) was the Commander, United States Seventh Fleet (COMSEVENFLT), headquartered at Yokosuka, then ranked a vice admiral. He would retire from the United States Navy in 2018 a full admiral.

The story of Asano Naganori, Lord Asano of Akō (1667-1701) and what happened in the fourteenth year of Genroku (the year 1701 CE) was the effective ignition point of the story of the Forty-seven Rōnin that would become one of the most well-known historical tales in Japanese history. In the incident, Asano was visiting the court of Shōgun Tokugawa Tsunayoshi (1646-1709) in Edo (modern-day Tōkyō) when he was provoked by a court official, Kira Yoshinaka (1641-1703), into drawing his sword within the shōgun's palace, a capital offence. Asano committed seppuku on 21 April 1701, with his lands confiscated, his family ruined and his samurai forced to became rōnin (master-less warriors). Incensed by Kira's actions, forty-seven of Asano's men spent a little over a year plotting revenge against Kira, catching him and killing him on the evening of 30 January 1703. However, as revenge had been forbidden by Shōgun Tsunayoshi despite the more than justifiable reasons for seeking such, the rōnin all were made to commit seppuku. This story was popularized in Japanese culture as emblematic of the loyalty, sacrifice, persistence and honour that people should preserve in their daily lives. It also served as one of the recurring core themes of the Seventh Carrier series, driving the crew of Yonaga — including Brent Ross — into incredible feats while carrying out their duty regardless of cost.

Sister Princess character note: Kakinomoto Sayaka first appeared in the final short story written about Tenhiro Haruka, which was collected in the Sincerely Yours collection that was the final official written work of the series. Like I did with the sisters themselves, Sayaka's family name is my creation.

Shipgirls introduced or noted on in this part:

**Itō Shizuka**-taisa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan Shinano [CVB-40])

Capitaine de Vaisseau Élisabeth de Penfell MN (Grand Cuirassé Bretagne [pendant 79])

**Itō Mutsuko**-taisa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan Musashi [BB-35])

**Itō Izumi**-taisa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan Izumi [BB-37])

In real life, the French Navy never used pendant numbers for anything larger than a destroyer. In the universe of my stories, pendant numbers were used for all vessels. The number assigned to GC Bretagne (Élisabeth de Penfell) indicates she is the seventy-ninth vessel classified as a "cuirassé" regardless of type from the first ironclad ever launched, CB Gloire, in 1859. It should also be noted that like in Russia, France does not use a single service ship prefix, but warship type prefixes.
Note that my choice of name for Warship No. 111 (AKA THG *Izumi* [Itō Izumi]) was made to differentiate her from the recycled name of an earlier battleship that has often been chosen in fictitious accounts to be re-honoured as a Yamato-class vessel, THG *Kii*. In reality, *Kii* was to be built as the lead ship of a follow-on design to the never-completed Tosa-class battleships, though all construction on them was cancelled due to the Washington Naval Treaty of 1922 before keels were laid.

**Kamichu!** character notes: **Gen Kiyonobu** first appeared in the episode "Crossing The River of Time" (episode #9). Of course, **Saegusa Matsuri**, her younger sister **Saegusa Miko**, **Shijō Mitsue** and Hitotsubashi Yurie's would-be boyfriend **Ninomiya Kenji** are all secondary stars of the entire anime series. Names given to the various yōkai mentioned here are my creation. As an aside, a **nurarihyon** (literally "slippery gourd") is a humanoid creature often looking like a very aged man with an elongated head (think of the aliens from *Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull* and you get the idea) that is seen as the "supreme commander of all monsters" and live their lives in the lap of luxury; thus, it made sense to me that someone like **Nūri** would be the effective "mayor" of all of the yōkai living in Onomichi.

When **Amélie von Zeppelin** introduces the human names of the four Yamato-class ships she encounters in Onomichi, she makes use of the short-titles of the old imperial provinces as their honorific names. The first name would correspond to their ship name's namesake province, the second being the old province where they were built. Thus:

- **Washū** — Yamato Province (modern-day Nara prefecture)
- **Bushū** — Musashi Province (modern-day Metro Tōkyō, most of Saitama prefecture and parts of Kanagawa prefecture)
- **Shinshū** — Shinano Province (modern-day Nagano prefecture)
- **Senshū** — Izumi Province (southwest part of modern-day Ōsaka Region)
- **Geishū** — Aki Province (western part of modern-day Hiroshima prefecture, indicating the city of Kure)
- **Hishū** — Hizen Province (parts of modern-day Saga and Nagasaki prefectures, indicating the city of Nagasaki itself)
- **Sōshū** — Sagami Province (parts of modern-day Kanagawa prefecture, indicating the city of Yokosuka)
- **Tanshū** — Tango Province (northern part of modern-day Kyōto Region, indicating the city of Maizuru)
- **Bishū** — Owari Province (western half of modern-day Aichi prefecture, indicating the city of Nagoya)
She repeats that same pattern when referring to Tenhiro Haruka and Moroboshi Ataru. Thus:

Ōshū — Mutsu Province (modern-day Fukushima, Miyagi, Iwate and Aomori prefectures and part of Akita prefecture, indicating the city of Sendai where the Inshin Group and the Moroboshi Clan are traditionally based in my stories)

Berg — The Duchy of Berg (part of the modern-day state of Nordrhein-Westfalen in Germany, indicating the city of Düsseldorf, which is Haruka's birthplace)

Ezo — Hokkaidō (literally translated as "North Sea Province", this indicates both Rishiri-tō [birthplace of Moroboshi Nagaiwakai] and Wakkanai [birthplace of Moroboshi Ataru in my stories])

Hitotsubashi Yurie's adventures during the month of Kannazuki was depicted in the Kamichu! episode "Mysterious Adventure" (anime episode #12).
The War of the Worlds Returns!

Chapter Summary

As the ICW try to put some controls over the metahumans on Earth, an ugly secret dating back to 1953 is discovered by Chikage and Roman Reigns...while Luisa von Bismarck's sister and her friends redeem themselves saving children from the Mor-Tax's deadliest enemies...

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Welcome House on Ōmure-jima, mid-afternoon...

"Are you sure about that?"

As the assembled shipgirls, the Moroboshi siblings and their friends seated or standing in the dining room of the rotunda — now joined by four "elder" members of the Yamato-class warships — waited for the current commander of Canada's special forces to finish her call, Dean Raeburn nodded. "Hai!"

Noting the Jewel Warrior's smile in her response to the Heavenly Sovereign from her position at the table to the Canadian's right — he was speaking to Raeburn via cellphone from the Imperial Palace as he awaited the chance to greet Yonaga's crew — Itō Yoiko could only shake her head at the irony of it all. The native of Queenston in Ontario and adopted native of Fort Saint John in British Columbia and Prince Albert in Saskatchewan still looked as she did in 1889, when she was twenty-two and living on her own, desperately trying to avoid a greedy uncle who wanted to kill her to seize the family fortune. That was the year of the "Miracle of 1889", when the orphaned banker's daughter stumbled onto the Power Jewel in a cave near the site of her current home in British Columbia. And in doing so, was empowered with the accumulated energy of THREE BILLION YEARS of the evolution of life from the most primitive bacteria in the Archean Eon to the rise of modern man in the last twenty thousand years.
It had been said for years now that no being on Earth could potentially equal the one respectfully called by mystics and magics worldwide as the Protector of All Life.

It was no wonder that the Immortal Master Hosan Hirosuke felt it vital to take Raeburn under his tutelage and make her his last true student in the 1920s.

The results of which...!

"Okay, I'll tell them," Raeburn then said. "You best go easy on Hiroshi and his friends. Remember, they'll see you like they saw your father; you're practically no different than that Yurie kid without the powers." As some of the Japanese shipgirls gaped at such informality between the Canadian Army officer and their divine-descent head-of-state, she nodded. "Yeah, we're about to deal with that issue concerning Yoiko's sisters right now." Ignoring the gargled breath from the recently transformed Itō Yasuko, now seated with her sisters on one of the couches lining the wall of the dining room, Raeburn smiled. "Sure, they'll be happy to come meet you. Tomorrow morning at ten?" She waited to hear the reply, then she smiled. "I'll make sure they're all gussied up. Got friends to help the girls from Britain and Germany, not to mention little Randi standing behind me." That comment made Randi Stubbs awk as her cheeks flamed at being singled out by her new formation commander. "Yeah, it'll be strange to see her in khaki since she's a Navy girl. Can't tell you how many times Heather threatened to curse me when I wanted her as my Navy DCO." She then laughed on hearing the reply from the Son of Heaven, which made Yoiko gape in shock at the sight of her current head-of-state being so informal and human, even with someone like Dean Raeburn. "Sure. I'll see you tomorrow morning. 'Bye."

She hung up, which seemed to make everyone relax. "Tennō's wishes are, Shihan-sama?" Yoiko asked.

"Tomorrow morning at ten, you'll all be parading at the Palace and will be introduced to Heika and his wife," Raeburn announced, which made almost all the Japanese cruiser and destroyer shipgirls squeal in wide-eyed disbelief at the thought of being presented to the Son of Heaven himself...and at the Imperial Palace to boot! "Uniforms will be provided by the Tōmagun with appropriate medals considering your time in service as actual warships. As for Charlene, Luisa and their groups — no to mention Catarina here — the Specialized Warfare Fencibles in Britain, the Spezialführungskommando in Germany and the Joint Specialized Warfare Command in America will have uniforms shipped over, again with appropriate medals marking their service. One of my students will be here for you, Randi," she then said as she gazed on the reborn second of the Canadian Tribal-class destroyers.

She then blinked on noting surprised looks on people's faces. "Um, forgive this Musashi for questioning you, Shihan-sama, but how on Earth would we be awarded medals?!" Itō Mutsuko wondered.
"Considering it's always been the tradition in the Commonwealth for all warships to just receive battle honours for meritorious actions, General," Charlene Boleyn wondered as she gazed upon the leader of the War Hawks, "...I have to echo Mutsuko's comment here and ask the same about us."

"I REFUSE to wear any medal with a swastika on it!" Luisa von Bismarck added. "I can't even begin to guess how Catarina here is going to be uniformed given that all her service was in the Kriegsmarine!"

"It will be handled," Raeburn assured with a wink as Catarina von Savoyen blushed at her old mission mate's spoken concern. "Now, Captain Itō, I believe you've got something to say," she coldly added.

Eyes locked on Yasuko, who looked ready to sink under the floor in embarrassment after what Saeru Hinako accused her of hours before in Onomichi. Taking a deep breath, she then stood, turning to walk over to where her mission-mates from Operation: Ten-gō were standing as a group. Once in front of them, the adopted native of Takachi District in Nara prefecture (site of the capital of her namesake province) and Kure near Hiroshima (her place of construction as THG Yamato) dropped to her knees and prostrated herself before them. "My friends, I humbly apologize from the depths of my heart and soul for abandoning you like I did a month ago when Yurie-sama gave me the chance to return to our homeland. I was selfish and had totally forgot about all of you. My behaviour was completely inexcusable! Please forgive me for my total lack of thought towards you!"

Sobs escaped her as she lowered her forehead to the floor. None of her sisters moved to help comfort her even if Saeru Hinako (who was seated beside Yoiko) wanted to go over and offer a warm hug. After a moment as the eight shipgirls reborn from most of the Ten-gō task force exchanged looks, Ōkawa Yaeko cleared her throat. "Yamato-dono, when you accepted Yurie-sama's offer to return to the Home Islands, did you know if Gen-heisōchō was living in Onomichi?"

Yasuko looked at the cruiser that led her escorts. "Um...no, not until I came into harbour..."

"You have a theory, Yahagi-dono?" Yoiko asked.

"Hai, Yonaga-dono, we do," Yaeko said as her cheeks slightly flushed. "As you'll recall, before we came back here to brief your sisters on our lives as kantai musume, Gen-heisōchō invited us into his home so we could enjoy some drinks in toast to those of our crews who died that day and those who were rescued by the Ryūsei-zen that was there that day." As Hirosaki Chikage's eyebrow arched in amusement at that part of the statement while the other Japanese shipgirls shuddered on recalling "encounters" with those strange monster-killing battleships that were like ghosts in the Pacific War, the third of the Agano-class cruisers added, "I noted pictures of your sister as a warship in a
prominent place in his living room. Given that Yurie-sama and her friends didn't find out about your sister until Gen-heisōchō actually told them about his service with the 15th Construction Division, it stands to reason that the actions of the kami of the *Mitsuba-maru* may have so energized Yurie-sama's wish to have Yamato-dono return to Japan that neither she nor her friends would even consider researching about the others of our task force. Atop that, the kami of that boat did warn that there were kami who were hell-bent on keeping your sister's kami were she had sunk. I believe it was Fate itself that made the events that brought not only our flagship but her sisters back in the manner they did, if not the desires of the elder kami such as Susano'o-sama given the need to defend Earth from the aliens."

Yoiko's eyebrows arched in amusement. "That my sisters would be touched by Yurie-sama — who is a normal girl despite her recent elevation to an arahitogami — and thus influenced to not to fall into the path of the Forty-Seven Rōnin upon her becoming a kantai musume."

"Hai, Yonaga-dono..."

"Oh! Hina's heard enough!"

Eyes locked on the youngest of Tariko Katabarbe's sisters. "Little One...!" Yoiko gently admonished.

"You be quiet, Yoiko-san!" Hinako groaned as she got up from her place at the table, then walked over to stand next to the still-prostrating Yasuko. "Yasuko-san said she was sorry!" the Spirit of Innocence declared as she faced Yaeko and the others. "Do you forgive her?!!"

The other shipgirls blushed, then Yuhara Yukiko smiled, bowing her head. "Hai!"

She was joined by the others, who also bowed as they affirmed their forgiveness.

Of course, there had to be a spoiler in the lot.

"As long as Yasuko-san doesn't act like a shitty admiral from now on, it's cool!" Akatsuka Kasumi darkly muttered as she crossed her arms, making most of the shipgirls in the room gasp in stunned disbelief at the use of such foul language in front of an eight-year old.

Hinako wasn't going to put up to THAT, of course.
As the native of Niigata began ranting at the adopted native of Yokosuka, the other shipgirls shook their heads as Raeburn smirked while she rose from her place at the head of the table to head out of the dining room. As Randi moved to fall in behind her, the current commander of Canada’s special forces stepped out of the rotunda, looking around before she saw a figure in a white button shirt and blue jeans seated on the rail topping the old sea wall, gazing out to the south and the open ocean beyond. Pulling out a cigar and lighting it, Raeburn walked over to lean on the fence beside the Trickster of the Show. "Is this what you had in mind all along when you started your ‘pretty girl quest', kid?"

"No, but I'm not complaining," Tariko Katabarbe said as she gave the older woman a lanky smile before returning to gaze out at the distant ocean. "Luck of the fight scene, after all. Win some, lose some, draw even in others. If you don't suffer a death scene, go on and live your life."

"Amazing you didn't go medieval on Invader's kid after you found out about how much she lied to you when you tagged her horns," the oldest living human being in Canada noted.

Tariko smiled. "She's in my book, Oba-chan. Even if she'll probably not be Gifted — even with her soon to be bonded to Hiromi as her marei'cha — she's someone I've got to watch out for. I didn't start this whole business without vowing to watch out for people who'd become like me eventually. It's way too much of a change for some people even if a lot of them needed help like they did."

"Like Maryam's group, you mean?"

"Yeah, like Maryam and her friends."

"Who are they?" Randi asked.

"Descendants of a student of Papa-sensei's back from the Eleventh Century, Randi," Raeburn answered as she gazed on the transformed Athabaskan. "They've always seen themselves as guardians of all of Islam regardless of which specific school of that faith someone practices. They'll even protect non-believers in their territory. Thanks to the radical nuts like the ones who brought down the World Trade Centre in New York City back in '01, their 'fans' wanted them dead because they were all women." As Randi scowled on hearing that even if she didn't understand the reference to the attacks on America on 11 September 2001, Raeburn added, "Tariko went in to save them all and get them Gifted."
"And now they're ripping the hell out of friends of the jerks that killed all those people in New York and Washington, not to mention that plane that came down in Pennsylvania," Tariko added as she winked at Randi. "Just like kamikazes in the war." She then scowled. "Just like my idiot granddad," she sourly noted. "Wanted to go die for the Heavenly Sovereign, never got the chance no matter how much he tried, then turned around and took a tantō to his gut when the guilt got too much for him."

Randi winced. "I'm sorry to hear that, ma'am."

The Trickster of the Show gazed at her, then she shrugged. "Even if I'm Japanese by birth, I never gave a damn about the way people in this country look at life and death. Hai, we all die at the end, but live your life to the fullest. All this crap about Bushidō and all that..." She shook her head. "'Honour is a sword shattered on a rock, a piece of paper blown away by the wind, a temple brought down in an earthquake, a home destroyed in a fire'," she then quoted her clan's traditional lament when it came to honour issues. "Don't make promises you can't keep. Human nature is a fickle thing. If you're going to face your death scene, do it on your terms, your terms only. All this crap about society's standards..."

A tired sigh escaped her as a look of ageless weariness crossed her face. "In just this life alone, I've seen too much pain and too much misery to give a shit about all the 'proper' standards people live under, Randi. I thought I'd do a tonne of good. I'd go out, find people to be Gifted, thus make sure Earth was safe from the idiot sames out there who'd want to make us all like the fucking Nazis were before and during the war. It started out good when I found Ayumu-chan. I expected what happened with Lum, of course. But then I started meeting people like Maryam and Margo and..." She shook her head. "This world sometimes seems to me to be too sick to save. But I have to keep going."

"Why?" the destroyer asked.

"Because..."

Tariko then tensed before her hand shot out...

...just as the sucking sound of air being displaced thanks to magical apparition sounded off nearby. As Randi spun around to look, energy billowing in her hands, a whirlpool-like effect appeared close to the chairs that had been set up by the main doors to the rotunda. Before the half-dozen magicals that were teleporting onto the grounds could fully materialize and draw their wands...

"U-CHAN STUPID STAEBLOOD SMACK PYON!"
Screams escaped the now thoroughly-electrocuted visitors — all bearing badges marking them as field agents of the International Confederation of Wizards, Raeburn and Tariko immediately noted — dropped into unconscious heaps on the grass, shouts of outrage bellowed from inside the rotunda as windows were flung open and Tariko's sisters all looked outside just as the smiling fourth of the Mutsuki-class destroyers came over from the commons, a pot of well-steamed Goa'uld symbiotes in one hand and her free hand crackling with the lightning she commanded as the Rainy Scrapper of Spring. "Nice moves, U-chan!" Tariko said. "How the hell did you sense them coming in so fast?!"

Kisaragi Utako chuckled as she scratched her head in embarrassment just as Chikage came out from the dining room, she accompanied by Pansy Parkinson and Hermione Granger. "Some of U-chan's crew had relatives that fought under Tsukiko-sensei in the war, pyon! They always apparated aboard U-chan whenever they brought in fresh food for U-chan's crew to eat, pyon!"

Raeburn chuckled. "I always knew Tsukiko's troopers had common sense."

Eyes locked on the woman who first coined the term "staleblood" during the Miracle of 1889 when the ICW tried to seize her Power Jewel, then laughter filled the air...

***

*Inside the rotunda, minutes later...*

"Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen."

Hearing that, Elaine Jackson could only shake her head. "Idiot fools...charging in like that...!"

"I take it, Major Jackson, you tried to stop these idiots from trying to prove the depths of their stupidity by attacking the known Earth residence of one of the most powerful beings to live in this UNIVERSE?!"

On registering that voice, the native of Quincy in Massachusetts blinked before she looked up...
Seeing her visibly wince on realizing the predicament she and her friends were currently in, Chikage could only shake her head. As everyone was in a magically-extended part of her own bedroom on the second floor of the rotunda, she had the place of prominence behind her work desk, her deck of Tarot cards laid out before her in a reading pattern. Seated to either side of her were Pansy and Hermione, both of whom were scowling at the half-dozen visitors from the embassy of the International Confederation of Wizards to the Magical House of Peers of the State of Japan. Also present was Utako, who was standing to the right rear of the Dark Heart of Pure Chaos, arms crossed.

A glance around with mage sight soon told the long lineal descendant of the first "magical president" of America that Chikage had raised quite powerful wards to prevent her and her friends from escaping...

...to say anything of the semi-solid shadows now holding her and her friends fast to the floor in front of the arch-mage's desk, no doubt controlled by the dark-haired Lancastrian witch to her host's right.

"Stupid...no-maj-born...!"

The chief of the team that had charged down to Ōmure-jima, William Harkaway, gargled as one of Pansy's shadows moved to nearly gorge him on its "arm" to make him be quiet. "Mister Harkaway, do be silent and lay off the insults," Chikage said as her royal blue eyes began to glow the pale gold as she allowed her Sith-self a chance to take control. "You have been warned many times how stupid it is to attack Yizibajohei metahumans — especially MAGICAL Yizibajohei metahumans such as myself — ever since Ane-kun started her quest to get people Gifted to see us protected from the aliens. Just like those who came by last year in Tomobiki, not to mention the Goa'uld that members of your own country's armed forces have fought consistently against for FOUR years. Now, I think I have an idea what made you want to try to commit suicide like this...but since your own staleblood attitudes will give me nothing more than an earache, I'll hear it from Major Jackson instead."

Four pairs of eyes locked on Jackson, who sensed that the shadows weren't holding her down as harshly as her companions. She had been quick to note that her wand and all other emergency gear she had on her was out of her magical reach, such as a portkey to get her back to the ICW Embassy in the magical quarter of Chiyoda near the Imperial Palace and the National Diet building...where the crew of Yonaga were presently marching towards in a frightful display of samurai passion backed up by huge levels of mesonium that make any of that carrier's crew the potential near-equal of the best hit-wizard or hit-witch that wasn't trained in any of the world's active magical military services. Taking a breath, she bowed her head. "Mistress Hirosaki. Countess Parkinson. Baroness Granger."

She flashed a questioning look at Utako, getting a scowl from the fourth of the Mutsuki-class destroyers.
"Please forgive Commander Kisaragi," Chikage said with a slight smile. "Many of her crew had relatives who served with my grandfather, so she has a very strong mistrust of any foreign magical."

Hearing that, the native of Quincy nodded. "Apologies again, Commander," she said before bowing her head, which made Utako blink in surprise at this woman quickly acknowledging her honorary rank in the JMSDF. "I give you all my deepest personal apologizes for our brazen intrusion on the grounds of the Moroboshi Clan without just cause." As her companions all glared in outrage at her, the reserve officer of the 3rd Battalion, 75th Marine Regiment (Magical) smirked. "As I'm sure you've probably guessed by now, Lady Hirosaki, the repercussions of what Her Grace, the Duchess Thérèse Peverell of Kyme Eau, did five hours ago in the headquarters complex of the Ministry of Magic of the United Kingdom has unleashed quite the panic with our superiors in Geneva." She glared at the feebly-struggling Harkaway and his friends. "We received orders from Supreme Mugwump Akingbade to come here, arrest Countess Parkinson and Baroness Granger on charges of attempted rebellion against the ICW and their own ministry, try to arrest your sister Lady Katabarbe for her continued interference in magical affairs and try to de-power any metahuman resident here to ensure they will never threaten magicals again." She shrugged as her hosts all stared askance at her. "The words written on that order, by the way."

"Now see here, madame! You must...!"

"Quiet."

Shadows warped around to firmly cover the mouth of Quintus Avery, the lone British magical in the group. Pansy knew he was the older son of Hercules Avery even if he was no Death Eater; it was his brother Septimus who had taken the Mark and lost his magic hours before in the Atrium of the Ministry of Magic. She knew this man was just as much a blood-purist as his father and brother, as were his sisters back home in Britain; no doubt, they were scrambling to ensure their family's holdings wouldn't be seized in a follow up move by Thérèse Peverell to unleash the Praeda Bellica on her other-self's unmarked supporters. "It's a pity that when Rose rescued Jody Crowley from doing her magically-sworn duty to kill you traitors to Magic back in 2007, your father and brother weren't there to be slaughtered or sent off to entertain the Hollows in Gonebren," Hermione calmly teased, making Avery glare murderously at her even if he looked ready to piss himself on hearing the dentists' daughter from West Sussex mention the cursed beings of THAT PLACE. "Oh, well, if Mark's willing to let us use it, we can send you into the Dark Gaol, where your magic and life force will be absorbed into the Great Crystal of Power." Her brown eyes then glowed. "And render you nothing more than a HUSK, Lord Avery!"

As Avery paled on hearing that dire threat from the most well-known muggleborn to attend Hogwarts in recent years, Chikage sat back, her eyes reverting to their normal royal blue shade. She could understand where these people were coming from. Sensors attuned to detect massive magical events at the ICW embassy must have gone berserk on Friday when they detected the warp Mark Caloway made to transport the spirit of the infamous oni Ibaraki-dōji into the Yizibajohei version of Hell, which no doubt started a panic that had been boiling among leaders of the magical alliance over the last few days. Still, despite their understandable devotion to maintaining the secrets of the magical
world as mandated in the original Statute of Secrecy in 1689, this was a much different age. "Do you people even BOTHER to read the words of the laws that are in effect that would have spared you this embarrassment? Such as the International Specialized Warfare Treaty of 1959, the Tokubeppō passed in wake of that and its accompanying Magical Imperial Rescript that compelled all magicals to adhere to all the legal provisions of the Tokubeppō, which had the provisions of the Mahōhō folded into it?"

"THAT STUPID MUGGLE HAD NO RIGHT TO OVERRIDE THE STATUTE...urrk!"

The African witch who had come with the group to Ōmure-jima found herself turning pale as the gentle kiss of a VERY sharp katana touched her throat. "Madame, I trust you realize that the laws of Lèse-Majesté STILL APPLY TO YOUR KIND!" a voice as icy as an Arctic wind echoed over the room as some of the shadows melted away to reveal a tall and muscular woman in green-and-grey, her typhoon grey eyes now glowing with outrage as she gazed down upon her current target of interest. As the trapped magicals all quaked as they sensed the sheer aura of power that Itō Yoiko commanded, the adopted native of Maizuru and Hiroshima leaned down to glare at the idiot who DARED insult the late Heavenly Sovereign like that. "What is your name, madame?" the transformed carrier demanded.

"Answer her," Chikage declared as she reached out with her magic to compel the fool to reply.

The witch shuddered before sputtering out, "N-n-Nora Nyabire...!"

An eyebrow arched in return. "Ah, the late President Amin's daughter," she said, which made Hermione gape before she looked at the native of Koboko near the tri-border between Uganda, South Sudan and the Democratic People's Republic of the Congo like she was a cockroach that needed to be squashed. "Graduate of Uagadou, Mistresses' Class of 1964. You were Professor Akingbade's prize conjuration student at the time; you were also rumoured to be his lover." As Nyabire gaped in stunned shock at the fact that the granddaughter of the famous Hirosaki Ryūji had known all THAT, the Dark Heart of Pure Chaos added, "It was through you that the professor was able to win your father's approval to become Minister for Magic after your father became president in 1971. You were a supporter of the professor's drive to reactivate the loyalty ward stones in your country that were turned off when the Schwartze Mädchen destroyed the base ward stone in London in 1942." As the Ugandan witch gasped on feeling the bite of Yoiko's katana draw a trickle of blood, Chikage smirked. "No doubt you were more than pleased to answer the professor's call to 'put down the muggle monsters' that now threaten his hold on the ICW." She shook her head. "Staleblood wanna-be!" Her eyes narrowed as she glared directly into Nyabire's eyes. "No different than Tom Riddle. Or as you would know him...Voldemort."

Pansy and Hermione broke out in derisive laughter as Avery, Nyabire and one other in the group shuddered in horror on hearing Chikage utter the late dark lord's battle name. Seeing that, Jackson sneered while Harkaway shook his head. The former was normal-born, thus had NO comprehension
as to why it was people from Europe panicked when they heard that made-up name even now years after the dark lord's death in 1996. Though a "pureblood" by European standards and having developed friendships with peers on the Continent, Harkaway also thought the whole issue with Voldemort had been blown way out of proportion; he majored in magical history at Ilvermorny and had studied the magical side of the Civil War, which was far bloodier than the normal history books ever indicated.

The fifth of the group was a middle-aged Russian wizard, Chikage knew: Il'já Aleksándrovich Ezhóv of Irkútsk in central Siberia. She had heard from her grandfather that Ezhóv was descent from an old Imperial Russian pureblood line whose members had fled the country after the October Revolution of 1917 and settled in neighbouring Finland until the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, returning back to try to reintroduce a new pureblood aristocracy and restore magical society to the way it was a century before. Ezhóv and his relatives haven't had much success to date, which probably explained his "exile" to serve the ICW in Japan, where his "staleblood" attitudes would definitely NOT be welcome. Ezhóv himself was rumoured to be involved in the illegal hunting of protected magical species during his time back in his homeland, but hadn't yet been charged with a crime. Of course, his reaction to hearing Voldemort's battle name was understandable; one of the late dark lord's top lieutenants had been a fellow Russian-descent pureblood, Ígor' Alekseyevich Kárkárov (now highmaster of the Durmstrang Institute in northern Norway), who had been tasked to stir up radical purebloods on the Continent to beat back the influence of "mudbloods" during the Death Eaters' rebellion at the end of the Cold War.

Of course, with Kárkárov now most likely without his magic...!

As for the sixth member of the group from Chiyoda — a gregarious fellow that Chikage recognized as the chief law enforcement liaison between the ICW and the Eight Commanderies, Alessia Bruttini of Naples in Italy — he seemed calm and relaxed even if he clearly wanted to be out of the grasp of Pansy's shadows. That was quick to draw the attention of the Dark Heart of Pure Chaos.

A quick glance with mage-sight soon revealed why...!

"Utako?"

"Pyon?" Utako called out as she gazed on her host.

"Go ask Chihaya Anne to contact Roman Reigns and have him come here, please."

"Pyon!"
With that, the Rainy Scrapper of Spring faded into the darkness as Chikage sipped her cup of cherry tea. "Are we finished?" she then called out, making her current "guests" stop as they stared at her.

"Forgive my asking this, Chikage-san, but doesn't that yōkai's name come from the French phrase for 'flees from death'?" Yoiko then asked with an arched eyebrow as she gave the arch-mage a curious look, her hand still steadily holding the katana right on Nyabire's neck.

"Indeed it does, Yoiko," the Moroboshi Clan's matriarch-in-waiting replied. "Which has always struck us here in Japan as ridiculous. There's no noble house by that name that can be accessed on official records, so it had to be an alias. As I became associated with Rose Potter shortly after that incident in the Chamber of Secrets in 2009 through Hermione here, I soon learned of Thérèse Peverell and her relationship with Tom Riddle. She showed me this." She gestured to make the words **TOM MARVOLO RIDDLE** appear in flaming letters over her head. With a twist of her fingers, the arch-mage switched that to have the letters read **I AM LORD VOLDEMORT**, which made all the visitors gape in shock.

"He ANAGRAMIZED his name?!!" Jackson demanded. "How old was he?! FIVE?!"

As the others save Bruttini stared in dumbfounded disbelief at the American for saying that about a dark lord that did more damage per capita than even Gellert Grindelwald, Hermione snorted. "He did, Major," the dentists' daughter answered. "And no, none of us have any idea when he came up with something like that. Clearly when he was in the junior years at Hogwarts. After all, Riddle was known to be muggleborn!" As Avery's eyes went wide with outrage on hearing that term applied to the dark lord he had been loyal to his whole life, the Bright Seamstress of Spells smirked at him. "He was even less of a 'half-blood' than Rose is! At least Rose's parents were magicals even if her mother was normal-born. Riddle had a NORMAL father and a NIMMIB for a mother, descent of the House of Gaunt. You should know how inbred those idiots became before they died out in the 1940s, Mister Avery." A look of mock-grief then crossed her face. "Or rather, when Tommy-wommy arranged for them to DIE because he was so ashamed of being related to them!" she then declared in a sobbing voice.

Pansy made the shadow blocking the Staffordshire native's mouth let go; he seemed ready to literally choke himself to death from his outrage. "LIES! ALL LIES!" Avery shrieked out. "THE DARK LORD IS PURE! THE PUREST OF THE PURE! WHAT WOULD YOU KNOW, YOU FILTHY MUDBLOOD?!!" He then spun on Pansy as Jackson shook her head in amusement. "Your parents must be ASHAMED of you, Pansy! To cavort with a MUDBLOOD of all things?! How could you even contemplate being FRIENDS with this creature?! Do you realize you're betraying your own BLOOD...!"

"'Mudblood'??
That simple statement made Avery freeze as he turned to see Yoiko pull the katana from Nyabire's neck, she using a small amount of power to telekinetically clean the blade of the blood drawn before sheathing it in a scabbard. "How utterly pathetic that one who FOLLOWs a so-called 'mudblood' would use that insult on someone like Hermione-san when he HIMSELF is a mudblood." As Avery awed in outrage, the carrier's eyes fixed on him, making his breath catch in his throat as her glare seemed to bore right into his soul to find what was there most wanting. "As declared in the Book of Genesis!"

"Specifically, Verses 7, 21 and 22 in Chapter Two of that book," Chikage added before sipping her tea.

"'Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and the man became a living being'," Yoiko quoted from the first book of the Bible while she moved to walk around and place herself in front of him. "Did you not know that dust can be mixed with water to make MUD, Mister Avery?!'" As Avery gaped, his mouth opening and closing like a fish, the carrier added, "'So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep. And while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and then closed up the place with flesh. Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man and he brought her to the man.' In that story, the first woman was effectively born from the first man at the hands of God, Mister Avery. And the man was formed by the hands of God effectively from one of the two main ingredients of MUD! So when you call someone like Lady Granger here a 'mudblood', you're simply acknowledging a cornerstone of her FAITH...while also SPITTING on it since in her eyes, you are also a mudblood!'" As Jackson shrieked with laughter at her hosts' tying together of those points to totally overwhelm her co-worker, Avery rapidly shook his head even if he couldn't find it within him to scream back at this creature. "That is why you and your late lord wanted to make war on those who were not 'pure'! You KNEW that if all the normal-borns remembered their Bible studies and realized that all of you 'nobles' were SNEERING at their faith in God, the witch-hunts that made you RUN LIKE COWARDS and HIDE yourselves in the 1680s would START ALL OVER AGAIN!" As the trapped magics save for Jackson gaped in horror at what she was spelling out to them, the seventh carrier smirked. "And with metahumans like myself at their sides, you all would be committing SUICIDE!'" she said with a voice as cold as deepest space.

As Avery jolted thanks to an apoplectic fit, Yoiko smirked as Pansy made her shadows cover his mouth. She then blinked before she gazed at the native of Quincy. "What service are you in, Major?"

Jackson perked before she straightened in a proper military manner, a proud smile crossing her face. "Bravo Company, 3rd Battalion, 75th Marine Regiment, Magical Wing of the United States Marine Corps, Captain Itō," she acknowledged with a simple nod of her head.

A nod of appreciation came back from the seventh carrier of Operation Z. "You felt yourself duty-bound to protect these fools when you tried to stop them from coming here and killing themselves?"
The Bay Stater smirked. "Much that they are stalebloods or staleblood wanna-bes, Captain, their being killed will just bring more stalebloods or staleblood wanna-bes over here to give Professor Konoe and his friends earaches." She then winked at the transformed aircraft carrier before she gave her companions a droll look. "Besides, dealing with their deaths is just too much paperwork in the end!"

Yoiko roared with raucous laughter as Pansy and Hermione whooped in delight while they applauded the magical Marine officer's words; the others who had come with Jackson were just gaping in disbelief at her complete lack of respect for them. "I think she can be let go, Pansy," Chikage said, her own lips twitching into a smile. "Much that she is utterly wasted on these fools, we can't fault her desire not to overburden herself with such useless paperwork, not to mention breaking in of new fools."

"Sure...!"

Jackson breathed out as the shadows withdrew from her, then she stood up, coming to attention to salute the senior officer in the room. As Yoiko returned that courtesy, Nyabire blinked in confusion before she shrieked out, "DON'T JUST STAND THERE, FOOL! STUN THEM!"

A sneer answered her. "I don't take orders from you, bitch!" the Bay Stater said as she drew out her wand and quickly moved to clean her clothes with it. "My orders always come from the chief of security at the embassy...who ALSO disapproved of this stupid job your lover boy sent you and the rest of these morons down here to do." She then gave the other woman a disgusted look. "Besides, why the hell would I take orders from the daughter of THAT loon in the first place?"

As the Ugandan shrieked again, Yoiko looked over. "The rumours are true?"

"What's that, Captain?"

"That Miss Nyabire's father kept the heads of his enemies in his refrigerator?"

As Nyabire squawked in outrage, Jackson shrugged. "Personally, I can't answer that and I don't want to answer that, ma'am. The fact that she supports that staleblood wanna-be Akingbade is bad enough in my eyes!" Disgust then crossed her face as she stared anew at the native of Koboko. "You actually SLEPT with that perverted creep?! You're just as bad as Bellatrix Lestrange was to that Riddle moron!" Noting that Avery was now too out of it to react to that, the Bay Stater turned to stare wide-eyed at the two British witches in the room. "Is it true?! She actually had a KID with that
"As crazy as it sounds, it's true," Pansy answered. "But knowing Neville Longbottom and keeping mind of what he was Gifted into becoming, I'm sure this child will soon be cleansed of her 'mudblood-ness'!"

As the others save Avery sputtered at her words, Hermione blinked. "That's not a word, Pansy."

"Okay! Let's go with 'staleblood-ness' then!"

The dentists' daughter nodded in approval. "THAT'S a word!"

Jackson giggled before a voice called out, "Hey! Can I come in, Chikage?!!"

"Come in, Roman!" Chikage called back.

The shadows off to Nyabire's left shifted to allow the current incarnation of the Spectral Hound of the Dark Gaol to step into the light. As Jackson's eyes bugged out of her skull at the sight of the wrestler from Pensacola in a uniform no different than her hosts, Roman Reigns came to a stop before Chikage's desk while Kisaragi Utako again appeared to stand guard behind the arch-mage. "Hey, Chikage..."

He paused as his nose suddenly flared, then his dark eyes narrowed before they glowed as he spun around to stare intently at Alessia Bruttini. Before the native of Naples could register that look, a snarl escaped Reigns. "Let's take this outside...!" he then bade.

The darkness around them instantly melted into the lawn in front of the rotunda. As the magicals who had been held down by Pansy's shadows dropped onto their backs after being teleported out of Chikage's bedroom, the Samoan-descent soul-hunter's hand snapped up to telekinetically yank Bruttini into his grasp. "Thought I smelled something familiar...!" he snarled...

...before an explosion of eldritch fire flowed out of his body to rip into the wizard, causing him to howl, his voice acquiring an echoing monstrous quality that didn't sound ANYWHERE close to human. As Jackson drew her wand to form a protective field around her co-workers, Bruttini's head literally flipped backwards from his chest just as a jellyfish-like THING with three three-fingered arms was forcibly ejected from the empty shell it had possessed. The other magicals shrieked at such
a sight while the creature flopped onto the grass, its whole body starting to boil from contact with the open air and the various pollutants, bacteria and other particles it couldn't tolerate direct exposure to. As Reigns tossed Bruttini's melting corpse to the ground in front of a wide-eyed William Harkaway, his eyes flared again.

"Did you honestly believe we wouldn't be watching out for your kind, roenor'beke?" he sneered.

Jackson dodged around the melted corpse of her dead once-possessed co-worker to stare closely at whatever it was the Spectral Hound exorcised out of his body. "What in Merlin's name IS that?!

"They call themselves 'Mor-Tax', Major," Chikage declared as Pansy called up her shadows again to hold the Bay Stater's still-living co-workers and prevent them from trying to escape and potentially alert the now-dead symbiote's friends elsewhere that their presence within Terran magical society had been discovered. "They're parasites similar to the Goa'uld; they're actually rivals of sorts to the so-called 'children of the gods', Major. You won't know this since magicals weren't involved in their first attempt at invading Earth back in 1953 — that was handled by the War Hawks and other metahumans in the long term — but they have as little care for magicals as the Goa'uld or most other aliens do."

"Holy shit! Haven't seen one of THEM in years!"

Everyone turned as the leader of the War Hawks came up, she accompanied by the Trickster of the Show. As Chikage's sister shook her head, Dean Raeburn gave the magical Marine a sympathetic look...

****

Nerima, near Fūrinkan High School, that moment...

"Thank you so much for understanding my situation, Akane-san."

Hearing that from the frail raven-haired man with the sunken brown eyes now seated across from her at the yatai overlooking Shakuji Park and the river of the same name located a half-kilometre from her old home, Tendō Akane could only smile. "I'm as flattered by your interest in me as I am by all the other boys' interest in me," she said as she gently squeezed Gosunkugi Hikaru's hand, making the amateur voodoo occultist blush madly at her actually touching him, something he never thought in his wildest dreams would ever happen to him. "And I'm also quite happy that you never tried to push
"And get killed?" he weakly asked.

That made the Hammer of Passion laugh, which made people seated close by gaze in appreciation at her. Having decided to not butt in on the issues concerning the shipgirls that just came pouring down on the Moroboshi Clan like they did over the last couple of days — despite her more than friendly interest in Fukushima Fujiko — the would-be heiress of the "Tendō-ryū" elected to spend today closing out what affairs she had to deal with in Nerima before relocating full time to Ōmure-jima. That included getting herself officially transferred off the student rolls at Fūrinkan High and becoming a student at Stargazer West College, where all of Moroboshi Ataru's sisters save Hirosaki Chikage now attended.

Fortunately, the school secretary Kobayakawa Akiko — daughter of the original principal of the school before it was bought out by Kunō Godai — had been in the office catching up on paperwork when Akane came in with the letter from the Ministry of Justice declaring her full legal emancipation from her father's custody. Once all was confirmed, the Hammer of Passion was able to get all her records out of there before the Hawai'ian-crazed idiot showed up out of nowhere to try to press a fight scene with her and make her stay...or at least try to find some way to force a haircut on her before she departed the school for the last time. After she was finally clear of the place that had been the scene of a lot of crazy incidents for her over the last eighteen months, she elected to take a quiet walk around town, seeing the sights and frequently linking into her PAA to catch up on things with Fujiko, the other shipgirls and what was going on with Itō Yoiko and her still-surviving crew now parading at the Imperial Palace.

She had bumped into Hikaru an hour ago...then they went on an unofficial "date" in Shakujii Park to enjoy some afternoon snacks and catch up on things.

To the young occultist, it was literally a day in Heaven.

What was even better in Hikaru's eyes, there was none of the usual suspects from the Horde of Hentai under Kunō Tatewaki's leadership to come along and try to spoil things with someone he still cared for and respected. Unlike the vast majority of the boys attending Fūrinkan, Hikaru didn't think any less of Akane when the many revelations concerning Hibiki Ryōga came out in the wake of Hayashi Kanami's departure from Japan in May. He knew that Akane didn't have the sheer tech savvy of her older sister Nabiki, so the chances were very good that the youngest of the daughters of Tendō Sōun had no real idea that the secret of her precious "P-chan" was just a mouse-click away. He certainly didn't care for many of the girls who often crowded around Akane; surely, people like Asano Sayuri and Tokoro Yuka would have seen that website, then told their friend the truth about her "pet". Hikaru understood Kanami's reasons for staying silent about it; until her Gifting, her sense of honour demanded her silence because of how crippling such a curse could be in a fight...though given his obsession towards "Ranma", Ryōga had as much if not MORE responsibility over what
had happened to himself at Jusenkyō.

And given that Akane had just singled Hikaru out of all the potential dates she could have had today...!

"What?"

The occultist perked on hearing that concerned question, then he flustered. "Um, n-n-nothing!" he sputtered, waving in reassurance at her. "It's nothing, Akane-san! I...well, my mind was drifting...!"

"Towards a pillow scene?"

That made Hikaru gargle before he stared wide-eyed at her. "Are you Yizibajohei always this blunt?"

That made her laugh. "Oh, Crystal, Hikaru! Your look was priceless!" she teased him...before leaning in to land a wet kiss on his lips, which nearly made him pass out from that surprising contact.

"Akane-chan! What are you doing with him?!"

Hearing that unwelcome voice, Akane sighed before looking over her shoulders at two people she didn't want to see anytime now. "What do you two want?" she coldly asked.

Both of her "best friends" from Class 2-4 at Fūrinkan High School yelped on sensing that incensed look, then they waved their hands to calm her down. "Hey! Hey! Hey!" Sayuri squeaked as she tried not to backpedal away. "Calm down, Akane-chan! We've been looking all over for you since you left class after that Tariko woman did what she did to you on Friday! Where have you been all this time?!"

A surprised look answered the woman Akane now knew never really cared at all for her engagement. "What?! You mean you never got that news flash from Nabiki's website?" she icily wondered.

That made the other two girls wince. "Um, Akane-san, I doubt your ex-sister would have been able
to add anything to that site," Hikaru then declared, feeling quite inwardly surprised at his willingness to overcome his shyness when it came to speaking to other people. Then again, that had been one hell of a first kiss and part of him was definitely screaming for more. "Don't you remember? As soon as Tariko-san's sister Hinako-chan removed that block on your Gift to allow you to become Cremisi, the backlash of what your ex-father did to you back in 2003 almost destroyed the house. Since the place is being condemned now, I doubt Nabiki-san has had any chance to get to a computer and update things."

That made the former most popular student at Fūrinkan High blink. "Ah! Thanks for recapping the script, Hikaru! I appreciate it!" She then leaned over to kiss him again, making Sayuri and Yuka gape and the voodoo occultist nearly pass out from getting a second chance to sample such lips. "So where were you if I was supposedly in distress?" she then asked her now-former best friends. "That explosion was heard as far away as the Imperial Palace. Why didn't you come running over to the house to make sure I was okay after classes let out? Even if I stayed with Tariko-chan's sisters on Friday night, I was right back 'home'..." — she made finger-quotes with one hand; the other was holding one of Hikaru's — "...yesterday morning to clear my stuff out and get away from the hypocrites once and for all."

As the other girls winced on hearing the unspoken accusation, Akane's eyes narrowed as a mirthless smile crossed her face. "Or is it because you realized that all the boys' accusations about you all not giving a damned about my honour — to say anything about my PRIVACY of all things — was TRUE?! You KNEW what Nabiki put on that website, didn't you?! If you really were my friends, then why the hell didn't you tell me a damned thing about Hibiki and what he was hiding from me?!"

"Why should we?!" Sayuri demanded in return as she threw up her hands in exasperation. "Even if he had that curse, Ryōga-kun was a million times more better than that pervert Saotome! Look at all of the crap that came down on your head after that sex-changing pervert showed up?!"

A groan answered her. "Oh, someone, PLEASE! Put an end to that damned replay scene!" Akane breathed out, making the other girls wince on realizing how much their friend had truly changed. "That's all you've ever said about Kanami in private to me ever since she was dragged into the house last April. UNCONSCIOUS on the back of that panda that was the REAL source of all the shit that came down on her since way before Tariko-chan pulled her out of that damned pit of cats in '05, then got her pre-Gifted! Never mind that over-honoured bitch's demand all the way back in '97 — when Kanami was TWO, by the way! — that 'he' end up being the same type of pervert that old freak Happōsai was because he HAD to be the icon of a 'man above men'! After all, Genma and Sōun both trained under Happōsai, so Genma HAD to have know what being a 'man above men' was like!"

"You said that all the time!" Yuka snapped.

"Yes, I did!"
As the other girls blinked in shock at that frank admission, Akane shook her head. "It was a MIRACLE Kanami had ANY feelings for me at all, even AFTER Jusenkyō warped her mind around and guaranteed that sooner or later, she would have walked out on Genma and Nodoka once and for all! It was a MIRACLE that she liked me even after I practically BETRAYED my promise to be her friend the instant I found out about that curse! I couldn't really think straight for a lot of reasons, the least of which being what my ex-father did to me after my first TRUE friend helped me get over my mother's death by giving me the chance to defend myself in a way that I'd never be able to have done as a normal...!"

"That's the point!" Sayuri snapped as she pointed at the other woman. "You changed so much! You're not the Akane-chan we know! What the hell are you?!" She then glared at Hikaru. "C'mon, Voodoo Spike! Do something! You're some shit-hot occultist! Change her back!"

Hikaru blinked. "Why should I, Sayuri-san?"

Silence.

More silence.

Still more silence.

Then...

"If you don't...!" Sayuri growled.

"What will you do?" he challenged back as he gazed in disgust at her. "Try to get someone like Kuonji-san to beat me up to make me comply? You could do that. But you'll never get Hiroshi-san back!" As Sayuri suddenly squawked in shock at that statement, the voodoo occultist added, "Why should he care for you when you proved by your INACTION that you really don't care for your friend?"

"That's got nothing to do with it!"

"Are you sure?" Hikaru asked before focusing on Yuka. "And you and Daisuke-san, Yuka-san?"
Forget it! Daisuke-san knows you're religious when it comes to Nabiki-san's website, so you KNEW about Hibiki! Hell, you had to have read the statement there on how Hibiki tricked Ranma — Kanami-san now — into making that promise before he started SPYING on your 'friend' to learn as many secrets as he could, then go on and press his stupid vendetta on Kanami-san!" He narrowed his eyes. "Why the hell didn't YOU care, Yuka-san? I can guess why Sayuri-san didn't say a thing!" He gazed at the girl with the dark pony-tailed hair. "She must have had wet dreams about Akane-san ever since they met...!"

"THAT'S NOT TRUE!" Sayuri exclaimed.

"Really?" he then said with a syrupy voice. "Well, that's what Nabiki-san told me after Kanami-san left when I paid her to try to find out why was it that neither of you moved to warn Akane-san about Hibiki the instant the information of that curse went out. We KNOW she tells the truth when you PAY her!"

As Sayuri squawked with both embarrassment and outrage as she took several steps away from Akane, Yuka looked in shock at Hikaru, then at her friend, then again at Akane. As the other girl sputtered her denials, Yuka took a deep breath. "What about your sister, Akane-chan?"

"I have no sisters," Akane evenly declared.

"Okay! OKAY! I understand Nabiki! What about Kasumi-san?!"

"What about her?"

Yuka gaped. "Don't you know she's been kidnapped from Nerima General Hospital?!!"

"Oh? Did that whole thing with Picolet Chardin turn sour once news of what happened to Kanami get to him? Or was it some stupid new debt that Sōun acquired that people didn't find out about until now?"

"SHE'S YOUR SISTER!"

"I have no sisters."
As Yuka gaped at Akane, Hikaru sighed. "Kasumi-san knew the truth about Hibiki as much as her father and sister did," he explained. "If Kasumi-san was concerned about Akane-san's honour, why didn't SHE say something about it? She was in the house all the time; not a thing happened there that Kasumi-san wasn't aware of within an hour. If her father supposedly bullied her into silence because of 'honour' issues..." — he made finger quotes — "...all Kasumi-san had to do was threaten to NOT cook, then see to it Kanami-san was nowhere close by to take her place, thus force her father to acquiesce. After all, neither Nabiki-san or Akane-san could cook and having Genma-san's wife around threatened to expose the Jusenkyō curses, which was to be avoided. Involving Ukyō-san or Shampoo-san would have brought their claims of marriage on Kanami-san into play. And yet, Kasumi-san did NOTHING!"

"So what...?" Sayuri hissed.

Hikaru stared in shock at her, then he shook his head. "You best go, Akane-san," he then advised his former classmate. "These two idiots aren't listening to a damned thing people are saying to them..."

"This Musashi apologizes for intruding on your time with this wise young priest, Tendō-dono..."

Everyone perked on hearing that formal voice with its Kyūshū accent, then heads snapped around...

"Oh — ye — gods!" Yuka eeped.

Standing nearby was a tall, muscular woman in a black modern-pattern Yizibajohei jumpsuit with silver belt and boots, silver finger-less gloves covering her hands. Her skin was tanned to the shade of burnt umber, the muscles in the exposed arms and pressing against the cloth of her clothing sharp and accentuated; there was no mistaking the POWER that burned in this woman's body. Like the youngest of her sisters who was the first of the "first four" Yamato-class ships to be Gifted and transformed into a shipgirl, Itō Mutsuko had a hooded silver demi-cape wrapped around her shoulders, giving her something of a noble air; Akane knew that the wearing of demi-capes was a common form of nobility dress across most of Yiziba before the Dawn of Power. On her chest was a silver ring surrounding the silver-lined black kanji 武蔵 of her ship name. Linked into the rings at the cardinal direction were four smaller rings, each with hakke that effectively denoted the names of of the four chapters in the famous book her near-namesake Miyamoto Musashi wrote in 1645: ☵️ (Earth) at the top, ☐ (Water) at the bottom, ☢️ (Fire) to the viewer's right over the heart and ☴️ (Wind) to the viewer's left. Her head was well-shaped, with piercing chestnut eyes behind safety goggles. Dusky silver-grey hair covered her head, with a two-side up style creating "fox ears" at the back of her temples, stringy twintails streaming from the back of her skull down to mid-back with the remainder of the mass cut to a shaggy taper at the back of the neck, bangs combed over her forehead to below the bridge of her nose.

"What is it, Mutsuko-san?" Akane asked as Hikaru turned as red as a tomato on realizing the second
of the Yamato-class battleships had just addressed HIM of all people as a "wise young priest".

A perfect courtly bow responded from the adopted native of Nagasaki (her place of construction as THG *Musashi*) and Fuchū to the west of Nerima (the ancient site of the capital of her namesake province) responded. "We received a signal from an Isaac Thomas-sensei, who is currently in orbit over the planet of the space oni that so plagued the grandnephew and grandniece of Onē-sama's junior navigation officer over the last year. There is a summons to all of the Forge to attend a 'mother of all fight scenes' now being put out by Thomas-sensei to defend the space oni from a potential attack from the lar'beke. Also, there was an incident moments ago on the island. One of the roenor'beke native to a world in the Kani-seiun was discovered possessing a foolish gaijin magical who tried to force an arrest on Parkinson-dono and Granger-dono, not to mention make trouble for all of us there. Fubuki-dono was worried about you and hopes you were finished with your old place of education."

As Sayuri and Yuka found themselves frozen solid being so close to Mutsuko — they had seen the power which had been unleashed to restore the sunken battleship and transform her into this tall metahuman that probably could smash aside Prince Herb of the Musk like an annoying fly had he been foolish enough to cross her path — Akane moaned. "Oh, Crystal! One of the *Mor-Tax* are here?!"

"It WAS here, Tendō-dono. Kongō-dono's new friend from Florida dealt with the foolish beast." At Akane's curious look, Mutsuko added, "Roman Reigns-sensei."

A hum responded even if Akane's eyes went wide on recognizing that stage name. "Gifted, huh?! I have to really catch up on who everyone is right now!" Akane gazed at Hikaru. "Gomen."

"If you wish, Tendō-dono, you can bring the wise young priest along," Mutsuko proposed, her eyes sparkling before she redefined "glare" at Akane's former best friends. "This Musashi scents evil intentions towards him from these two," she added, her tone quite cold.

As both girls nearly pissed their panties, Akane gazed on Hikaru. "Want to come and meet everyone? I know Chikage-san's grandfather was one of the top magical warriors in the land in the late war."

That made him gaze at her. "What's her name again?"

"Hirosaki Chikage."
"HIROSAKI?!"

As he had a fanboy moment on hearing that family name, Mutsuko's eyes twinkled more...

****

Welcome House, an hour later...

"THE MOR-TAX?!"

"Yeah."

As that information sank into his mind, Albus Dumbledore groaned as he squeezed the bridge of his nose. "Dear Merlin! It was a MIRACLE you and the others were able to keep the damage from their invasion to a minimum back in 1953! Why are they still here, Dean?! Hermione, Luna and Ginevra have told me about the local galactic situation! Even if they hail from the Crab Nebula, they're practically homeless now! Trying to invade Earth with all the powers surrounding our system is suicide!"

"Maybe because they feel they've got no choice now."

Both Dumbledore and Dean Raeburn gazed on the raven-haired Samoa-descent wrestler seated with them outside the main doors of the rotunda. Nearby, a gushing Gosunkugi Hikaru was trying not to make an ass of himself on meeting Hirosaki Chikage, talking the arch-mage's ears off with questions about her grandfather. Pansy Parkinson and Hermione Granger stood beside their schoolmate; they were also attended by Tendō Akane, Itō Mutsuko, Fukushima Fujiko and Kisaragi Utako. Seated with Dumbledore, Raeburn and Roman Reigns now were Tariko Katabarbe, Moroboshi Ataru, Shigaten Benten, Sukeyama Sakuya, Hatoyama Rinrin, Susumu Marie, Yotsuba Dunn, Itō Yoiko, Yamamoto Reiko, Charlene Boleyn and Luisa von Bismarck. The shipgirls and others present at this impromptu kaffeeklatsch were guarded by destroyers with arms crossed even if there was obviously no threat from the former Supreme Mugwump of the International Confederation of Wizards or the current commander of the Canadian Special Operations Forces Command. Elaine Jackson had taken the other members of her team back to the ICW Embassy in Chiyoda after Chikage had used her magic to swear the others into total silence over the being that had possessed Alessia Bruttini. Also present was Konoe Konoemon, with Takahata Takamichi and Asakura Kazumi having accompanied him from Mahora.
"They're being hounded down to extinction, you mean?" Raeburn asked.

"Probably," the native of Pensacola stated as he sat back into his chair, crossing his arms. "We need to hunt down where they're based out of and wipe it out. 'Sides, Liz and Tánja are gonna be pissed off enough over all the 'holes' that are in that shielding system at Ceres."

"Shit! I've never even heard of these clowns!" Benten snorted.

"Be grateful about that, Miss Shigaten," Raeburn noted as she stubbed out her cigar in a tray offered to her by Randi Stubbs. As the transformed destroyer moved to dispose of that inside the rotunda, the leader of the War Hawks sighed. "If only the Qar'to didn't go like gangbusters on those idiots after their home star exploded way back before Papa-sensei's time. They've been completely intent on slaughtering the rest of the Mor-Tax since. That's what students of mine have told me."

"What are the Qar'to?" Luisa asked.

"They're an offshoot of the Mor-Tax, Captain," Reigns answered. "But they look on humans differently. Normal Mor-Tax see us as host bodies to let them survive on Earth. Qar'to — who always used android bodies to pretend to be like other races they interact with — basically want to EAT us!"

The shipgirls made faces on hearing that. "They're fucking CANNIBALS?!" Ashikaga Akemi, standing close to Ataru, demanded as her fists shook with fury at that idea.

"I wonder if they're good to eat," Fukushima Shirayuki, currently "protecting" Sakuya, wondered.

"I dunno," Reigns noted. "You Japanese eat jellyfish?"

The Japanese shipgirls hummed. "If cooked right, they are a delicacy," Yoiko then mused, which earned her surprised looks. "You'd be amazed at what my crew were willing to consume."

"Well, the Bering Sea and the area around it is a pretty rich zone for sea life. Look at Deadliest Catch," he commented. "Your crew was pretty damned lucky to be based up there all these years, Captain."
At Yoiko's curious look, Rinrin explained about the television series concerning king crab fishing based out of Unalaska (known to the Japanese by the old name "Dutch Harbour") that had been running on the Discovery Channel since 2005. "So what can we do combat this threat?" Charlene then asked. "Mister Reigns has obligations to his employers to be back in Louisiana in a few hours to participate in a match with his friends, so he can't spare too much time to help in the search. I would assume the other members of this 'Shield' group are also Gifted." At Reigns' nod, the second of the Queen Elizabeth-class battleships sighed. "So they'll be under the same type of obligations."

"Mark Caloway is available since he doesn't wrestle too much," Yotsuba noted.

"Yeah, but few people know about him being Gifted, Yotsuba," Reigns warned.

"Please excuse us!"

Everyone perked, then they turned...

"Ah! I need a good tea!" Dumbledore called out as the Chihaya sisters came over with a full tea service. "Thank you, my dear!" he said as Chihaya Isabel handed him a cup of steaming hot Darjeeling.

As the eldest sister sat down at the circle, the other sisters moved to serve everyone else. "So we've got a potential fifth column at our backs that could make lives not so wonderful now," Chihaya Anne said as she sipped her tea after everyone was served. "Atop that, the idiots in the ICW are trying to make noise just because Pansy over there was happy to acknowledge the Life Debt she owes Tariko here and make a better life for herself beyond the bounds of that silly secrecy statute." She shook her head. "Professor Dumbledore, I have a question. How exactly did you get 'fired'?"

The current headmaster of Hogwarts blinked. "Quite simple, my dear. Once Cornelius withdrew his support for my holding the post of Supreme Mugwump, I was automatically relieved of the position."

"Is that normal, Köchō-sensei?" Isabel asked.

He hummed. "It is in the rules, but not normal. The typical ways one stops being Supreme Mugwump is either voluntary retirement or dying while in office."
"How does a successor get nominated then, Kōchō-sensei?" the second of the Kongō-class fast battleships, Chihaya Sarah, then asked as she stood behind Anne.

"By majority vote of all the members of the representatives of the Confederation."

"What are you getting at, Anne?" Charlene asked.

A smile crossed the face of the adopted native of Chihayaakasaka and Barrow-in-Furness. "During the war, Charlene, I had the fortune of having some 'muggleborns' serve as officers in my crew." She made finger-quotes with her free hand as Dumbledore gaped at her. "One of them was a master in magical law at Dejima who clerked with Marshal Yomigawa after she was made Mahō-Shōgun in 1930. He helped WRITE the Mahō-chokugo no Dokuritsu in 1937 promulgated by Shōwa Tennō that started the run in to the Wars of Liberation on our side of the world." As Reiko's eyes brightened on hearing that, Anne added, "It was always tradition in the ICW from the very beginning that if someone was going to retire from the position of Supreme Mugwump, no matter what the reason, he or she had the right to propose his or her successor! It may not be law, but it certainly HAS BEEN the tradition! Professor, did you choose Professor Akingbade as your successor when you were made to leave your post?"

"No, I didn't, Captain," Dumbledore stated. "But I hardly see..."

"Did your predecessor suggest you as his successor?"

He nodded. "Yes, Heather did. She felt it was the right thing. As Dean can tell you, she was totally self-taught in magic and often found herself fire-calling me for advice on certain matters."

As the shipgirls gaped on realizing that their British guest's predecessor as Supreme Mugwump was the Canadian arch-mage who served as the Royal Canadian Navy's representative in the War Hawks, Lieutenant Commander (now Vice Admiral) Heather Thompkins of Beauport (now a part of Québec City), Anne smiled. "And when Admiral Thompkins proposed your name, it was put to a proper vote, right? With the majority of the members all agreeing to your becoming Supreme Mugwump?"

"That's right."

"When you were 'fired', did they vote for Professor Akingbade?"
The elderly arch-mage from Somerset blinked before his eyes widened. "Oh, my..."

"Before we go anywhere with this, Albus, do you want to go back to doing TWO jobs at once?" Raeburn wondered as she gazed on the man who had privately apprenticed under her in the fall of 1944 to deal once and for all with Gellert Grindelwald at Nurmengard on the summer solstice the following year.

A wry chuckle answered him. "Actually, no," he admitted, shaking his head. "Much that I felt a deep responsibility — giri, as it's said here — to honour what Heather did for me, I actually like being just a school headmaster now." As the Japanese shipgirls nodded at that, he gazed on the eldest of the Kongō-class. "Are you proposing that people force a confidence vote on Babajide because he's actually more of an 'acting' Supreme Mugwump than a properly elected one, Captain Chihaya?"

Anne nodded. "Exactly."

"Yotsuba can call Mycroft and get Her Majesty to put out a Magical Royal Proclamation about that right away, Professor," Yotsuba then proposed.

"The general's got every head of state in the world on speed dial," Reigns added, indicating Raeburn. "Get everyone to turn up the heat real quick on the ministries worldwide to demand a proper vote."

"How much support would this Akingbade have?" Luisa wondered.

"Most of Africa would support him," Dumbledore declared after a moment's contemplation. "He's always been an African nationalist even if he's too enamoured with European wand-styles of magic to not try to support repairing the damage the loyalty stones unleashed there..."

A beeping sound echoed from Maria's PAA. As people gazed her way, the Paper Sorceress tapped the crystal to bring up a television screen, now flashing breaking news. Noting it was BBC World, the native of Hakodate blinked on seeing the banner at the bottom of the screen: FOUR NEW SHIPGIRLS FIGHTING ALIENS IN NORWAY! The subtitle underneath it declared: Children of Tromsø summon Bismarck's sistership Tirpitz back to fight alien androids! Battleships Scharnhorst and Gneisenau come to help! German shipgirls joined by Italian battleship Roma! Show of compassion for innocents demonstrates human hearts of the Kriegsmarine and the Regia Marina! "Oh, my...!"

Luisa gaped on seeing that name. "Tirpitz...?!!"
On Håkøya Island (five kilometres north of west from Tromsø), that moment (local time: Breakfast)...

"SCHMUTZIGE KANNIBALENMONSTER! STIRB ENDLICH!"

The whole of the small island where the second of the Bismarck-class battleships had been anchored close to during the last twenty-eight days of her existence as a warship shook violently as the trees still standing near the battle scene collapsed thanks to the sheer nova of overwhelming power the "lonely queen of the North" just unleashed towards the platoon's worth of dark-clad humanoids who had been corralling many crying children to a private place to have their flesh consumed.

As two androids were instantly pulverized into tiny bits by that balloon of power, others drew futuristic rifles and fired a rapid fusillade at the silver-haired woman with the icy blue-grey eyes, who was now hovering some distance off shore over where she had sunk in 1944. As said bolts slammed into her chest where her bugwappen was displayed on the red field of her shirt, the adopted native of what was Küstrin on the east bank of the Oder in old Brandenburg — it was now the city of Kostrzyn nad Odrą in the Polish province of Lubusz — laughed at the spring mist-like feeling. "You call those killing weapons?" the woman who had been called by that strange angel "Maria von Tirpitz" jeered at those she was trying to smash down with help of two of her old fleet mates and a former ally from Italy. "The British Tallboys hurt worse than that! Give me a challenge for God's sake! You're NOBODIES!"

"YOU WILL NOT KEEP OUR FOOD FROM US, YIZIBAJOHEI!"

That was the leader of these cannibalistic robots calling themselves "Qar'to", a woman with long curly raven hair and deep brown eyes, who was using both her internal hand-fitted weapons — which fired crimson pulse beams — and an automatic rifle to try and subdue her. As distant screams echoed from the children who had been gathered by her brethren from all over northern Norway, Sweden and Finland to replenish themselves as they continued their search for those Mor-Tax who survived the 1953 invasion attempt on Earth, two other flying women in Yizibajohei-pattern jumpsuits moved to put the alien synthezoids into a three-way cross-fire and submerge them with enough power to wipe out a city. «Roma! Are all the children out of the way?!» the reborn first of her class of light battleships telepathically called out as if she was transmitting through secure radio communications.

«Si!» a voice with a mix of Romanesco and Veneto accents called back in the minds of the
transformed German battleships. That signal came from the other side of a high ridge nearby in the direction of the bridge that connected the island to Highway 858. The third of the Littorio-class battleships, after she flew in from the site of her sinking in the Strait of Bonifacio between Corsica and Sardinia once she had been reborn thanks to the prayers of several veterans of her crew — who "brought her back to duty" on a drunken mad lark around midnight — gladly evacuated an infantry company's worth of pre-teen children while her old allies went totally medieval on those robots who would have EATEN them. «The little ones are still insisting that boy machine that was with them is a close friend of theirs! I have shields up!» A hesitant chuckle echoed from Roberta Ansaldo. «At least I think I do...!»

"JAWOHL!" Gertrude von Scharnhorst howled with cackling delight as her blue eyes glowed with unholy fire. "MEINE SCHWESTER! LET'S MAKE OUR ADMIRAL REALLY PROUD OF US AND SEND THESE DAMNED THINGS TO THE HELL THAT MADE THEM!"

"JEDER! AUF DREI!" Eva von Gneisenau called out from the other side of the Qar'to, huge blooms of energy cloaking her fists, both protected by black finger-less gloves. "DREI! ZWEI! EIN! FEUER!"

Three bolts of blinding power escaped the reborn German battleships to intersect right at the centre of the mass of androids. The resulting explosion nearly turned a quarter of Håkøya itself into a new basin of the Sandnessundet Passage separating the island from Tromsøya Island where the centre of one of Norway's northernmost cities was located. All the homes within range were turned into instant kindling; fortunately, the only inhabitants of the island over the last while seemed to have been Qar'to who bought homes to turn the island into their hidden base. As a great mushroom cloud sent a shower of debris and shattered rock hurtling into the air, the former Kriegsmarine battleships whooped on noting that all resistance that had been directed at Maria had completely stopped.

While there was the possibility of a sniper still out there...!

After a few minutes of total science save for the hissing noises of burning grass and rock, Maria waved Gertrude and Eva down to join her by the western end of the large crater which had been made by their attacks. Such had ironically wiped out the old craters where Tallboy bombs dropped by the Royal Air Force's 9 and 613 Squadrons had come down in the last few attacks done on the second of the Bismarck-class battleships during 1944. Ignoring the helicopters from the local police district and the Coast Guard based out of nearby Bardufoss Air Station who had moved to enforce a no-fly zone around the battle area, the veterans of the Kriegsmarine slowly walked up to the place on the other side of the crater from where the second of the Bismarck-class battleships had been floating. After a couple of minutes — while two Coast Guard helicopters landed on the beach to disgorge soldiers in full battle dress — Maria paused before she pointed. "Lieber Gott! Look! That one survived!"
Eva and Gertrude gaped before they joined their fleet mate to move closer to whom they recognized as the leader of the Qar'to here, who called herself "Katara" when Maria demanded their surrender an hour before after she had been reborn and Gifted. Said android was now a mess of body parts, though her head was still attached on her body even if both arms had been amputated by flying debris and she had been nearly cut in half under the waist. Despite this, there was still life in those eyes as she seemed to focus on the second of the Bismarck-class battleships reborn as a woman. "You...will not...!"

A bolt of bright white energy slammed into the sputtering gynoid's head, knocking out what little power she had left while not leaving a physical mark on her skin. "That's enough out of you!" a strange voice called out from behind the three schiffsmädchen, making them spin around.

Fortunately, the fact that the leader of the small squad of troopers who just joined them had initiated a hand salute was enough to make Maria, Gertrude and Eva relax even if they bore weapons similar to what the Qar'to had. "Kommandør Frifrue von Tirpitz, I presume?" the major in command of this group greeted with a delighted smile before nodding at the reborn light battleships that helped Maria. "And Kommandør Frifrue von Scharnhorst and Kommandør Grevinne von Gneisenau as well?"

"Ja, Herr Major Jensen," Maria said as they returned his courtesy, she recognizing the insignia on his epaulettes after reading the family name on his jacket. Out of the corner of her eye, she was quick to see Eve turn as red as a tomato at being called by the local version of "countess" in obvious salute to her namesake, August von Gneisenau. "May I ask what unit are you with?"

"Kongelig Spesialisert Krigføring Regiment," Karl Jensen replied with a proud smile as he indicated the phoenix insignia on the formation patch on his upper arm, that topped with the Crown of Norway. As translators built into the schiffsmädchen's battle uniforms quickly rendered that term into German for them to understand, he relaxed himself. "Trained under Frøken Generalløytnant Raeburn in Canada when my own powers came into the fore a couple decades' ago. Welcome back...and thank you!"

He held out his hand, which made Maria laugh as she shook it. "The Rittmeister's granddaughter is a general now?!" she demanded as Jensen moved to shake Eva's hand, then Gertrude's. "I thought...!"

"Major! We've got a Shōzoki android here!"

Everyone's heads snapped around as Jensen's kommandersersjant came over to join them, followed by a wave of young and clearly starving children, plus the reborn third of the Littorio-class battleships in her white-and-red combat suit with protective goggles over her dark brown eyes tucked into her bobcut umber brown hair. In the arms of the woman who could now call herself "Roberta Ansaldo" was a handsome blond boy of about seven or so, with gaping wounds in his lower chest and stomach, they exposing even more advanced machinery the Qar'to possess under their artificial
skin and muscles, said wounds leaking a reddish blood-like fluid. Much to the understandable surprise of Maria and her fleet mates, a pretty girl of about the same age as the fallen android child was holding one of his hands...

To Be Continued...

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WRITER'S NOTES

Again, please reference Magic and Canada to understand what happened during the Miracle of 1889. That also has a note concerning the Mahō-chokugo no Dokuritsu ("Magical Imperial Rescript of Independence"). A future part of that narrative will describe how the Magical Wing of the United States Marine Corps (normally shortened as MAWMC, pronounced /mɑː-ːmək/ in the International Phonetic Alphabet) and its component regiments were formed in response to the Wars of Liberation.

Translation list: Spezialführungskommando — Specialized Warfare Command; Ryūseizen — Dragon Killing Ship; Tokubepō — Special Code; Mahōhō — Magical Code; Lese-Majesté — Wounded Majesty, this is the concept that declares that anything that directly threatens a crowned head of state is effectively treason; Replay scene — Yizibajohei euphemism where someone utters the same information over and over again to the point of nauseating the listener, this would be equal to the English euphemism "broken record" (as in "shut off that broken record"); Hakke — Literally "eight symbols", these are the eight three line trigrams used in Taoist thought that denote the fundamental principles of humanity; Kaffeeklatsch — Literally "coffee chat", this is an informal meeting where coffee (and in this case tea) is served; Schmutzige Kannibalenmonster — Dirty cannibal monsters; Stürb Endlich! — Die already!; Jeder — Everyone; Auf Drei — On three; Drei! Zwei! Ein! Feuer! — Three! Two! One! Fire!; Kommandør — Commander, the Norwegian Navy rank title for a navy captain; Frifrue — Literally "free [married] lady", the Norwegian equivalent of the German "Freifrau" (the title applied to the wife of a Freiherr); Grevinne — Countess; Kongelig Spesialisert Krigføring Regiment — Royal Specialized Warfare Regiment; Frøken — Miss/Lady; Generalløytnant — Lieutenant General; Kommandersersjant — Literally "command sergeant", the Norwegian Army rank equivalent to a Canadian Army master warrant officer (NATO rank code OR-8); Capitano di Vascello — Ship of the line captain, Italian naval rank title for a navy captain (NATO rank code OR-5); RM — Regia Marina ("Royal Navy"), the official name of the Italian maritime warfare branch from 1861-1946.

The concepts of the Magical House of Peers (in Japanese, Makizoku-in) are based on the ideas of the "Magical Diet" that was created as a background story to Harry Leferts' Harry Potter and the Shipgirls snippet collection that can be found at SpaceBattles and Sufficient Velocity. The specific
snippets that look upon the Japanese magical government in that universe were fleshed out by one of the many contributing authors in that snippet collection, Lord K.

*Harry Potter* minor character notes: The given name of the younger Avery that appeared in Voldemort's resurrection scene in *Order of the Phoenix*, *Septimus Avery*, is my creation. Babajide Akingbade was first mentioned in *Pottermore*. Ígor Kárkarov also appeared in *Order of the Phoenix*; his patronymic "Alekséevich" ("son of Alekséj") is my creation. Note that the patronymic for И́горь Алексе́евич here, "Aleksándrovich", means "son of Aleksándr".

The concepts of the *Tokubeppō* ("Special Code") and the *Mahōhō* ("Magical Code") are based on the concept of the Six Codes (in Japanese, *Roppō*) that serve as the main body of legal codes currently active in Japan (and also in South Korea and the Republic of China on Taiwan). The six "normal" codes in Japan include the *Constitution* (1946), the *Civil Code* (1896), the *Code of Civil Procedure* (1996), the *Criminal Code* (1907), the *Code of Criminal Procedure* (1948) and the *Commercial Code* (1899). In the history of this story, the Magical Code was first composed in 1692 to enforce the Statute of Secrecy on Japan's magical population. It was amended in 1854 in the wake of the forced opening of the nation; it was these amendments that saw the creation of the post of *Mahō-Shōgun* ("Supreme General of Magic") as a way of protecting Japan's magics from European encroachment and the wholesale destruction of local magical lore as had happened elsewhere. With the passing of the *International Specialized Warfare Treaty*, an all-encompassing Special Code was created in 1959, absorbing the tenets of the Magical Code and forming a strong legal structure for all of Japan's magical and metahuman population and all foreign magics and metahumans living in the land.

To explain about the father of Nora Nyabire, Idi Amin Dada (1923-2003) was born from a man named Andreas Nyabire (1889-1976), who changed his name to "Amin Dada" after converting to Islam in 1910.

*Ranma 1/2* character notes: Gosunkugi Hikaru first appeared in the manga story "Looking for a Weak Spot" (manga chapter #37). Kobayakawa Akiko is my own creation, but her father Kobayakawa Toramasa first appeared in the anime story "The Secret Don of Fūrinkan High" (season 6, episode 4).

The book that the symbol on the uniform of Itō Mutsuko (THG *Musashi*) references which was written by Miyamoto Musashi (1584-1645) is *The Book of Five Rings (Go-rin no Sho)*, which is broken into five component "books". Outside the four referenced above, the final chapter is the *Book of Void*.

*War of the Worlds* minor character notes: The Qar'to and their representative Katara first appeared in the television episode "Angel of Death" (first season, episode 24).
Like other members of the War Hawks, **Heather Thompkins** first appeared in *Phoenix From the Ashes*.

The shipgirls introduced in the final scene here:

Kapitän zur See **Maria von Tirpitz** KMDR (*Kriegsmarineschiff* **Tirpitz** [pendant 63])

KptzS **Gertrude "Trudl" von Scharnhorst** KMDR (*Kriegsmarineschiff* **Scharnhorst** [pendant 60])

KptzS **Eva Neidhardt von Gneisenau** KMDR (*Kriegsmarineschiff* **Gneisenau** [pendant 61])

Capitano di Vascello **Roberta Ansaldo** RM (*Regia Marina* **Roma** [pendant 21])

Like most European navies, the Royal Navy of Italy didn't use pendant numbers on any of their ships; the number assigned to RM **Roma** marks her as the twenty-first battleship of any type built for Italy since 1893. Note that **KMS Tirpitz** (**Maria von Tirpitz**), **KMS Scharnhorst** (**Trudl von Scharnhorst**) and **KMS Gneisenau** (**Eva von Gneisenau**) all resemble their *Azur Lane* incarnations. Naturally, the version of **RM Roma** (Roberta Ansaldo) appearing here is based on her *KanColle* interpretation.
As the Vongola learn about one particular shipgirl who just returned, Naomi Haight-Ashbury (Long Beach) borrows a magical battleship from Canada to stop "Big Mistake Number Two" from starting all over again...

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Welcome House on Ōmure-jima, an hour before supper (Tromsø time: Two hours before lunch)...

"Minna-san!" Tenhiro Haruka declared as she bowed politely to the crowd of students from Stargazer West College — to say anything of her family, friends and all the shipgirls that had come to live on Ōmure-jima over the last few months — who were filming this on cellphones and tablets for immediate transmission onto social media worldwide. "The Moroboshi Clan of Mutsu is more than honoured to welcome four most honourable warriors, who responded right away to defend the helpless citizens of Tromsø from alien CANNIBALS who see us as nothing more than FOOD and a mere HINDERENCE when it comes to seeking out their true foes! Despite the stain on their karma three of our new guests bear because the leaders of their homeland adopted an ancient symbol of luck and turned it forever into a symbol for GENOCIDE, they rose up out of a strong belief in all of humanity and answered the call to arms, returning to life in a much different world than the one they left...and in the honoured traditions demanded of them by the spilled blood of sailors of their Fatherland who fell in combat countless times over the last two centuries as the late crews of two of them gallantly showed at the very end." She gazed on the three proudly-standing schiffsmädchen now formed line abreast off to her left, they currently joined by the lone fanciulla della flotta named in honour of the Eternal City. "To say anything of our new and honoured friend from Italy, who overcame her own mistrust of her former allies because of what had been used to sink her in 1943, who realized right away that she could serve humanity without foolish thoughts of race, nationality or the other things that divide us!"

"PASTA!" Fukushima Miyuki then screamed out.

"MIYUKI-CHAN!" her older sister Fujiko moaned.
A roar of laughter echoed over the front lawn of Welcome House as the adopted native of her namesake city and Trieste (where she had been built as RM Roma) calling herself Roberta Ansaldo blushed madly at that horrible yet quite amusing misconception concerning what was most popular among Italians. As Haruka gave the fourth of the Fubuki-class destroyers a scolding look, Osamu Shirayuki reached up to squeeze the brown-haired shipgirl's shoulders. "Don't you worry about that, Roberta-san! Roberta-san and Hime are going to team together and teach the silly ones about proper Italian cooking!"

"You are a chef, Donna Marchesa Shirayuki?!" Roberta asked.

"Hai desu no!"

Hearing that, the brown-eyed battleship grinned. "Well, as soon as I can make sure I can properly cook, we'll show these piccoli scampi what REAL Italian food is like!"

"Desu no!"

A roar of approval came from everyone on the lawn. Haruka quickly cleared her throat before she bowed again to the cameras. "First and foremost, the one who immediately answered the call for aid by those poor children in Tromsø, Kapitän zur See Maria Augusta, Freidame von Tirpitz zu Küstrin und Wilhelmshaven!" she called out as she waved to the silver-haired, blue-eyed woman with the battlesuit bearing a red top and black pants with silver belt and boots, her bugwappen on her chest.

"TIRPITZ BANZAI!" all the Japanese destroyers screamed out as one.

As Maria blushed madly at getting that salute from her hosts' charges, Haruka smiled. "Beside her, Kapitän zur See Margarete Gertrude, Freidame von Scharnhorst zu Neustadt am Rübenberge und Wilhelmshaven!" she declared, indicating a grinning woman with very long pink-hued silvery hair and blue eyes — though her left eye seemed a little unfocused — now dressed in a solid dark blue jumpsuit with silver belt and boots, her blue bugwappen with its simple silver bend on her chest.

"SCHARNJORST BANZAI!"

As Gertrude — who now insisted on being called "Trudl" as her chosen given name was a little too old fashioned even for someone descent of the years of the Great Depression — blushed, Haruka
indicated her sister. "Beside her, her beloved sister, Kapitän zur See Eva Maria Neidhardt, Gräfin von Gneisenau zu Schildau und Kiel!" she introduced the second of the Scharnhorst-class light battleships, who was a twin of her sister save for protective goggles over her eyes, both eyes being clear and full of life and her uniform composed of a gold top, black pants, silver belt and boots — with the flaps bearing the crowned eagle of Prussia on the fronts — with her own bugwappen on her chest, that on a green leaf of laurel. Like Trudl, Eva had finger-less gloves on her hands; hers were black while her sister's were dark blue.

"GNEISENAU BANZAI!"

Eva waved in delight as the crowd screamed their support while applause echoed over the scene. Once people had quieted down, Haruka took a deep breath before she indicated the last new shipgirl. "Finally, our wonderful new friend from Italy, who truly showed the heart and compassion of the Regia Marina this morning when she shielded over a HUNDRED children from harm while her friends dealt with the monsters this morning. Minna-san, I present to you all Capitano di Vascello Donna Roberta Ansaldo, Vongola Patrizia di Roma e Trieste!" she said as she waved to the blushing woman with the wavy dark brown hair cut in blunt bangs over her brown eyes, eyes now shielded by protective goggles like what Eva wore. Her uniform was dark gold with burnt red belt and boots in reflection of the flag of the Eternal City, the dark red shield of Rome on her chest topped by a modern Italian Navy crown, said crest bearing the famed gold initials **SPQR** in bend, preceded in the canton by a gold cross pattée.

"ROMA BANZAI!" all the destroyers howled again.

"PASTA!"

As eyes locked on a grinning Miyuki, people blinked before Roman Reigns roared with laughter. That was enough to make everyone gape before they joined in, even a blushing Roberta Ansaldo...

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*Outside Palermo in Sicily, thirty minutes later (local time: Ninety minutes after breakfast)...

"Donna Daniela?"

"Sì?"
"The Decimo is calling. It's a conference call with your grandson."

Nodding as a smile crossed her face, the graceful middle-aged woman with the high pony-tailed black hair and the deep brown eyes walked over to where the PADD the Avalonian-Italian staff had gladly built and programmed for her had been placed on the coffee table in the living room of her private mansion overlooking Sicily's largest city. Two holographic view screens were now being projected from the screen, one depicting the office of the current leader of the Varia, the other the bedroom of the future leader of the Vongola. "Buongiorno, Xanxus. Buon Pomeriggio, Tsuna. What's the occasion for the call?" Daniela Lo Secco del Vongola asked as she sat down on the chair before the screens.

The usual devil-may-care smirk crossed the face of the Varia's chief executive officer, whom the former don of the Vongola saw as her adopted grandson. "Trash over there says there might be a possible Omertà breach in Japan, so he called me for advice," Xanxus del Vongola advised as he sat back in his chair. Daniela was quick to see his right hand, Curio Bernardis (AKA Superbi Squalo), standing behind the chair, arms crossed even if a respectful look was on his Rain Guardian's face. "It is questionable, so that's why we're calling you for advice on this, Nonna. It's involving the Moroboshi, specifically the girl from Germany who became some meta quarterstaff fighter; she's one of Tariko's half-sisters."

Daniela smirked. "Oh, what did Haruka do, Tsuna?"

Sawada Tsunayoshi blushed as he scratched the back of his head. He was alone in his bedroom as he spoke to his distant cousin and adopted cousin. "Do you know of the many fanciulle della flotta that have come back over the last couple of months thanks to Haruka's sister Hinako, Nonna?" he replied, speaking fluent Italian even if he still had his natural Tōkai–Tōsan dialect inflecting his words.

The old leader of the Vongola smiled, nodding in delight. "Sì, Tsuna, I do. I know that Sua Maestà Imperiale asked little Hinako to stop doing that back in the summer." A snicker then escaped her. "Obviously, given what Capitano von Spee did to protect Montevideo yesterday and what later happened to Capitano Owings when the people of America wished her to come back as a fanciulla della flotta, it's started a rainfall of such angels coming back and as empowered as they are."

"Including your brothers' ship, Nonna," Xanxus advised.

Silence.
More silence.

Still more silence.

Then...

"Roma?!” Daniela exclaimed.

Xanxus grinned. "Show her, trash!"

"Hai, Nii-san!” Tsunayoshi called out in Japanese before he tapped controls on his own PADD.

The old boss of the Vongola blinked as a picture appeared, then she gaped in shock as that bookish image seared into the heart of her soul. "Mio Dio! She looks like...!” she gasped as her eyes teared.

"Nonna?!” both Xanxus and Tsunayoshi cried out in shock.

"Easy, Daniela!” a strange voice called out from somewhere off screen as the would-be don of the Vongola looked to his left as someone walked into the camera's range. "Take a moment, take a breath, then let it come to you. I taught you how to do that back in the war, remember?"

Tsunayoshi shifted himself to his right to allow Renato Sinclair to take a seat beside his student. Seeing the World's Greatest Hitman as a full adult, Xanxus and Squalo both grinned. Shortly after her proper Gifting, as a way to allow all her mixed feelings over what happened to her in Tomobiki to be bled out before she "went heel", Tariko Katabarbe went on a worldwide blitz. When it came to people affiliated to the metahuman Mafia based in Italy, she gladly used her powers to restore the Arcobaleno back to adult form, ensuring none of them would die because of the curse that had wrecked hundreds of lives over the years. Even better, she sought out all the living Vindice and helped heal them as well, including their leader Bermuda von Veckenschtein. Then, as a bonus, the Trickster of the Show helped everyone hunt down "Checker-face" to allow them all to get a good "revenge scene" on the man born Kawahira Masaya before Margo Black swept in to put the "death cheater" down; as Checker-face, Kawahira had lived for CENTURIES thanks to experiments with ebony mesonium after being expelled from Hosan Hirosuke's dōjō off the coast of Hokkaidō. Despite this being a Mafia affair, the young Archangel of Mortality from Vermont didn't care for people being hurt because of THAT!
That one act reformed alliances between the metahuman mafia and those who had the blood right to practice Saikō Jinseijutsu-ryū, which had been effectively wrecked when Moroboshi Nagaiwakai died a half-decade ago from heartbreak because of the loss of her husband Kokeru to suicide years before. It also gave families like the Vongola a chance to forge alliances with Terrans-turned-Yizibajohei from Italy and China. And while many people such as the man known commonly these days as "Reborn" wanted to pay Tariko back for what she did by teaching the aliens how to behave while living in Tomobiki, an unexpected result of the Liberation of the Avalonians in June stayed their hands.

Despite that, many in the Mafia did get the chance to express their disgust at the monsters who had enslaved MILLIONS of those poor bioroids during the period between Tariko's Gifting in April and the Pseudo-War in August when a worldwide sweep of all the Niphentaxian cultural observers was done.

At least THAT message had got out to those copycat maniacs...!

Shaking her head to come out of her contemplation, Daniela sighed. "She looks like my youngest brother Alessandro would have, had he been born a woman. He was one of the gunnery officers on Roma when she was to be surrendered to the English before those bastard Nazis sank her with those damned flying bombs! He never made it out..." She shook her head. "And I have no idea at all if the crew of the Assassino del Leviatano that was there that day rescued him or not."

The younger men nodded in understanding as Reborn shook his head. It was known in Mafia circles that the Canadian magical ministry authorized the creation of incredibly large dreadnought battleships as early as 1910 to seek out creatures that would even dwarf Godzilla himself as he had been depicted in recent films, said ships meant to prevent them from consuming the souls of crews from warships that were sunk in battles like Jutland. Given the sheer loss of life on RM Roma that day in the summer of 1943 — official records stated 1,393 officers and men were killed out of a crew of nearly two thousand — one of the "leviathan assassins" WAS there to rescue the "dead" from one creature; the presence of that ship had been confirmed by Flame-active members of the Italian ships that survived the German attempt at destroying their just-surrendered allies' naval forces. While the general shape of the ship was known — she was one of the veterans of Jutland, though highly upgraded by the time she was in the Strait of Bonifacio — her name and the status of those she rescued from Roma was still unknown.

Xanxus knew Daniela had been secretly negotiating with Albus Dumbledore to get an accounting of her brothers' fate from the Canadians when he had been removed from his post as Supreme Mugwump thanks to that bastard Cornelius Fudge in July. Since he had been replaced by a "staleblood" fool from Uganda who didn't care at all for "muggles", the chances were close to excellent that if the former leader of the Vongola pressed the ICW for information, a potential shadow war could result thanks to the magicals' insane passion when it came to protecting their next-to-useless Statute of Secrecy.
But now...

"We could ask Donna Roberta directly about what happened, Nonna."

Daniela jerked as she gazed at her grandson before she sat back in her chair. "She would know, wouldn't she...?" she wondered to herself before she blinked in confusion. "Wait! 'Donna Roberta'?

"It's the human name the Moroboshi gave her, Daniela. And that's what got Tsuna worried about Omertà," Reborn explained with an amused grin.

"Oh?! What name is it, Renato?"

"Donna Roberta Ansaldo, Vongola Patrizia di Roma e Trieste."

Silence.

More silence.

Still more silence.

Then...

Daniela blinked as that name sunk into her mind before she roared with laughter, making both Xanxus and Tsunayoshi gape in shock at her; the only reaction from Reborn was a hidden arched eyebrow. "Oh, Negako! Don't change at all! Dio Mio, you're incredible...!"

"Negako-sensei told Haruka-san the name?!" the future leader of the Vongola demanded in Japanese.

Fortunately, Daniela was fluent and the PADDs came with a universal translator function. "Hai! Hai!" she called back as she wiped the amused tears from her eyes. "That was a subtle message from Negako to you, Renato!" she then advised her old friend.
Hearing that, the former Sun Arcobaleno moaned. "Oh, hell! She could have Dying Will Flames!"

The retired leader of the Vongola nodded. "And given how she was sunk...?"

A groan responded. "Damn! Alright, I'll go look in on her to see what's happening!" he vowed.

"Do you need help, Reborn?" Tsunayoshi asked.

Reborn considered that, then he nodded. "Bring your guardians. Xan, since you and yours will want to be in on this, send people over, but DON'T make too much noise! Remember who and what Tariko is!"

Xanxus blanched. When Tariko helped the Arcobaleno regain their adult bodies and heal the Vindice, she sensed something off about the Varia's Cloud officer, Ottavio Miele. Given the Trickster of the Show was a telepath as well as possessing her reality-warping powers, she had been quick to learn that the Cloud had turned against Xanxus out of outrage that the "street brat" effectively seized control of the Varia when Squalo killed Ottavio's best friend, Tio "Týr" Martino, to become the group's new "sword emperor". Since that day, Ottavio had sold information concerning Xanxus' activities to both Tsunayoshi's father Iemitsu (in charge of the Consulenza Esterna della Famiglia, the Vongola's intelligence force) as well as Ottone Visconti, Cloud Guardian to Xanxus' adopted father and the current don of the largest metahuman Mafia family now active, Timoteo del Vongola.

Yizibajohei didn't care at ALL about backstabbers.

When Ottavio tried to kill the Trickster of the Show when he was discovered...!

"Don't remind me, man!" Xanxus breathed out, rubbing his forehead.

"I'll come over as well," Daniela stated. As concerned looks were sent her way by the people calling in, the former Mafia leader added, "I'll be like meeting a sister I've heard of...but never met in person."

Her grandson and distant cousin both smiled as Reborn nodded in understanding...
Ōmure-jīma, Welcome House, that moment...

"AH-CHOO!"

As Roberta Ansaldo moaned while wiping her nose, both Maria von Tirpitz and Luisa von Bismarck gazed her way. "Gesundheit!" the younger of the two reborn German battleships called out as she walked over to squeeze her friend's shoulder. "You're not catching a cold, are you?"

The third of the Littorio-class groaned as she sat down in the new bedroom set aside for her on the top floor of the commons overlooking the main doors. "Che se ne va! I don't think so, mia amica," the adopted native of the Eternal City said with a reassuring smile while she slipped the goggles away from her eyes, then she relaxed herself as Hatoyama Rinrin did a scan of her orbs. "You're rather blurry, Donna Marchesa Rinrin," she quietly warned with a wry smile. "I must be nearsighted."

"Yeah, you are," the Technological Sorceress of the East stated before she picked up the goggles. "Any preference for glasses that you'd like to wear, Roberta-san? I can make any type you'd want."

"Ladies' pince-nez?"

Rinrin blinked before she laughed. "Oh! You're old-fashioned, eh?!" With that, she tapped controls on her portable replicator machine, then slipped the goggles inside them before closing the lid and activating the device to program them to transform into what was just requested. "Aniki should be here soon with normal clothes that will fit you so you can go out and do some shopping. He's really good when it comes to getting stuff that fits." A wry smile crossed the Ōsaka native's face.

"He's not perverted about it, is he?"

"Oh, no!" the eighth of Moroboshi Ataru's half-sisters by age declared as she waved the transformed battleship down. "I mean, when Aniki and Aneki were one person, they were made to act that way because of that hypnosis they got hit with last September before Lum-san came, but they wouldn't ever do something wrong under normal circumstances. Aneki grew up as a girl even if she was a boy at birth." She smirked. "Even with Benten-san now on Earth wanting to get into Aniki's boxers and a
whole tonne of the shipgirls Hinako-chan found having crushes on him, he doesn't know what to do."

"Have you found the criminals who did that to your sister, Frau Markgräfin?" Maria asked as she crossed her arms. Thanks to shipgirls having a natural telepathic ability which seemed akin to secure radio, she had been briefed by Luisa concerning what happened with their spiritual "admiral".

"No. We know who they are, but we gotta track them down now," Rinrin said as she waited for her replicator to finish its work. "Once we do, Aneki's gonna go medieval on them if Margo-san doesn't get to them ahead of time and turn them into goo, like Roman-san did that Mor-Tax earlier..."

"Special delivery!"

"In here, Aniki!"

Everyone turned as Moroboshi Ataru leaned through the bedroom door, two large bags of clothes in hand. "Here you are, Maria-san," he said as he handed one to the adopted native of Kostrzyn nad Odřą. "I'm sure that your sister can help show you how to deal with the foundation garments." As Maria flustered at his amused look, he then held out the other bag for Rinrin to take. "You can handle Roberta-san, I believe, Rinrin-chan?" he asked as he gave his sister a knowing look.

"Hai!"

Roberta nodded her thanks before she perked as she recalled something. "Oh! What of that android that helped save those children? I can't believe the little girl who was with him was also an android!"

"Ah-ah-ah!" Rinrin cut her off as she wagged her finger. "Quick lesson of terminology, Roberta-san," she warned as the German battleships and Ataru stepped out of the room, Luisa closing the door behind them. "Human-shaped boy AIs are androids, girl AIs are gynoids. I hate it when people use 'android' to describe gynoids. Here, let me get that battlesuit off you so you can get dressed for a walk around town. There's gonna be a load of people who want to meet you after what you did."

She tapped the buckle of the jumpsuit, which made the whole thing vanish, revealing a very trim yet quite wiry muscular body, the skin touched with shades of olive expected of someone who lived near the Mediterranean. As Roberta's cheeks flushed in embarrassment as she gazed on her considerable "superstructure", Rinrin got out packages. "Ah! Silk panties! Aniki must have raided Petite Cherry on Second Street to get you fixed up!" she said as she moved to slip the dark red panties trimmed in
black lace over the battleship's feet. Nodding as Roberta moved to secure them into place, Rinrin did a quick scan around to ensure the adopted native of the Eternal City got it right; given she had been formed from the spirits of thousands of men who had helped design, build and serve on her, the differences between male and female bodies might throw Roberta off. "Feel okay?" she asked as a ding! echoed from her replicator, then she reached over to pop open the hatch to pull out the transformed goggles.

"Sì! It's very nice and comforting...ah!" Roberta breathed out as Rinrin placed the glasses on the bridge of her nose, allowing her vision to clear up. The Technological Sorceress of the East then secured the pin tied to the chains that connected to both sides of the spectacles into the reborn battleship's hair just above the base of her skull. "I can see finally!" she declared in relief. "Why on Earth did the angel that controls where this body was stored force me to be nearsighted?"

Rinrin hummed as she reached into the bag to pull out the matching push-up demi-bra that Ataru had got for the third of the Littorio-class battleships, a shrug rolling her shoulder. "Can't say. Try as we might, we don't know who it is that's allowing first generation battle dolls to get out of wherever they were stored on Yiziba to merge with warship kami to make shipgirls like you." Taking the bra out of its package, she then moved to shift Roberta around. "Okay, here's the hard part..."

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At the south end of the Sibley Peninsula in Ontario overlooking Lake Superior (fifteen kilometres east of Thunder Bay), that moment (local time: Three and a half hours after midnight)...

"Come in, Albus!"

An amused chuckle escaped the headmaster of Hogwarts as he stepped into the work office of his counterpart who administered Canada's national magical school, the Institute of Sorcery and Magic, set right at the foot of the Sleeping Giant rock formation believed to be the hidden home of Nanabozho, one of the many Great Old Ones who allied with Josef von Taserich twenty-five millennia before to drive out the Old Ones and other interdimensional invaders in the Great Expulsion. Shuddering as his body was once again flooded with the intensive earth magic that permeated the whole peninsula — said to be able to enhance the personal power of all who had studied in this school since its opening in 1880 — the man who defeated Gellert Grindelwald in 1945 sat before William Harlan’s desk while Fawkes flew over to relax on a perch set aside for him while the two old veterans of the Wars of Liberation got together. "Doing some lesson plans for your lectures in military studies?" the native of Mould-on-the-Wold said as the enchanted tea service nearby moved to pour some tea for him.

"A lot of normal-borns from the major schools are flocking not just to here but to Grouseo and
Mantigi for post-master's studies to join the Foresters, the Rangers and the Mountain Infantry," the native of Bayham on the shores of Lake Erie stated as he sat back in his chair to gaze at Dumbledore. "Not even Miss Katabarbe's efforts to get magical children who'd attend Hogwarts and elsewhere Gifted has convinced people to stay where they're at. With what just happened to Riddle and his friends, things in Britain should calm down...but the sheer level of mistrust that 'mudbloods' have towards the leadership of the Ministry there won't go away soon. Still, if stalebloods elsewhere want to stir up trouble to seek 'vengeance' for what happened to that maniac, they're too fragmented now to make a big impact."

"You heard what just happened on Ōmure-jima?"

"Konoemon signalled me." Here, the two-term Minister of Magical Affairs that had led Canada's response to the Wars of Liberation shook his head as he set his pen down. "I doubt the Mor-Tax will be much of an issue, much less these Qar'to Captain von Tirpitz and her friends just dealt with at Tromsø. A Mor-Tax possessing someone eventually destroys the host body over time, forcing them to switch bodies frequently. All investigators worldwide have to do to help Mister Reigns and others who are interested in fighting these things is to compile a list of possible deaths with no bodies, locate where these incidents happened, then send telepaths familiar with those creatures in to scan the area."

"Is John Reid getting 'W' Division to look in on this?"

"He is," Harlan answered as he sipped from his own tea cup. "News was passed on by that young Marine captain to Sam Quahog as soon as she got back to Chiyoda, so the Aurors down south will start looking around. Since there's that ongoing furor stirring up because of that incident at the Bremerton yards in the summer, I doubt the stalebloods in the Magical Congress will stick their noses in. Especially with the shipgirls George Hammond now controls at Stargate Command."

Dumbledore smirked. Even if he was effectively retired from his post as the leader of the International Confederation of Wizards, his hunger for knowledge hadn't died away and his concern about events that could affect the magical realms worldwide was as strong as a Category Five hurricane. And while things might calm down in Britain now that Tom Riddle's supporters in the Wizengamot had been fully neutralized with the sudden appearance of Thérèse Peverell — not to mention her firing Cornelius Fudge, which had been a LOUD message to those who hadn't been affected by the Praeda Bellica to finally start toeing the line and act responsibly — the rest of the world was a whole different matter.

"Where's Heather at right now?" he then asked.

Harlan gazed at him before he sighed. "Serving as the commander of the Joint Operations Command that was set up last month when the government got a case of the clevers and rearranged things in NDHQ," the founding commander of the First Canadian Battleship Squadron explained. "She was
in charge of the Expeditionary Force Command before they brought that mess together like they did." At Dumbledore's curious look, the alumnus of the ISM's first freshman class of students that matriculated in 1880 added, "CEFCOM was in charge of all deployments of normal forces beyond the borders of the Dominion. Handling things in country was Canada Command. Those two were combined together with another command in charge of operational support and service support to create CJOC. Given Heather's experience as head of the Magical Service after she came back here from her time in Geneva — even if such isn't known to the normal world — she should do well as the overall commander of this new formation. Of course, the First Squadron, the Foresters and 77 Wing remain under Dean's control."

The English arch-mage laughed. Legal purists who saw the Statute of Secrecy as a sacrosanct decree of the Gods of Magic would be spitting fire if they learned how much the Canadians went out their way to maintain links with leaders in the "muggle" world while still blocking an uncontrolled revelation of the existence of the hidden magical enclaves to normal people in general. While some procedures were accepted — such as the use of a nation-wide Fidelius that prevented normal relatives of magicals from spilling that secret willy-nilly to everyone who passed them by — the sheer NUMBER of normal officials that were in on it would have even the most liberal official in Geneva screaming in outrage.

Being that his friend was the founding commander of the Royal Canadian Navy Magical Service in 1910, Dumbledore was well-briefed on all affairs concerning Her Majesty's armed forces of the Dominion of Canada. He knew through prior conversations with Harlan that senior leaders of the Canadian military from major general/rear admiral up were in on the secret, as were their senior non-commissioned advisors. Remembering one time when he visited the Canadian sailor two years ago when the then-Chief of the Maritime Staff and head of the just-renamed Royal Canadian Navy, Vice Admiral Dean McFadden, had been visiting the ISM to learn the history of the monster-hunting squadron of magical battleships Harlan once commanded, Dumbledore was overwhelmed when the Belfast native impressed him with profound knowledge of both the Wars of Liberation and Voldemort's recent rebellion.

Having long come to know Heather Thompkins since she first came to Europe to help fight the Magische Reichsarmee and the last remnants of the Übermenschen Gruppe during the final two years of World War Two beside her friends in the War Hawks, Dumbledore knew that the new command that would take charge of all Canadian military forces both at home and overseas would do quite well.

"Where's Jessica in all this? And Martin as well?"

Harlan smirked. "I'm so glad that you don't soil yourself speaking about Jessica," he teased.

Both old arch-mages laughed again. While they were quite powerful magically, the still-youthful half-Ukrainian native of Saint Boniface in what was now Winnipeg in Manitoba they now spoke of
had become the host of a soul-eating *zharpýtšja* in the early 1930s, which made Jessica Dover one of the most dangerous beings alive even BEFORE Dean Raeburn got to train her to be the Royal Canadian Air Force's representative in the War Hawks. Harlan then sipped his tea. "She's in Mons right now, serving as Vice Chief of Staff for the Supreme Allied Commander Europe. The first Canadian officer to be appointed to that post though it's as obvious as coal in a ballroom what sent her there anyway." He winked at his guest while Dumbledore laughed. "I'm surprised that you didn't go down and visit her, Fawkes," he then said as he gazed on his friend's familiar, earning him a mournful trill in return. "Oh, don't worry about it!" he stated. "Dean's been working hard to help her better control..."

A knock echoed from the main door. "Enter!" Harlan barked out.

"Sorry to disturb you, Admiral."

The door opened to reveal a slender brown-eyed, blond man in his twenties, dressed in Number 3B service dress for the Canadian Special Operations Forces Command: A short-sleeved khaki button shirt over umber-shaded dress pants bloused into spit-shone paratrooper combat boots. However, this person had black rank slides over his shirt epaulettes, they displaying the gold "stripe-and-a-half" rank insignia of a sub-lieutenant in the Royal Canadian Navy. Dumbledore knew who he was: Larry Brigham, a lecturer for both Wandless Practical Magic and Studies of Normal Peoples at the Institute. In real life, he worked for the federal Department of Indigenous Affairs at their local offices in Thunder Bay. Under normal circumstances, SLt Brigham would always parade with the local naval reserve "stone frigate", HMCS *Griffon*, based in the old Port Arthur part of northern Ontario's second largest city. However, given the massive surge of metahumans now rising worldwide which required the return of Dean Raeburn and her friends, he had been called up to full-time duty, assigned to a successor unit of the War Hawks, the 33rd (Heroes Alliance of Canada) Canadian Specialized Warfare Unit.

"Good evening, Larry," the English arch-mage greeted, earning him a look of surprise from the Thunder Bay native. "I have to confess, you look quite sharp. A special parade you have to attend?"

Brigham chuckled as he firmly shook the older man's hand. "Just being prepared ahead of time for the stream of new normal-borns that just came in from Africa to join the Foresters, Professor," he said before gazing on his part-time employer and Canada's first magical naval commander. "We just got some flash traffic from Gravé, Admiral. The *Lady Elgin* is missing."

Silence.

More silence.
Still more silence.

Then...

A look of exasperation crossed Harlan’s face as he wiped his face. "Larry, how on Earth does one lose a ninety-five thousand tonne BATTLESHIP?" he quietly asked.

As Dumbledore goggled, Brigham chuckled. "Um...Captain Haight-Ashbury took her out of the dock."

Hearing that name, Harlan moaned. "Oh, good GOD, Naomi...!"

"Who is Naomi?!"

Eyes locked on the visitor from Hogwarts. "Don't you KNOW?!" Harlan demanded.

"Bill, if I knew, I wouldn't ask!" Dumbledore protested.

"Um...sir, the Supreme Mugwump Emeritus was relieved of his post before the stalebloods got to Bremerton," Brigham warned as he raised a finger in emphasis.

Harlan blinked, then he moaned. "Oh, I'm sorry, Albus! I though you'd be briefed on her before you were banished to Hogwarts!" Sipping his tea as he waved the young arch-mage to the other chair before his desk, the former commander of the First Canadian Battleship Squadron sat back in his chair. "As you'll know, Bremerton in Washington is the place where our neighbours send decommissioned nuclear-powered ships to be dismantled. Their fuel is sent over to the Idaho National Laboratory to be stored, though that bright lad from New York City and that wonderful lass from near Sunnydale got involved to help them fully safe said fuel and clean up what was buried there." As his guest nodded on hearing that reference to Isaac Thomas and Elizabeth Wakefield, Harlan added, "Once at the Bremerton yards, the reactors are taken out of the hull and shipped to the Hanford Site in Washington for storage; again, Mister Thomas and Miss Wakefield got in there and devised ways of making the materials safe for eventual recycling and transformation. The remaining hull is then dismantled."

Dumbledore nodded, his eyes narrow in contemplation. "I assume, given the timing of the incident you referenced before Larry joined us, this 'Naomi' is the kami of a warship that was awaiting final
dismantlement at Bremerton before the Magical Congress got a 'case of the clevers'."

Seeing his eyes twinkle, both Harlan and Brigham roared with laughter. "Exactly! Turns out she was the kami of the first nuclear-powered surface warship, the USS Long Beach," the current headmaster of the ISM affirmed. "Since her spiritual presence was massive in comparison to other ships that were there, the stalebloobs chose her to see if they could create a 'shipgirl' who could then be used to destroy shipgirls young Miss Saeru helped bring back to life." As Dumbledore gaped in disbelief and shock on hearing that, Harlan smirked. "Unfortunately, they succeeded AND failed. They had Long Beach turned into Naomi Haight-Ashbury; that's the name that other-dimensional counterpart of Mister Moroboshi gave her counterpart when she was brought to 'life' under similar circumstances."

His guest groaned. "Merlin! How could people be so blind?!"

Brigham brought up his hand to shuffle his fingers. "Quite easy, Professor."

Seeing the young Ontarian's miming the sign of wanting money, Dumbledore breathed out. "Given how venomous our friends from Yiziba are when it comes to Gift thievery, the Conservator must have ensured that whatever control those fools thought they had over Naomi was totally shattered, thus effectively turning her against the traditional purebloods in the Congress."

"Exactly. And given that the captain effectively 'served' around the time of the Summer of Love in '67..."

"Oh?"

Brigham chuckled. "After she was Gifted and the stalebloobs tried to assert control over her, Professor, the captain declared them 'squares', then led them on a merry chase all over America, which got the Aurors up in arms over the idiots causing so many Statute breeches, then they got arrested while the captain went right away to President Bartlet — or 'Papa J' as she calls him — to report back to duty. Ever since that time, she's been employed as a special duties officer of the White House, directly answering to the President. Since she was created at the 'order' of the Magical Congress..."

"Those idiots in Manhattan are now cowering in fear that young Naomi will 'go and turn them into guacamole' if they 'start being square' again," Harlan finished for the younger officer before he shook his head, then he sipped his tea. "As to why on Earth she'd take Elgin out of the dock..."
"Maria gets headaches the size of ASTEROIDS whenever she senses her close by," Brigham advised. "Trying to figure out how the captain thinks is like trying to get a precise definition of pi!"

As Dumbledore gaped — Lieutenant Commander Maria Kennison, leader of the Heroes Alliance, was the most powerful non-magical telepath on Earth — Harlan sighed...

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In the Philippine Sea 200 kilometres east of Cape Engaño at the northern end of Luzon (280 kilometres south of Naha on Okinawa), that moment (local time: Supper)... 

"Um...Mistress Mama Cass?"

Hearing that hesitant question from the little house elf wearing a miniaturized version of the modern naval combat uniform used by members of the Royal Canadian Navy, the teenage woman with the long flowing brown hair partially tied down by a gold cord-like bandana and decked with flowers looked down from the captain's chair at the senior elf that helped maintain the world's largest battleship whenever she wasn't manned for operations. "What is it, little bro?" the transformed nuclear guided missile cruiser now known as Naomi Haight-Ashbury asked, a content smile on her face.

"Um...why is it you takes Miss Elgin from dockyard and brings her here outs to Pacific?" the tiny creature asked, his body radiating both with the considerable respect he had for the reborn USS Long Beach who had won the hearts of all magical creatures worldwide since those fool stalebloods from America tried to enslave her in the summer...and the fright he now felt as he considered how the leaders of the Royal Canadian Navy Magical Service would react to the effective THEFT of HMCS Lady Elgin from the dockyard at Tadoussac on the Saint Lawrence River, especially by an AMERICAN naval officer, even if she directly worked for the most kind Master President Professor Josiah Bartlet himself! "If you needs large ship to fight Hungry Ones..." — here, the poor creature shuddered as he recalled the times during the Second World War when the world's largest battleship turned her eight American-designed 18 inch Mark A C1 guns to fire hyper-charged mesonium warheads into the deadly soul-sucking sea leviathans which made Dementors out of places like Azkaban seem like tiny motes of dust in comparison — "...well, you could get Miss Jane! She's closer than Miss Elgin!"

Hearing that, Naomi winked at him before she rocked her head to and fro as she seemed to think how to answer that, acting like any of the Vietnam generation did when they were experiencing an afterglow in the wake of a massive acid trip. "Yeah, that's true. And don't worry about those Godzilla rejects, little bro! After the crystal folk got freed by the cool cats and chicks from Party Planet, I found all those things and sent them to where those copycat squares crash out." As the elf
gasped in shock on hearing that, the adopted native of Long Beach in California and Quincy in Massachusetts (where she had been built in the early years of rock and roll) rocked her head on the back of the captain's chair while she gazed out at the clear ocean ahead of Lady Elgin. "Problem is, thanks to what Little Sunshine did with the little samurai she went to find when she took breaks from school, loads more kami are wanting to come back to be cool shipgirls. A small commune of them are on the range here now."

The house elf gaped at her...

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Welcome House, that moment...

"Hinako-chan, are you alright?"

The Spirit of Innocence blinked on hearing that sudden before she gazed on the Herald of Fight Scenes. "What is it, Karen-chan?" Saeru Hinako asked.

"You're blushing, Hinako-chan," Sukeyama Sakuya stated as Osamu Shirayuki and her helpers moved to serve supper while Tanenobu Karen immediately rose from her own chair to come comfort the younger woman. "Did you just sense something?" the Healer of Men's Hearts wondered.

Hinako blinked, then she looked around. "A-ri-ri...?"

"Is someone talking about you, Hinako-chan?" Moroboshi Ataru asked.

The native of Niigata blinked again. "Hina's not sure, Onii-tama..."

****

North of the Lady Elgin's position, a half-hour later...
To the reborn spirit of the first true aircraft carrier, the sensation of flying under her own power without any mechanical aid was something she believed was a gift of all the Kami in the Universe.

Taking a deep breath, the adopted native of Tsurumi Ward in Yokohama (where she had been built as THG Hōshō) — the kami that had finished her transformation into a human being called the diminutive, slender twenty-something woman by the name "Asano Hoshie" — gazed around. She was at three thousand metres altitude over the Philippine Sea. Nautical twilight had fallen in this part of the world, but there was enough reflected sunlight in the sky to tell her that there were clouds at her altitude. No rain was visible and it was closing in on the end of the main typhoon season for this part of Earth. The sea below was slightly choppy, looking to be around Sea State Three; large ships wouldn't be bothered by such swells, but small vessels would be pitching around quite actively, making the crews quite ill if they weren't prepared. Noting that as she allowed herself to twirl like a ballerina, the woman with the long raven hair done in a high ponytail and the bright blue eyes took a moment to scan around; even if she had been a training carrier for the majority of her service, she was one of Tennō's warships even if in human form. While she had survived the war and had helped bring thousands of Japanese soldiers home — thus didn't see the Americans as a threat anymore — it was simply wise to be cautious...

Eh...?

Looking to her south, Hoshie noted the wake of a large vessel steaming north towards her position; if said vessel didn't change course given her current speed, she would make landfall in the Ryūkyū chain within three days. Instantly noting the obvious protrusion of guns on said vessel's hull to indicate she was a warship of some sort, the reborn first carrier angled herself to do a flypast over the approaching vessel; she was too far away to properly identify her flag, much less her type. Still, given the clear size of the vessel, it had to be a battleship of some sort. Knowing that none of Japan's battleships from before the Greater East Asia War had ultimately survived, Hoshie was quick to believe her to be American or British. Would the crew of vessel see her as a threat even if she was shaped as a human being and not a 9,646 tonne light aircraft carrier, especially one that didn't have any sort of air wing...?

A trill made Hoshie squawk as she felt something land on top of her head. Looking up, she slowed to a halt just as that odd mass lifted off her head. She glanced around before a beautiful hawk-like avian with red and gold plumage came into her field of vision, causing her to gape. "A hō'ō...?" she gasped in awe before the creature shook its head, trilling again. She blinked as her mind seemed to interpret that sound before she smiled, blushed. "Oh, I'm sorry!" she said as she held out one of her arms for the beautiful avian to land on, the cloth of her gold flame-trimmed scarlet martial art gi-like uniform top warming from the creature's touch. "Now what on Earth is a phoenix of all things doing out here?!

The creature trilled as he — it was male, Hoshie realized on sensing the deeper tone in that sound — cocked his head towards the oncoming warship. "Eh?! That ship is your home?!
She then cocked her head before her eyes then went wide. "That's one of the Ryūseizen?!!"
The phoenix trilled again before he lifted himself off her arm, then moved to flutter before her. "You want me to come aboard?" Hoshie asked. "Um...but what about the Statute of Secrecy? I am a normal warship..." She then blushed as she gazed down at the breasts she had underneath the cloth of her scarlet uniform, which bore a classical depiction of an Oriental hōō in gold embossed by the kanji 凤翔 of her ship's name in gold-trimmed black on her chest. "Er...well, I was a normal warship before I was struck from the Navy List and scrapped in Shōwa-nijūichinen...!" she then quietly added.

The phoenix trilled again as he projected images into her mind. Hoshie gasped. "What?! There are others like me that came back?!” At the creature's nod, the adopted native of Yokohama concentrated for a moment before the image of one such "shipgirl" came before her mind's eye, making her gape. "Dear gods! That's Yonaga!" She then gaped as the phoenix sang a happy song in response. “Eh?! She survived all these years?! Her crew's alive and back home again?!" she demanded.

"You might as well c'mon down, Mama H," a strange voice with the flat tones of New England echoed in the mind of the transformed first aircraft carrier, even if she spoke very fluent Japanese. "Beautiful ones like him don't want to see cool folks like us start up Big Mistake Number Two all over again. With the bodies we got from the Cool Spirit of the Seekers' Forge, we could outdo all those squares that tried to crash people's scenes in the war many times over, Mama H."

Hoshie blinked. "You're obviously not the kami of the Ryūseizen. Who are you?"

"I came along over a decade after you got sent to join the Spirit in the Sky, Mama H. My name's Naomi Haight-Ashbury, but I like to be called 'Cass'. My ship name is Long Beach. I was a cruiser about to go join the Spirit in the Sky before the magical squares Stateside decided to turn me into something that could be used to waste cool chicks like us 'cause they're scared of folk like Dean Raeburn and her pals in the War Hawks, not to mention their pals from the Thunder Companies."

Even if the person telepathically speaking to her made use of terms that really didn't make sense to her, Hoshie could quickly conclude what that person was now implying. "A metahuman...?!" she hissed as she gazed at her sleeved arms. "I doubt Tennō — he was Prince Tsugu in my day — would like us to restart a war that's long since ended. Given what I briefly saw of Japan after that kami brought me back like this, you Americans were really merciful to us after the war."

"We had to do that since our Russian brothers got too paranoid for their own good after it was all done. And it just wasn't cool to let all the good people in Japan go and starve to death," Naomi Haight-Ashbury called back. "C'mon down and hop aboard, Mama H. Soon as the little people aboard the Big E realized who you were, they went to the wardroom to cook up a proper meal for
Hoshie's cheeks turned a deep cherry while the phoenix that had intercepted her trilled with laughter...

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Welcome House, that moment...

"Little One."

Hinako perked on hearing that voice before she looked over her shoulder, glad that the outside lights of Welcome House were soft enough to not ruin her night vision now that it had gone dark. "Yoiko-san..."

Itō Yoiko knelt beside the youngest of the sisters, who had gone to stand close to the old sea wall, gazing out into the Pacific. "What do you sense, Little One? Is there a danger?"

Hinako blinked before shaking her head, then she looked back out to sea. "No. Hina's hearing many phoenixes and hōʻō and suzakus and garudas and bherunḍas and simurghs and zhar-ptīṣas and even gamājuns all out in the Pacific south of here, Yoiko-san." As the carrier gaped at her — given her profound knowledge thanks to both the blessings she received from the oldest living sentient being on Earth and her admiral's large library that seemed to hold the knowledge of the world within those tomes, she knew what Hinako was speaking of — the Spirit of Innocence gazed out to sea. "Hina's not sure why they're out there. They're so far from land! Now that Hina can feel them, Hina knows they're happy. But what are they doing way out there, Yoiko-san?! Hina doesn't want them to be hurt!"

The fifth of the Yamato-class hummed as she placed a hand on the young girl's shoulder in reassurance. It didn't surprise Yoiko that the youngest of her junior navigation officer's grandnieces had made friends with such a wide assortment of mystical creatures like she did. Hinako's cosmic empathic aura was strong enough to impress even the being that had helped Yonaga be transformed into a shipgirl back in the summer...and given how much the Spirit of Innocence had travelled around the world to see all the interesting things out there like she had done since her Gifting the previous summer, it stood to reason that she had made many friends among such beings worldwide. Atop that, the presence of gamājun way out beyond their normal ranges was mystifying. Given what her crew had been forced to do during their decades in Sano-wan whenever the metamorphic avians hid there to avoid the poachers, it was simply a matter of giri and ninjō which compelled Yoiko to investigate this.
The Ice Warrior of Eternity would honour her obligations towards such beings to her final breath.

"Come, Little One," she then bade as she moved to sit seiza beside Hinako, reaching over with both hands to squeeze her shoulders. "Let us see if we can communicate with our friends out there to see why such a vast and diverse parliament has assembled so far from the safety of land."

Hinako nodded as she closed her eyes, focusing her powers out to sea as Yoiko allowed her own mind to link with that of her spiritual kin to see what she was seeing. Ignoring the growing crowd of people that were gathering behind the two as they waited to learn what had come to so bother the youngest of Tariko Katabarbe's sisters, the two allowed their minds — in effect, a variation of the astral body concept many telepaths and magicals who had very thorough command of their own minds could make use of — to fly out into the Philippine Sea, soaring south at many times the speed of sound to focus on the considerable crowd of mythical birds that were flocking over a specific point on the ocean. A quick glance around showed that nautical twilight had just set over the area, with the full moon high in the sky to the east. There were some clouds close to the surface of the Pacific, with a slight chop to the waves below...which were now being pierced by the nearly-black mass of a large warship heading north in the general direction of Okinawa. "Ah!" Hinako then called out pointing. "They're flocking to that ship, Yoiko-san! Something on that ship's got them really, really excited!"

"Hai, it has..." Yoiko said, a concerned tone in her voice.

The younger woman was quick to notice. "Yoiko-san knows that ship?"

A sigh escaped the transformed aircraft carrier. "Hai, I do, Hinako-san. But this particular ship is under the same sort of legal shielding that your sister Chikage-san has to acknowledge from time to time."

That made the Niigata native's eyes go wide. Even if she was young, she wasn't stupid. "Eh?! That ship's MAGICAL?! Hina never knew there were magical battleships!"

"Hai, there are. From Canada, Australia and New Zealand to be exact. As a senior flag officer, my admiral knew of them. Have the others you brought to Ōmure-jima ever spoken to you or your sisters of the 'Ryūseizen' or the monsters they went out to destroy during the wars?"

That made Hinako hum as she considered that question before she nodded. "Hai! Hina's heard Fujiko-chan and the others speak about the Ryūseizen and those meanie kaijū they always went out
to hunt and kill to make sure the souls of their sailors never got eaten, saving sailors from drowning before they went and disappeared all the time." She then "looked" down at what Yoiko finally recognized as HMCS Lady Elgin, the first of her class of warship that had been built two decades prior to the concept of "super-battleship" ever entering popular discourse thanks to the revelations concerning her own sisters in the wake of World War Two. "Do you think a kaijū's trying to eat someone?"

"Ha-wa-wa-wa-wa-wa...!"

Yoiko and Hinako jolted, then they looked left to see Akamatsu Inoue standing nearby, gaping in shock at the sight of Elgin serenely sailing in the direction of the Home Islands. "I assume when you were sunk, she was the one who rescued your 'dead', Inoue-chan," the former mused.

The fourth of the Akatsuki-class destroyers rapidly nodded. "I know it's her, nanodesu! Even if my hull blew up when Bonefish-san torpedoed me, Yoiko-san, her crew were able to teleport my crew off my hull before I sank, nanodesu!" she then blurted out.

"How can you tell she was the one and not her sister, Inoue?"

Yoiko blinked on noting that ALL the shipgirls who were staying at Welcome House — save for those currently on Uru — had "joined" them in astral form in the skies over the Pacific, they accompanied by Hinako's siblings and their guests. As she wondered how on Earth it was possible to draw in the souls of nearly a HUDNRED people into this situation, Inoue turned to gaze on Charlene Boleyn. "I was told by Fujiko-chan that her crew was saved by the one that's like this one, but her mainmast was pointed aft, not forward, Sempai," she explained to the second of the Queen Elizabeth-class battleships.

"That one there was there for me, poi! And Tsukiko-chan and Sarah-san too, poi!"

Eyes locked on Hamamoto Kodachi, who was warmly squeezing the shoulder of Inoue's elder sister Tsukiko, who was on her knees and weeping at the sight of the great ship whose crew had saved most of hers after she had been sunk during the initial phases of the running battles in early November of 1942 that had occurred around Guadalcanal as the Japanese tried to cut off the American troops on the island from outside support, losing six warships and multiple transports in a short time. Now kneeling beside the eldest of the Akatsuki-class destroyers was Chihaya Sarah, who was gazing in thanks at the world's largest battleship as she calmly sailed on. Beside her was her sister Isabel, who had been sunk herself around thirty-six hours after her sister. She had a slightly disappointed look on her face, which was matched to that of Ashikaga Ayako's; the destroyer was squeezing the fast battleship's shoulder. "I assume your crews were rescued by someone else," the fifth of the Yamato-class declared, making the third of the Kongō-class and the first of the Ayanami-class look her way.
"H-hai, Yoiko-san," Isabel said as she adjusted her oval reading glasses, earning her a frightened yelp from a pale Sarah as she stared warily at her sister, she making warding signs with her hands. Seeing that, both the oldest and youngest of the Chihaya sisters stifled snickers as some of the destroyers covered their mouths and turned away to stop laughing. They had learned that Sarah had become incredibly paranoid at the sight of Isabel removing her glasses; due to the fact that she was nearly blind without visual aides, the adopted native of her namesake city in Kagoshima prefecture had to squint when she was gazing at something, which gave her a demonic appearance that gave Sarah a heart attack the first time she saw that. "There were two Ryūseizen in the area when Sarah and I were down there with the others. The one that was there for my crew and Ayako-chan's crew was one of the single-stacked ones with the large cannon. Her mainmast pointed aft, of course."

"The one of that class at Jutland had her mainmast pointing forward. She was the one that did most of the culling in that battle," Charlene mused. "Must have been done to allow people to identify who's who, especially since they didn't have hull markings from what I recall of Jutland."

"Beata Vergine Maria...sei tu...sei tu...!"

Eyes then locked on the lone Italian shipgirl in their group, who was on her knees nearby, her eyes swimming in tears as she stared at the great vessel whose crew had saved so many of her own one summer day in 1943. Before people could ask Roberta Ansaldo what was going on, Yoiko's sister Mutsuko walked over to squeeze the shoulders of the smaller girl. "She was there for your crew, wasn't she, Roma-dono?" the adopted native of Nagasaki and Fuchū quietly asked.

"Sì...!" Roberta nearly sobbed. "Sì...è lei...è lei...!"

"Okay, I'm a little tired of this."

People blinked before they felt something seize them...

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*Out in the Philippine Sea...*

...before they felt themselves standing on the vast aft flight deck of the world's largest battleship!
As squeals escaped many of the destroyers on realizing that they now stood on the very weather deck of the monster-slaying battleship some had strong cause to remember, Hermione Granger spun around to march up to Dean Raeburn, who was pulling out one of her Dutch Masters Honey Sports cigars to light it up. "General Raeburn, with all due respect, this is NOT allowed!" the Bright Seamstress of Spells hissed, making many of the destroyers gape in shock at her; on hearing that, Akamatsu Tsukiko looked as if she had been stabbed in the heart. "No one outside magical circles or anyone who is allowed to know of the magical enclaves can learn of these ships! The Statute of Secrecy...!"

The dentists' daughter from Crowley stopped as an annoyed look crossed the face of the current leader of Canada's special forces. Some of the shipgirls had noticed a white Canadian ensign with the badge of CANSOFCOM in the fly had just been raised on a halyard hanging from a high spar on the mainmast. From a halyard hanging from the mainmast's gaff flew the white Canadian Naval Ensign over a black Canadian ensign with a gold symbol in the fly depicting a wreath of thirteen maple leaves topped by the Royal Crown and charged with crossed wands; it was easy for people to realize that was the ensign of the Dominion's magical government, Her Majesty's Ministry of Magical Affairs.

Noting that, Raeburn sighed before she focused on Hermione, making the young woman cringe. "Miss Granger, have you ever taken the time to fully read the Specialized Warfare Treaty?"

"Ah..." Hermione sputtered as Pansy Parkinson fought down the urge to smirk. "Not really..."

An annoyed sigh answered her before the native of Queenston gave her a knowing look. "I take it you just took Mycroft's words to heart when he first briefed you on your duties in the Fencibles?"

"Ah...well, um..."

Hirosaki Chikage smirked as she gave her schoolmate a mock-surprised look. "Hermione, I'm shocked!" the Dark Heart of the Pure Chaos declared. "SHOCKED, I say!"

"HEY!"

Laughter echoed over the weather deck...which the shipgirls were quick to note was actually a flight deck for helicopters, located aft of a superfiring pair of gunhouses in the pattern used on American fast battleships of the Second World War era, both bristling with two 18 inch naval rifles. The eyes of the battleships were quick to see that said guns had to be at least 55 calibre, making the barrels over twenty-five metres long from muzzle to breech. Gazing on her sisters, Itō Yoiko was quick to see envious looks cross Yasuko's, Mutsuko's and Izumi's faces. That was understandable; longer
barrels ensured greater range. The Yamato-class battleships had been fitted with 18.1 inch cannons, but the barrels were 45 calibre, thus having an overall length of nearly twenty-one metres from muzzle to breech. At maximum range, such weapons could potentially hit at over 41 kilometres at maximum elevation. Yoiko knew through her admiral — who first met the man who designed the Canadian magical battleships back in 1909, when Fujita Hiroshi served as flag lieutenant to Tōgō Heihachirō — the gun crews of _Lady Elgin_ and others like her were trained to hit out to that range with their weapons EVERY TIME they fired a salvo. Given that the knowledge of the sea leviathans _Elgin_ had been built to destroy hadn't got out, her crews had obviously enjoyed considerable success in their missions.

"Um...excuse me, Shihan-sama...!"

Raeburn gazed at Yamamoto Reiko. "What is it, Captain?"

"If this ship is sailing, where on Earth are her crew?!

People looked around. "Ha-wa-wa-wa-wa! Does she sail herself?!

As the other destroyers gasped before several dropped to their knees to feel the meson-hardened deck under their feet, Raeburn smirked. "No, Commander, she doesn't...even if she's old enough to become a damned tsukumogami," she answered before she looked forward. "SO WHERE THE HELL IS THE DAMNED SIDE PARTY?!

Multiple _pops!_ echoed over the deck as a small crowd of house elves appeared, all in Royal Canadian Navy combat dress, black baseball caps with _HMCS Lady Elgin_ over _BBGH-03_ in light grey on their heads. The eldest of them gave off a perfect salute. "Mistress Dean, we is sorry!"

"WHAT?! Hōshō-sensei is aboard?! When did sensei come back?!

That was a wide-eyed Yoiko, which made the elves stare at her before they quailed slightly on sensing the aura the seventh carrier of Operation Z projected. Seeing that, Saeru Hinako huffed. "Yoiko-san! Stop that! You're scaring them!" she snapped, which made the elves look her way.
before they seemed to glow on sensing the more soothing aura emanate from the Spirit of Innocence. They then brightened as Hinako came over to gaze into the leader's eyes. "Is Hoshie-sensei okay?"

The elves gaped. "You knows Mistress Lady Hōshō's name, Miss Hinako?!

The native of Niigata blushed on realizing the creatures that served on this ship knew of her. Then again, such had been commented on over the last year as Hinako travelled to magical districts in her weekend exploration trips; how magical creatures of all stripes reacted to the Spirit of Innocence made front page news in papers such as The Daily Prophet and The New York Ghost. "Hai! It was Onii-tama who gave Sensei her human name!" Here, she waved to Moroboshi Ataru, who was blushing as a nervous Shigaten Benten hugged his arm. "After all, Sensei isn't an aircraft carrier anymore! She's a metahuman like Hina and Hina's sisters are, not to mention all the shipgirls Hina found and all the other shipgirls that came after Tennō asked Hina to stop bringing them back. It's not right to call Sensei 'Miss Hōshō' since 'Hōshō' is the name of a ship! So Onii-tama gave her the name 'Asano Hoshie'."

The elves all stared at Ataru. "You did that, Master Ataru?!

"In a way, yes," he answered. "By the way, who's this 'Mama Cass' you just talked about?"

The elves shuddered. "She is All-Seeing One, Master Ataru!"

"Is she a schiffsmädchen such as we?" Luisa von Bismarck wondered.

"Yes, Mistress Lady Bismarck! She goings to be dismantled in Bremerton when stupid stalebloods from MACUSA tries to turns her into their own metahuman SLAVE to hurts the shipgirls Miss Hinako finds!" As the shipgirls present gasped on hearing that, the chief elf crossed her arms. "Nice Conservator makes sure Mama Cass was never enslaved, then she makes sure stupid stalebloods be arrested by good Aurors before she goes to Master President Professor Bartlet to reports back to duty!"

People nodded. "She was a nuclear ship, you mean," Hatoyama Rinrin concluded.

"Ooh! That's NOT checky!" Yotsuba Dunn warned as many of the Japanese shipgirls who had lived with the sisters quaked in understandable trepidation on hearing that said vessel had been powered by the same type of energy used to totally destroy Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945.
"Chill, Sherlock Junior! The Crystal Spirit made sure I run these days on meson fuel, not that bad stuff!"

People gaped before they spun aft to where the ensign staff would be raised when *Elgin* was in port...

...then they gaped on seeing the rather hippie-looking woman standing there, looking as if being caught after effectively STEALING a *battleship* of all things from dock wasn't any big deal. Noting her uniform, people blinked, many of them seeing how much it seemed like what a flower child from the Summer of Love in 1967 would look like if one became a metahuman: A crimson V-neck jacket with flared sleeves and a virtual rainstorm of blooming flowers showering the fabric, that secured at the waist by a simple gold belt, necklaces composed of Buddhist prayer beads and pearls hanging from her neck, gold pants with crimson flower-decked bell bottoms below the knees, gold slip-on shoes on her feet. Her long brown hair was decorated with flowers and held down by a hairband. Her eyes were green and wide, instantly reminding all who knew her of Luna Lovegood; said eyes were under protective goggles. Over her left breast was an American warship crest, it bearing a shield quartered gold and blue surmounted by a dove with an olive branch in its beak. The shield was embossed with a gold seashell and a gold sun in the blue fields; on the gold fields were an eagle and three crossed tridents. Under the shield was a scroll in blue, declaring in Latin *PAX VOSTRUM*. And on the stadium ring around that crest:

**USS LONG BEACH**

**CGN-9**

"Holy...!" Rinrin exclaimed as she gaped in awe at the reborn nuclear cruiser.

Said woman winked. "Oi! R-squared! Might want to close the mouth! You want to eat moths?!!"

That made the Technological Sorceress of the East gargle as many of the people on the deck looked her way before laughter echoed over the scene. "Um...I have a question," a voice hesitantly asked, making people stare at Mary Hood. As both Charlene Boleyn and Amy Power nodded in approval on noting that their depressed friend seemed to be livening up finally, the adopted native of Clydebank and Butleigh came over to stand before the transformed missile cruiser. "Forgive my asking this, madame, but did you have ANY authorization from whoever is the flag officer in charge of this ship to take her from dock to bring her out here? That could be seen as PIRACY, you know. Much less an act of WAR!"

A finger tapped the battlecruiser's forehead. "Was no time to make the squares in Tadoussac see
what was going on and why Big E was needed, Crow Girl," the cruiser answered. "Check my six o'clock high."

Raeburn's head then snapped up to gaze to the southern horizon, as did others...

"Oh, hell...!" Sukeyama Sakuya moaned as she sensed over three dozen shipgirls now floating in the sky at about twenty kilometres range from Elgin's fantail, keeping pace with the battleship even if none of them moved to make a close approach. "Where the heck are we going to put all of THEM?!

Yoiko's eyes narrowed as she focused on two of those girls, glad her meta sight was strong enough to pick out details from this distance. And the kanji on the new shipgirls' jumpsuits spoke volumes. "Shōkaku and Zuikaku are here now, Reiko-san," she warned. "They're with Taihō, Hiyō, Jun'yō, Ryūjō, Zuikō, Shōhō, Chitose and Chiyoda." As Reiko moaned on hearing how many aircraft carriers had been transformed into shipgirls — never mind that the first two Yoiko mentioned had been two of the carriers involved in the Pearl Harbour attack — the fifth of the Yamato-class gazed at the cruiser whose actions had brought everyone down here in the first place. "Captain, have you ANY idea who's been going around and forcing the kami of warships to be transformed and Gifted as we are?"

A knowing smirk crossed the cruiser's face as she waved around, making people look up to see a small flutter of mythical birds swarming around the world's largest battleship. "All the beautiful ones you and Little Sunshine heard when you were on Promised Island a few minutes ago, Big Y. After they watched Little Sunshine start bringing kami back when she started with Little Snowfall over there..." — here, she indicated Fukushima Fujiko, which made the adopted native of Maizuru blush madly at such a cute nickname while Tendō Akane squeezed her shoulder — "...they wanted in on the party, so they started looking around and started bringing cool chicks like us back wholesale. One problem now is that those chicks astern of us never got Grandpa H's word to stand down in '45," she added as she thumbed aft.

Jaws dropped as eyes locked on the adopted native of Long Beach and Quincy. "Um...did you just call Shōwa Tennō 'Grandpa'?!” a wide-eyed Reiko exclaimed as she pointed at the cruiser.

The smirk turned into a content smile as she allowed a PAA to appear in the palm of her hand, she tapping the crystal. A second later, a smiling silver-haired man with dark brown eyes appeared in the hologram over the crystal, which made Ataru's sisters gape in shock on recognizing the Heavenly Sovereign as a lot of the Japanese shipgirls instantly bowed on seeing their divine head of state. "Naomi-chan! This is an odd surprise!" the Japanese head of state declared with a delighted smile as hushed voices — one of which being Fujita Hiroshi's, Yoiko realized — echoed in the background.
"Sorry to bug you, Papa A, but a whole commune of your dad's ships were made to come back as shipgirls thanks to all the beautiful ones who want to do what Little Sunshine did in the spring and summer," Naomi Haight-Ashbury said, ignoring the shocked looks from the Japanese shipgirls on hearing this odd-talking American cruiser address the Son of Heaven so informally. "I had to borrow Big E from Tadoussac to get them from accidentally starting up Big Mistake Number Two."

Hearing that, the Heavenly Sovereign moaned, his eyes widening in disbelief. "You mean to say that hō'ō and other creatures decided to do what Hinako-chan did and bring back warship kami to become shipgirls, Naomi-chan?" he repeated as the background noise hushed.

"Afraid so, Papa A. Two of Big Y's pals from Op Z are among them."

"Please forgive me, Heika," a voice echoed in the background, which made the Son of Heaven look over before he shifted his PAA over to allow the would-be commander of Operation Z to come into the camera's range. "Which ones, Captain?" he asked; he would see the human name given to the world's first nuclear-powered surface ship in a banner at the base of the holographic screen before him.

"The Matsubara twins, Uncle Hiroshi. They were Shōkaku and Zuikaku. And there's a whole load of other flattops with them right now, enough for three more carrier divisions."

A gargled breath escaped the native of Nagoya on being called THAT. "Please forgive Naomi-chan, Fujita-dono," the Son of Heaven bade as the older man gaped at him. "Naomi-chan's karma was gravely affected by the Americans' war in Vietnam, which makes her determined to deliver peace and harmony in very much the same manner young Hinako-chan delivers it wherever she travels. Her speech patterns — as I'm sure your young hatamoto can confirm — reflect that terrible time."

Fujita blinked several times, then he bowed his head. "I understand, Heika," he declared in a slightly strained voice. He then gazed at Naomi. "Is Dean-san with you, Captain?"

"I'm here, Hiroshi!" Raeburn called back; she had moved to sit on a capstan at the aft end of the flight deck to enjoy her cigar as she waited for the kids around her to figure out what to do.

"I assume you're on the Lady Elgin right now?"

"We are."
"Then I ask permission to come aboard and raise my flag on her, General. Seeing that may make the young ones that concerned Captain Haight-Ashbury more curious instead of belligerent; no doubt, many of their 'dead' crews were rescued by Elgin's crew in the war. If that will prevent a confrontation..."

"A wise thing to do, Teitoku," Yoiko then piped up as she crossed her arms. "Given how determined the crews of Shōkaku and Zuikaku were to prove themselves in the eyes of the crews of Akagi and Kaga if what I recall of them is correct, both Kanako-san and Suzue-san might now be shinigurui."

Gasps echoed over the flight deck as all the Japanese shipgirls gaped in horror at her. "Please come aboard, Admiral Fujita," Raeburn declared in a formal voice. "Chief, put up a Kyokujitsu-ki on the yardarms as a courtesy flag. Make sure the admiral's standard goes over my standard."

"Aye-aye, Mistress Dean!" Pop!

To Be Continued...

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WRITER'S NOTES

Translation list: Fanciulla della flotta — Fleet maiden (pluralized as fanciulle della flotta); Donna — Feminine of Don, which is the noble prefix honorific used for untitled noble persons such as knights; Marchesa — Marchioness; Piccoli scampi — Little scamps; Patrizia — Feminine of Patrizio (patrician), a noble rank in Italy that marked those allowed to exercise many political functions in urban communes; Di — Of; E — And; SPQR — Short for Senātus Populusque Rōmānus ("The Roman Senate and People"), which was an inscription used to symbolize the authority of the ancient Roman Republic; Decimo — Tenth (of the Vongola); PADD — Personal Archival Display Device; Buongiorno — Good Morning; Buon Pomeriggio — Good Afternoon; Del — Of the; Nonna — Grandmother; Sua Maestà Imperiale — His Imperial Majesty; Mio Dio — My God; Assassino del Leviatano — Leviathan assassin; Consulenza Esterna della Famiglia — External Advisors of the (Vongola) Family, shortened always as CEDEF; Gesundheit — Literally "Health"; Che se ne va — Literally "Which is going away", a sort of admission that one might not be well when one sneezes; Mia amica — My (lady) friends; Zhar-ptítsa — Ember bird (in Ukrainian), pronounced "zhar-ptítsa" in Russian; Shōwa-nijūichinen — Twenty-first Year of Shōwa (the year 1946 CE); Giri — Obligation; Ninjō — Human compassion; Beata Vergine Maria — Blessed Virgin Mary; Sei tu — It's you; È lei — It's her; Pax Vostrum — Peace Be With
You; Shinigurui — Literally "death frenzy", an emotional state where someone feels they have no choice but to fight to the death; Kyokujitsu-ki — The "rising sun" flag that serve as the Japanese naval ensign.

Katekyō Hitman Reborn character notes: Daniela, the eighth boss of the Vongola family, first appeared in the manga story "Inheritance" (manga chapter #158); her full family name is my creation. Xanxus, the chief of the Varia, first appeared in the manga story "Sawada Iemitsu" (manga chapter #85); this is also where the character the chapter was named after first appeared. Of course, both Sawada Tsunayoshi and Renato "Reborn" Sinclair are the main stars of the series, appearing in the first manga story "That Guy From Italy". Superbi Squalo first appeared in the manga story "The Foreboding of a Coming Storm" (manga chapter #82); his birth name Curio Bernardis is my creation. Bermuda von Veckenschtein first appeared in the manga story "Swear" (manga chapter #333); the Vindice as a whole first appeared in "The End and the Aftermath" (manga chapter #81). Kawahira Masaya (also known as "Checker-face") first appeared in "Escape" (manga chapter #258); his given name is my creation. Ottavio Miele first appeared in the light novel Hidden Bullet: X-Fiamma; his family name is my creation. Tio "Týr" Martino was Squalo's predecessor as the "sword emperor" of the Varia; his birth name is my creation. Ottone Visconti is my creation, though based on other senior Cloud Guardians that have appeared in various Reborn fanfics I've read to date. And Daniela's son Timoteo first appeared in the manga story "Gola Mosca" (manga chapter #121).

The story of HMCS Lady Elgin and the other ships of the First Canadian Battleship Squadron (CANBATRON ONE) is covered in Magic in Canada. It was also in that narrative that Admiral (and later Minister) William Harlan first appeared, as did Canada's magical school, the Institute of Sorcery and Magic (ISM). Also covered in that narrative is the story behind Canada's magical militia on land, air and sea: The Royal Regiment of Canadian Foresters (RCF), the Royal Canadian Navy Magical Service (RCN[M]) and No. 7 Wing (Magical), Royal Canadian Air Force (here called 77 Wing to differentiate it from a normal wing of the same name). Also there is the story of Canada's version of the Corps of Aurors in Britain, "W" Division of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP). Note that the Australian and New Zealand counterparts to the Foresters, the Commonwealth Rangers and the New Zealand Mountain Infantry, were first noted on in the The Seventh Shipgirl.

John Reid first appeared in The Icemaidens and the Philosopher's Stone.

In the universe of this story, the administrative organization in command and control over Canada's naval forces was renamed from Maritime Command (MARCOM) back to the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) on the centennial of the service's founding (4 May 1910); in real life, said renaming went into official effect on 16 August 2011.

As with Heather Thompkins, both Jessica Dover and Martin Larsden first appeared in Phoenix
From the Ashes. Their background stories are also covered in Magic and Canada.

The 33rd (Heroes Alliance of Canada) Canadian Specialized Warfare Unit (33 CSWU) and its members such as Lieutenant Commander Maria Kennison and Sub-Lieutenant Larry Brigham appear and will appear in The Children of the Tensei.

Shipgirls introduced and noted on in this chapter:

Asano Hoshie-ta isa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan Hōshō [CVL-1])

Captain Naomi Haight-Ashbury USN (United States Ship Long Beach [CGN-9])

Matsubara Kanako-ta isa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan Shōkaku [CV-8])

Matsubara Suzue-ta isa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan Zuikaku [CV-9])

Ozawa Taeko-ta isa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan Taihō [CV-21])

Kakuta Hiromi-ta isa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan Hiyō [CV-14])

Kakuta Junko-ta isa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan Jun'yō [CV-13])

Matsunaga Ryōko-ta isa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan Ryūjō [CVL-4])

Takasaki Sumiko-ta isa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan Zuihō [CVL-10])

Takasaki Shōko-ta isa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan Shōhō [CVL-11])

Seigō Chitose-ta isa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan Chitose [CVL-22])

Seigō Chie-ta isa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan Chiyoda [CVL-23])

Note, I base the physical looks of USS Long Beach (Naomi Haight-Ashbury) on a portrait done by the artist Bokuman, which can be seen on Danbooru at post #1377452. The other shipgirls mentioned or appearing here are based on their KanColle interpretations.

A listing of the mythical avians who appear or are mentioned here:

The word hō’ō is the Japanese reading of the kanji for the Mandarin term fènghuáng, which is the mythical king of all birds and would over time become the celestial "female" counterpart of the dragon in Oriental cosmology. In the universe of these stories, the fènghuáng are seen as just as precious as phoenixes are in Europe and are protected accordingly.
The term **suzaku** is the Japanese reading of the Mandarin **zhūquè** ("vermilion peafowl"), which is one of the Four Symbols of the constellations as seen by Chinese astronomers. The mythological zhūquè is the guardian of the South. In the universe of these stories, these creatures are effectively Oriental cousins of gamájun in Russia, with the same metamorphic capabilities.

The Hindu counterpart of a fènghuáng is the **garuda**. In legends, the garuda was said to be the personal familiar of the god Vishnu. As with counterparts elsewhere, garuda in India are seen as precious as phoenixes and protected accordingly.

Also from India is the **bherunda** (also known as a **gandabherunda**), a two-headed mythical bird possessing strength equal to dragons. In the universe of my stories, they were called down to destroy "foreign" creatures to prevent European encroachment on the subcontinent during the early years after the Statute of Secrecy was passed in 1692; this was partially what was seen as necessitating the loyalty stone warding system that would eventually provoke the Wars of Liberation. Because of their power, bherunda are rated as Class Five-X (the equal of dragons and nundu) by various magical ministries.

The Iranian version of a fènghuáng is the **simurgh**. According to some legends, such creatures are said to be SO old that they've witnessed the destruction of the world three times over! Of all mythical birds in existence in the universe of my stories, these beings are truly immortal and don't "resurrect" themselves through burning days.

Finally, there is the Slavic **zhar-ptítsa** (as pronounced in Russia). Unlike other such mythical birds, the "ember birds" are seen not as symbols of light or wisdom, but of luck, for good and ill. Such beings are precognitive and are avoided due to the fact that they've often led people seeking them out to their doom...never mind what happened to the one that eventually bonded with Jessica Dover of all people!
The Prancing Dragon Gets a Daughter?

Chapter Summary

It's a time of reunions. Brent Ross reunites with his daughter Sarah. The vast majority of the Imperial Japanese Navy returns to duty. Two good comrades from the old USSR join the pending fight scene over Uru. And Matsunaga Ryōko (Ryūjō) becomes the adopted mother of a gynoid child!

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In orbit over Onishuto on Uru, the dining hall of the FPSYS Normandy, two hours after midnight (Tōkyō time: Two hours after supper)...

"Are you scared, Ten-chan?"

Hearing that concerned question from his future cousin-in-law, Redet Ten blushed before he gazed at Hiromi Katabarbe, seated beside his cousin Redet Lum and her friend Oyuki at one of the tables in the fair-sized dining room. Also seated with them were Takino Tomo and Mizuhara Koyomi; even if both students of Azuma High School in Itabashi were expected to be in classes within a half-day, there was no way that the Wild Warrior of Passion was missing out on the chance to deal with her battle-line's long-time nemesis among the Goa'uld. "Well, I never thought normal Yizibajohei were so friendly!" he admitted, his cheeks reddening. "I know you're Terran underneath it all, Hiromi-onē-chan, but..."

A gentle hand reached over to ruffle his hair. "You're a meta by our standards, Ten," Yomi said, her brown eyes sparkling. As the time slowly approached to when the Goa'uld were expected to make their appearance in the Oniboshi system — updates on Apophis' movements were being sent from Elizabeth Wakefield's ship Discovery by the hour — more and more natives of Yiziba as well as adopted natives of that planet from Earth had streamed into Onishuto over the last few hours to prepare themselves. While the reality warpers who came from Earth and Yiziba had gladly undid the subconscious hypnosis many Urusians had been subjected to when they were younger than even Ten, there was still wariness in the hearts of the natives when it came to the Children of the Forge. "Sure, you're only developing your powers, but once they appeared, you broke the 'umale' mould
people from Yiziba would normally force on you." The Mistress of the Mind-Dive slurped her milkshake as her best friend scanned updates from the information network run by one of Negi Springfield's students currently in Mahora north of Tōkyō, Hasegawa Chisame, the current incarnation of the Mistress of Knowledge, *Timsim* ("Nexus"). "We also get INN broadcasts from Zeiwan. Everyone saw what Utako-chan did to your mother after she freaked on seeing your flame-breath. We may not be as fanatic about child abusers as Noukiites and Avalonians are, but we don't care for people attacking children for no reason."

"Yeah, heels like that have to be put down and NEVER allowed to go into the Crystal," Tomo muttered as she nibbled on beef jerky. "Some of them are just too fucking sick to be given a chance at new life."

"Have you ever done that, Tomo-chan?" Oyuki asked.

"Couple of times," the native of Itabashi responded. "It's not fun. I've got the memories of the Starvation Times like Yomi and everyone else do. Even the most dark heels back in those times felt it was just the right thing to do to help people survive when there was just no real food around to feed everyone. I guess that's part of the reason why we're so adamant on seeing people's corpses buried in the Crystal and we've been doing that since the start of the Show. You never want to forget THAT sort of history so you don't do something like it again. Sort of like what you folks did to yourselves to make sure you didn't forget the lessons of the Mother of All Fight Scenes," she added as she gazed at Lum.

Hearing that, Lum sighed as she leaned her chin on her crossed fingers, her elbows propped on the table in an upside-down "V" formation. "Well, I'm glad that Tariko-cha got that out of my mind. It's easier for me to accept what really happened to her. I'm glad that stupid mother of hers finally admitted who it was that hurt Tariko-cha like that. I just hope they find those creeps and make sure they don't do that to anyone ever again. If you people are about to face an invasion by this 'obsidian lord' at this Fūka-jima place, you need to be ready for it and be able to drive it off."

Hiromi gazed at her fiancée. "Are you alright, koishii?"

"No," Lum breathed out as she flashed the Mistress of Morphing a reassuring look before shaking her head. "Hearing about these Mor-Tax and the Qar'to have been trying to conquer Earth since the 1950s just shocked me, Darling. I can't believe we missed something like that!"

"And it proves yet again that we shouldn't have depended on the Niphentaxians for intelligence like we did," Oyuki sighed before sipping her tea. "Then again, if General Raeburn and her friends led the response against the Mor-Tax, I doubt our 'friends' from Phentax Two would have given us all the lurid details of that event. Despite all their many issues, they did understand our fears. Given that my people's forces aren't well-developed, it's not surprising we missed that."
A snort escaped Tomo. "The roenor'beke flew on ships that weren't much bigger than your average jumbo jet. No wonder your people missed that, Oyuki-chan! Or maybe you were infiltrated yourselves."

As the crown princess of Neptune jerked on hearing that dark observation, Yomi sighed. "Well, all we need to do is to persuade Roman-kun to spare some time and sniff around Kōri City," Yiziba's most powerful telepath proposed. "Or even better, let Dean-kun go at it. He's a cosmic meta, so his clairvoyance could flush out those things well before Roman-kun could sniff them out."

"EH?!" Ten gasped in wide-eyed shock as the possible full name of the person Yiziba's most powerful telepath just mentioned came to him. "Dean Ambrose is Gifted?!!"

"NO FUCKING WAY!"

Hiromi's head snapped over. "Mackenzie-san! There's a CHILD here!"

As Ten blushed at his future cousin-in-law's move to protect him from bad language, Mackenzie Appleby lunged over from the tables he had been sharing with the others of the Camelot Wondercolts and the Huntresses of Remnant; since the people Isaac Thomas had trained ran on New York City time, it was an early breakfast for them. "Never mind! Never mind!" the current incarnation of the Living Wrecking Machine, Yuotuo ("Impact"), said as Tomo stifled her laughter; the offensive guard for the Camelot High School football team was a BIG fan of the WWE. "We're talking about THE Dean Ambrose, right?! He was with Heartland Wrestling for six years?!! The Lunatic Fringe?!"

"He's Duoti, Mack," Tomo teased.

Silence.

More silence.

Still more silence.

Then...
"INSANITY?!" a pale-faced Mackenzie exclaimed before gulping.

"Um...Hiromi-onēchan...?"

"What is it, Ten-chan?"

"What's Insanity?" Ten asked as he gazed on Hiromi.

"Think of Ayumu-chan with a strong dose of the Joker added."

As the firefighter's son paled on hearing that particular description — he was also a big fan of North American comics, so he KNEW of the Clown Prince of Crime who appeared in DC Comics — Mackenzie shook his head. "Next thing you're gonna say is that freaking Seth Rollins is Gifted, too!"

"Tutouo Rier'bo," Yomi provided. "Kingslayer."

As Mackenzie gaped in disbelief at that revelation, Lum gazed on her fiancée. "Um, Darling, wasn't the first incarnation of Tutouo Rier'bo the one responsible for killing off all the dictators and absolute monarchs on Yiziba during the Dawn of Power?" she asked.

"Damn! My reputation's known!"

People blinked before they turned...

...then Mackenzie gaped in awe while Ten gushed as a brown-eyed, raven-haired man with beard and moustache walked in, part of his stringy hair dyed blond around his right ear. The native of Buffalo in Iowa born as Daniel Lopez was in a solid black jumpsuit with gunmetal grey belt and boots, wearing an insignia on his chest looking like a lightning bolt crashing down from the heavens to split apart a stylized crown; such was the perfect crest for the man known on Yiziba as the "Assassin of Dynasties". Like his brothers in the stable now called the Shield — on Yiziba, they were known as Buodur'ba — he wore black finger-less wrestler's gloves to protect his hands. "AH! SETH ROLLINS!" Ten screamed out.
Hearing that cry of delight, the wrestler who was the fight scene planner for his stable smiled as he held out his fist for Ten to tap with his. "Hey! Can't believe I've got fans here on *Uru* of all places!"

Oyuki giggled before she gave the newcomer an admiring look. "People here admire how artistic you are in putting out such good shows with such athleticism without actually coming close to permanently crippling or killing each other in the ring, Rollins-sensei," she noted.

That made Seth Rollins smirk as some of the Wondercolts took out their PAAAs to get pictures of him. "Hey, just because it's kayfabe doesn't mean we shouldn't be playing it safe, Your Highness," he noted.

"What are you doing here anyway, Seth-kun?" Yomi asked.

"Touching base with Isaac about what's coming up," the first NXT Champion after the mid-summer re-branding of what had been called "Florida Championship Wrestling" answered. "Dean's getting feisty because Roman got the chance to diffuse a replay of the Battle of Midway when he intercepted the Kongō sisters and cool them down, not to mention take out that roenor'beke that was possessing that jerk from the ICW who wanted to give Hiromi's sisters a hard time after Rose Potter's wife put down that death cheater Riddle. And RELAX, Takino!" he then declared as Tomo tensed while she levelled a warning look at the Assassin of Dynasties. "Take a chill pill! He'll leave Apophis to you, okay?!!"

"He better, Rollins! Or I'll go 'lunatic fringe' all over his ass!"

"Don't you guys have a show soon?" Hiromi asked.

Seth took a moment to check his watch. "It's 4:19 AM Central Time on Sunday right now, Hiromi. *RAW* doesn't start the live show until seven tomorrow night. We're expected to be there a couple hours ahead of time. Nothing's really planned for us other than to watch over CM's match with Kane, plus do an interview with Mike Cole that's to be taped in mid-afternoon. That should be about ten minutes at the most. Teleport back to Earth, power-nap for six hours and I'm good to go."

"Excuse me, young comrade. Are you the admiral here?"

Hearing that question, Seth blinked before he turned to look...
...then blinked again on seeing a twenty-something woman a head shorter than he standing nearby, she flanked by a woman looking to be an older teenager. Both were in fighting jumpsuits. The older of the two was in a white suit with blue belt possessing a red buckle, red boots on her feet. The buckle had the gold double-headed Imperial eagle of Russia on it. On her chest was another shield, it displaying a beautiful red-brick Orthodox church on a sea blue field, said church having a silver-grey dome and trimming. Her long silver hair was straight and flowed to her hips, her eyes the shade of maple fudge and there was a healed scar under the left eye. The younger of the pair had brown eyes and long brown hair tied in low twintails draped over her shoulders. She had a uniform with a blue top, green pants, white boots and a white belt bearing a blue buckle that had a white crescent moon and twelve small stars in three increasing rows from top to bottom. On her chest was a seal of blue, gold and green displaying a forest scene at the base of mountains under the sun, a gold banner at the base with TOSHKENT in white on it and the outer band of the seal bearing the motto KUCH ADOLATDADIR in gold; the crest was nestled on stalks of wheat wrapped together at the base with a long red ribbon.

"No I'm not," Seth answered. "I take it you just came in from Russia."

The older of the pair smiled as she crossed her arms. "Da, though Comrade Speedy One here came actually from her namesake city...even if such is misspelled on her uniform top," she said as she gazed in amusement at her companion, who blushed in return.

"Holy God...!

That was a wide-eyed Phoebe Pitts, who had surged out of her chair to gaze intently at the older of the newcomers. "Pinkie!" Tara Silva snapped. "Don't scare her like that! She probably just got Gifted...!"

"YOU'RE OKTJÁBR'SKAJA REVOLJÚTSIJA?!

Everyone was nearly blown into the bulkheads of the cafeteria by that excited shout from the current incarnation of the Mistress of Implausibility, Nami ("Cartoon"). That was soon echoed by a roaring laughter from the older of the two just-arrived shipgirls (as some of the people in the room had guessed right away). "Don't tell me you're a fan of that computer game those bright young ones in Minsk created two years ago with the help of Tat’jána Andrévna Chapáeva, comrade!"

"Y-yes...I mean d-da!" Phoebe sputtered. "Well, the Imperial eagle was a giveaway and you had to be a shipgirl, but why not wear your Order of the Red Banner?! Your crew EARNED that medal...!"
More laughter escaped the reborn dreadnought that could be seen as an adopted native of Sankt-Peterbúrg in Russia (her place of construction as LK Gángut) and Hanko in southwest Finland (where the battle she was named after was fought in 1714) as she drew out a sailor's pipe and put it into her mouth. With a flare of energy, she lit the tobacco she had in the bowl; people were quick to see a slight distortion of air form around her similar to what Dean Raeburn did to prevent people from inhaling her cigar smoke second-hand. "Da, young one, I did, but I was built during the time of Imperial Russia, not when those child-killing Bol'shevikí tried to create their 'dictatorship of the proletariat' some years after my keel was embraced by Tsar Morskój when I was blessed by a proper priest! That was something Comrade Speedy One here..." — here, she indicated the younger-looking shipgirl, who smiled, politely bowing to the Mistress of Implausibility — "...was sadly denied until the good people of her namesake city called her back to duty as a dévushka flóta after young Khímeiko Mútovna introduced young Fudžiko Sídzuovna to the world in the White House." She reached over to squeeze the young Californian's shoulder. "Still, you pronounced 'Oktjábr'skaja Revoljútsija' almost like a native, young comrade!" she complemented Phoebe. "There must be Great Russian in your ancestry somewhere!"

"Ah!" a strange voice called out from the entrance to the cafeteria. "There you are, Továrisch Kapitán Jurkévich! I see you were able to rescue Továrisch Kapitán Vladímirskaja from her 'fans' in Tashként!"

The woman known officially on Russian records as Galína Vladímirovna Jurkévich looked over as the Wise Lone Sage came in. "You must be Isaák Fomích Tómas!" the reborn lead of her class said as she offered her hand, which Isaac Thomas took. "Da, it was easy to persuade those silly people in Tashként to allow Luná L’vóvna here to come out to this gathering of warriors to remove these so-called 'gods' from existence." As Isaac reached over to shake Luná L’vóvna Vladímirskaja's hand, the older-looking shipgirl added, "I look forward to finding those ones who named themselves after the old gods of the Ródina, then force them to count all the trees in Siberia before making them face a firing squad!"

"You won't eat them, Captain?" Seth asked, crossing his arms.

Galína's eyes focused on the wrestler's as her voice dripped with disgust. "Comrade, they were near-rotting when this body was first created. I can't believe Utáko Masáovna found them tasty, even after the little one there fried one for a taste test!" Here, she nodded towards Ten.

The others gaped in shock at her, then laughter filled the room...

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"So what's it look like, RJ?"

The slender woman with the brown hair in twintails and the brown eyes scowled as she concentrated, sensing what shikigami she forged from the scroll she blessed with her powers were detecting as they followed the VERY large battleship sailing towards the Ryūkyū Islands. "Loads of people on the quarterdeck aft of Turret 'Y', Zui-han," she replied. She had been named "Matsunaga Ryōko" by that alien kami who literally fused her wreck — which had been at the bottom of the Pacific Ocean two hundred kilometres northeast of Santa Isabel in the Solomons — into some organic golem-like thing that came with memories of a different planet being invaded by alien snake-like things; the word "lar'beke" had repeated in the mind of the adopted native of Yokohama (where she had been built as THG Ryūjō) since her literal rebirth on the very anniversary of her commissioning into the Imperial Japanese Navy back in May. While she and her ad hoc fleet of "shipgirls" had heard of others like them thanks to a brief visit to Ormoc in the Philippines to help their peers catch up on seven decades' worth of news — especially with that particular chain of islands being finally free of the stupid Yankees! — one simply couldn't be TOO cautious in a situation like this one. "Most of them are friends of ours if the kanji on their uniform tops say anything about it. Mostly destroyers, but Nagamon and the Yamato and Kongō sisters are there, too. Not to mention a bunch of others. AND Raeburn-shihan, too!"

That made everyone in the fleet of shipgirls with her gape in shock on hearing the name of the Immortal Master's adopted daughter and the leader of the most powerful team of metahumans who had fought in the Greater East Asia War. "Since this Ryūseizen is flying the new Canadian naval ensign atop that black ensign, that's not surprising," a woman with long hime-cut dark brown hair and chestnut eyes behind protective goggles declared from a position about ten metres to Ryōko's starboard. As she had been the flagship of the Eighth Fleet during the Guadalcanal campaign when she had just been THG Chōkai, it had been agreed by everyone once they had come together near Leyte Island that Hōjō Chiyo would be overall force commander despite there being four transformed battleships in their group in the Nishimura sisters Fujiko (THG Fusō) and Yaeko (THG Yamashiro), plus the Kawasaki sisters Ikuko (THG Ise) and Hoshiko (THG Hyūga). "What do you think that black ensign signifies, Ryōko-san?"

Ryōko hummed as she called up that image before her mind's eye. "Maybe the new ensign for the Canadian magical ministry, Chiyo-han," she replied, her voice flecked with a strong Ōsaka-ben accent despite her being built in Yokohama. "Since they got that nicer flag, they obviously had to switch the ministry flag. The kaijū hunter that was there for my crew wasn't this one, but she flew a black British ensign under the White Ensign. It had that same badge in the fly with a king's crown on top."

"So why would this ship be here, Chiyo-chan?" Chiyo's sister Hōjō Maya wondered as she flew over to hover beside the former Eighth Fleet flagship. It didn't surprise anyone that when she got her human name, such had matched her ship name, even in how it was written.
Chiyo sighed as she pulled the goggles away from her eyes to rub them. Even if it was getting well past nautical twilight, she could still see perfectly in the dark even if she was near-sighted; she was glad that her goggles could help her view things at a great distance. "I can't say, Maya-chan," the adopted native of Happō in Akita prefecture (where her namesake mountain was located) and Nagasaki (where she had been built) breathed out. "Ryōko-san, can you get exact names...?"

"Wait! One of OUR admiral pennants just went up on her!"

Eyes locked on Ryōko, then they focused on the distant battleship. Sure enough, the eight-ray rising sun standard of a full admiral in the Imperial Japanese Navy was flying now above the white Canadian ensign with the red command badge bearing a fighting dagger in the fly. "Why isn't a modern admiral's flag flying on her?!" demanded Matsubara Suzue, the reborn THG Zuikaku. "We know the Americans forced Tennō to abolish the armed forces when he ended the war, but..."

"Unless one of our admirals is aboard, Suzue-san," Nishimura Fujiko proposed from her position close to the last of the six carriers who had been part of the attack on Pearl Harbour which started the war. "Didn't you hear the radio before the hō'ō and their friends persuaded us to all come out this way? The entire crew of one of our ships had been trapped in a cove in Siberia since before the war started, saved because the cove was full of diamond mesonium deposits..."

"OH YE GODS!"

Eyes locked on Ryōko. "What is it, Ryōko?!” Kakuta Hiromi, the former THG Hiyō, demanded.

The shipgirl onmyō-ji — she had several of them serve as part of her crew before and during the war — looked like she was about to cry. "It's Admiral Fujita, Hiro-han! Fujita Hiroshi! HE'S ALIVE!"

Jaws dropped as everyone gaped at Ryōko...

«Ladies!»

Both Suzue and her elder sister Kanako (born as THG Shōkaku) jolted as Ryōko began to sob in joy, nearly dropping her enchanted scroll. "Fujita-taishō! Are you alright?!" the reborn "lucky crane" of the Kidō Butai gasped. "How in the name of the gods did you survive...?!"
"That is a rather long and complex story, Suzue-chan," that aged voice echoed back as the destroyers in their group looked around to find where such came from. "One of Lady Elgin's small parliament of phoenixes is helping me 'speak' to you all." A touch of playful joviality then entered his voice as he added, "You destroyers can stop trying to look around for me."

Ear-splitting excited squeals escaped some of the shipgirls floating close to Chiyo. Seeing that, the old flagship of the Eighth Fleet could only smile in understanding; no doubt, all of them had been delighted to finally learn the name of this particular monster-hunting battleship where Kanako's and Suzue's would-be fleet commander now stood. Clearing her throat, the fourth of the Takao-class heavy cruisers straightened. "Admiral, what are your orders, sir?" she formally asked.

"You have assumed command of that fleet, Captain?"

Chiyo blushed at being addressed that way. "Hai! Hōjō Chiyo, formerly Tennō Heika Gunkan Chōkai, fourth of the Takao-class cruisers, flagship of the Eighth Fleet under Mikawa Gun'ichi-chūjō, reporting!"

"Well done, Captain. And it's good that you've taken after Gun'ichi-san like you clearly have." As Chiyo blushed madly at that compliment, the would-be commander of Operation Z added, "In the meantime, General Raeburn has been kind enough to allow you all to come aboard the Elgin." As squeals again escaped the girls who screamed out on hearing the name of that battleship, Fujita Hiroshi chuckled. "The war is over, Chiyo-chan. But a new war approaches. We need you."

"This is Tennō's command, Teitoku?"

"Indeed it is."

"Then we gladly obey. EIGHTH FLEET, FORWARD!"

The large gathering of shipgirls flew forward as they descended to the battleship far ahead of them...
"Oi! Where the heck are you guys?!"

Roman Reigns perked on hearing that voice, then he looked over his shoulder; he had been relaxing at the dining room table. "Something got Hinako's attention, so they all went to check it out, Tariko," the Spectral Hound replied as Tariko Katabarbe came inside. "What's happening...?"

He stopped as a very dressed twenty-something man who looked like Moroboshi Ataru at that age with a well-trimmed moustache and goatee walked inside, now in the double-breasted dark blue dress uniform with gold frilled epaulettes on his shoulders and the Royal Navy-like rank insignia on his lower arms. A quick glance through the main doors of the rotunda revealed two sailors in dress blues now standing guard by the entrance, their rifles at their side while others were formed in divisions outside. "You must be Tariko's granduncle," the native of Pensacola stated as he came over, his hand out, which Moroboshi Kyōsuke took. "Roman Reigns; that's my stage name. Welcome back, Lieutenant."

"Honoured, Roman-san. And thank you for helping bring Anne-chan and her sisters back whole and in one piece," the junior navigation officer of Yonaga said with a delighted smile. At Roman's questioning look, Kyōsuke added with a wink, "I did my first tour of duty on Kongō after I graduated from Eta-jima. Anne-chan's as precious to me now as Yoiko-chan is."

"Ah, got it...!"

"Kyōsuke-san!"

Everyone looked over. "What is it, Kiyonaga-san?"

Hachirobe Kiyonaga came up, saluting him under arms; the duty seaman guard watch always carried their Arisaka rifles wherever they went. "Sir, there's an American woman at the gate to the grounds asking for Brent-san. I think this must be his daughter Sarah-chan, but given what happened earlier..."

Tariko and Roman exchanged looks. "Let me take a 'look' at her, Yeoman," the latter offered, making Kiyonaga gape. "I'm something of a cosmic meta. Telepathy comes with the Gift. I can scan her out."
"Appreciated, Roman-san," Kyōsuke stated as they stepped out of the dining room.

"I'll call Sakuya and find out what's going on, Hiiji-chan," Tariko said.

"Dōmo!"

With that, the two men walked out of the rotunda, the yeoman who had been in charge of a band of guards when the navigation officer went to see his nephew in Tomobiki early that morning following. "Are you a father, Roman-san?" Kyōsuke asked as he gazed on the native of Pensacola.

"A daughter; she was born just before Christmas four years ago," the wrestler admitted. "You?"

"Sadly, I didn't find anyone nice until my enforced 'vacation' from life," the older man admitted.

"I'll bet that for the married people, it's been hard," Roman mused.

"Hai, it has been. We know that the admiral lost his family thanks to Colonel Tibbets and his crew."

As Roman visibly winced, Kyōsuke chuckled. "Pay it no mind, my friend. It's the sad fact of war."

"'There are certain rules about a war. Rule Number One is young men die. And Rule Number Two is doctors can't change Rule Number One.'," Roman quoted Henry Blake from the M*A*S*H episode "Sometimes You Hear the Bullet". Here, the Spectral Hound shook his head as he focused on the young blonde girl standing now by the entrance to the Welcome House grounds, guarded by young seamen who were both polite yet wary. "Change Rule One to say 'people die' instead."

Kyōsuke was quick to see the wrestler's eyes narrow. "Is it her?"

"Yeah," Roman assured him before he gave the navigation officer a warning look. "She had a weird encounter with someone as she was coming to see her father. It spooked her."

The other man scowled. Whoever had done that would earn the fool the wrath of ALL of Yonaga's crew, not to mention Itō Yoiko herself. With that, he walked over, barking out, "Petty Officer Tomonaga!"
Tomonaga Fujio turned, then saluted under arms. "Lieutenant Moroboshi!"

"Pay attention, Fujio-san," Kyōsuke bade before he turned and smiled at Sarah Ross. "Be at ease, Sarah-san," he bade in accented English; all of Yonaga's crew were fluent. "You're among friends." As the seamen surrounding the intelligence officer's daughter gazed at their superior officer and his companion, they quickly noted Roman's reassuring nod before they relaxed. "My apologies, but Mister Reigns here did a telepathic scan to ensure you were who you say you were. There was an ugly incident on the grounds while we were meeting with His Imperial Majesty at the Palace that he had to deal with, so we're being cautious. Still, it is good to meet Brent-san's daughter finally."

An amused grin answered him. "I assume Otō-chan's off somewhere doing something weird, Oji-chan?" Sarah then asked in nearly-fluent Japanese, which made the people around her gape in shock before delighted grins crossed their faces on realizing she had taken the time to learn their language.

Kyōsuke laughed. "Oh! A cautious one, aren't we?!" he demanded.

An amused snort answered him. "After that weird bōsōzoku girl came across me and asked me to give this to one of your crew, Oji-chan, it was just being smart," Sarah noted as she raised what looked like a high school duty banner in black trimmed in gold to show the older man, the kanji 代 永・天使 on it, the two kanji blocks split apart by a gold anchor topped with an Imperial chrysanthemum, just like what the sailors of the seventh carrier of Operation Z wore on their uniform caps.

"'Yonaga Tenshi'," Roman read out, making the seamen stare in surprise at him on realizing that the wrestler understood how to read Japanese. "Or more likely 'Yonaga no Tenshi', using the anchor to take the place of the conjunction." He then smirked as the others gazed on him. "Yizibajohei is close to Japanese in general structure, guys. Once you learn the kanji, it's easy to read."

Laughter filled the air. "Thank God I've got a photographic memory. Still, learning six thousand kanji hurt my brain," Sarah admitted, making the sailors stare in awe at her. "It wasn't a cakewalk, guys."

More laughter responded before footfalls heralded the arrival of Brent Ross' best friend. "Who is this, Kyōsuke-san?" Matsuhara Yoshi demanded as he accepted the seamen's salutes under arms.

"Brent-san's daughter Sarah-chan, Yoshi-san," Kyōsuke answered, which made the Los Angeles native gape before a smile crossed his face. "But there's another problem." He held up the armband.
The ace pilot blinked in confusion...

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**Aboard HMCS Lady Elgin in the Philippine Sea, an hour later...**

"So it was those like Fawkes-sama who sensed the need to have the kami of warships restored to assist in the defence of the planet, Captain," Fujita Hiroshi noted. "And given that they all went out to take up the task after Hinako-chan stopped seeking out the kami..."

Naomi Haight-Ashbury nodded. "Yeah, Uncle Hiroshi. The beautiful ones all felt how happy Little Snowfall here was when she came back as a shipgirl, then went out to find others to convince them to come back." Here, the transformed nuclear cruiser nodded at Fukushima Fujiko, who blushed again at that nickname the adopted native of Long Beach and Quincy had given her. "But when Papa A asked Little Sunshine to stop doing that, they moved to use their own power to make the kami come back. They didn't have the links to the Spirit of the Forge like Little Sunshine did, so they had to get the wise ones who normally crashed out where you folk were in Siberia to help out. Since a lot of the wise ones were touched when the Big Dude up north helped turn Big Y into what she is now, it became easier to get the kami to come back to duty once the gates to the Forge were opened."

Hearing that, Fujita moaned. Given the sheer number of people now on the world's largest battleship, everyone had gone to one of the four junior ranks messes on the third deck, this one located forward of the barbette for Turret "A". Having joined the would-be commander of Operation Z was William Harlan (with Larry Brigham escorting the retired admiral) and Albus Dumbledore; they had been teleported to *Lady Elgin* by Fawkes, who was now trilling in delight as she rubbed her head in Naomi's brown hair. Also seated at the table where the master seamen of the deck department would relax were Fujiko, Itō Yoiko (to the right of her admiral), Dean Raeburn (with Randi Stubbs standing behind the leader of the War Hawks), Moroboshi Ataru (with Shigaten Benten seated behind him) and Sukeyama Sakuya (who had Fujiko's sister Fukushima Itsuko [the former THG *Isonami*] standing behind her). Also with Fujita were Brent Ross, Katsube Hakuseki and Kawamoto Masao. All the other shipgirls, Ataru's and Sakuya's siblings and both Tendō Akane and Gosunkugi Hikaru were at different tables in the rather large space. Many of the newcomers that had been under Hōjō Chiyo's charge were being fed by *Elgin*'s large legion of house elves, the tiny sprites acting with Osamu Shirayuki to coordinate the distribution of supper; for a small number of Chiyo's fleet, the big feast they were enjoying now was their first meal as shipgirls. "Given that phoenixes and other such creatures are magical, Professor Dumbledore, I would assume the ICW will take interest in this when the hounds of the media begin to sniff around to get the lurid details of how most warships of the Imperial Japanese Navy have been resurrected like this."
Dumbledore sighed. "It's not as cut and dried as that, Hiroshi-san," he answered, crossing his arms. "If this was several years ago, the ICW would want to get involved even if legally, Japan as a nation hasn't been part of the Confederation since 1937 thanks to the Magical Imperial Rescript of Independence issued by Shōwa Tennō at Tsukiko-san's urging." Noting the surprised look the native of Nagoya — who himself was two generations removed from magical blood — was giving him, the headmaster of Hogwarts added, "It's long been believed in Europe that magical forces under Tsukiko-san surrendered to the ICW when the Pacific side of the Wars of Liberation ended. Such was never the truth. It was a simple armistice between Tsukiko-san on the 'axis' side and the American, Canadian, Australian and New Zealander magical forces on the 'allied' side. In the magical equivalent of the Treaty of San Francisco in 1952 that saw the Greater East Asia War legally ended, the Eight Commanderies only signed peace treaties with the magical ministries or departments of those four nations atop the Soviet Union, the People's Republic of China, the Republic of China, the Republic of Korea and ALL the independent nations that arose in Asia after that war's end. Telling that to leaders in Europe..."

"Here comes the Wars of Liberation, Take Two," Ataru wryly noted.

"Indeed so," Dumbledore finished. "However, with the recent revelation of Miss Hitotsubashi Yurie's transformation into an arahitogami — not to mention her involvement in the transformation of your flagship's sisters — it could easily be explained without the mention of beings such as Fawkes. Given what happened to her, people's faith in Shintō in Japan has strengthened considerably. Atop that, the one time people in Chiyoda sent someone there to enforce the Statute, they were intercepted by forces of the Chūgoku Magical Association and expelled from the country." His eyes twinkled. "Despite the reputation the Confederation has, it's never been allowed to develop large pan-national security forces; local magical governments wouldn't allow it. Ah, alas..." he breathed out as Harlan and Raeburn both laughed. "Of course, to prevent any further action, His Imperial Majesty released a Magical Imperial Rescript that declared the whole of the city of Onomichi a 'mixed' situation under the applicable clauses of the Statute. In effect, no different than how all of Iceland is viewed legally. Given the sheer evidence of the existence of 'magical' beings such as yōkai and kami..." — here, he made finger-quotes with his hands — "...in that town — plus the full acceptance of the presence of such beings by the normal residents as witness how Lady Yurie is always treated — it simply makes no sense to try to force a separation in this case. Atop that, the Tokubeppō — which incorporated the old Mahōhō — is the acknowledged 'seventh great code' of laws now active in Japan. Anyone who acts contrary to that..."

"Instant imprisonment in the old student dorms at Mahōtokoro," Harlan finished.

Interpreting that, Fujita nodded in delight. "Good. Given what is soon to befall this sector of the galaxy thanks to the false 'gods' the Yizibajohei loathe so much and our American friends have dealt with over the last few years, any interference by some fool staleblood will not be tolerated and punished most severely. My crew, including Commander Ross, are now seen as subject to the Tokubeppō. Hopefully, this yakuza Apophis won't gather a large force for his attack on Uru."

"We'll stop them no matter what, Teitoku!" Fujiko vowed.
People smiled at the words spoken by the Blizzard of Death. "As true samurai always should, Commander," Fujita said with an approving nod, making the destroyer blush. "Once they're dealt with, we can then concentrate on those other aliens that were missed when Sakuya-san and her friends did their sweep of the planet to remove the Niphentaxian observers. With the presence of these Mor-Tax, not to mention their cyborg cannibal cousins that Captain von Tirpitz and her friends fought..."

"If we can find more Shōzoki androids and gynoids like those kids that protected the kids the Qar'to gathered in Norway earlier today, we've got a lot help," Benten noted. As people gazed her way, the adopted daughter of one of the senior commanders in the central council of the Union of Fukunokami added, "Darling told me about that Mizunokōji girl and what happened to her when she got her 'droid boyfriends. There are two basic types of Shōzoki encountered these days: Those who are directly controlled by this 'Mother' command nexus that practically runs that planet and those who were programmed from the start to avoid being controlled by Mother. Mizunokōji's boyfriends are all free of Mother's control and I'll bet those kids Rinrin took in after Captain Maria and her friends brought them over are the same way. If they know where others like them are based out of now..."

"That's going to be hard," Ataru warned as he crossed his arms. "Just before supper, Rinrin-chan got a message from the Public Security Bureau about the androids Nagisa-chan wrecked yesterday after breakfast to protect Asuka-chan and her boyfriend from Soban's stupidity. They were trying to bring Hikaru and his friends under Mother's control through a central nexus unit that's active somewhere in the Nishitōkyō area. I think those like Hikaru will want to stay under the radar."

"Can Rinrin-san find these ones and eliminate them before they become a threat?" Kawamoto asked.

"It'll take a while, Oji-chan," Sakuya warned. "Up until now, we were too worried about that stupid temporal paradox thing that developed because we went out to liberate the Avalonians back in June. People like Rinrin-chan haven't had the chance to sit down and take the time to fully analyze what else could be out there since those groups that have made noise in the past like the Goa'uld are being dealt with by other folks like those under General Hammond's command in Colorado."

"Better now than never," Ataru warned.

"Hai...!"

A PAA chimed off. Ataru reached into his pocket to pull his device, then he put it on the table, tapping the crystal to create an image of his sister in the dining room at Welcome House. "Hey, Onē-san!"
"Oi! Where the hell are you guys right now?!
Tariko demanded.

"Aboard one of the Canadian magical battleships near Okinotori-shima, Onē-sama," Sakuya answered. "A whole fleet of warship kami were brought back as shipgirls thanks to the hōō and other mystical birds that saw what Hinako-chan was doing back in the spring and the summer, then wanted in on the action. An American shipgirl's with us as well; she got brought back by the stalebloods in MACUSA..." — here, the Healer of Men's Hearts said the acronym as "mack-you-es-ay", following how the leader of the War Hawks always referred to the legislative branch of the American Department of Magic if she wasn't insulting them with the "staleblood" appellation she first applied to conservative purebloods from Europe and America back in 1889 — "...in hopes of creating a counter to Fujiko-chan and the others." As Tariko gave her a concerned look, Sakuya smirked. "They screwed up."

"How screwed up is 'screwed up'?" the Trickster of the Show asked.

"If the magical squares want to keep forcing the system on cool cats like Little Snowfall here, they're gonna get totalled and turned into guacamole, T-Gal," Naomi called out, which earned the reborn cruiser a pleased trill from Fawkes. "See?!" she then asked as Ataru shifted his PAA around to bring the reborn cruiser into the camera range. "Even the hot chick is all for that!"

People gaped at her, then laughter filled the room...

"DADDY!"

Brent Ross gasped as someone came into the camera range. "Sarah...?"

As his shipmates all grinned in delight on hearing who was calling in, Sarah Ross crossed her arms. 
"OTŌ-CHAN NO BAKA!" she shrilled out in very clear Japanese. "I know you wanted to find Ojii-chan after he disappeared like that, but you've been gone for SIX YEARS now! Couldn't you have tried to CALL HOME in all that time?! What were you doing in that cove all this time?! SLUMMING?!"

The retired intelligence officer ducked his daughter's ranting as Fujita's eyes sparkled in amusement...

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Welcome House, an hour later...

"Welcome back, Admiral!"

Fujita Hiroshi blinked before he smiled as the phoenix that had transported him from HMCS Lady Elgin vanished in a burst of fire to return to her home vessel. "Thank you, Captain," he said as he returned Ogawa Gorō's salute. "Have the people from the Self-Defence Forces..." — he tried not to frown on saying that term — "...come by to help with our accommodations in the reclaimed lands so that we don't have to impose ourselves on Kyōsuke-san's relatives as we have since this morning?"

"Hai," the captain of Yonaga replied as he turned to follow his formation commander into the rotunda so they could speak in the relative privacy of the dining room. "All the Imperial Magical Commanderies are sending in the necessary supplies to allow us to live in relative comfort as we move to reconnect with whatever relatives we have living today. The old American construction battalion barracks here on the island have been kept in relatively good shape even if their Seventh Fleet decided to concentrate their headquarters staff at the Yokosuka District." He paused as he gazed out the open main doorway. "I see young Sarah-chan is proving to be just as passionate as her father could be at times."

Fujita looked himself before he smirked on seeing Sarah Ross screaming a tsunami of creative invective at her now-sheepish father; they were standing close to the old sea wall of the Welcome House grounds. Several of the retired intelligence officer's closer friends such as Matsuhara Yoshi stood close to him as he tried to properly reunite with his daughter, torn between letting Ross get the tenth degree from Sarah and try to discipline her for being so publicly disrespectful to her father in the first place. Remembering the several times the elder Ross' temper got the better of him whenever one of Yonaga's crew jerked his anchor chains the right way — and remembering the times the retired intelligence officer spoke of his own late father's temper, which earned him the nickname "Trigger" Ross — the native of Nagoya could only shake his head as he sat down at the head of the dining room table. "I see she really takes after her father in so many ways. So brilliant and so combative. If she intends to follow him into the United States Navy, she'll either eventually rise to the flag ranks or wind up in the brig for murdering an idiot who was foolish enough to offend her."

Ogawa chuckled. "Hai, it could go either way."

"What's this about this biker woman who had that armband that Yoshi-san told me about before we came back from Elgin?" the native of Nagoya then asked.

The native of Fukuoka sighed as he sat beside his formation commander. "According to what Reigns-sensei was able to detect when she arrived on the grounds, when Sarah-chan made her way
down here from the house she shares with her mother, a motorcyclist in black leather clothing came up to her. She wore the armband she gave her, then asked her to pass on the message that we were 'not forgotten'. Before she could inquire what the rider was speaking about, she rode away on her machine without saying anything further. The woman looked to be about the physical age of any of the carriers. Atop that, even if she seemed a bōsōzoku, from what Sarah-chan did observe, the rider did obey traffic laws."

Fujita considered that, then he hummed. "Odd. From what we overheard on shortwave, such people are hooligans and often associate with the yakuza. What makes this person behave so differently?"

"A mystery."

"Is Roman-san still here?"

Ogawa shook his head. "It's 0708 hours on Sunday in Louisiana right now, Admiral. Reigns-sensei is expected to be at the stadium where he is to perform in this Monday Night RAW event by 1600 hours tomorrow local time. He had to go get some sleep to be ready for his match. Even for all his power, his endurance is only a little above human norm." He then waved around. "Still, we have enough telepaths within immediate range to help out in case any of these people wish to renew contact with us."

That made the would-be commander of Operation Z nod. "I can't believe I have to keep such things in mind now, Gorō-san," he then lamented.

"Welcome to my life."

Both turned, then Ogawa rose to bow as Dean Raeburn stepped inside. As the native of Queenston waved the captain back down into his chair while she sat to Fujita's right, the native of Nagoya chuckled as he gazed at her. "I would welcome whatever advice you can give me, Dean-san," he admitted. "I must confess that in all the time I've been in uniform, I NEVER once imagined being asked to command metahumans, especially when it comes to metahumans formed from the kami of warships. Even if I learned some things after Yoiko-chan's transformation, how on Earth could I be expected to command an effective REGIMENT...?" Confusion then crossed his face. "Should I call them a 'fleet' instead?" As Raeburn laughed, Fujita shrugged. "You can understand, I hope."

"Yeah! Yeah! I can understand...oh!"
"Tea? Coffee?"

"Marie-san!" Ogawa gently scolded as Susumu Marie walked into the room with a tea service, along with a mug of coffee for the lone Canadian. "Much that we do appreciate all you've done for us..."

"Oh, hush, Oji-san!" the Paper Sorceress said as she moved to prepare the cloudberry tea for the two would-be participants in Operation Z, then she served the coffee to Raeburn. "Even if you're moving down to the old navy barracks in the reclaimed lands, you're still our guests. Besides, if I didn't do this, Haruka-chan WOULD do this." The native of Hakodate then winked at the three older people as she cupped her lips with one hand. "She'd turn it into a formal cha no yu if she wasn't stopped!"

"I HEARD that, Marie-chan!" a certain quarterstaff fighter called out from the stairwell.

"Considering she's right, it's good that you DID, Haruka-chan!" Sukeyama Sakuya called back as she walked in. "There are days you're way too formal for your own good, girl! Dial it back, huh?!"

"SAKUYA-CHAN!"

As laughter escaped the other sisters who had overheard this from the hallways or their bedrooms, Sakuya sat down at the table. "She won't listen," Marie quietly noted.

The Healer of Men's Hearts snorted. "True...!"

"Ah! Hey! Tove-chan! Stay in the room! Don't go out there!"

Heads snapped around on hearing Hatoyama Rimrin's voice, then Sakuya ran out of the dining rooms as the sucking sounds of air being displaced thanks to teleportation echoed from the third floor. Reaching out with her telepathy to see what was affecting her sister, Sakuya then groaned on sensing that three of the recently-Gifted aircraft carriers-turned-twenty-something women had reacted on hearing the barked shout from the Technological Sorceress of the East, then shifted themselves to the third floor so they could help out. While that reaction from Matsunaga Ryōko and the Kakuta sisters was certainly appreciated, none of them would have ANY knowledge about how Shōzoki AIs acted...!

Oh, SHIT...!
"Hey! Hold on, Chibi! Do what Rin-han told you...HEY! What...mmmmmfth!"

Sakuya growled in annoyance as she bounded up the last of the stairs to the third floor landing, then looked right to see the reborn fourth of Japan's aircraft carriers now bent over as the cute child gynoid brought to Ōmure-jima by Maria von Tirpitz and her friends from Norway hugged her tight while giving her a kiss that seemed to threaten now to suck out the air from Ryōko's lungs. Nearby, a groaning Rinrin looked ready to bang her head on the wall to get rid of the headache this was going to cause everyone while Kakuta Hiromi and her sister Junko were just staring at their friend enjoying her first kiss with ANYONE as a shipgirl, both clearly confused as to why the simple act of KISSING someone was causing two of their hosts to totally freak out like they were doing now. Focusing her powers on Tove Haugen, Sakuya was quick to sense a flash of desperation deep in the gynoid's quasi-organic mind, that matched to a growing cauldron of dislocation. Given that her brother Stian was still unconscious on the diagnostic bed in Rinrin's laboratory, that was understandable...

"Not bonded to Mother?"

Sakuya turned to see Dean Raeburn now standing behind her and gazing on the Kodak moment nearby. "Yeah, Obaba, neither of them were," Rinrin said as she rubbed her forehead. "Given their 'parents' were just drone robots to add to the pretense of a normal family, they had no choice but to frequently kiss kids their age to keep their programming stable, not to mention stay linked with each other. I've tried to get Stian-kun back on his feet, but the damage those cannibal 'droids did to him was bad."

"They need KISSES?!" Hiromi demanded as she and Junko gaped in shock at the technokinetic.

"Mama..."

An embarrassed croak escaped a now red-faced Ryōko as Tove pulled away from her, then moved to snuggle against the struggling carrier. "Um...R-r-Rin-han, wh-wh-what's going on here?" the adopted native of Yokosuka sputtered while gazing hopefully at Rinrin.

A sympathetic look answered her. "Congratulations, Ryōko-sensei. It's a girl."

Silence.
More silence.

Still more silence.

Then...

"Excuse me...!"

And over she went! As Tove cried out while she moved to help the dazed Ryōko into a sitting position, the other shipgirl onmyō-ji exchanged looks. "I need a damned drink!" Junko then moaned as she rubbed her long, feathered lavender hair, shaking her head.

"I actually might join you on that for once, Junko," Hiromi moaned.

Sakuya tried not to laugh as both Rinrin and Raeburn shook their heads...

****

Thirty minutes later...

"EH?! YOU'RE A MOTHER?!!" Yamamoto Reiko demanded.

A blushing Matsunaga Ryōko ducked the looks from all the shipgirls above destroyer-type present on Ōmure-jima; they had gathered in the recreation room of the commons once the news of what just befell the adopted native of Yokohama got out. In the background, noise of those of Yonaga's officers who had stayed in the commons shifting their personal belongings out of their temporary quarters to make room for the fleet of shipgirls who had been under Hōjō Chiyo's command echoed; they were being helped by the destroyers even if many of them were doing their best to keep an ear out over what just happened to the fourth of Japan's aircraft carriers. Also present at this impromptu meeting were Hatoyama Rinrin and Sukeyama Sakuya, they joined by Dean Raeburn and Fujita Hiroshi, the former of the pair of flag officers shaking her head in amusement while the latter looked understandably baffled.

"That's NOT what I said, Reiko-san!" Rinrin said as she squeezed Ryōko's shoulder in support.
"What I said was that because of the way she was built, Tove-chan had no choice but to seek out intimate contact via kissing to organics as a way of keeping her own internal programming stabilized. ALL Shōzoki AIs who don't have a direct control link to Mother are like this. Fortunately, since Tove-chan is built as a child, the only thing she need to do was kiss someone." As the other shipgirls all tensed on realizing that the situation with Ryōko could have actually been worse, the native of Ōsaka added, "If she was built to be sexually mature, things between her and Ryōko-san would be more intimate."

Jaws dropped. "Damn, RJ! Way to go!" Kakuta Junko breathed out as she toasted the older carrier before sipping some nigorizake from an earthenware cup. The adopted native of Nagasaki acquired some from a magical vendor in Sasebo two weeks ago, shortly after her resurrection and Gifting; she kept all her alcohol stash in a hyperspace pocket along with all her equipment that marked her as an onmyō-ji, even if she had yet to be accredited with the Imperial Magical Commanderies.

Fujita gazed at her. "Captain, I trust you will not engage in that sort of drinking in front of children."

An impish shake of the head responded. "Trying my best, Teitoku!"

Her sister Hiromi moaned. "Forgive her, Teitoku. Ever since she was restored to full function shortly after the hōō helped me come back to duty, Junko has acquired quite the taste for spirituous liquors..."

"Oi! Get the terms right, Hiro! Nigorizake is FERMENTED, not DISTILLED!"

"Junko!"

"Girls!"

The Kakuta sisters yelped before they gazed warily at a now-very annoyed Asano Hoshie. The effective "mother" of all aircraft carriers was now cradling Tove Haugen, who appeared to be asleep; after she had effectively bonded with her new "mother", the child-like gynoid had put herself into maintenance mode to allow her internal programming to properly stabilize, which was akin to a normal person sleeping and dreaming. "Be quiet," Hoshie then scolded. "She's trying to sleep now."

As Ryōko moaned, Fujita sighed. This was NOT something he had been prepared to confront when he had been asked by the Heavenly Sovereign to lead his crew into helping the shipgirls of Japan properly adjust to being human beings. "Rinrin-san, please tell me there is SOME way to help young
Tove be independent and able to live her life. Much that I understand why she would seek out a new mother given that the being that was constructed to be her mother didn't even have a tithe of her level of programming. Ryōko-san has duties to perform. What might happen if Ryōko-san falls in battle? How does that affect this child?" He then shook his head. "To believe I said that about a machine...!"

"A machine with a soul, Teitoku," the seventh carrier of Operation Z then declared. "That is what I sense of this young one. Besides, how on Earth could her brother had been so willing to 'break cover' like he did to defend their friends in Norway were he just a simple machine?"

As people gazed on Itō Yoiko, Fujita nodded. "This sounds like something straight out of Jules Verne..."


"Not to mention Karel Čapek," Catarina von Savoyen mused.

Others nodded. "The Admiral has a point, Lady Hatoyama," Charlene Boleyn noted. "What might happen if Ryōko falls in battle, say against the lar'beke when we go to Uru to help defend the planet?"

Rinrin sighed as she rubbed her forehead. "Can't say, Charlene-san. I've got next to no experience when it comes to Shōzoki AI. Yeah, my maternal grandfather is one of the local experts on that sort of thing since several of those 'seed ships' have crash-landed in Japan over the years, but none of the AIs that have been made based on what the seed ships brought to Earth have ever experienced that sort of break between an android or gynoid 'child' and the 'parent'. It's unknown territory." She shook her head. "Only option I can see is to have Tove-chan and Stian-kun turned into battle dolls, which brings up the possibility of their being Gifted. Since all Shōzoki AIs who aren't linked to Mother are effectively living memorials to people who died when the Great Conversion went down and Mother became the effective overlord of the planet, that would be the best thing to do. But is she ready for it?"

Eyes locked on the sleeping gynoid. "How soon can her brother be on his feet, Rin-han?" Ryōko asked.

"The diagnostics computer I linked him into just now discovered how to get his self-repair functions going to get him fully mended," the Technological Sorceress of the East answered. "Probably about a day or so. More than enough time to sit down and figure out things before we all go to Uru and deliver some long overdue curve-stomps on the lar'beke, plus let U-chan go out on another fishing
expedition to get all the System Lord symbiotes and collapse that whole damned mess."

"How long will Tove-chan sleep for, Rinrin-san?" Yoiko's sister Izumi asked.

"All night. Even if she's a gynoid and can multitask, she's been through a rough time," Rinrin answered. "From what my past-selves learned over the years, the Qar'to and the Shōzoki NEVER got along. Even Shōzoki AIs slaved to Mother have always looked down on the Qar'to since their tech is just a little past Zeiwanite levels." At the confused looks from the shipgirls and their admiral, the native of Ōsaka explained, "Like comparing the performance of either a Bf 109 or an A6M2 to the Wright Flyer." Hearing that, everyone nodded in understanding. "If the Shōzoki hadn't succumbed to their own internal issues that launched the Great Conversion, the Qar'to would have been wiped off the galactic map years ago."

"Torture," Itō Mutsuko said with a scowl, she crossing her arms as her square-frame reading glasses glittered to mark her growing fury at the current situation. "It is a pity that you and your friends couldn't have captured some of these cannibal machines alive, Tirpitz-dono. This Musashi would have gladly demonstrated how she feels about the torture of a child on any of these scoundrels."

"I had some of the Totenkopfverbände aboard me during the time I was forced to hide in the fjords of Norway." Maria von Tirpitz declared as her older sister, Trudl von Scharnhorst and Eva von Gneisenau grimly nodded in agreement. "I say that the next time we encounter any of these schmutzige Kannibalenmonster, Freidame von Itō, we take them somewhere private and indulge ourselves thoroughly on them before we dispatch them to the hell that created them."

"Yes, a little artistic interrogation of such an enemy is always good for one's mood," Yoiko dryly mused.

Cold laughter echoed from the other Japanese shipgirls in the room as Fujita grimly nodded. Eyes then locked on Dean Raeburn, who was just sipping some coffee, having not commented or reacted to such threats. "You don't seem to be bothered by this, General," Amy Power noted.

An eyebrow arched. "You have to understand that I'm as much Japanese as I am Canadian, Captain. I can understand where Hiroshi and all the local girls are coming from. Then again, the sheer clash of worldviews between Japan and the nations of the West helped provoke the Second World War in the first place, much less helped depress Papa-sensei to the point where he couldn't defend himself from the idiots of the Black Dragon Society who came to kill him in '37," she lamented as a sad look flashed across her face. Even now, seventy-five years after losing the man she saw as her adopted father like that still hurt. "Besides, the Qar'to, the Shōzoki and the other races across the Universe have different worldviews than we do. Even the humanoid races like the Urusians and their friends are quite radically different than we are; look how much things clashed in Tomobiki when Invader's kid was here chasing Rinrin's brother like that. We can't and we really shouldn't bother trying to
force them to adhere to our ethical standards when we're out there; we're as alien to them as they are
to us. Much that wishing for a universe like Star Trek is always good, the reality of Life out there is
that it's a dog-eat-dog universe. The good thing is that you're all empowered by the ONE planet
whose residents realized that right away, then strove to stay on top of the game like they have since
the Dawn of Power."

"Even before that," Sakuya mused as she crossed her arms.

"At least with those poor slaves of the lar'beke, we can be merciful."

Eyes locked on Margareta von Spee. "We can't be too merciful, Margareta," Luisa then warned as
she gave the third of the Deutschland-class cruisers a warning look. "Will all of them open their eyes
and see the truth of their 'gods' when we smash their ships to have their symbiotes given to young
Utako?"

"Of course! Always be watchful!" the pocket battleship assured with a nod of her head. "However,
this must be kept in mind: Given that Paula Schoeni, Sydney McCain and I were able to dispatch
Heru'ur and his allies so quickly, their Jaffa were swift to capitulate and accept becoming shol'va
when Herr Bra'tac came aboard to see to the safety of that young child Frau Kasuga took to the
Anquietas woman that had been caring for him. Ja, defend oneself and those one is assigned to
protect. But don't let it become an unnecessary massacre. A show of mercy could go a very long way
if it's done right."

"Winning future allies, you mean?" Yoiko wondered.

"Ja."

The others hummed as they considered that...

****

The rotunda, minutes later...

"So you think that's the best thing to do?"
Hearing that question from the quite-independent biker-babe from Fukunokami that had come back to Earth to be with the man she was attracted to, Tanenobu Karen took a deep breath. "Hai," the Herald of Fight Scenes said. "Don't get me wrong, Benten-san. I like the idea of you getting a chance to be with Onii-chan. But since we encouraged the girls Hinako-chan brought here to the island to consider being with Onii-chan..." Here, the native of Odawara shrugged. "Well, I doubt any man who really cares for the feelings of women would want to be caught in the middle of something like that. Onii-chan's always been like that even if he had to act the idiot after he was separated from Onē-chan in April. I doubt he wants to wind up in a situation similar to what they went through when Lum-san came here and found herself squaring off against Shinobu-san. Onii-chan hates it when girls fight over him."

Shigaten Benten blinked before she sipped her own tea. It had herbs in it prepared by Osamu Shirayuki to help the native of Bensaikyō overcome some of the health problems she had done to herself because of excessive drinking; much that it was seen as tradition on Fukunokami to consume their native vodka from childhood, it hadn't done her body any favours. "Yeah. Especially girls like the ones Hinako found. There's not an ugly one in the lot. I was mentally undressing them the instant I saw Hatsue for the first time after she brought Hinako to Onishuto, when they discovered all the Goa'uld who had taken over the bodies of the Imperial assholes in town. I'd sleep with any of them as much as I would with Darling." Her eyes then sparkled. "He's still got to have some fantasies about that, Karen!"

"He does," Karen admitted. "But Onii-chan feels guilt every time those fantasies come back to haunt him. Remember, he knew a life as a girl from the day Aunt Ayone brought Onii-chan to Yiziba in the first place. Even if he lives as a boy now and half of Onē-chan's past-selves were men, Onii-chan's still influenced heavily by what he did when he was part of Onē-chan" Here, the fifth-oldest of Tariko Katabarbe's and Moroboshi Ataru's half-sisters by order of birth scowled. "I just can't wait for someone to find those monsters that did that to them!" she then hissed. "Who gave them the right...?"

"Probably declare some sort of divine right or something stupid like that."

A sigh answered her. "Hai, true..." Karen breathed out, then she perked as she looked in the direction of the main commons. "Ryōko-san..?" she breathed out before shaking her head. "Poor woman..."

"What was she before?" Benten wondered as she called up the image of the gangling adopted native of Yokosuka who had developed magical powers atop whatever strengths her battle doll body gave her.

"Light aircraft carrier Ryūjō," Karen answered. "If she's anything like what Amélie-san appears to be given what she did yesterday morning to the Mizunokōji estate, she'll be able to hit from a very long distance away. I don't know if her onmyō-dō skills will be of use in space. Does she need to speak..."
her spells to use them? Does that type of magic work in a near-vacuum?" She shook her head. "Far too many questions. Too many questions. Even the older girls like Fujiko-chan..."

Benten chuckled. "I thought you Yizibajohei could multitask better than that!"

Both women laughed at that observation, then Karen looked again, this time focusing in the direction of the entrance to the rotunda. "Okay, Rinrin-chan's taking Tove-chan up to her laboratory so she'll stay close to Stian-kun as he heals himself. Sakuya..." She then tensed before a moan escaped her. "Oh, Sakuya-chan, don't!" she hissed out as she rose from her desk, moving to walk out of her bedroom to confront the oldest of the sisters now in the main foyer with Matsunaga Ryōko.

«Stay out of this, Karen-chan,» the mental "voice" of the Healer of Men's Hearts echoed in both girls' minds. «I understand Benten's wanting to be with Onii-sama, but if we're to get Onii-sama properly Gifted as soon as we can, we need someone different to help him.»

"Oi! Sakuya! That girl was a fucking' WARSHIP until not so long ago, never mind her being WRECKED at the bottom of the damned OCEAN for seventy years!" Benten hissed out, not sure if the interior walls of the rotunda would block her voice if she shouted out that comment to the other woman. "What the hell makes you think that she'll want to sleep with Darling so fucking soon?"

«She's like Yoiko-san, Benten,» the native of Kyōto who was now matriarch of the Moroboshi Clan answered. «One of the Great Old Ones touched Ryōko-san's soul when she was reborn and Gifted back in May. It's no wonder her magic's so powerful.»

«Don't press her too hard, Sakuya,» Hirosaki Chikage called down from her room.

Karen blinked, then she moaned. "Masaka...!"

****

Ataru's bedroom, minutes later...

"Um...h-hi!"
Moroboshi Ataru perked on hearing that voice before he looked over her shoulder. "Ryōko-san!" he called out as he waved the transformed aircraft carrier into his room. As she closed the door behind her, he barely noted Sukeyama Sakuya standing in the hallway. "Everything okay?"

"Um...well, what do you expect?" the adopted native of Yokosuka admitted with an embarrassed smile as she sat down on the bed beside his desk. "I mean, much that I've had about six months to adjust to being human after I was Gifted with the help of Samiloloto-sama, I'm still learning about being human, much less adjusting to being a girl when my whole crew were men!" She shrugged again as she gave him a curious look. "It must have been hard for you. Getting split apart from Tariko-han like that." At his surprised look, Ryōko shrugged. "Pretty easy for me to notice how badly hurt your karma is."

"At least you're not as nosy about it as my old school nurse could be at times," he admitted as he turned back to his laptop, tapping things into his diary. After discovering Redet Lum's willingness to invade his privacy like this, he made backup diary entries on his personal computer which expressed his real feelings about the situations he encountered while allowing the written diary to remain out there as a way of distracting his "wife" from probing his personal thoughts. After he was permanently split away from Tariko in April, he got Mihama Chiyo to encrypt his machine to act as an extra layer of security just in case Lum or anyone else like his mother Kinshō got a little too curious about what he had on his computer. Of course, getting his sister Chikage to later enspell the computer to make people like Lum not take any notice of his work made things all the safer for him; Rinnin had been happy to ensure everything he put into his computer in Tomobiki was replicated to his laptop in Welcome House. "Not to mention as hungry. I have to admit, those yōkai that loved to plague Sakurambō-sensei's life like they did really did a number on her. Hopefully now that things aren't plugged up in Tomobiki these days, she can recover and get on with her life, not to mention press things with her fiancé." He looked at her. "How's Tove-chan?" he then asked, not using the term "daughter" when speaking of the gynoid.

A shrug responded. "I'm totally lost in the middle of a typhoon right now, Ataru-han. I mean, I can understand why Chibi wanted to bond with someone. Her soul really felt fractured when I teleported up top after Rin-han called for her to stay in her lab. But being kissed by her and being called 'mama'..." Ryōko then moaned as she pulled at her hair. "A MOTHER?! ME?! Gods! Why did that happen to me?! I just turned into a human being six months ago! What do I know about being a MOTHER?!"

He gave her a sympathetic look, then he tapped controls on his laptop to bring up his music files to get the audio player going. As the lovely sound of an orchestra playing a rolling melody echoed from the speakers, he got up and moved to sit beside her, gently sliding an arm around her shoulders to allow her to lean against him. Ryōko's cheeks reddened at such a show of closeness even if she didn't push him away. "No wonder all the girls are attracted to you, Ataru-han! You're so WARM...!"

"Benefit of having grown up as a woman," he admitted before confusion crossed his face as he gave her a look. "When exactly did you get Gifted, Ryōko-san? And who's this 'Samiloloto' you just
"The Lord of the Deep," she explained. "One of the Great Old Ones who helped the Undying Lord drive off the Old Ones back in the Great Expulsion. He knows Napaaqtuqarunnangittuq-sama, the one who blessed your granduncle's ship after she got turned into Yoi-han. I came back on the anniversary of my commissioning in 1933." A smile crossed her face. "Samiloloto-sama sensed what Hina-han was doing, then decided to try it out. He had much better luck than all the hōō and all their friends did."

"So why didn't you come back right away?"

Ryōko shrugged. "Since I was brought back with Samiloloto-sama's help, I felt it was only right to volunteer to keep watch over his domain, going out to help the magical ministries in Polynesia keep an eye on things. It's a good thing I did. Those staleblood dorks in the ICW loved to pick on the locals 'cause they're so isolated and they don't have magical militia like the Aussies and the Kiwis do. I didn't mind delivering a few curses on them when they got to be right ornery at times. Earned some real coin with the kobaloi in Gringotts, which allowed me to get the right sort of supplies, not to mention a change of clothes or two." Here, she gazed down at the dark maroon sleeved top of her old-model battlesuit, which came with baggy black trousers, a white belt decked with maroon magatama symbols and the Imperial chrysanthemum on her buckle and white slip-on shoes on her feet. On her chest were two dancing gold oriental dragons interlaced with each other, the whole embossed with her ship's name 龍驤 in black framed in gold. "I mean, it's a good suit and makes me look mature..."

Oh, hell! She's got breast envy! he moaned to himself. He had noticed that Ryōko's "superstructure" was shaped in the same general dimensions as that of any of the Akamatsu sisters, which would make people think her more of a young teenager enduring an odd growth spurt than the twenty-something woman her more mature face projected to other people. Seeing how naturally curvy a lot of the shipgirls now on Ōmure-jima appeared to be like must have hit Ryōko the wrong way.

And if she had spent SIX MONTHS in Polynesia, where there were a metric tonne of beaches where healthy, beautiful people flocked to all the time to enjoy the sun and experience romance...!

"You're beautiful no matter what you wear," he whispered as he gave her shoulders a squeeze.

Hearing that, her brown eyes teared. "You're just being nice...!"

Before she could break down and cry, he gently shifted her face to gaze upon him, then he leaned over to gently rub his forehead against hers. "Hey! Grew up as a woman here," he said as his eyes
twinkled. "We were raised on a planet where the best virtue people seek in a pillow scene partner is how powerful you are and how well you can fight, not how well you look."

She blinked, sniffing back the tears. "R-r-really...?"

"Yep. I'm sure that once you find the right person who sees how good you are with your magic and how strong you are, you'll be beating back the pillow scene partners with a damned rod of neutronium..."

Ryōko laughed before she perked as the drum beat of one of the most popular big band songs from America echoed from the laptop speakers. "Let's dance!" the carrier said as she stood, pulling him up.

"Hey!" he yelped, though he didn't resist her...

To Be Continued...

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WRITER'S NOTES

Translation list: **Kapitán Pervovo Ranga** — Captain of the First Rank, Russian naval rank title for a navy captain (NATO rank code OF-5); **VMFRF** — Short for **Voénno-Morskój Flót Rossíjskój Federátsii** ("Military Maritime Fleet of the Russian Federation"), the official name of the Russian Navy; **VMFSSSR** — Short for **Voénno-Morskój Flót Sojúz Sovétských Socialistícheských Respúblik** ("Military Maritime Fleet of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics"), the official name of the Soviet Navy from 1918-1991; **Linéjnýj Korábľ** — Literally "ship of the line", the term applied to dreadnought battleships in Russia (short-form LK); **Kapitán Vtoróvo Ránga** — Captain of the Second Rank, Russian naval rank title for a commander (NATO rank code OR-4); **Líder Linéjnych Minonóstsev** — Literally "squadron torpedo boat leader", the term applied to large destroyer flotilla leaders in Russia (short-form LÉM); **Kuch Adolatdadir** — Strength is in Justice; **Oktjábr’skaja Revoljútsija** — October Revolution; **Bol'shevikí** — Literally "those of the majority", this is the Russian way of saying "Bolsheviks"; **Tsar Morskój** — Literally "Emperor Ocean", the ancient Slavic god of the seas; **Děvushka flóta** — Maiden of the fleet; **Cha no yu** — Literally "tea and hot water", the name always applied to a formal tea ceremony meeting between different parties; **Nigorizake** — Literally "cloudy sake", this is a sweet version of Japan's most well-known drink where fine rice particles aren't removed in the distilling process, giving it an opaque
appearance; **Totenkopfverbände** — Literally "death head units", this was the formation within the **Schutzstaffel** ("protection squadron", short-formed as **SS**) that administered the Nazi concentration camp system.

Names of shipgirls who were introduced in this chapter:

Kapitán Pérvovo Ránga **Galína Jurkévich** VMFRF (ex-VMFSSSR) (**Linéjnyj Korábl' Gángut** [pendant 028])

Kapitán Vtoróvo Ránga **Luná Vladímirskaja** VMFRF (ex-VMFSSSR) (**Líder Èskádrennykh Minonóstsev Tashként** [pendant 473])

**Nishimura Fujiko**-taisa DNTK (**Tennō Heika Gunkan Fusō** [BB-18])

**Nishimura Yaeko**-taisa DNTK (**Tennō Heika Gunkan Yamashiro** [BB-19])

**Kawasaki Ikuko**-taisa DNTK (**Tennō Heika Gunkan Ise** [BB-20])

**Kawasaki Hoshiko**-taisa DNTK (**Tennō Heika Gunkan Hyūga** [BB-21])

Note that the Russian and later the Soviet navies didn't make use of hull/pendant numbers until after World War Two. Atop that, once such numbers were formally adopted, the Soviet naval leadership got into the habit of SWITC**HING** said numbers around to confuse foreign observers as to which ship was which. To simplify things, a single block of hull numbers were set aside for each ship starting from the first modern vessel of the type. The 000-099 block is set aside for battleships and battlecruisers; **LK Gángut (Galína Jurkévich)** is the twenty-ninth such ship built for Russia. The 300-599 block is set aside for destroyers (including destroyer leaders); **LÈM Tashként (Luná Vladímirskaja)** is the 174th destroyer built for Russia (and later the Soviet Union as a whole). Of course, the issue concerning Luná's namesake city now being the capital of an INDEPENDENT COUNTRY rather complicates things for her. Note that in the language of Uzbekistan, the name is spelled "Toshkent" in Latin script. Also note that like France, Russia doesn't make use of a universal warship prefix but type prefixes.

Patronymics used in this chapter:

**Tat’jána Andrévna** — Tat’jána, daughter of Andréj

**Fudzíko Sídzuovna** — Fujiko, daughter of Shizuo

**Galína Vladímirovna** — Galína, daughter of Vladímir

**Luná L’vóvná** — Luná, daughter of Lev

**Utáko Masáovna** — Utako, daughter of Masao
In real life, *World of Warships* wasn't officially released until 2015. However, given the presence of Tat’jána Chapáeva (the Philosopher) in Russia, having been Gifted in 2007, it's certainly possible to for her to have helped the people at Wargamming Group Limited to release that game and its sister games such as *World of Tanks* much earlier.

Sarah Ross and the Yonaga no Tenshi (literally "Angels of the Era of Eternity") first appeared in my first try at a *Seventh Carrier* fanfic story, *The Angels of the Era of Eternity*.

In the universe of my stories, the Mahōtokoro School of Magic on Minami-iōtō was closed down at the order of Yomigawa Tsukiko in 1930, forcing all students to transfer either to private instruction under the control of the Imperial Magical Commanderies or go to the Dejima School of Wizardry and Witchcraft (which is my creation) in Nagasaki. However, due to the support of Dejima alumni when it came to Yomigawa's pursuit of the Wars of Liberation, information given to magicals in Europe still claim that Mahōtokoro is an active institution and one of the ICW's eleven premier accredited schools of magecraft; any information concerning Dejima is always censored from the public media.

Samiloloto is the name I give to the Lord of the Deep, an ancient Polynesian legend about a VERY large shark — most likely a still-surviving megalodon (*Carcharocles megalodon*) — that was seen by ancient fishermen across the Pacific and was reportedly encountered by fishermen from New South Wales in Australia in 1918! In the universe of my stories as I indicated above, Samiloloto (taken from the Samoan term meaning "ocean king") is one of the Great Old Ones and is approximately three million years old. Many thanks again to Harry Leferts, who first introduced me to the concept of the Lord of the Deep in his *Harry Potter and the Shipgirls* snippets.
Sisters and Clones

Chapter Summary

Tariko, Ataru and Hiromi believed that all the idiocy that had haunted their lives thanks to the aliens was finally gone.

They were wrong...

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In the northern part of Onishuto on Uru, three hours before breakfast (Tōkyō time: An hour before midnight on Sunday)...

"Um...excuse me, Bakaro Bolem...?!

That pleading query came from the dark-haired twenty-something man dressed in the uniform of the Speedy Flyer, Lu'unum ("Streak"), now standing near the front gate of the small plot of land near the edge of the ruins of the old Imperial capital city wrecked in the Mother of All Fight Scenes. In a reflection of trailer parks in America, many personal scout ships were parked in this plot; this part of town was where many single Urusians who graduated from galactic middle school came to live once they felt it right to get away from the parents and start up their own life. Gazing on him now as the crunching noises of a very powerful FISS-type moving to demolish the interior of one such scoutship echoed in the background — one the citizens of Japan's most infamous town would immediately recognize — was a woman with hime-cut raven hair that flowed past her hips, blue-grey eyes peeking out of a severe face. She was dressed in a solid black jumpsuit with a dark grey spiral-like insignia on her chest; dark grey belt, boots and a dark grey-trimmed black cloak finished the ensemble. "Hai, what is it, Ha'aku-san?" she asked in a very quiet voice that belied the cosmic power she wielded.

That form of address made the man born Ha'aku Asim blink in surprise. "Um...I'm sure we've never met before..." the reincarnated forest ranger from the northern polar continent on Yiziba noted.
The woman calling herself Tsuchidō Otome in honour of the twelfth of the "sister" characters in the hentai dating simulation game Colourful Kiss — on which her current Avalonian body was modelled after — smirked. "You know who calls you that, Ha'aku-san," the current incarnation of the Endless One, Bakaro ("Azriel"), coldly declared as the sounds of multiple bones being shattered echoed from inside the now-wrecked scoutship home of one Aruka Ran.

Hearing that, the Speedy Flyer blinked before his blue eyes went wide in horror. "Gift thievery...?!

"Unintentional, but yes," Otome finished as the frightened shriek of Redet Lum's childhood "friend" echoed from inside her devastated home, that soon followed by a sharp crack indicating that the daughter of the naval infantry officer who had been Redet Invader's sponsor in the Union Congress before his death had just been slapped down by Otome's sister Yamanobe Saki, now the current incarnation of the Demon of the Slums, Takrobim ("Scrapper"). "Still, it has to be punished. Ran needs to be shocked out of her sense of privilege because Lum foolishly deferred to her too much thanks to what Ran's mother did to her every time she was punished for something Lum did. One can't allow a lur'buo lonukro to run around thinking she's at the top of the card in a fight scene. Agreed?" Here, a cold and cruel smile crossed the Endless One's face.

Ha'aku winced on hearing that vicious term being applied to Ran, even if Otome had used the western equatorial continent pronunciation meant to identify someone who was SO out of control and SO willing to shatter even the scant few social conventions existing these days on Yiziba that such a person NEVER deserved to have his/her Gift seed returned to the Great Crystal on death to allow the battle line to continue in a future generation. Before he could ask Otome what actually marked Ran in that manner, one side of the pink-haired Seishin teen's mobile home was blasted from the hull, the shattered and bleeding ushitora body of Lum's old fiancé flying out with it. A moment later, a woman with shaggy, shoulder-length strawberry blonde hair, part of that pulled away from her face by a white headband, emerged from the wrecked scoutship, a grim smile crossing her face. "Let's see you try to steal food from yatai owners in the future, you walking slab of mindless beef!"

"DIE!"

Ran's personal anti-fortification weapon discharged, sending a rocket slamming into Saki's back. Ha'aku ducked as the warhead detonated, though there was no shrapnel from the blow; as the Demon of the Slums, Yamanobe Saki was a high-end FISS with rumoured adrenaline boost capabilities similar to what Takino Tomo welded as the Wild Warrior of Passion. All that attack did do was to make the first of the "sisters" turn to stare intently at Ran with chestnut eyes that now blazed with a level of hate that the Seishin teenager had never experienced from ANYONE before. "I'm done with you," she coldly declared. "Now it's Otome's turn! Enjoy your DEATH SCENE, lur'buo lonukro!"

Ran shrieked on hearing that phrase, but didn't lunge clear of Saki's hand fast enough before she was pitched out of her scoutship to smash into the ground at Otome's feet. As a pained moan escaped the
naval infantry officer's daughter, the Eternal One mirthlessly smirked as her eyes began to glow with the endless fires of the power she welded; Otome was a cosmic meta nearly at the level of Kasuga Ayumu, though she wasn't affected by the bouts of narcolepsy the native of Wakayama who was the first of Tariko Katabarbe's "pretty girls" to be Gifted endured. "Hello, Ran," she declared, her voice booming at a level that would impress any Goa'uld system lord. "Do you remember the day you CREATED all of us? When you tried yet again to continue your silly spat with Lum, then caused a RIOT in Tomobiki when you went and created THOUSANDS of CLONES of Nii-ya? When, after it got too much for you to handle, you HID in a GARBAGE CAN...then had the audacity to tell Lum, 'It's not MY problem. Maybe they'll go away if we treat the source! LET'S WIPE OUT THE REAL ONE!'"

As Ran felt her bowels vent themselves as she felt the cosmic aura of the woman who now stared at her like she was confronting a cockroach about to be squashed, Ha'aku moaned. "Oh, Crystal...! And they have the guts to say WE'RE monsters?!" he demanded.

Otome smiled. "It's a good thing that WE understand what REAL civilization is all about, Ha'aku-san," she declared as she gazed at him, winking. As the Speedy Flyer quickly noted that, she turned back to lean down and yank Ran up by her hair to bring her to the Eternal One's eye level. "Now, Ran...since your mother's not around to punish you, it's time to put you down like the RABID ANIMAL you are!" she said with a mirthless smile. "THIS time, Lum's NOT going to save you!"

A second later, a howling shriek of agony filled the early morning air...

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Aboard the FPSYS Normandy, an hour later...

"Hai, Hina's here! What's wrong, Isaac-san?!

Isaac Thomas sighed as he looked over his shoulder to see the Spirit of Innocence standing by the main door leading onto the Normandy's pilotage platform. "Hey, Hinako!" the Wise Lone Sage called out as Saeru Hinako came over to join him by the command chair. Escorting the youngest of Tariko Katabarbe's half-sisters was Hamamoto Kodachi, an anticipatory smile on the face of the reborn fourth of the Shiratsuyu-class destroyers. "A pleasure to meet you at last, Commander!"

"Poi!" the adopted native of Sasebo said as she grasped her host's hand before she sighed as she crossed her arms, taking a guarding stance close to Hinako. "Honestly though, you really got to stop asking Hinako-chan to go all over the place like that! She needs her beauty sleep!"
The native of Queens chuckled. "Well, under normal circumstances, I'd be happy to handle this potential confrontation scene myself, Commander Hamamoto. But given the specific circumstances that started this mess, it's best to have the best person available to help out in this case. And that's Hinako here," he said as he pointed to Hinako, making her blush.

"Isaac-san!" the native of Niigata moaned before she sobered. "So what's wrong?!!"

"You know Ha'aku Asim, don't you?"

An eager nod answered him. "Hai! Ha'aku-san was there when Maclay-sensei got Gifted as Gospel because that meanie-meanie creep Leno Lu'umo-san was trying to toss around Gift seeds all over the place! Margo-san sure got really, really, really mad when she found out what that baka-baka was doing!" Hinako then caught herself. "Is Ha'aku-san okay, Isaac-san?"

"He's fine. An hour ago, he witnessed the current incarnations of Azriel and Scrapper tear the snot out of Seq Rei and Aruka Ran in a mobile home park near the ruins of old Onishuto." As Hinako nodded at that while Kodachi drew out her PAA to call up names and see what sort of powers they had, the Wise Lone Sage added, "They're now in intensive care in the main hospital for the defence force. Ran's in a coma, one so deep that I doubt even Yomi could get her out of it." He gazed at her. "Here's the weird part. When Azriel put Ran down with her powers, she stated she was seeking revenge for her Nii-ya...and this had something to do with some sort of riot in Tomobiki that Lum was also involved in."

Hinako blinked. "Eh?! Ran-san hurt this person's big brother?!!"

"Yes. Atop that, Ran supposedly CREATED both the new Azriel and Scrapper."

The Spirit of Innocence blinked as she considered that for a moment, then she gasped as a possible explanation came to her. "They could be two of Onii-tama's clones from that silly thing Ran-san started the same day Fujiko-chan got Gifted!" she said.

"That's impossible!"

Everyone turned around as Tariko's would-be "wife" came up to join them, she accompanied by her fiancée, cousin and friend. "Can you be honestly sure about that, Lum?" Isaac asked as he turned his chair so he could stare directly at Redet Lum.
The warlord's daughter from Onishuto nodded. "I'm more than sure, Isaac-san! When it was all over with and I destroyed the clone gun that I made and the one Ran-chan made, all the clones disappeared. No clone created in that manner can survive the destruction of the device that created it. There's no way any of them could survive, much less survive to be Gifted!"

"Unless your so-called 'most faithful' had something to do with it, koishii."

Lum's head snapped around so she could stare at Hiromi Katabarbe, then she moaned. "Tcha! That WOULD be something one of Ōgi's idiots would do!" she said. "But what happened to them?!"

"Fortunately, Ha'aku was able to get pictures," Isaac said as he tapped a control on the armrest.

Two holographic pictures were instantly displayed, showing both full-body and facial close-ups of the women who had effectively disposed of Lum's old fiancé and her oldest "friend" not an hour before. Gazing closely at those pictures, Redet Ten blinked before his eyes went wide. "Colourful Kiss!" he declared as he pointed at the pictures. "Those two are Yamanobe Saki and Tsuchidō Otome! You know them, Hiromi-onēchan! That's one of the games Ataru hates a lot!"

"EH?!" Hinako cried as Hiromi moaned and Lum winced. "You mean that etchi game where the player is allowed to do mushy stuff with his SISTERS?! EWWW!" she then groaned, looking understandably nauseated. "How could someone do THAT to them?!"

"'Great Evil', remember?"

That was a sympathetically-smiling Oyuki. Gazing at the crown princess of Neptune for a moment, the others then sighed. "So are these creeps still around?!" a shuddering Kodachi asked as she cracked her knuckles in anticipation. "If they went and made clones of Teitoku behind his back like that, they deserve to get a nightmare party dropped on their heads!"

"Hinako-chan, are you SURE you got rid of all the observers in Tomobiki?" Lum asked.

Hinako nodded. "Hai! Ayumu-chan used an Infinite Wave to make sure any of the creeps that could have still been hiding when you had that silly scene with that Memory creep were sent home! We didn't touch the Avalonians of course, not to mention that bomb in the Ginza!" She hummed as she considered that before she looked at Isaac. "Isaac-san, could Saki-chan, Otome-chan and the others
have been in their birth tubes and hidden somewhere when we did that?"

The New Yorker considered that. "Strong possibility. An even stronger possibility might be that
some other group who would have reason to hate the Niphentaxians might have gone and 'liberated'
them. Which means they may have known of the connection between Ataru, Tariko and Yiziba.
Which then certainly justifies Otome's charge of Gift thievery she declared to Ha'aku before she put
Ran into a coma." He shook his head. "Mimir, have you been able to trace down anything?"

"No trace of either of them, Isaac," Mimir Shepard answered. "If they teleported in..."

"Unknown ship de-cloaking ahead of us, Doctor!" the android manning those controls called out,
which made everyone tense. "Power sources indicate Yizibajohei origin. Twelve life signs aboard,
all Gifted Avalonian bioroids. One other possible life sign..."

Isaac tapped controls to allow the main screen to display a strange rectangular craft with wings
holding outlying warp drive pods, now orbiting Uru with her stern facing the Normandy. Gazing at it
for a moment as he tried to interpret what had inspired this particular ship, Isaac then blinked a
couple of times before he shook his head. "Um...Hinako, I never knew that Tariko was a fan of Mel
Brooks," he said as he gazed in amusement at the Spirit of Innocence while the others on the bridge
all gaped at the ten-to-one sized replica of the winged 1986 Winnebago Chieftain 33 that appeared in
Spaceballs...

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Minutes later...

The Normandy had slid up alongside and slightly below the new arrival, which bore the name
EXCELSIOR written on the protective cover over the "spare tire" mounted on the rear of the hull
above the aft bumper, where two sub-light drives had been installed to propel this flying motor home
that was larger than even the biggest Terran jumbo jet through in-system jaunts. As soon as the top
boarding hatch of Isaac Thomas' command ship was positioned close to where the side door would
be on a real Winnebago, a retractable jetway extended from the side of the Excelsior's hull, it forming
a perfectly-pressurized boarding hatch for an away party to visit the smaller ship. Once the seal was
positive, Hamamoto Kodachi gently carried Saeru Hinako up and into the jetway, they accompanied
by Fukushima Hatsue, Ashikaga Shikuko and Toyama Sumie. Once the four destroyer shipgirls had
formed a protective line, Isaac himself floated up on an anti-gravity pad projected from his boots, he
followed by Redet Lum (carrying her fiancée Hiromi Katabarbe in her arms), Redet Ten and Oyuki
(who used her ice powers to create a quasi-lift to allow her to join her friends on this visit).
People soon came up to the main outer hatchway, which had a metal plate with Yizibajohei characters written on it. Gazing at the plate, Hinako blinked before she read it, translating, "'Who needs the Force when you have the Schwartz?' She shook her head before she gazed on the man who gave her Kasa-tama. "Isaac-san, is Hina going to get a headache if she asks Isaac-san what the Schwartz actually is?"

The Wise Lone Sage was trying not to chuckle while Ten was smothering his mouth with his hands so he didn't laugh out loud in front of the Spirit of Innocence and both Hiromi and Lum looked away. "No! It's actually similar to your sister's type of humour, Hinako!"

The native of Niigata considered that before she crossed her arms. Honestly! She wasn't a kid! "Isaac-san better be sure of that!" she said before she turned and politely knocked on the doorway.

Muffled footfalls echoed from inside the Excelsior before the door unlocked and swung open, revealing a girl that seemed to be a virtual double of the third of the Fubuki-class destroyers in demeanour; she had a dull and glazed look on her face that made her seem as if she just woke up from a long period asleep. She had shaggy blonde hair in a quasi-bouffant style, amber eyes peeking out of a pretty yet not unique face. As she was in a potential battlezone, she was dressed in a battlesuit, soft beige overall with pink belt and boots. On her chest was a symbol that instantly attracted Hatsue's eye: A kotatsu of all things over a pink heart emblem! Seeing that made the adopted native of Maizuru blush in delight as she realized she was now standing close to someone who could UNDERSTAND her!

Given she had been turned into an Avalonian bioroid, it didn't take much for Kishiwada Fūka to lock in on the raven-haired destroyer-turned-VERY cute teenage girl, curiosity crossing the former clone's face.

Silence.

Ditto.

Ditto.

Then...

Hearts now shone in Fūka's amber eyes as she found herself mentally undressing Hatsue. As Hinako gaped in shock on feeling the Gifted bioroid's "time of the month" overcome her like a tsunami,
Hatsue zipped up to stare intently into the eyes of the person who had just become her new admiral.

"Where?" she asked as she pointed to the symbol on Fūka's chest.

"My cabin," the sixth of the replicas of the Colourful Kiss cast declared.

ZIP!

People then blinked on seeing that both Fūka and Hatsue had VANISHED! Seeing that, Sumie gazed on Isaac. "Um, Thomas-sensei, who the heck was that, anyway?" the adopted native of Maizuru (where she had been built as THG Shimakaze) and P'ohang in South Korea (thanks to all her half-sisters seeing the industrial city on the East Sea coast of Kyŏngsangbuk-to as their adopted home town) then asked. "I thought you said I was the fastest metahuman on Yiziba!"

The Wise Lone Sage chuckled. "Honestly, Sumie, I'm as clueless as you are."

"Don't be surprised, Isaac," a strange woman's voice then hailed as footfalls heralded the arrival of the replica of the fifth of the Colourful Kiss "sisters" bearing a copy of Moroboshi Ataru's soul. "Fūka got a rather rare Gift when the idiot androids that kidnapped us from our 'masters' around the time of the Pseudo-War tried to splice some of Onii-san's DNA into our bodies. Of course, not realizing until it was WAY too late to stop things when the Giftings got underway for all of us that Onii-san had been given a battle doll body when he had been separated from Onē-san in April."

Isaac and the others looked before the New Yorker grinned. "Why didn't you name this ship Eagle 5 like in the movie?" he asked as he gave his host a knowing look.

The somewhat bookish girl — Lum was instantly reminded of Tsuruya Rumiko — with the bobcut black hair and the blue eyes behind protective goggles smirked. "Even if I'm trying to dial it back, Isaac, I do have things to be proud of," the current incarnation of the Supreme Polymath, R'buoyatodo ("Excelsior"), declared as she gave the Wise Lone Sage a knowing look while crossing her arms. "I'm taking a break from the torture scene I was running on one of the androids that wanted to learn how Onē-san and Onii-san ticked when we came by here and Saki decided to settle scores with Lum's so-called 'friend' and her old 'fiancé'." Scorn dripped from Karasawa Mitsuki's voice as she waved the others aboard her ship. "I've got some nice Ukoach mountain eta powder; the eta-ch'ukaitu I can make from it is excellent for one's sinuses." She winked at Lum while she turned to wave everyone aboard.
As Hiromi's fiancée tried not to squeal at being offered that — the red pepper powder that came from the mountainous region of Noukieos' southern main continent was worth its weight in any hard currency used anywhere in the Galactic Federation; not even Lum's father Redet Invader could afford any large shipments of Ukoach eta powder or any teas derived from that — the others were quick to respond to Mitsuki's unspoken invitation. They headed away from the main boarding area and up four decks to the primary recreation space; fortunately, there were handy lifts for those people who couldn't fly. Once in the very homely space, the visitors were quick to note that another of the transformed clones was in the room. She was in a uniform of the older style, soft brown overall with white belt and boots. On Haruhino Shizuka's chest was the manor house insignia of the Mistress of the Travel Lodge, Huokro'o ("Landlady"); her first-self had become famous for using her psychokinetic abilities to create emergency shelters for homeless refugees fleeing the larger cities on the western equatorial continent during the harsh years of the Dawn of Power. Already, cups of spicy yet sweet tea were set out on the circular table for the new guests. "Please make yourselves at home," Shizuka then bade in a voice that reminded Lum of the couple of times she had come across Tendō Kasumi during the year or so she had lived in Tomobiki. "The others are either sleeping, meditating or having some relaxation time torturing our current 'guest', so Mitsuki-chan and I will answer all your questions."

"You're too courteous, Lady Huokro'o," Oyuki said with a polite bow, which Shizuka returned. As the others took their seats and Hiromi moved to prepare Lum's tea for her, the crown princess added, "I only just wish that our fathers had been far more understanding when it came to our 'most faithful' and how far they were ultimately willing to go with your template if they ever got the chance. I pray that none of you were ever abused when you were transformed into Avalonians."

Mitsuki chuckled as she assumed her place at the head of the table. "No. After our souls were captured and transferred into these bodies — the observers who were in charge of that knew of Onii-san's revulsion concerning Colourful Kiss — they kept us in our gestation tubes for future study until they were sent home by Ayumu-chan in August. Around that time, some of the Shōzoki who were in town discovered us, then decided to find some way to use us against Onē-san."

"Gift thievery," Isaac concluded as he sipped his own tea, slightly wincing as the harsh peppery taste danced over his tongue; he wasn't used to those type of spices with things he drank.

"Exactly," Mitsuki affirmed with a nod. "Our being kept in our gestation tubes allowed us to recover the memories copied from Onē-san that were suppressed in her mind by this First District group." At the surprised looks from the others, the Supreme Polymath smirked. "I bugged the whole house when Onii-san was out of the building for a time after that whole thing with Memory, so I had a pretty good idea what was going on. By the way, Ten-chan, that was good acting."

Hearing that made Ten suddenly blush as Hinako reached over to squeeze his shoulder in a show of support. "Um, th-thanks, Mitsuki-onēsan!" the firefighter's son sputtered before he sipped his tea. "You stayed away because of what Haruhi-onēchan did, right?"
"Hai, we did," Shizuka answered for her sister as she took her own chair to Mitsuki's right, then telekinetically moved to prepare her own tea. "After all, we had no idea how Lum might react even if the idiots who had the keys to controlling that bomb were long since gone." As Lum grimly nodded, the Mistress of the Travel Lodge added, "Not only that, we didn't want to attract attention to us as we went out to locate those Shōzoki who wanted to turn us into weapons against Nii-sama and Nē-sama."

"How did you get free of them, Shirei-kan?" Shikuko asked.

As Lum and Oyuki both blinked on hearing the adopted native of Maizuru use THAT title with one of their hosts, Shizuka smiled at the second of the Ayanami-class destroyers. "They somehow acquired a sample of Nii-sama's blood, then infused it into our bodies, which effectively pre-Gifted us, then allowed us to be Gifted right away." She then shared a knowing grin with Mitsuki. "Of course, the sheer energy overload of all TWELVE of us being Gifted at once wrecked the whole building where we were being held. Fortunately, given the total level of damage Tomobiki suffered because of the Pseudo-War, it was easy to mask what happened and we made a clean getaway. Once Mitsuki-chan got us teleported back to her past-self's laboratory on Yiziba, she got to work building our mobile home while we proceeded to go find ALL the Gift thieves that were involved with us."

"Including me...?"

Eyes turned to gaze on Lum, then Mitsuki sighed. "You went out of control that day...but unlike your 'friend', you not only APOLOGIZED for what happened, but helped clean it up, Lum." As the warlord's daughter blushed at that compliment while Hiromi squeezed her hand, the Supreme Polymath added, "Given that you didn't know about the Avalonians at that time, it was understandable that you never suspected how far your 'most faithful' were willing to go when it came to Onii-san and us."

"Still, we definitely agree to Nē-sama's whole plan to keep Earth relatively clear of contact with aliens until cooler heads prevail and we don't wind up triggering a multi-planet Mother of All Fight Scenes," Shizuka added, crossing her arms. "Especially given what Hinako-chan provoked with the shipgirls that got a lot of mystical creatures and two of the Great Old Ones in on the action, not to mention those umale r'betiike in America when it came to Naomi-san." As Hinako chuckled in embarrassment while rubbing the back of her head, the raven-haired girl added, "With 'Shipgirl Fever' now underway back on Earth, we all have to strongly keep in mind that there will be some hot heads on the planet who would gladly want to point a just-Gifted shipgirl towards Triton or the Galactic Taxi Company or even Uru itself to retaliate against what people have done to Earth by design and by accident."

"Aren't you coming to stay with us, Shizuka-chan?" Hinako asked.
"Eventually we will, Hinako-chan," Mitsuki affirmed. "But we have to clear things up on the Shōzoki front before we're comfortable moving to Ōmure-jima. It'll definitely take some pressure off Onii-san, especially with Benten-san now involved in what's going on with him atop all the shipgirls that want to be close to him. Atop that, we'd want to not impact on Welcome House..."

"AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAARGH! RELEASE ME! FREE ME! YOU WILL NOT WIN, FLESH-BOT! YOU WILL SUBMIT TO MOTHER...!"

"Um, Mitsuki-chan, who's torturing our 'guest' now?" Shizuka asked.

As the Supreme Polymath blushed, the others at the table blinked in confusion...

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Minutes later...

"FURUYA TOSHIHARU?!"

Everyone gaped on hearing Hiromi's shocked cry, then people gazed at her as the raven-haired teenager now strapped to a diagnostic bed wailed with both pain and outrage as his body convulsed under the sheets that gave him some sort of modesty, especially with the presence of a five year-old boy and an eight year-old girl. Gazing at him, Ten blinked before his eyes went wide. "Ah! It's the Tomato Guy!" he cried, pointing at the struggling amateur botanist.

"Darling! You know this man?!" Lum demanded as she gazed at her fiancée.

The Mistress of Morphing smirked before she walked over to lean into Furuya Toshiharu's face, making him goggle as she allowed herself to morph into a perfect replica of her brother's body, though the uniform stayed the same. As Lum blushed madly on seeing "his" manhood barely masked by that form-fitting costume, Hiromi smirked. "It was just after I was Gifted," "he" explained before morphing back into her proper body. "I was taking Onii-san's place in class for the first time when Ten-chan accidentally burned down the greenhouses where this robot and his friends tended to be a little TOO fanatical when it came to caring for their plants." She gazed at Lum as the warlord's daughter blinked, her eyes widening as memory finally clicked in. "You remember this, don't you, koishii? After they got into a fight with Ten-chan here, he and his friends decided to pretend to be the sons of Leatherface, chasing after all of the boys with chainsaws!" She then blinked as she recalled who else had been involved in that incident, then she stared at Mitsuki. "Were the others...?!!"
"Sadly not, Onē-san," the Supreme Polymath answered as she adjusted her goggles, then walked around the diagnostic bed before she tapped controls on a holographic panel hovering near her "guest's" head, that making Toshiharu gargle before a silent scream escaped him. "Which is a pity! We had to watch as those three tried to turn you all into spare parts for Mister Frankenstein!" she then snarled as she glared at the struggling android while Isaac came over to scan him with the many sensors in his own goggles. "Of course, once that incident was over with, I was more than happy to remove it from the school to make sure it wouldn't hurt you or Onii-san or Onē-san ever again!" As the others nodded, Mitsuki smirked. "Now, all we have to do is wait for this one to finally answer a question that I need answered, then we can dispose of it once and for all time!"

"NEVER!" the android wailed.

"Poi! Question, Teitoku!"

Eyes locked on Kodachi, who had put up her hand. "What is it, Kodachi-chan?" Mitsuki wondered.

"Why are you calling him 'it'?' the fourth of the Shiratsuyu-class destroyers asked. "That's a boy even if he's a machine. Admiral Hatoyama insisted that boy android Captain von Tirpitz and her friends brought over from Norway be treated as a real boy! What's the difference, poi?"

"Because I'd hardly call this one a truly sentient being, Kodachi-chan," the hyper-genius of the *Colourful Kiss* sisters answered with a sneer as she glared down at Toshiharu, who returned that with his own scowl even if the pain he was now enduring was considerable. "To be truly seen as sentient in the Yizibajohei standard, one must be able to think on one's own, feel on one's own and have no constraints in one's choices in life. This thing doesn't have it since it's completely slaved to Mother, which also prevents it from properly thinking on its own and feeling on its own." A smirk crossed her face. "Right now, we're torturing it to make it feel more to break the bond with Mother...!"

"MOTHER WILL DESTROY YOU, FLESH-BOT!" the android shrieked.

"Oh?! Don't you know of Nē-sama's connections to Sagussa, perchance, Toshiharu-san?" Shizuka sweetly asked as she leaned into his face. "Where they developed *genesis bombs*?! All we have to do is drop one on Shōzoran and your precious mama will be DESTROYED!"

"NEVER!"
“Hai! It's Yukari's turn now!”

Everyone blinked, then turned to see a grinning girl looking to be about fifteen standing at the doorway to Mitsuki's laboratory. Possessing long pink hair done in waist-length twintails with an ahoge sticking out of the top of her head, she had teal blue eyes on a childish face. As the shipgirls gaped, Ten snickered on recognizing her: Misaki Yukari, the effective baby of the *Colourful Kiss* characters. She was dressed in a pink-hued silver uniform with dark pink belt and boots, a shower of pink snowflakes descending from her neck to her waist; noting that, Isaac realized Yukari was the current incarnation of the Morning Chill, *Dante* ("Frost"), a mid-level cryokinetic whose first-self arose in the southern polar continent. "Hai! Hai! It's Yukari-chan's turn!" Mitsuki said as she did a high ten with the newcomer. "We'll leave you be and let you have your fun with this thing. If it tells you who its controller is...?"

A hand went up in affirmation. "Hai! Yukari will tell Mitsuki-chan right away!"

The Supreme Polymath waved the others out of the room. Ten seemed to hesitate, but then got tugged out by Hinako. "Ah! Hinako-onētama! What are you doing?!" the firefighter's son protested.

"It's gonna be mushy stuff, Ten-chan," the Spirit of Innocence warned.

Hearing that, he perked before he blushed. "Oh...!"

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*Dear Diary,*

*Oh, Maidens! Doesn't this ever STOP?!*

*Ugh! Why is it that Uncle and everyone else went and allowed that mindless moron Ōgi to DO all this?!*

*Oh! Sorry! Forgot to tell you about Tariko-onēchan's ADOPTED sisters!*

*That's right! Atop twelve half-sisters in people like Hinako-onētama and the others plus one sort of mental replica in Hiromi-onēchan, Tariko-onēchan had one adopted older sister in Moroboshi Negako-sensei, who's Earth's first true artificial intelligence; she was Imperial Special Agent #49, the same being who put a stop to a possible Japanese CIVIL WAR at the end of the Second World War by killing off all the agents of the Black Dragon Society after the late Heavenly Sovereign finally declared the war was over.*

*It turns out that Negako-sensei's soul would have been put into Tariko-onēchan's head before she*
was moved to Yiziba by her adopted mother when her old host body was about to die. However, when Tariko-onēchan got shifted to Yiziba, the old host didn't have someone to move her spirit into until Ayumu-onēchan came along and let Negako-sensei make use of a battle doll body to finally live her life.

And then Negako-sensei did something incredible.

She became fully organic WITHOUT being Gifted!

It was the first time EVER that a battle doll had done something like that!

People on Yiziba still can't understand how that happened!

So since she finally got her own life to live, Sensei went back to Earth and became the official Steward of the Moroboshi Clan, watching over things because Tariko-onēchan's grandmother Nagaiwakai-obāchan was dying and the other sisters were just too young and living with their own families.

She's also said to be the one being on Earth who can equal that planet's Jewel Warrior, General Dean Raeburn, when it comes to martial arts.

Sensei could probably deck any of the characters from Dragonball Z without any problems...and she doesn't have super-strength unless she boosts her body with the ki energy she can use by just touching the Earth!

Given that she wasn't really allowed to develop her own emotions, Sensei is really reserved and logical, sort of like Mr. Spock in Star Trek is. It kinda scares all of Tariko-onēchan's sisters, so they don't have much to do with Sensei.

But now...

Now Tariko-onēchan has TWELVE other adopted sisters!

Maidens!

Ōgi is such an IDIOT...!

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Outside Onishuto, the Invader home, breakfast...

"A CLONE GUN?!

Redet Lum winced as her father's shout echoed throughout the house. "There was no choice, Daddy..."
Seated beside her at the kitchen table while both Redet Invader and his wife Chim glared at their child, her fiancée smiled. "Otō-san, please! Unlike the idiot who PROVOKED that mess, your daughter here was willing to clean up after herself when people confronted her about it. And the incident was not repeated after Onii-san's clones were disposed off..." She looked over to see the ten girls now relaxing in the living room enjoying spiced tea as they chatted away with Milan Domo and her team about their particular situation. "Or so we thought...!" she added before sipping her own tea.

Invader groaned. "First spacializers, now clone guns! What ELSE did you do on that planet when you were pursuing that boy, child?!” he wondered, making Lum duck again. "Maidens! It's no wonder the United Nations and its member governments were more than happy to support Tariko's overall plan to scare all the aliens off the planet when she revealed the presence of people like her there! Much that I understand how much you wanted to be rid of Rei...!"

Lum tiredly nodded as Hiromi Katabarbe squeezed her shoulders while Oyuki and Isaac Thomas shook their heads. Chim sighed before she gazed at Saeru Hinako, now seated beside Aria des Beauchamps; the second-youngest of Tariko Katabarbe's sisters had teleported over from Ōmure-jima once Hinako passed on the news concerning their new sisters. Both were enjoying lollipops the Candy Lady made with her powers, as was Redet Ten. "Aria likes having more sisters," the native of Paris declared before her lips turned down into a frown. "Aria doesn't like the fact that Yukari-chan is doing mushy stuff with that mean android that once tried to hurt Nē-ya," she added before a sniffle escaped her. "Kusun...!"

"Hina doesn't like it either," the Spirit of Innocence added. "But Onii-tama is really, really, really worried about Asuka-san's boyfriends. If we don't catch the creep that controlled those robots that Nagisa-san wrecked yesterday morning to save Asuka-san, they're gonna try to hurt Asuka-san's boyfriends, not to mention Tove-chan and Stian-chan! That would sure make Ryōko-san upset!" As her sister nodded, the native of Niigata shook her head before turning back to enjoy her lollipop.

"Don't your powers affect those type of beings, Hinako-cha?" Chim asked.

"There's not that much organic stuff in their brains for Hina's power to touch, Oba-san," Hinako confessed. "Hina could try to calm down people like Tove-chan and Stian-chan down since they have more organic stuff in their brains, but not like that creep Yukari-chan's trying to get to talk about who's in charge of those robots in Tomobiki that hurt her and..."

Everyone jolted on hearing a garbling scream echo from outside. Invader was instantly on the move towards the main door to see what was going on, he joined by all the others as they crowded around the doorway. Reaching the portal, the battlewagon warlord stopped on seeing Furuya Toshiharu now frozen in a solid block of ice that had been created by Misaki Yukari. Given his current pose, everyone was quick to realize that the android had been trying to charge into the Invader home when the Morning Chill caught him with her powers. "What happened, Yukari-chan?!” Hiromi demanded as she moved to shield Lum just in case the trapped Toshiharu somehow broke free of his
containment and attacked.

As the warlord's daughter blushed as she sensed what her fiancée was doing, Yukari grinned madly as she held up a "V" sign for victory. "Hai, Nēnē! Yukari stopped the stupid robot from hurting Nēnē and her sisters! Yukari got a name, too!" she then whooped.

"You did?! Who?!" Karasawa Mitsuki demanded.

"Someone named Kamiya Hokuto!"

Lum blinked on hearing that, then she exchanged looks with Hiromi. "Darling!" the former said as she pointed out the doorway at the frozen Toshiharu. "Hokuto-san's part of our class..." She caught herself as she remembered what happened a couple days ago. "Er, I mean...!"

"Hai! Hai! Hai! I know! I know!" the Mistress of Morphing said, waving her fiancée down. Reaching into a pocket on her belt, she pulled out a PAA, tapping the crystal. "Oi! Rumiko-san! Are you there?!"

A second later, the holographic image of the Careful Planner of the Circle of Thought, currently seated in her new work area in the clock tower belfry at Tomobiki High School, clearly looking very tired. "Trying to get some sleep right now," Tsuruya Rumiko moaned as she rubbed her eyes clear before slipping her goggles over her eyes. "What is it, guys? Couldn't it wait until morning?"

Hiromi blushed. "Ah! Gomen! Gomen! We just found out about a possible Shōzoki infiltration of the school, Rumiko-san. Kamiya Hokuto from the class is a possible android, one slaved to Mother."

That made Rumiko's eyes widen for a moment before she chuckled. "Oh, relax, Hiromi-chan! The instant Hikaru-kun and Asuka-chan came by on Saturday morning, I took a scan of those androids Nagisa-chan wrecked. Instant anything slaved to that eye in the sky that runs Shōzoran tries to walk onto the grounds, he or she will be in for a very ugly and very embarrassing surprise."

"What sort of surprise would that be, Rumiko-san?" Oyuki asked.

"I'll let the bragging one there explain!" Rumiko breathed out. "Oyasumi..."
"HEY!" Mitsuki yelped.

The link was cut...

...just as loud cracking noise echoed from outside, making people spin around to see fissures appear on the ice block holding Toshiharu in place. As Yukari gaped in disbelief at the fact that the machine she had helped subdue was now breaking clear of his imprisonment, the ice finally shattered as he let out a delighted roar. "YOU LITTLE MONSTER! DIE!" the android howled as he glared at Ten, which made the firefighter's son awk as he remembered his last encounter with Toshiharu.

"Oi."

Toshiharu blinked as he stopped, then spun around...

...before he screeched in outrage at the sight of Kishiwada Fūka standing next to her sister, a big and plump tomato in hand as she took a huge bite out of it. "MURDERER!" the android screamed as he cocked back his arm, allowing it to morph into a familiar chainsaw that was mated to his elbow, which made everyone gasp in shock before Toshiharu sent it flying at his target...

**KK-KKRANG!**

Yukari gasped as said chainsaw instantly shattered on hitting skin the density of carbonized neutronium! The only effect it had on Fūka other than making her hair ruffle a bit was to see the tomato in her hand slit in half thanks to flying shrapnel, which sent the pieces into the ground. As Toshiharu gasped in horror on seeing such a healthy tomato destroyed like that, the sixth of the *Colourful Kiss* sisters blinked before she levelled a very annoyed gaze his way.

"That was my breakfast," she declared...

...before her boot-covered foot slammed into his groin!

Everyone seeing this watched as half of Toshiharu's body was CRUSHED by the sheer force of that blow, a fairly powerful sonic boom echoing from the place of impact to rattle people's ears. As the android squealed in a very good simulation of mortal agony, Fūka's hand snared his still-intact head, then she pushed that extremity towards the ground, tearing apart his body thanks to the whiplash
effect his compressed abdomen forced on his torso. As the effectively dismembered bottom half of
the amateur tomato farmer spiralled into the sky for a moment before dropping onto the ground to
shatter into several pieces, Fūka's hand slammed his face into a rock buried in the dirt in front of her,
crushing his skill and snapping his head off the neck. His now-severed thorax smashed against her
limb, the impact force breaking the arms off, severed parts tumbling onto the grass nearby as torn
power conduits that served as the android's equivalent of one's circulatory system spilled hot plasma
onto the ripped clothes, instantly igniting them and the artificial skin underneath.

As the onlookers gaped at such a display of strength, Fūka hummed before she slouch-walked her
way back to the nearby Excelsior, ignoring the slightly wary look on Yukari's face.

"I liked that tomato..." the former then said with a sigh.

Silence fell over the scene as people took that in...

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Ah...ha-ha-ha...!

Wow! Fūka-anē sure is something, isn't she...?

Oh, right! Forgot to tell you about Colourful Kiss!

Like most Terran kids his age, Ataru was always interested in seeing naked girls since puberty was
coming on; despite his overdoing it at times, he was pretty much no different than anyone at
Tomobiki High School, even that dork Megane!

Because of that, he always collected pornographic magazines and videos and video games and the
like, always doing his best to hide them from me. I realize now that he was doing that out of the fact
that I was seen as too young by Japanese law to view that sort of stuff, so he was protecting me in a
way. Of course, I wasn't really interested in that sort of stuff — I'm a KID, after all! — but now that I
understand why Ataru acted the way he did when he had that stuff...

Oh, well. He's okay with what happened these days.

Anyhow, there were adult things Ataru WASN'T interested in. Anything that showed girls being
abused or anything like that was something he never liked. He didn't really like stuff that
exaggerated a person's body; Ataru was not one for the unnatural beauties, with Sakura-nēchan
representing the limit of what he could tolerate when it came to how girls looked.

And he sure didn't like storylines where boys did mushy stuff with their own SISTERS!

Which is why he hates Colourful Kiss!

That's a dating simulation game whose latest edition came out in 2007. It's where the player
character meets up with twelve girls — which is kinda the average when it comes to those type of
games — and while being treated as their 'big brother', ends up working to do mushy stuff with them!

And Ataru learned of this game BEFORE he found out he had REAL sisters!

Unfortunately, that dork Ōgi's people in Tomobiki found out about this, then — all because they saw Ataru as the 'Great Evil' and wanted to find some way to hurt him to get him away from Lum-cha! — they captured twelve of the clones Ran made during that clone gun fight in March. Once they did that, they inserted their souls into Avalonian bioroid replicas of the Colourful Kiss characters!

Even more so, they layered programming on all of those clones to make them ACT like the characters in the show!

And when they all got Gifted thanks to the Shōzoki now in Tomobiki...!

Well, you just saw what Kishiwada Fūka-anē did to that android I had a fight with back on Earth a month ago.

Fūka-anē is the current incarnation of the Slothful Fighter, Samga ; she adopted the Russian name Oblómov as her fighting name on Earth.

Fūka-anē is a top-end FISS...but because her energy levels tend to burn out fast, she ends up sleeping a lot of the time.

Wow! No wonder Hatsue-chan took to her right away!

The other FISS-type in the group is Yamanobe Saki-nēchan, who is the Demon of the Slums, Takrobim ; on Earth, you’d call her Scrapper . She was the one who was involved in crippling that dork Rei earlier today.

The one who put that idiot Ran into a coma is the 'mysterious' sister of the group, Tsuchidō Otome-nēya, who's the Endless One, Bakaro ...or Azriel as she calls herself on Earth. She's a cosmic meta like Ayumu-onēchan but can’t affect as much as Ayumu-onēchan could, though she could keep doing things even longer than Ayumu-onēchan could. She's kinda like Chikage-anekun in a way.

Then there's the effective den mother of the group, Haruhino Shizuka-nēsama; she's the Mistress of the Travel Lodge, Huokro'o; on Earth, you call her Landlady. She's a psychokinetic who is able to build new shelters and all that for people when there's need for a dry and warm place to live. She helped her sister Karasawa Mitsuki-onēsan build their ship, which they call the Excelsior.

That's not surprising, since Mitsuki-onēsan is the hyper-genius of the group. On Yiziba, she's known as the Supreme Polymath, R'buoyatodo ...which on Earth, is translated as 'Excelsior '! She's like Isaac-san and Rumiko-onēchan and Rinrin-aneki and all the other super-smart people that Tariko-onēchan can rely on to help with really technical or alien stuff.

Then there's Misaki Yukari-nēnē, who's the kid of that crowd. She's a cryokinetic known on Yiziba as the Morning Chill, Damte...or Frost as she would go by on Earth. She's like an older Hinako-onētama who never really grew up...
Outside the Invader home, an hour later...

"A motorhome?"

"Hai!" Mitsuki said as she puffed with pride.

A weary-eyed Hatoyama Rinrin blinked as she gazed at the polymath of her newly-adopted sisters, then she gazed back at the *Excelsior* for a moment. "A motorhome?!" she repeated.

"Hai!"

Again, the Technological Sorceress of the East stared at the Supreme Polymath for a moment before gazing on the latter's ship. "Okay, I'll bite. Why a motorhome?" the native of Ōsaka then asked as she gazed once more on Mitsuki, trying not to allow her eyebrows to twitch.

"Because motorhomes are cool," the physically older girl said. "And *Spaceballs* was cool, too!"

A sweat drop appeared in Rinrin's hair. "Um...yeah...!"

Standing nearby in a row were Moroboshi Ataru and the other sisters, who were all looking in confusion at the transformed clones. Of course, Shigaten Benten and a slew of shipgirls had come with their spiritual admiral and his kin to this planet to ensure they remained safe in a potential battlezone; the destroyers Saeru Hinako had helped see reborn in her "shipgirl hunts" earlier in the year had been quite vocal to the others concerning how much of a pair of monsters Seq Rei and Aruka Ran had been with Ataru back in Tomobiki. Acting as "flagship" over this bunch was Matsunaga Ryōko, who had been gaily dancing with her new "admiral" when the news came in from Uru about Mitsuki and her siblings.

"Um...I hope this isn't too much of an issue for you, Madame Sakuya," Redet Invader then mused as he gazed in sympathy at Sukeyama Sakuya.

The Healer of Men's Hearts sighed. "Well, since this is all Ōgi's fault in the first place — not to mention whoever was controlling THAT thing that Fūka-chan decided to beat down..." — here, she indicated the burnt grass nearby where Furuya Toshiharu had met his end thanks to Kishiwada Fūka; a field team of the Defence Intelligence Directorate had come by minutes before to retrieve the android's shattered body for analysis — "...blaming these girls for what happened is just plain wrong.
Much that I HOPE they don't do what their namesakes in that silly game did to their Onii-sama..."

"Sakuya-chan!" Hano Wakaba snapped as she glared at her opposite number among Ataru's sisters. "That's INCEST! I wouldn't EVER think of doing that sort of thing with Nii-san!"

"I think they understand that point, Sakuya. You don't need to bother them about it anymore."

Eyes locked on Hirosaki Chikage, who was seated off to one side, next to the futon Kishiwada Fūka used to sleep under. Beside her was Tsuchidō Otome; both were enjoying some tea. Naturally, both the Slothful Fighter and the destroyer that selected her as her personal "admiral" were tucked in under the quilted blanket that covered that table snoozing away; both Fūka and Fukushima Hatsue were lying on a futon spread out over the grass to ensure their clothes didn't get dirty.

As all the shipgirls who escorted Ataru and his sisters here moaned at the sight of the third of the Fubuki-class once more slacking off and sleeping, Redet Lum took a deep breath. "You're going to have your hands full with them, Darling," she warned.

A moan escaped Ataru. "Gee, Lum! I really needed to hear that!" As his would-be wife winced at that sarcastic comment from him, he then sighed before walking over to slip his arm around Mitsuki's, making the Supreme Polymath blush. "So why don't you show me the inside of this thing, Mitsuki-chan," he then bade, making the blue-eyed raven-haired woman blush madly. "I need to make sure that this ship is nice and comfortable for you all to travel around in."

Her cheeks instantly reddened to the *Don't Point That at MY Planet!* stage. "Ah...h-hai, Onii-san!"

Once he made that statement, his blood sisters moved to follow him aboard, with the clones following in their wake as they paired up with the sisters. With a wave of her hand, Otome teleported herself, Chikage, Fūka, Hatsue and the kotatsu to the Slothful Fighter's quarters aboard the warp-capable mobile home. That left behind a chorus of shipgirls and Ataru's would-be lover, not to mention Lum, her fiancée, family and Oyuki, plus Isaac Thomas. "Um...you don't seem to be really surprised at this sort of thing happening, Hiromi-cha," Lum's mother Redet Chim noted as she gazed on Hiromi Katabarbe.

"According to Negako-san, it's always been the policy of our family to take in orphans who have nowhere else to go and no one around to support them, Okā-san," the Mistress of Morphing explained as Benten and the shipgirls headed over to board the *Excelsior*. That served as the signal for everyone else to head back into the Invader home. "Given they're spiritually Onii-san's own sisters because they were effectively cloned from him thanks to Ran-san, they have as much right to be part of the overall Moroboshi Clan as Sakuya-chan and the others do because of their blood..."
relationship to Onii-san; in all effect, people like Mitsuki-chan are no different than myself. Or Onii-san for that matter."

"Makes one wonder who WAS the real Moroboshi Ataru in the end," Oyuki observed.

Wry chuckles escaped the others as they headed inside...

...then Chim perked on hearing an impatient buzzing noise echoed from the main communications station in the kitchen. Flying over, Lum's mother tapped controls to allow the signal to come through. "Invader residence...oh! Mrs. Mamoru!" she called out.

Lum tensed on hearing that, realizing who was calling in without even seeing the woman: Aruka Chena, Ran's mother. "Good morning, Mrs. Invader," the raven-haired Seishin forty-something woman said from her house on the colony planet of Shingetsu. "I just got a call from the Onishuto Defence Medical Institute saying my idiot daughter is in intensive care, in a COMA of all things! Not to mention the man she's pursuing as her husband." A slight sneer crossed the woman's face on her saying that. Both Chim and Invader knew that Chena didn't care at all for Seq Rei...and with both of Rei's parents dead atop his uncle having died at Jessica Wakefield's hand, there was no one of sufficient social standing to support the frontier pilot's case...that is IF he wanted to pursue Ran still and not try to claim Lum back. "What in the name of the Maidens happened to the foolish girl THIS time?!" she demanded.

Invader sighed as he joined his wife. "I'm afraid that one of your daughter's foolish stunts on Earth concerning my daughter came back to blow up in her face, Mrs. Mamoru," the captain replied.

He then explained the whole situation. Hearing what happened, Chena growled. "Oh, I knew letting that girl go to that planet would cause trouble!" she spat out. "That's all she's ever got into ever since she tried to blame things on your child like she did when they were younger. Fine! I'll have her moved to the defence medical unit here on Shingetsu to keep an eye on her. Maybe putting her into the Abbey of the Maidens here might actually TEACH that girl something called 'self-control'."

The link was then cut. As Invader and his wife shook their heads, Hiromi sighed before she gazed on her fiancée, who now had a guilty look on her face...

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In the cafeteria aboard the FPSYS Normandy, a half-hour later...
"You look like someone who wants to admit some things, but isn't sure doing that will help."

Lum perked on hearing that very calm observation, then she sighed as Isaac Thomas moved to sit across from her. She had come aboard the base ship of the Wise Lone Sage after Saeru Hinako convinced her fiancée to check out the clones' ship; Oyuki and Ten accompanied Lum aboard the Normandy. "Tcha...!" the warlord's daughter breathed out. "You overheard Ran's mother when she called in to my parents about her. All the things that Ran was said to have done when we were kids..."

"You actually did," the New Yorker finished.

Lum slumped. "Tcha..."

He nodded as Ten shook his head and Oyuki squeezed Lum's shoulder in support. "As you'll know now, Ran has an Avalonian sister, Aruka Damasu," Isaac said. "She was one of the living 'gynoid targets' Ōgi tricked Nassur and Cinba into accepting as a way of protecting you four from threats like the Mikado and GeRanko, then was allowed to live on Okusei under Kyech's guardianship until Tariko got to them once Ayumu told her about them, then helped them be Gifted."

"Damasu-cha is now Yiziba's effective president," Oyuki noted. "Benten and Lum-cha told me that."

"That's correct," the Wise Lone Sage stated. "Thus Tariko, Ataru and Hiromi got a convenient window when it came to understanding your 'friend' and what drives her. Naturally, they shared their observations with myself and the other polymaths they personally know of. Much that you might have 'provoked' such punishments in the past when it comes to your 'friend', Lum, something like this was going to happen one way or another. That's the type of person Aruka Chena ultimately is."

"A child abuser," Oyuki concluded, shaking her head. "Which, given that Damasu-cha is Avalonian as well as Yizibajouhei, would spell that woman's death should she ever have the ill-luck to cross Damasu-cha's path. To say anything of Hensō-cha and the others as well."

Lum cringed. "Still...!"

"Lum, Ran's fight scene was just with you," Isaac advised. "She had no right to involve Tariko or Ataru in any way, shape or form. That she did such many times basically made her as much of a berserker as some other people I happen to know of. People who effectively become rabid dogs, so
blinded by revenge that they wind up not caring about how many people suffer as long as the one they want to target suffers for it most of all. In my eyes, she's not worthy of any respect or sympathy from you. Captain Itō had the rights of it yesterday when she came here to defend Ataru from both her and Rei after Benten declared her feelings for Ataru. Ran knows she's effectively a nobody here on Uru now. She can't hurt you through people you care for on Earth — who would be defenceless against her in the long term — which takes the power she has over you away from her. Hiromi can certainly defend herself and has utterly no care at all for Ran. Given what Saki and Otome did to her this morning, Ran will know now that she's the hunted and not the hunter. That's not a place a bully likes to be."

"Oh, shit! Don't tell me we got another Ryōga running around, Isaac!"

People perked on hearing that sarcastic woman's voice, then they spun around...

"Hey, stranger!" the Wise Lone Sage called out with a grin as he got up, offering his hand to the muscular yet petite redhead with the crystal blue eyes walking up to join him, dressed in a form-fitting dark blue jumpsuit with a red belt and boots, a red rearing horse's insignia on her chest. "What the hell are you doing here now, Kanami?!" he then demanded. "Don't you know you have classes tomorrow morning in Sunnydale?! Given that you're hanging out with the 'bad' crowd...!"

A snort escaped the current incarnation of the Untameable One, Muona ("Mustang"), the most powerful FISS-type ever to live on Yiziba. "Do you honestly think I give a shit what Snyder the Troll actually wants, Isaac?" Hayashi Kanami (né Saotome Ranma) wondered as she gave him a wary look. "'Sides, Kikuko's interested in having pillow scenes with the old football team, so she wants to hang out with the crowd inside the school to get up to date on American teen stuff."

The native of Queens gave the "heir" of the "Saotome-ryū" a wary look. "The 'old' football team?" he wondered as he crossed his arms while Ten flew over to float close to Kanami. "I take it these folks ran afoul of the nightlife in Sunnydale," he then concluded.

"Yeah, you could say that," she responded as she hugged the firefighter's son. "Hey, Ten-chan!"

"Kanami-nīnē-chan!" Ten whooped as he snuggled up against the Untameable One.

She gave him a sharp look. "Oi! What did I tell you?!"

A blush crossed the Oni child's face. "Only call you 'Kanami-nē-chan'...?"
He got kissed on the forehead, which made his blush turn as deep red as ripe cherries. "Better!" she declared, which made Ten relax, then she gazed on Isaac. "'Sides, there's rumour running around the 'Dale that a new 'big bad' is moving to take up the place Angel, Dru and Spike left behind. Since I'm not really needed unless it's some real power demon — and Molly Hecht often likes to get involved in those sorts of fight scenes — I came here to get the sitch on what the lar'beke are doing, plus keep Takino in line." She then looked around. "Oh, speaking of the bonkura, where the hell is she?"

"Dirtside," Isaac declared as he gave the newcomer a look. "Please keep it off my ship, Kanami!"

"Hai, Sensei!" the transformed native of Nerima crowed back...

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_The island O'ahu in Hawai'i, Joint Base Pearl Harbour-Hickam Library on Mills Boulevard, a half-hour later (local time: An hour after breakfast)..._

"Thank you again, Captain Owings!"

The currently quite dazed adopted native of Phoenix and Brooklyn could only nod as the group of smiling seamen in civilian clothing saluted her before heading out of the library to return to their barracks and get the pictures they were able to take on those small "cellular phones" posted on the incredible worldwide communications network called the "Internet" through something called "social media". Shaking her head as she once again found herself thanking the managers of the library that she could bring a good strong cup of coffee from the base wardroom into the building here while she moved to catch up on the seventy years of history since her sinking, Sonia Owings could only sigh before she sensed a concerned look coming her way from the Episcopal minister who had been on Ford Island when she had been reborn the previous afternoon. "What is it, Reverend?" the reborn Pennsylvania-class super-dreadnought asked before sipping her coffee.

"It's overwhelming, isn't it?" Reverend Louis Cole asked.

Thinking on that, Sonia nodded. "Yes, it is overwhelming. I was able to sense some things in the years my hull was on the bottom of the harbour, especially with all of my crew that survived being buried in the barbette of Turret Three every time they answered Taps." A sigh escaped her as she focused her eyes on the ceiling overhead for a moment. "Not just them. All the people who came to the memorial over my hull, no matter their nationality or age or anything else..."
"Well, that's a good sign," an aged voice mused from one end of the table, which made Sonia smile as she gazed on her old quartermaster, who had also been on Ford Island the previous afternoon. "Much that the idiots that started that war in Japan deserved what was coming to them, the sheer level of damage we did to that country was hideous. Especially..." Here, QM1 Wayne Hunt tried not to scowl. "Especially the damned bombs that murdered that admiral's family in the end."

Grim nods echoed from the other people seated at the table. Upon her reporting to the commander of the Pacific Fleet, Admiral Cecil Haney, within an hour of her Gifting and rescue by that mysterious shipgirl whose identity NO ONE at Pearl Harbour knew of, she had been assigned a small division's worth of guides under Reverend Cole's leadership while waiting for the proper paperwork to be pushed through and see her officially welcomed into the United States Navy Reserve. Of course, the whereabouts of her elder sister Margaret Penn — much less all the others who had been sunk at the Crossroads nuclear bomb tests in 1946 — was a mystery to COMPACFLT or any of his subordinates. Supposedly, some highly secret air force agency was directly involved with Margaret and the others, but as to who it was and where on Earth they could be based...!

"Don't worry, ma'am. It'll all straighten itself out."

Sonia smiled at the elderly Marine master gunnery sergeant who was the senior enlisted person assigned to her detail. MGySgt Thomas Beckett was from Chicago. He wouldn't be listed on the normal nominal rolls of the Marine Corps as he was part of the Magical Wing of the service set up nearly a year after Sonia's sinking in response to the rapid movements of the Greater East Asia Liberation Army under Marshal Yomigawa Tsukiko's command. A veteran of the magical side of the Wars of Liberation, he was currently part of Charlie Company, First Battalion of the 75th Marine Regiment (Magical), which normally recruited from magicals living throughout in the Midwest States. While nominally a reserve formation, the Magical Wing and its component regiments could be called up to duty at the order of either the President or the Secretary of Magic, who himself was a veteran Marine officer, having topped off as executive officer of the 72nd Marine Regiment by the time of the end of the Wars of Liberation. "I thought this Joint Specialized Warfare Command could cut through the red tape and get me back on the active nominal rolls a lot faster than even your people do it, Master Guns."

As snickers escaped the others at the table, Beckett shrugged. "Even if it is an established command in the military hierarchy, Captain, the Specialized Warfare Command is basically a manning pool of metahumans currently and recently retired from the uniformed services with just a small clerical staff running the show in San Antonio," the veteran magical naval infantryman noted, rolling his eyes.

Sonia shook her head. She knew that Fort San Antonio — now part of Joint Base San Antonio with two Air Force installations and an Army airfield — had been chosen as the site for HQJSWC due to the fact that the late leader of the Liberty Legion, Texas Ranger David Collins (also known as the Cosmic Cowboy, the Wrangler), came from that city. But to believe that America had been sorely behind Canada when it came to organizing its military metahuman formations was hard to process.
Beckett had told her that within a year of Tariko Katabarbe starting her mission to get people Gifted to protect Earth, Prime Minister Jean Chrétien ordered the mobilization of the Specialized Warfare Regiment of Canada as a fighting element of the country's special operations forces, with then-Brigadier General Dean Raeburn taking charge of her old students in country for a while until the decision was made to re-mobilize the Royal Canadian Corps of Air Cavalry to provide tactical aviation services to both the Army and CANSOFCOM, she becoming the first Master General of that corps in over thirty years.

"Sonia'll be plugged in where she can fit, you mean," Hunt's granddaughter Donna Reese mused.

"Most likely, ma'am," Beckett answered. He knew EXACTLY where Sonia would be posted, but since Stargate Command was as top secret to the no-majs as the Magical Wing of the Marine Corps, he wouldn't reveal that unless ordered to by very competent authority. Of course, he knew how to lock in no-majs into the country-wide Fidelius charm to allow people like Reverend Cole and Quartermaster Hunt into the secret of magic — which would also allow them to stay quiet about the SGC — but he hadn't been cleared by his own commanders to perform that. "It'll come soon, I'm sure..."

"Captain Owings!"

Sonia's head snapped around...

...then she got to her feet, returning the salute of the wide-eyed lance corporal that had double-timed it into the library. "Report, Marine!" the adopted native of Phoenix and Brooklyn demanded.

"Beg pardon, ma'am! But we got five shipgirls on the lawn by the community centre up the street!" the panting Marine declared. "All of them are Japanese; the kanji on their uniform chests call it out!"

"Has anyone tried to talk to them?" Reverend Cole wondered.

"My gunny's trying now, Padre," the just-arrived rifleman declared. "They either don't speak English or don't wanna speak English! But one of these girls has got hold of one of those short swords they used back in the war...and she looks like she's gonna use it on HERSELF!"

Sonia's eyes went as wide as saucers. "No...!"
"Seppuku...!" Beckett hissed.

Before someone could ask what was going on, the Chicagoan firmly grabbed the super-dreadnought by the shoulder, then he concentrated hard, instantly apparating both of them out of the library...

****

_In front of Hickam Communities Ka Makani Community Centre, that moment..._

"OH!"

"Ma'am! For God's sake, put that sword down! The war's over...!"

Shaking herself before snapping an annoyed look at Beckett for teleporting her here without warning, Sonia then looked to the north on the grassy strip separating South Avenue from Porter Avenue...

...before her jaw dropped in horror on seeing the beautiful woman in the white battlesuit with the red belt and boots, the red Oriental castle insignia on her chest topped with the white-trimmed black kanji 赤城, she now gazing tranquilly at the small crowd of armed Marines in battle dress and gaping sailors and civilians being held back by several shore patrolmen. Standing solemnly close to the reborn native of Maebashi in Gunma prefecture (where her namesake volcano was located) and Kure (where she had been built as THG *Akagi*) were four other women, three twenty-somethings and one older teenager. Peering intently at them, Sonia was quick to see the faint ghostly echoes of the ships they had been.

Thanks to being allowed to communicate with the sisters of that brave young man who had defended Earth from alien invasion the previous fall by her just-returned fleet mate Eleanor Livingston, Sonia also knew the human names matching up to the warships they had been.

"CAPTAIN TAKAHASHI! STOP! PUT THAT TANTŌ DOWN!"

That made the kneeling brown-haired woman's head snap over before her brown eyes locked on the reborn super-dreadnought. As others gazed her way, the reborn battlecruiser-turned-aircraft carrier that served as flagship of the Kidō Butai both at Pearl Harbour and later at Midway lightly smiled.
"The only way, Arizona-dono..." Takahashi Anna calmly declared...

...before she plunged the tantō right into her abdomen!

As many people seeing this all screamed and the gunnery sergeant in charge of the guard detail barked for a medic, MGySgt Beckett's hackles instantly rose on sensing the huge aura of the being that just teleported in when a voice called out, "Man, Red, you're the most square of the freaking lot!"

Before people could note what was happening, a flash of fire saw seven shipgirls disappear!

Seeing that happen, Beckett gaped.

That had been phoenix fire...!

What in Merlin's name is going on here...?! the veteran of the Wars of Liberation wondered...

To Be Continued...

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WRITER'S NOTES

Translation list: (Battle Name) Bolem — Lady (Battle Name), the typical honorific used for a Gifted woman on Yiziba; Lur'buo lonukro — Wild animal; Eta-ch'ukaitu — Red pepper apricot tea; Eye in the sky — Yizibajohei euphemism which is normally applied to any sort of artificial sentient being that acts as a controlling mechanism for other beings like Skynet from The Terminator series; COMPACFLT — Navy shorthand for Commander, United States Pacific Fleet.

Streak (Ha'aku Asim) first appeared in Regina Magia's omake A "Quiet" Time in Delaware.
**Colourful Kiss** is, as noted in the text above, a hentai dating simulation game that was created in 2003 by Giga. In effect an hentai version of *Sister Princess*, *Colourful Kiss* is pretty much as described above in Redet Ten's diary entry. Given that all the characters were about the same physical age save for Misaki Yukari, the chances of them being actual sisters (or even half-sisters) of the player character is very slim. No doubt, the *Colourful Kiss* "sisters" are just a group of twelve girls who elected to see the player character as their spiritual big brother even if they had intimate relations with him.

As noted before, the "clone gun fight" between Aruka Ran and Redet Lum was depicted in the *Yatsura* manga story "All of Me" (manga chapter #107).

This chapter introduces a slight variation of the word-encoding system I devised for Yizibajohei as described in Part One. Under normal circumstances, I would translate the kana tsu (つ) as it were written "tu", thus becoming "ko" in Yizibajohei. However, there were times that I actually made the encoding come out "kro" as note the battle name I gave to the Major Domo of the Cosmic Mage Guild, Nalokror'be (the Thaumaturge [Thérèse Peverell]). Thus, I decided to allow the tsu=kro encoding to occur for those who speak the western equatorial continental version of Yizibajohei; that continent on the World of the Forge would be the analogue of Europe before World War Two. Thus elsewhere, the phrase lur'buo lonuko ("wild animal") would be pronounced "lur'buo lonuko".

Ukoach is the analogue of Kangwŏn Province (Kangwŏn-do) in Korea, which today is split by the Demilitarized Zone separating the Democratic People's Republic of Korea from the Republic of Korea.

**Furuya Toshiharu** first appeared in *Yatsura* the anime story "Tomobiki High School Survival! Who Are the Survivors?!" (anime episode #139). He was known as "Toshi-chan" in the anime; his full name is my creation. **Kamiya Hokuto**, modelled somewhat after Kenshirō from *Fist of the North Star*, first appeared in the anime story "Kiss Courier! Darling's First Jealousy!" (anime episode #178); his family name is my invention. Note that a version of Hokuto also appeared in the anime story "Pure Fox Again! Shinobu-san is Love" (anime episode #158); he was depicted fighting and losing against Kotatsuneko. **Aruka Chena** first appeared in flashback scenes in the manga story "A Narrow Escape From Memory Lane" (manga chapter #59); her real name is my creation. Note that in Urusian society my stories, a married (even widowed) woman is always publicly addressed as "Mrs. (husband's given name)". Ran's Avalonian twin **Aruka Damasu** and Lum's Avalonian twin **Redet Hensō** first appeared in *The Senior Year* story "What Price For Love?" **Gegranko** first appeared in the TSY story "Oyuki's Story".

*Sweet Valley High* character note: **Molly Hecht** first appeared in the novel *On The Edge* (novel #40).

Master Gunnery Sergeant **Thomas Beckett** first appeared in *The Seventh Shipgirl*. 
Members of the **Liberty Legion** and the **Soldiers of Freedom** that have been noted on in this story are based on characters created by one of the first truly fan-driven storylines to be published by a mainstream comic company, DC Comics' *Dial "H" For Hero*. These characters here are based on the 1980s incarnation of the series, first published in a special insert in *Legion of Super-Heroes* #272 (February 1981), then ran in *Adventure Comics* #479-490, then continued in *New Adventures of Superboy* #28-49, then finally wrapped up in *DC Comics Presents* #44 when the main protagonists of the story, **Christopher King** and **Victoria Grant**, had an encounter with Superman. The main creators of the second series (the first appeared in the 1960s in the House of Mystery anthology series) was writer **Marv Wolfman** (co-creator of the *New Teen Titans*) and artist **Carmine Infantino**.

Unlike that series, members of the Legion and the Soldiers are their own people and not just mere hour-long super-powered personas assumed by Christopher or Victoria via their "H" Dials, devices that allowed them to acquire such abilities at random. Real names, home towns and stories of the people listed here are my creation. The **Wrangler** (David Collins) was created by Tom Reed.
An Autumn Night's Meeting

Chapter Summary

As wizarding Britain recovers from the destruction of Voldemort and the downfall of the Death Eaters, the leaders of the Sacred Twenty-eight Families move to protect their long-entrenched privileges against the mysterious Duchess of Kyme Eau.

Those fools have NO idea who they're facing...!

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Aboard HMCS Lady Elgin in the Philippine Sea, Monday morning three hours before breakfast (Honolulu time: Sunday, two hours before lunch)... 

"Ooh! Hina's mad now!"

Hearing that complaint from the youngest of Tariko Katabarbe's sisters, the adopted native of Quincy and Long Beach first born as the first nuclear surface warship who just saved the reborn flagship of the Kidō Butai from killing herself smirked before she looked over as Saeru Hinako stepped onto the pilotage of the world's largest battleship. "Found out what the beautiful ones decided to do on your birthday in August, huh?" Naomi Haight-Ashbury asked, her green eyes sparkling with amusement.

The Spirit of Innocence pouted as she sat at the navigation officer's chair. "Hina made a promise to Tennō, Naomi-san!" she then complained, waving her arms.

"Yeah, you did! And you've kept that promise to Papa A!" the transformed missile cruiser stated. "But the beautiful ones are more in tune to the songs of the world than even you are, Little Sunshine!" As Hinako blushed at the shipgirl calling her that, Naomi added, "We can't and we sure shouldn't stop them if they feel something's wrong and they know they can do stuff to make it better. Look how much cool folk worldwide are understanding how groovy people like me are!"
Hearing that, the native of Niigata sighed. She and the other sisters — along with almost all the clones-turned-bioroids that were effectively adopted sisters of the central Moroboshi/Katabarbe family; given her narcolepsy issues, Kishiwada Fūka stayed behind on Uru with Fukushima Hatsue to watch over the Excelsior — had teleported to Earth when the news came in concerning what Takahashi Anna had done on the grounds of Joint Base Pearl Harbour-Hickam an hour ago to atone for the lives her crews helped end one beautiful Sunday morning seventy-one years before. Also having boarded Lady Elgin were a fleet's worth of shipgirls from Ōmure-jima, not to mention Fujita Hiroshi and medical staff from THG Yonaga. Tariko herself had brought her grand-uncle Neyanege over from Yiziba to look in on the suicidal depressed aircraft carrier-turned-twenty-something. Fortunately, the others who accompanied Anna to Hawai’i — the three other aircraft carriers lost at Midway, plus the transformed heavy cruiser THG Mikuma, now known as Matsu Miki — hadn’t shown any signs of following their flagship’s example; from what Hinako remembered on seeing the helpless look on the face of Anna's division mate Oikawa Kei (the transformed THG Kaga), Anna's decision to end her just-begun second life with a mesonium-charged tantō that could slice even through her invulnerable skin took her totally by surprise.

"Hinako-chan! Naomi-san! Hiiojii-san! Sensei!"

Heads turned to the port-side gangway just as a certain chef from Nagoya came up, a tray full of snacks and drinks in hand. "Ah, arigatō, Shirayuki-san!" Fujita Hiroshi declared from the admiral’s chair at the starboard forward edge of the pilotage while the Great Chef of the West came over to hand him some cloudberry tea and some muffins made fresh in the forward junior ranks' galley. "Did you hear anything from Eiichi-san concerning Anna-chan's condition?" he then asked.

"Iie desu no," Shirayuki said as she moved to serve Heather Thompkins, who had teleported herself in from Ottawa to relieve Dean Raeburn so the former leader of the War Hawks could update the senior brass at NDHQ concerning what was happening with the shipgirls; she was now relaxing in the captain’s chair on the port forward side of the pilotage opposite Fujita’s position given she was just a vice admiral and not a full admiral. After the native of Québec City was given a cup of freshly-roasted coffee and some muffins, Shirayuki served Naomi and Hinako with tea, coffee and muffins. "Don't worry about it, Hiiojii-san! With Neyanege-ō'ojisan here now, it'll be alright."

Fujita smiled. "What can you tell me about Tariko-san's granduncle, Heather-san?"

The first post-war Supreme Mugwump of the International Confederation of Wizards who helped the organization recover from the shocks delivered to it thanks to the Wars of Liberation smiled before sipping her coffee. "He's a social conservative, Admiral," she replied in Japanese even if her native Québécoise flavoured her words. "In his eyes, all should be Gifted as soon as possible; this whole idea of waiting until a person's mind matures to accept such a huge download of memories and knowledge makes no sense to him. He's not against the Nameless as his brother chose to be one, but he fears that the information concerning the culture that developed among their kind would be lost if it wasn't given the chance to reincarnate through the Crystal. It's made things rough between him and Tariko according to Negako, but they still care for each other; Tariko is all Neyanege has left of his niece."
That made the adopted native of Hiroshima nod. "Well, that's good..."

"Admiral!"

Everyone turned as several people came up to the pilotage platform. Fujita smiled as they formed a line, saluting both him and Thompkins. "Report, Commander Ross," the would-be commander of Operation Z declared. "How is Captain Takahashi?"

"The captain's wound is fully healed, sir," Brent Ross stated. "She's now in a meditative state to allow her to wake up naturally; she was put there by Captain Itō and Master Neyanege." The native of Norfolk smirked. "Eiichi-san is more than satisfied as to Anna-san's physical state; he was pretty impressed by what Neyanege-sensei was able to do for her. Of course, both Yoiko-san and Hoshie-sensei are ready to tear a strip off Anna-san when she fully recovers."

Laughter echoed over the bridge. "Have you taken the chance to interview the others concerning what happened to them after they were Gifted, Reiko-san?" Fujita asked the reborn Combined Fleet flagship.

Yamamoto Reiko nodded. "A little bit, Teitoku. It's been hard to tear Kei-san and the others away from the ship's records room; as Harlan-taishō told us when we were aboard last night, that's where lists of all survivors pulled out of sunken warships by the crews of the Ryūseizen are maintained. Roberta-san is still there reading over the manifest of those of her crew that were rescued by this ship's crew when she was sunk in Shōwa-jūhachinen. Not to mention all the others from Chiyo-san's fleet who had crews rescued by Elgin-sama's crew in that war. It's quite the detailed record."

"So what happened?" Thompkins wondered.

"Very much like what happened to all of us, Teitoku," Hōjō Chiyo answered. "They were restored and Gifted a month ago, then after scouting Midway to see that it was abandoned, they returned to home waters. They visited magical villages in Hokkaidō to get updated on the last seventy years; they were able to get clothing made by Ainu shamans so they didn't have to parade around in their battlesuits. They crossed the Pacific to Los Angeles to see how much things had changed with our former enemies. Yesterday, they visited a library where they were able to read over texts detailing how the Americans came to see the war. When Anna-san learned that Operation Z was executed before the formal break of relations with the Americans was announced, she suggested flying over to Pearl to apologize to the kami of the vessels sunk that day. Until they arrived on the base, Kei-san and the others had no idea that Anna-san was going to commit seppuku...but when they arrived and she drew out her tantō...!"
"Poor Anna-san..." Hinako hissed.

"I certainly wouldn't say it was her fault," Thompkins then mused. "Back then, she was just a tool for war. It was the men who used her and commanded her from behind who were truly at fault."

Fujita nodded. "Kyōsuke-san, any news from America concerning what Anna-chan just did?" he asked.

Moroboshi Kyōsuke sighed. "The White House is in a panic, Admiral. President Bartlet personally called Tennō to apologize for what happened...though Tennō is aware of Naomi-san's intervention."

As eyes locked on the transformed missile cruiser, the junior navigation officer then added, "According to Rinrin-chan — who was quick to get updates from social media thanks to Hasegawa Chisame-san in Mahora — many Americans are totally shocked by her actions. Experts on samurai culture in that country are working overtime to explain to people there about the nuances of karma and how it would have affected Anna-chan's decision to end her life in seppuku." He tried not to frown on saying that word; as a passionate Taoist, he didn't really care for some of the more extreme elements of Bushidō his shipmates fervently followed. "Most Americans are praying for Anna-san's swift recovery."

Fujita nodded. "I should make a public statement after Anna-chan recovers. Apologize to Admiral Locklear and his subordinates for Anna-chan's actions." Everyone knew that Admiral Samuel Locklear was the current theatre commander for all American forces in the Pacific basin. "There were civilians, including children, present at the base when Anna-chan moved to end her life. Unlike people like Hinako-chan and Shirayuki-chan here thanks to the memories they inherited of their past-selves, normal children wouldn't be prepared to see something so shocking and bloody without consequences."

"I can help you compose it, then Rinrin-chan can transmit it, sir," Kyōsuke offered.

"Excellent. Inform me when Anna-chan is up, will you?"

"Hai!"

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_Hogwarts in Scotland, that moment (local time: Sunday, two hours after supper)...._
"Horrible! That poor woman...!"

"To believe that she would just THROW her life away like that...!"

"Do not be surprised at the captain's act of atonement, Poppy. The Japanese code of honour is quite harsh when it comes to punishing oneself to atone for wrong actions, even if one wasn't actually responsible for said action. It was seen with all of Lady Tsukuyomi's troopers in the Wars of Liberation, especially with those who allowed themselves to go out of control and attack defenceless people in the colonies, which is something she NEVER permitted to happen."

As people took a moment to absorb Severus Snape's words, Albus Dumbledore sighed before sipping his tea. The heads of house, the school mediwitch and several other members of staff had gathered in the headmaster's office to await the return of three of their students from Japan. Also present there was their new boss, Thérèse Peverell; she had allowed the staff the chance to watch the replay of events in Hawai'i an hour ago through her PAA. "Don't worry about Captain Takahashi, Poppy," the newly-recognized Duchess of Kyme Eau stated as she sipped her own tea. "Tariko asked her granduncle, who's quite the healer in his own right, to go look in on her. Besides, given she is a first generation battle doll created by the second Doctor Destructo, she'll have an enhanced healing factor that will save her even from dismemberment. And that tantō she used wasn't ebony mesonium."

"As he was the intended commander of the First Air Fleet — His Imperial Majesty's ships Akagi, Kaga, Sōryū, Hiryū, Shōkaku and Zuikaku; Captains Takahashi Anna, Oikawa Kei, Samejima Sei, Yamaguchi Hiyoko, Matsubara Kanako and Matsubara Suzue now — and served on Akagi as air wing commander before he was tasked to organize Yonaga's construction, Admiral Fujita should be able to make her see that His Imperial Majesty has greater need of living heroes, not dead martyrs," Dumbledore noted.

"Lady Tsukuyomi taught you very well, Albus," Pomona Sprout mused.

"Indeed she did. There have been times over the years that I fervently believed Tsukiko was right all along when she warned me in 1946 that with the stripping of Europe's magical colonies, someone would come along to turn all that aggression inward and unleash civil wars all over the Continent. I tried desperately to warn people that such was coming long before Tom began to make trouble for us all, but alas..." He shook his head. "No one would listen to me," he then lamented.

"In a way, I can understand," Thérèse noted. "People were used to lording it over 'lesser' beings. Having that ripped away from them without any warning or any sort of preparation to live without that privilege, people wanted to keep it all the same and live as they did before. It was no wonder my
cousin was so capable of fooling the conservative leaders in Britain as to his intentions before things went crazy in '80." Dumbledore and Snape both knew that the effectively-reborn Tom Riddle made use of the "cousin" appellation when it came to her other-self to divert people away from trying to trace down her ancestry. "Especially with the way the normal-borns were doing their best to not only try to be full parts of our society, but also find ways to improve things all around. Look at how much people like Rose's mother strove to fit in." As the people there grimaced on being reminded of Lily Potter, Thérèse sighed. "That was just too scary for some. Too much of a reminder of the Schwartze Mädchen."

"May those brave ladies rest in peace," Rubeus Hagrid noted...

...before shouts echoed through the window of the headmaster's office. "Ah, they're here!" Dumbledore stated as everyone stood up, moving to file out of the office and head down to join their charges.

As people headed down the great staircase to the ground floor that connected to the dormitories, they were quick to see people stream out to crowd around three people in civilian clothes, though one was more than recognizable thanks to her hooded white cross-embossed cape that had been personally prepared for her by her grandfather. As members of Ravenclaw, Hufflepuff and Slytherin gravitated towards their now-known Gifted housemates, Hufflepuff senior prefect Maxine O'Flaherty warmly embraced Hirosaki Chikage as she welcomed her back. "Miss Hirosaki! Mrs. Parkinson! Mrs. Granger!" Dumbledore called out, making the just-returned students look up. "Welcome back, ladies!"

A hush fell over the crowd as people gaped at both Pansy Parkinson and Hermione Granger. "What?! You're MARRIED?!" Millicent Bulstrode, who was Pansy's effective best friend in Slytherin, demanded.

The couple laughed. "Don't make it sound like it's a crime, Millie!" Pansy stated as she wrapped an arm around her wife's. "It's a soul-bond, no different that what happened to Ginny and Luna!"

As people automatically looked over to where the school's former star lesbian couple were now standing as they gazed with contentment at this scene, Filius Flitwick chuckled before he gazed in amusement at the older girls. "Now that we no longer have to keep that secret, ladies, I'll arranged for married quarters for you both close to where Mrs. Lovegood and Mrs. Weasley are now living."

"I will join you in that, Professor," Snape added. "Well done to the both of you for keeping that point..."
"AVADA KEDAVRA!"

People screamed out as a bolt of green energy lashed out towards Hermione...

...only to have a humanoid shadow suddenly surge up from the floor to absorb the bolt long before it got to the Bright Seamstress of Spells, the energy vanishing into eternal night. Before anyone could turn around to see what was going on and who had fired that curse, a voice barked out from the great staircase, "Mister Cleveley, you may now consider yourself forever expelled from Hogwarts for attacking a fellow student with an Unforgivable! Headmaster, please hold onto this!"

A wand sailed over people's heads to land in Dumbledore's hand. As people spun around to glare at Andrew Cleveley, a fifth-year Gryffindor descent of a long pureblood line from the Midlands, Thérèse made a gesture with her hand. The air suddenly chilled as an opaque mist rose from the floor close to the wide-eyed boy before they morphed into the images of ghostly normal people with glowing eyes. As the students closest to this contingent of Hollows screamed in horror while they scrambled clear of the deathly spirits, the woman who was also the Countess of Gonebren — thus was seen as the Lady Warden of Her Majesty's Prison there — called out, "Put him in 'C' Block until we can get law enforcement here to take him into custody, lads. I'll tell you when to bring him back."

«Right away, my lady! You heard her, lads!»

Andrew's face turned pale. "YOU CAN'T DO THAT TO ME, MUDBLOOD...!"

His shriek turned into a ghastly wail of terror as the Hollows swarmed him, dragging him into the ground to be teleported to the keep within the heart of Cornwall. As many of the magical-born freshmen and sophomores collapsed and began to cry in fright on realizing that the dark stories of You Know Where were REAL, Thérèse flicked her hand, sending off a cannon blast charm to explode over the students' heads. People instantly fell silent as they stared at this exotic woman who looked to be the age of a seventh-year, dressed "muggle" in form-fitting jeans and a ruffled white button blouse under the green hooded cape that she normally wore with her battlesuit as the Major Domo of the Cosmic Mage Guild.

"Anyone else care to be monumentally STUPID today?" Thérèse then demanded.

Silence.

"I can sense four wands in people's hands now! I KNOW the people who've got them out had
friends or relatives who lost their magic early this morning," the new lady great steward of Hogwarts coldly declared as her blue eyes glowed ominously. "If you want to try..."

"FILTHY MUDBLOOD! AVADA...YAARGH!"

That was Rebecca Taylor, a fourth-year Ravenclaw, who was overwhelmed by another group of Hollows as Thérèse telekinetically sent her wand sailing over people's heads to be caught by Flitwick. Before anyone could say anything more, groups of the deadly spirits surged up from the floor to snare students: Gregory Munslow (a seventh-year Hufflepuff), Heather Joyce (a fifth-year, also in Hufflepuff) and Phillip Urquhart (a seventh-year Slytherin) before dragging them to Gonebren as their wands were passed over people's heads to their heads of house. As people began to shuffle away from the woman who had command of the most feared beings in the United Kingdom, Thérèse shook her head as her eyes went back to normal, she descending down to join the students on the main floor. "Minerva, please contact Director Bones to have her send people here to have those idiots interviewed," she bade.

"Of course, Mormaer Thérèse," Minerva McGonagall declared with a bow before she immediately raced back upstairs to get to her office and put a call down to the Ministry of Magic in London.

Gasps escaped many people there on hearing that ancient Scottish title be uttered by the deputy headmistress. "You can't be the Heir of Slytherin!" a wide-eyed Charles Matthews, a seventh-year in Ravenclaw who was well known for his pureblood attitudes even if his father Orion was actually a moderate on the Wizengamot, spat out. "There's no way a mu-...!"

"A mudblood?"

More silence.

As many of the normal-borns assembled there all began to snicker on seeing the arrogant pale-haired teen cut off like that while Flitwick shook his head in despair at the thought of people inside HIS house harbouring those sorts of useless attitudes, Thérèse gazed at Charles. "So are you, by the way," she declared, making him squawk in outrage. "So is everyone standing in this room, everyone in all the magical enclaves around the world, everyone living beyond those enclaves around the world and all carbon-based sentient beings living on all the inhabitable worlds of the UNIVERSE..."

"THAT'S A LIE!"
Her eyes suddenly glowed as Charles felt a terrible chill surge up from the floor to freeze him in place, making people nearly shriek again. "DON'T INTERRUPT ME!" Thérèse roared.

The castle seemed to quake slightly at her uttering that. "Before anyone becomes a total dunderhead — quoting my own head-of-house — you better realize that all the wards of the castle now answer to her," Pansy added with a cold smile. "And they're now energized to the point where ANY sort of dark object that is brought into the grounds will stick out like a Lumos spell in the middle of the night to Lady Thérèse! Like the blood quills Umbridge had in her office..."

"Oh, poo!" Luna Lovegood then whined. "I thought we destroyed them all!"

As many normal-borns and several half-bloods all gaped in shock at the quirky Ravenclaw fifth-year for making that unspoken admission, Zacharias Smith sneered. "You can't do a damned thing, Mormaer Peverell!" he declared, spitting that title in disgust. "Senior Undersecretary Umbridge is the High Inquisitor now! Even if you ARE the 'heir' to Slytherin, she's..."

"Dead."

Still more silence.

Zacharias was now as pale as a ghost as many of the people the late Dolores Umbridge tried to target all stared in hope at the person who clearly was Albus Dumbledore's new BOSS! "What...?"

"Don't depend on her to protect your arse, Master Smith," Thérèse declared with a mirthless smile, using the proper title for the son of a current lord or lady of the Wizengamot when it came to addressing the arrogant Hufflepuff sixth-year whose father claimed that his family was descent from Helga Hufflepuff herself; this was thanks to the fact that Zacharias was the great-grandnephew of one of Tom Riddle's many victims that helped in the creation of his horcruxes over the years, Hepzibah Smith. "She foolishly attacked a metahuman who had come to visit the Headmaster in his very office last night around this time, trying to kill her with a Killing Curse." As people gasped on hearing what happened, she added, "Of course, since Captain Charlene Boleyn of the Royal Navy Reserve was quite invulnerable to such an attack, she wasn't hurt...but since the Magical Royal Proclamation of 1949 grants metahumans listed to serve as part of Her Majesty's Specialized Warfare Fencibles the UNDISPUTED right to defend themselves against rogue magicals, she retaliated. And blew out a hole in the wall of the administration tower when she turned Madame Umbridge into a very fine red MIST!"

"THAT'S MURDER!" Charles Matthews snapped.
"No, it wasn't, Mister Matthews. It was self-defence."

That was Dumbledore, who was now glaring at the would-be heir of the Most Noble House of Matthews of Sutton near Birmingham, the disappointment in his eyes quite apparent. As some people gulped on realizing that things had changed quite radically over the last couple days, Thérèse sighed. "Headmaster, tell me when the Aurors come so I can have our FORMER students returned from 'C' Block so they can be interrogated and dealt with as necessary. I'll be in my quarters."

With that, she gestured, causing the floor close to the main stairwell leading to the lower levels where all of Slytherin were currently quartered to collapse, revealing a dark passage that seemed to lead right into the bowels of the dungeons themselves. Thérèse walked over and stepped down into it, clearly not bothered by the chorus of outraged stares coming her way from some of the students...though none of them came from any of those within her spiritual house.

Silence fell for a moment...then an amused chuckle escaped Draco Malfoy. "Well, I guess THAT proves Mormaer Thérèse IS the Heiress of Slytherin," the new Marquess of Avebury declared as he crossed his arms, making people stare his way. "Makes me wonder if Lady Rose Potter is as much a Slytherin as his wife is!" He then caught himself. "Oops! I meant HER wife!" As his friends roared with laughter, he waved them towards the main stairwell leading to their rooms.

That instantly set off his "rival" in Gryffindor. "MALFOY, YOU BASTARD!" Ronald Weasley snapped as he yanked out his want to point at Draco. "HOW DARE YOU...?!"

"WHOMP!"

The youngest son of Arthur Weasley was now buried under a magical MALLET conjured up by his sister, his wand clattering over to fall against Lavender Brown's foot. "Shut it, moron!" Ginny Weasley snapped. "The rest of the people in this castle don't want to listen to your LIES anymore!"

Dispelling her weapon, she then walked hand-in-hand with her wife to the stairs so they could ascend to their quarters to turn in for the night. "Mrs. Weasley!" Snape called out after her. "Ten points from Gryffindor for hitting your brother...!" — that instantly earned him moans from the house of the lions — "...and twenty points TO Gryffindor for caring for your schoolmates' auditory health!"

"Yes, Professor!" Ginny chirruped back.
As some people watched them go and several of Ronald's housemates moved to drag him off, others turned to stare in wide-eyed disbelief at the sour potions master while he moved to head to his charges’ dorms and have Pansy's personal belongings shifted to her new married quarters...

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The headmaster's office, minutes later...

"Hello, Albus."

Albus Dumbledore perked, then he smiled. "Hello, Sirius. I take it Peter was part of the party that invaded the Ministry headquarters earlier this morning," he said as he moved to sit down at his desk.

A chuckling Sirius Black nodded as he moved to sit across from him, taking up one of the lemon drop candies the elderly arch-mage always had available for guests. "Yes, poor Wormtail..." he trilled out. "Soon as he was spotted, Amelia poured veritaserum down his throat to get the whole story, then declared me exonerated of the original charges. She told Arthur, who told me; she even got my wand sent back." He held up his blackthorn wand with fragments of the horn of a European horned serpent, then the delighted grin on his face faded. "Why didn't you tell me that Harry was still alive? Even if...?"

"He is now a she and calls herself 'Rose'," Dumbledore finished before shaking his head. "You are not the only one who has totally failed that child, Sirius. When I came to understand the full scale of what Rose's relatives did to her..." He shuddered. "There was little if any physical abuse from either Vernon or Petunia, but their son certainly made up for it as Rose explained to me when I learned what happened to her after Arthur's daughter was Gifted in 2009. But that was more than enough to so hurt Harry that he gladly took the offered hand of help Tariko gave him and allowed himself to become Rose." He shook his head. "You know most of all how chaotic things were when Voldemort fell. Even if there were certainly many people available that could have taken Harry in after he was orphaned, given that questions hung over every one of those candidates in the eyes of all the factions..." A tired sigh escaped him. "You know how easy it was for both Barty Crouch and Millicent Bagnold to continuously deny my request for a trial to determine what really happened to you."

Black growled on being reminded of the long battles Dumbledore had with the Ministry. "Of course they were more willing to do what my delightful late parents requested of them. After all, one must honour the rights of the Sacred Twenty-eight above the rules of the Wizengamot. I hope to hell that Harry..." Here, he caught himself before smiling. "I hope Rose's wife goes after them first. Seeing their traditional 'rights' shown to be the hollow lies they are will do a lot to change things for everyone."
Both chuckled as they considered what was about to happen with the government of wizarding Britain now that Thérèse Peverell was getting involved. Bearing Tom Riddle's very deep knowledge of how the government worked thanks to his friends among the Knights of Walpurgis who formed the first generation of Death Eaters, the Duchess of Kyme Eau knew that despite the centuries of legislation meant to guide the actions of the Ministry of Magic and its departments, there were too many unwritten customs and traditions that were deemed more important than the written legal code stemming from the Separation Act. Much of that surrounded the so-called "Sacred Twenty-Eight Families" — of which the Noble and Most Ancient House of Black of Grimmauld was one of the senior members — and the "traditional rights" they possessed that often clashed hard with the laws of the land.

One such tradition was the right of the elders of one of the Sacred Twenty-eight to demand either a trial for a relative before the Wizengamot in ANY sort of criminal manner major or minor...or, in the right circumstance, actually demand that NO trial be permitted, no matter how heinous the crime.

That had led to the constant blocks thrown up by Sirius Black's parents Orion and Walburga in the wake of his arrest in late 1996 after he was captured at the scene of the "death" of Peter Pettigrew and twelve normal people in Birmingham days after the deaths of Black's spirit brother and sister-in-law at Godric's Hollow. As Walburga's portrait proudly declared to her son when he moved to open up No. 12 Grimmauld Place to the Order of the Phoenix the previous July, her husband declared his son a "traitor to the blood", which convinced both then-Minister Millicent Bagnold and then-Director of the DMLE Barty Crouch to condemn him to Azkaban without trial. Given that the actions of Walburga's niece Bellatrix Lestrange when it came to Neville Longbottom's parents Frank and Alice some days later earned them a full trial before the Wizengamot — a crime that was seen by "polite" society as NOT possible since the Lestrange family and the younger Barty Crouch were "upstanding purebloods" — the imprisonment of Harry Potter's godfather without trial made a very sick sort of sense, especially since most liberal magicals saw the name "Black" and immediately assumed "dark".

Try as Albus Dumbledore did to make people see reason...!

The headmaster sat back in his chair as he rubbed his face. "Well, I've defended those fools from Reality long enough," he breathed out, almost spitting that declaration as years of frustration when it came to dealing with the social conservatives that had dominated wizarding Britain since before the time of the Separation Act of 1692 came out to express itself. "Now they're going to face Rose's and Thérèse's wrath, not to mention be gorged on Yizibajohei prejudices, which will see the 'sacred twenty-eight' condemned to vanish forever from history." At his guest's look, a cruel smile crossed the arch-mage's face. "The actions of your parents and those like them are akin to what happened in the absolute monarchies that were in power on Yiziba as the Dawn of Power began. Rose's and Thérèse's first-selves hailed from a kingdom on the western equatorial continent, Taletuto. An autocracy that made what Svetá Múrometsa fought in the Russian Civil War seem quaint in comparison."
"They'll have allies," Black noted.

"Indeed. Much that they always acted like their parents in public here, Severus has noted how much people such as Draco Malfoy and his peers loathed what their parents did in the war. Part of it comes from the fact that people in Slytherin are still so greatly isolated here thanks to what Voldemort provoked. Part of it comes from tales of what Tariko was doing around the world; with the return of metahumans, it was obvious that the excesses of magical conservatives concerning muggles was about to run into a wall of basilisk hide. And part comes from Mycroft, of course; ever since he was made the Master of the Fencibles, he's led a campaign — beautifully aided by Tariko's sister Yotsuba Dunn and others — to indoctrinate muggleborns before they come to Hogwarts as to the right sort of behaviours. Given what Hermione was willing to do with people such as Draco's friends Vincent Crabbe and Gregory Goyle — even before she allowed herself to be Gifted as the Enchantress — that did much to prevent the mugalophobia that haunted your generation from developing in them."

That made Black laugh. "Ah, what fools these wizards be...!"

KK-KLONK!

"HEY!"

"That's copyrighted, buster! By ME!"

Black blinked as he tried not to forget the pain of the elbow that smashed his head, then he looked up and left to see a scowling Japanese teenager standing there, her eyebrow twitching. "Er...?"

Dumbledore chuckled. "Hello, Tariko. Lemon drop?"

"With calming draught?"

"Naturally."

The Trickster of the Show grumbled as she took one of the sweets, then plopped down on the chair to Black's left, tossing the lemon drop into her mouth. "To explain what she just did, Sirius, her past-self alive at the time William Shakespeare was writing his wonderful plays actually came with Rose's past-self to visit Earth," Dumbledore explained as the new head of one of the Seven and Ten most noble houses rubbed his forehead. "They actually helped Mister Shakespeare — who was quite the
rhabdophile as you'll know — write some of his plays. The phrase 'Lord, what fools these mortals be!' from A Midsummer Night's Dream was actually suggested by Tariko's past-self." He then winked. "Of course, when Mister Shakespeare's wizard friends got hold of that phrase and changed it to 'Merlin, what fools these wizards be', then began bantering it around, they wound up experiencing a prequel to what Master Haddoro did to the nobles on Uru during the Mother of All Fight Scenes."

"Ouch...!" Black moaned. "I'm sorry about that..."


He cringed on hearing that tone in her voice. "What's wrong?" Dumbledore asked.

"Oh, finding out about twelve MORE sisters," she declared. "No thanks to my 'wife's' so-called 'most faithful', to say anything of that psychopath Ran and her chorus of flubbed-up revenge scenes!"

That made the headmaster gape in shock...

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The main reception hall, a half-hour later...

"Thank you for coming, Amelia."

"My pleasure, Minerva," Amelia Bones stated as she warmly shook Minerva McGonagall's hand, then stood back as the section of Aurors also greeted their old transfiguration teacher. "So it's started."

"Unfortunately so," the deputy headmistress breathed out before she perked on noting the other people who just apparated themselves onto the grounds. "Now, what the devil brings you people here?"

Of the group in civilian clothing, only Eustace Fawley, the current Viscount of Yarvil in the southern part of Somerset, had the courtesy to look sheepish at the idea of forcing themselves on McGonagall.
The others — no doubt representing the radical conservatives among the "Sacred Twenty-eight" families that fought like rabid nundu to maintain their traditional rights in the Wizengamot — glared at her; their dislike of her because she was a half-blood was known to the woman who was also the Viscountess of Holyrood. "That is none of your business, Deputy Headmistress," Herbert Burke, the eldest of the group and the current Viscount of Clanwilliam — the Irish-descent family lost their ancestral lands when the Republic of Ireland was formally founded in 1949, forcing them to relocate to Bury Saint Edmunds in Suffolk — coolly declared. "Where is this muggleborn pretender who declares herself the 'heiress' of House Slytherin? Despite his madness, the Dark Lord was the true Heir of that...!"

His voice was cut off as a section of ground floor close to the stairwell that led to where the Slytherins were quartered suddenly parted way to reveal a stairwell as someone in a green hooded cloak began to ascend. "Minerva, is there some reason these people are disturbing the harmony of MY castle?" the newcomer declared in an echoing voice that made some of the students who had been milling about the reception hall gaze her way, many grinning on seeing Thérèse Peverell appear from a chamber whose very existence was not known to ANY of the Hogwarts alumni present today. On realizing that a confrontation was underway, some students sprinted off to pass on the news.

As the Aurors and their current director formally bowed to the Duchess of Kyme Eau, Minerva sighed. "My apologies, Mormaer Thérèse. It seems that a delegation from the Wizengamot have come here to speak to you." The deputy headmistress' own eyes sparkled as footfalls from the Grand Staircase heralded the arrival of the headmaster and two guests, one of which made her heart warm over on seeing Sirius Black finally free while the other almost made her grin in anticipation.

An eyebrow arched in response from the adopted native of Houndsborough in southern Somerset. That particular hundred had been the home territory of the Peverell family until the wizarding male line went extinct sometime in the Fourteenth Century...though there were nimmib lines descent from Cadmus and Ignutus Peverell that carried the name into the normal world. It had actually been through one of Cadmus' descendant families which actually had been wiped out by Voldemort's people during his rebellion in the 1980s — thanks to the late dark lord's fear that he could have a rival among his distant relatives — that Thérèse had been legally adopted into to claim the family vault at Gringotts and be acknowledged through blood inheritance as a claimant to the Slytherin family fortune.

Seeing that, Fawley bowed his head. "My deepest apologies, Mormaer Thérèse," he declared, earning him an offered hand so he could properly greet her. Seeing the Slytherin house ring on her finger, he nodded. "Despite the clear evidence of your claiming your ancestor's seat, my friends..." — hearing that word, many were quick to sense the derision in his voice — "...seem to require further proof."

Thérèse chuckled. "That's natural, Lord Yarvil," she noted, earning her a surprised look from the Hufflepuff alumnus as Pomona Sprout walked up from the stairs leading to the Sett where her charges were quartered, having been told by various paintings that Fawley was here. Seeing that
surprise, her blue eyes twinkled. "As your friends no doubt are ready to rave about, I was raised in
the normal world. That's the proper form of address for the titled lords at all rank levels in the
Wizengamot."

"Um...what chambers are those, my lady?"

That was a wide-eyed Ignatius Prewett, the current Baron of Basingtoke and Molly Weasley's uncle,
who was now staring down into the dimly-lit space with profound curiosity, befitting that he was a
Ravenclaw when he attended Hogwarts as a peer of Herbert Burke's and the now-squibbed Hercules
Avery. "That is Headmaster Slytherin's private quarters, Ignatius," Dumbledore stated, making
everyone spin around to stare at him and Sirius Black; Tariko Katabarbe had shifted herself off to
one side as she watched this confrontation scene. "Mormaer Thérèse was able to unlock it and open
it when she confirmed her blood relationship to Headmaster Slytherin at Gringotts back in the
summer of 2009."

Jaws dropped. "Albus, why on Earth didn't you say anything about that THEN?!" Fawley
demanded.

A tired sigh escaped the former Chief Warlock of the Wizengamot and the current Baron of Exmoor.
"Because as was just proven this morning, Eustace, I always knew Voldemort..." — he tried not to
smirk on seeing people quake on hearing that name — "...was still out there and biding his time to
reacquire a physical body. If Mormaer Thérèse's existence was revealed back then, all of
Voldemort's allies would have immediately moved to kill her...which, given that she is Rose's soul-
mate and wife, would have seen her Gifted as the Thaumaturge. Those who attacked her would no
doubt be killed wholesale for their effrontery in enforcing the thoughts of 'sames' on her and her
wife. Since she wasn't ready to be Gifted given the trauma that Voldemort forced on her when he
attempted to kill her when she was a child, it was seen as inhumane to force such power on Mormaer
Thérèse when she wasn't ready for it."

Hearing that, both Fawley and Prewett nodded as annoyed looks crossed the faces of some of the
others that just came in from London. One who didn't look so annoyed was Talaat Shafiq, the
Director of the Magical Horde and Treasury in the Ministry; in effect, she was the chief financial
officer of wizarding Britain's government. A pureblood descent of Egyptian sorcerers who moved to
Britain in the wake of the Napoleonic Wars, she was the Baroness of Bevington in the Wizengamot;
her family had been ennobled — alongside Kingsley Shacklebolt's family — in 1864 thanks to
relatives who went to America to fight the rebel daywalkers in the Civil War as part of the 7th
Cavalry Regiment (Magical) of the United States Coloured Troops. Despite her relationship to one of
Gellert Grindelwald's senior fighters, she was well-respected in the Ministry even if she often
complained to friends about the paucity of funding from taxation and other forms of income that
forced her to be flinty when it came to doling them out to Ministry departments. She had been one of
Dolores Umbridge's most frightful foes; the two had been rivals in Slytherin during their time
attending Hogwarts in the 1960s.
"That was where Master Salazar had his quarters?" Shafiq asked as she walked over to peer down the stairwell. "I always thought he would have preferred to stay in the Chamber of Secrets."

"There's a lot of things you don't know about my ancestor, Lady Bevington," Thérèse warned.

A snort escaped Burke. "As if you would know that..."

As Tariko smirked, Thérèse gazed balefully at the man she knew had been one of Tom Riddle's early patrons when he formed the Knights of Walpurgis in the 1940s, her eyes glowing. "You'd be surprised how much I know, Lord Clanwilliam," she declared in an echoing voice that made many of the delegation from the Wizengamot shudder as Black smirked in delight. "Boys!"

Most of the Magicals present save Dumbledore, McGonagall, Black, Shafiq, Bones and the Aurors that came with her squawked in horror as the silvery mist heralding the arrival of a small troupe of Hollows rose from the floor. "Your desires, Your Grace?" one of the spirits, dressed in rather fanciful robes dating from the Elizabethan Era, inquired as he formally bowed to the Mistress of the Keep.

"Bring the children I ordered placed in 'C' Block here so Regent Lady Bute can question them."

«At once, my lady.»

More silvery mist appeared, that producing five shivering teenagers who were now curled up in fetal positions on the floor of the reception hall. Seeing who they were and realizing what had happened to them, Burke spun around, aiming his wand at Thérèse. "HOW DARE YOU...?!"

He then screamed like a petulant child that just got stung by a bee as more Hollows suddenly appeared around him, making him collapse onto the floor as the others from the Wizengamot all backed away, many of them making warding signs with their hands. «Now, gov'nor...you're not going to do anything HARSH to Her Grace, are you...?» one of them asked in a growling London East End accent.

As Burke was instantly transformed into an incoherent babbling wreck being so physically close to the nightmarish denizens of That Place, Thérèse smirked. "And just think, Lord Clanwilliam...as soon as I can arrange things with Her Majesty and Mistress Margo Black — you'll remember her, I believe — the Dementors will be CULLED...and all that will be left are my friends," she coldly
warned before the smile departed from her face, her eyes going back to normal. "Don't push your luck."

Ignoring the elder wizard now on the floor, the others all stared in bewilderment at her before Bones snapped at her aurors to detain the children and have them taken to a private room to be interrogated...

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**Aboard HMCS Lady Elgin, that moment...**

The Lady Elgin-class super-battleships had been built by Dweorg artisans from across Canada, who had been helped by nimmibs from America who previously worked in various shipyards and steel mills before the Great War; all of them had been paid top dollar by the Ministry of Magical Affairs to put out a pair of warships that were truly beyond exceptional given the type of threat they would eventually face. Possessing a staggering length of 292.6 metres overall, *Lady Elgin* had a beam of 46.3 metres and a draft of nearly thirteen metres at full displacement; her overall height from keel to the top of her main battery director station on her tripod foremast was 57.5 metres. With full crew, provisions, fuel and ammunition, the magical battleship tipped the scales at a colossal 96,740 tonnes, over forty-five percent of that mass being committed to the most thorough incremental armour scheme ever devised for a warship before the concept of "all or nothing" came into vogue near the end of the Great War.

"My God! The shell doesn't exist that can punch through this!"

That was Charlene Boleyn, now on the second deck, the level below the weather deck, to the port of the barbette of Turret "Y" aft. The adopted native of Devonshire was kneeling to feel the top of the solid mesonium-treated steel sheet which formed the outer of two protective main belts right down to the keel, both 508 millimetres thick, separated by a void space of two metres. Said space contained a forest of sharp ebony mesonium buttresses that would have sliced apart any appendage from the sea leviathans if they got close enough to smash into her hull. Such could be seen thanks to special maintenance hatches opening into those spaces from the second deck. Seeing this from beside the second of the Queen Elizabeth-class battleships was the fourth of the Kongō-class battleships. "If she fought a normal foe, any shell that penetrated the outer belt would detonate on those frames before they could damage the inner belt," Chihaya Isabel noted. "You can tell Harlan-taishō tossed out the rule book when it came to properly defending his crews from not just the kaijū, but any warship crew that wasn't fooled by the obliviation field this ship protects and thought her as an enemy."

"It's amazing that a ship that's just four years shy of her centennial is still in such excellent shape," Itō Yasuko added as she and her sisters looked down a nearby hatch; everyone was standing in one of the several small auditoriums located on Deck Two that were used for crew assembly and training.
classes. "When I was rusting away at the bottom of the East China Sea, I just felt the water eat away at my armour." She suppressed a shudder as she chased away such dark memories from her mind. "But to see how a battleship was meant to be built and cared for...!" A sigh escaped her. "A pity that secrecy statute exists. That the Canadians — even if they had help from the dwarves and goblins...!"

"Sempai!" Fukushima Fujiko scolded from forward, where she was busy looking over the deck plans with some of her sisters, not to mention both Tendō Akane and Gosunkugi Hikari; the latter had heard of the rumours surrounding the Ryūseizen through friends who dabbed in mystical matters and the former was happy to accompany her girlfriend to visit the sistership of the one that had been there for the crew of THG *Fubuki* the day she foundered in the Battle of Cape Esperance. "Dweorg and Kobaloi! You don't call people like that by such names! It's like people calling us 'Nips'!"

Yasuko blushed at that admonishment from the first modern destroyer as others in the room laughed. Seated at a desk as she enjoyed tea, Luisa von Bismarck smiled as she gazed on a picture of the ship that had been there for her crew in 1941, HMCS *Argo*. No two ships could be different even if they served in the same navy. *Lady Elgin* and her sister *Lady Jane* projected the classic look of Great War-era dreadnoughts: Triple funnels, the tripod foremast and the superfiring gunhouses originally fitted with British BL 18 inch Mark I naval rifles before being replaced by American 18 inch Mark A weapons with much longer barrels — that eventually saw them designated as "18 inch/55 calibre Mark A C1 naval rifles" — at the start of the Second World War. The name ship of her class built at the start of the Second World War looked to be a stretched and beefier version of the Bismarck-class, with four gunhouses in superfiring pairs fore and aft, each fitted with FOUR American 16 inch/55 calibre Mark 7 rifles; such gave *Argo* — not to mention her much-longer and twin-funnelled sister *Chennalton* and the Australian/New Zealander Victoria-class battleships modelled on the ship named after the vessel the Argonauts used in Green mythology — the heaviest broadside weight of any battleship in history.

Of course, the march of technology hadn't left the Canadian, Australian and New Zealander magical battleships behind. *Lady Elgin* had been originally fitted with a secondary armament of sixty Ordnance QF 3-pounder Vickers 47 millimetre/50 calibre cannons in roomy enclosed gunhouses on both her weather and first superstructure decks; they had been tasked to take out things like dragons and other magical creatures, not to mention defending against people on flying carpets and brooms moving to board the ship. At the start of the Second World War, the Vickers guns were replaced by twenty-eight 127 millimetre/38 calibre Mark 12 dual purpose rifles in fourteen twin turrets to serve as heavy anti-creature defence and one hundred-and-twelve Bofors 40 millimetre/60 calibre anti-aircraft cannons in fully enclosed Mark V twin rifle gunhouses to serve as light anti-creature and anti-personnel defence; the Canadians never used the Oerlikon 20 millimetre machine cannon on their battleships. In the most recent refit at the turn of the millennium, all secondary weapons had been swept clear of her hull, replaced by fourteen OTO Melara 76 millimetre/62 calibre rapid fire rifles in single mounts, fifty-six M242 Bushmaster 25 millimetre/87 calibre chain guns in enclosed Mark 38 single mounts and eight Raytheon Phalanx Block 1B automated close-in weapons systems mounting M61 20 millimetre Vulcan six-barrelled rotary cannons...atop four 96-cell Mark 41 vertical launch system units bracketing the funnels that could fire everything from RGM-84 Harpoon surface-to-surface missiles to RIM-156A and RIM-161 Standard and RIM-162 Enhanced Sea Sparrow surface-to-air missiles, RUM-139 anti-submarine rockets and even RGM-109D and RGM-109E Tomahawk cruise missiles.
Naturally, all the sensors and other electronics on the ship — which had to be specifically hardened in the first place thanks to her magical aura, something that would just overwhelm anyone if they weren't prepared ahead of time — had been upgraded to make HMCS *Lady Elgin* one of the most dangerous warships on the high seas these days short of a ballistic missile submarine.

"Excuse me...?"

Everyone perked as the door leading into the auditorium to reveal a middle-aged man in Royal Canadian Navy combat dress uniform without the jacket, the black slip-ons over his epaulettes displaying the rank of petty officer second class. On seeing all the strange ladies in the form-fitting jumpsuits standing or kneeling there, he blinked in confusion. "Alright, I know the ship was running her engines, but I didn't know we have visitors," he stated, putting his fist to his hip.

Blushes crossed the faces of all the shipgirls present. "Um...you are...?" Charlene then asked.

Before he could answer, a *pop!* heralded the arrival of one of the battleship's legion of house elves. "Ah! Master Tom! Why's you being aboard?!" she scolded him, wagging her finger at him as if she was a grandmother giving her grandson the devil. "Did you sleep in the engine room again?!"

As he ducked her angry look, all the shipgirls present blinked...

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**Hogwarts, Thérèse Peverell's quarters, a half-hour later...**

Ignatius Prewett roared with laughter, then he gaped at Rose Potter. "You're serious?!"

The transformed Boy Who Lived shook her head as she thumbed her godfather. "No, Granduncle, that's the dumb doggie here!" she flatly answered.

As Sirius Black squawked on realizing his transformed godson had got that joke quite easily, laughter filled the well-lit basement quarters that had once been used by Salazar Slytherin when this part of the castle was the only element of Hogwarts that had been constructed in the early Tenth Century. While poor Herbert Burke was still babbling away off in one corner of the living room, the
others had been invited to sit in chairs around the main desk where the Duchess of Kyme Eau now held court as her wife and her wife’s rescuer relayed a very interesting story from the Dark Times of Magic, the period before the Separation Act of 1692 when persecution of magicals across Europe had reached a feverish height.

Watching this from one side of the gathering, Albus Dumbledore could only smile as he recalled the many times that Tom Riddle had met with the original Knights of Walpurgis back in the 1940s. Said meetings had been very formal, even when they had hosted Horace Slughorn during the period the future dark lord pursued the forbidden knowledge that would guarantee him immortality...which ultimately started the march to see Thérèse Peverell created as her own being. This meeting was full of laughter and amusing stories as the castle's large legion of house elves gladly served snacks and tea while Amelia Bones and her crew did their very necessary work in a nearby classroom upstairs.

Of course, there were the party poopers in the room as well; even though several of the Wizengamot lords present had been won over to the fact that the "orphaned" descendant of the first user of the Resurrection Stone was the proper Heiress of Slytherin, there were those like Burke's closer allies who were still glaring at this "upstart mudblood" now hosting them, not wanting to accept her "absurd" claim of inheriting one of the Empty Chairs in the Wizengamot chambers in London.

Even AFTER she used her reserve powers as one of the Heirs of the Founders which had been granted her in the Separation Act to remove Cornelius Fudge from office earlier today.

"I can't believe people from your planet would be willing to 'slum with the norms and sames' like that, Lady Katabarbe," Catriona McCormack noted. The retired star chaser of the Pride of Portree was the current Viscountess of Skye and a known neutral in the Wizengamot. She had come at Talaat Shafiq's private request to offset the "stalebloods" among the leaders of the Sacred Twenty-eight to show that not ALL the people who helped run wizarding Britain were blood bigots.

"You read my book, Catriona?" Dumbledore asked.

"Even better!" the native of Skye said. "I've met Professor Raeburn on several occasions when she's come back to Earth to rest from teaching fellow heiresses of the Tears of the Stars on other planets."

People nodded in understanding. After retiring from professional play in the mid-1970s, McCormack became the director of the British and Irish Quidditch League, which gave her a seat in the governing council of le Fédération Internationale de Quidditch Association, the worldwide governing body for professional quidditch. This was at the same time that the first generation of magical Canadian zeppelins that had been built for 77 (Magical) Wing of the Royal Canadian Air Force in the 1930s were decommissioned for new construction. Given such aircraft had been used to help Canadian quidditch teams travel around when they weren't needed for official duties, they were popular among magical sports fans worldwide. McCormack travelled on several of those zeppelins to Canada to
attend games as an FIQA observer to the North American Quidditch and Quodpot Union. In Canada, the championship trophies for both l'Association Canadienne de Quidditch and the Dominion Quodpot League were named after the Protector of All Life; the official title of the ACQ trophy was the "Professor Dean A. Raeburn VC Memorial Cup". If Dean Raeburn herself wasn't on Earth at the time of the annual championships, a student of her school in Clayhurst — who were briefed on magic under the auspices of the Specialized Warfare Act passed in 1949 — would award the Memorial Cup on her behalf.

"So what made your past-self back then come to Earth?" Septimus Weasley asked as he gazed on Rose and Tariko Katabarbe. A grey-haired version of his son Arthur, he was the Baron of Aylesbeare, based in County Devon. With the marriage between Arthur Weasley and the former Molly Prewett, their eldest son William would become the heir to the Aylesbeare seat while their daughter Ginny would inherit her granduncle's seat for Basingtoke; Luna Lovegood herself was due to become the next Baroness of Saint Catchpole from her mother, the former Pandora Hitchens. And while Pandora herself didn't actively serve in the Wizengamot thanks to her wanting to help her husband Xenophilius publish the Quibbler and its sister magazine for non-human magicals The News of the Magical World, Luna would probably reactivate the Saint Catchpole seat when she felt the time was right; given that the Ravenclaw OWL year student was a metahuman seer, there was no pressure from anyone to force her hand.

Rose and Tariko exchanged looks, then the latter sighed. "Well..."

*Pop!* "Miss Tariko?"

The Trickster of the Show looked down to see a smiling Winky, one of the house elves directly bound to the Supreme Sorceress of Yiziba. "What is it, Winks?" Tariko asked as the new arrival gave a curtsy.

"One of the pretty sea spirits like the ones that Miss Hinako finds has comes to the castle, Miss Tariko, asking for her 'shirē'!" the former servant of the Crouch family — who had been welcomed to serve Rose Potter thanks to the influence of Luna Lovegood the previous summer — declared with a delighted smile. "Winky thinks the pretty sea spirit wants her admiral!" she then cheerfully added.

A moan escaped her. "Okay, Winks, bring her down!"

"Winky will do!" *Pop!*

Confusion crossed people's faces. "Do you mean those 'shipgirls' that your sister helped transform
into metahumans earlier this year, Lady Katabarbe?" Talaat Shafiq then asked.

"Same..."

"Ah! Shirē! There you are!"

Recognizing that voice with its mixture of Hichiku Kyūshū Japanese and Tâioân Bân-lâm-gú dialect of southern Min Chinese as footfalls echoed from nearby, Tariko looked over as someone stepped in from the stairwell leading to the main reception hall. "Hey, Snowy!" she called out.

An embarrassed squawk escaped the just-arrived Yuhara Yukiko as she stepped into view, being walked down by a grinning Winky. Instantly, all the non-Gifted magicals found themselves gaping at the reborn eighth of the Kagerō-class destroyers, their eyes widening almost to the size of saucers as their own mage sight abilities took in the uniqueness of Yukiko's aura. Instantly, Pomona Sprout was on her feet, moving to approach the pretty adopted native of Sasebo and Jīlóng. "Hold still, child!" she bade as she drew out her wand, then proceeded to do diagnostics, creating various magical pentagrams in the middle of the air. "I'm not sure if you were cursed or simply charmed, but this...!"

That made Yukiko's eyes go wide. "YUKIKAZE IS CURSED?!"

"No, Yukiko! You're not cursed! Pomona, you can stop that."

As Sprout stopped, her old housemate gazed at Thérèse. "What do you mean?" Eustace Fawley asked.

The new major domo of the Cosmic Mage Guild chuckled. "As His Imperial Majesty's ship Yukikaze, Yukiko here is one of the few warship kami of the Imperial Japanese Navy to have survived the Wars of Liberation." At the confused look crossing the destroyer's face, she added, "Greater East Asia War." Once Yukiko nodded in understanding, Thérèse added, "In fact, she was able to survive the war because one of her captains, Terauchi Masamichi, vowed on taking command that..."

"YUKIKAZE WILL NOT SINK!"

A burst of energy exploded from Yukiko at her declaring her fifth captain's oath to wash over everyone else in the room, flooding their bodies with power that made them all shudder in delight for
a moment. As soon as that aura faded, Dumbledore blinked before a chuckle escaped him. "I definitely will not call that a curse but a blessing," he calmly breathed out. "Thank you, Commander Yuhara. Indeed, the blessings of Lady Benzaiten were gifted to you when you returned to service!"

That made the adopted native of Sasebo and Jiulong squawk in embarrassment. "Indeed, Master-Headmaster is rights, Miss Yukikaze!" Winky declared as she tried not to sway from the sheer luck energy that she just received from the reborn destroyer. "Winky only wishes Miss Yukikaze was around so she could better protect poor Master Barty because of what his cruel father did!"

"Bah! That was a lie...!"

After uttering that vicious denial, Nicholas Bulstrode found himself glaring at a pair of glowing green eyes that instantly reminded the farmer from Buckinghamshire of the Killing Curse. "Are you calling my friend a LIAR, umale r'betike?!" Rose hissed as her own battle aura flared.

As the current Baron of Gerrard's Cross — he was Millicent Bulstrode's paternal first cousin once removed — whimpered at that cold look, his friend Ellen Finnegan waved the younger woman down. "Now, now, Rose! That's enough," Seamus Finnegan's mother and the Baroness of Dillon in County Antrim — the only surviving Irish-based magical lordship still possessing land on the Emerald Isle — chided. While Bulstrode was one of the group who still found it impossible to accept that a muggleborn had become the Heiress of Slytherin, the native of Ulster was slowly accepting the story, especially with the sheer magical aura her host currently projected, not to mention her parseltongue capabilities. "You have to admit, a lot of us aren't used to accepting testimony from house elves."

"That's wrong, Oba-san!" Yukiko scolded as she put her fists to her hips. "After all, Elgin-sama is run by house elves! Harlan-taishō didn't complain about that!"

Gasps filled the room. "You're not supposed to know of them!" McCormack snapped.

Tariko shook her head as she tried not to roll her eyes. Why in the name of the Crystal did she have to be around people who were so wilfully STUPID?! "Specialized Warfare Act in Canada, the International Specialized Warfare Treaty and the Tokubeppō all say otherwise, people!"

Silence.

More silence.
Still more silence.

Then...

"Are you all so hell-bent on losing your MAGIC?!!" Thérèse then demanded.

That made almost every non-metahuman magical currently in the room gasp in horror. "WHAT IN MERLIN'S NAME DOES THAT MEAN?!" Lewis Macmillan demanded.

She moaned. "It means, Lord Rosyth, your magic has been bound to the Separation Act..."

"Everyone knows that!" Slade Harper protested.

"I AM NOT FINISHED, LORD TURRIFF! DON'T INTERRUPT ME!"

The father of a NEWT-year student who was now captain of the Slytherin quidditch team cried out as his host's aura flared like a nova. As he curled in on himself, Thérèse sighed. "As I was saying, our magic is bound to the Separation Act and the Magical Royal Proclamation of 1692 that made it law!" she declared. "Which means each and every one of us — even the muggleborns who join our society when they come of age to be invited to school — are bound by the Preface of BOTH the Separation Act and the Magical Royal Proclamation to be loyal to the Crown! And if ANYONE dares call Her Majesty a 'mere muggle' in my presence or denies that bond because she has no magic, WE WILL DUEL!"

Almost all the people in the room — even those supporting her — cringed in terror as she bolted to her feet to look intently at them. As several nodded, Rose sighed. "Oi! Calm down, sweetie! You'll make them all soil themselves! I don't want Winky to have to clean up that sort of mess! She hates that!"

As Thérèse jolted at her wife's admonishment before she was yanked back into her chair by Rose, Dumbledore sighed, shaking his head in private amusement. "I would strongly suggest, ladies and gentlemen, you carefully re-read both the Separation Act and the Magical Royal Proclamation of 1692 in the near future to understand how precarious our situation became because Tom Riddle made so many rebel against Her Majesty's Peace," he cautioned. "And ALSO read the Specialized Warfare Act and the Magical Royal Proclamation of 1949 as well. The equivalent Japanese laws do
permit Commander Yuhara and her fleet-mates to know of the magical battleships commissioned into the naval militias of our Canadian, Australian and New Zealander cousins. As a matter of fact, one of Commander Yuhara's fleet mates is now in critical condition in Lady Elgin's sick bay after she tried to kill herself in atonement for playing a part in launching Japan's war against America without formal warning."


Yukiko smiled. "Shirē's granduncle came from Yiziba to help Akagi-sempai heal! Fujita-taishō is there to make her see what she did in Pearl Harbour was wrong when she tried to commit seppuku..."

"Hara-kiri," Thérèse translated.

As many of the Wizengamot lords looked sick on hearing that term — the well-known nickname for a samurai's act of ritual suicide was familiar to them thanks to the times Yomigawa Tsukiko's people who acted against her orders performed such an act in public during the Wars of Liberation — Sprout blinked as her eyes teared, then she moved to warmly embrace Yukiko, making the transformed destroyer squawk. "Oh, you poor dear! How awful! I'm sure Tariko's granduncle will make her well!"

Yukiko giggled. "Hufflepuff for sure!" Fawley declared as he toasted her with his tea cup.

Rose smirked. "Let's make sure, Uncle!" She then snapped her fingers.

Instantly, an old black witch's hat appeared in her lap. "Huh?!" the Sorting Hat blurted as it "woke up" after being moved from the shelf in the headmaster's office where it was stored when not needed to place people into houses, then it looked up at the current Marchioness of Taunton Deane. "Mrs. Potter! You're already sorted into Slytherin even if you don't attend the school!" As that statement made many of the Wizengamot lords gape in shock at that revelation, it added, "Now let me..."

"Ah-ah!" Rose cut it off. "We're proving a point here, Alastair!" she scolded.

She then floated it over to land on Yukiko's head. "GREAT MERLIN!" the Hat exclaimed as it came into contact with the destroyer's hair, it being overwhelmed by the aura of luck — which felt like she had been submerged in a vat full of Felix Felicis to the Wizengamot lords when Yukiko's aura had washed over them moments before — then it hummed as the ancient spells woven into it by
all the Founders quickly got to work to analyze the destroyer's soul. After a moment, it came: "HUFFLEPUFF!"

The alumni of the House of the Loyal whooped on hearing that as Rose snapped her fingers to put the Hat back in the headmaster's office. "Um...is that good?" Yukiko wondered.

As Sprout laughed while embracing her again, Fawley declared, "Good enough for us, Lady Yukikaze!"

Scattered applause echoed from the others. "Oi! Oi! Let's get back to this story Rose and Tariko were telling us!" Sirius Black declared. "We can tell the beautiful lady came here to be Tariko's bodyguard tonight!" He then turned to gaze expectantly at his transformed godchild and her best friend.

"Okay! Okay!" Tariko moaned. "Anyhow, the Show had to go into Hiatus during the Sixteenth Series..."

"'Hiatus'?" Sprout asked.

"That happens when there are very few living Named metahumans on that planet," McCormack then explained. "Either because of a very large battle between factions or a natural disaster. According to Professor Raeburn's and Albus' book on them, there was a massive meteor shower that hit the planet during the era of the Dark Times of Magic here on Earth that actually saw the Healer of Destruction — the creator of Lady Yukikaze's current body — return." As people gazed at her, the retired quidditch star added, "Many on Yiziba believe that situation is something to be avoided AT ALL COSTS!"

As shudders ran through people's bodies on hearing that declaration, Tariko nodded her thanks. "So while the Casting Change was underway, my past-self then didn't have anything to do. She decided to wander around the local cluster for a bit, then wound up in England during the 1580s and 1590s." Here, she smirked as she sipped her tea. "She lived with the secret identity of Robin Goodfellow..."

"YOU WERE ROBIN GOODFELLOW?!" many of the lords present demanded as they boggled at her.

"Indeed she was!" Rose said as she patted her friend's shoulder while Thérèse laughed.
The Trickster of the Show shrugged. "Well, people always talk about William Shakespeare's 'lost years', right?" she asked. As her current audience rapidly nodded — no matter what one's current political views were, there was a universal respect for the Bard since he had been a passionate rhabdophile; all his letters to members of the Wizard's Council and many other magicals in the land were in several portfolios that could be read in the Hogwarts library — she added, "Well, Robin — she was actually born Suhem Hamee, which makes her my adopted ancestor — met him during that period. They weren't so close that people could have called them FRIENDS, but they knew each other's faces and names."

"Did Mistress Robin help him write his plays?!" Sprout wondered.

"Hah!" Tariko barked out before she snorted into her tea cup, shaking her head. "Hardly, Sensei! William was already a successful playwright even by the time Robin met him!" As the others in the room nodded, she added, "Heck, the FIRST time Robin DID meet him was when she was hired to help build the various set pieces for the initial showing of *Henry VI Part 2* in '91."

People were quick to realize that she meant the year 1591. "What about that line she and Rose's past-self 'copyrighted'?!" Black wondered as he made air-quotes with his fingers.

Tariko and Rose exchanged looks, then the latter sighed. "Well, I'll admit that Robin did inspire a few lines here and there for some of his plays. They were based on things she said at the time." A shrug then rolled her shoulders. "The 'What fools' line? No! That wasn't intentional at ALL!"

Tariko thumbed her friend. "Alberich von Heidel — he was the secret identity Rose's past-self took on back then — came to Earth in '93 with word that the Casting Call was finally being answered. It would be only a few seasons before the Hiatus ended and we'd have to go back." She smirked. "They got together at the Leaky Cauldron in London for some seasons to catch up on things when William was trying to get Thomas Brend to loan some of his spread in Southwark to get the Globe built!"

"That was done in 1599," Septimus Weasley noted.

Rose nodded. "Both Alberich and Robin left shortly after the Globe opened."

"So what made Robin-sensei say those words, Shirē?" Yukiko asked.
The two boys-turned-girls groaned. "It was the Spanish Armada that did it for Robin," Tariko then declared. Hearing that, all the non-metahuman magicals scowled; the magical side of that attempted invasion of Protestant England by the forces of Catholic Spain at the bidding of King Philip II in the summer of 1588 had been almost as nasty in its own way as Grindelwald's War was in the middle of the Twentieth Century. "She was there when your ancestors banded to beat the heck out of the Magical Inquisition at that fight scene on Tinworth Beach while the normal ships were sailing into the Channel."

"The Battle of Tinworth..." Dumbledore breathed out.

Rose nodded before she shook her head in clear disgust. "The time when almost ALL of our ancestors got together to defend both normal and metahuman, human and non-human alike from a bunch of hom'r'bu umale who thought themselves the bloody emperors of all the known world...!

The scowls on some people's faces deepened at that reminder. It was that very battle on Tinworth Beach — which had been led by the Queen's Warlock at the time, Master Arithmancer Jonas Wenlock, the last living descendant of the discoverer of the magical properties contained in the number seven; his death in that fight ended his line in the magical world even if there was a seat in the Wizengamot set aside for future descendants until it was declared "defunct" in 1957 thanks to Voldemort's allies — that effectively saw the makeup of the modern Wizengamot form over a century before it was codified in the Ministry Governance Act of 1708. "So what happened?" Black then wondered.

Tariko snorted. "Like Rose said, Robin saw the Spaniards as hom'r'bu umale! Forcing the folks here in England no matter who and what they were to march in lockstep to their stupid theme! That's a classic Dawn of Power storyline right there, Sirius! The umale dictators making the underdogs march to their theme music!" She shook her head. "Believe me, when Robin watched Jonas plot the fight scene with both the magicals and the normals..." A delighted laugh escaped her. "Oh, it was just insane!"

Amused laughter filled the room. The Battle of Tinworth was also well known for the nasty pranks that had been pulled on the invaders by magicals and normals alike, something that ultimately soured relations between the English and Spanish magical communities to well past the time the Statute of Secrecy went into effect. "Being that you are your planet's version of Loki, I can see why Mistress Robin found that whole time so amusing!" McCormack said, toasting Tariko with her tea cup.

"Oh, yeah! 'What fools these normals be!'" the Trickster of the Show quoted her past-self. "She said that to Alberich in one conversation at the Cauldron when she told him about the Armada and Tinworth! That was a fight scene Robin never forgot! The underdogs taking on the hom'r'bu umale and kicking their butts off the damned island, pulling all sorts of crazy stunts to fight them off and send them back to their home spreads all crying because the 'nasty heretics' were so MEAN!"
She mock-sobbed that last part, making people in the room laugh; even some of those who stood against Thérèse joined in. "What fools these normals be'?'" Tariko repeated herself. "Hah! In Robin's eyes, BOTH sides were fools! Your ancestors and their friends were the kind of fools she LIKED!"

People nodded as some of the magicals in the room snickered. "Hell, she didn't realize until a few episodes later that William had been listening in on them when he had supper at the Cauldron!" Tariko then added as she held up a finger to emphasize her point. "Then he pulled one hell of a reveal scene on Robin and Alberich when he showed them the first draft of A Midsummer Night's Dream!"

People's jaws dropped. "And?!!" Dumbledore wondered.

Rose chuckled. "Oh, he was all SO formal about it back then!'" the Supreme Sorcerer of Yiziba declared. "Formally asking Robin to make use of that line — cloaked, of course! — plus base Puck on Robin!"

"Naturally, Robin said 'yes'!," Tariko added. "It wasn't stealing her shtick or anything like that! But when some wizards who worked with William turned that phrase into 'What fools these wizards be'..." She shrugged. "Well, Robin got upset! And the bricks started falling down on their heads!"

"After all, they never ASKED her!" Rose finished, shrugging herself.

People gaped at her, then laughter escaped many of the magicals there...

To Be Continued...

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WRITER'S NOTES

First of all, major thanks to the 17th Immortal, who was one of the first people to become fans of the Yizibajohei, for writing a portion of the last scene. Many terms introduced there are his creation.
For those who might be wondering, Tariko Katabarbe's granduncle, the Preacher (Neyange Katabarbe), is based on the Pope of Pain, who first appeared in the third issue of normalman.

Shipgirls introduced in this chapter:

Takahashi Anna-taisa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan Akagi [CV-2])

Oikawa Kei-taisa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan Kaga [CV-3])

Samejima Sei-taisa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan Sōryū [CV-5])

Yamaguchi Hiyoko-taisa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan Hiryū [CV-6])

Matsuo Miki-taisa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan Mikuma [CA-26])

Translation list: **NDHQ** — National Defence Headquarters, the command complex of the Canadian Forces in Ottawa; **Shōwa-jūhachinen** — Eighteenth Year of Shōwa (the year 1943 CE); **Taletuto** — Literally "country of rowers", this is the analogue of Russia on Yiziba; **Fédération Internationale de Quidditch Association** — International Federation of Association Quidditch (short-formed **FIQA**); **Association Canadienne de Quidditch** — Canadian Quidditch Association (short-formed **ACQ**); **VC** — Post-nominal letters for the Victoria Cross, the British Commonwealth's highest award for valour; **Shirē** — Commander (in Yukiko-speak); **Felix Felicis** — Literally "lucky luck" or "luck's luck".

Admiral Samuel J. Locklear (born 1954) served as **CDRUSPACOM (Commander, United States Pacific Command)** from 2012-15; he would retire from the United States Navy at the end of his tenure after a corruption scandal (in which he was cleared of any criminal charges) effectively scuttled his chances to become Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Note that the largest theatre command by physical area had its name changed to **United States Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM)** on 30 May 2018 to reflect the fact that the theatre formation covers over 52% of the planet's surface, covering the Pacific Ocean basin save for areas close to Russia and the Americas, east, southeast and south Asia, Australia, Oceania and Antarctica. Note that commanders of the **Unified Combatant Commands (UCCs)** that serve as top combined formations in the United States armed forces are no longer addressed as "Commander-in-Chief" (CINC); such was changed to just "Commander" (CDR) on 24 October 2002 by then-Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld (born 1932) when he decreed that the former title post ONLY belongs to the President of the United States.

*Harry Potter* minor character notes: **Maxine O'Flaherty** first appeared in the video game Quidditch World Cup. **Andrew Cleveley** and **Gregory Munslow** first appeared in the *Prisoner of Azkaban* video game. **Rebecca Taylor** and **Heather Joyce** (their last names are my invention) first appeared in the *Chamber of Secrets* video game. **Phillip Urquhart** (his given name is my invention) first
appeared in *Half-Blood Prince*. **Zacharias Smith** first appeared in *Order of the Phoenix*; this was also the story where former Minister for Magic **Millicent Bagnold** was first mentioned. The concept of the **Sacred Twenty-eight** families of "most pure" magicals was first mentioned in an article in *Pottermore*. The elder and younger **Barty Crouch** first appeared in *Goblet of Fire*, as did their house elf **Winky**. **Eustace Fawley** first appeared in the Android/iOS mobile hidden object game *Fantastic Beasts: Cases from the Wizarding World*. **Herbert Burke** was one of many who married into the Black family; his name appeared on the Black family tapestry in the film version of *Order of the Phoenix* and he was mentioned in *Pottermore*. **Ignatius Prewett** also appeared on the Black family tapestry in the *Order of the Phoenix* film. Talaat Shafiq is my own character, though a relative of hers will appear in the upcoming film *Fantastic Beasts: The Crimes of Grindelwald*. **Catriona McCormack** appeared in the book *Quidditch Through the Ages*. **Septimus Weasley** appeared on the Black family tapestry in the *Order of the Phoenix* movie and was mentioned in the video game *Harry Potter: Hogwarts Mystery*. **Pandora Lovegood** (née Hitchens) was first mentioned in *Order of the Phoenix*; her given name was confirmed in *Pottermore* and her maiden name is my creation. **Nicholas Bulstrode** is my creation; his first cousin once removed **Millicent Bulstrode** first appeared in *Philosopher's Stone*. That story was also where **Ellen Finnegan** was first mentioned; her given name is my invention. **Lewis Macmillan** is my own creation; his son **Ernie Macmillan** first appeared in *Philosopher's Stone*. **Slade Harper** is my creation; his son **Kieran Harper** (first name my creation) first appeared in *Half-Blood Prince*. **Jonas Wenlock** is my creation, but his ancestor **Bridget Wenlock** was mentioned in a Famous Wizard Card that came with the video game based on *Philosopher's Stone*. **As an aside, the Queen's** (or **King's**) **Warlock** (or **Witch**) was the effective leader of the pre-Statute of Secrecy **Wizard's Council**, the ruling body of magicals in the British Isles. The responsibilities of such a position were split apart in the **Ministry Governance Act, 1708** that saw the modern **Ministry of Magic** form. The executive responsibilities fell upon the new position of **Minister for Magic** while the legislative leadership responsibilities fell on the **Chief Warlock** (or **Chief Witch**) of the Wizengamot.

The term **Dweorg** is the old English word for dwarves in various tales from Germanic mythology. The term can be used in both singular and plural formats. As magical Canadians do for kobaloi, they refuse to call the famous humanoid artisans by such a "degrading" term as "dwarf".

**Quodpot** is a rather more explosive version of quidditch which was invented by British wizard **Abraham Peasegood** when he was visiting the English-speaking areas of North America in the Eighteenth Century. Its rules are better explained in *Quidditch Through the Ages*. Also, **Charles Matthews** first appeared in my fanfic *Harry Potter and the Icemaidens*. The *Quibbler’s* sister publication *The News of the Magical World* was first created by fellow author **Clell Harmon** (AKA **Clell65619**) in his fanfic *Triwizard Tales*. And the nickname for the **Sorting Hat**, **Alastair** (or sometimes **Sir Alastair**), has appeared in many fanfic stories by many authors.
The Yizibajohei social terms introduced in the last scene (with thanks to the 17th Immortal again):

When the Great Show of Life goes into **Hiatus**, this is a time when ALL fighting between metahumans is stopped to prevent the population from dropping to dangerously low or even non-sustainable levels. As Catriona McCormack spoke of, a massive number of deaths among Named metahumans on Yiziba in a short period of time was seen over the years as the right situation to force the return of the Healer of Destruction; such theories are termed these days as the "**Destructo Prophecies**".

The **casting change** is the death-and-rebirth recycling of a Gift seed from the previous generation of a Named battle line to a new generation via the Gifting process. When emphasized (put into capitals as shown here), this is the rebirth of MANY Named metahumans during the period of a Hiatus.

A Yizibajohei metahuman assumes a **secret identity** whenever s/he goes to another planet and wishes to remain hidden from detection by the locals. Of course, the name chosen for the secret identity is always based on local names, not the birth name.

**Theme music** is a general term used to speak of a set of basic behavioural standards in one's society.

A **reveal scene** is naturally when a secret is made public to other people.

To **cloak** something is to disguise that object/person to hide one's actual nature/identity.

And **stealing one's shtick** is when someone copies another person's behaviour or battle moves.

Finally, as fans of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* will no doubt be aware, **Puck** (AKA **Robin Goodfellow**) is the name of a domestic/nature sprite from Celtic mythology. The name "Robin Goodfellow" first appeared in the *Oxford English Dictionary* in 1531.
Chapter Summary

As Ataru goes back to Tomobiki under escort to check in on things - and reunites with a former lover - more shocking developments happen in Hogwarts...!

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In the Tomobiki Ginza, Monday, an hour before breakfast (Scotland time: Sunday, two hours before midnight)...

"Thanks for coming with me while I check in on things before we go back to the Island to welcome Anna-san and her friends after Ō'oji-san declares her fit to be let out of the healer's cockpit, ladies."

Hearing that from the handsome spiritual "admiral" to all the shipgirls now living on Ōmure-jima, the two destroyer and the lone heavy cruiser veterans of the Kriegsmarine smiled as they headed down the street towards a local yatai. "It's alright, mein Admiral," Catarina von Savoyen said before she leaned over to playfully kiss Moroboshi Ataru's cheek, making him blush. The four had teleported back to Japan from HMCS Lady Elgin some moments before, arriving at a spot not so far from Tampopo's Rāmen and Beefbowl Bar. "Will we have to deal with your former classmates today?"

"Hopefully not, even if there are no classes due to the 'holiday switch'," he answered with a smirk.

The shipgirls snickered. Friday had been Labour Thanksgiving Day throughout all of Japan, a statutory holiday similar in general concept to Labour Day in North America or May Day in many other parts of the world; this was where labour and production by the population in whatever field that enhanced the nation's prosperity were honoured and thanked. However, since that particular Friday was ALSO the scheduled day the antimatter bomb that had been placed in the Tomobiki Ginza would be finally taken off Earth, the Tōkyō Metropolitan Board of Education — on direct orders from the Prime Minister himself — switched the celebration for Nishitōkyō and its surrounding municipalities to Monday to ensure that the maximum number of people who were...
involved in one way or another with Redet Lum would be in classes the very day she was exiled from Earth forever. For the schools in places like Nishitōkyō, Kodaira and Nerima, today would be the make-up holiday for Labour Thanksgiving.

"Ah! Ataru-kun!"

Ataru perked, then he looked over. "Kiyose-seitokaichō!" he called back, waving.

The German shipgirls all gaped as a tall and statuesque senior student with long black hair and brown eyes behind reading glasses came over. As the student council president of Tomobiki High didn't have to attend classes today, she was dressed in quite stylish jeans and a button blouse under a cardigan sweater. While not super-wealthy as Mendō Shūtarō or Mizunokōji Tobimaro, Kiyose Aoi was from a well-to-do family; her father was mayor of Nishitōkyō and her mother was an accomplished novelist. Of course, Aoi wasn't alone; her freshman secretary Katō Ai was at her side. Ataru knew through rumours — confirmed by his film-replica sister Hiromi's telepathy — that Aoi and Ai sometimes were "friends with benefits", even if they kept it VERY top secret, not wanting to be shunned by their peers as what had happened at times to Tsuruya Rumiko after she came out of the closet. Fortunately for the school's smartest student and the current incarnation of the Careful Planner of the Circle of Thought, Lum's acceptance of all forms of sexual preference made things much easier for Rumiko by the time everyone in Class 1-4 had advanced to second year in April just before the issue with Queen Elle came up.

A laugh escaped Aoi as she came up to embrace Ataru, making him gape in shock. She pulled back to allow Ai to hug him, which nearly dropped him to his knees; NO ONE save Lum or Inu Chigaiko had ever been so physically friendly with him in public before today. Noting that, his old schoolmates grinned. "That was in thanks for getting rid of Lum finally, Ataru-kun," Aoi explained as her eyes danced over Catarina, then she glanced at both Lieselotte Maaß and Melanie Schultz, remembering seeing them on Saturday morning when they had come to Tomobiki with Amélie von Zeppelin. "You wouldn't believe how QUIET things were in classes after your sister and Caloway-sensei sent her home."

Hearing that, he blinked again before he chuckled. "Well, it was my pleasure, Seitokaichō-san," he stated. "I never realized until very lately how much Lum's presence annoyed a lot of you girls."

"Are you telepathic, Sempai?" Ai asked.

"No, Katō-san, but my film-replica sister is."

That made both girls blink. "'Film replica'?" Aoi asked before her eyes widened as she recalled
events earlier in the year, then she pointed at Ataru. "You mean those replicas of you, Lum, Mendō and the others from your old class that showed up that day those idiots from Butsumetsu came by for a rumble just before spring break?! They're still alive?! What happened to them?"

He smirked before waving them over to a nearby yatai. "It's a bit of a complicated story, Seitokaichō-san. My friends and I want something to eat first; we've been up practically all night, so we need to get some chow. Shirayuki-chan's too busy helping out with Takanashi-taisa after she nearly cut her stomach open over at Pearl Harbour a few hours ago. I'll pay for it."

Both girls nodded as they walked over to sit at the yatai, then food was ordered. Introductions were made, then Aoi and Ai asked for Lieselotte's autograph. "It's because of what you did to that feminazi Mizunokōji when she wanted to blast her way into the school on Saturday, Maaß-chūsa," Ai explained as autograph books were handed over. "Believe me, that wasn't the only time that bitch stormed into the school to go after Sempai or someone else. You wouldn't believe the number of boys who got hurt a month ago when she found out about Kōchō-sensei's 'physical' that we had to do at Keppeki that nearly scared the poor girl to death, then came over to punish people for hurting her precious baby."

"Pity Onē-san was taking my place when she came by," Ataru noted, a sly smile crossing his face. "I think it was a dozen cinder blocks dropped on Oba-san's head?"

That made his old schoolmates gape. "Tariko-sempai did that?!!" Ai demanded. "Wait! She's a girl; her costume sure showed that! How on Earth was she able to disguise herself as you that day?!"

Laughter responded from the visitors from Ōmure-jima. "The admiral's sister is a reality warper, Fraulein," Melanie answered. "She can change anything that exists as easily as Frau Kasuga can." As the local girls nodded on remembering the "flash night" that warped across Japan on Saturday morning, the adopted native of Kiel (where she was built) and Nowe Brynki in the Polish province of West Pomerania on the River Oder's east bank (her namesake's hometown) added, "Besides, before November just last, the admiral and Frau Tariko were actually one and the same person." As Ataru jerked, Melanie waved to him while Aoi and Ai gaped. "That cursed cake that was made by Herr Ehrwürdiger Sakurambō split Frau Tariko's very soul in half. They wouldn't be physically separated until Frau Kasuga rescued Frau Tariko from being married to that selfish 'queen' from planet Elle. The part that stayed in her body remained as Frau Tariko while the admiral got a battle doll body to live in."

Silence.

More silence.
"Buddha...you were actually a GIRL?!” Aoi demanded, her jaw now in her lap.

"We — Onē-san and I as one person — were born a boy," Ataru answered after a tired sigh as Melanie blushed on realizing she had blurted something out that he would have preferred not to talk about. As Lieselotte squeezed her sister's leg in reassurance, he added, "Two days after we went to Yiziba in 2001, we were transformed into a girl and took the name 'Tariko Katabarbe'. That's how we lived until we came to Tomobiki to help Rumiko-chan and Chigaiko-chan get Gifted. The idiots who blanked our memories of Yiziba and hypnotized you into thinking we had been on Earth all along turned us back into a boy. When our souls got separated after Onē-san took up her Gift, I was 'reborn' as a battle doll."

"You mean like them..." Ai wondered as she indicated the shipgirls.

"Almost, but not with FISS-type powers," he answered. Information had been steadily flowing out into the media since early Sunday morning concerning Yiziba and its remarkable residents, all being released by the governments of various nations who had working relationships with local metahumans. "It certainly helped me better endure Lum's temper tantrums at times; with the way she had been going before we encountered Elle, we could have been crippled for life..." He then hummed. "Or most likely be jointly Gifted in a public way before we could make sure Earth was finally safe from the aliens."

By then, the others at the yatai were gaping at their town's "most infamous" resident. "You know, Ataru-kun, now that you're saying that, I DO remember the times that idiot mother of yours always wailed that you weren't at home before the Oni came here," the yatai's owner noted as some of the others present all nodded in confirmation. "Did you find out who did that?"

"We know who it is, Master, but we're staying silent about it until we can get everyone's memories all back on-line," the most "infamous" teenager in the world answered. "That needs a friend of mine to dig around a bit to get at the mesonium crystals used to keep the brainwashing in place, not to mention turn this whole town into a spiritual prison for all sorts of yōkai." As people winced, Ataru hummed. "Probably by tomorrow, just before we all have to go to Uru and go beat down the Goa'uld."

"The people who led that 'attack' on Montevideo that our fleet mate stopped late Saturday evening local time," Melanie added as she held up her finger in emphasis.
People nodded. "Damn! I read that the German government's going to bring back the Iron Cross as their top medal for bravery, just like the Victoria Cross and the Medal of Honour that Raeburn-shihan got during the Greater East Asia War," a construction worker noted. "I heard that Spee-taisa is going to be the first one to get it. Not to mention the top Uruguayan and Argentinian medals, too!"

"We haven't heard anything yet, mein Herr," Catarina cautioned.

Laughter echoed around the yatai, then the master called for a banzai cheer to salute Margareta von Spee. People then relaxed as they settled in to eat; those who had finished their breakfasts were ordering snacks so they could listen to the gossip Ataru and his companions were now delivering; some had got out their cell phones to relay the story concerning the soul-split between Ataru and Tariko to their friends as well as post same on social media. "Still, even if she and her friends did cause a tonne of trouble, I'm going to miss having Lum-chan around," a police officer — not one who had been caught in the dragnet concerning Ataru's disgraced maternal uncle Yamaguchi Keisuke — then lamented.

"Strange as it sounds, I'll miss that big tiger-cow Rei," the yatai master noted as he sipped some tea while monitoring the cooking. "Sure, he cleaned me out a half-dozen times when he came to town and wrecked the yatai once, but government insurance replaced all the food and gave me a brand new yatai." He chuckled. "Ah, I guess we'll all be lamenting all the good times from now on."

"Even you, Ataru-kun?" an office lady asked.

Ataru sighed. "Well, it's not exactly over for me, Onē-san. Remember the film replicas that got created by Lum's camera back in early March when my class was doing that film on school violence?"

Many people laughed. "We met Shinobu-chan's sister Saiko-chan when she helped her parents move out of town and go down to Kyōto on Saturday," the police officer noted. "And Perm's sister Nijiko-chan was there when those idiot Stormtroopers were arrested on Saturday night when your granduncle's ship came to town with Ross-shōsa to find Negako-sama and Raeburn-shihan."

"What happened to your double, Ataru-kun?" a student Ataru recognized normally attended the Shakkō Vocational Institute north of the Mizunokōji estate then asked. "Is she Gifted like Tariko-chan is?"

"Hai, she is...and she's going to be Lum's wife."
Jaws dropped. "You're kidding me!" Ai gasped.

"It's true, Katō-san," he assured her with a playful wink. "Atop that, it turns out that Shigaten Benten always harboured a crush on me despite Lum being 'married' to me. When Hiromi — that's my film-replica's name — won Lum over, Benten felt it was right to make her move on me."

"Is Benten-san here?" the police officer asked.

"Where my sisters and I live now," Ataru smoothly answered; in truth, his would-be wife was now on Lady Elgin keeping herself available in case the people who had boarded the Canadian superbattleship needed help with Takahashi Anna, the reborn THG Akagi.

"She'll be able to visit home, will she?" the yatai master asked.

An affirming nod answered him. "Sure she can! Even if Fukunokami are encouraged to be independent as soon as they can, she loves her parents. And we have these." Here, Ataru held up a PAA. "They can teleport her back to her home planet when she wants to visit."

People hearing this nodded...

...before a rough girl's voice called out, "There you are!"

Ataru awked before he turned...

...then he was knocked out of his chair by a tackle thanks to what appeared to be a crimson-haired girl in a pink jumpsuit with white belt and boots. They tumbled over each other until they slammed against a telephone pole, Ataru's head smacking against the concrete of the mast. "OI!" he grunted...before his breath was taken away as his attacker swamped him with a kiss that took all the air out of his lungs!

People watched this. "Must be one of the girls Tariko-sempai found on her quest..." Ai then mused.
"Look at HIS crotch, Katō-kun!" Aoi warned.

People who could see this glanced down, then they gaped on seeing what was barely masked by the newcomer's very form-fitting uniform. As Catarina began to shake at the idea of someone assaulting her admiral and publicly embarrassing him in this matter, the two kissers finally pulled apart. "Ah!" the newcomer breathed out before she gazed passionately at this male version of one of her oldest friends, then a pout crossed her face. "Damn! What does it take to get you Gifted, Ataru?!!"

A grunt escaped him. "Much more than that, Nunuri-chan...!"

That made the current incarnation of the Passionate Knight of Beauty, Tamyur'be ("Tomgirl"), groan as she leaned her forehead against his chin while he reached up to stroke her wavy crimson hair; that was styled in two French braids to mid-back. "Oh, Crystal!" she breathed out. "Please tell me you at least found those Gift thieves who split your soul apart last season!"

He leaned down to kiss her forehead above the goggles that protected her brown eyes. "We have, but we'll probably need Tsunetsuki Matoi to track where they might be hiding to pound their skulls in."

"I want in on that fight scene, Ataru!"

"Hai, hai..."

"Er...mein Admiral...?"

He jolted, then looked around Nunuri Kagar'be's head to see Catarina von Savoyen gazing neutrally at them even if her hands were squeezing into very tight fists. "One of our old pillow scene partners."

Hearing THAT admission, the natives all fell flat on their faces!

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Minutes later...
"So...um, transgender people are pretty much accepted as normal folk on Yiziba, right...er, Nunuri-san?" Kiyose Aoi asked, stuttering as she tried not to focus on zher crotch even if Nunuri Kagar'be was seated in Melanie Schultz's lap, hugging the cute reborn third of the Type 1934 destroyers.

"Hai!" the native of Kabe-koli, the large village of Nameless — it was actually the size of a major city on Earth even if it was a farmer's town — which was located a few kilometres south of Tariko Katabarbe's cabin, answered as zhe gave the transformed destroyer's shoulders a friendly squeeze, pressing zher considerable bust into Melanie's to make her madly blush. As both Catarina von Savoyen — who had calmed down somewhat; Moroboshi Ataru was holding the heavy cruiser's hand — and Lieselotte Maaß gave the latter's sister sympathetic looks, Nunuri held up a finger as zhe added, "No, we don't do corrective medical procedures to make us 'pure' as is done here..." — zhe scowled — "...and those who DO that sort of things deserve to get their death scenes for mutilating defenceless people like that..." Zhe then winked at Ataru's former schoolmates. "And yes, I'm FULLY functional in all regards!"

"NUNURI!" Ataru groaned as many at the yatai engaged in loud coughing fits while Aoi blushed madly.

A groan escaped the tanner's child. "Okay! Okay! Stop teasing the norms!" zhe breathed out. "Sorry!"

Silence fell...then Katō Ai began to giggle, her shoulders shaking in amusement. Others blinked before a chorus of laughter echoed over the scene; even Melanie found room to smile even if she was still embarrassed by the intersex teenager's forwardness with her. "Damn! Are everyone on Yiziba as open about those sorts of things?!!" the yatai owner asked as he refilled Catarina's tea cup.

"Social taboos like that exited stage right at the double-quick when the Dawn of Power just wrecked everything in sight, Master," Ataru noted as people turned back to their food and drinks. "Sure, we still have some taboos — like what Nunuri-chan just mentioned about people getting corrective surgery or any sort of medical procedure if they aren't Simon-perfect males or females — but a lot of stuff that's seen as taboo here just doesn't make sense to people like zhim or me."

"Like kissing in public, you mean," Lieselotte mused, making some of the women present blush.

"Like that. I can kiss a boy as easily as I can a girl...and YES, that does make me bisexual in a way," Ataru affirmed with a nod, making people there stare at him. "But I only do that with people that were our pillow scene partners before we got stuck in town last September."
Nods from all around. "Are there others coming, Nunuri-sempai?" Ai asked.

Nunuri hummed. "I know R'hemle wants to see Ataru and make sure he's alright. Ditto with Kohara and Tatische. Soa and Wuke are back on their family farms dealing with the northern harvest now."

"Gifted?" Ataru asked.

"R'hemle is Nuosato Uo now."

That made zher old lover hum. "Cyberking, huh?"

"Is that to our advantage, mein Admiral?" Lieselotte asked.

"Definitely," Ataru affirmed. "He's a technokinetic like Rinrin-chan is. His past-selves often dealt with titemam and titemyu probes that were sent to Yiziba from other planets to learn our weaknesses..."

"What are they, Ataru-kun?" Aoi wondered.

"Androids and gynoids," he translated, a blush crossing his face. "Sorry about that, Seitokaichō-san. Like those androids Nagisa-chan wrecked on Saturday morning to protect Asuka-chan and her boyfriend." As people gasped, Ataru then chuckled. "Hai, it's true! Asuka-chan doesn't have just one boyfriend but THREE of them! They're the three guys who run the Natural Café up the street."

"You mean Sakō-kun, Ōkubo-kun and Hirakawa-kun?" the police officer asked.

"Hai! Matter of fact, Hikaru-san, Chikao-san and Konoe-san are androids themselves...or WERE androids until Ayumu-chan got in there last night and changed them into battle dolls like I am now and like our pillow scene partners were turned into shortly after we moved to Yiziba to be with Mama." Seeing people tense, he smiled, waving his free hand in a reassuring gesture. "Relax! Those three were programmed to be independent of the thing that controlled the other boys Soban had in his 'gang'. They're living memorials in effect; memory replicas of people who died on a planet named Shōzoran a few series — centuries, I mean! — ago! Since they're battle dolls, they don't have to hide anymore."
"And can be Gifted as well," Nunuri added with a wink.

"Mein Admiral and we came here today to look in on them," Catarina added with a reassuring smile, she squeezing his hand in support. "Just as it was quite shocking for my friends and I to transform from warships into living people, it'll be just as shocking for Fraulein Mizunokōji's lovers to transform from being humanoid robots to synthezoids en route to becoming fully organic metahumans."

"This has been cleared, has it?" the police officer asked.

"Hai, by the Men In Black and the government agencies that are making sure Mendō's idiots don't create killer boomers like what showed up in Bubblegum Crisis," Ataru assured him with a snide grin.

People gaped at him, then laughter filled the air...

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At the Mendō estate, that moment...

"AH-CHOO!"

Silence.

More silence.

Still more silence.

Then...

"OI! KUROMEGANE! FIND OUT WHO'S TALKING ABOUT ME!"
Mendō Shūtarō then blinked on noting there was no one in his sitting room to answer his command.

"CURSE YOU, MOROBOSHI, YOU...!"

KK-KLONK!

"Onii-sama, please! I'm trying to read!"

Shūtarō moaned after his twin Tachiko hit him with a cinder block from a pile beside her chair...

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Hogwarts, nearly an hour later (local time: An hour before midnight)...

"Definitely NOT the way to end this weekend," Thérèse Peverell mused.

The other people now in the basement apartment of the Duchess of Kyme Eau nodded forlornly as they enjoyed late night tea. "It's the luck of the fight scene, Thérèse," Tariko Katabarbe advised the current major domo of the Cosmic Mage Guild. "Those umale made their choices."

The reborn now-female version of Tom Riddle grimly nodded as her wife reached over to squeeze her shoulders in support. Most of the lords of the Wizengamot that had charged up from London to confront the "muggleborn upstart" who now claimed one of the Empty Chairs in the chambers of the Ministry of Magic's combined legislative assembly and primary judicial court had left the castle to return to their homes. Some of those people had been outraged when five pureblood students who had been temporarily imprisoned in "C" Block at Her Majesty's Prison Gonebren were turned over to the Aurors and formally expelled from the school — even after two were effectively proven guilty of attempted murder after unleashing Killing Curses on both the new owner of the castle as well as one of its sixth year honours students — but found themselves powerless at the fact that a powerful voting block of the Seven and Ten now stood against the traditionalists of the Sacred Twenty-eight.

Remembering the frustrated looks on the faces of Herbert Burke, Nicholas Bulstrode, Lewis Macmillan and Slade Harper when the group led by Sirius Black, Rose Potter and Neville Longbottom, backed by Draco Malfoy — the latter joined by his housemates from Slytherin Pansy Parkinson, Daphne Greengrass, Blaise Zabini, Vincent Crabbe and Gregory Goyle — declared their intention to further rewrite the Ministry Governance Act of 1708 beyond removing the idiot
restrictions concerning alumni of Britain's other main magical school to wipe out all entrenched "pureblood" privileges still hidden in the basic legislation that governed the running of the Ministry of Magic, Thérèse smiled as she again wondered what the hell had driven her other-self away from using his own followers in the Knights of Walpurgis in the realm of politics rather than to waste energy inciting an armed rebellion.

"Still, it's good to make a strong point," Hermione Granger noted before sipping her tea. She and her wife had come down to visit everyone after Thérèse saw her guests from the Wizengamot off; having joined them were Draco and his friends from Slytherin, Neville, Ginny Weasley, her wife Luna Lovegood and Hirosaki Chikage. Also present were Albus Dumbledore and all the heads of houses; prefects were now making sure all the other students were in their quarters as lights out was coming on soon. Yuhara Yukiko was also there, hovering close to her spiritual admiral's twin sister; noting that, the Hufflepuffs in the crowd could only grin at such a show of passionate loyalty by the reborn destroyer.

"They also need to teach the TRUE story of Headmaster Slytherin and the reason he left the school," Pansy noted. "Not to mention his hand in the creation of Gonebren and WHY it was created that way."

"In time, Pansy. In time," Thérèse cautioned...

...before a gentle chime echoed in the air. A second later, a pop! heralded the arrival of Rose's and Thérèse's chief house elf. "Please forgives Winky for interrupting, Mistresses, but Mistress Tracey and Master Theodore wish to speaks to Master-Headmaster, Master Severus and Mistress Minerva. Mistress Ginny's silly brother is trying to cause trouble again!"

The head of Slytherin moaned. "Dear Merlin! What's that dunderhead doing now?"

"Can I hit him again, Uncle Severus?" Ginny pleaded.

"Yes, you can!" Thérèse bade.
"NO, YOU CAN'T!" both Severus Snape and Minerva McGonagall bellowed together.

People looked at each other, then Tariko and Dumbledore laughed as Yukiko giggled. "Fine! Be party poopers then!" Thérèse snapped before she gazed at Winky, making a beckoning motion with her hand. "Bring them down here, Winky! Let's get this over with finally!"

"Winky will do, Mistress!" Pop!

A moment later, footfalls echoed from the stairs that led into the main reception hall, heralding the arrival of two Slytherin sixth years in formal robes and one Gryffindor of the same year in civilian clothes. "Mistress Davis, Lord Torridge," Thérèse greeted the two in uniform before she fixed a shuddering Ronald Weasley with a knowing look, making him flush a particular shade of puce that reminded Rose a little too much of her maternal uncle Vernon Dursley, who was now in Australia still lamenting on the shower of bad luck that had befallen his family since the "freak" disappeared in the fall of 2003. "Is there some reason you've brought down Master Weasley to see us this evening?"

Tracey Davis gave Thérèse a polite curtsy as Theodore Nott bowed his head. "Our apologies for intruding on you, Mormaer Thérèse, Headmaster, Professors," the latter then said before he bowed deeply to Tariko. "Lady Katabarbe. If your sister's tales of your exploits over the last decade and more are as rich as she described them, you've long earned your Gift as the true Mistress of Chaos among the Children of the Forge of the First Race." He glanced at Yukiko. "Er...?"

"Sadly, Lord Torridge, our sisters' concerns for Ane-kun saw Commander Yuhara Yukiko of Sasebo and Jilong, Lady Yukikaze of Clan Kagerō, sent here," Chikage said as her royal blue eyes twinkled.

"Is that how Yukikaze would be called here?!"

That was a now-madly blushing Yukiko. "I shudder to think of what your sister would call her, Chikage," Snape noted as he looked at the Dark Heart of Pure Chaos.

"Knowing her, she'd be addressed as 'Korvettenkapitän Yukiko, Freidame von Yuhara zu Hishū und Táiwān'," Hermione cautioned, she raising a finger to emphasize her point.

"How did you guess, Hermione-san?" Yukiko asked, her eyes wide at that guess. She had heard that exact same phrase from Tenhiro Haruka when the eighth of the Kagerō-class destroyers had asked the Quarterstaff Mistress about German honorifics after she had gone and embarrassed all the schiffsmädchen now living on Ōmure-jima by introducing them with their "noble" titles.
The Bright Seamstress of Spells smirked. "Haruka can be pretty predictable."

«I HEARD that, Hermione-chan!»

People jolted on hearing that familiar woman's voice echo in their minds as Ron wildly scanned around, then laughter filled the room. "Again, I ask you two, what's going on here?" Thérèse then called out.

Theodore sighed. "Miss Davis and I were doing our rounds to get everyone back into their dorms before curfew when we chanced upon Mister Weasley trying to rile up some members of his house to march down here and demand an immediate audience with the lords of the Wizengamot when they were here meeting you, Mormaer Thérèse. When we asked him why, he started ranting on and on about how the 'slimy snakes' had somehow corrupted HIS 'best mate' and turned 'him' against Gryffindor, never mind what your beloved wife VOLUNTARILY chose to do when she was Gifted..."

"LOOK OUT!"

A flash of light and a blast of Arctic cold later...

"Miss Yukikaze!" Winky declared as people stared at what Yukiko had just done. "You needs not freeze silly boy like that! Winky and Winky's friends could stop him!"

Everyone blinked before they stared at a now-frozen Ron, trapped in a solid block of ice thanks to the primary cryokinetic powers of who was now called on Yiziba the Typhoon Blizzard, Rikebo'o ("Yukikaze"). Tariko moaned. "Snowy, we have GOT to teach you something about butting into other people's fight scenes!" she said as she gave Yukiko a scolding look, which made the destroyer wilt.

"Her heart is in the right place, Ane-kun! Leave her be," Chikage chided.

The Trickster of the Show groaned as she shook her head. "Tell me something, Tracey? Theo?" Rose then asked as she used her magic to make sure her would-be "best mate" would hear everything she had to say at this time; fortunately for Ron, Yukiko had enough control over her powers to make sure he could still breathe even if he couldn't presently move. "How long as this
idiot been giving you all earaches claiming he was my best friend? Ever since you got to this place in '07?

"Pretty much so, Rose," Tracey answered as Theodore and the others in the room nodded while Ginny rolled her eyes and Luna shook her head. "Especially during the times people from houses other than Gryffindor stated they wanted the chance to meet you — meet you as Harry, I mean — until you were declared 'dead' at the start of the Triwizard last fall." She then winked. "By the way, that was some cool trick, fooling the *Goblet of Fire* like that!" As people laughed, she then glared at Ron. "Every time someone was foolish enough to say that they wanted to meet you, Weasley here would jump down their throats and said that only HE was worthy to be your best — and even at times ONLY! — friend."

"It all stems from Mum, Rose," Ginny added. "Despite the mistakes Professor Dumbledore made at the start, it WAS sensible in the long term to hide you away from all the idiots who wanted to take advantage of you for something your MOTHER clearly did when Riddle was deprived of his corpus." As people snickered, she added, "To her credit, Mum always worried about that. She wanted to make sure you had the right sort of friends to guide you back in when you would come to Hogwarts in '07. Dummy here took it WAY too seriously! Thank Merlin that I finally got over that silly crush I had on you!"

"Some sort of mana-compulso?" Neville then asked.

People looked at the Master of Plants. "Like what you just unleashed on Bellatrix?" Thérèse wondered.

"It's a potential explanation, Thérèse," the future Marquess of Holdenhurst noted with a shrug. "I'm no healer by any stretch of the imagination, but willpower has always been one major factor in all forms of magic no matter the school. Look at how someone can become an Obscurial! If someone convinces himself or herself that a certain course in life is the right way — if not the ONLY way! — to go, they do it. With their own magic forcing them in that particular direction...!"

People winced as several gazed on Ron. One good thing about Tariko's quest to get people Gifted over the years were the encounters she had with badly abused magical children who were sliding down the ugly slope that had ultimately consumed Credence Barebone back in the 1920s, saving them from their abusive caregivers and getting them Gifted to help bring their magic under control. Studies towards detecting the onset of what was often called "mana-compulso" — said to be the ability to subconsciously use one's magic to "hypnotize" oneself into performing or thinking of any sort of feat to the point where one simply couldn't think of doing something else — had gone hand-in-hand with studies on the development of Obscurials, creating a thick tome of literature that was still mostly conjecture with few hard facts. Given that studies into mental health care among magicals had not advanced anywhere near to how they had in the normal world...
"Get him to a healer."

Eyes locked on Tariko. "That 'spy eye' of yours see something?" Chikage asked.

"Yeah," the Trickster of the Show warned as Ron's glare focused on her. "He's wishing for the chance to break out of the ice and curse me for 'taking his best mate' away from him, he's calling Tracey and Theo here — not to mention Drake and all the others from Slytherin — all sorts of names that would earn him a nasty beatdown from even the most rabid heel back on Yiziba, he hates the fact that his own sister is 'perverted' for being soul-bonded with Luna, can't stand the fact that Hermione is actually soul-bonded to Pansy and..." She shook her head. "Crystal! One rapid repeat scene after the next inside this umale's brain! He's no freaking different than Hibiki Ryōga or Isona'a Naggu...!

Her hand instantly clapped her mouth closed. "Oh, well done, Ane-kun...!" Chikage moaned...

KK-KRANG!

The whole room suddenly shook as the ice cube that consumed Ron tipped to one side, shattering on impact; fortunately, the youngest son of Arthur Weasley and Molly Prewett was knocked out by the fall.

"HEY, YOU SHITTY ASSHOLE! WATCH WHERE YOU'RE AIMING THAT THING, HUH?!"

People exchanged looks, then they gazed at Yukiko. "You brought HER here, Snowy?" Tariko wondered.

"Nagato-san insisted that Yukikaze not come alone, Shirē!" the destroyer whined.

A moan escaped the Trickster of the Show. "Oh, great...!"

Everyone then tensed as a wave of pure peace washed over the room, making the people there all calm down. "Ah! Miss Hinako is here!" Winky called out in delight...
In the main reception hall...

"Isona'a-san...!"

For the Eternal Hunter, Wyo’ona ("Cougar"), this was a revolting development.

A bald and lanky yet muscular teenage man with very dark marksman's eyes, he was a native of the northern polar continent, born in one of the smaller coastal urban habitations mostly frequented by the Named. Gifted when he was a child, Isona'a Naggu was primarily blessed with cosmic-level empathy that allowed him to track whatever he saw as prey anywhere on the planet...and eventually even beyond the planet. His first-self had been a big game hunter that had gladly gone after rogue metahumans in the Dawn of Power...but during that dark age on the World of the Forge, something went wrong.

What had just made the poor fellow come charging into Hogwarts ready to unleash a fight scene — only to be stopped by the Spirit of Innocence and her companion — was one such thing.

"I'm thsure...I thsmelled a coyote here...!"

A very annoyed Saeru Hinako tried not to roll her eyes as she sensed other students beyond the normal patrolling prefects burst out from the dormitories to see what was going on, many with wands out and ready. "Minna-san! It's okay!" the native of Niigata called out, waving her hand as she looked about, reaching out with her empathy to calm the crowd down. "It's just Isona'a-san being silly again!"

That made him awk. "Mithss Hinako...!"

A growl escaped Hinako; as what normally happened elsewhere when she did that, people seeing her gushed at how cute she was doing that. "You keep him still until Onē-tama and Chikage-chan comes here, Kasumi-san!" she bade as she wagged her finger at the dazed Isona'a.

A dark cackle escaped the ninth of the Asashio-class destroyers as she gladly twisted the Eternal
Hunter's leg in a perfect ankle lock, which she had learned how to do telepathically from Ashikaga Akemi. "Don't worry about that, Hinako-chan!" Akatsuka Kasumi said as she glared with contempt at the reborn wild game hunter that had become quite the annoying headache for Hinako's big sister since she was Gifted. "This shitty lisping idiot's going nowhere! Right, shithead?!"

She twisted his brown boot, making Isona'a screech. "AH! Hey! That hurtths!"

"Then you should'a thought better than to attack a castle that has a standing patrol, dumbass!"

"Okay! OKAY! Fight scene's over with, people!"

Hearing the voice of the current incarnation of one of the battle lines his past-selves had locked in on to hunt down no matter what, Isona'a's eyes glittered as a battle aura flared around him. "COYOTE...!"

**KK-KRUNCH!**

"Shut it, shithead!" Kasumi snapped after slamming the Eternal Hunter's face right into the floor.

"Commander, there's no need for that sort of language here!"

People turned around to look as a small crowd came out of the private quarters of the woman claiming to be Salazar Slytherin's heiress. "Ah! Onē-tama! Chikage-chan! Thérèse-san! Rose-san! Kōchō-sensei! Sensei-tachi! Minna!" Hinako called out, waving.

"Hello again, Hinako," Albus Dumbledore said as he came over to gaze at the unconscious hunter on the floor of the reception hall. "Now, what made Mister Naggu come charging in here this evening?"

"Sadly, Lord Exmoor, I am ultimately at fault here."

People perked, then spun around to gaze towards the main doors...
"Who...?" Draco Malfoy hissed.

Standing inside the doors was a tall, slender woman of about the same age as the new Marquess of Avebury. Possessing chocolate brown skin of a more milkier shade than what Blaise Zabini had, she had very aristocratic features and a pair of deep blue eyes that seemed to take in all around her. Her head was covered by deep rusty red hair, wavy and long, tied in a utilitarian ponytail at the back of her neck. She was dressed as if she was a master of foxhounds in a classic English hunt: A scarlet coat over white ruffled blouse, tan rider's trousers covering her slender legs. To denote she was clearly a witch, a beautiful hooded cape was draped around her shoulders, the family crest poised over her heart.

On seeing that blazon...

"You're a Meretrice...?" Blaise whispered, his eyes wide with shock.

As the people all listening to this save those who weren't too familiar with wizarding Britain gasped in disbelief, the newcomer gazed upon him, a knowing grin crossing her face. "Aye, cousin, your lost kin from Rhosan Green have returned!" she said as she held out her hands. "Hail and well met!" As she came over to warmly grasp the hands of the future Baron of Lewisham, she leaned around him to gaze upon Pomona Sprout. "My beloved Sarah sends you her love and best wishes, House Mistress Pomona. She sensed it when that vile usurper Umbridge was slain by the good Lady Warspite of Devonport last evening! While she may not return to these hollowed halls, she does miss her beloved friends dearly..."

"WAIT! YOU'RE SALLY-ANNE'S WIFE?!"

That was Head Girl Zhāng Qīū — known to everyone in wizarding Britain familiar with the girlfriend of the winner of the Triwizard Tournament by the misreading of her name, "Cho Chang" — who had come down with Head Boy Terrance Higgs when Isona'a came charging into the castle to be intercepted by Kasumi. As the Hufflepuffs in listening range gasped on hearing of their housemate Sally-Anne Perks — who resigned from Hogwarts at the end of her fourth year and totally disappeared — the newcomer nodded. "I do have that honour to declare dear Sarah my beloved wife and soul-mate, Mistress Zhāng!" Her eyes then raked across Qīū's body, which made the Chinese-descent native of Cumbernauld in North Lanarkshire near Glasgow blush madly. "Indeed, I must compliment Master Diggory's exceptional good taste! I'm sure you and he will enjoy a delightful marriage once you wed, Mistress Zhāng!"

As the Head Girl flustered even more at that rakish compliment, Thérèse Peverell clicked her tongue. "Magistra Maga Libera Meretrice, right?! Mistresses' Class from two years ago at Meridiana?"
As many students gasped on hearing the full name of the beautiful woman — to say anything of where she went to school — the newcomer pulled away from Blaise, then walked over, offering her hand. Thérèse took it, noting the family ring of the Most Noble House of Meretrice of the Viscounty of Wye in southeast Herfordshire on her finger. She also quickly sensed the newcomer was a Terran-turned-Avalonian, though Libera's mind-shields were fully up. Once they were grasping hands, Libera gave her a polite curtsy. "Indeed I am, Your Grace," she declared with a bow of her head. "As so acknowledged by both my blood and by Magicks most ancient at the Circle of Justice where the Wizard's Council of old once sat at your family's most noble keep within the Moor of Gonebren." She then perked as people gasped and shuddered at the uttering of the name of that prison that had temporarily taken five of their number away earlier this evening. "Oh, come now!" Libera scolded. "The noble souls who guard Her Majesty's Gaol aren't evil to those who are not evil to them in return! They're the ultimate guardians of true justice in the land, far more than those foul creations of the mad Ekrizdis!"

Dumbledore chuckled. "It appears, Lady Wye, your knowledge of magical history is far more thorough than what one might suspect of a family that has been absent from our society for over a century!"

A tired sigh escaped the newcomer. "We would have stayed missing hadn't the direly afflicted Master Naggu of the World of the Forge stumbled onto our poor village shortly after his being blessed by the Spirits of the First Race. He freed us from my great-grandfather's entrapment spells that kept us within the Green to protect us from 'Lord' Chaucer, nearly rendering all who lived on the Green squibs. It was only by Master Naggu's intervention and the later intervention of a poor explorer from a world plagued by a most queer social disorder that saw my beloved sisters and I able to attend Meridiana. No doubt, the spells used by Her Grace's ancestor and his friends who forged this castle in the Age of Danegeld were not able to track us due to our families' isolation from those who DID get such a chance."

The headmaster nodded as his mind quickly analyzed what had just been revealed. He knew the late Dolores Umbridge had forced the forester's daughter from Ross-on-Wye near the Forest of Dean to resign from Hogwarts in the summer of 2011 due to "improper behaviour". He never found out what that meant, but thanks to what Libera just said, he realized that the senior undersecretary probably learned of Sally-Anne's relationship with the heiress to the Viscounty of Wye, then deemed it "improper" as there was to be a TOTAL separation between alumni of Hogwarts and alumni of Meridiana because of the latter school's more accepting stance towards normal people; such had actually been reinforced by various clauses of the Ministry Governance Act of 1708 that effectively isolated the alumni of Meridiana from the rest of the magical realms in Europe for many years afterwards.

Fortunately for the future of magical Britain, as soon as she went to Gringotts to claim her inheritance as Duchess of Kyme Eau after destroying her other-self, one of the first things Thérèse Peverell did was to use her veto vote to throw out the Defunct Lords Act of 1957 — which prevented normal-born heirs of lost magical seats such as Hermione Granger, the heiress to the Barony of Ifield near London through her mother, from taking up their posts in the Wizengamot; it was the removal of THAT act that saw representatives of the Sacred Twenty-eight storm the castle earlier — as well as
eliminate clauses in the Ministry Governance Act concerning interactions with Meridiana alumni, the first step in refolding the people who had gone to that school back into a fully intact and vibrant magical British society.

And with **Jody Crowley** holding the "fifth" Empty Chair in the Wizengamot...!

He and Thérèse exchanged a look. "Tell me, Lady Wye, have you fulfilled your obligations as demanded by your mastery diploma when you finally left Meridiana?" the new owner of Hogwarts asked.

Libera smiled; her empathy had picked up that silent conversation between this reborn and cleansed version of that mudblood that dared call himself a "dark lord" and the headmaster and possessor of the Elder Wand of the Undying Lord of Rügen. "Indeed I have, Your Grace. 'Twas not as exciting as what my younger peer Master Negi Springfield found himself in when he was dispatched to tranquil Mahora to oversee one of the classes at the keep of the His Imperial Majesty's Commandery of Kantō and the wild collection of forceful personalities within his class — such as the **Maga Nosferatu** herself...!"

Screams echoed from the students hearing this; the overall fear of one Evangeline McDowell among the magicals of Britain regardless of alma mater was more ingrained than what Tom Riddle provoked as Voldemort. The teachers remained calm; Tariko Katabarbe herself had encountered the seven century-old shinso when she passed through Mahora to see Asakura Kazumi and Hasegawa Chisame Gifted, finding the immortal native of Scotland to be no real threat...especially now that Margo Black was Gifted as Doctor Death. "Still, you are released from your diploma oath?" Dumbledore then confirmed.

"Indeed I am, Lord Exmoor."

A delighted grin crossed his face as he clapped his arms in anticipation. "Then, if Mormaer Thérèse agrees, I extend an invitation for you to seek employment with us. I think a revision of the History of Magic class is long overdue. Wouldn't you agree, Mormaer Thérèse?"

"Oh, I agree indeed!" Thérèse stated with a nod as Rose Potter exchanged a knowing look with her oldest friend. "At the same time, the issue with Lady Wye's wife can be dealt with properly. I don't care at all for the honour of Hogwarts being insulted by that half-blood liar Umbridge's actions that took away one hell of a good student from these halls!" As all the Hufflepuffs in hearing range whooped at that declaration, the heiress of Slytherin gazed upon their current head of house. "Pomona, once Mistress Perks is back, you'll arrange for tutorials so she can take her OWLs and get caught up."
"I'll see to it as soon as she's back, Mormaer Thérèse!" Pomona Sprout vowed.

"HEY! YOU CAN'T DO THAT!"

Eyes locked on Ronald Weasley, who had come up from the basement shivering after being frozen by Yuhara Yukiko. "And why the hell can't she, Weasley?!" Rose then asked. "She OWNS the castle..."

"She's a tribade, Harry!" the youngest of Arthur Weasley's sons snapped, waving at Libera. As shocked gasps echoed through the hall at the utterance of such a vicious local term for a homosexual and Tariko rolled her eyes at such a show of total stupidity, Libera began to shudder in outrage. "We can't have someone like that teach history! 'Sides, it'll take our sleep period...!"

KK-KKRACK!

"Are you thsaying bad wordths about Mithss Libera, thsame?!"

As Kasumi squawked on seeing she was sitting on empty air — though her own flight capabilities had stopped the adopted native of Uraga within Yokosuka itself from falling on her butt — people's heads snapped over to see Ron now unconscious after Isona'a lunged over and butt-stroked him with his portable grenade launcher in the gut; such had sent Ron flying into the ceiling of the reception hall to then flop down face-first into the floor. As the Eternal Hunter moved to continue the beatdown, Libera sighed. "Such a gallant knight, isn't he?!" she passionately declared as she gazed on her cousin.

"Request to sire, cousin?" Blaise asked, an amused look crossing his face.

"But of course, dear cousin!" Libera then gazed on Tariko as Isona'a awked in embarrassment. "To which, Lady Katabarbe, I pray you'll soon find a new Dragoness to remove that dratted spell that prevents Isona'a from giving my wife and I children." As Isona'a and Hinako blushed at that comment, the Viscountess of Wye added, "Much that I can understand why your people would gladly put a stop to what you call 'Gift thievery'...!" — here, she shook her head — "Indeed, such sounds like those fool lies the lunatics of the so-called 'sacred twenty-eight' have long espoused when it comes to normal-borns blessed by the Goddesses of Magic, claiming they 'stole' such gifts from 'deserving' stalebloods...!" — here, she ignored the shocked gasps from many on hearing that insulting term for conservative purebloods as she gave Tariko a pleading look — "Do make a good effort, I pray thee!"
"Well, if you and your wife can keep him busy, I won't complain," the Trickster of the Show said.

"Onē-tama!" Hinako screamed out.

"Hinako-chan...don't you have SCHOOL to worry about?"

That made the Spirit of Innocence blink as she took in Hirosaki Chikage's words, then she gasped. "Ah! Hina forgot! Hina's got to go!" she cried out before vanishing in a flare of light thanks to her PAA.

People blinked, then laughter filled the room...

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The hospital wing, an hour later...

"I DON'T BELIEVE THIS CLAPTRAP! THERE'S NOTHING WRONG WITH MY BOY...!"

"SILENCIO!"

Molly Weasley gasped in outrage on hearing that barked command from the specialist master healer that had been called in to look on Ronald Weasley, then her face flushed with outrage as she realized that Lamicho Hundings had completely silenced her with just a wave of his hand. "Thank you, Lamicho!" Poppy Pomfrey breathed out as she glared Ron's mother down, making Molly wilt. "I will NOT have that sort of behaviour in MY hospital wing, Molly! You sit right down there!"

She indicated a nearby chair. Ron's mother hesitated...then she silently awked as a hand covered in brown finger-less gloves landed on her shoulder. "The nithse healer athsked you to thsit down, thsame!" Ison'a Naggu said as he glared murderously at the matriarch of the Weasley Clan of Ottery Saint Catchpole. "Thso do as the nithse healer athsked or I'll declare it 'Wittch Thseason' and make what that thsame Riddle did to all of you look NITHSE in comparithson!"

Sensing his battle aura growing like a Dementor looming over its latest target, Molly quickly scrambled over to the chair, sitting down like a child who had just been spanked. As Pomfrey flashed
the Eternal Hunter a grateful look, the current Viscount of Dengie on the North Sea coast of Essex and one of the curse specialists currently working at Saint Mungo's Hospital smirked. "I take it, Mistress Tariko, that the sanctity of a healer's cockpit is just as important to you Yizibajohei as the sanctity of meals?"

"You can say that, Healer," Tariko Katabarbe said, seated beside Hirosaki Chikage on a nearby bed as the healer examined the unconscious Ron. "Is Neville's theory about this mana-compulso thing right?"

As Molly shuddered in outrage on hearing that question from the nosy muggle that had caused so much trouble over the years — Ron's mother was one of many who thought the concept of having one's magic hypnotize oneself into doing this was just a load of dragon dung — the master healer hummed. "There are all the classic signs, Lady Katabarbe. Tell me, Lord Longbottom: In any of your past lives, did any of those people apprentice with healers on Yiziba? That was an excellent diagnosis you made."

Neville Longbottom shyly shrugged as Hermione Granger and Pansy Parkinson squeezed his shoulders in support; they were seated to the opposite side from where Tariko and Chikage were seated. "Since my past-selves were most often lone heels, Master Healer, they had to learn self-healing with their own powers. There have been times when people who've had powerful psionic or magical abilities have done that to themselves by accident. I would have spoken up earlier..."

"But you had to maintain your rather remarkable disguise of being a dunderhead to ensure that what happened to your parents remained undiscovered until Bellatrix and her family were permanently dealt with," Severus Snape said as he came over with some freshly-made potions for Hundings to make use of, getting a nod of thanks from the Essaxon master healer and Wizengamot lord.

"Just like you did, Uncle Severus," Neville stated, which made the sour potions master blush at that familial title from one of his worst students. "I've always admired your acting abilities when it came to the blood purists who were breathing down your back to make sure their children danced to the same theme music and kept up the scare on all the normal-borns and their supporters here."

As people smirked, Snape shook his head. "Just act PROPERLY in the labs from now on and I'll not comment on it," the head of Slytherin declared with a hint of an amused smile touching his lips.

"Have you discovered something else about this poor lout, Master Healer?" Libera Meretrice added. She was seated on another bed nearby with Thérèse Peverell, Rose Potter and Albus Dumbledore as they waited for the master healer to finish his examination.
"Indeed I did, Magistra Maga Libera: A very poorly-applied CHILD'S CAP!"

Pomfrey croaked before she turned to glare wrathfully at Ron's mother, making the silenced matriarch pale. "I'll summon some ambulatory staff to have him brought to the hospital, Master Healer."

"Please do so, Madame."

"What does that mean, Lamicho?" Dumbledore asked as Pomfrey ran off to her office.

"It means, Albus, that someone — most likely the poor lad's mother — tried to apply a child's cap to help control his accidental magic. No doubt because of the potential threat of the late Mister Riddle's people killing the child because he was born of 'blood traitors,'" Hundings dryly declared. While a pureblood himself, he was an admirer of normal people — especially normal medical studies — and didn't care at all for the rabid racism that haunted many other people in wizarding Britain. Fortunately for him and his relatives, the Death Eaters always balked at the idea of trying to attack healers since such would see them denied any professional medical assistance in return. That was enforced by the Bonhammic Oath all healers, mediwizards and mediwitches took before they could work with patients; such was a more flexible version of the normal Hippocratic Oath which had been composed by the founder of Saint Mungo's Hospital, Master Healer Mungo Bonham, to ensure those who would try to do evil upon any living creature wouldn't find any succour at his famous facility in London.

"Which, because she's no healer by any stretch of the damned imagination, ended up badly affecting my brother's magic over the years," Ginny Weasley declared from the bed on the other side of the room from where Tariko and Chikage sat, then she glared at her mother. "Way to go, Mummy!" she snapped, making Molly stare at her before Ginny's eyes started to glow with the wild magic she commanded, that making the older woman cringe. "Oh, how does that script line that Ataru likes to use again go...?"

"She'll grow old and die alone!" Tariko teased.

Molly silently gasped on hearing that dire threat from the Trickster of the Show, then she collapsed into a semi-conscious daze in her chair. As Isona'a picked her up and dropped her onto a bed so she didn't make a mess of the nice healer's cockpit here, Dumbledore chuckled. "Much that I personally cringe at the idea of families being shattered in that manner, I can understand what possessed her children to flee from home like they did once they achieved their majority," he breathed out.

"They can't be protected forever, you know," Thérèse warned.
"True, true..."

A knock echoed from the main doors, then it opened slightly to allow Akatsuka Kasumi to lean in. "Sensei-tachi!" the ninth of the Asashio-class quietly called in. "There's some government puke here that wants to talk to the headmaster. He brought some local cops with him, too. Saying some stupid ward tripped for some dumb reason and they had to respond to it."

"As long as they're quiet, Commander Akatsuka," Pomfrey declared.

The reborn destroyer nodded, then ducked out again. A moment later, the door opened to allow the third of the sons of Arthur and Molly Weasley to walk in, he escorted by a three-person detail of aurors. Dumbledore smirked on seeing both Kingsley Shacklebolt and Nymphadora Tonks accompanying Percy Weasley, along with John Dawlish; the latter had been part of Cornelius Fudge's personal protection detail. "My apologies for intruding, Master Healer, Madame Pomfrey," Percy declared with a polite bow of his head before he gazed on the dazed Molly, then the unconscious Ron. "What happened?"

"A bad case of mana-compulso thanks to a botched child's cap put on your brother's magic by your mother, plus the result of an ugly insult delivered by your brother to Magistra Maga Libera Meretrice seated beside the Headmaster and his companions, Undersecretary Weasley," Hundings explained as he waved to Percy's brother. "As for your mother, the discovery of her actions to your brother — and your sister, no doubt — has forced your sister to follow your and your brothers' paths out of the Burrow to seek a life for herself away from your mother's smothering. Master Naggu was more than pleased to put your mother to bed." He nodded to the Eternal Hunter, who nodded politely to the newcomers.

Percy blinked before he moaned, reaching up to rub his forehead. "Oh, Merlin! You'd think that Mother would have taken Ronald and Ginevra to the hospital to have those caps fixed by you or one of the others on staff after the war was over!" he spat out, shaking his head.

"Um...Undersecretary...?"

"Auror Dawlish, be quiet!" Percy snapped, making Dawlish cringe. "We'll get to the issue of Magistra Maga Libera's presence later! I pray trust that the problem with Ronald can be cured, Master Healer."

The Essaxon chuckled. "It'll take a bit — until after the New Year — but your brother's physical
brain wasn't damaged because of it. We're getting him put into long term care at the hospital now."

"I'll contact Lord Aylesbeare and Lord Basingtoke to tell them, Master Healer," Thérèse promised. "I'm sure once they learn what his mother did, they'll be happy to see you properly compensated for it."

Hearing that, Percy grimaced. "Yes, Grandfather and Granduncle WOULD be happy to see Mother's idiocy shown up like that," he muttered. "If you want, Mormaer Thérèse, I can contact them instead."

"That's certainly more than appreciated, Master Weasley. I will have to see your brother suspended from school for his atrocious behaviour concerning his peers, though." At Percy's questioning look, Thérèse waved to her wife as she quickly explained things.

After that quick explanation, the former Wizengamot court scribe — who had been promoted to junior undersecretary in September by Cornelius Fudge and was now effectively running the administrative mechanisms of government in the Ministry in the name of the current Chief Warlock and temporary minister, Xavier Leolin, the Baron of Flagley in the Richmondshire part of northern Yorkshire — could only shake his head. "I'll pass this on to Father, Ginny," he vowed. "Mormaer Thérèse, I'll approach Professor Marchbanks to have Ronald's OWL tests redone. It's a miracle in my eyes he was allowed to pass fifth year at all. If it IS mana-compulso, everything he's done here has to be re-evaluated."

"I definitely would recommend repeating a year, Mormaer," Severus Snape advised.

Thérèse nodded. "We'll look at it after the Master Healer gives us a full diagnosis. Lippy!"

"Pop! "What is it, Mistress Mormaer?!" the elderly chief house elf of Hogwarts asked.

"Have young Master Weasley's belongings packed and taken out of the sixth year boy's dorm in Gryffindor, shrink it all down, then give same to his brother here," the Duchess of Kyme Eau declared as she waved to the unconscious Ron. "He's suspended until further notice."

"Lippy will have it done, Mistress Mormaer!" Pop!

As Percy nodded in appreciation, a knock echoed from the doorway. It then opened, this time
revealing a discretely acting Yuhara Yukiko. "Um, Sensei-tachi, a very nice obā-san came up to 
Yukikaze and Kasumi-chan looking for Kōchō-sensei," she quietly announced.

"Send her in, Commander Yuhara," Dumbledore bade.

The eighth of the Kagerō-class destroyers ducked out, then the door opened to reveal the very elderly 
governor of the Wizarding Examinations Authority, one of the several sub-departments of the 
Ministry of Magic responsible for enforcing educational standards among the magicals of the United 
Kingdom that answered to the Ministry itself. "Thank you, child!" Griselda Marchbanks, who was 
also Earl Countess of Water Newton near Peterborough in Cambridgeshire — thus making her part 
of the Seven and Ten — playfully declared as she squeezed Yukiko's cheek, that making the adopted 
native of Sasebo squeak in embarrassment. "Apologies for not stopping this visit of yours here 
tonight, Percival..."

She stopped on seeing what was going on before she shook her head, crossing her arms. "By the 
looks of it, you had to come anyway," she then dryly noted. "What's going on, Lamicho?"

"Botched child cap and mana-compulso, Professor," Hundings said as he flashed the elderly witch 
— who was a peer of Percy's maternal great-grandaunt Muriel Prewett and had been Albus 
Dumbledore's charms teacher when he attended Hogwarts in the 1890s — an amused smile, eyes 
twinkling in reassurance. "No permanent damage to his mind, but he'll be off school for some time."

Marchbanks nodded before she gazed in amusement at Libera Meretrice. "Here seeking a job, young 
lady?" she teased. "Got tired of dealing with that idiot Carpenter over at the British Library, eh?!"

"Grandmother, please!" the Viscountess of Wye squeaked, her cheeks flushing.

That made Dawlish gape. "Professor, you know that...!"

"Shut up, boy!" Marchbanks snapped, making the auror clam up. "As I was trying to tell you before 
you made this visit to bother Albus an OFFICIAL call-out, the removal of those laws concerning 
Meridiana alumni by Her Grace today meant that ward that's around the castle that detected Magistra 
Maga Meretrice when she came here to meet Her Grace is ILLEGAL!" As Dawlish cringed and 
Shacklebolt and Tonks smirked in delight on seeing their brown-nosing peer publicly dressed down 
like that, Marchbanks gazed at Thérèse. "You best get Ragnok's people over here to look over the 
castle wards, young lady. Anyone from Yiziba that would be expert in those things would be needed 
too, I think."
"Only one person who can do that, Grandmother," Rose warned. "Jody Crowley."

That made Dawlish jerk. "**WHERE IS SHE, POTTER?! SHE'S UNDER ARREST...!**"

**KK-KLONK!**

"Oi, umale! *Volume*, huh?" Tariko snapped after braining Dawlish yet again with a cinder block.

"Get him out of here please, Dora?" Hundings pleaded.

"Right away, Master Healer!" Tonks called out.

With a quick levitation charm, the dazed former bodyguard was floated out of the hospital wing by the young metamorphmagus witch. Just as the sound of Pomfrey's personal Floo echoed from her office to herald the arrival of a small group of mediwizards and mediwitches from the hidden magical hospital in an "abandoned" department store building on Castelnau Road south of Hammersmith Bridge in the borough of Richmond upon Thames, a PAA then chimed off. "Mine!" Rose called out as she pulled out the device from her belt, then placed it on the small nightstand beside her, tapping the crystal.

People looked over to see a holographic image then appear over the device, it projecting a familiar image. "Hey, Isaac!" the sorcerer supreme of Yiziba quietly called out as she thumbed behind her just as the people from Saint Mungo's Hospital walked into the camera range to be briefed by Hundings and Pomfrey on the current situation. "Had some interesting issues here."

"Well, it sure took you guys long enough to answer," the Wise Lone Sage noted from his private quarters aboard the FPSYS *Normandy*, still in orbit over Uru. As Rose shrugged and Thérèse and Dumbledore chuckled, Isaac Thomas added, "I sent out the notice about the Mother of All Fight Scenes that's going down in the Oniboshi system a while ago. Why didn't you call back?"

By then, the other Gifted metahumans were moving to join in on the conversation, they discretely followed by both Percy Weasley and Griselda Marchbanks. "You mean the fact that the Goa'uld are about to attack Uru," Hermione noted as she crossed her arms.

The New Yorker nodded. Even if she was part of the Cosmic Mage Guild, the Bright Seamstress of Spells always kept an eagle eye out for events beyond the magical realms to ensure all was well.
"Time's finally come to put them through their death scenes finally," Isaac noted. "Given that Apophis' wife was recently EATEN by one of the American shipgirls who came back to duty for Stargate Command after she was reborn early Saturday morning local time at Bikini...!"

"Tomo must be jumping for joy!" Pansy cackled. "Is she there?"

"Both her and Yomi, Pansy. They're skipping school just in case someone comes 'fashionably early' so Tomo can warm herself up on the stupid fool before she finally teaches Apophis how to DIE properly."

Snickers escaped the people hearing this, even the non-Gifted magicals; the fame of what Stargate Command was doing had made it to Britain as well. "I dare say, Master Isona'a, there will be good hunting for you once the false gods are trapped near the world of the Oni to be shown for the liars they are," Libera noted as Isona'a came over to listen in on the conversation, sitting beside Marchbanks.

As Dumbledore pulled out his wand to put up a cone of silence over the group so that Hundings and his co-workers weren't disturbed as they worked on Ron, Isona'a sneered. "I hope thso!" the Eternal Hunter growled. "Mithss Tomo'ths right! That death tcheater doethn't know how to DIE right! I'm sure Mithss Tomo will finally thshow him what it meanths to be a death tcheater!"

Thérèse sighed. "Sorry that we haven't picked up calls from you, Isaac," she apologized. "We've been pretty busy now that another certain death cheater has been dealt with once and for all time."

"Voldemort, you mean?"

"You seem uncommonly informed about events here, young man," Marchbanks noted.

Isaac chuckled. "Professor Marchbanks, the instant Rose was saved by Tariko and Gifted, everything that happens in your society became our business on Yiziba, especially given what Rose became and who would soon follow here as Luna, Ginny and Hermione can better explain. Speaking for my own friends, I rejoice at the fact that Tom Riddle and his friends won't be haunting your society anymore. Given how many bad hits your society's taken since Lord Chaucer launched his rebellion in answer to the Ministry's so-called 'failure' when it came to General Raeburn after she became Earth's Jewel Warrior in 1889, a long period of peace and reconstruction is something your society deserves."
"Though I feel these days that we're not worthy of such words of support given how much we failed over the years to look after people — as what happened to Rose glaringly demonstrates — you're far, far too kind to us, Isaac," Dumbledore stated as Percy nodded in appreciation; the fame of Doctor Renaissance was also known among certain echelons in the Ministry of Magic.

The native of Queens nodded. "So you won't be attending?" he asked Rose.

The sorcerer supreme of Yiziba shook her head. "Much that we'd love to, Isaac, it's a total disaster zone here. We just cut away a good block on the Wizengamot, dumped the money chaser that was Minister, had the lying torturer turned to mist thanks to one of the old veterans of the Home Fleet that reported to Mycroft here in the castle last night, plus got rid of the laws that blocked 'Mione and a tonne of other people from claiming their family seats in the Wizengamot. Libera here, too!"

Isaac hummed as he tried to remember something. "As I recall correctly, that would be the Viscountcy of Wye for Magistra Maga Libera Meretrice, the Barony of Ifield for Hermione here, the Barony of Accrington for Kevin Entwhistle, the Barony of Keighley for Director Dirk Cresswell, the Barony of Colfield for Camellia Matthews' mother Diana, the Barony of Knapton for Amanda Brocklehurst, the Barony of Aelius Bridge for Dean Thomas and the Barony of Brechin for Lisa Turpin."

Jaws dropped in stunned surprise. "My God! If you were a Ravenclaw and I was still teaching, that would get you a hundred points, young man!" Marchbanks cackled as both Percy and Dumbledore gaped in awe at the sheer knowledge the Wise Lone Sage possessed when it came to their home society. "Hell, that might actually get Pierus Collins to get off his lazy butt finally, settle the whole damned issue with his son-in-law, then get all the recessed seats back into active service!"

"What if I could add onto that, Professor?"

That made people gazed at Isaac, the surprise some felt at that offer quite apparent. "How much more can you add, Isaac?" Pansy asked as Tariko felt a smile creep across her face; the latter knew the New Yorker had been running some odd side projects even when he had been on Remnant.

"Oh, easily enough, Pansy," Isaac answered, a knowing smile crossing his face. "I was thinking of the Earldoms of Wells, Clydeford, Romney and Swinford and the Viscounties of Craiglockhart, Mull and Tinworth as well!" As the people listening to this gasped in shock, he hummed. "Possibly the Viscountcy of Barnet as well." Here, he fixed Neville with a knowing look, which made the Master of Plants duck his head even if Hermione reached over to squeeze his shoulder in support.

"You can't blame Neville for what happened to Bellatrix, Isaac!" the new Baroness of Ifield coldly stated. "His grandmother forced him into that oath that saw her enslaved at the Ministry earlier
The American sighed. "You can't ask me to like it, Hermione."

"And this from the guy who tore a strip off 'Mione for not understanding house elves?" Rose teased.

Both Isaac and Hermione blanched as Tariko laughed. "Fine! Heap it all on Grandma if you want, Thomas!" Neville said out as he glared at Isaac. "Hell, if you want Granduncle Algeron too, go for it!"

"I just might..."

"Excuse me, Master Thomas," Percy then cut in. "Much that I do understand Lord Longbottom's actions when it came to dealing with Lady Lestrangé at the Ministry this morning, you obviously are hinting at the fact that even more seats in the Wizengamot can be reactivated now that Mormaer Thérèse has got rid of those provisions in the Governance Act and declared the Defunct Lord Acts as paslem." That was the common short phrase for the Latin magical legal term *Pondus Autem Sine Lege Magicis*, which was the code used in Europe whenever a law or sections of a law were declared illegal or unconstitutional. Much that he had done a lot to support the Ministry since he was hired on as a court scribe in 2010, there were a lot of laws that Percy personally believed deserved to be consigned to the rubbish heap. With the removal of Fudge and many of his cronies and the swift action by the Duchess of Kyme Eau just this day alone, the former Hogwarts head boy suspected that a plan to see a lot of the laws either rewritten, streamlined or totally eliminated had long been thought out beforehand. "Since you told us those seats, who exactly would be filling them? I assume muggleborns, of course..."

"Indeed they are, Undersecretary Weasley. From the time of the Wars of Liberation, in fact...with the help of *Rittmeister von Taserich!*" Isaac declared, which made people's jaws drop in shock; unlike many Terrans-turned-Yizibajohei, the Wise Lone Sage had no problems whatsoever with the Undying Lord. It was the luck of the fight scene in the end. "I think, given what the Rittmeister has done MANY times over in Germany and its predecessor states, Professor Dumbledore..."

"They're alive...?!"

That was a wide-eyed Dumbledore, whose eyes were now tearing as a look of hope appeared on his face. "Who?" Neville asked as Ginny and Luna moved to gently squeeze the headmaster's shoulders.
The master of the Elder Wand that had been created by the Undying Lord himself — Dumbledore had learned that after defeating the Deathstick's prior owner at the Battle of Nurmengard in 1945, the last battle of the European side of the Wars of Liberation — blinked before he wiped his eyes, then he gazed at Isaac with his normal jovial smile. "The reveal scene is yours, I believe, Doctor!" he declared.

"My thanks, Headmaster!" the Wise Lone Sage declared as people native to wizarding Britain tensed. "I'm speaking of Earl Countess Colonel Livia Dietrich of Wells, Earl Countess Major Linn Heinrich of Swinford, Earl Countess Staff Sergeant Christine Schultze of Romney, Earl Countess Warrant Officer Class 2 Suzanne Stuart of Clydeford, Viscountess Major Bette Maris of Tinworth, Viscountess Major Jade Xiyu Speer of Mull, Viscountess Presumptive Captain Andrea Slaed of Barnet..."

"And Viscountess Brigadier Elizabeth Gibbon of Craiglockhart!"

That was a wide-eyed Griselda Marchbanks as she stared in stunned disbelief at Dumbledore. "Oh, Merlin...!" Percy exclaimed as the others who had been raised in wizarding Britain save Rose Potter exchanged wide-eyed look at THIS unbelievable plot twist now dropping on their heads.

"The Schwarte Mädchen now have a QUORUM in the Wizengamot ...?!"

To Be Continued...

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WRITER'S NOTES

A major word of thanks to Dr Tempo for writing some of the final scene.

Translation list: Seitokaichō — Student council chief; Ehrwürdiger — Venerable; Titemam — Literally "machine man"; Titemyu — Literally "machine woman"; Nǒksbae — Soul boat; Magistra Maga — Mistress Mage; Danegeld — Danish tribute; Maga Nosferatu — Undying Mage; Pondus Autem Sine Lege Magicis — Without the weight of magical law.

The pronouns used for Tomgirl (Nunuri Kagar'be) are the same used by genetic hermaphrodites
on the planet Hustaros, introduced in The Senior Year story "Dakejinzo's Story"; such was inspired by the 1995 novel Shadow Man by Melissa Scott. The subjective pronoun for such is zhe (pronounced /ʒiː/ in the International Phonetic Alphabet), starting with the voiced palato-alveolar fricative (akin to the "s" in vision) and rhyming with "he". The possessive pronoun is zher (pronounced /ʒ3ː(ə)/) rhyming with "her". The objective pronoun is zhim (pronounced /ʒim/), rhyming with "him". The reflexive pronoun is zhimself (pronounced /ʒimself/), rhyming with "himself". And the honorific normally used among Hustari with hermaphrodites is Serray (pronounced /səˈrɛɪ/), rhyming with "array".

Harry Potter character/concept notes: The nōksbae concept was first introduced in The Icemaidens and the Philosopher's Stone, as was the concept of mana-compulso. Salazar Slytherin's connection to Her Majesty's Prison Gonebren was fully explained in the third Wizards and Avalonians story. Tracey Davis was on the class list introduced in Harry Potter and Me; she has since become quite the popular character in fan stories. Theodore Nott first appeared in Philosopher's Stone. Of course, the concept of Obscurials and the best example of one, Credence Barebone, was depicted in Fantastic Beasts and Where To Find Them. Libera Meretrice and the citizens of Rhosan Green in the Forest of Dean (not to mention the Dark Lord Chaucer's actions that ended up isolating the village for over a century) was introduced in The Icemaidens and the Philosopher's Stone; her lover Sally-Anne Perks was mentioned in Philosopher's Stone...and was never mentioned again in the Harry Potter novels. Zhāng Qiū (AKA Cho Chang) first appeared in Prisoner of Azkaban; I make use of the reading of her name as shown in the Chinese translations of the novels as her "proper name". Terrance Higgs first appeared in Philosopher's Stone. The first owner of Azkaban Island, Ekrizdis, was mentioned in the article on the prison in Pottermore. The word tribade first appeared in the Harry Potter-Bouquet storyline in the Anime Adventure in Episode #124327, "An Uncomfortable Conversation", by Bastet's Chosen. The idea of requesting to sire (or requesting to dam when involving a woman) when it comes to asking people to help co-parent a child was introduced by Crys in his story Pureblood Traditions. Lamicho Hundings first appeared in the third Wizards and Avalonians story...as did the members of the Schwartze Mädchen (Black Maidens) mentioned by Isaac Thomas at the end of the story: Elizabeth Gibbon, Livia Dietrich, Linn Heinrich, Christine Schultz, Suzanne Stuart and Jade Xiyû Speer (note that Bette Maris and Andrea Slaed would have appeared in that story). Griselda Marchbanks first appeared in Order of the Phoenix, as did John Dawlish, Kingsley Shacklebolt and Nymphadora Tonks. Mungo Bonham was first mentioned on a Famous Wizard Card that was given as part of the Philosopher's Stone video game. Xavier Leolin was first mentioned in The Icemaidens and the Philosopher's Stone. Muriel Prewett (her family name is my invention) and Dirk Cresswell were first mentioned in Half-Blood Prince. Amanda "Mandy" Brocklehurst and Lisa Turpin first appeared in Philosopher's Stone. Kevin Entwhistle was also in the class list shown in Harry Potter and Me. And both Pierus Collins and Diana Matthews was first mentioned in Harry Potter and the Icemaidens.

Coyote (Isona'a Naggu) first appeared in The Seventh Shipgirl. The lisp he demonstrates here is a slurring of the various sibilant sounds. For example, Isona'a mixes the voiceless dental fricative /θ/ (the "th" in thin) with the voiceless alveolar sibilant /s/ (the "s" in sun) together. And with the voiced alveolar fricative /z/ (the "z" in zoo), he mixes it with the voiced dental fricative /ð/ (the "th" in this).
The **Age of Danegeld** that Libera Meretrice speaks of in this part covers the period of the Tenth to Twelfth Centuries CE — around the time Hogwarts was established — when English kingdoms had to pay off Viking raiders to prevent their territories from being ravaged by the Norse longboatmen.

*Negima* character and situation notes: The **mastery diploma** is the enchanted parchment awarded to all Meridiana graduates which also declares what post-study job said graduate would be tasked to do; such appeared in the first manga story, "The Child Teacher is a Mage". **Evangeline McDowell** appeared with the others in Class 2-A on the class diagram in that manga chapter (as did **Asakura Kazumi** and **Hasegawa Chisame**); the Maga Nosferatu began to impact her peers lives in "The Mage of Sakura Lane" (manga chapter #16).

The person Griselda Marchbanks mentions in the final part to Libera Meretrice, **Joseph Carpenter** (AKA **Joker**), is one of the supporting characters from *Read Or Die*. 
Chapter Summary

The people who had associated with Moroboshi Ataru over the last year couldn't BEGIN to imagine his BOYFRIENDS coming down to aid in his finally being Gifted...!

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Tomobiki, Tomobiki High School, breakfast (Scotland time: Monday at midnight)...

"Oh, ye gods...it's TRUE?!!"

"Damn! Ataru-kun's one hell of a kisser!"

"To believe that there was a girl's soul under all that...!"

"Poor Tariko-chan...to get her SOUL ripped apart...!"

"Ataru-kun's so strong to push on...!"

Inwardly grinning as he heard the hushed comments from many of his former female classmates, Moroboshi Ataru purred as he allowed one of his old lovers' new pillow scene partner to explore his mouth with his tongue. Another farmer's child from Kabe-koli who had befriended Tariko Katabarbe when they were younger, Tapuso Madera was a slender and lanky boy his age with a wild halo of silver hair and burning chestnut eyes that just drowned the soul of those who looked into them with levels of passion he could unleash at a moment's notice. It didn't surprise Ataru that R'benle Etase's boyfriend had been Gifted as the Angel of Vengeance, Hotolor'ba ("Tabriz"); as a cosmic meta with
clairvoyance and reality warping powers atop mid-level FISS capabilities, the farmer's son was spiritually descent of a dispossessed prince from the northern polar continent who went forth to avenge his slaughtered subjects in the Dawn of Power, taking on some of the most numerous battle teams active at the time.

"Would you ladies want to join in?"

Hearing that from Nunuri Kagar'be, Ataru and Tapuso tried not to snicker while the small crowd of girls in the cafeteria squawked in embarrassment at such a forward question. Given how much a wild animal zhe could be in bed, it didn't surprise either boy that the intersex tanner's child wanted to make the potential pillow scene as much of an all-out orgy as possible. In many ways, the Passionate Knight of Beauty was as sex-crazed as two girls Tariko had met the previous summer on an island off the coast of Kyūshū, Ichijō Ayaka and Hirato Yūko. Thinking of the two would-be sophomores of the effectively-closed Saint Maria Christos Girl's High School who became the current incarnations of two of the most expert pillow scene fighters to grace Yiziba, Ataru tried not to shake his head, which would force him to break the kiss with Tapuso. Given that Ayaka WAS the daughter of a porn star who committed suicide because her marriage to a successful construction conglomerate executive unleashed a horrid scandal, it didn't surprise Tariko that she became the Huntress of Ecstasy, R'beteluoduo ("Nymphette")...just as it didn't surprise the future Trickster of the Show that Yūko, the daughter of a bank executive who became as much of a hypersexual slut out of teenage rebellion as Ayaka did thanks to her mother's influence, would be Gifted as the Tornado of Insanity, Lur'buo R'buto ("Wild Child")...

"OH!"

Ataru and Tapuso jerked, then spun around to gaze at the west entrance...

"Asuka-chan!" the former then blurted out.

Staring wide-eyed at the boy who had been part of the being that had unleashed a very nasty bout of androphobia within her soul, the young heiress of Japan's second-largest family fortune blinked several times as her mind quickly analyzed what was going on...then, to the surprise of Okano Yuka and the other former Ekō Girl's High alumni who had moved to Tomobiki in the wake of their own school's destruction the previous summer, she smiled. "I forgot that you were as much of an android as my friends, Ataru-san. Are you on an interface date right now? Do you need help interfacing?"

As the girls present fell flat on their faces on hearing THAT from the quite naïve middle school senior and the schiffsmädchen serving as Ataru's escorts for this mission into "enemy waters" blinked in confusion, people from Yiziba grinned. "Not a full interface date, Asuka-beni," R'blemle Etase said, having looked up from the holographic data screen being projected from his PAA. The current
incarnation of the Emperor of Living Machines, *Nuosato Uo* ("Cyberking"), was as effeminate as Tariko's and Ataru's other childhood friends from Kabe-koli. Possessing well-groomed dark brown hair and a pair of eyes the shade of an evening sky, he was so mouthwatering gorgeous that a half-dozen of Yuka's schoolmates — including herself and one of her oldest friends, Shimizu Kaho — had swarmed the farmer's son the instant he teleported in with his boyfriend. "That requires some privacy as I'm sure your lovely titemam companions have long taught you. Still, being on kissing dates is interfacing in its own right for organics as well as battle dolls. Please, come join us. Where are your friends?"

Asuka nodded in understanding as she calmly walked inside, clearly not affected by the fact that there were a chorus of young MEN in the room. "They went up to the Natural Café to make sure everything's alright before coming back. Rumiko-san is allowing us to stay here since schools are closed down today. Hopefully, we'll be able to interface and we can then be Gifted since it's the safest thing to do with all those scary androids out there...!" Here, she shuddered in clear terror.

"Not to mention foolish and ignorant norms who couldn't see that they were titemam in the first place," Nunuri mused as zhe reached down to help two of the girls who had sat beside zher, Hayashi Sawako and Shinohara Yūki, back into their chairs so they could still relax beside zhim.

Asuka focused on zhim, then she blinked as she came over to view the intersex tomgirl. As both Sawako and Yūki tensed on seeing the clear interest the younger girl was demonstrating, Nunuri chuckled. "Don't be jealous, Beni-kake," zhe quietly said, making zher current companions blush. "Remember, the concept of marriage doesn't really exist on Yiziba. And since we're not concerned about raising children, the need to have a proper parental group isn't there. Besides, Ataru told me about this one's galling lack of education when it comes to all things surrounding pillow scenes. It's a miracle those cute titemam were able to make her comfortable enough to be around some males now."

Hearing that, the two Ekō alumni blinked before they turned to give Asuka sympathetic looks. As Ataru and Tapuso smiled before turning back to intently exploring each other's mouths with their tongues, the sports empire heiress hummed. "You're an intersex!" she declared as her glittering dark eyes widened on seeing zher crotch, that sight making her feel warm and fuzzy deep in her body. "Oh, how horrible!" she then moaned. "You'll never be able to have children of your own...!"

Nunuri blinked, then roared with laughter. "Oh, relax, Asuka! I'm fully capable of being the father or the mother of a child whenever nesting season hits me!" zhe assured her as zhe reached over with both zher hands to give Asuka's a warm, reassuring squeeze. "Benefit of being a hermaphrodite or any other type of intersex on the World of the Forge of the First Race!" zhe added with a wink as both zher current companions relaxed, realizing that the tanner's child wasn't moving to hit on the middle school senior that had once been promised to Mendō Shūtarō until her androphobia effectively put such marriage plans on indefinite hold. "It's a good thing that your titemam taught you these things!"
Hearing that, Asuka smiled as she pulled back, then took a seat nearby. "I'm forever grateful to them. Given how much I just didn't understand about boys and what happens between boys and girls — not that Okā-sama and the Kurotenshi helped me there every time they talked to me about this — that I was able to become comfortable enough to interface with them still amazes me at times."

"Not to mention you keeping it secret from everyone," Yuka noted from her seat beside R'bemle; she had been reading what the technokinetic had been scanning. "Who'd ever think of that...?"

People relaxed as Ataru and Tapuso pulled apart, the latter leaning against the former as both gazed towards Asuka. "You really disguised that well, Asuka-chan," the former then noted with a wink. "Neither Onē-san nor I sensed what was going on. It was only when you hit Hiromi-chan once at that physical last month that any of us learned of those guys. That was incredible!"

Worry crossed the younger woman's face. "I didn't hurt her, did I?"

"Nah!" he assured her, waving his hand. "That's one of the benefits of having your body cloned from the cells of a reality warper! Hiromi-chan didn't mind the punch! It was part of the scene!"

As Asuka blushed on hearing her actions hadn't hurt someone she wanted to see as a friend, the others laughed...just as footfalls heralded the arrival of someone who once lived here. "Hey, Ataru!"

Catarina von Savoyen's head snapped over. "Frau Fujinami!"

Asuka looked herself, then she squealed. "Ryūnosuke-oniisama!"

She lunged over to swamp Fujinami Ryūnosuke with a warm hug...then stopped herself on seeing that the current incarnation of the Huntress of the Wild was in her battlesuit, which displayed her curvy body quite well. Blinking as Ryūnosuke found herself muttering dark thoughts about beating down Asuka's idiot mother and her own father for causing so much confusion in this poor kid, the sports empire heiress turned to look at Yuka, her pleading look speaking volumes. "Um...Yuka-san...?"

"She was always a girl, Asuka-chan," the heroine of the Ekō Girl's High School incident declared with a wink and a wave of her hand. "Her father forced her to be a boy since he lost his wife when she was a baby. Tariko-chan tried to save her once, but lost track of her when she lost her own mother, so Ryūnosuke-chan grew up effectively as a boy even if she wanted to live as a girl."
Hearing that, Asuka shuddered. "That horrible man!" she hissed as she remembered Fujinami Fujimi, whom she met during the incident when she encountered Ryūnosuke and mistook her as a boy when she had been trying to visit her "fiancé". "How could he do such awful things, Ryūnosuke-san?!"

A laugh escaped the beach café tomboy as she reached up to scratch the back of her head. "Ah, he just didn't get what raising a daughter meant! It's alright, Asuka-chan! I'm all over him now! Yo, Ataru! You think that Tatsuko and I can crash out at Welcome House?!"

Ataru sighed as Tapuso warmly hugged him, his own eyes dancing over Ryūnosuke's body. "Well, we got to knock in a whole new tower to the property to fit in the sisters we just got from Ran, so why not?"

That made Ryūnosuke blink. "What sisters are you talking about...?" she demanded before her eyes went wide as it came to her. "Oh, fuck! You mean that whole damned clone gun thing from March?! Same day Fujiko-san came back thanks to Hinako-chan?! What happened?!"

A tired sigh escaped Sanokura Emi, who had been seated close to Ataru and Tapuso to watch the two boys kissing away. "Oi! Nagisa-san!" she then called out. "Your hubby's back! Can we get a lot of coffee please?! There's a whole tonne of reveal scenes that have to happen!"

Shiowatari Nagisa peeked out of the entrance to the kitchen, beaming in delight on seeing her would-be fiancée back in Japan. "Ohayō, Ryūnosuke-sama!" the Steady Guardian of the South meowed with a playful wink, which made her fiancée blush. "Hai, Emi-san! Coffee coming up!"

Ryūnosuke moaned as she covered her face with a gloved hand. "One of those fucking days...!"

****

Approaching the school, that moment...

"Grazie mille, Luisa! Amélie! Akemi! I really appreciate this!"

Luisa von Bismarck chuckled as she reached over to squeeze Roberta Ansaldo's hand as she, Amélie von Zeppelin and Ashikaga Akemi walked up the street towards the west gate that opened onto the Tomobiki High grounds. "Anything for an honoured ally, especially one who was so ill-treated by my people when your forces finally surrendered to the Allies," the adopted native of Schönhausen
noted as she ignored the gasps from passers by on recognizing her, then a saucy look crossed her face. "So...you're wanting to see if you can be nice and close to our delightfully handsome admiral, ja?"

"Do you blame me?" the adopted native of Roma and Trieste wondered.

Laughter escaped both Luisa and Akemi while Amélie blushed at the sexual innuendo that had governed the conversation between the transformed battleships after they came to Tomobiki from HMCS Lady Elgin via Ōmure-jima. Takanashi Anna was still in the Canadian super-battleship's sick back as people waited for her coming out of her induced coma before she would face her old air group commander and would-be fleet commander, then chastised for her rash actions at Pearl Harbour hours earlier. "Nein! While I was shocked by Catarina's actions the morning after she returned to duty thanks to the admiral's wonderful sisters, I have to admit he's definitely very pleasing to the eyes." She shrugged. "I guess it's because he has a woman's soul inside him. Given that our souls were formed from the thoughts and beliefs of hundreds or thousands of men...!"

Roberta nodded. "Sì! It makes sense! And given how shy he can be at times...!" She giggled as she clapped her cheeks in embarrassment. "È così carino...!" she then trilled.

Laughter escaped the two battleships. "You don't seem to be so jealous about this sort of thing, Frau Fregattenkapitän," Amélie stated as she gazed on the profane eighth of the Ayanami-class destroyers.

Akemi snorted. "Well, we're supposed to be part of a fleet and Teitoku's vulnerable now because he ain't Gifted thanks to the shitty assholes who decided to play basketball with his and his sister's souls!" she darkly muttered. "I still say we should raze this damned place to the ground and beat down all of the fucking shitty assholes who live in this town! Hey, did you know that battleships were always used for shore bombardment duties once carriers became the 'in' thing...?"

"**HOLD IT! STOP RIGHT THERE!**"

All four shipgirls stopped, then they looked to their port...

...before they blinked on seeing a considerable chorus of teenage girls, many in uniforms marking them as students of many schools in and around Tomobiki, standing at the end of a side street glaring at the shipgirls. They were supported by several large men, three of whom Akemi recognized as Unbaba Tetsu and the Nyōke twins Hitori and Futari; they were dropouts from Butsumetsu High School who often sided with Mendō Shūtarō's fan club in town, the Rosebuds. Remembering that, the Orchid Nova then spotted the leader of that group of fan girls, Ogin Haneko, at the head of this crowd. "What the fuck do you want, Ogin?!!" the eighth of the Ayanami-class growled as she make a
step towards them, cracking her knuckles in anticipation of a cathartic beat-down. "If you're looking for a combo like I gave that rich shithead you like so much on Friday morning, I'm happy to give it right here and now!"

The students all shuddered as they took an involuntary step back from this foul-mouthed monster that hurt their beloved icon so much on the day that Earth was freed of the Oni. Before any of them could try to challenge Akemi in hopes of restoring things to "normal", though...

*I can see her lyin' back in her satin dress*  
*In a room where ya do what ya don't confess!*

*Sometimes I think it's a shame*  
*When I get feelin' better when I'm feelin' no pain!  
Sometimes I think it's a shame  
When I get feelin' better when I'm feelin' no pain...!*

"PAOLA! STOP SINGING THAT SONG!"

"Ah, leave her be, Zita! She's funny!"

"SHE'S DRUNK, LUCREZIA! SHE'S EMBARRASSING US!"

"Ah! Please! Stop yelling, Sorella Maggiore! I've got a headache...!"

"BECAUSE YOU DRUNK ALL THAT ICE WINE, IDIOTA!"

A wild whoop then echoed through the air, making the Rosebuds and their muscle blink as they looked around just as the shippirls sensed four more like them having landed on the street parallel to the one they stood on off to their port, which put the newcomers right behind the idiots who clearly wanted to set things "strait" in this town of lunatics. "Such a wonderful ice wine it is, Zita!" that voice — which had a mix of Toscano and Veneta accents — cried out as Roberta spotted a hand hoisting a wine flute filled with a dark red liquid. "ADORO IL CANADA! ADORO L'ONTARIO! ADORO NIAGARA!"
"PAOLA!"

The clearly sloshed shipgirl then launched once more into song...

*I can picture every move that a man could make;*

*Getting lost in her lovin' is your first mistake!*

*Sundown, ya better take care*

*If I find you been creepin' 'round my back stairs!*

*Sometimes I think it's a sin*

*When I feel like I'm winnin' when I'm losin' again...!*

"PAOLA! DON'T TOUCH THAT BELT BUCKLE!"

"Hey! Who the hell's been slumming in the officers' mess?"

Roberta moaned, slapping her forehead. "Oh, mio Dio...è il Tenente Generale Raeburn...!"

Luisa, Amélie and Akemi awked, then all four shipgirls lifted themselves into the air, flying over the Rosebuds to land on the street next over. Sure enough, there were four shipgirls there, one swaying thanks to acute alcohol intoxication; she was the one holding up the glass of Ontario ice wine she just screamed her love for. The two older teenagers — clearly heavy cruisers — were dressed in matching black tops, red pants and white belts and boots. The very curvy one with long wavy strawberry blonde hair and brown eyes had the crest of the city of Zadar in Dalmatia on her chest under an Italian naval coronet. Her quite inebriated sister with the long wavy grey-blonde hair and the grey-brown eyes had the gold cross on a green shield of the Istrian city of Pula on her chest, that also under the naval crown of the Regia Marina. The younger newcomers — both of them clearly being destroyers — were slimmer like Akemi, having a little baby fat on their faces indicating short careers as warships. One had tanned skin, long brown hair in twintails and brown eyes while the other had paler skin (though there were tan lines), long straight silver hair cut square over her eyebrows and with one side of her hair tied up by a ribbon to make a ponytail, she possessing green eyes. They had dark blue jumpsuits on with silver belt and boots. The paler one had a circular crest with a compass rose on it hovering over a churning sea, the head of Boreas blowing down from the northwest; that was under an Italian naval ship's crown. The one with the tanned skin had a similar badge, but with Aster's head blowing from the southwest. And while the namesake of the modern
Croatian city of Zadar looked totally mortified now standing before the former leader of the War Hawks with her sister in such a drunken state, the two destroyers were trying not to fall over laughing at the antics of the third of the Zara-class heavy cruisers.

Before Zita de Lerici — as the Conservator hailed the spirit of RM Zara before she had risen from the waters of the Mediterranean hours before thanks to Italian-Canadians from the Niagara region of Ontario who went out to bring back shipgirls from the old country to serve alongside the reborn third of the Littorio-class battleships — could say anything, her sister Paola drew herself admirably to attention and saluted the current commander of Canada's special forces, now in her Number 1A dress uniform with full medals. Such included the Medal of Honour from the United States hung around her neck alongside the Order of Canada (at the rank of Commander), plus the Order of Military Merit (also at the rank of Commander), the Saskatchewan Order of Merit, the Order of Ontario and the Order of British Columbia hanging from the four centre buttons of her dark tan jacket. The adopted native of Pula and Livorno (where she had been built as RM Pola) blinked on seeing all those medals — with the frame-mounted red ribbon holding the gold star hailing her as Gerój Sovétskogo Sojúza draped over the gold-trimmed red ribbon of the Órden Lénina next to the Victoria Cross with its two repeat bars at the primary place on her triple row of chest ribbons under her gold pilot's wings with the crossed cavalry sabres marking her as a qualified pilot in the Royal Canadian Corps of Air Cavalry — then she swelled with admiration. "Il mio Generale Raeburn, my sincerest apologies for not reporting to you right away!" she said in a somewhat steady voice. After she relaxed when Dean Raeburn returned her salute, she held up her flute. "However, your wonderful vintners who went to the area where my sister and I were sunk near Capo Matapan as part of the Prima Divisione Incrociatori were just too happy to toast our return to life as fanciulle della flotta before we were joined by the bambini piccoli here..." — here, she waved to Maddalena Alighieri (RM Maestrale) and her sister Lucrezia (RM Libeccio) before she shrugged as Zita groaned, shaking her head — "...then we were informed by those wonderful vintners that there is a most wonderful and caring ammiraglio here in il Giappone, so here we are!"

Hearing that, Raeburn tried not to bust a gut laughing. Even if those who always followed proper military procedures would die of apoplexy if they ever saw such a show from the reborn Italian heavy cruiser, she had to personally admit that Paola meant every word she just said. Footfalls then heralded the arrival of someone from the Toranoseishin Finances tower. "Greetings, Dean," Moroboshi Negako said as she tried not to smirk at such a sight. "It appears your vintners were busy if they deliberately went to locate Zita, Paola, Maddalena and Lucrezia after the existence of shipgirls was revealed at the White House yesterday morning." As the four newcomers gaped on noting that this woman in the black kimono and hakama had known their human names without asking them directly, the grandmaster of Saikō Jinseijutsu-ryū then gazed upon the gathered Rosebuds nearby. "Oh, Paola..." she called out.

Paola perked. "Sì?"

"If you wish to know, these people here plan to threaten your admiral."

Hearing that and seeing Negako point to the Rosebuds, Paola perked...then her face flushed with...
rage as she glared at them. "Sorella, hold my wine," she calmly asked as she held out her flute to Zita.

A moment later, many pained screams echoed throughout Tomobiki...

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The front gates of Tomobiki High School, an hour later...

"Ciaossu..."

Dean Raeburn perked on hearing that voice, then she chuckled, looking over her shoulder. "Hey, Renato! Nice to see you at your proper height these days!" she called out, waving.

A snort escaped the World's Greatest Hitman as he came up to stand beside the Protector of All Life while they watched paramedics that came to deal with the aftermath of a near-massacre of over two hundred students at the hands of the third of the Zara-class cruisers. She was now relaxing on a chair brought out by Tsuruya Rumiko as she enjoyed ice wine — it was the P/WO1 J.E. Ebrill Clairet Ice from the 2008 season, the leader of the War Hawks noted when Paola de Lerici pulled the bottle from her stuff-space pocket to enjoy a soothing drink — while observing this affair. As Paola's sister Zita and the two reborn Maestrale-class destroyers were busy chatting away with Roberta Ansaldo, the parents of many of the Rosebuds who had been there — all of whom had been happy to race down here to yell at their children for picking a fight with shipgirls of all people! — screamed away as police officers took their statements before they were transported to Nishitōkyō General Hospital to recuperate from the beatdown they got from Paola, then be arrested. Despite howls of denial from leaders like Ogin Haneko declaring their innocence, none of the growing crowd of onlookers showed any sympathy to them...

...save for one woman in the near distance, who was cowering behind a telephone pole while staring at yet ANOTHER result of her transformed son's final departure from Tomobiki on Friday morning.

Reborn was quick to notice. "Ataru's idiot mother? At my twelve-thirty?"

"Same," Raeburn stated with an amused smile as she focused for a moment on Moroboshi Kinshō, making the older-looking woman pale before she ducked behind the telephone pole in a failed attempt at hiding herself. "Negako, you mind taking over here? I have to get the kids ready to be presented to Tennō at the Palace in an hour. He's going to LOVE to hear about this mess."
"I'm sure Heika will understand, Dean," Moroboshi Negako stated as she gazed upon the other
woman. The grandmaster of Saikō Jinseijutsu-ryū had been briefing the head of the police detail
about this incident. "With Renato and his companions here, things should remain peaceful, though I
definitely suspect that Shūtarō will no doubt seek to aid his fans after such 'police brutality'."

Reborn cackled as he waved the Canadian air cavalry soldier off. "We can handle this, Dean. Send
our apologies to Sua Maestà as well." He then lowered his voice. "Given that Donna Roberta was
recognized by Negako as 'Vongola Patrizia', there are more important matters to look at."

"What about the four new kids, Negako?" Raeburn wondered; she knew Negako's meta senses
would be able to detect hers and Reborn's words even if they were being drowned by background
noise.

Negako dismissed the inspector, then came over to join her friends. "Paola and Zita would both be
Chiavarone Patrizia, Renato," she announced in a low voice. "Maddalena and Lucrezia are
untouched by such powers, but you can ask Roberta to declare the matter a 'fleet secret' to maintain
Omertà. Paola is both Tempesta and Fulmine. Zita is Sereno. Roberta is Pioggia."

"Damn...!" the former Sun Arcobaleno breathed out as Raeburn nodded before turning to teleport
back to Ōmure-jima. As a roar of applause escaped the crowd nearby on seeing Ogin Haneko told
off by her parents before she was loaded into an ambulance — the language used by her mother
Ogin Reiko had been vile — he crossed his arms. "Given that your family masters the equivalent of
Earth Flames thanks to your martial arts school, it's no wonder that Ataru finds himself the target of
so many fanciulle della flotta who want to form his 'fleet'. I always suspected that if he had our type
of Flames, he'd be a mix of Serena, Fulmine and Nuvola. Or perhaps Terra and Oceano with a touch
of Ciclone..."

An amused snort escaped the ninjutsu grandmaster, making the half-English hitman gape in shock at
such a show of emotion from the normally strictly taciturn woman. "That was the very same
conclusion Kozato Makoto made on meeting Ataru when Sakuya permitted the Inshin Group to seed
money to the Simon Famiglia to help in rebuilding their school for Italian expats here in Japan."

Reborn gaped, then he laughed...

"Ah! È l'ammiraglio! Ammiraglio! Ammiraglio Moroboshi!"

Hearing Lucrezia Alighieri scream out in delight as everyone paused to look at her, the adopted
native of Riva Trigoso in the Italian Riviera (where she had been built as RM Libeccio) whooped as she charged through the front gate onto the school grounds to draw herself to attention and salute the blinking teenage boy who just stepped outside alongside the young farmer from Yiziba he had been spending time kissing in the cafeteria until Mendō Shūtarō's idiot fan girls decided to be insanely stupid today. "Oh, my heavens!" Tapuso Madera exclaimed as he took in the woman who appeared to be their age with such lovely skin tone under that dark blue battlesuit. "Ataru, please introduce...!"

"I'm meeting her myself for the first time, Tapuso-chan! Give me a moment, will you?!" Moroboshi Ataru declared before he straightened himself, returning the salute. "Signora Capitano di Fregata, much that it shames me to state this, I simply had no idea that such a beautiful angelo as you had come back to join us. May my beloved friend and I have the esteemed honour of your name?" His eyebrow arched in amusement as Lucrezia blushed at his interest in her. "Which I'm sure is as beautiful as you are now and as you were as a cacciatorpediniere who had the esteemed honour to serve Sua Maestà il Re."

That made the third of the Maestrale-class sputter. "A-a-Ammiraglio...!"

"If I may be so bold, mio Ammiraglio, I'll be pleased to introduce my beloved fleet mates to you."

Hearing that from Roberta Ansaldo, Ataru felt his heart skip a beat on sensing the tone of passion in her voice. A glance at her — who was now walking over to join them, the three other veterans of the Regia Marina who had come to Tomobiki just now accompanying her; both Luisa von Bismarck and Amélie von Zeppelin moved to stand guard at the gate while Ashikaga Akemi remained on the street looking to the north — revealed the slightly rosy cheeks on both the reborn battleship's face and the face of the silver-haired heavy cruiser...and no, the latter's face wasn't coloured just because she was now quite inebriated. "Please do, Donna Roberta," he then bade, giving her a curious look.

Roberta smiled as she bowed, then she waved to the other shipgirls with her now. "Capitano di Fregata Lucrezia Alighieri di Sestri Levante," she indicated the girl who had charged up to Ataru right away. "Il cacciatorpediniere Libeccio, terzo della classe Maestrale. Beside her, Capitano di Fregata Maddalena Alighieri di Ancona, il cacciatorpediniere Maestrale, il primo della sua classe. Capitano di Vascello Donna Zita de Lerici, Chiavarone Patrizia di La Spezia e Zadar, l'incrociatore pesante Zara, il primo della sua classe. And Capitano di Vascello Donna Paola de Lerici, Chiavarone Patrizia di Livorno e Pula, l'incrociatore pesante Pola, terzo della classe Zara." She glared at the swaying Paola. "Who should be totally ASHAMED of herself for presenting herself to her ammiraglio in such a state of drunkenness!"

"Oh, stop that, Roberta! She's funny!" Lucrezia scolded.

As both she and Maddalena both collapsed into piles of giggles at that observation, Roberta and Zara moaned, their heads drooping in shame. Staring at Paola, Ataru then smiled. "Given the horrible
story of what happened to her crew when she was sunk at Cape Matapan back in 1941, Roberta-san, that doesn't surprise me," he noted as he gave the brown-haired battleship a reassuring look. He then grasped Paola's free hand to draw it to his lips, she giving him a curtsy in return, keeping her wine flute steady even if her cheeks had turned as red as cherries. "Incantato, Donna Paola..."

"MISS! YOU MUST REJECT MOROBOSHI...!"

KK-KRUNCH!

Ataru jolted, then spun right to see his former class rival now effectively wrapped around Paola's hand...which had been holding her glass of ice wine. Mendō Shūtarō moaned as he slipped from heavy cruiser's hand to drop to the ground — running into someone with the spiritual mass of a 14,168 tonne warship wasn't conducive to one's health — as the adopted native of Pula and Livorno looked to see the shattered flute given to her by one of the vintners who helped in her rebirth as a shipgirl. As Zita paled in horror on seeing Paola start to quake, Ataru shook his head. "Do have a nice afterlife, Shūtarō," he coolly declared. "Don't kill him, Paola-san. Other than that, I leave it to your imagination..."

A sheer explosion of crimson and emerald flames marking her spiritual blood kinship to the metahuman Mafia erupted from the third of the Zara-class while she looked down murderously at the dazed scion of Japan's richest family. "I have good imagination, mio Ammiraglio...!" she snarled.

A second later, a shriek of mortal agony echoed over Tomobiki!

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The cafeteria, an hour later...

"I can't BELIEVE that Shūtarō-oniisama would do something like that! Are you SURE you're alright, Paola-san?! He didn't hurt you or molest you, did he?!"

Hearing that worried question from the very cute young sports empire heiress who was now being protected by three VERY cute effeminate boys who clearly formed her personal harem of gigolo, Paola de Lerici smiled as she hoisted a fresh flute full of ice wine in a toast. "I was not hurt at all, Signorina Mizunokōji. Si, I was annoyed at the fact that culo arrogante presumed to tell ME what to do when it comes to the ammiraglio, but as he ordered me to do, I didn't send him off to San Pietro at the Gates of Heaven to confess his many misdeeds when it comes to beautiful women. Given what
Capitano di Fregata Ashikaga explained to me about how much of a selfish playboy that fool was, seeing him properly humiliated in front of his 'adoring' public will hurt him far worse than anything physical I did to him. Pay it no mind and be grateful to the Fates for delivering such handsome gigolo as Signor Sakō, Signor Ōkubo and Signor Hirakawa to to warm your bedchambers, Signorina.”

Laughter echoed through the cafeteria as Mizunokōji Asuka found herself hugged by her intimate friends, then Paola sipped from her flute. Seated beside her with Roberta Ansaldò flanking him to his right and Catarina von Savoyen seated across from him, Moroboshi Ataru could only shake his head. Hearing the howling cries of helpless outrage from those members of the Rosebuds who hadn’t then been taken into custody on seeing Mendō Shūtarō be beaten to a bloody pulp for his effrontery with the third of the Zara-class heavy cruisers made human, the "most infamous" resident of Tomobiki then combined with Ashikaga Akemi to loudly chant that groups such as al-Qā'idah would be sending suicide bombers to the town soon to kill off "traitors to all humanity" like Asuka's would-be fiancé for their long support of Redet Lum. When Miyake Shinobu's close friend Hyōga Yumi — who normally led the Rosebud faction from the Shakkō Vocational Institute — demanded to know what he'd do to defend his friends in Tomobiki from being hurt in case such a lunatic came, the answer he gave them drove an ice pick into the hearts of everyone listening, especially Ataru's estranged mother Kinshō:

"It's not MY responsibility to defend you idiots from people who want to PUNISH you for your open and public support of CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY, Hyōga! And I have neither FRIENDS nor FAMILY native to this town standing outside the school grounds right now!"

A wide-eyed Yumi then got a blast of righteous motherly wrath from her mother Shōko for helping provoke such terrorists because of her "insane crush" on "that rich idiot Mendō" Paola had earlier sent flying back to his estate in a ball of bruised flesh and shattered bones, then she was dragged off in an ambulance to be healed before she would be arrested for inciting a riot.

The looks on the faces of the other Rosebuds had been simply priceless.

Noting that, Ataru quickly concluded that if he had actually been born magical like Rose Potter had been, such a memory could potentially power a Patronus charm that would BURN AWAY all the Dementors in Azkaban, leaving nothing behind of the soul vampires save ashes!

"Oh, Asuka...!"

That was Ōkubo Chikao. The smallest height-wise of Asuka's lovers, he was a slender teenager of the same physical age as the sports empire heiress, possessing shaggy brown hair and very soulful caramel brown eyes. On seeing how much Asuka just doted over Chikao, all the Ekō Girl's High alumni such as Okano Yuka could only squeal on seeing how the once naïve middle school senior
now attending the Keppeki Girl's Middle School in Musashino had scored with such a cute boy. As both Sakō Hikaru and Hirakawa Konoe gazed with concern at the android-turned-synthezoid battle doll, Asuka hummed as she reached down to fondle his crotch. "Oh, dear..." she breathed out before turning Chikao's head over so they could share a deep kiss. "We need to interface again. Here, let's go back upstairs, Chikao."

He nodded, clearly a little dizzy. A glance to his hands soon told Ataru and his lovers from Yiziba why: They were now glowing slightly in clear indication that Chikao's soul had locked on a potential Gift within the Great Crystal of Power and that his Gifting was minutes away. After Konoe — who could disguise herself as a girl given his waist-length hime-cut raven hair — helped his brother ex-android to his feet, they made their way out of the room for the nearest stairwell to head to the attic and the beds set out there by Tsuruya Rumiko for situations like this. Concerned looks crossed people's faces on seeing Chikao stumble like that, then Yuka gazed at R'blemle Etase, who was now seated beside his lover Tapuso Madera. "Um...how soon will Chikao-kun be Gifted, R'blemle-san?" she hesitantly asked.

"Probably within the next few scenes," Tapuso hummed as he focused his cosmic clairvoyance on the ex-android middle school senior as he was escorted from the room by his lovers. "He wanted to hold back until he's sure that Konoe, Hikaru and Asuka have good Gifts." The Angel of Vengeance then shared a knowing look with the Emperor of Living Machines. "Isn't it so beautiful, R'blemle?" he then cooed as they shared a passionate look. "Practically the same as the day we were Gifted."

"Bae, bae, simmem!" R'blemle purred before they shared a very wet kiss.

By now, the open showing of such deep passion had pretty much desensitized the Ekō alumni to the point that all they did on seeing that sort of thing was smile in delight. Seated close to Yuka now was Shimizu Kaho, who along with Sanokura Emi was one of two childhood friends to the heroine of the Ekō Girl's High School terrorist incident the previous summer. Kaho was a trendy woman with waist-length dark brown hair in a shaggy hime cut, green eyes peeking out of an oval face. A girl who was quite frank with her opinions and possessing a low bullshit tolerance level thanks to the issue with the terrorists, she had been one of the few voices against BOTH Redet Lum and Mendō Shūtarō in Tomobiki High; doing that had often isolated her from her peers save for her old Ekō classmates. Ataru had hit on her a couple of times before April; both times, Kaho was "defended" by Lum...but the native of Ichikawa on the eastern border of Tōkyō then turned around and lambasted the warlord's daughter in public for her "abuse" of her "husband", something that made others in Class 1-4 think Kaho cursed. Naturally, that saw Kaho put into the "pretty girls to be helped" list in the Book of Pretty Girls.

All the other girls from Ekō were also on that list...

"Hey!"
People jolted, then looked to the south to see a small group of girls from Class 2-4 storm into the room, all in civilian clothes. "Are you people going to be idiots now and give us a whole tonne of earaches?!" Fujinami Ryūnosuke then asked from her place close to the serving line, she seated with her would-be fiancée Shiowatari Nagisa. "The police are out there in force, you know." Here, the Huntress of the Wild thumbed off to the west. "If you're wanting to avenge that idiot Mendō..."

Several of the newcomers winced on hearing that warning from the second-most popular person in their class. "No! No!" Marubeya Momoe affirmed with a shake of her head. "Negako-san told us what happened when Mendō-san tried to hit up on Lerici-taisa here just because she and her friends want Ataru-kun as their admiral." She then turned to gaze hopefully at Paola, who was calmly sipping her ice wine. "But did you HAVE to be so harsh to him, Lerici-taisa?!" she then pleaded.

An even look came back, making the newcomers tense. "He spilled a perfectly good glass of ice wine, Signorina," Paola coolly answered as Zita reached over to squeeze her shoulder to calm her sister down. "And he presumed to enter my personal space without getting permission. Surely you ladies can understand that, I hope. Not even the poor lady who was once promised to him in marriage wants to have anything to do with him now." As the newcomers tensed even more on being reminded of Mizunokōji Asuka, the adopted native of Pula and Livorno sipped her wine as she reached over to grasp Ataru's hand with her own. "Then again, given those truly divine gigolo she now has as lovers, I can't..."

"WHAT?!"

Everyone winced on hearing that stunned shout from Momoe and her friends. "Hai, it's true, Marubeya-san," Ataru stated as he gazed in veiled amusement at her. "Asuka-chan had us all fooled for MONTHS now. Those three hot studs from the Natural Café up the street all taught her wonderful things about pillow scenes. Since Hikaru, Chikao and Konoe are now battle dolls like me, the chances of Asuka getting Gifted herself are well to the right of 'excellent'." He sighed. "That should help her..."

"Tene lomher'buo, Ōkubo Chikao...!"

Everyone perked, then they looked up. "Looks like it's happening now..."

"ATARU-SAN! RYŪNOSUKE-SAN! MINNA-SAN! COME UP HERE!"

Hearing Asuka's concerned shout echo through the hallways of the school, people immediately got
out of their chairs and scrambled for the doors. Within a minute, they were climbing into the school attic through the access hatchway near the east side entrance. Once in the long corridor that paralleled the central hallways on the ground and second floors, Ataru then grinned on seeing a nude Chikao now cloaked in a beautiful field of energy, a look of sheer delight on his face. As Tsuruya Rumiko herself sat on a nearby bed with a scanner to monitor this Gifting, Chikao's other lovers — also nude — watched this with delight. As Momoe and her friends all gaped at the impossible sight of Mizunokōji Asuka of all people seated NUDE on a bed with two BOYS — also nude! — embracing her from both sides, Yuka walked over to sit on the bed beside her classmate, gazing at the readout on Rumiko's scanner. "He's not being hurt because of this?" the native of Chiyoda in Tōkyō itself asked as she tried not to stare and drool at Chikao's erect manhood like some of her own friends were now doing.

"No, but it's been confusing because he doesn't have a 'housekeeping computer' in his current body that he had in his original body," the Careful Planner of the Circle of Thought warned as the subject of her scans shuddered, gasping moans escaping him. "His being an android before this is helping him better process what he's linking into. Tariko-chan told me of the several times she rescued androids and gynoids to get them Gifted." She then winked at Asuka and her other lovers. "He's fine, guys..."

As Asuka, Hikaru and Konoe breathed out in relief, Chikao then gargled as his brown eyes began to glow. Seeing that, Ataru smiled as he pulled away from Paola, Catarina and Roberta, walking over to place comforting hands on the slowly-transforming ex-android's shoulders. Chikao perked, then he smiled as he gazed at the man who had once been part of the person who had liberated so many from the sickening drudgery of normal lives. "Can we...go on a date...Ataru-kun...?" he croaked.

"I'm definitely game for a few pillow scenes if your other simmem are all for it, Chikao-kun," Ataru whispered before he leaned in to kiss him as passionately as he would his other lovers.

As Momoe and her classmates all screeched in complete disbelief at the sight of Moroboshi Ataru of all people actually KISSING another boy so passionately, the energy now cloaking Chikao turned blinding as the ex-android teenager screamed out, "Taeim letam...!"

Nesu...MEMTU!

People squeezed their eyes shut as that brilliance flooded the whole of the attic...

...then they blinked as such faded, prompting them to turn and see that Chikao was now dressed in a turquoise battlesuit with coral orange belt and boots, a coral-shaded trident on his chest. As he shook his head while the memories from previous incarnations of the Prince of Tidal Waves, Memtu ("Triton"), settled into his mind, Asuka nodded. "That right!" she noted, making people stare at her.
"Chikao always loves swimming in the nude when he's out in the country by himself or with us." Ignoring the gasps from Ataru's old peers in Class 2-4 who hadn't attended Ekō Girl's High, the sports empire heiress got up and moved to embrace the smallest of her lovers. "Are you okay, Chikao?"

Blinking in confusion, Ataru then gazed intently at her. "Asuka-chan, how'd you know what Chikao just transformed into?" he then tenderly asked.

That made Asuka blink in surprise, then she hummed, reaching up to her mouth with a finger...

...which was now glowing!

"Oh, shit! That's why!" Ryūnosuke called out as she walked up to Asuka, gently guiding her to sit on the bed beside her lovers. "Here, sit down and let it come to you, Asuka. Don't fight it happening...!"

"I hope it's a good Gift!" Chikao said, his voice echoing from the power that had just been poured right into his now-organic battle doll body not a moment before, he moving to lean against Ataru.

The physically older teenager moved to embrace the just-Gifted ex-android, making Momoe and her peers gape in disbelief at the sight of their girl-crazed classmate being so passionate in public with a BOY, especially one who had "taken" one of the girls Moroboshi Ataru chased after all the time since they first met in March. As the Ekō alumni grinned on seeing their other classmates endure such a mental breakdown, Ataru's lovers from Yiziba and the shipgirls moved to take guard positions to ensure none of the people who would definitely disapprove of Ataru being Gifted could get close to him. "It'll be a good Gift," he then said as he tenderly kissed Chikao's forehead. "Asuka-chan's a really strong and resilient person. You helped her make it this far. Once she's past this scene in her life, she'll never have to fear anything her mother tries to force on her again. You SAVED her, Chikao...!"

"Hai...!" the hydrokinetic FISS-type breathed as he turned to warmly embrace the taller man, snuggling his head into the crook of Ataru's neck. "We'll be together forever until the day we go off-line..."

Hearing that, Momoe blinked in confusion. She herself had come to school when a panicking Tendō Nabiki called her an hour before from her temporary residence in the Saotome home in Nerima, screaming for any information concerning what was going on with Momoe's old classmate and all the people he now associated with. From the background noise, Momoe had been quick to tell that her "boss" was being harassed by both her father Sōun and Hayashi Kanami's estranged mother
Saotome Nodoka to find some way to get both Nabiki's sister Akane and Nodoka's missing son-turned-daughter back to Nerima so that things concerning the "Wrecking Crew" and their hangers-on could go back to "normal". Of course, "normal" meaning that the woman born a man named Saotome Ranma would find her/himself once more dealing with multiple fiancée claims, rivals who'd want to do anything to beat her/him down because of some imagined slight or another and two lazy fool fathers constantly riding her/his coattails to enjoy a comfortable "retirement" after their harsh training under Happōsai.

Given how much Nabiki's website on the martial artists of Nerima had revealed about how people had finally reached their limits concerning things — which Momoe had thoroughly read through over the last year to better understand what drove her "boss" in situations like this — the woman who had been voted second most beautiful in Class 1-4 shortly after Mendō Shūtarō came into their lives had a good idea what trying to get involved in the madness surrounding Hayashi Kanami could ultimately cost her.

«Want in?»

Momoe perked on hearing that voice echo in her mind, then she looked right to see the silver-haired Yizibajohei farmer's son gazing knowingly at her. Noting he was in the sleeveless battlesuits worn by those who had been Gifted — the suit matched his hair colour, with dark blue belt and boots, a flaming crusader-like long sword with angel's wings sprouting from the grip on his chest; that insignia reminded Momoe of the badge of Britain's elite special forces, the Special Air Service Regiment — she turned back before she gaped on seeing Chikao nude, he moving to draw off Ataru's clothing while kissing the older teen's quite muscular chest. Noting the look of total bliss on the face of the man who had been the one everyone blamed for every weird thing that happened in Tomobiki since the Tag Race, Momoe shook her head as her mind tried to equate this insanely passionate yet quite well-spoken and clearly caring man with the girl-chasing idiot she and her friends had to put up to for over a year, since...

Hey, wait a minute...!

«It's all true, Momoe.» Tapuso Madera advised as he allowed his psionic capabilities to push out whatever it had been that had kept Marubeya Momoe so ignorant of the wider world around her for over a year. «He was born a boy, but eleven seasons ago when he fled to Yiziba, he WILLINGLY became a girl to honour his adopted mother's wishes to bring back the power of her lost husband. Ataru became Tariko. Ataru GREW UP as Tariko...until she was trapped here and forced to go back to being what she didn't want to be. Then she got her soul SPLIT in half by that umale monk you people loathe so much. And while the part that remained Tariko would be Gifted when Ayumu rescued her from her would-be pillow scene partner, the part that was made to return to being Ataru was TRAPPED here. And given how many people on Earth AND Yiziba care for him...»
She paled as the images of many people flashed through her mind. Three of them were quite well-known to her: The Heavenly Sovereign of the State of Japan, the Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the President of the United States of America. Three people who saw the unbelievable potential in what the girl born a boy named Moroboshi Ataru was doing on his/her "pretty girl quest" over the last decade, silently supporting him/her all along...

Three people who did NOT like it when Tariko had been trapped in Tomobiki the previous summer...!

That's right! she thought as her eyes widened with realization. Until then, Shinobu-chan always cried on Ataru-kun's birthday because he had been MISSING for so long! She's the only one who ever really cared for him! That idiot mother of his always bitched about wishing she never had him...!

Momoe then shuddered as a pit of Arctic cold filled her heart. Just like she did AFTER he came back...!

«She knew what had been done to all of you all along,» Tapuso stated as many of Momoe's friends all gaped at the sight of Chikao and Ataru engage in mutual fellatio, clearly unbothered that they were performing in front of quite the audience. As Yamagata Masako — who had been voted the fifth most popular girl in Class 1-4 the previous fall — collapsed to her knees and began to scream out that the world was coming to an end while she yanked her long dark pigtails, the Angel of Vengeance separated from his lover to gently grasp Momoe's hand. That earned him a blush from her; fortunately for Momoe, none of her peers noticed this as they were still trying to find something, ANYTHING, to explain what was going on now in front of them...never mind their growing arousal at such a sight. «She didn't care how much you suffered because of the umale that came in Lum's wake. She knew she could have tried to find someone to contact one of us to remove the umale from the city and restore your lives to normal. SHE — DID — NOTHING — AT — ALL! And all that was because she wished to seize the treasure that was due to Ataru — and Tariko and their sisters — for her own use!»

Momoe stared at him, she waving to Ataru. "But you people all say that money doesn't exist on Yiziba!" she hissed, confidant enough that her peers were just too dazed by what was going on to note that she was actually having a conversation with one of the children of the Forge. "Nabiki-san told me that when she called me to try to get Ataru-kun to bring Kanami-san back to Nerima...!"

By then, Tapuso's lover had gained a new companion...in none other than Sanokura Emi. "It's rather hard to care for such things when you're far too worried about simple SURVIVAL, Momoe," the Emperor of Living Machines advised as the amateur pianist from Beppu on the eastern coast of Kyūshū gently traced her fingertips through his hair. As several of Emi's fellow Ekō Girl's High alumni moved to sit down close to them and listen to this particular revelation, R'blemle Etase added, "That's one of the down sides of absorbing a Gift. We gain the memories of ALL our past-selves, including the first one to possess our Gift...which, almost in EVERY time a casting change happens, lived through the Dawn of Power and the Starvation Times." He then chuckled as Emi instantly hugged him while some of her peers gave him horrified looks. "Hey! Stop that! They're just
memories! We didn't live through those times! It's really no different than what you all go through when you have history classes...other than not having any excuse to say you slept through it all because the instructor was so umale..."

Hearing that, many girls gaped before laughter escaped them, then Emi leaned in to kiss him. "Oi! Emi! Share!" Hayashi Sawako barked as she embraced R'bemle from behind. "There's too few of them...!"

"You're doing it, Sawako-chan?" Shinohara Yūki demanded.

Sawako giggled. "Hayashi Kanami's my second cousin, Yūki-chan!"

"NO WAY!" the other girls listening to this all screamed out.

"Yes way! And yes, just to confirm what Momoe always said, Kanami's parents are a pair of total assholes!" the woman with the brown hair combed back away from her head said as she gave Momoe a concerned look. "How on Earth you can put up with that bitch Nabiki, I'll never understand!"

"Sadly, that woman has sensitive information that could hurt Momoe's family were it to be released," Tapuso warned, making Momoe pale even if he gave her a squeeze of her hand in reassurance.

The girls all gaped as they stared in horror at their peer, then they moaned. "Oh, gods! Sawako-chan, call your cousin and have that idiot beaten down finally!" Yūki declared. "If Kanami-chan's parents are trying to force her into being 'Ranma' again and using that bitch Nabiki to do it...!"

"I asked her once to do that, Yūki-chan."

"And?" Emi wondered.

"If Nabiki steps out of line, Emi-chan, the Yakuza get involved."

Hearing that, the Ekō alumni took a moment to think it over, then snickers echoed through the group. "No great loss!" Nishimura Tina noted...before her blue eyes went wide as the native of Sweet
Valley gaped, she gazing towards the centre of the room. "Oh, God! Look at THAT...!"

Heads snapped over...

*Tene lomher'buo, Mizunok ōji Asuka...!

As the other girls watched — by now, all of Momoe's peers from Class 2-4 were now on their knees, dazed looks on their faces as many muttered prayers to whatever deity they worshipped to make this hideous nightmare go away; the primary prayers actually went to Baku, the tapir like dream-eater that people attending Tomobiki High School had cause to remember because of a weird repeating dream that struck them all during Golden Week after the incident with Queen Elle — the heiress to Japan's second-largest family fortune cried out as her whole body glowed star bright. "Oh, God! This is so WONDERFUL...!" she screamed out as her still-synthezoid lovers pulled away from her.

*Nesu...GAKIMR'BE!

People opened their eyes, having closed them as the Conservator called out what Asuka was becoming. As whoops of delight escaped the already Gifted people in the room and the shipgirls present all clapped their hands in approval at seeing another innocent girl transformed by the great power that had given them their new lives, the newest incarnation of the Heavenly Guide, Gakimr'be (*Archangel*), took a deep breath...before her balance went wacky and she collapsed onto the bed.

Fortunately, the Huntress of the Wild was right there to catch her. "Hey! Sit down and take a break, Asuka-chan!" Fujinami Ryūnosuke called out, then she perked as Asuka's now-Gifted lover and the man she was with right now cried out as orgasms overcame them. As Chikao collapsed against Ataru while trying to catch his breath, the tea shop "heir" from Chōshi gazed at her old classmate's hands, noting no energy emitting from them to indicate his own Gifting was starting. "What the fuck...?" she called out as she got up and walked over, gently helping Chikao into a sitting position before she traced her fingers over Ataru's chest to check out his energy meridians; being a ki mistress, Ryūnosuke was automatically trained in the Yizibajohei version of various forms of Oriental medical knowledge. "Damn! His tyuosato are all fucked up!" she hissed. "It's no wonder he can't mentally link into the Crystal to get a Gift!"

"No, that's not it, Ryūnosuke!"

She turned as Asuka came over to join them. As the Heavenly Guide, she was now dressed in a more classical Yizibajohei sleeved jumpsuit with a white hooded cape slung around her shoulders, the suit also being white with gold belt and slip-on shoes masked by her bell bottom trousers. A
golden ring symbol with angel's wings growing from the sides was on her left breast over her heart. Calling up her cosmic clairvoyance, the transformed sports empire heiress allowed her hand to pass over the panting Ataru. As Momoe gaped on noting that Asuka hadn't once reacted to his still-stiff manhood, Asuka squeezed her eyes shut as she allowed her powers to analyze what was going on. After a moment, she sighed. "It's no singular atona like those that the original Healer of Destruction removed from our planet all those sagas ago, Ryūnosuke. But the influences of many atona and beings like them are all over him. It's as if they're afraid that if he becomes Gifted, he'll turn around and destroy them all!"

Hearing that, Ryūnosuke spat out as Chikao willed his own costume back and Rumiko came over with her scanner to run it over Ataru's body. "Is there any way to kick-start the Gifting, Asuka-chan?" Okano Yuka demanded. She was being held by Ataru's intersex lover Nunuri Kagar'be; the horrified look on her face loudly indicated that she had come to understand a lot of what was just revealed. "I know that Tariko-chan got people to try to clear up the mess made when she was trapped last year, but if there are yōkai trying to keep him pinned here away from his sisters and the shipgirls with him now...!"

She then stopped as she considered that for a moment, then she spun around to look at Ashikaga Akemi, making the adopted native of Ōsaka blink as she seemed to shy away from that intensive stare. "Oi! OI! What the fuck are you looking at me for, you shitty four-eyed moron...?!"

Yuka snapped her fingers as she pointed at her. "'Healer of Destruction'! That's Batae Erba, right?!!"

"Hai!" Asuka affirmed with a nod.

"The original version of that guy kicked off the yōkai trying to invade Yiziba twenty-five millennia ago?!!"

"Hai!"

"Are you saying that WE have to have SEX with Ataru?!!"

That was a madly blushing Roberta Ansaldo, who had been trying not to give into the weird urges that had overcome her on seeing her admiral in the buff and try him out herself. As Catarina von Savoyen began to fidget herself despite the fact that she had slept with the man the very night after her rebirth as a shipgirl, Akemi began muttering a storm of profane curses at all the akuma and yōkai that had fucked around with Ataru's life since he was trapped her the previous fall by this mysterious "Division One" known to the crew of the Yonaga thanks to Itō Yoiko's eidetic memory of her life as a warship. Considering that, Asuka exchanged looks with Ryūnosuke. "It may work," the latter
"Oh, Beata Santa Maria! If that's all that has to be done, I'll do it!"

Heads snapped over as the third of the Zara-class cruisers reached up to tap her belt buckle, making her battlesuit vanish to reveal a somewhat muscular body that was curved in all the right places. Ignoring the chorus of envious looks from Yuka's friends, Paola di Lerici smiled as she came over to sit on the bed holding Ataru, putting herself on the opposite side of his legs from where Chikao was sitting. Noting that she was moving right away to mount her admiral, both Roberta and Paola's sister Zita gasped in embarrassed shock on seeing that the adopted native of Pula and Livorno was going to go all the way with him. "Paola! You're drunk! You can't RAPE the admiral like that!" Zita screeched.

"Shush, Sorella!" Paola snapped back as she leaned herself to gaze into Ataru's eyes. "Now, let's see if we can get YOUR Flames going, mio Ammiraglio!" she purred before swamping his lips with a kiss.

Roberta and Zita both gargled in disbelief on hearing their fleet mate mention Dying Will Flames while the other shipgirls present gazed intently at Paola, wondering what she was talking about. As Ataru's eyes went wide from that kiss, both their bodies glowed just as wisps of dark smoky energy began to billow away from his skin. People instantly backed off as Asuka forged a containment field around the bed just as the reborn heavy cruiser allowed herself to be impaled on his love machine, a croaked gasp escaping her. As Tapuso came over to help his new sister cosmic clairvoyant keep the dark energy that had embedded itself over the last half-year into Ataru's body from escaping to cause more mischief with other people, Paola hissed out as she hungrily explored his mouth with her tongue, causing him to gargle as his cheeks flamed with embarrassment; much that he didn't mind a good pillow scene, he had just MET this woman who had gladly surrendered her maidenhood to him like this...!

He then gasped as his whole body began to glow just as Paola's mixture of Storm and Lightning Flames erupted from her skin to lovingly cocoon his whole body. As Roberta whispered a relieved prayer to all the saints of the Church at the fact that the whole idea of metahumans ultimately made it easier for people possessing Dying Will Flames to adhere to Omertà when such was displayed in front of civilians, Ryūnosuke's nose flared. "Yeah! It's starting to happen now! Lucky thing he switched places with Tariko and Hiromi to stay away from this town when he needed a break from Lum! If he had stayed here full-time since he got that body, we'd need Ayumu-san to exorcise all that crap out of him!"

Rumiko winced. "I'd rather keep Ayumu-chan out of this...!"
Tene lomher'buo, Ataru Katabarbe...!

The reborn destroyers present and all the Ekō alumni screamed as that echoing declaration washed over the room. "C'mon, you shitty drunk pasta-loving cruiser!" Akemi snarled at Paola as the latter gyrated herself over his body. "Let him finish so he can get Gifted...!"

Paola grunted at that urging from the Orchid Nova, then she screamed as she felt something exploded deep inside her loins...before she was pitched off her admiral's body by him, she stumbling off the bed to the floor just as the radiance billowing from Ataru became too bright to look at.

NO! NO! YOU MONSTERS! YOU WILL NOT HAVE HIM...!

As the shipgirls snarled at that chorus of voices screeching from the direction of the shuddering battle doll, Akemi smirked, giving the mists the finger. "Fuck you, you shitty akuma! Teitoku's OURS...!"

Then the whole room was blinded by light!

Nesu...GAMR'BUO!

****

Just beyond the front gates of Tomobiki High School...

"Splendid..."

"Damn! That felt like someone going into Hyper Dying Will mode!"

Moroboshi Negako chuckled as she gazed at Renato Sinclair. "He's able to tolerate such, Renato."

The World's Greatest Hitman blinked before he gazed towards the clock tower...
Aboard the FPSYS Normandy in orbit over Onishuto, that moment (local time: Two hours before supper)...

"Huh?!

Isaac Thomas looked up to see a confused look cross Tariko Katabarbe's face as she seemed to glance aft. "Hey, you okay?" the Wise Lone Sage asked.

The Trickster of the Show blinked as she peered with her meta sight in the direction of Earth before she shook her head. "Damn! Why didn't I pick up on all that...?" she hissed as her fists clenched.

The New Yorker blinked as he gazed at her...

****

Aboard the FPSYS Excelsior, on the grounds of the Invader home near Onishuto...

"Onii-san...?"

"Darling...?"

Both Redet Ten and Oyuki perked on hearing the former's cousin and future cousin-in-law call out like that, they they focused on Redet Lum and her fiancée. "Lum-cha?! Hiromi-chan?! Are you two alright?" the crown princess of Neptune asked as she squeezed the hand of her oldest friend.

Lum blinked, then she gazed wide-eyed at Hiromi Katabarbe. "Did Darling just...?"

"Hai, I believe so," the Mistress of Morphing affirmed with a nod...
In her private cabin on the Excelsior...

"Anii...?"

Fukushima Hatsue perked on hearing that from her current companion, then she looked over to see Kishiwada Fūka gaze nowhere in particular. Much to the surprise of the reborn third of the Fubuki-class destroyers, the current incarnation of the Slothful Fighter was wide awake and alert as she seemed to concentrate on something. "Hey! You okay?" the adopted native of Maizuru wondered as she reached over to wrap a protective arm around the transformed clone of her spiritual admiral.

Fūka blinked, then she turned to warmly kiss the Silent Blizzard, making the destroyer blush as she felt the other woman move to pull her close for some very welcome intimacy...

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In the main galley...

"Nii-sama...?"

Shuddering as the wonderful feeling of her template/elder brother being Gifted passed through her, Haruhino Shizuka smiled as she looked into the oven to see the casserole she was preparing.

The current incarnation of the Mistress of the Travel Lodge then found herself shuddering even more as ideas concerning what sort of celebratory feast she could make for Ataru danced through her mind...

****

On the main pilotage...
"Onii-san...!"

Looking nowhere in particular, Karasawa Mitsuki blinked as her living computer of a mind analyzed that empathic wave that surged through her mind, then a grin crossed the Supreme Polymath's face.

Giggling like a maniac, the technokinetic hyper-genius immediately called up the scans she had made of Welcome House to get to work preparing a whole new rotunda to be paired with the one that her just-Gifted brother and his blood sisters lived in now, plans upon plans swirling in her mind.

*This should impress a lot of people,* she mused...

****

*In the Onishuto central market...*

"Nii-chan...?!

"Niinii...?!"

"Um...Miss Takrobim? Miss Damte? Are you two alright?!"

Both Yamanobe Saki and Misaki Yukari yelped on hearing that concerned question from the clothing merchant they had been speaking to when that surge of power flooded their minds to tell them what happened to Ataru, then they sputtered apologies before they got back to business...

****

*Back in Tomobiki, at the top of the Toranoseishin Finances tower...*

"Oh, this is perfect...!"
Standing on the roof of the skyscraper as she gazed towards Tomobiki High School, Tsuchidō Otome shook her head as she pulled her cape closer to her, ignoring the moaning wind echoing around her.

The dark eyes of the Endless One glittered with grim anticipation as she imagined how those who had once derided her Nii-ya would react to seeing him become something like THAT, someone who was more than capable of dealing with wounded women's hearts.

That should be interesting, Otome purred, licking her lips...

****

In Yumoa Reigi's office several floors down...

"Nii-san...?"

"Eh?! Are you alright, Wakaba-chan?"

Hearing that concerned question from the young financial genius that had supported her beloved sister on her pretty girl quest, Hano Wakaba chuckled as she waved the older man down. "I'm alright, Reigi-kun! I'm alright!" the current incarnation of the Fleeing Orphan, Huoro ("Runaway"), said before she giggled. "I just sensed Nii-san be Gifted finally! Excuse me!" With that, the lovely and mature-looking clone-sister with the shoulder-length shaggy brown hair and the blue eyes under reading glasses pulled out her PAA, tapping the crystal. "Oi! Kanna-chan! What's going on with Nii-san right now?!"

She ignored the curious looks from Reigi and his co-workers...

****

Atop the Moroboshi home...

"Oh, relax, Wakaba-chan! Onii-san's going to be alright...!"
A cruel smile crossed the face of Ototachibana Kanna, the living replica of the eighth of the *Colourful Kiss* characters, as she focused her special camera in the direction of Tomobiki High School. Grateful that her primary tool as the Stalking Photographist, *Emso* ("Shutter"), allowed the reborn paparazzi from the Nesetimtuto state of Dotir'ba-kuo to probe INSIDE a building, the woman with the long brown hair possessing an ahoge sticking out of her forehead and the deep brown eyes cackled as she recalled the images of all the idiot girls that always chased her Onii-san to keep him "loyal" to Lum.

"Wait until you learn what Onii-san became...!" Kanna purred as she moved to take another still shot.

Hearing that tone in her sister's voice, Wakaba moaned. "Dear Lyna...!"

****

At Onigakkō Primary School in the east end of Tomobiki...

"Oi! Oi! Onē-chan! Are you okay?!"

Shocked out of her state after she felt her template/brother finally be Gifted after over six months of living as a battle doll, Kubo Ayano chuckled as she turned her attention back to the smiling children who gathered on the tarmac of their school to play basketball...and found themselves under the effective guidance of the Demon of the Court, *Samdo* ("Hoops"). "Ah! Gomen! Gomen!" the energetic teenager with the shaggy shoulder-length strawberry blonde hair — with an ahoge sticking out of her forehead — declared as she turned back to the kids that had noticed her practising with her own basketball, then crowed her for the chance to learn how to play the game. "I just felt something happen to Onii!" She then grinned, her teal eyes glittering. "Now, let me show you stuff your teachers don't know...!"

All the children cheered...

****

*Nishitōkyō General Hospital*...
"Onii-chan...!"

Blinking as she allowed that surge of power to flood her body, Mishima Akira then churlishly smiled as she turned her attention to the semi-conscious Ogin Haneko, who had been left alone in one of the recovery rooms in the emergency ward of the hospital. Of course, thanks to Paola de Lerici’s actions, the members of the Rosebuds had few people looking over them given the sheer number of people that had been put into intensive care by the third of the Zara-class cruisers.

Which was a perfect situation for the current incarnation of the Queen of Diseases, Yatohyuo ("Pandemic"), to spend some quality time seeking vengeance on the arrogant and selfish bitches and their punk friends that tried to keep her brother down because of their idiot crush on Mendō Shūtarō.

Grinning as she placed the lily flower now infected with a modified version of the Yizibajohei analogue to a flu virus — which couldn't be spread to Terrans thanks to the absence of the intensive amount of mesonium in the bodies of a native of Earth that a native of the World of the Forge possessed as a birthright — the sickly looking girl with the shoulder-length shaggy grey-silver hair and the blue eyes smirked as she glared at the unconscious Sanrinbō Institute senior.

"Reject Sword for Brains forever...and you'll be cured..." Akira teased.

Sadly, the leader of the Rosebuds wasn't conscious enough to hear that...

****

The Mendō estate...

"Flowers for Onii-sama?"

"With an extra present from Akira-chan, Tachiko-san!"

Hearing that from Ōnishi Konatsu, Mendō Tachiko turned back to her newspaper. "And Akira-san became, Konatsu-san?" the Passionate Pugilist wondered as she scanned through the stock reports.
"Yatohyuo," the current incarnation of the Princess of the Polar Gardens, *Tiuto* (the "*Florist"*), answered as her blue eyes glittered with smouldering outrage at the idiots that had so harmed her brother here in Town. "You have to admit, with the way he threw himself on Aniki’s new friend..."

"Hai, that was stupid of him. Nothing fatal, I hope?"

"Just a dose of tumnuo modified for Terrans."

Tachiko smirked. "Please deal with Ryōko-chan as well, Konatsu-san."

"No problem!" the blonde with the well-styled hair promised...

****

Welcome House on Ōmure-jima, that moment...

"Eh?! Who are you, nanodesu?!"

Hearing that demand from the fourth of the Akatsuki-class destroyers, Konatsu’s effective elder sister Ōnishi Koharu smirked as she looked over from the stove where she had been preparing a massive number of snacks for the rather large "fleet" of shipgirls her brother had found himself in spiritual charge of, even if a large number of Japanese shipgirls were now off to the Imperial Palace in Tōkyō to be formally presented to the Heavenly Sovereign. "Didn’t Shirayuki-chan or An-chan tell you about me, Inoue-chan?!" the green-eyed woman with the shaggy shoulder-length red hair wondered.

Before Akamatsu Inoue could demand what was going on, her eldest sister came up to squeeze her shoulder in reassurance. "This is one of Shirei-kan’s clone sisters, Inoue-chan," Akamatsu Tsukiko stated while she waved to the current incarnation of the Tart Crafter, *Tar’be* ("*Pastry*"). "She came here to help cook food for us now that Shirayuki-san is busy at school," the adopted native of Sasebo who also called herself the Living Pulsar, *Akakote* ("*Akatsuki*"), explained.

Hearing that, her brown-haired sister who now called herself the Peaceful Lightning, *Emalona* ("*Inazuma*") gazed intently on Koharu before she nodded in acceptance. "Hai!"
Koharu smiled as she turned back to monitoring the stove, inwardly anticipating how the shipgirls on Ōmure-jima will react soon to the news surrounding her brother's Gifting...

****

*Within the Hufflepuff dormitories at Hogwarts (local time: An hour after midnight)*...

"Oh, that's simply *perfect*, Ani-kun...!"

Grinning in anticipation of the sheer chaos that her brother darling was about to unleash on Tomobiki and elsewhere, Hirosaki Chikage stretched herself before slipping under the covers to get some sleep...

*To Be Continued...*

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**WRITER'S NOTES**

*Ichijō Ayaka* and *Hirato Yūko* are two of the protagonists in the hentai dōjinshi series *MC Gakuen*, written by *Mizuryū Kei* as part of the dōjin circle *Alice no Takarabako*. While I certainly don't approve of mind control stories and found it shocking that Ayaka was the actual cause of the events depicted in the eight-part storyline, their histories and what exactly happened at *Saint Marina Christos Girl's High School* in the universe of this story is MUCH different than what was depicted in the dōjinshi.

*Hayashi Sawako* and *Shinohara Yūki* are two background characters from the *NOëL* series.

Translation list: *Kake* — Yizibajohei equivalent of the English plural "s" ending indicating multiples of the same objects, thus making the term *Beni-kake* mean "princesses" or "ladies"; *Grazie mille* — Thank you very much; *È cosi carino* — He's so cute; *Sorella Maggiore* — Elder sister; *Idiota* — Idiot; *Adoro (name)* — I love (name); *È il Tenente Generale Raeburn* — It's Lieutenant General Raeburn; *Gerój Sovétskogo Sojúza* — Hero of the Soviet Union; *Órden Lénina* — Order of Lénin; *Prima Divisione Incrociatori* — First Cruiser Division; *Bambini piccoli* — Little children;
Ammiraglio — Admiral; Giappone — Japan; Tempesta — Storm; Fulmine — Lightning; Sereno — Sun; Pioggia — Rain; Nuvola — Cloud; Terra — Earth; Oceano — Ocean; Ciclone — Cyclone; Capitano di Fregata — Frigate Captain, the Italian Navy rank title for a commander (NATO rank code OF-4); Angelo — Angel; Sua Maestà il Re — His Majesty the King; Terzo della classe (name) — Third of the (name)-class; Il primo della sua classe — The first of her class; Incantato — Enchanted; Culo arrogante — Arrogant ass; San Pietro — Saint Peter; Bae — Yes; Simmem — Lover; Tyuosato — Literally "classic net", this is the name given to the spiritual meridians that are in a person's body which can be detected by traditional medicine to sense various aspects of one's health; Atona — Demon; Dotir'ba-kuo — Literally "island of the successor", this is the Yizibajohei analogue to the state of California within the United States; Tumnuo — Influenza.

_Yatsura_ minor character notes: Unbaba Tetsu, Nyōke Hitori, his twin brother Nyōke Futari, Ogin Haneko, Hyōga Yumi and the other members of the Rosebuds first appeared in the anime story "Goodbye Season" (anime episode #64). In that episode, the Nyōke twins are called the "Franken twins" due to their resemblance to the monster in Mary Shelley's novel _Frankenstein_. The Franken twins' proper birth names, Ogin's given name and Yumi's family name are my creation. Yamagata Masako was first mentioned in the manga episode "Even Though I Wait For You" (manga chapter #26); her family name is my invention and I base her looks on the unnamed student with twintails depicted in the second panel on page four of the manga story "The Bluebird of Happiness" (manga chapter #281). And Baku first appeared in the manga story "Waking To A Nightmare" (manga chapter #31); he would also make an appearance in the second movie Beautiful Dreamer.

Shipgirls introduced in this episode:

Capitano di Vascello Paola de Lerici RM (Regia Marina _Pola_ [pendant IP23])

Capitano di Vascello Zita de Lerici RM (Regia Marina _Zara_ [pendant IP20])

Capitano di Fregata Maddalena Alighieri RM (Regia Marina _Maestrale_ [pendant CT117])

Capitano di Fregata Lucrezia Alighieri RM (Regia Marina _Libeccio_ [pendant CT119])

With warships other that battleships, the Regia Marina makes use of something akin to an American-style hull classification code system in the universe of my stories to identify their ships. The short term **IP** means *Incrociatore Pesante* ("heavy cruiser") while **CT** means *Cacciatorpediniere* (literally "torpedo (boat) hunter", the Italian term for a destroyer). The hull number indicates the actual order of which ship was built, with **RM Pola** (Paola de Lerici) being the twenty-third heavy/ armoured cruiser having been built for the Regia Marina since the first such vessel was commissioned in 1892.

_P/WO1 John E. Ebrill_ was first mentioned in _The Angels of the Era of Eternity_. He was Dean Raeburn's squadron sergeant-major (SSM), the senior non-commission officer of "B" Squadron in
the 10th Saskatchewan Cavalry Regiment of Canada (Air) (10 SASK CAV) during the early part of World War Two. The abbreviation P/WO1 is read "Pilot Warrant Officer Class 1" and is the Royal Canadian Corps of Air Cavalry's official rank title for a top-rank non-commissioned officer qualified to fly aircraft in battle. A WO1 is the old Canadian Army rank equivalent of a Chief Warrant Officer (CWO) (NATO rank code OR-9) in the modern Canadian Armed Forces; such a person qualified to fly aircraft in battle in the modern Corps of Air Cavalry is titled as Pilot Chief Warrant Officer (P/CWO).

The Famiglia Chiavarone are one of the Vongola's allied clans in Katekyō Hitman Reborn. They were first introduced in the manga story "Bucking Horse Dino" (manga chapter #27) with the introduction of Reborn's old student Dino Chiavarone. The Dying Will Flames of the Earth were first introduced in the manga story "Simon Middle School" (manga chapter #283), along with the family that normally makes use of such powers, the Famiglia Simon. One practitioner of the Earth-style flames is Kozato Makoto, first mentioned in the manga story "A No-Good Combination" (manga chapter #339).
Gathering of Jewel Warriors

Chapter Summary

As the sisters react to Ataru's unique Gifting and girls decide to give him a try out in bed, Stargate Command hosts a meeting between the Tok'ra and the TRUE Children of the First Race, the Jewel Warriors...

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Fūka-jima, two hours before lunch...

"Dimgae...!"

Shuddering as she felt her systems come back to active status and her mind fully wake up from a wonderful dream, Miyu Greer sat up in her bed and looked around the dorm room she lived in at the student residence near the main buildings of the Fūka Academy. Even if it was a school day, she had called in to her homeroom teacher reporting a stomach flu to be excused from classes; Miyu had done this every time she received a programming upgrade package ultimately from one of the world's leading experts in Shōzoki AI technology, Professor George Andrews of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (and retired major of the Corps of Royal Canadian Electrical and Mechanical Engineers) who served in the 7th Canadian Specialized Warfare Unit during the 1950s. Shuddering, the gynoid looked down at her arms, blinking on seeing a cloak of energy encompass both limbs. Shaking her head as she ran an automatic internal diagnostic to determine if there were any faults to her internal systems, the adopted daughter of the Academy's resident chaplain shifted herself to stand up, moving to stand at the window to gaze upon the manicured lawns of the all-grade school she had been made to infiltrate to help protect Alyssa Searrs and prepare for the coming of the new Festival of Fūka, when twelve "Valkyries" would gather in preparation to combat each other in a winner-take-all battle royale that would see the survivor offered to a mysterious "obsidian lord"; Miyu's sponsors knew now thanks to long and intensive research on the subject that it was some interdimensional entity who had tried many times over the last three millennia to conquer Earth through a portal that opened over Fūka-jima.

Blinking as she considered what just happened and as the energy aura around her limbs faded, Miyu
shook her head. Fortunately for her, she was in a high enough apartment that people wouldn't see her nude body even if they were directly looking at her from ground level. She had been warned by Grigori Wyszynski that by ingesting a lot of mesonium into her body, she could start developing powers and abilities well beyond her basic design specifications. In effect, that would make her a "metahuman gynoid" similar in concept to the characters of Amazo or any of the Metal Men as produced by DC Comics in the United States, much less Cutey Honey here in Japan. While the concept had been just an abstract observation when it had been first raised by the Polish-born Canadian polymath serving as the Academy's advanced chemistry teacher, that something was happening to her now...

"Who pre-Gifted you?"

Hearing that voice, Miyu gasped before her combat systems came on-line, then she spun around, her left hand jutting out to allow it to morph into her mythril sword. "Who are you...?!" she demanded...

...then she blinked in obvious surprise on hearing the clang! of said sword dropping to the floor, her left arm fully intact and looking perfectly organic.

Seeing that, the newcomer smiled as she stepped out into the late morning sunlight reflected from outside, revealing her to be a slender girl who would fit well in the middle school classes at the Academy. With a beautiful and innocent face, she had spiky black hair cropped short save for twin braids that descended from her temples down to the level of her budding breasts; her eyes were a beautiful amber shade that Miyu felt herself drawn to automatically, just before her internal housekeeping wetware slammed down on it to stop her intimacy programming from activating and making her move to embrace the newcomer. Said woman was dressed in a Yizibajohei-pattern jumpsuit of the new model, dark blue overall with silver-grey belt and boots, a silver crossed sword insignia on her upper chest. Strapped to her back by a Sam Browne belt-like strap of leather looped over her left shoulder was a large black claymore-like weapon...one that Miyu instantly recognized as the combat element of one of the Princesses of Fūka, the one destined to be bound to an ogre-like creature called "Miroku" in all the stories the Foundation had gathered about the Festivals of Fūka.

She also knew this woman's real name. "Mikoto-san..."

Hearing that greeting, Minagi Mikoto — now the current incarnation of the Polar Swordswoman, Gatum ("Claymore") — smiled as she calmly walked over, kneeling to grasp Miyu's blade by its new hilt, then she casually straightened herself. With a casual turn of the weapon indicating that the middle school sophomore was expert in dealing with all types of bladed weapons and how they were to be handled, she offered it hilt-first to her "host". Seeing the acceptance on the face of the orphaned native of rural Metropolitan Tōkyō, Miyu nodded as she took her sword back. "Arigatō, Mikoto-san."
"Who pre-Gifted you?" Mikoto then asked again.

A confused look responded. "'Pre-Gifted'?"

Hearing that made the Polar Swordswoman moan. "Oh, wonderful...!"

Seeing the annoyed look on her guest's face, Miyu blinked before her chestnut eyes went wide in disbelief. "I'm...becoming Yizibajohei...?" she sputtered as she looked at her free hand.

That made Mikoto perk. "You know of us?"

An affirming nod answered her. "My sponsors have agents working in the school right now. And the presence of Terrans-turned-Yizibajohei became public news on Friday morning when Tariko Katabarbe-san and her siblings finally expelled the Urusians from Tomobiki."

"Ah!" Mikoto breathed out, a delighted smile crossing her face before she crossed her arms. "I wasn't aware that Tariko-aneue finally got rid of those hom're bu umale finally; they had to keep things secret because of some temporal paradox thing." She then hummed. "Still, given that Chie-aneue is the Rhapsode and that the Festival is coming, it's no wonder Searrs-hakase is taking interest in these things since his daughter's attending classes here. It's not anything akin to some dark umale from those magical enclaves being stupid, but it's just as threatening as when the Old Ones tried to conquer Earth twenty-five sagas ago that required the Praetorian Guardian and that death cheater from Rügen to chase off." She shook her head, her eyes suddenly tearing. "Ojii-chan...!"

Miyu's too-human heart instantly ached on seeing that. "Mikoto-san...?"

Hearing that concerned voice, Mikoto blinked before she smiled as she reached up to wipe her eyes. "Gomen ne, Miyu-aneue. I don't know if your baka jijii told you about what I was made to do to my grandfather, but..." She shook her head again, ignoring Miyu's surprised blush at being called "older sister" even if the gynoid had been quite surprised to realize that Mikoto had known of Joseph Greer's affiliation to the Searrs Foundation. "Searrs-hakase wants to try to stop the Festival?"

Miyu nodded. "To prevent it from reaching the point where the Obsidian Lord will face one 'Valkyrie'; 'HiME' as you'll no doubt know the concept. He hopes that they can assist the Foundation in ushering in the 'Golden Millennium'. For that, having the HiMEs not fight each other — thus risking the lives of their most beloved person as it happened in the past — would be of benefit to all of humanity." She sighed. "Personally, I care not for the fate of the other HiMEs. The child I care for..."
as if she was my own is being forced to act as a 'spoiler' in case the Festival starts. That will bring her to direct harm."

"You're programmed to protect her first?"

"Hai."

Mikoto nodded in understanding. "Yeah, I sensed you were Shōzoki," she admitted, then explained after seeing Miyu's surprised look, "I've bumped into androids and gynoids like you ever since I allowed myself to become Claymore after Tariko-aneue was rescued by Ōsaka from being forced to marry that umale Lum seven months ago on Uru." She then smiled in reminiscence as she recalled getting into her first big fight scene on Phentax Twelve helping rescue the Avalonians. "Don't worry about Alyssa-chan. Both of you are under my protection, Ane-ue. Who's helping you become one of us?"

That made Miyu blink before she sighed. "I believe it's Wyszynski-sensei."

That made the new student gape; Mikoto hadn't officially transferred in yet as her entrance examination had yet to be marked. "The chemistry teacher? I don't recall Ane-ue ever helping him get Gifted."

Hearing that made Miyu blink as she took a moment to consider that point. "Sensei told me someone helped save him from the consequences of the Canadians' Omega Protocol, healing him from acute ebony mesonium poisoning. He never said anything about the Yizibajohei being involved. He hasn't demonstrated any metahuman powers that I could recognize," she then noted.

Mikoto sighed before she rolled her eyes to the ceiling. "He was a student of the Grandmaster of the Tensei-ryū from just after the Greater East Asia War. If it was a recent Gifting, he would have the self-discipline necessary to control it without dealing with bouts of Post-Gifting Shock." She nodded. "I can see why he's helping you be Gifted. Your internal wetware will keep the Post-Gifting Shock to a very dull roar when it happens. Ane-ue has helped several gynoids be Gifted in the past."

"Why would he not tell me that?"

"You mentioned the Omega Protocol," Mikoto stated. "Ane-ue has had to save a couple girls from Canada that would have been killed because of that."
The gynoid stared nowhere in particular as she considered that. "I will ask him about it when I can," she admitted. "Arigatō, Mikoto-san."

The Polar Swordswoman nodded before she teleported out...

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Nearby...

"Why are THEY getting involved in this?"

Shaking his head, Homura Nagi sighed as he turned back to his book...

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Tomobiki High School, that moment...

"Onii-chan!"

"Onii-chama!"

"Anii!"

"Onii-sama!"

"Onii-tama!"

"Aniue-sama!"
"Nii-sama!"

"Aniki!"

"Anigimi-sama!"

"Ani-chama!"

"Nii-ya!"

Hearing those shouted voices from the direction of the east stairwell, Mizunokōji Asuka blinked in confusion before she looked at Roberta Ansaldo. "Um, Roberta-san, who are they...?"

"The ammiraglio's younger sisters!" the third of the Littorio-class battleships made human stated before she gazed intently at Paola de Lerici, then Sakō Hikaru and Hirakawa Konoe. "Get dressed, idiota!" she snarled as her brown eyes flared with the brilliant blue of Rain Flames. "Do you wish to traumatize a group of CHILDREN by presenting yourselves to them NAKED?!"

Both of Asuka's still-synthetic lovers awked as they immediately reached for their underwear. As Paola picked up her belt buckle, then slapped it onto her abdomen to have her body cloaked with her uniform, footfalls echoed from the drop-down ladder that allowed people to come up into the attic. Soon to appear was Tanenobu Karen, she in the uniform of the Herald of Fight Scenes. "Onii-chan!" she screamed as she raced past the crowd of her brother's old classmates to put herself by the bed beside her recovering brother and hug him. "Oh, Onii-chan! We all felt it when you were Gifted...oh, my!"

As Eigo Kaho, Itō Mamoru and Sukeyama Sakuya stepped in, Karen pulled back to gaze on a face that was wonderfully familiar yet that of a stranger. The Gifting had altered and matured Moroboshi Ataru's features; his face was a little more rugged and he had a well-trimmed moustache and goatee framing his mouth. He was now draped in a dark burgundy jumpsuit of the older model with semi-detached sleeves similar to what some Shintō shrine miko wore, it complete with a black belt around his waist, black armbands keeping his sleeves secured to his top and black boots covering his feet. Black finger-less gloves covered his hands. On his left breast over his heart was a black symbol similar to a theatre mask that was often used by Western playhouses. Even so, his clearly more muscular body was apparent to all who were staring at him; that was making the girls in the room save Tsuruya Rumiko and Ataru's sisters drool at how drop-dead sexy he was. Unseen by all but felt by all the people present was the very warm empathic aura that was now radiating from the just-Gifted battle doll's body.
"Gam'r'buo...?!" Karen croaked, making Sakuya groan as the other sisters climbed up into the attic.

Hearing that, the new incarnation of the Healer of Women's Hearts, **Gam'r'buo ("Rake")**, chuckled in embarrassment as Yotsuba Dunn seemed to teleport in to take pictures of her brother dearest in his new battlesuit on the day where his TRUE life would begin. "No doubt, the last slap in the face by the akuma and yōkai that loved to play with our lives since we were trapped in this town last September." He then gave Sakuya an amused look. "I trust you won't get jealous, Sakuya-chan."

A derisive snort escaped his effective opposite number as she crossed her arms while Saeru Hinako walked around her to put herself right in front of her brother, she reaching up to touch his forehead. "**Curse, curse...GO AWAY!**" the Spirit of Innocence called out as she projected her own empathic power into him...then she blinked. "A-ri-ri?! No curse?! What happened, Ryūnosuke-san?!"

Fortunately, the arrival of the sisters from Ōmure-jima had shaken the Huntress of the Wild out of her hormone-induced stupor on seeing her old classmate in his new empowered form, which had woken memories of her eighth incarnation when she dated the second incarnation of the Healer of Women's Hearts for a whole month after her nesting season came. "Uh...y-yeah!" Fujinami Ryūnosuke sputtered, making the sisters laugh in amusement. "His tyuosato were all messed up, Hinako-chan. Some of the akuma still here in town had embedded themselves pretty deep in your bro-bro's body, so we had to jump-start the Gifting. Lerici-taisa here did it for him." Here, she thumbed the third of the Zara-class cruisers, who had drawn out her wine flute to pour herself a new glass of Ebrill Cabaret Ice.

The sisters all looked at Paola as she sat down beside her admiral, then Tenhiro Haruka sighed. "**Regia Marina Pola**, I assume?" the Quarterstaff Mistress wondered as she then gazed on Roberta, her eyebrow arching. "Third of the Zara-class cruisers, one of the three lost at Cape Matapan?"

"Si, Donna Marchesa Haruka," the third of the Littorio-class battleships affirmed with a moan. "Paola! Stop drinking! There are children present! Have you utterly no shame whatsoever?!" she then barked.

"Oi! Oi! It's okay, Roberta-san! Given what happened to her as Pola, it's no wonder she's like this!"

Eyes locked on Hatoyama Rinrin, who was using the scanning mechanisms in her goggles to give Paola a detailed look over before she nodded on seeing all was well. "What do you mean by that, Rinrin-san?" Ryūnosuke asked as everyone gazed upon the transformed heavy cruiser.

The Technological Sorceress of the East sighed. "Battle of Cape Matapan. Near the end of March in 1941 in the **Mediterranean** just off the coast of Greece. In other words, it's HOT, even at nighttime!"
The second day of the battle, *Pola* and two of her sisterships — and I assume the cutie by the corner is Zita de Lerici, AKA *Zara*..." — here, the native of Ōsaka pointed to where the reborn name-ship of her class was standing, making Zita blush — "...gets nailed by a torpedo from one of HMS *Formidable*’s Swordfish bombers that knocks out power. She's stuck adrift until nighttime when the British battle line — including *Warspite* and two sisters — finds her and her fleet mates, including *Zara* and their sister *Fiume*. The battleships sink *Zara* and *Fiume* thanks to *Pola*’s crew putting up flares, believing the British ships were Italian ones coming to help them; the British also had radar on their ships, which helped tracking their opponents down. When they saw *Zara* and *Fiume* sunk, *Pola*’s captain ordered her to be scuttled. Lots of crew go for a swim, but when she doesn’t sink, they got back aboard, stripped down since it was freaking HOT! — not to mention given how WET they were! — then broke out the wine and got themselves sloshed to prepare to face their death scenes. Fortunately, the British were happy to get the crew taken off before they sank her with a torpedo."

She waved to Paola in emphasis.

Eyes locked on the grey-haired cruiser as many of the girls present look ready to break down and cry at hearing what her crew had undergone all those years ago. Immediately, Aria des Beauchamps came over, gesturing with her hands to create a beautiful lollipop to give to Paola. Seeing that gesture by the Candy Lady, the transformed cruiser nodded as she took it. "Molte grazie!"

"De rien!" the native of Paris declared with a cute smile.

That made the newly arrived Italian shipgirls perk. "Sei francese?!" Zita asked.

"Ma mère était française."

That instantly made both Maddalena and Lucrezia Alighieri immediately come over to protectively guard Aria, which made the latter blush before she used her powers to make candy for them...then she made candy for Zita as well since she was obviously the elder sister to the nice cruiser who helped her beloved brother be Gifted finally. As the people watching this giggled and laughed at such a friendly show of support, one of Ataru’s male lovers was quick to notice the still-dazed looks on the faces of Marubeya Momoe and the other girls from Class 2-4 who hadn't attended Ekō Girl's High School in the first semester of their freshman year. "Um, Ataru..." R'hemle Etase called out.

Ataru looked over, then he sighed as he got up, walking over to place himself in front of his former peers. With a tap of a finger, he jolted Momoe awake. "Momoe-san, are you alright?” he gently asked.

The woman voted as second most popular in Class 1-4 shortly after Mendō Shūtarō joined their number the previous November blinked as her eyes cleared up, then she focused on him for a moment before her cheeks flamed to the shade of ripe cherries as she took in the sheer *Adonis* now standing before her. Confusion then flashed across her face. "Um...I'm sorry!" she then blurted out.
"You look familiar, but I don't really recognize you! Are you one of Ryūnosuke-san's friends from Yiziba?"

As those who did know that the current incarnation of the Healer of Women's Hearts was Moroboshi Ataru all blinked in surprise, he himself bowed his head as the other non-Ekō alumni from Class 2-4 all seemed to snap back to full wakefulness, they gazing upon a man who was clearly more attractive than Mendō Shūtarō could EVER be! "Forgive me, Momoe-san. My name's Ataru Katabarbe," he then formally introduced himself, waving to his chest. "If you'll recall, I'm the split-off part of my older sister Tariko's soul that was forced to live as a man after our good friend Kasuga Ayumu rescued us from being forced to marry Redet Lum back in April. I believe you and the ladies here were forced to attend that complete travesty of a 'wedding' in Onishuto against your will when you were foully KIDNAPPED and forced to go, virtually at gunpoint!" As the girls he was speaking to tittered in embarrassment on hearing his spoken concern for them, he shook his head. "How typically arrogant the Urusians are. I assume there never came any sort of apology from our would-be 'wife' because of that."

"None whatsoever," Gekasawa Kumiko advised as the others grimly nodded on recalling those dark days on a planet they never wanted to visit. "Don't apologize, Ataru-kun. Was it because of that thing with that cake Cherry baked back in November that split your sister into twins that saw you born?"

He nodded politely to her. "Effectively so, Kumiko-san. And by the way, Onē-san and I do apologize for the times we were forced to behave like sex-crazed fools when it came to you even after Onē-san regained her memories and I was allowed to live as my own person. Regretfully, the issue with the Niphentaxians stayed our hand from revealing ourselves until we could dispose of that annihilation bomb in the Ginza, though we returned those rimrae umale back to their home planet in August."

"Temporal paradox, right?" Yamagata Masako asked, making people gaze on the pretty girl with the long twintails. "When you people liberated the Avalonians in June, the time warper in your group pulled the bomb out of town from Friday, not the day of that big fight scene, right?"

"The same, Masako-san."

Laughter echoed from his old classmates as they waved him down. "Oh, don't apologize for that, Ataru-kun!" Obinata Hiromi, who had been voted fourth most popular in Class 1-4 in November, said as she waved him down. "I remember the time we found out about Lum's time travel tech! Everyone in class are Doctor Who and Star Trek fans, too! We know all about temporal paradoxes!"

"Still, it had to be said, Hiromi-san," he noted as he gave the girl with the headband an apologetic look, which made Hiromi blush at his behaviour; such clearly outdid Mendō Shūtarō's ten ways from
Sunday.

The girls tittered. "It's alright, Ataru-kun! It's alright!" Kumiko assured before she looked over to see the sisters. "Oh! What are you girls all doing here?! Shouldn't you be in classes now?!"

Hinako giggled in knowing delight as she came over to join her brother, allowing her own empathic aura to reach out and keep the poor girls that had often rode her brother's case concerning Redet Lum calm. "It's okay, Kumiko-san! Onii-tama just got Gifted and we came over to make sure he was alright!" Here, she waved to Ataru in emphasis. "The teachers at the College understand!"

"Well, you shouldn't skip classes all day, Hinako-chan!" Hiromi then cautioned as she raised a cautioning finger. "I can guess the flip of Labour Thanksgiving for us was to make sure Lum didn't suspect anything about the Yizibajohei being on Earth, but you guys weren't affected."

"We had the holiday on Friday anyway," Rinrin noted.

People laughed on hearing that even if Okano Yuka and her fellow Ekō Girl's High School alumni were staring at their peers in confusion. As Ataru glanced at them with a warning look to say nothing about what happened, Momoe and her friends then moved to depart from the attic; it WAS a day off for them and they didn't want to spend time here. As soon as they had departed from the attic and had faded well beyond hearing range, Shimizu Kaho took a deep breath. "Okay, I don't know about the rest of you, but that was too much a *Twilight Zone* moment for me! What the fuck just happened, Ataru-kun?!

The Healer of Women's Hearts took a deep breath, reaching up to scratch his forehead. "That, we'll need Margo to finally come deal with, Kaho-san," he noted. "Asuka-san, did you and Tapuso capture those spiritual fragments that were embedded in my body before I was Gifted?"

"Right here," Tapuso said as he held up several mesonium crystals that were stained with black gunk.

"Good! Once we get Margo here, she can go out and find where the rest of those creatures who've been trapped in this town for the last year are to expunge them once and for all." Ataru then moaned. "I now have to wonder if Onē-san's killing of that arrogant fool Mujaki during the Golden Week Festival here at the school might have provoked some of what's been going on here lately."

That made everyone stare in confusion at him...
Outside...

"Ah! Negako-sensei!"

Moroboshi Negako perked, then looked over as a stream of girls in normal civilian clothes came out of the main doors, heading towards her and Renato Sinclair. "Ladies. I trust all of you are well?" the grandmaster of Saikō Jinseijutsu-ryū wondered as Marubeya Momoe and her peers came to a stop close to her and the World's Greatest Hitman, all of them bowing respectfully to her.

"Hai, Negako-sensei, we're alright!" Momoe affirmed with a reassuring wave of her hand as the other women giggled at that show of concern. "I'm so glad that Tariko-chan's brother is now Gifted. Seeing how much his sisters were so worried about him..." She then winked. "Besides, it's a guarantee that Lum will NEVER come back to Earth! And that's good enough for all of us!"

"BANZAI ATARU-KUN!" Gekasawa Kumiko screamed out.

The other girls chanted their own cheers for their just-Gifted former classmate. Outside the front gate, the few Rosebuds who had yet to be processed by the police stared at them on hearing them cheer Moroboshi Ataru of all people...but before they could yell at their "allies" because of their "treason" in supporting Ataru in lieu of Mendō Shūtarō, a voice called out from above everyone's heads, "Um...your pardon, everyone, but are any of you the gentile ammiraglio that we were told used to live here?"

Both Negako and Reborn looked up to see two smiling older teenagers in the same type of black-white-and-red battlesuits that Zita de Lerici and Paola de Lerici wore, though they had different city crests on their chests under the naval crowns of the Regia Marina. Both had brown hair, the one with protective goggles over her brown eyes wearing her locks loose past her shoulders while the blue-eyed girl wore her hair in a high ponytail to her neck. The former had beautiful freckles on her face and bore the twin-headed eagle crest of the city of Rijeka on the Kvarner Gulf. The latter was clear faced and had pale skin, bearing the badge displaying the walled city gate with protective towers of Gorizia on the banks of the River Isonzo that formed the border between Italy and Slovenia. Smirking in amusement at the actions of Dean Raeburn's vintners who had brought the living spirits of the second and the fourth of the Zara-class heavy cruisers back as shipgirls, Negako called out, "Federica de Lerici and Giuseppina de Lerici, I presume." As they stared at her, the ninjutsu grandmaster waved towards the school. "Your admiral is my adopted younger brother Ataru," she then declared as the two cruisers came down to the ground. "He's currently busy with his sisters and your sisters Zita and Paola, plus Roberta Ansaldo — whom I'm sure Dean's vintners warned you
Both newcomers blushed. "You must be Granmaestro Moroboshi Negako, then," Federica stated as
she and Giuseppina properly saluted her. As Momoe and her friends took out their cell phones to
take pictures of the two transformed heavy cruisers, the reborn RM Fiume who was also lost at Cape
Matapan with almost all her crew — save for half who had been rescued by the Canadian battleship
HMCS Erinville in her first post-1940 refit mission during the Wars of Liberation — then gazed in
confusion at Reborn before her eyes went wide. "Beata Santa Maria! Renato Sinclair?! Is that
you?!!"

Before the long-lived former Sun Arcobaleno could sputter a denial as he was in the midst of a
bunch of civilian girls, the adopted native of Rijeka and Trieste (where she had been built) lunged
over to swamp him with an embrace and a kiss that nearly sucked the air out of his lungs. Seeing
that, Giuseppina gasped. "Sorella! Stop that! Don't you understand a damned thing about...?!!"

"Omertà is being observed, Giuseppina," Negako calmly cut her off.

That made the two cruisers AND Reborn gape. "Negako...!" he exclaimed.

"All the citizens of Tomobiki were granted a blanket exception to the International Statute of
Wizarding Secrecy because of the alien presence in town last October, Renato. Because of the sheer
number of metahuman mafiosi and yakuza who might have also come into town, it was decided that
the issues concerning Omertà would also be ignored even if such would be monitored by Konoe
Konoemon's people in Mahora. There were no breaches until I discussed this issue with Bermuda in
May after Tariko restored the Vindice to proper health and Kawahira Masaya was killed by Margo
Black." She then focused on Momoe. "Momoe learned of the whole issue thanks to Tendō Nabiki." As
Momoe blushed while Reborn glared at her, the ninjutsu grandmaster added, "Though I do admit
that Momoe realized right away that such a thing should not be publicly banded about, thus kept her
silence on the matter. As to how Nabiki learned of such a secret, I would suggest you speak to her."

The World's Greatest Hitman muttered something in Italian under his breath, earning him an
outraged gasp from the second of the Zara-class cruisers. "Renato Sinclair!" she snapped, making
him nearly leap out of his suit at that motherly admonishment. "There are LADIES present, idiota!
Apologize!"

"Please, there's no need to force Sensei to do that, Lerici-taisa!" Momoe declared with a wave of her
hand as the other girls nodded. "Believe me, Tendō Nabiki earns every damned profanity on the
planet in every language for the crap she's caused people! She's like Sinclair-sensei's friend Gabriela
Abate-sensei!" As Reborn gaped in dumbfounded shock on hearing the woman speak the birth name
of his fellow Arcobaleno known more commonly among the Varia as either "Viper" or "Mammon
Esper", Momoe crossed her arms. "Don't ask me where she got the name, Sensei. All she bragged
about was that she would do everything to mimic your friend when it came to information
gathering."

"Most likely, one of Kujaku Tsuretsu's people might know of Gabriela, Renato," Negako then
warned. "Wolfgang von Etchert works for Tsuretsu as his chief scientist." As Reborn growled on
hearing the birth name of a quack that was as perverted in his own way as the late Happō sai was —
he first learned of the man also called "Doctor Etchi" from another of the last generation of
Arcobaleno, Loden Sapienti AKA "Verde" — the ninjutsu grandmaster hummed as she gazed to the
east, reaching out with ki senses to scan Nerima. "Given the times that Hayashi Kanami had
threatened to have Tsuretsu's people move in to eliminate Nabiki in the period immediately after her
Gifting, Nabiki undoubtedly used her own people to spy on Tsuretsu's to learn more about what she
could face. No doubt, information about those possessing Dying Will Flames came up in monitored
conversations. Or most likely, she learned of things through Happō sai given how much of a thorn
he has been at times with your allies in country."

"Dear gods! That woman's a menace!" Kumiko spat out.

"Would she have Flames of her own, Granmaestro?" Giuseppina wondered.

Negako's face turned very cold. "She does not, Giuseppina."

Hearing that, the cruisers nodded. "Omertà has to be adhered to, Renato," Federica sternly declared.

Reborn nodded. "The current generation of Varia are here as well," he said as he reached up to
gently squeeze her shoulder, making her blush. "We can handle this, Ricca. You and Seppi take the
time to get together with your sisters and learn all that's going on; you'll be facing the enemies your
current bodies were purpose-made to destroy five millennia ago sometime in the next day or so." As
both cruisers grimly nodded, he hummed. "I won't kill her, Signorina," he stated as he gazed on
Momoe. "But I WILL have her experience the hospitality of our friends in the Vindice; they're our
equivalent to security specialists who ensure the magical enclaves remain hidden from normal
people."

"Do they have something like that Gonebren place in Britain Sakura-sensei once told us about,
Sensei?" Yamagata Masako wondered. "Given what that bitch Tendō's done to Momoe-chan here
since she forced her to become a spy on us, she needs to really feel some heat for all the shit she's
caused."

"Kanami-chan's just too noble to do it herself!" Obinata Hiromi added.
That made the World's Greatest Hitman laugh. "You can relax about that, ladies! Vendicare — that's the prison the Vindice use to deal with those who go out of their way to violate Omertà — was INSPIRED by that lovely prison on Gonebren Moor in Britain!" He then tipped his fedora at them as a lethal smile crossed his face. "By the time they're done with her, Signorina Tendō will never threaten any of you again. Atop that, she won't be able to help Kanami's fool parents, much less Akane's idiot father, to try to force them into that fool agreement when they had no certification from Dean Raeburn's people concerning their fake 'schools' of martial arts. That should bring the lunacy in Nerima to a final stop once and for all." He then raised a warning finger. "Ladies, please... keep silent about this. Ricca, you and Seppi tell Zita and Paola about this so no one new can learn of our powers."

"Sì, Renato!" Federica and Giuseppina vowed with a nod.

"Hai, Sensei!" Momoe and her friends all chanted, bowing to him.

With that, he turned and headed to the front gate just as footfalls echoed from the front doors. "Ah! Negako-san!" the youngest of the sisters called out as Saeru Hinako jogged over to join them. "Hina felt it when...!" She then stopped on seeing the two newcomers standing there. "A-ri-ri?! Who are you?!” the Spirit of Innocence asked as she pointed at the just-arrived cruisers.

"Zita-san's and Paola-san's sisters, Hinako-chan," Momoe answered.

Hearing that, Hinako moaned. "Negako-san...?"

"Yes, Hinako?"

The Spirit of Innocence then seemed to explode with childish fury as she glared at the older woman, waving her arms. "PLEASE ASK OBA-SAN TO MAKE HER PEOPLE STOP BRINGING SHIPGIRLS BACK! WE'RE GONNA HAVE NO ROOM AT WELCOME HOUSE IF PEOPLE KEEP DOING THIS!"

Negako smiled. "I will inform Dean of your request, Hinako..."

****
The cafeteria, an hour later...

"To the return of Roberta-san's wonderful friends of the Royal Navy! Kampai!"

"KAMPAI!"

"ZUM WOHL!"

"CHEERS!"

"SANTÉ!"

"SALUTE!"

"TAMBI!"

Wine flutes were hoisted to toast the lone battleship, four heavy cruisers and two destroyers of the Regia Marina who were there, then people took a sip of the wonderful ice wine that Paola de Lerici obtained from Dean Raeburn's vintners after her rebirth as a shipgirl. As the crowd inside the cafeteria — Moroboshi Ataru and his sisters, the shipgirls who had come to Tomobiki today, Fujinami Ryūnosuke and Shiowatari Nagisa, the Ekō Girl's High alumni who transferred to Tomobiki High the previous summer, Ataru's lovers from Yiziba and the other female members of Class 2-4 (who elected to stick around once Paola's sisters Federica and Giuseppina had come to town) — finished their wine before conversations started up again, Okano Yuka gazed at Sukeyama Sakuya. "Oi, Sakuya-san, I hope your teachers at the College don't get pissed at you all for drinking in the middle of a school day."

"It takes a bit of alcohol to affect us, Yuka-san," the Healer of Men's Hearts and the matriarch of the Moroboshi Clan of Mutsu stated as she looked over, amusement crossing her face on seeing that Paola was obviously competing with Catarina von Savoyen for her dear brother's attention. Fortunately for Ataru's own sense of sanity, both Roberta Ansaldo and Ashikaga Akemi were not overreacting to the two cruisers' antics. Noting that, Sakuya then gazed over to see Luisa von Bismarck shaking her head at her old mission mate's behaviour while Amélie von Zeppelin was trying not to permanently turn into the shade of a cherry in embarrassment at the sight of such open intimacy. "Sure, we can get drunk, but we know to keep it to one glass of wine at any given period."
Besides, we'd be insulting Paola-chan if we didn't have at least one glass of the wine she got from Oba-san's people in Canada."

The heroine of the Ekō Girl's High incident chuckled as she sipped her wine, then she gave the other girl a knowing look. "I want in," she stated, making some of her friends perk before they grimly nodded.

Sakuya nodded in turn. After a nasty incident with terrorists, then living over a year in a town where the very concept of "sanity" exited stage right the instant Ataru found himself "married" to Redet Lum, it didn't surprise her that Yuka and her peers were now considering being Gifted themselves. "Two ways of doing it. Either have Onē-sama's wonderful black forest cake that she specially prepares people to help being Gifted..." She then saucily winked at the second smartest student in Tomobiki High School. "Or enjoy a wonderful pillow scene with Onii-sama or any of his friends," she added.

Some of the girls seated with her blushed. "Well...!" Sanokura Emi trilled.

"I wouldn't mind that," Nishimura Tina noted as she glanced over at Ataru. "He was pretty nicely built before this, but God...!" Here, the native of Sweet Valley licked her lips in anticipation. "That is pure one hundred percent beefcake now! No wonder Marubeya and the others went ga-ga over him after he got Gifted! He's way more pleasing to the eyes than Mendō ever could be!"

"I don't think you'll have to worry about that idiot for a while," Sakuya noted. On sensing the other girls' curiosity, she added, "We have other sisters. All clones created by that psychopath Ran in that 'clone gun fight' in March, the same day that Hinako-chan ran into Fukushima Fujiko-chan." As the others nodded, the Healer of Men's Hearts added, "Lum's so-called 'most faithful' captured twelve clones Ran created, then had their souls shifted into Avalonian bodies modelled after the characters of Colourful Kiss; that's the hentai dating sim game that has the player character do pillow scenes with his own SISTERS!" As the others winced on hearing that — seeing how much Ataru loved to dote on his sisters, they didn't doubt for a moment that he would just HATE such a game — Sakuya added, "One of the characters is Mishima Akira. She's the token sick girl of the group in the game. When our Akira-chan got Gifted, she became Pandemic; she has the ability to create disease organisms in her body to infect people in bio-war operations." As the other girls winced, the matriarch of the Moroboshi Clan smirked. "Though I never asked her to do it, she went out to target Mendō and his 'fan club' outside the gates to make them shut up finally. With an open threat from al-Qā'idah in the air now...!"

"Ugh! Don't say anything more, Sakuya!" Tina muttered before she sipped her wine. "Hell, I'll do it as well, Yuka!" As the other girls nodded in understanding, she then looked over her shoulder to see Catarina sharing a warm kiss with Ataru while Paola was shuddering with impatience to get her own turn at those lovely lips. "Do you think those two might get upset if I tried to cut into the action?"
Sakuya blinked before she gazed intently at the two transformed heavy cruisers, her empathy reaching out to scan their minds. After a moment, she hummed. "If it's a pillow scene you want, Tina-san, it'll be shared with one or both of them. You'll definitely be treated well since you're from Sweet Valley — which is Onii-sama's favourite place to visit in America, by the way! — but they'll be on the lookout for those who might want to hurt Onii-sama for whatever reason strikes their fancy!"

As Tina's friends all laughed while the transfer student blushed madly at the fact that HER hometown had earned such a high rating from Ataru, the amateur cyclist sighed as she reached for a wine bottle. "Better get ready!" she muttered as she filled her glass, then proceeded to drink it down.

"Not too much, Tina-san," a new voice then hailed. "While having alcohol to serve as 'liquid courage' is understandable, Anigimi-sama won't initiate a pillow scene if he senses any hesitation in your heart."

Tina stopped, then looked over her shoulder to see Tenhiro Haruka gazing with concern at her. The freckled blonde yonsei blinked before she winked at the Quarterstaff Mistress. "You know, even if your brother had to act like an idiot to keep Lum from suspecting what was going on here, he was always kind to us. Sure, he wanted to go on dates with us, but given how much Lum loved to lord it over him all the time, I can't blame him for wanting time away from her." She shook her head. "I just hope this other clone of Ataru's that went after Lum won't get into that situation, too. It's not fair to her."

Sakuya smirked. "Oh, don't worry about Hiromi-onē-sama, Tina-san! Given that she's Gifted and has a touch of Onē-sama's powers atop her own Gift, Lum won't be too much of a bother to her. Besides, Hiromi-onē-sama's was turned into an Avalonian when she was given her new body; she had her 'time of the month' after she got Gifted and began subbing in for Onii-sama in classes here. Lum always wanted someone who could love her for herself. That's why she wanted to get as far away from the ushitora that was her fiancé before the Tag Race." As many of the others scowled on hearing of Seq Rei, the Healer of Men's Hearts shrugged. "She won't be nasty to her new fiancée, especially with Onē-sama keeping a loose eye on things. With the Goa'uld breathing down on everyone's backs now, it's stupid to cause friction with the Mother of All Fight Scenes coming up sometime tomorrow..."

"What are these Goa'uld, anyway?" Emi asked. "Bartlet-daitōryō really didn't say much about them when he did his briefing after Spee-taisa drove those monsters away from Montevideo on Saturday."

Sakuya sighed as she moved to explain...
"Um...excuse us, General Raeburn, ma'am...?"

Dean Raeburn perked on hearing that timid voice, then she looked left...

...before she blinked in confusion on seeing three young teenagers standing nearby, all dressed in the black uniforms of members of the Royal Canadian Sea Cadets, the Navy wing of Canada's military-theme national youth organization, standing at attention and saluting her even if the nervousness on their faces spoke volumes to the leader of the War Hawks. All three cadets were leading seamen in rank as the single anchor over two chevron insignia on their left upper arms indicated. A glance at the ship's crests over their name tags on the right breasts indicated they came from the same cadet corps. Blinking in surprise on seeing three kids standing in Japan in UNIFORM, she sighed as she returned their salute; the current commander of Canada's special forces had stepped outside the Kyūden to get some fresh air. "Alright, kids, I'm ready to hear THIS story," she wryly noted. "How'd you get here?"

The three young cadets flustered before the female of the group straightened herself. "Forgive us, General Raeburn, ma'am. We ended up accidentally summoning the living spirit of our corps' namesake corvette when we had a church parade." She reached into her jacket pocket to pull out a folded sheet of paper. "From the commander of our corps, ma'am," she declared as she handed the sheet over.

Raeburn nodded as she took it in hand, then unfolded the paper. Seeing the typed words there, she shook her head. "You were doing weekend exercises, then the cox'n of your corps proposed a special ceremony in honour of HMCS Alberni. When prayers were offered to her lost crew, the Conservator called out to a 'Gennifer Olive Baugh' that her Gifting was about to begin. There was the flash of energy and then this girl who looks like that young lady on the plaza at my ten o'clock arrived, reporting to your CO to get back to duty." Shaking her head as she folded the sheet of paper and slipped it into her pants pocket, she looked over. "Lieutenant Baugh! Get your butt over here, sailor!" she barked out.

A frightened awk was heard from the poor girl who looked about fifteen years old or so, then she double-timed it over to stand beside her new friends, snapping to attention and saluting the famous Army warrior who proved way too tough for those Nazi jerks who wanted to bring the war to Canada. "General Raeburn, ma'am!" the woman who now was pretty much going to live under the name "Olive Baugh" called out as if she was a recruit seaman attending basic training at HMCS Cornwallis in Nova Scotia's Annapolis Valley during the Second World War. "Her Majesty's
Canadian Ship *Alberni*, pendant King-One-Zero-Three, assigned last to Escort Group Yoke-Four, reporting back for duty!"

"At ease, sailor. How much have these kids briefed you on things?"

Olive relaxed herself as footfalls heralded the arrival of the first of Japan's super-battleships, dressed perfectly as a captain in the Maritime Self-Defence Forces with a nice row of medals on her chest marking her service as THG *Yamato*. "Raeburn-shihan...oh!" Itō Yasuko then gasped on seeing the young navy cadets there, who had snapped to attention and saluted her. "What on Earth are you people doing...oh!" she then breathed out on seeing the girl in the blue-and-green battlesuit with the gold belt and boots, the gold pendant number **K103** on her upper thighs and the beautiful ship's crest on her upper chest displaying a tree in a blue disc with three golden apples flanking each side. "I take it you just came back to duty, *Alberni*-dono?" the adopted native of Kure and Nara wondered.

"Aye, ma'am! Instant I sensed the prayers from the cadets here and felt that my crew wanted me to do this, I came back!" Here, Olive scratched her long wavy dark brown hair as a blush crossed her face. "Never thought I'd come back as a human being, much less a **mystery man** of all things!" Her blue eyes then sparkled as she gazed intently at Raeburn. "Hey, General! Everyone told me *Athabaskan*’s back as well! I still can't believe that she got sunk by some Ratzi torpedo boat...!"

"*Alberni*?!

That was a wide-eyed Randi Stubbs, who had just walked out to join her principal. The second of the Canadian Tribal class was now in the two-tone khaki dress uniform of Canada's special forces, black epaulettes on her shoulders displaying her honorary rank of commander in the Royal Canadian Navy. She had the blank red arrowhead formation insignia of the Special Operations Forces Command inherited from the famous First Special Service Force on her left shoulder. On her tan beret was the crowned golden phoenix insignia on a red maple leaf of the Specialized Warfare Regiment of Canada, it bearing the omniversal battle honour **UBIQUE** and the motto **QUO FAS ET GLORIA DUCUNT** in the same design pattern as members of the Royal Regiment of Canadian Artillery wore on their own cap badges; miniature versions of that badge were on the collars of her jacket. She also had a small spray of medals on her chest marking her service in the Royal Canadian Navy. Seeing that as the adopted native of Newcastle-on-Tyne in England and Fort Saskatchewan near Edmonton in Alberta (the latter being the home of the Sea Cadet Corps named after HMCS *Athabaskan*) returned the salutes from the cadets standing there, Olive shook her head. "We're gonna be MUD-EATERS, Athabee?!"

Randi shrugged. "Hey, we're all part of the same formation as the general's old corps, not to mention the Foresters, the zeppelins the magical airedales use and the battleships the magicals built to deal with those damned sea monsters that always wanted to eat the souls of the crews of ships that got sunk in the wars!" As the cadets all gaped on hearing that, the smiling brunette with the tanned skin of a native of one of the First Nations added, "I even got a chance to walk on *Lady Elgin*'s decks,
TWICE!" As Olive gasped in awe, the transformed destroyer then awked. "Oh, hell! Sorry, ma'am!"

Raeburn rolled her eyes. "Kids, where's your corps based out of?"

"Port Alberni on Vancouver Island, ma'am," the female leading seaman reported.

"Okay, I'll give you a phone number your CO will call as soon as the lieutenant gets you back to British Columbia. You'll be let in on certain secrets that you're soon to be guaranteed to NEVER speak of, not even to your parents. It's for the safety of a LOT of people! You got me?!"

The cadets chuckled. "All part of the Specialized Warfare Act, ma'am?" one of the male cadets asked.

"Same deal."

"Aye, ma'am!"

"Good. Lieutenant, get these kids home, then report back here ASAP."

"Aye-aye, General!" Olive said as she saluted her new flag commander...

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*Colorado Springs Air Force Station, headquarters of United States Stargate Command, that moment (local time: Sunday, an hour after supper)*...

"General, aren't you worried about Colonel O'Neill and his team? Even with Sara and E there..."

George Hammond chuckled as he gazed in amusement at Margaret Penn. Save for five of their number who were aboard the FPSYS *Discovery* somewhere between Abydos and Uru, the American shipgirls who had been part of the Crossroads tests in 1946 now relaxed in a meeting room. The urgent looks on their faces demanding some sort of action concerning what had befallen
SG-1 twenty-four hours before made the veteran command pilot smile. Much that he knew the reborn ship spirits weren't emotionally ready for a deep space battle despite what the Healer of Destruction had made their bodies do to the Goa'uld five millennia before, he couldn't ignore the fact that they were eager and ready to get on with it. Now joined by the name ship of the Yorktown-class aircraft carriers and another of the Sims-class destroyers — Hammond knew Margaret's own sister Sonia Owens was still aboard HMCS Lady Elgin in the Philippine Sea as the reborn martyr of Pearl Harbour awaited the recovery of the reborn flagship of the Kidō Butai from her failed suicide attempt — it was quite the impressive force before him now even with the second of the Lexington-class aircraft carriers, one of the Balao-class submarines and three destroyers currently having joined Eleanor Livingston's sister aboard FPSYS Discovery in pursuit of Apophis towards a growing trap in the Oniboshi star system some distance from Earth.

"I'm fully confident that Miss Wakefield, Captain Swanson and their companions have the situation well in hand, Captain Penn," the native of Texas stated. "I've a good idea what Mister Thomas has now in mind. That sort of thing can't be tripped ahead of time. Given how normally overconfident the System Lords can be given our experience with them over the last three years, his plan of drawing them into a massive metahuman fire sack can go off with no problem at all. We just don't want to tip our hand."

"Hurry up and wait," Rayne Warner muttered before she blew a bubble of gum, then popped it, she leaning back in her chair as she gazed on the ceiling overhead, crossing her arms in frustration. "You'd figure THAT would be one thing they would've changed in the military by now..."

As the others laughed at the words the adopted native of Camden in New Jersey (where she had been built as USS Independence) and San Francisco (near whose territory she had been finally scuttled in 1951) uttered, a warning lamp began to flash. "General Quarters! General Quarters! Unscheduled off-world activation! General Hammond to the Control Room! General Quarters! General Quarters!" the voice of the duty sergeant in the control centre close to the Gate Room called out.

People scrambled out of their chairs to head out of the room, moving like pilots manning their planes. Hammond, the two aircraft carriers of the shipgirls still on Earth and all the battleships headed into the control booth overlooking the embarking ramp while the cruisers, destroyers and submarines moved to augment the security forces now moving to stand guard in the Gate Room itself. By now, the Stargate had locked two chevrons. "Report, Master Sergeant!" the general bade as he gazed on Joan Turner.

"Tok'ra identification code, General," the Terran-form Avalonian declared. "It's Thoughtmaster Selmak." She then gave the shipgirls standing a wary look. "Um, sir, is it wise for them to be here...?"

"Chevron Three locked!" another technician called out.
"Settle down," Hammond stated before he gazed on Margaret, straightening himself to convey the image of how serious this was. "Captain, order your people to leave this man alone once he comes in. The Tok'ra — the word means 'Against Ra' — are rebels against the System Lords. Much that I know that you're conditioned to think of Goa'uld as food, these ones are more pleasant to deal with." Seeing the eyebrow arch on the super-dreadnought's face, he sighed. "I can make it an order, sailor!"

"Its scent will tell us if it's neutral, General."

That was Eleanor, who had crossed her arms as she gave the flag officer in charge of the SGC a warning look. "Pity that show's on now in Louisiana," Sarah Blasdel then noted as she relaxed in a chair in the back of the room. "Having Mister Reigns scare the hell out of this thing..."

"Captain...!"

A flash of energy then cause people to gasp before they looked into the Gate Room...

"HEY! WHO THE FUCK ARE YOU, LUMP-HEAD...?!"

KK-KLONK!

"P-COLA!"

"Oh, shit..." Hammond growled before tapping the intercom. "All shipgirls, stand down!" he barked out in his most stern command voice. "She's friendly!" he barked out before taking a deep breath. "Lady K'ekhech, does the concept of CALLING FIRST mean anything to you?" he then pleaded.

Everyone crowded the windows to see a dazed Amber Seligman on the deck, gripping her head after a fist had smacked the reborn heavy cruiser down before she could snare the woman in the strange robes and a hooded cloak slung around her neck who just teleported into the base. As Julie Budge gave the newcomer a warning look and the destroyers and submarines present readied themselves to dog-pile her for hurting Amber like that, she allowed the huge crimson halberd with the twin battleaxe head to rest on her shoulder, gazing up at the leader of Stargate Command with glowing chestnut eyes. "Time was of the essence," she said in a quiet yet accented voice as her eyes went to normal while the shipgirls saw the guards lower their rifles. As the fourth chevron clicked into place, she added, "On hearing of the rebirth of the Healer's creations, my hochk'uo declared her intention to
come visit and prevent Isaac's planned ambush of the Goa'uld from spreading beyond Oniboshi."

"Yeah, tell us another one...!" Alexandra Anderson snarled.

"STAND DOWN, COMMANDER ANDERSON!" Hammond barked out, making the adopted native of South Kearny on Newark Bay across from the Big Apple (where she had been built) and Wilmington in North Carolina (her namesake's birthplace) yelp as she stared in stunned disbelief at her new flag officer. "That lady there is strong enough to wrestle down General Raeburn if need be! And she's helped our teams out whenever they've encountered her in the past. You want to be in Sick Bay?"

As the shuddering brown-eyed woman with the dirty blonde hair gulped while Chevron Five clicked into place, the other shipgirls gaped in disbelief on hearing that this stranger was strong enough to take down the leader of the War Hawks...which, given how powerful Dean Raeburn had been shown to be, made many of then boggle. Noting the reborn warship house angels were now thinking about it, the newcomer then pulled her hood away to reveal a head of hair shaded somewhat similar to what Amber possessed, though such didn't disguise the pronounced Klingon-like forehead ridges that sprouted from the bridge of her nose. Her face was weathered yet still youthful, the cheeks dotted with flower tattoos that contrasted her tanned skin very much. Her clothing was similar to what the five reborn Kamikaze-class destroyers had worn when everyone had met at Bikini Atoll early on Saturday morning, though it was coloured with a mixture of whites, blacks and greys, a strange chain of Oriental-like script flowing down the front flap of her tunic. Bandages covered her hands save her fingers, though they didn't seem wounded...and if this woman was capable of locking horns with Earth's Jewel Warrior...

People then blinked as Julia Crane literally teleported over to stare right into the newcomer's face...

...then they gaped as the sixth of the Tambor-class submarines reached up to tap the ahoge-like strands of crimson hair, seeing them bounce before going back into place. "Damn...!" the adopted native of Vallejo in California (where she had been built as USS Tuna) hummed. "How the hell do you make your hair stand up like that?" she wondered as she put her fists to her hips.

While some people staggered at such an odd question just as Chevron Six clicked into place, the newcomer smiled as she reached up to rub her fingers through Julia's shaggy black hair, making the reborn submarine squawk in embarrassment. That earned her a burst of laughter from Hammond, which soon became contagious among the other normal humans and the Avalonians now looking at this. "You're silly," the newcomer then declared as she pulled her hand...

...just as the last chevron clicked into place and the wormhole formed. Turning around, she moved to step onto the embarkation ramp just as someone came through the event horizon. "Selmak..." she
declared, her voice booming with the nigh-immortal power that had flowed through her veins in two
lifetimes spread over three millennia, her face turning into a frightfully icy cold mask.

The possessed Jacob Carter stopped as he stared in confusion at the newcomer before he sighed.
"With respect, Lady K'ekhech, this is no concern of yours," he then announced with an echoing
voice indicating his mental guest was currently in control of Samantha Carter's father.

"With Batae Erba having returned, Selmak, greater caution is required."

That made everyone blink while the elder Carter turned as white as a sheet...

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Minutes later...

"Heaven's most sincere blessings upon you and all who serve under you within your noble
command, Lord General Hammond of Texas," the beautiful Noukiite woman with the long raven
hair tied in a ponytail over her left ear and the long bangs almost masking the right side of her face
declared as she gave the standard fist-in-palm military salute of her people to the commander of
Stargate Command. "Our deepest apologies for disturbing you in such a matter, but the Most
Venerable Ladies Hüchch'uchha of K'up'suo and Klaer Redet of Dominos have recently taken note
of the number of su-nechkichsyek that have risen from the World of the Forge to fuse with the
immortal souls of many noble ch'uongtechhu from your recent world war. Given another issue that
just gained their attention recently, they felt it necessary to come here to your beautiful world to
speak of this with you and your noble advisors, plus seek out the noble Lady Flying General who
bears the Keystone Jewel."

George Hammond smiled as he returned the salute of the woman known throughout the Noukiite
Outmarches as the "Black-Haired Bandit Slayer", who had come with her adopted sister from the
colony world of Tengsei to this meeting as heralds for the Jewel Warriors of the planets Noukiios
and Dominos; as Dean Raeburn had discovered in her travels over the previous six decades, it wasn't
the wisest thing for a Jewel Warrior to travel through a Stargate without wrecking it as Yvonne
Swanson had effectively demonstrated on Abydos a day before. "We appreciate your willingness to
warn us of their coming, Lady Kachnuk. Now, let's have some snacks and drinks before they come
here so Lady Kingch'eng can be calm and not cause a ruckus with some of the new members of my
command."

"KEO!" the youthful red-haired tomboy with the blue eyes snapped as she resentfully glared at the
elderly command pilot from Texas. "I DON'T cause any sort of ruckus, George! You know that!"
"**KYEKKYEK!**" Seu-Euch Yesu-A Hechnich'-Kachnuk of K’uongno snapped as she glared at the younger free warrior, who instantly ducked from the outraged shout from her fellow native of Tengsei.

"**IT'S TRUE!**" Seu-Nuk Yesu-K'i Hechnich'-Kingch'eng of K’uongno snapped back.

"Kuohu. Kyekkyek. Stop that."

That was the Dragonspeaker of Noukiios, Seu-P'ye Yesu-Re Hechnich'-K'ekhech of Ait'uch Nehech — "Kyech" to her closest friends — as she looked over from consuming the large pile of steamed bāozi that had been prepared by the culinary staff on hearing that one of the most powerful beings in the local cosmos had come to visit. As the other free warriors winced from that calm admonishment from a woman who had once been seen as a monster on Okusei before it was discovered that she wanted to simply protect the wild wolf packs from poachers in the first open revelation that the Flower Youth that had dominated Noukiios three millennia ago had been reborn, she turned back to nibble on one bun, ignoring the dazed looks from the reborn submarines who had gathered around her. "We want to make sure that the return of Naoko and the others is as peaceful as possible," the native of Ryekkyuk on Noukiios' northern continent added. "Given that it was one of the traitors to the Tok'ra who had effectively saw them all Gifted as the newest generation of the senior warriors of the Unending League, their participation in the fight scene that Isaac is now preparing over Uru is a given."

"**The Unending League have returned?!**" the possessed Jacob Carter demanded.

"Yes."

"**And they were the ones that confirmed that Batae Erba has also returned?!**"

"Yes. One of the newly-woken souls of the Crystal was **Yuotopam.**" On seeing the confused looks on the shipgirls' faces as Kuohu and Kyekkyek — as the Ladies Kachnuk and Kingch'eng were known to close friends — moved to sit down at the meeting table and Hammond headed over to the opposite end of the table to take his own seat, the Dragonspeaker added, "For those who don't speak Yizibajohei, the name means 'Shepherd'. The current incarnation was a woman of interest to Tariko: Minegishi Ruriko of Takatsuki in Metropolitan Ōsaka. She was part of a contest that was held in Tōkyō during summer vacation last year when all the contestants, Ruriko included, simply vanished..."
"The Grand Prix?" Hammond wondered. "One of Miss Katabarbe's friends from Kyūshū, Miss Higurashi Akane, lost a friend when all those girls disappeared. Were they kidnapped by the Goa'uld?"

"No, George, they weren't," Kyech answered. "They were initially kidnapped by a Niphentaxian trader named Jorath dai-Kohl. In truth, they were never to be taken from Earth in the first place; all Master Jorath wanted was to have blood samples to have them templated on Avalonian bioroids, plus copies of their memories. When the latter was to occur, tre'cha saw the girls' souls shifted into their new bodies, which convinced Master Jorath to take them back to his mansion on Phentax Two." As Kuohu and Kyekkyek snarled — like Kyech, the two other free warriors who had been a nightmare to bandits in the Outmarches were genetically Avalonians thanks to the "Arch-Heretic" himself, Ganzo dai-Louc, the man who had convinced Tariko Katabarbe to launch the Mother of All Fight Scenes on the Niphentaxians back in June — the Dragonspeaker added, "He was soon tricked by a Tok'ra named Sunmi..." — she paused on hearing Carter hiss on hearing that name — "...who disguised himself as Master Jorath's lost son returned to life to take the girls and see them Gifted in a clear act of Gift thievery."

Hammond gazed on his fellow flag officer. "Selmak?"

A growl escaped Carter as the symbiote within him seemed to writhe with hot anger on hearing THAT name. "Sunmi was a rival of Egeria, George," he then declared with a voice that was full of regret and disbelief. "While desiring to have nothing to do with Ra and his ilk, Sunmi hadn't let go of the thirst for conquest that drives any normal Goa'uld. He was also one who had long been fascinated with the Forge of the First Ones and the powers it can bestow. He also knows of the creations of the second incarnation of Batae Erba. It was his desire for many years to find out what happened to them and seize one for his use." As all the shipgirls snarled on hearing that, the possessed command pilot shook his head. "It was madness, of course. We knew from the day Ra and Apophis led the first attack on Yiziba that it was impossible for one of our kind to possess one of the transplanted Tau'ri moved there by the Ra'kalach of old during the time of the Great Expulsion when Tash Ri gained his immortality. To actually possess someone like you ladies? That was just insanity!" He then took a deep breath. "Still, confirming that Batae Erba has risen again will have the whole GALAXY shaking in fear!" he then nearly sobbed as he covered his face with his hands.

"You were there, Master Selmak...?"

That was Kuohu, who was gazing in sympathy at the possessed pilot. Looking at her, he then smiled. "Aye, Lady Kachnuk, I was," he admitted. "Much that I was, even then, revolted by Ra's and Apophis' actions concerning the use of host bodies like they had done on Earth prior to Tash Ri and Hosan expelling them from the planet, the outrage they felt at the fact that Yizibajohei had such a resistance to their possession could have caused a massacre had not the Healer of Destruction rose from the Crystal to defend them all. Yet when she did...!" Another hiss of fright
escaped him. "She was a true GODDESS! A true avatar of pure CHAOS! It was SHE who did the most damage to all of our forces, not just those created by her!" He gazed on the shipgirls, who were staring at him neutrally. "One believes that the Infinite One is the ONLY child of the Forge who could literally destroy the Universe were she aroused to do such. No. Infinity is but ONE of TWO such beings. The Healer of Destruction, whoever she or he is now, is the other!"

"Ruriko believes that this new version of the Doctor will not cause harm."

Eyes locked on Kyech. "Can you be sure, Lady K'ekehch?" Margaret Penn wondered. "Much that I am appreciative of the chance I gained when I was reborn as this, I know that Doctor Destructo — as Miss Jessica Wakefield nicknamed him — was the one who created my body."

"It was Ruriko who allowed you to be reborn as such, Margaret."

Kuohu hissed as she stared in appalled shock at her friend. "Kyech!" she snapped before bowing repentantly to the reborn first of her class of super-dreadnoughts. "Most Venerable Lady, please forgive my friend for addressing you in such an informal matter without being permitted..."

"Kuohu, now is not the time for that."

The Black-Haired Bandit Slayer gargled on hearing the tone in her friend's voice, making her wilt as the Dragonspeaker glared at her. Before Kuohu could demand an explanation, Kyech then rose...

...just as a flash of light allowed three people to appear off to one corner of the room!

Immediately, the reborn Flying General of the forces of Ait'uuch Nehech who tried to keep the first of Noukiios' world-wide kingdoms intact with the growing rebellion in the outmarch provinces which would unleash the Tri-Kingdoms age went to one knee as she bowed her head. "Hochkuo-chut!" she hissed out as she allowed a slight echo of her immortal power to create a beautiful halo around her body, that declaration instantly getting Kuohu and Kyekkyek on their feet as they bowed deeply to the lead of the newcomers, clapping their hands in the ritual salute as they gazed reverently upon the Jewel Warrior of Noukiios herself, once personal friend to Emperor Muchach himself!

A slight smile crossed the face of the woman in the traveller's robes with hooded demi-cape, her full name in Noukiite scripture on the outer flap of her jacket. Barely visible under the folds of her cape and undershirt was the pulsing jewel that had been placed on the third world of Ch'uokkyuk three billion years before. As was common with those who were the true heirs of the First Race, a
A beautiful taiken-shaped sword was slung to her belt, it forged of purest neutronium with mesonium bracing to prevent something with the physical mass of TRILLIONS of tonnes from being pulled down by gravity into a planet's very core. Unlike the other Noukites in the room, the newcomer had very intricate tribal tattoos marking her as a warrior of the lost kingdom of K'up'suo on her face framing her deep brown eyes, her weathered yet still-youthful face framed by long, straight hair the same shade. "Rise, my student," Ye-Hŭchhŭ Chyosu-Kakchyo Hog'ŏp'Hŭchch'uchha of K'up'suo bade as she waved Kyech back to her feet. "So THIS is the noble keep of the people who've vexed Apophis all this time, eh?"

"Heaven's most sincere blessings upon thee, Most Venerable Lady Hŭchch'uchha, beloved friend of the Ch'uoceu who awaits us all at Heaven's Gates," Kuohu immediately greeted. "You honour we unworthy ones with your presence, much less the presence of your sister warrior from fair Dominos."

An amused chuckle escaped the azure-skinned woman standing to the right rear of the Jewel Warrior of Noukiios. "K'ŭt'ŭsŏ, your people still are far too formal for their own good at times," she said as her own amber eyes flared with amusement before she focused on the possessed Jacob Carter. "Oh, Selmak, THERE you are!" she said as he rose, walking over to take her hand, then courtly kiss it. As people around them relaxed, she added, "So what are your siblings plotting now? I suspect that the return of the daughters of my old friend Dumti Tika would have you all hiding in caves."

"They've got reasons to fear, Mistress Titaan," he declared in a normal voice. "Your 'friend' from back then was even more of a hellion than I heard General Raeburn was during the Second World War."

"And your mental guest's siblings scattered across the galaxy expected any less?" Klaer Redet Titaan wondered. Of all her race, she was the most well respected among neighbouring races. Titaan was the one responsible for the complete annihilation of a Seifuku noble House two millennia ago when it was proven the leaders of that House were dealing with demons from other dimensions related to the Old Ones who tried to conquer Earth before the time of the Great Banishment. Such a campaign cleared out a massive space of Class M planets to the inspin and spinward of Sol itself, resulting in their being garrisoned by frontier troops meant to keep the Imperial Houses' rivals in the Galactic Federation back even if such forces were hopelessly weak. It was only thanks to the reputation of the Destroyer of the House With No Name that stayed the forces of Uru and her allied powers from sweeping in and expanding their territories by a factor of two. "You know that answer better than I."

"Stop that, Titaan," K'ŭt'ŭsŏ — as the Most Venerable Lady Hŭchch'uchha allowed friends to address her as — chided as the third of their number giggled, covering her mouth with a gloved hand.

"So can we bring in that idiot Sunmi now?" the third woman asked.
As people gazed at her, she pulled back the hood of her floor-length chestnut brown cape to reveal that she was a pretty Japanese girl with waist length auburn hair done in a simple ponytail and amethyst eyes behind protective goggles. As Carter looked at her, she drew back her cape to reveal her jumpsuit, a chestnut brown affair with khaki boots and belt, crossed shepherd's staffs on her chest above her cleavage. Realizing this woman was the new incarnation of the Pastor of the Ranges, Yuotopam (the "Shepherd"), the possessed pilot tried not to quake; the being reborn now as Minegishi Ruriko was as much a reality warper as Kasuga Ayumu or Tariko Katabarbe. "Where is Batae Erba?" he demanded.

That made the former freshman student from outside Ōsaka blink. "Now that..."

Silence.

More silence.

Still more silence.

Then...

"Is a secret."

As people staggered at Ruriko's words, K'ŭt'ŭsŏ and Titaan roared with laughter...

To Be Continued...

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WRITER'S NOTES

Translation list: Dimgae — Virtuous younger brother; Molte grazie — Many thanks; De rien — You're welcome; Sei francese — You're French; Ma mère était française — My mother is French; Granmaestro — Grandmaster; Zum Wohl — To (your) health; Santé — (Your) health; Salute —
(Your) health; **Tambi** — Bottoms up; **Kyūden** — Literally "palace hall", this is the central building of the **Imperial Palace** （Kōkyo, literally "imperial residence") in Tōkyō; **Ubique** — Everywhere; **Quo Fas Et Gloria Ducunt** — Whither Right and Glory Lead; **Hochk'uo** — Nokuite equivalent of the Japanese term "sempai"; **Su-nechkichsyek** — First (generation) battle doll; **Keo** — Hey; **-chit'** — Nokuite suffix honorific equivalent of the Japanese "-sama" honorific; **Ch'uo'eu** — Supreme king.

Like with Dean Raeburn, **George Andrews** is one of my oldest fictional creations. Inspired by **Vincent Price** 's performance as **Doctor Goldfoot** in two movies in the 1960s — not to mention **John Houseman** 's performance as **Doctor Franklin** in the *Bionic Woman/Six Million Dollar Man* crossover story "Kill Oscar" televised in 1976 — Andrews was the man who devised a special classification code system for artificial intelligences I use in my writing to this day. As an aside, the **Corps of Royal Canadian Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (RCEME)** is the Canadian Army's personnel service responsible for equipment and weapons maintenance support.

**Yatsura** minor character note: Like with Yamagata Masako in the last part, **Obinata Hiromi** was first mentioned in the manga story "Even Though I Wait For You" (manga chapter #26); her family name is my invention and I base her looks on the unnamed student with a hairband depicted in the second panel on page four of "The Bluebird of Happiness" (manga chapter #281).

The list of shipgirls introduced here:

**Capitano di Vascello Federica de Lerici RM (Regia Marina Fiume)** [pendant IP21])

**Capitano di Vascello Giuseppina de Lerici RM (Regia Marina Gorizia)** [pendant IP22])

**Lieutenant (Navy) Olive Baugh RCN (Her Majesty's Canadian Ship Alberni)** [pendant K103])

Noted that in *Kantai Collection*, **RM Pola (Paola de Lerici)** was introduced as the THIRD of the Zara-class. That is because she was commissioned into the Regia Marina two days before **RM Gorizia (Giuseppina de Lerici)**. If one counts the order of a warship class by the laying of one's keel, **Pola** comes after **Gorizia**, the former having been laid down a year after the latter.

**Note that the names for the other Arcobaleno noted on here, such as Gabriela Abate for Viper/Mammon Esper and Loden Sapienti for Verde, are my creation. Viper first appeared in the Katekyō Hitman Reborn manga story "Varia Footsteps" (manga chapter #90). Verde first appeared in the manga story "Resonance" (manga chapter #276). Note also that Kujaku Tsuretsu and Professor Wolfgang von Etchert (AKA Doctor Etchi) are characters that often appear in Ranma 1/2-inspired episodes at various "contribute your own story chapter" websites such as the Anime Addventure and the Unending BE Addventure; as to who created these two characters, I simply can’t say.**
The **Royal Canadian Sea Cadets (RCSC)** is, as noted above, a Canadian national youth program sponsored by the Canadian Armed Forces and the civilian Navy League of Canada. The aim of the RCSC and its sister cadet services formed to mirror the land and air elements of the Forces is to develop in youth the attributes of good citizenship and leadership, promote physical fitness and stimulate the interest of youth in the sea activities of the Canadian Forces. Youth aged 12-18 can join any of the Sea Cadet units — called "corps" — located across the country. Each Sea Cadet corps is numbered and is either named after a current or former warship of the Royal Canadian Navy or the Royal Navy or named after an important person in Canadian history. The cadets that appeared here come from **Royal Canadian Sea Cadet Corps #109 Alberni**, located in the city of **Port Alberni** at the northern end of Vancouver Island in British Columbia. **RCSCC #113 Athabaskan** is located in **Fort Saskatchewan** near Edmonton in Alberta.

Her Majesty's Canadian Ship **Cornwallis** was the primary basic training facility for the Royal Canadian Navy from 1942 until the administrative Unification of the Canadian Forces in 1968, when the base was re-designated **Canadian Forces Base Cornwallis**. The base would serve as the English-language basic training facility for the Canadian Forces its decommissioning in 1995; I myself attended the last course held in 1985 when I joined the military on a full-time basis. Now serving as an industrial park and retirement community called **Cornwallis Park**, the former base is located eleven kilometres from Digby on the south shore of Annapolis Basin (an arm of the Bay of Fundy). The military hasn't permanently left the location, though: A Sea Cadet training camp known as **Cadet Summer Training Centre HMCS Acadia (CSTC HMCS Acadia)** still operates on the grounds every summer.

*Stargate* character notes: **Jacob Carter** first appeared in "Secrets" (season 2, episode 9). He would mentally merge with **Selmak** in the first part of the two-part story "The Tok'ra" (season 2, episode 11).

Members of the **Flower Youth** (Seup'uk) of Noukiios appearing in the last scenes are based on characters from the BaseSon video game (and later anime series) **Koihime Musō**, that itself based on the famous Chinese novel *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*. **Seu-P'ye Yesu-Re Hechnich'-K'ekhech** of Ait'uch Nehech (AKA Kyech) is modelled after Ryofu Hōsen (Ren). **Seu-Euch Yesu-A Hechnich'-Kachnuk** of Kuongno (Kuohu) is modelled after Kan'u Unchō (Aisha). And **Seu-Nuk Yesu-K'i Hechnich'-Kingch'eng** of Kuongno (Kyekkyek) is based on Chōhi Yokotoku (Rinrin). Note, here is how the Noukiite naming system actually works (using Kyech as an example):

**Seu** — The caste prefix, indicating which large social group the person is a part of (in this case, this is short for "Seup'uk").

**P'ye** — Family name.

**Yesu** — Gender/birth order prefix, with this one meaning "first daughter".
Re — Given name.

Hechnich' — Short for Hechnich'kye ("sacred true bone lady/lord")

K'ekhech — Courtesy name.

Thus, the Dragonspeaker is formally addressed by strangers as "Lady K'ekhech" and personally by close friends as "Kyech".

Note that the family names, given names and courtesy names (as well as the personal childhood names as used in Koihime Musō) for the Noukiite characters here are all taken from the Korean readings of the characters, then converted over using the character-encoding system I created to help compose Noukiite words and names in The Ishinomaki Years as follows:

**CONSONANTS:** K/G=NG, N=CH/J, T/D=CH', R=P', M=T', P/B=K', S=H. When NG falls before a vowel, it is silent (as in Korean). Mid-syllable sounds G, J, D, L and B are not used in common Noukiite.

**DOUBLE CONSONANTS:** KK=NG, TT=CH', PP=K', SS=H, JJ=N

**MULTI-CONSONANT SYLLABIC END SOUNDS:** KS=H, NJ=CH', NH=S, LG=K', LM=T', LB=P', LS=K, LT=CH, LP'=P, LH=N, PS=M.

**VOWELS:** A=U, E=O. I and Y stay the same. The different types of O (O and Ō) and U (U and Ū) do not matter in this case.

**DIPTHONGS:** AE=UO (WO), OI=EI, OA (WA)=EU, OAE (WAE)=EUO, UI=AI, UE=AO

Thus, taking the name of the character Ryofu Hōsen, the kanji is read (Ryŏp'o Pongsŏn) in Korean, thus becomes "P'ye K'ekhech" in Noukiite. Thus, with the additions noted above, the Dragonspeaker's proper name is **Seu-P'ye Yesu-Re Hechnich'-K'ekhech**. The childhood name "Ren" is read (Yón) in Korean, which becomes **Kyech** in Noukiite.

However, there is a more vowel-intensive dialect of Noukiite, normally used around the city of Ryekkyuk (said locally as Ryoggyuk). Here, the mid-syllable consonant sounds G, J, D, L and B as seen in Korean appear whenever K, CH, T, R and P appear in the middle of a word. Also, the encoding of vowel, multi-consonant syllabic end sounds and diphthongs is more intensive as see below:

**MULTI-CONSONANT SYLLABIC END SOUNDS:** KS=H, NJ=CHN, NH=CHS, LG=P'NG, LM=P'T', LB=P'K', LS=P'H, LT=P'CH', LP'=P'K, LH=P'S, PS=K'H
Note that if the following sound is either a matching consonant or a vowel, both consonants are spoken. If the following sound is a non-matching consonant, the first consonant of the end sound is silent.

**VOWELS/DIPHTHONGS:** I=Ŭ, E=OŬ, OI=ŎŬ, AE=UŬ, A=U, O=Ŏ, ÚI=ĬŬ, YE=YOŬ, YAE=YUŬ, YA=YU, YO=YŎ, UI=AUŬ, UE=ŬOŬ, OAE=ŎUŬ, OA=ŎU, UŎ=AO

Please note that the underlined vowel/diphthong encoding are pronounced as separate syllables in Ryoggyuk dialect Noukiite.

Thus, if we look at Kyech's namesake as written in Korean, it would be rendered *P'yolo K'oghoch* in the Ryoggyuk dialect, with her personal name being rendered as *Kyoch*. Her full name would be said as *Seu-P'yo Chyosu-Lo Hog'ŏp'-K'oghoch* in her hometown; note that the caste prefixes remain the same with all Noukiites save for remote locations like the Island of *K'up'suo*.

Note that the Noukiite *O* is the same as in "boat". The *Ŏ* is the same as in "hot". The *U* is the same as in *boot*. And *Ŭ* is the same as how the vowel sound in *goose* is pronounced in Californian English, with a close back unrounded vowel (in the International Phonetic Alphabet, written as /ɯ/).

**Minegishi Ruriko** is a character from *Zenkoku Seifuku Bishōjo Grand Prix* ("National Uniformed Beauty Grand Prix"), an adult video pictorial game that was created by *Lyceen* in 1996. It had groups of seven girls in five parts of Japan who were portrayed as "finalists" in a sort of beauty pageant. Eventually, the characters were recycled into a standard dating simulation video game called *Find Love: Rhapsody*. However, the Grand Prix girls never became popular in the face of mainstream dating simulation games as *Tokimeki Memorial* and later *Sister Princess*; Lyceen went out of business after the turn of the millennium. Like many other video game characters that I use in my stories, I discovered the Grand Prix characters when I was living Korea from 1996-2005.
Retreat, Hell! We Just Got Here!

Chapter Summary

Shipgirl fever hits America as the Big Stick and the Black Dragon come to Japan, meeting up with the Torpedo Twins of the IJN and the Mistress of Night Battles...just as Ataru's unofficial little sister Minagi Mikoto comes to visit and reveals something about a future schoolmate named Tokiha Mai...

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In orbit over Onishuto on Uru, aboard FPSYS Normandy, supper time (Tōkyō time: Lunchtime)...  

"Hey, everyone..."

People now relaxing to enjoy their meal inside the main cafeteria of Isaac Thomas' primary starship turned to gaze upon their host as the Wise Lone Sage walked in. "Hey, Isaac!" Lance Silva called out as he crossed his arms while some of the others waved at him. "What's going on?"

The native of Queens moved to sit down at the head of the long table where both the Huntresses of Remnant and the Camelot Wondercolts were enjoying their meal. "Just finished speaking to Rose Potter and Thérèse Peverell," Isaac stated, that making Lance's sister Tara perk. "Forgot to tell them that I intended to visit Hogwarts once we're done here with the Goa'uld." He focused his eyes on the co-leader of the Wondercolts, who now lived as the Great Witch of the West, Gabuor'be ("Archmage"). "They said 'hi' and passed on the word that everything's going alright in Britain right now."

That made the raven-haired half-Italian honours student smile before she sipped her coffee. "Good to know that things are going full-steam ahead at Hogwarts," she commented, her blue eyes sparkling. "Given how much crap they've got to shovel through to make the umale like the ones they were born from finally come into the Twenty-First Century, I sometimes wonder if it was better for Rose and
Thérèse to cut their losses and move to somewhere more sane, like Canada or Australia.

Snickers echoed from her brother and best friends, not to mention the natives of Remnant. Ever since they got together, the two groups had often heard Tara complain about the many inequalities of magical British society, which was still seen as a social trendsetter for magicals worldwide. "How many of Rose's peers are Gifted, Twilight?" Ruby Rose wondered as she leaned her chin on the palm of her hand. The current incarnation of the Warp Huntress, Borimnyuo ("Blur"), had been fascinated with Terran magic ever since the Wise Lone Sage introduced her to the histories of Earth’s enclaves.

Tara hummed; she had been addressed by the nickname bestowed on her via her close resemblance to a character in My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic, "Twilight Sparkle". "Well, of the people who would have been her classmates had she gone to Hogwarts, there's Pansy Parkinson..."

"Silhouette," Phoebe Pitts supplied.

"...her wife Hermione Granger..."

"Enchantress."

"...the other 'prophecy child', Neville Longbottom..."

"Vinclozolin."

"...and two from the year that followed Pansy's, Ginny Weasley and her wife Luna Lovegood."

"Soulfire and Prophecy," the current incarnation of the Mistress of Improbability finished.

Tara nodded. "Guaranteed there will be more coming," she warned.

"But what about the whole thing concerning the Dragoness' spells that prevent us from having kids with non-Gifted people, Twilight?" Blake Belladonna asked, crossing her arms. "With that still on us all..."
"Destructo's back."

Silence.

More silence.

Still more silence.

Then...

"What...?!" Tara hissed as the other people at the table paled on hearing that flat statement from the Wise Lone Sage. In the background, some of the native Yizibajohei there began to whimper as they pulled out PAAs to send out an alert to everyone back home about the return of the Chaos Bringer. "Is that confirmed, Isaac?" Penny Polendina demanded.

"Just got a message from Stargate Command thanks to Yvette Stuyvesant, Penny," the native of Queens affirmed. He then gazed on the members of the Wondercolts, noting their confused looks on hearing that unfamiliar name. "Battleship New York." As the natives of Santa Clara in California nodded in understanding, he sat back in his chair. "Seventy-seven members of the Unending League are confirmed to have returned, including several of the nominal key leaders. Turns out that a Tok'ra who wanted to take Egeria's place as their leader managed to get hold of participants in the Zenkoku Seifuku Bishōjo Grand Prix contest from last summer after they were kidnapped by someone from Phentax Two — seeing them turned into Avalonians along the way — then tried to get them Gifted to have a force he could use to overthrow the Tok'ra Council AND take on the System Lords. The overall winner of the Grand Prix, Miss Ikusawa Kyōko, is Lerie; she'll go by the Icelandic term Segulmagnaðir on Earth." Hearing that, the others in the room nodded. No matter how many of the Unending League of Super-Soldiers there were believed to have lived, the Mistress of Magnetism was seen as the group's overall leader, one others immediately flocked to were s/he to arise from the Crystal. As a mixture of expressions crossed the faces of others listening in, Isaac added, "Of course, Sunmi — that's this particular Gift thief's name — was arrogant to forget that whatever hold that 'loyalty lock' system the Niphentaxians forced on Avalonians would be broken by finishing the casting change in Gifting."

"Idiots...!" Mackenzie Appleby droned as he sat back in his chair, a disgusted snort escaping him. "You know, Tomo's right! They ALL deserve to go through their death scenes, Goa'uld and Tok'ra alike! If they can't see that other races are just as sentient as they..."
"Well, let's hope that the shipgirls will be willing to EAT them all," his sister Jackie then teased.

Cold laughter escaped the others at that dark comment by the current incarnation of the Avalanche Maker, *Ledor'blemlo* (*Earthshaker*). "Would any of Mrs. Potter's friends be able to come out still, Isaac?" Weiss Schnee wondered. "We're pretty weak magically right now. The Goa'uld know nothing about magic at all since they're so dependent on what they salvaged from the Anquietas."

The Wise Lone Sage shook his head. "Really doubtful, Weiss. You have to understand that the instant Rose's wife declared the Spoils of War benediction on Sunday after midnight in London, every one of Voldemort's supporters who were branded by that 'dark mark' were stripped of their magic. Nimmibs — 'squibs' as they're called in Britain — have next to NO legal rights in that society. They certainly can't hold public office in the Ministry of Magic OR their family seat in the Wizengamot. With the Schwartz Mädchen now having a good-sized faction in the Wizengamot, things are going to change rapidly. If Rose and her friends play it right and make alliances with Brigadier Gibbon and her friends as soon as possible, everything should go through without another civil war. Atop that, given that Thérèse is a magical duchess in that society with veto powers over the Wizengamot — and she'll be allied with Jody Crowley in her post as Duchess of Anglesey — I doubt there will be much of an issue. But it could still ignite, which could force the Queen to slam a Magical Royal Proclamation down people's throats to force everyone back into line. That can work, but resentment will rise from social conservatives." He shook his head. "I doubt we'll see any of them come, even newly-Gifted ones from Pansy's peers."

"Luck of the fight scene," Rebecca Skylark breathed out.

As the others nodded, Isaac then sat back in his chair, an amused smile crossing his face. "I should have predicted something like that with all that I know about what goes on in Britain." He rolled his eyes. "I guess I can make a mistake on occasion." As the others snickered on hearing his admission, his eyebrow then arched in amusement. "Anyhow, news from Japan. Ataru's finally Gifted."

Jaws dropped on hearing an announcement many had expected for months now. "As what?!" Takino Tomo demanded from a nearby table as both she and Mizuhara Koyomi looked over.

"Rake."

 Surprise crossed the faces of all those in the cafeteria as they took a moment to let that sink in, then people began to excitedly whisper to others. Among the Terran-born, wallets came out as money was exchanged with friends; a very large betting pool had been run since April concerning the possible Gift the split-off element of Tariko Katabarbe's mind would ultimately inherit. Among native Yizibajohei, PAAs came out to record promises people made if they lost a bet; as the planet
pretty much ran on a barter economy due to a universal distaste for the concept of money — one of the many factors seen to have provoked the Dawn of Power, Isaac knew — no specie was used on the world of the Forge.

"Ooh...nookie...!" a now-giddy Tomo then crooned.

Laughter filled the room at that declaration from the Wild Warrior of Passion. It was well-known that the native of Itabashi had taken to the idea of a MALE version of the woman who forever changed her life like a duck to water. Many a time between Ataru's return to Earth as his own person in April and the Pseudo War in August when he met his sisters did Tomo sneak into Tomobiki, snag Ataru from his "wife", then spend a few hours in private places doing very intimate things. Since this was the start of the "silent war" waged to shake the confidence of Redet Lum and her allies when it came to influencing Moroboshi Ataru's life, never ONCE did Ataru suffer "divine punishment" after such "nookie dates".

"Hell! We should have seen THAT coming!" Flora Sandford quietly lamented.

"Why do you say that, Fluttershy?" Pyrrha Nikos asked.

"Simple, Pyrrha," the green eyed woman with the long pink-tinged blonde hair affirmed, a shy smile crossing her face as she shrugged. "Tariko's whole quest started out to get pretty GIRLS Gifted as metahumans since she was told by her mother that getting more and more GIRLS to become Named metahumans would be the best way to keep Doctor Destructo from returning to life." As people nodded, the current incarnation of the Parodist of the Wild, Yar'buo Nubuo ("Wild Mimie"), added, "I'll bet that when those demons and other creeps who loved to haunt Tomobiki after she was trapped there and forced to act as Ataru decided to get one last shot in to force him into becoming a metahuman gigolo as a way of forcing him from EVER having a permanent relationship with anyone."

"Hah! Won't happen, Flo-jo!" Tomo barked out, making Flora pout on hearing that unwanted nickname from the Wild Warrior of Passion. "Even if we don't do marriage on Yiziba, parenting units are always seen as necessary to help raise kids until they get the chance to get Gifted. I doubt that whoever it was that helped Ataru get Gifted will leave him. I REALLY doubt that Benten will leave him now that Lum's out of the way and with Hiromi-chan! And with all those shipgirls that want to get into that guy's boxers?!" She began counting off on fingers, "Akebono, Prinz Eugen, Roma, Pola..."

"You knew what Ataru became all along, didn't you?!" Isaac demanded.
The native of Itabashi flashed a "V" for Victory sign in return, making many of the people there laugh. "He's going to be busy once nesting season hits us," Ruby then mused, a wry chuckle then escaping her. "Personally, I'd rather wait until I complete my time at Beacon before thinking about romance."

"And wait for the Dragoness to come back so our pick of potential lovers is much greater," Weiss added.

Everyone nodded. Isaac then gazed at the time-keeping display on one bulkhead before he perked on noting the local time. "Ah! Sorry, guys!" he lamented as he stood to leave. "Have to meet with the Urusian fleet commanders to prepare for our party with the Goa'uld."

"Hope they don't bore you to death!" Phoebe teased.

More laughter escaped people as the Wise Lone Sage left the room...

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Washington, the White House, that moment (local time: Sunday, two hours before midnight)...

"Mister President...?"

Josiah Bartlet perked on hearing the voice of his chief of staff, then he looked over. "What is it, Leo?"

Leo McGarry sighed as he relaxed himself before the Resolute Desk in the Oval Office. "We just got a call from the Pentagon, sir," the native of Chicago announced in his normal deadpan voice. "It's started." At Bartlet's curious look, the chief of staff added, "Shipgirl Fever, Mister President."

"How many?" the former governor of New Hampshire asked.

"Fitz is getting it compiled..."
A knock echoed from the door leading to the corridor that connected the Oval Office to the major offices of the West Wing. "Enter!" Bartlet called out, then he tried not to grin on seeing a weary-eyed chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff walk in, a sheet of printout in hand. "Let's hear it, Fitz."

"Aye-aye, sir," Admiral Percy Fitzwallace said as he tried not to smile; he wasn't sure HOW to react to this. "Flash messages came in from all naval district headquarters reporting that the following warships have been transformed into shipgirls." He took a deep breath as he tried not to take a moment to ponder on the implication of THIS sort of force arising before reading out, "In alphabetical order: Battleship Alabama, submarines Batfish, Becuna and Bowfin, destroyer Cassin Young, submarines Cavalla, Clamagore, Cobia, Cod, Croaker and Drum, minesweeper Hazard, aircraft carrier Hornet, minesweeper Inaugural, aircraft carrier Intrepid, battleship Iowa, destroyers Joseph P. Kennedy Jr, Kidd and Laffey, aircraft carrier Lexington, submarines Ling and Lionfish, light cruiser Little Rock, submarine Martin, battleship Massachusetts, aircraft carrier Midway, battleships Missouri, New Jersey and North Carolina, protected cruiser Olympia, destroyer Orleck, submarines Pampanito, Razorback and Requin, heavy cruiser Salem, submarine Silversides, destroyer escorts Slater and Stewart, battleship Texas, destroyer The Sullivans, submarine Torsk, battleship Wisconsin and aircraft carrier Yorktown."

"Wait! Yorktown's already come back, Fitz...!" McGarry objected.

"The second Yorktown, Leo," the admiral cut in. "The Essex-class carrier."

Bartlet groaned. "Oh, my God...!"

"Sir, there's more," Fitzwallace warned.

A groan escaped the former New Hampshire state governor. "What else?!"

"Sir, strange as this will sound to you, when North Carolina reported back as Captain Edwina Hyde, her sistership Washington came back as Captain Ida Stevens," the senior ranking military officer in the United States armed forces declared. "Atop that, Alabama's and Massachusetts' sisters South Dakota and Indiana are also back, as is the Baltimore-class heavy cruiser Fall River. And the Essex-class aircraft carrier Oriskany came back when Lexington was transformed into a shipgirl."

"What's so unique about them?" Bartlet asked.

"Oriskany was sunk as a diving wreck in 2006, Mister President. As for the others, they were all
"scraped." Here, the veteran surface warfare officer reached up to adjust his glasses as he tried not to shake his head. "We also got a very interesting surprise along the way. Massachusetts, Kennedy and Lionfish were museum ships together at Battleship Cove in Fall River just by the border with Rhode Island. Also there was a former Soviet Project 1241 missile corvette, NATO code name 'Tarantul'. She was built for the East Germans as Rudolf Egelhofer, wound up under unified German control after the Berlin Wall fell as Hiddensee, then was transferred to us a couple years later to let us to test systems before she was struck from the non-commissioned naval vessel register and sent to Battleship Cove." As the other men took that in, Fitzwallace added, "She's volunteering to join our navy. I propose making her a lieutenant, same as what the Canadians would do to any corvette that comes back."

"Her name, Fitz?"

"Renate Egelhofer."

Bartlet nodded. "Leo, get the night secretary to type up a letter to Lieutenant Egelhofer, thanking her for volunteering to serve with us. Make sure Captain von Savoyen is mentioned in that letter."

McGarry nodded. "Right away, Mister President."

As the Chicagoan walked out of the room, the president shook his head...

...before a knock echoed from the door to the corridor. "Come!"

The door opened to reveal Toby Ziegler. "Mister President."

"Toby, what is it?"

"Sir, CNN's reporting an incident happening in P'yŏng'yang," the White House's communications director stated. "It's being relayed from KBS in Sŏul. The Pueblo is now a shipgirl, sir."

As Bartlet shook his head, Fitzwallace sighed. "If you'll excuse me, Mister President..."

"Go!" the president stated. "Toby, get someone to call President Yi so I can..."
"Mister President!

Everyone turned as McGarry walked back in. "What now?" Bartlet asked.

"President Yi of Korea called in," the chief of staff stated. "He's reporting that four museum ships that were originally built here in America have become shipgirls." He glanced at Ziegler. "The Pueblo?!

"Yeah," the native of Brooklyn affirmed. "Who else came back?"

"Destroyers Chŏnbuk, Chŏnju and Kang'wŏn and frigate Taedong," McGarry stated.

"Gearing-class destroyers Everett F. Larson, Rogers and William R. Rush and patrol frigate Tacoma — the name ship of her class — respectively, Mister President," Fitzwallace added, thanking himself for checking ahead of time concerning American ships sent overseas that still existed as museum relics.

"We better call our friends elsewhere who have our old ships as museums to get them checked out," Ziegler then warned. "If the Pueblo is trying to break out of North Korea..."

"Do it!" Bartlet snapped. "Leo, find out where our shipgirls are, please! Get someone to call Naomi!"

"Yes, sir!" all three men answered before heading out...

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*Tomobiki, Tomobiki High School, that moment...*

A gulp escaped the tall, very statuesque and visibly-muscled blonde with the starry deep blue eyes as she gazed on the rustic schoolhouse now before her. As her heart fluttered in anticipation on meeting the wonderful admiral she can now sense inside with at least a dozen other shipgirls, the woman who
was reborn from the first of America's penultimate battleship class tried not to allow her nervousness to show. After all, this man — according to what she had effectively overheard from her caretakers in Los Angeles before she was transformed into Abigail "Gabby" Lewis several hours ago — was one who had defended the whole PLANET from alien invasion over a year before...never mind the fact that said man also (after discovering things which still weren't well-known among the general population) felt it necessary to RETURN America's highest civilian medal to the President thanks to a strong belief that he had NOT properly saved Earth when he faced his would-be "wife" here in this part of Tōkyō...!

"Who is she?"

"Where's she from?"

"Is she from one of the European nations?"

Hearing people whispering — she teleported herself onto the main walkway a couple metres in from the front gate — the adopted native of Brooklyn (where she had been built) and Des Moines (capital of her namesake state) glanced over to see a bunch of high school kids all staring agape at her over the top of the border wall. Raising her hand — partially-covered in finger-less gloved coloured the red-white-blue of her namesake state's flag — she waved, earning Gabby squeals of delight from the onlookers while some drew out those newfangled cellular phones to snap pictures of her. Before she could say anything to them, a frightfully neutral woman's voice called out, "Do you prefer Minerva or Abigail?"

That made the namesake of the Hawkeye State spin around as someone in solid black from neck to toe approached. Blinking in confusion as she tried to put a name to the face of the twenty-something martial arts master, Gabby then relaxed as it came to her. Even if this person had been possessing some guy's body at the time she swept through the hull of USS Iowa in the wake of the final surrender that ended World War Two in 1945 to ensure the Black Dragon Society's metahumans hadn't got inside to attack her crew, the energy aura being projected from her was as unique as fingerprints. "Um...h-hi, Miss Negako!" she called out with an embarrassed chuckle. "Please, call me Gabby!"

Moroboshi Negako's eyebrow arched. "Abigail, then." On seeing the reborn fast battleship pout, the ninjutsu grandmaster added with a slightly amused glare, "I care not for using informal nicknames with other people unless I have dealt with that person for a considerable period of time. In effect, this is only our second meeting." She then glanced up into the eastern sky. "I assume that if you have been transformed into a shipgirl that others will be coming from America to meet my adopted brother?"

That made Gabby blink before she hummed. "Well, when I was flying here from L.A, I thought I
heard Mo and Bowfin preparing to deploy here from Pearl. Is it true that they got Arizona back first?!

"Indeed, Arizona has returned as Sonia Owings. However, she is at this time currently looking in on Takahashi Anna — the carrier Akagi — after her attempted suicide yesterday," Negako responded before she squinted as her ki senses picked up contacts high in the sky over the Pacific east of the Bōsō Peninsula. "Marguerite! Jazlynn!" she called out in a voice that seemed to boom loud in the reborn fast battleship's ears even if others overhearing her didn't seem affected at all. "Shift yourselves five nautical miles south of your current course before commencing approach to Tōkyō airspace! You are on the direct approach vector to Nariţa New Tōkyō International Airport!"

Gabby then perked as a voice possessing a mixture of Brooklyn and Midland American dialects echoed somewhere deep in her mind, «Hey! Who the hell's this?!»

"It's Miss Negako, Mo!" Gabby called out. "You want to run over a 747?!!"

A shocked squawk answered back. «Stick?! That you?!»

"Yeah, it's me! Do as Miss Negako said! If you're heading into Narita...!"

«Ah...r-right!» the voice of Marguerite McNair, the reborn USS Missouri, stuttered. «Shift south, Jazy!»

«Who the hell WAS that, Mo?!» a younger-sounding voice with the Maine accent marking her place of construction as USS Bowfin, third of the Balao-class fleet submarines, then demanded.

"Someone who can kick Major Raeburn's butt if she had to!" Gabby called back.

That earned her a disbelieving squawk from Jazlynn Willingham...

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Approaching Tomobiki High School, that moment...
"At least Fujita-taishō is willing to let us be by ourselves instead of shepherding destroyers, Ōitchi."

Hearing that comment from her raven-haired elder sister, the adopted native of Kōbe (where she had been built as THG Ōi) and Shizuoka (where the source of her namesake river was located) smiled as she reached over to squeeze Kumamoto Kiko's arm. Both torpedo cruisers had dressed down from their winter navy blue uniforms into their black-trimmed dark green fighting jumpsuits. All the shipgirls who just finished parading at the Imperial Palace had sensed the strange newcomer arrive at Tomobiki High School some moments before. The third and fourth of the Kuma-class cruisers had been dispatched by Yamamoto Reiko to see who it was while others remained close to the Palace in case the newcomer turned out to be hostile. "We will have to work with them, Kiko-san," Kumamoto Otsune warned as she gave her sister a knowing look. "The way you were ready to go crazy all over Aiko-san like that..."

"Idiot was begging for it," Kiko slyly noted as she gave her brown-haired sister an amused look. "The way she was going on and on about how good she looked as a shipgirl, she needed to be taken down a peg or three..." She then shook her head. "All because of that stupid collision we had back in 1930..."

"Didn't she have to have her whole BOW replaced?!" Otsune wondered.

Both cruisers exchanged looks, then they laughed as they turned to head down the street towards the front gate of Tomobiki High. Indeed, watching the high-strung Kuwana Aiko (the reborn THG Abukuma) fret about her long blonde hair before she got into her uniform earlier that morning to attend the parade at the Imperial Palace BEGGED for a smart troll to rile her up every which way possible. And since Kiko had suffered some damage (as THG Kitakami) from that collision in the autumn of 1930, who better than the third of the Kuma-class to keep the sixth of the Nagara-class in line. Besides, seeing how much the adopted native of Yokosuka and Shimogō (where the Abukuma River began on the slopes of Mount Asahi near the border with Tochigi prefecture) loved to dote on all the would-be "ladies" among the destroyers such as Akamatsu Tsukiko made Kiko's stomach lurch to the point where she would have had to go to the washroom and vomit. She didn't care for destroyers on general principle even if some could see her as a glorified destroyer leader, so watching Aiko do what she did with Tsukiko...!

"Ah! Look! It's Kitakami-sama and Ōi-sama!"

Cell phones began to click pictures as the crowd of high school students who had gathered by the gate turned their attention to the just-arrived cruisers. Watching them fawn over her, Kiko smirked before she looked at Otsune. "'Super-Kitakami'?" she then mused, her eyebrow arching in amusement.
The other cruiser snickered as the crowd close to them began begging for selfies, which was soon acknowledged. Fortunately, the knowledge about how teenagers acted these days and what interested people had been automatically passed on to every shipgirl who ultimately came to Ōmure-jima in the wake of the last "shipgirl hunt" carried out by Saeru Hinako thanks to the reborn warship spirits' telepathy that effectively served as their new bodies' secure communications systems. As this was going on, footsteps heralded the arrival of the first of her class. "When did you guys get back?!" Gabby Lewis demanded as she walked through the front gate, accompanied by Moroboshi Negako.

Kiko and Otsune tensed on seeing the reborn USS Iowa, then they relaxed as salutes were exchanged; since they knew of the ninjutsu grandmaster serving as steward of the Moroboshi Clan, clearly the adopted native of Brooklyn and Des Moines had been declared safe. "I came back a month ago," the latter stated as the teenagers moved to take selfies with the battleship and her current companion. "After I helped the others of my class return to duty, we went to Nagasaki to see if we could bring back Kiko-san. Once we did, we just patrolled around until the phoenixes from Lady Elgin summoned us to rendezvous with the rest of the fleet that Chiyo-san took under her control, then we came here."

Gabby blinked in confusion. "'Lady Elgin'?

"You encountered her off Cape Engaño during Operation: Musketeer," Negako provided.

That made the first of her class of fast battleships blink before her eyes went wide. "Oh, HER!" she stated. "Damn! That had to be the finest shooting anyone's ever seen! There were an even half-dozen of those critters moving to go after the crews of those ships Ozawa just tossed away! She nailed each and every one of them beautifully with those lengthened Mark A rifles of hers!"

"She's in the Philippines Sea right now, Iowa-dono," Otsune stated, having read the battleship's name on the upper arc of the stadium ring framing her redesigned crest. Such was emblazoned in the same pattern as the Iowa state flag, though such was embossed with the flower of the wild prairie rose. Said shield was topped by an eagle, grasping in its beak a blue scroll with the motto OUR LIBERTIES WE PRIZE AND OUR RIGHTS WE WILL MAINTAIN in gold. Framing the shield's sides and base were a wreath of fourteen wild rose flowers, twelve with battle stars marking her campaign credits in World War Two and Korea and the star for her National Defence Service Medal, one rose at the bottom of the field with a silver E marking her winning the Battle Efficiency Ribbon three times over...and the last, poised above the rose with the E right under the tip of the shield, bore the medal of the Purple Heart. "Right now, she's serving as a temporary hospital ship for Akagi-dono after that fool stunt she pulled at Pearl Harbour early this morning with a tantō."

That made Gabby wince. "Yeah! That was dumb! Especially doing that in front of KIDS...!"
"MOROBOSHI! YOU BASTARD!"

Everyone blinked, then they looked up...

**KK-ZZZAARRRK!**

"YEAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAGH...!

The three shipgirls and the ninjutsu grandmaster then blinked as a very tanned and handsome teenage man dropped down out of nowhere to crash on the street just beyond the front gate. Noting who it was, Negako tried not to sigh even if she shook her head. "Shūtarō is not giving up, it seems."

"That Kempeitai major's grand-kid, Sensei?" Otsune asked.

"The same person, Otsune. This is Tōru Shingo. While having the ability to absorb electricity and would be seen as chūnin in Saikō Jinseijutsu, he is also grossly illiterate, naïve to a very dangerous degree and if any woman shows him any form of kindness, he will immediately become infatuated with her."

"He's a stalker, you mean," Gabby noted.

Negako considered that for a moment before nodding. "A somewhat apt description, Abigail."

"What's going on out here, Negako-san?"

The shipgirls tensed before turning to gaze at the front doors...

...before their cheeks turned utterly nuclear as the newest incarnation of the Healer of Women's Hearts marched towards them, a concerned look on his face. "It appears that Shūtarō has dispatched Shingo here to discipline you for some reason, Ataru," Negako stated as Gabby suppressed a nervous gulp, Kiko began twirling her thumbs in embarrassment and Otsune looked away as steam began to billow from her collars. "Most likely, something has occurred with Tachiko that offended him. Given the state Paola left Shūtarō before drop-kicking him back to the mansion after her arrival here..."
Ataru blinked, then he walked up to the front gate, taking care not to pass over the rails on the ground, such marking the limits of the defensive fields Tsuruya Rumiko installed over the grounds. By then, Shingo was on his feet, glaring murderously at his master's hated rival, recognizing Ataru despite the physical changes the latter endured when he was Gifted two hours before. "And what makes you think, bakänin, that I was going to take Tachiko-chan away from anything, least of all a bakänin like you?!"

"What does that mean?!" Shingo snarled.

Ataru dramatically reached into one of his tunic sleeves, then whipped out a roll of expensive paper to let it unfurl, the sheet displaying the kanji 馬鹿忍 in vertical reading format. Holding it out in front of the personal bodyguard of his old class rival, the Healer of Women's Hearts then reached out with his own empathy to force Shingo to focus directly on the three kanji characters. As Shingo then began to babble incoherently on seeing those three maddening blocks of exquisite script, the onlookers all blinked in confusion. "Oi, Ataru, what the hell's the matter with him?!" one Shakkō Vocational Institute sophomore Ataru recognized as Shiretoko Misaki — he was one of the lucky fellows in that school at the north end of Tomobiki who had won himself lovers among the auxiliary Avalonian observers based in the "holy city", the Nobushige twins Tazuna and Katsumi — then asked. "Why's he panicking?!"

"He simply can't read kanji, Misaki," Ataru answered. "Atop that, after the time that Shingo 'kidnapped' Lum a couple months ago, Onē-san took my place in classes for a couple days, then tortured him by making him FEAR seeing these characters!" He then winked. "He doesn't know what they say."

The onlookers blinked as they took that in before they shook their heads. "What an idiot..." one girl then snarled. "To believe that Mendō-san has such morons working under him!"

"Yeah! He's a bakänin for sure!" another girl snapped.

Shingo yelped on hearing that. Noting that reaction, some of the girls began to chant "bakänin" again and again, which made the hapless ninjutsu-ka start to scream out as he frantically looked to and fro, the mindless fear that he had first experienced over two months before overriding what little common sense he possessed. Suddenly, the shadows close to one tree morphed and expanded, allowing a smirking woman about the same physical age as the Kumamoto sisters — who both appeared to be Catarina von Savoyen's age — to emerge. Dressed in a black jumpsuit with low-light orange belt and boots, she had black finger-less gloves on her hands, bands with weapons pouches on her upper
On seeing the first of her class of light cruisers appear, Kiko moaned. "Yasen-baka...!"

Ataru gazed at the raven-haired cruiser, his lips turning down in a disapproving frown. "Now, now, Kiko-san, stop calling Sei-san that! Her passion for all sorts of scenes in the twilight hours is truly admirable." He then held out his free hand, allowing such to be grasped by the just-arrived Hashimoto Sei so he could draw her close and courtly kiss those well-shaped fingers. "Sei-san, even if you are a mistress of the night, you have certainly brightened my day," he then declared.

As the girls seeing this squealed on seeing Ataru be so formal to the reborn THG *Sendai*, the newcomer smiled. "Oh, finally! An admiral who can appreciate my skills in all forms of night battle! My heart swoons at such a gift of the Fates!" she declared with a mix of Hichiku and southern Tōhoku dialects marking her place of construction in Nagasaki and the location of her namesake river that emptied into the Pacific at the city of the same name that also was the traditional home of the Moroboshi Clan. As the boys hearing this hooted at Ataru for being so suave, Sei immediately moved to embrace him...

"OJŌ-SAMA! YOU MUST REJECT MOROBOSHI...!"

KK-ZZZAARRRK!

"YEAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA.

Sei looked down to see a nicely-cooked Shingo, his body twitching violently from being burned once more by the defences installed on the Tomobiki High grounds by the Careful Planner of the Circle of Thought. "It's a good thing Rumiko-san kept this idiot in mind when she proofed the school against intrusion," Ataru noted as he rolled up the "bakanin" scroll and inserted it back into his sleeve before tenderly taking Sei's hand and guiding her to "safety", that making the transformed light cruiser blush.

Watching this from nearby, Gabby shook her head as she tried not to launch into a chorus of wolf whistles. "Wow! Hugh Hefner, move over! You got some serious competition here!" she said as she crossed her arms. "Oi, Miss Negako! Were all the versions of this guy as smooth as your brother?!"
"Indeed they were, Miss Abigail," Ataru answered as he gave the battleship an apologetic look. "A thousand pardons I ask for being distracted by the bakanin here. Be assured, the welcoming carpet is always open for the great warriors of the Union to come join us at Welcome House. It actually gives Rinrin-chan the excuse to knock in some more wings to the commons so we can fit in everyone."

"Um...Teitoku...?"

"Hai, Sei-san, what is it?"

Sei was now staring intently at the dazed Shingo. "Is he of the Tōru Clan?"

"He is, Sei," Negako affirmed.

Hearing that, the light cruiser's face then turned as frigid as that of Earth's first true artificial intelligence. "There is a duty passed onto me from the Immortal Master himself that must be carried out, Shihan-sama," she formally declared before walking over and kneeling beside Shingo.

After a certain series of pressure points on the back of his head and on the shoulders were pressed in the right combination to unleash the Martial Arts Death Touch attack which would forever wipe out all combat knowledge from Shingo's mind, Sei gazed a question at Ataru. After he indicated the direction to the Mendō estate, the transformed light cruiser drew out a rolled sheet of paper, writing down a quick note before stuffing it in the fallen ninjutsu-ka's tunic, then she sent him flying off to his employer's estate with a one-handed pitch. She then blushed as Ataru offered his arm to her, which she took as they headed back into the school building; Gabby quickly snared the other arm as Kiko and Otsune followed them inside so they could be introduced to everyone else. The crowd watched them go, then Misaki gazed at Negako. "Um...what did Sendai-sama just do, Negako-sensei?"

"She just effectively destroyed his life in punishment for his ancestor's actions against my creator, Misaki," the ninjutsu grandmaster coolly announced as she fixed the young man with a knowing look. "Shūtarō's family should have better vetted such people before taking them under their employ."

With that, she herself moved to head inside...

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The Mendō estate, fifteen minutes later...

"Oh, my...how delightful."

"B-b-but...Waka-sama..."

"Akira-san?"

"Hai, Tachiko-san?"

"Kill him, please."

"Hai!"

"B- but...AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAGH...!

Both Mendō Shūtarō and his younger sister Ryōko gaped in horror after Mishima Akira reached over to grasp the very pale Tōru Saizō around the back of the neck, allowing the Queen of Diseases to inject a lethal virus into his body to make his heart stop and his brain literally melt inside his skull. As several of the butlers moved to drag Saizō's badly wounded grandson out from the reception all — Tōru Shingo had crashed down on the front lawn of the mansion close to the space the Passionate Pugilist now considered her own — the "sickly" sister of the transformed and Gifted clones of Moroboshi Ataru let go of the elderly ninjutsu-ka's body, letting him drop to the floor as a final breath rattled from his mouth. Seeing how easily the girl had just killed the experienced silent warrior, Ryōko shakily turned to gaze on Mendō Tachiko; the Seiran Girl's High School sophomore's face was now flush thanks to the sudden flu she had unknowingly acquired from Akira via her sister Ōnishi Konatsu. "W-w-why...?"

Tachiko gazed on her genetic sister. "You're willing to DEFY the words of the Immortal Master, Ryōko?"

As Ryōko gulped — her own Kuroko passionately worshipped the memory of Hosan Hirosuke; once they returned and learned what happened to her brother's bodyguard and his father, what little respect they had for the two fools would vanish in an instant...and most likely, they would arrange a fatal "accident" to befall the hapless Shingo — Shūtarō shuddered. "This is all Moroboshi's
He then screeched like a child as Akira's fingers suddenly appeared within an inch of his face. "Keep it up, Sword for Brains, and I'll make you both BLIND and DEAF for all the crap YOU caused Onii-chan!" the mistress of biological warfare snarled as her blue eyes glowed ominously. Ignoring her current target's shaking his head in denial, she added, "When is it FINALLY going to sink into that BLACK HOLE you call a brain that it's long since time for YOU to start owning up to all the crap YOU unleashed, huh?!" She then drew her hand back to lean down and glare into his eyes, making him nearly piss himself. "Or shall we wait for our friends in al-Qā'idah to deliver those lessons to you, huh?!"

"Don't bother, Akira-chan," Konatsu stated from her position in a chair off to one side of the room as butlers came back in to drag out Saizō's corpse to have it cremated in the mansion's power plant. Given that the last of the Tōru Clan had no friends thanks to the interdiction delivered to their ancestors by the founder of the Tensei-ryū over three hundred years before, there was no need to worry about people who might question what happened to them. As the Queen of Diseases moved to sit at another guest chair to enjoy her own cup of tea, the Princess of the Polar Gardens smirked as she glared at her other-self's former rival. "He's just upset that the government isn't listening to him anymore when it comes to Aneki's new fiancée. Aw! Poor, poor little Shūtarō!" she then mockingly moaned, making the now very sick scion of Japan's richest family glare resentfully at her. "Knowing Aneki, she'll take Lum off to Zeiwan and do a Sensualist handfasting ceremony. There, NO ONE can raise objections like they do in most marriage ceremonies here on Earth!" As Shūtarō shrieked in outrage, Konatsu hummed. "Maybe we'll have Kazumi-chan film it and project it here when it happens!"

As Akira laughed and Tachiko shook her head, Ryōko shakily turned her head so she could look at her grandfather. "Oji-sama, aren't you going to say something?" she pleaded, hoping that someone would come along and make some sense of this utterly maddening situation. "Anything...?"

Mendō Gennosuke snorted as he relaxed on a nearby sofa. "What's there to say, girl? Tachiko-chan is doing a wonderful job removing some unnecessary refuse from dragging the family down. Let her do what is necessary. I will NOT allow my family to plunge into dishonour in the eyes of the Tensei-ryū!"

"Still, Otō-sama, one has to wonder how Hashimoto-taisa could deliver such an attack as what befell Shingo-kun," his son Hajime mused from nearby; he was seated on couch alongside his wife Haruka, with her valet/human parrot Hikutsu Ōmukai standing diligently behind the technophobic matriarch.

Akira and Konatsu exchanged looks, then they snorted before turning back to their tea. "Easily explained, Oji-san," the latter declared before sipping. "There were people who died on the Sendai who were students of the Tensei-ryū. People who weren't rescued either publicly by RO-104 or in..."
"secret by Sundown." As Gennosuke slowly nodded in understanding — given magical involvement in the construction of the Yonaga before the start of World War Two, he had been let into the secret of the Ryūseizen and knew the names of the magical battleships from Canada, Australia and New Zealand — the mid-level cryokinetic/chlorokinetic added, "The dead always influence the kami of warships once they become shipgirls; Hinako-chan and the others learned that right from Fujiko-chan on down."

"Moroboshi CAN'T have such power...!!"

"Akira-chan, please?" Gennosuke called out.

"Hai, Ojii-chan!" Akira trilled as she got up.

Shūtarō gargled as he stumbled away from the mistress of plagues. "NO...!"

Akira's fingers hit his forehead and right temple, making the scion of Japan's richest family freeze for a moment before a horrified scream escaped him. One hit with a hyperspace mallet later, Shūtarō collapsed to the floor in a semi-conscious daze. "Have the fool boy taken to his room and watch over him!" Gennosuke snapped, making several of the maids jump before they leapt into action.

As her brother was dragged off, Ryōko shuddered in fear as she stared at Tachiko...

****

Approaching Tomobiki High School, that moment...

A very giddy Minagi Mikoto smiled in anticipation as she walked down the street, her feet practically bouncing on the pavement as she tried not to scream out and laugh gaily at the wonderful feeling she sensed shortly after she confronted Miyu Greer at the Fūka Academy concerning the gynoid's rather subtle pre-Gifting. Still dressed as the Polar Swordswoman, the raven-haired, tomboyish middle school senior was quick to sense the many appraising looks coming her way from passers-by. With her well-honed ki senses, she was quick to detect that the locals were for the most part quite relieved that such a force as what could rise from the Great Crystal of Power had finally moved to fully shield this town from the many excesses the alien umale had unleashed over the last year and more...

"Ah! Mikoto-chan! Mikoto-chan! Over here! Over here!"
The native of the backwoods of Okutama at the west end of the Tōkyō metropolis perked on hearing that welcome voice, then she broke out into a run, waving. "Hinako-chan! Hinako-chan!" the highly-trained wandering martial artist who had been found by Tariko Katabarbe the previous summer, just after she had been literally TRICKED into killing her grandfather to ultimately prepare her for the upcoming HiME Festival of Fūka called back as she effortlessly bounded over the outer wall of the school grounds, then landed cat-like on the lawn before she swept Saeru Hinako into her arms.

Of course, the native of Niigata was rather used to the young wandering warrior's childlike exuberance when she encountered friends; not even her gifting as the Polar Swordswoman had changed that. "Ah! Mikoto-chan! Put Hina down!" the Spirit of Innocence scolded. "Hina can stand by herself, you know!"

"Don't wanna, don't wanna, don't wanna, don't wanna...!" Mikoto cooed.

"Onii-sama!" the voice of the oldest of Tariko's sisters then called out from the direction of the main doors as footfalls heralded the arrival of Hinako's siblings. "Mikoto-chan's here!"

"Hai!"

Mikoto perked before looking around...

...then she squealed again as she placed Hinako down, then did a perfect standing leap to drop right in front of Moroboshi Ataru before she nearly broke him in half with the strength of her hug. "ANI-UE!" she screamed out as she rubbed her face right into his chest. "Ani-ue...!" she then meowed.

As the Healer of Women's Hearts reached up to gently rub the younger girl's spiky hair, chatter echoed from the crowd that was still beyond the main gates. "Um...ah, excuse me, Hinako-chan!" Shiretoko Misaki then called out, making Hinako gaze his way. "Is that girl another sister?!" he then asked.

Hearing that, Hinako blinked before she snickered. "No, no, no! Mikoto-chan's just a friend!" she said as she waved the other people down. "She just sorta adopted Onii-tama and Onē-tama as her brother and sister since she has no family still alive...save for some baka-baka who she thinks is her big brother but who totally vanished on her years ago!" As people gasped on hearing that, the Spirit of Innocence gazed at her brother as he still permitted the Polar Swordswoman to cuddle. "It's really sad..."
"Poor girl..." Ogin Reiko, who remained behind while her daughter Haneko was sent to hospital thanks to being beaten down by Paola de Lerici, breathed out, shaking her head at such a fate.

"Oh, don't worry about that, Oba-chan! Mikoto-chan's got lots of people looking out for her..."

"And one of them's right here!"

Everyone perked, then they turned...

...before the crowd slowly parted to allow a beautiful girl with stylish short raven hair and brown eyes behind protective goggles to approach the front gate. She was currently dressed in an older-model jumpsuit with the beautiful puffy sleeves and bell-bottom trousers, such possessing a wild mix of primary colours with flowing shapes forming tidal waves and other psychedelic patterns all over; a banjo-like symbol was over her left breast. Seeing the current incarnation of the Wandering Bard of the Countryside, Duoruotuto ("Rhapsode"), Ataru chuckled. "What are you doing here, Chie-chan?"

"Claiming pillow scenes with you, buster!" Harada Chie, a native of Saitama north of Tōkyō proper, declared as she walked past the boundary of the school grounds, then she turned to gaze at the woman who came with her. "You stay put there, Mai-chan! I have to get Rumiko-chan to allow you inside."

Ataru perked on seeing the well-formed woman the same age as Chie with the beautifully styled strawberry blonde hair cropped at the neck, blue eyes peeking out of her face. Blinking in confusion, he then perked. "Tokiha Mai-san?!" he called out. "Just a moment!" He then gazed towards the clock town. "We have a potential here, Rumiko-chan!" he called out. "Can she come in?!"

"Just a sec'...!" echoed from the belfry. After a moment, Tsuruya Rumiko called out, "She can come in!"

"Arigatō!" Tokiha Mai, a native of Suginami just to the south of Nerima, said with a polite bow before she walked across the fence line to join her future classmate at the Fūka Academy. "It's been a while, Ataru-kun!" She then smirked. "And as I recall, you were a GIRL when we first met!"

"I was part of that girl, Mai-san," Ataru affirmed with a wink as Mikoto gazed at the newcomer, her nose twitching to see if she could pick out the scent of mesonium in the newcomer that would
indicate she was pre-Gifted. Ataru was quick to sense that. "She's not one of us just yet, Mikoto-chan."

The wandering warrior looked at him, then gazed once more on Mai, her eyes narrow as she reached out with ki senses to see what was it that had attracted Tariko's attention to her in the first place. She then focused on the newcomer's breasts, barely exposed under her T-shirt. Sensing that, Hinako blinked before she gazed on Mikoto. "Oi! Mikoto-chan! Stop staring at Mai-san! You're scaring her!"

"She's like me...!"

Silence.

More silence.

Still more silence.

Then...

"What do you mean, Mikoto-chan?" Ataru tenderly asked.

Mikoto pulled back from him, then pointed to the base of her right deltoid muscle, indicating the red birthmark composed of a dot framed by a circle, a jet of flame emitting from the top. As several of the sisters gazed upon it, the Polar Swordswoman turned to allow them to see it clearly. That made Mai come over with Chie, then the former gasped. "You got that too?!!" she demanded before pointing off to the west. "You can see it, can't you?! That strange red star that always hovers close to the Moon...!"

Mikoto nodded. "You're a HiME as well, Mai."

Everyone blinked as they stared at her...even if Ataru was quick to spot the same sort of mark on the upper slope of Mai's right breast, barely masked by her T-shirt...
The cafeteria, an hour later...

"So what's the news from Reborn-sensei, Negako-san?"

Moroboshi Negako walked over to sit down beside Sukeyama Sakuya; the ninjutsu grandmaster had stepped out of the cafeteria where everyone had now gathered to listen to Minagi Mikoto relay what she knew of the HiME Festival to her soon-to-be schoolmate. "Tendō Nabiki is now in the hands of the Vindice and will spend some time in Vendicare," she announced, sparing Marubeya Momoe a glance. As the other girls from Class 2-4 whooped and cheered on hearing that the "ice queen" of Fūrinkan High in Nerima was no longer going to haunt their friend's life, Negako added, "Furthermore, Nabiki's father and Kanami's parents have been effectively neutralized from attempting to further restore matters concerning their missing children to 'normal'. That was thanks to Nabiki's sister Kasumi."

"Is Kasumi-san alright, Sensei?" Momoe then asked. Much that she had no care at all for her former "boss", the second-most popular girl of the previous year's Class 1-4 always felt sorry for the eldest of Tendō Sōun's children. Given how she had been effectively forced into becoming the surrogate housewife in the wake of the death of her mother Kimiko nearly a decade ago, Momoe always prayed for the older woman to get some chance to flee that home and go forth to make a life for herself.

"She is well. She has also followed Akane's example and renounced familial relations with Sōun, going so far as to ask her maternal grandfather Miyamoto Shigeru to be adopted into his family. Since she is a legal adult now, Sōun has no means by which to force her back into the Tendō family."

Hearing that, many of the girls laughed. "So how did the old waterworks factory react to that?! Did he cry himself to death?!" Gekasawa Kumiko demanded. Thanks to Momoe's forced affiliation to Nabiki, all the girls of Class 2-4 had good ideas about what happened with members of the "Wrecking Crew".

"He couldn't engage in such after Kasumi shot him down with a Lawgiver pistol the elder mother of the Avalonians living in Nerima gave her for the occasion," Negako coolly answered before sipping her tea.

Silence.
More silence.

Still more silence.

Then...

"He's dead...?!" Yamagata Masako gasped. Much that the "master" of the "Tendō-ryū" deserved a good beatdown for the crap he forced on his children and the former Saotome Ranma, to go THAT far...!

"No, Masako, but he is in a coma now after being shot at point-blank range by Kasumi with her pistol at level 12, the highest non-lethal setting," Negako replied. "As was Saotome Nodoka. With Nodoka's husband Genma effectively rendered helpless because of what Dean did to him on Saturday to strip him of his martial arts knowledge, all attempts at forcing Kanami to revert to being 'Ranma' will effectively cease from that quarter. Since Nǚ Kēlún now recognizes Kanami's transformation into Mustang and her blood relationship to Indiana Jones..." — here, she smiled as her would-be host's former classmates squealed in awe on hearing of the famous American archaeologist — "...she is moving to persuade her great-granddaughter Shānpú to return to Nǚjiéchéng in Qīnhǎi since there is no longer any reason for them to remain in Japan. Most likely, Shānpú's would-be husband Liāo Műsī will follow her home..."

"Some would-be husband!" Sakuya snapped as she sat back in her chair, crossing her arms. "He's a stalker, Negako-san! He's no different than Megane and his clods were to Lum!"

The ninjutsu grandmaster's eyebrow arched. "True, Sakuya, but Műsī has a strong moral reason for not challenging her in the proper manner to seek her hand in marriage." As the other girls blinked, Negako explained, "Műsī is part of a group known as 'They Who Suffer In Silence'. They are a band of Nǚjiézú who see the 'challenge for marriage' law that once entrapped Kanami as condoning spousal abuse, thus they wish that law forever removed to allow their people to integrate more with outside society. Kēlún is aware of Műsī's beliefs, which is why she tolerates his presence close to Shānpú. Once he learns to stop being so obsessive towards her, I believe Műsī might succeed in winning her hand."

"That's good," Kumiko noted. "Műsī-kun always struck me as so tragic given how loyal he is to Shānpú-san. Sure, she cared a lot for Ranma-kun before she changed and became Kanami-chan, but his love for Shānpú-san was really strong. I hope he wins her over." As the other girls nodded in agreement, Kumiko gazed on Negako. "So Kasumi-san became an Avalonian, right? Why did the Avalonians in Nerima help her like that? I can understand why Tariko-chan would have held back, but..."
"Kasumi is as much a victim of child abuse as Kanami, Kumiko," Negako stated. "Traditional Sagussan society always came down very harshly on child abuse of any sort. If Ataru maintained his affiliation with the Daishi’cha on Sagussa who are now striving to rebuild the planet from the aftereffects of the Clone Rights War fourteen millennia ago, I doubt neither Muchi nor Kinshō would have survived their desire to seek vengeance for all he was made to suffer. Ryūnosuke's father Fujimi and Ran's mother Chena would have also earned their wrath as well." As the other girls nodded in understanding, the ninjutsu grandmaster then perked before she gazed at the entranceway. "Ah. It appears Anna has recovered from her act of foolishness at Pearl Harbour," she declared, rising from her seat.

Bright flashes of magical fire indicating many of the parliament of phoenixes that normally lived on HMCS Lady Elgin were teleporting people into the school building made people in the cafeteria turn to look before an elderly gentleman marching ramrod straight in his green work jumpsuit walked in. "Hiroshi," Negako greeted as the would-be commander of Operation Z formally bowed to her.

"Negako-sama," Fujita Hiroshi declared as all the students present rose to bow to him. "Ladies, please!" he then bade as he gently waved them back to their chairs before he looked behind him at the sullen-looking raven-haired transformed battlecruiser-turned-aircraft carrier who was now flanked by his own transformed flagship and the transformed battleship-turned-aircraft carrier that had long been the division mate to the being now calling herself Takanashi Anna. "Captain Takanashi?"

Hearing her former air wing commander's voice, Anna looked up before she stiffened, then she bowed to the ninjutsu grandmaster who was also the personal assassin of the Heavenly Sovereign. "Sensei."

"Anna," Negako coolly declared as she seemed to stare deep into the soul of the transformed carrier. "Tennō is pleased to see that you and your friends who were lost in Operation MI in 1942 have returned to serve the nation once more." She paused before adding, "However, Tennō is most DISPLEASED at the fact that you lost such control over your feelings that you would contemplate seppuku in visual range of young CHILDREN." Ignoring Anna's wince and the slight tremor in Oikawa Kei's fists indicating that the would-be battleship wanted simply to comfort her friend in such a trying time, the ninjutsu grandmaster added, "Right now, you need to re-establish a sense of zanshin before you can be seen as a fit warrior for Tennō and all of humanity." As Anna winced again at that admonishment, Negako turned away. "Once you are seen as fit, you will publicly apologize to the people of Hawai'i for your actions of ten hours ago. Until such time as you are seen as fit to do such, you will not be permitted to be alone save for tending to personal ablutions. You are NOT ALLOWED to think of seppuku or other forms of ending your life again. Tennō has need of live warriors, not dead fools. Understood?"

Anna winced, though she was quick to bow almost to the floor. "Hai, Sensei!"

"Kei, you will see to it that your division mate is escorted by at least two of the group of shipgirls
Hinako helped see become human at all times when you are back on Ōmure-jima. Is that understood?

The former THG *Kaga* bowed low. "It will be as you command, Shihan-sama!"

"Splendid. Hinako, would you also watch over Anna?"

Saeru Hinako looked over from her place beside Minagi Mikoto close to where Ataru Moroboshi was now relaxing with his own personal "fleet" of shipgirls and the other German schiffsmädchen, not to mention Harada Chie and Tokiha Mai. "Don't worry about that, Negako-san!" the native of Niigata said as she slipped off her chair, then walked over, allowing her empathy to reach out and gently shroud the bowing Anna. "Now, Anna-san, that was a silly thing to do!" she tenderly scolded as Fujita and his staff were met by Fujinami Ryūnosuke, then escorted to a nearby table while her fiancée Shiowatari Nagisa moved to prepare tea. "It's okay to feel sorry for what you were made to do on that silly trip, but to feel so sorry that you'd make Kei-san and Sei-san and Hiyoko-san and Kanako-san and Suzue-san CRY if you killed yourself?! You come right here with Hina now!" With that, she took Anna's unresistant hand and pulled her over to have her sit down on a chair close to Hinako's brother. "Aria-chan will make some nice candy for you and you'll have some of Marie-chan's nice cherry tea, okay?!"

"H-hai..." the adopted native of Kure and Maebashi answered as she allowed the girl to tow her over to sit at a table next to the smiling silver-haired child who was magically turning bread into lollipops!

As Kei followed her division mate over, the others of the Kidō Butai, the one cruiser who had been sunk at Midway, the carriers' long-missing mission-mate and the second of the Pennsylvania-class super-dreadnoughts tried not to wince on sensing the lack of life in Anna's voice. "Much that I personally understand one wanting to redeem oneself, to do it THAT way..." Sonia Owings breathed out before she shook her head in sadness. "There is bravery and there is sheer foolishness...

"We have a much different way of viewing things than you do, Sonia-san," Itō Yoiko warned yet again as she gazed at the adopted native of Brooklyn and Phoenix. "Still, there is some hope in the long term."

"What's that, Yoiko-san?" Matsuo Miki asked.

The fifth of the Yamato-class waved everyone over to a table between where Ataru was seated and where Sakuya and Negako were relaxing. "There is another who feels profound guilt over her actions during that war, Miki-san: Mary Hood-san, the battlecruiser *Hood*. In Mary-san's case, she is driven by guilt over what she had been forced to do at Mers-el-Kébir shortly after the French
capitulated to the Nazis in Shōwa-jūgonen. Given that the parliament of phoenixes and other mystical birds forced her return as a shipgirl like they did, she fears other such beings might restore the battleship *Bretagne* as Élisabeth de Penfell. I suspect Mary-san would welcome Élisabeth-san's seeking vengeance on her..."

The others nodded. "Yeah! Anna-sempai was sure surprised at how quickly Sonia-sempai here was willing to forgive her for what happened," Matsubara Suzue noted as she leaned her chin on the palms of her hands while she watched Hinako sit Anna down, then watched as Aria des Beauchamps offer her a freshly-made lollipop. As the would-be battlecruiser absently sucked on the tasty candy, the second of the Shōkaku-class fleet carriers and the last of the veterans of Pearl to be sunk by the Americans shook her head. "I know the kami of my crew — those that Elgin-sama's crew didn't rescue — approved of my coming back this way. They said to me that I was innocent in whatever I did that offended the Americans so much that they'd eventually come to use those damned atomic bombs on us in the end."

"That's not a way to wage a war," Sonia scowled before she nodded her thanks as Susumu Marie came over with cups of tea. "Many thanks, Madame Moroboshi," she said as the native of Hakodate moved to serve the others; naturally given what had happened to her crew, Yoiko received cloudberry tea in lieu of the mixed cherry tea that Marie loved so much and got so many hooked on. "Just press a damned button and millions of innocent people die, the land made useless for centuries if not millennium because of radiation." She shook her head. "Fleet Admiral Nimitz himself felt it wasn't necessary. We got our vengeance on the fools that launched that war on us a thousand times over. Wiping out two whole CITIES just to shock your leaders into surrendering finally...!" She sipped her tea.

"Be at ease, Sonia-san," Yoiko stated. "Anna-san will be watched over no matter what." After sipping her tea, she perked as Osamu Shirayuki came over with snacks. "Ah! Dōmo, Shirayuki-san!" she called out as the Great Chef of the West handed out pastries. "Aren't you supposed to be in classes now?"

The native of Nagoya sighed. "Hime's going to be missing classes. After all, with Gabby-san here and others on their way from America, we're going to have to find a way to fit them all into Welcome House."

The others perked before they looked over to see Gabby Lewis now seated beside Luisa von Bismarck, Catarina von Savoyen and Amélie von Zeppelin, the two Kriegsmarine veterans and the would-be carrier of that service listening avidly as the first of her class of fast battleships described some of the battles she had been involved in. Noting the hull classification symbol code on her crest, Yoiko frowned. "The one who suffered that explosion in her 'B' Turret back in Heisei-gan'n'en, Shirayuki-san?"

Shirayuki hummed. "Hime's not sure..."
"Yeah, Yoiko-san, that's her."

People turned as Hatoyama Rinrin came up. Hearing that, Yoiko sighed. "She is another one to watch out for," she whispered before sipping her tea. "To suffer what Reiko-san's sister endured..."

The others grimly nodded...

...before footfalls echoed from the main hallway. "Yo! Stick?! Where are you?!"

Gabby perked before she looked over. "Dragon?! That you?!"

Everyone turned...

...then all the normal girls in the room whooped in delight, rising to applaud on seeing a near-twin sister of the first of the Iowa-class walk into the cafeteria. Like most other shipgirls, the former USS New Jersey was in a jumpsuit that left her arms and shoulders bare; like her sister, she had finger-less gloves protecting her hands. Her jumpsuit colours were the reverse of her namesake state's flag: Dark blue, she had soft gold belt and boots; the first of the Iowa-class wore a white jumpsuit with red boots and blue belt. The ship's crest of the woman calling herself Katharine "Kathy" Hyde was different than what she was given on her fourth recommissioning in 1982: The escutcheon, helm, mantling and crest of her namesake state over a base of wavy blue lines representing the sea, a wreath of blue violet flowers with leaves at the base, that wrapped with the blue-gold-red-green ribbon of the Navy Unit Commendation with one bronze star embossed on it under the shield, the flowers holding nineteen bronze stars for her service from World War Two to the Persian Gulf and two gold stars representing her being awarded the Combat Action Ribbon twice. Between the wreath and the shield was a motto scroll declaring LIBERTATIS POTENTIA, a close approximation of the motto once applied to her, "Firepower for Freedom". Like Gabby Lewis, the adopted native of Philadelphia (where she had been built) and Camden across the Delaware River (where she had been stored as a museum ship) was a blue-eyed blonde, though Kathy wore her long hair in a thick braid and she had a shaded pair of goggles over her eyes; Gabby also had goggles, but they weren't deliberately shaded against the Sun.

Before Gabby could bowl her sister with a hug, Kathy stopped beside Yoiko. After a moment as the second of the Iowa-class gave the fifth of the Yamato-class an appraising look, she came to attention, saluting her. "Captain Itō Yoiko, I presume?" the namesake of the Garden State called out.

Yoiko blinked, then rose, returning that courtesy as her dark grey eyes sparkled with dry humour.
"Yes, I am she," she declared before adding in a perfect approximation of what a physician from Blantyre near Glasgow said in 1871 on meeting a Welsh-born veteran of the Confederate States Army dispatched into darkest Africa to find him. "I feel thankful that I am here to welcome you, Captain."

Kathy nodded as she lowered her arm...then paused a moment before holding out her hand. "May I have the honour of shaking your hand, Captain?"

That made Yoiko blink. "Why...?"

The transformed battleship smiled. "One: For standing the watch up in the Arctic like you and your crew did for seventy-one years. Two: For offering shelter to one of my crew." She winked as she glanced past the transformed carrier at a wide-eyed Brent Ross. "Even if he was an intel weenie!" she then teased. "He damn hell deserved to be a proper line officer. Thanks to your admiral...!"

That made the carrier gape at that unspoken compliment to her own admiral before she chuckled as she allowed Kathy to take her hand and warmly shake it while many whooped in delight...

...before the shipgirls perked as a faint voice echoed in their minds, one possessing a mix of Western and Inland Northern American English accents reflecting her namesake city in Colorado and her place of construction in Kewaunee on the shores of Lake Michigan in Wisconsin, «...any American or allied shipgirl...United States Ship Pueblo...Alpha-Golf-Echo-Romeo-Two...currently trapped with civilians...Pot'ong River in P'yŏng'yang...local security forces shooting everyone...help...!»

Hearing that, a dark look crossed Kathy's face. "Those fucking commies...!"

Yoiko nodded. "I believe the 'Dear Leader' needs a lesson in dealing with those such as we, Kathy-san," she declared in a voice that sent chills down other people's backs. "Shall we deliver it to them?"

The battleship smirked. "It's a public fight scene!"

The others all gaped at her...

To Be Continued...
WRITER'S NOTES

Shipgirls noted on in this chapter:

Captain Rebecca Roosevelt USN (United States Ship Yorktown [CV-10])
CAPT Helen Hoover USN (United States Ship Intrepid [CV-11])
CAPT Rhoda Knox USN (United States Ship Hornet [CV-12])
CAPT Tracey Robinson USN (United States Ship Lexington [CV-16])
CAPT Ida Cannon USN (United States Ship Oriskany [CV-34])
CAPT Brenda Ripley USN (United States Ship Midway [CV-41])
CAPT Emily Austin USN (United States Ship Texas [BB-35])
CAPT Edwina Hyde USN (United States Ship North Carolina [BB-55])
CAPT Ida Stevens USN (United States Ship Washington [BB-56])
CAPT Dakota Leigh Gatch USN (United States Ship South Dakota [BB-57])
CAPT Joanna Jennings USN (United States Ship Indiana [BB-58])
CAPT Rose Standish USN (United States Ship Massachusetts [BB-59])
CAPT Francine Bibb USN (United States Ship Alabama [BB-60])
CAPT Gabby Lewis USN (United States Ship Iowa [BB-61])
CAPT Kathy Hyde USN (United States Ship New Jersey [BB-62])
CAPT Marguerite McNair USN (United States Ship Missouri [BB-63])
CAPT Christiana Dodge USN (United States Ship Wisconsin [BB-64])
CAPT Brenda Church USN (United States Ship Fall River [CA-131])
CAPT Dorothy Coffey USN (United States Ship Salem [CA-139])
CAPT Julia Dewey USN (United States Ship Olympia [CL-15])
CAPT Belle de la Harpe USN (United States Ship Little Rock [CL-92])
Kumamoto Kiko-taisa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan Kitakami [CL-27])
Kumamoto Otsune-taisa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan Ōi [CL-28])

Kuwana Aiko-taisa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan Abukuma [CL-35])

Hashimoto Sei-taisa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan Sendai [CL-36])

Commander Madison Sullivan USN (United States Ship The Sullivans [DD-537])
CDR Irene Kidd USN (United States Ship Kidd [DD-661])
CDR Breanna Laffey USN (United States Ship Laffey [DD-724])
CDR Caitlin Young USN (United States Ship Cassin Young [DD-793])
CDR Rose Kennedy USN (United States Ship Joseph P. Kennedy Jr [DD-850])
CDR Johanna Orleck USN (United States Ship Orleck [DD-886])

Elaine Sŏn'yŏng Larson-jungnyŏng THMH (ex-Commander USN) (Taehan Minguk Kumhan Chŏnbuk [DD-916]) (ex-United States Ship Everett F. Larson [DD-830])

Jane Kŭnhye Rogers-jungnyŏng THMH (ex-Commander USN) (Taehan Minguk Kumhan Chŏnju [DD-925]) (ex-United States Ship Rogers [DD-876])

Wynter Sŏn'a Rush-jungnyŏng THMH (ex-Commander USN) (Taehan Minguk Kumhan Kang'wŏn [DD-922]) (ex-United States Ship William R. Rush [DD-714])

Lieutenant Commander Catherine Stewart USN (United States Ship Stewart [DE-238])

LCDR Felicity Slater USN (United States Ship Slater [DE-766])

Adrienne Mijŏng Werner-soryŏng THMH (ex-Lieutenant Commander USN) (Taehan Minguk Kumhan Taedong [PF-63]) (ex-United States Ship Tacoma [PF-3])

LCDR Gracelyn Sharp USN (United States Submarine Marlin [SS-205])

LCDR Camryn Dempsey USN (United States Submarine Cod [SS-224])

LCDR Harmony Rice USN (United States Submarine Drum [SS-228])

LCDR Casey Burlingame USN (United States Submarine Silversides [SS-236])

LCDR Hayden Kossler USN (United States Submarine Cavalla [SS-244])

LCDR Ariel Becker USN (United States Submarine Cobia [SS-245])

LCDR Emilia Lee USN (United States Submarine Croaker [SS-246])

LCDR Jazlynn Willingham USN (United States Submarine Bowfin [SS-287])

LCDR Gemma Molumphy USN (United States Submarine Ling [SS-297])

LCDR Dean Spruance USN (United States Submarine Lionfish [SS-298])
LCDR Whitney Merrill USN (United States Submarine *Batfish* [SS-310])

LCDR Denise Sturr USN (United States Submarine *Becuna* [SS-319])

LCDR Sienna Loomis USN (United States Submarine *Clamagore* [SS-343])

LCDR Ciara Jackson USN (United States Submarine *Pampanito* [SS-383])

LCDR Marlee Bontier USN (United States Submarine *Razorback* [SS-394])

LCDR Brynn Lewellen USN (United States Submarine *Torsk* [SS-423])

LCDR Dana Cutter USN (United States Submarine *Requin* [SS-481])

LCDR Heaven Winslow USN (United States Ship *Hazard* [AM-240])

LCDR Ivy Winslow USN (United States Ship *Inaugural* [AM-242])

Lieutenant Marlene Bucher-Flanagan USN (United States Ship *Pueblo* [AGER-2])

LT Renate Egelhofer USN (formerly Kapitänleutnant VMDDR [later DM]) (United States Naval Ship *Hiddensee* [PFM-103]) (ex-*Volksmarineschiff Rudolf Egelhofer* [pendant 572], later *Deutsche Marineschiff Hiddensee* [pendant P6166])

As always, many thanks again to sasahara17 for creating the human name of USS *South Dakota* (Dakota Leigh Gatch); this name appeared in *Greatest Generation*.

Translation list: KBS — Korean Broadcasting System (in Korean, Han'guk Pangsong Kongsa), the ROK's national public broadcaster; Chûnin — Middle-rank ninja; Bakanin — Idiot ninja; Yasen-baka — Night battle idiot; HiME — Short for "Highly-Advanced Materializing Equipment"; Nûjíchêng — Literally "castle of warrior heroines", this is my name for the home village of the Nûjiézu in China; Zanshin — Literally "remaining mind", this is the mental state of awareness and relaxed alertness a warrior strives to maintain to be ready for battle; Shôwa-jûgōnen — Fifteenth Year of Shôwa (the year 1940 CE); Heisei-gan'nen — First Year of Heisei (the year 1989 CE after the death of the Heavenly Sovereign of Shôwa on 7 January that year); Libertatis Potentia — The Power of Freedom; Soryông — Korean rank title for a Navy lieutenant commander, Army major or Air Force squadron leader; Kapitänleutnant — Captain Lieutenant, the German Navy rank title for a naval lieutenant; VMDDR — Short for *Volksmarine der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik* ("People's Navy of the German Democratic Republic"), the former naval service of *East Germany*; DM — Short for *Deutsche Marine* ("German Navy"), the modern naval service of the Federal Republic of Germany; *Volksmarineschiff* — People's Navy Ship (short form VMS), the ship prefix title for East German naval warships in the universe of my stories; *Deutsche Marineschiff* — German Navy Ship (short form DMS), the ship prefix for modern German naval warships in the universe of my stories.
Note that in real life, ship prefixes are not used in the German Navy, though the prefix FGS ("Federal German Ship") is used among the nations of NATO.

**Operation: Musketee**r was the American code name for the invasion of the Philippines launched on 20 October 1944 with landings on Leyte Island. During the first stage of that invasion, the **Battle of Leyte Gulf** was fought from 23-26 October of that year. **Operation MI** was the code name for the Japanese operation that ultimately led to the **Battle of Midway** on 4-7 June 1942.

*Yatsura* character notes: **Tōru Shingo** and his grandfather **Tōru Saizō** first appeared in the manga storyline "The Electric Jungle" (manga chapters #301-304). Their family name is my creation.

**Shiretoko Misaki, Nobushige Tazuna** and **Nobushige Katsumi** first appeared in *Long Way Home*.

*Mai-HiME* character notes: Of course, both **Tokiha Mai** and **Minagi Mikoto** were two of the main stars of the series. **Harada Chie** was one of the non-HiME background characters throughout the series.

**Miyamoto Shigeru** first appeared in *Phoenix From the Ashes*.

The relationship between **Hayashi Kanami** (*né* **Saotome Ranma**) and **Henry W. "Indiana" Jones Jr** is inspired by the *Ranma 1/2* and *Suikoden* crossover fanfic *Suikoden One Half*, written by **MadHat886**. That particular theme — and the potentially tragic result of same given what Dr. Jones had encountered over the years — was used by me in *Phoenix From the Ashes*.

The concept of **They Who Suffer In Silence** and **Liào Mûsî (Mousse)** being a member was introduced in *The Senior Year* side-story "Fūrinkan Summer". Note that Mûsî's family name is my creation.

As one might suspect, my version of **USS New Jersey (Kathy Hyde)** depicted here is based on the version of *New Jersey* as a shipgirl introduced in the fanfic *Belated Battleships*, written by **TheJMPer** which can be read in both SpaceBattles and Sufficient Velocity. Many thanks to him as well.
Happy Taffies and Cool Spy Ships

Chapter Summary

As the just-Gifted Ataru and his sisters deal with the arrival of more shipgirls from America, three famous destroyers who fought at Leyte Gulf have found peaceful lives for themselves in Sasebo...just as an infamous spy ship is reborn in the capital of the Hermit Kingdom...!

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Sasebo on Kyūshū (forty kilometres north of northwest from Nagasaki), an hour before noon (Los Angeles time: Suppertîme on Sunday)...

"Whoa! Whoa! What are you saying, Brooke?! That...?"

Brooke Roberts blushed as she gave Xander Harris a shy look. "W-well, sh-shortly after Chloe and I got Gifted, we started hearing voices of what we THINK are other shipgirls transmitting from all over the Pacific," the blue-haired destroyer escort-turned-teenage girl admitted as they and the other Gifted of the Scooby Gang — including the other shipgirl who now claimed Sunnydale as her hometown, Chloe Zitzewitz — walked along the SSK Bypass towards the main gate of United States Fleet Activities Sasebo. While the sight of Americans in the old Imperial Navy port city wasn't uncommon given a half-dozen warships were based here, the fact that these people were teenagers — with one possessing ELECTRIC AZURE hair that looked VERY natural! — made people passing them by pause to look; fortunately, drivers passing by didn't cause an accident on taking in Brooke's rather unique features.

"More shipgirls coming," Willow Rosenberg mused as she squeezed the hand of her lover Tara Maclay. Everyone had come to Japan after Liam O'Connor assured them that he and his fellow ex-vampires William Pratt and Drusilla Keeble would keep an eye on Sunnydale with help from Cordelia Chase and Rupert Giles while the rest took a chance to reconnoitre around Japan. Buffy Summers was more than happy to accept that; given how infamous the younger members of the Whirlwind were among the undead, seeing them transformed into pre-Gifted adopted Yizibajohei would keep any idiots wanting to cause trouble under control until this particular issue was properly
dealt with. Besides, if more shipgirls could be welcomed into the Scooby Gang, all the better; despite Faith Lehane and Hayashi Kanami being the two most powerful FISS-types to live on the World of the Forge, the senior Slayer was a strong believer in the concept of *"There is no such thing as 'kill' but OVERKILL!"*...especially when it came to dealing with elder vampires and other types of interdimensional critters.

"Any names, Little Scrapper?" Faith asked as she slipped a cigarette into her mouth, then lighting it.

"Not really sure, Faith..."

"AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH! LOOK OUT BELOW...!"

**KK-KRUNCH!**

The ground under the Scoobies' feet heaved slightly as the part of the Bypass close to the main gate literally heaved UP thanks to something slamming into the tarmac at terminal velocity. Fortunately, the lights had been changing at that time, so only a couple cars were overturned thanks to the impact. Reacting with speed inherited from her many past-selves as the Tailor of Pure Chaos, *Nabuor'be* (the *"Enchanter"*), Tara was quick to set them upright as Xander raced over, ki claws deploying from his fingertips so he could cut open the doors and windows and allow people to escape their vehicles. As both local police and members of the base's guard force came over to assist, Buffy barked out orders to get the others to change into costumes. Once they saw that as Willow levitated herself over to scan for wounded, the policemen relaxed as the chief of the main gate guard detail came over. "You folks from Stateside?!" the master-at-arms first class petty officer asked as he formally saluted them.

Both Brooke and Chloe returned that salute as Faith nodded, thumbing the shipgirls in emphasis. "Yeah, PO! We've got two shipgirls in Little Scrapper and Jackrabbit there..." — the Bostonian found herself on the receiving end of a cute pout from the reborn escort carrier on saying that — "...and they've been hearing other shipgirls since they finally got Gifted this morning back in the 'Dale."

"Sunnydale, you mean? Where that interdimensional 'hellmouth' nexus is located?"

Surprise flashed across Faith's face. "You know about it?"
The MA1 chuckled as some of the local police moved to protect Tara and Willow while they healed a young boy who suffered a broken arm, the child's hysterical mother wailing thanks to the two magical metahumans. "We've been augmented by security personnel loaned from the Seventh Marine Division since all that crap started in Tomobiki last fall, ma'am," he whispered. "News about your hometown was included in the packet that warned us about what happened to Miss Katabarbe..."

"Hey, Chief! We got someone here!"

That was one of the third class petty officers assigned as junior watch personnel at the main gate; she was now kneeling beside the rather big hole in the intersection, peering inside the pit. Immediately, Coya Gutierrez and April Mears headed over to look inside themselves. "Allow us, good guardslady!" the reincarnated Inca princess said as she gestured with her hands, levitating what appeared to be a very dazed woman their age out of the pit. "If you can, friend April..." she bade.

"Sure!" the former gynoid lover of the late Warren Mears who was now the current incarnation of the Wild Beast of the Mountains, Yamem ("Sasquatch"), said as she held out her arms.

Once the newcomer was safely in the brown-haired woman's grasp and pulled away from the pit, Coya gestured towards the hole, pouring magic into it to see it restored to the way it was before this accident happened. "There! As good as any of the repair robots back on the Homeworld would do it!"

Seeing that, the slowly-growing crowd of people who had gathered to watch what was happening broke out in cheers. The junior master-at-arms then guided April over to one corner close to the base gate with her dazed cargo, Coya following her. As two of the local police officers came to assist, Hayashi Kanami's current lover placed the dazed woman down on the grass by the sidewalk, shifting her body around to lay her on her side. A gaze at her top made the former gynoid's eyebrow arched as she took in the details of the ship's crest on the red top. "United States Ship William D. Porter, hull number DD-579," she announced, which made the Americans hearing this all gape. "Fletcher-class destroyer. As I recall, she was sunk during Operation: Iceberg. Her human name is 'Michelle Jane Porter'..."

Twin gargles of terror made April look over to see Chloe now ducking fearfully behind Brooke...who herself appeared VERY wary. "W-w-we're R-r-Republicans...!" the transformed escort carrier eeped.

That caused people to blink in confusion...
"Commander Porter, on behalf of the people of the United States of America, I welcome you back."

Blushing madly at getting such a show of respect, the childish teenager — physically, she was Buffy Summers’ age even if she had a lot of baby fat on her face — with the fire engine red hair done in odango-like buns at her temples took the hand of the captain in charge of the base. "Thank you, sir," Michelle Porter said as after pulling her hand back, then she blushed as the command master chief of the base offered his hand; he had been the one who held the bible while Captain John O'Connor administered her Oath of Office to see her properly commissioned a commander in the United States Navy Reserve, to be administratively assigned to the Navy Operations Support Centre in New Orleans while put on permanent detached duty to the Joint Specialized Warfare Command. "It's good to be back..." She then flustered as she focused her attention at the Maritime Self-Defence Force flag officer standing nearby. "Er...sorry about the street, Admiral! Getting used to FLYING...!"

That earned her a laugh from Vice Admiral Minomoto Jun'ichi. "Please, Porter-chūsa, there's no need to apologize. Gutierrez-sensei made it all right and the others of Summers-sama's group were quick to ensure that any injuries were dealt with smartly. Even the cars were repaired by Rosenberg-sensei and Maclay-sensei, so there's no need to bring insurance people into this." The commander of the Sasebo District of the JMSDF bowed his head, grateful that the magical Marines who had been assigned to assist the Americans in-country had set up an omniversal translation field in O'Connor's office so everyone could understand each other even with the presence of universal translators in the uniforms of Gifted Yizibajohei. "I'm sure those like you who've come back to duty earlier such as Owings-taisa will be happy to teach you the fundamentals of flying so such accidents can be avoided in the future."

"If her luck doesn't go sour AGAIN..." Brooke Roberts muttered from nearby.

O'Connor's head snapped over. "Is there a problem, Lieutenant Commander Roberts?"

That made the reborn destroyer escort awk as she bolted to attention. "Nossir!"

"Chill, Cap'n," Faith Lehane said as she squeezed Brooke's shoulder, making the adopted native of San Francisco and Houston visibly wince at that mountain-shattering grip. "We'll take the Little Scrapper to the Battlezone and knock some sense into her. Much that Specs over there..." — here, the Belle of the Wilderness jerked her chin towards Michelle, making the adopted native of New Orleans (her namesake's birth city) and Orange in Texas (where she had been built) blush — "...had
the devil's luck thanks to her crew being a bunch of idiots who didn't understand how to drive their ship, she doesn't deserve that sort of abuse." As the naval personnel nodded in understanding, the Bostonian leaned down down to glare into Brooke's golden brown eyes. "You ain't getting out of THIS exercise, kiddo!"

"Ditto with you, Chloe," Xander Harris added as he stared down Chloe Zitzewitz, making the adopted native of Xootsnouwú in the Alaskan Panhandle (where her namesake bay was located) and Vancouver in Washington (where she was built) wilt. "You've no right to heap that crap over Michelle. Besides, she might be a Republican herself!" As the others in the room snorted in amusement at the Wild Scavenger of the Plains' observation and Michelle blushed even more at the show of support from the native of Sunnydale, Xander clapped his hands. "So, time for the reveal scene! What the heck actually made you come back as you did, Michelle? I know Hinako flew around Okinawa in the past."

"Yeah, make with the 'splainy, Michelle," Buffy bade as people move to take seats. "Everyone'll sure be happy you're back, but how'd it happen, anyway? And when did it happen? Give us the what-what!"

Michelle gazed at the Mighty Maiden of the Mountains in confusion, which earned her an understanding smile from Willow. "Tell us how you came back, Michelle," the Arch-Mage of True Passion gently pressed. "We need to know what's going on so we can prepare just in case any of your sisters or any of the other ship spirits who were lost in the war decide to come back as well."

Hearing that made Michelle nod in understanding as she herself took the chair of the guest of honour before O'Connor's desk, then she took a deep breath while others sat themselves. "W-well, I was fully Gifted about four days ago. Sorry, I don't have an exact time when it happened..."

"It's cool, Specs. Go on," Faith urged.

Gently adjusting the goggles over her chestnut brown eyes, Michelle sighed. "Um...well, after I was Gifted, I just drifted around. I mean, none of my crew went to flight school, so I didn't know how to use my powers and I wasn't sure what to do with myself. After all, any ship sunk in action is automatically struck off the Naval Vessel Register, so I wasn't in commission, so to speak. Well, there was just NO ONE around to tell me a thing." She shrugged. "I ended up splashing down off the west shore of Iheya Island, where I ran into a big pod of dolphins feeding off the coast. They helped me fish so I could eat."

"Were you able to understand them?" Tara Maclay wondered.
A nod responded. "Actually, I did. Never knew dolphins were so smart and could actually communicate with each other like normal folks do. They told me about other shipgirls like me coming back like *Yamato* and the others who got sunk in that stupid suicide mission back in the war."

"That was yesterday morning," April Mears affirmed.

"Did you make contact with any of the people living on Iheya-jima, Porter-chūsa?" Minomoto asked.

"Um...n-no, sir! I mean, I didn't know if the war ended or not..."

"More than understandable," O'Connor stated. "So what made you come here today, Commander?"

Michelle blinked. "I heard a transmission from *Johnston*."

Silence.

More silence.

Still more silence.

Then...

Brooke and Chloe were both as white as sheets. "Johnny...?!!" both eeped.

"Y-yeah! And *Hoel* and *Heermann*, too...!"

That made people blink. "Sir, *Heermann* was scrapped after she served with the Argentinians," Command Master Chief Petty Officer Julian DuPont declared. The base command master chief had been put in charge of gathering historical information concerning American warships who had been involved in fighting during the Pacific side of World War Two the instant news of *Arizona*′s "return to duty" as Sonia Owings at Pearl Harbour got out the previous morning. "Sure, *Johnston* and *Hoel* would be definite candidates to return as shipgirls. Admiral Minomoto did tell us of the return of His
Imperial Majesty's Ships Chōkai, Suzuya and Chikuma last night when they reported to Admiral Fujita at Ōmure-jima; they were lost off Samar. We could get Saint Lô back if we're lucky. But Heermann...?!

"I know it was Heermann, Master Chief," Michelle assured him.

"Let me try..."

Eyes locked on Brooke as she closed her eyes and concentrated, gazing towards the ceiling.


"Hey! I heard that!" Michelle gasped.

«...oh, Kōta...make me cum...you're just too GOOD...!»

«...Hasumi, Hasumi, Hasumi...oh, shit...I'm gonna explode...!»

«¡...Kengo...mi amado...Santa María me preserva...make me FLY...!»

Hearing that and feeling the tsunami of raw passion being transmitted into her mind, Brooke turned a violent crimson as she mentally shut down the links to the other veterans of Task Unit 77.4.3. Seeing that reaction and noting that Chloe and Michelle were also blushing madly, Coya Gutierrez rose from her seat to place herself before the reborn destroyer escort, she touching her forehead. After a moment while the ends of her fingertips glowed as she scanned Brooke's mind, the reborn Inca princess demurely smiled. "We'll have to wait a while, good captain," she then noted as she gazed upon their host. "It appears the Ladies Rose, Madelyn and Kistiñe are currently engaged in most passionate affairs of the bedchamber at this time. And from what I can sense, their lovers are truly manly men...!"

"Pillow scenes?" Buffy asked.

"Of course, my Mistress!"

Once they heard that, the human-born Scoobies all relaxed as several then reached over to the snack
trays brought in by some mess management specialists. "Well, we're waiting for a bit," Xander noted. "No sense interrupting a pillow scene. At least we won't have to teach them THAT..."

As the shipgirls present sputtered in embarrassment, the naval personnel began to cough to hide their own reactions on learning how much the famous scrappers of Taffy 3 had adjusted to being human...!

****

An apartment in Yamazumi-chō (two kilometres east of north from Fleet Activities Sasebo)

"Rose-sama...Rose-sama...I love you..."

Hearing that from the grinning man lying naked on their bed, the slender and equally nude teenage girl with the long brown hair in twintails could only smile as she gently slid her fingers over his well-formed abdomen with its visible six pack muscles above the slight deflated manhood that certainly got quite the workout making Rose Johnston a very, VERY happy destroyer-turned-metahuman woman...not to mention help Takaki Kōta maintain a proper sort of mental balance within his artificial soul.

Never thought of stuff like THIS back in my day...!

Smiling giddily as the sensations of experiencing a half-dozen orgasms after Kōta moved to get his sexual programming stabilized, the adopted native of Cincinnati (her namesake's home town) and Tacoma (where she had been built) sighed as she stood, stretching herself to work the kinks out of her body. Grateful there were enough similarities between men and women that doing simple things like walking hadn't been an issue for the living soul of the seventy-fifth of the Fletcher-class destroyers in the period right after her rebirth/Gifting a month before, Rose headed out of the bedroom, her hand reaching for a towel to wrap around her while she proceeded downstairs to get some coffee.

Quick glances in other bedrooms revealed that the androids who bonded to her sisters Madelyn Hoel and Kistiñe Heermann y Brown were in standby mode/asleep, their lovers' bodies wrapped around them as nonsensical words fluttered from their lips. Shaking her head, Rose lifted herself off the floor, allowing her flight capabilities to let her descend to the main floor without noise; much that Kōta and his brothers didn't mind being woken from standby mode, Rose's memories of her crew doing everything they could to get as much sleep as possible instilled a very strong respect for keeping quiet when friends and sisters were napping. She certainly didn't care to be woken from a good dream, especially the dreams where she and Kōta would both be organic and married, plus
moving to start a family!

And if it was true and that androids could become organic thanks to the Great Crystal of Power...?

"Ohayō gozaimasu, Rose-dono."

Rose perked on hearing that voice, then she smirked as she sat down beside the low coffee table in the living room, noting that a cup of coffee was out beside the tea service the three Japanese kanmusu she and her sisters had surprisingly befriended over the last month had out whenever someone needed a soothing drink. Nodding her thanks to Haruguchi Harumi, Rose picked up the cup of java, then sipped from it, a grin crossing her face as the taste of sea salt danced over her lips. A glance to starboard revealed that the reborn name-ship of the Hatsuharu-class destroyers was concentrating on the television. "What's on the news?" she wondered, noting that the channel was on CNN International.

"News was just relayed from the Atlantic, Rose-dono," the amethyst-haired adopted native of Sasebo stated as she waved her gunsen — reinforced by mesonium taken from her own blood — before her face; even if it was fall, the weather was unseasonably warm and Harumi wasn't used to that arcane concept called "air conditioning". "The Lady Titanic has chosen to allow her spirit to be seized by the Great Dhármachakra, allowing her to become as us. The wise, noble Professor Ballard was there to see the Conservator gift Lady Titanic her humanity. I must wonder, however, how would Her Most Noble Majesty make use of Lady Titanic and her valiant sisters within Her Specialized Warfare Fencibles."

Rose snorted. "The Brits will figure it out, Harumi. They've always been pretty good about that."

"Yea, 'tis true..."

"Hey, Rose!"

Both turned as footfalls heralded the arrival of the reborn second of the Hatsuharu-class destroyers, now in the body of a slender yet muscular tomboy who was dressed in a fresh sports bra and pair of panties. Noting that, Rose smirked as she imagined how sweaty Haruguchi Miko got with her own cute android lover Hanabusa Yū when she saw to the cross-dressing amateur singer's internal programming. Before she could ask an embarrassing question, Harumi beat her to it: "Imōto-dono, I assume thou were able to see to Yū-dono's carnal wants as is required to keep him in good health and sanity?"
That made the woman with the bright pink hair in a French braid awk. "NĒ-CHAN!"

Rose snickered as the reborn soul of THG Nenohi sent her elder sister a pained look while Harumi cackled behind her gunsen. "What about you and Miki, Harumi?" the adopted Ohioan/Washingtonian then leered as she gazed knowingly at the reborn spirit of THG Hatsuharu, that making the adopted native of Sasebo awk while Miko also gazed in amusement at her sister. "I haven't heard her yodelling after you sent her over Niagara Falls with that VERY flexible tongue of yours...?!"

"ROSE-DONO!" Harumi yelped.

As Miko and Rose laughed, the front door of the multi-floor townhouse which had been taken over by a baker's dozen Shōzoki androids and gynoids who hid themselves among the local population to avoid agents of Mother who wanted to rob them of their free will and render them mere drones, potential fifth column agents against Terran authorities then opened to reveal two smiling teenage girls, both dressed in casual yet trendy clothing even if it was a school day. Of course, the three shipgirls in the living room could sense the truth about these two beings; their telepathy which replicated their on-board communications systems from when they were warships had made the three Fletcher-class destroyers and the three Hatsuharu-class destroyers living here able to quickly detect Shōzoki AIs regardless of their links (or lack of same) to the master intelligence back on their lost homeworld many light-years away. And while one was quite familiar as Harumi's lover Saionji Miki, the other was a stranger.

Miki, a pretty blonde with glittering amethyst eyes, quickly moved to correct that point: "Harumi-sama, Miko-sama, Rose-sama, may I present Yoshiwara Kaname-san. As you now sense, she is a free gynoid, but is also in need of a human lover to ensure she remains free of Mother's agents. Thanks to what Hinako-himesama did when Fujiko-sama was introduced to the world at the White House late Saturday evening, she is definitely open to having a kantai musume as her lover and effective 'mistress'." The lone American shipgirl in the room was quick to sense the quotes around that word; given that her crew had sworn to protect and defend the American Constitution on entering service, Rose was quite fanatical about adhering to the laws of her nation, including the Thirteenth Amendment.

Kaname, a coquettish caramel-eyed woman with long dark brown hair styled in a French braid, bowed deeply to them. "I'm so honoured," she said in a very quiet voice, tinged with understandable nervousness standing before the reborn living spirits of warships which had been used and sunk during humanity's greatest war. "Miki-san programmed me with all pertinent information concerning you all. As you now sense, she is a free gynoid, but is also in need of a human lover to ensure she remains free of Mother's agents. Thanks to what Hinako-himesama did when Fujiko-sama was introduced to the world at the White House late Saturday evening, she is definitely open to having a kantai musume as her lover and effective 'mistress'." The lone American shipgirl in the room was quick to sense the quotes around that word; given that her crew had sworn to protect and defend the American Constitution on entering service, Rose was quite fanatical about adhering to the laws of her nation, including the Thirteenth Amendment.

The three transformed destroyers smiled in welcome. "Be at home and feel safe here, Kaname-dono," Harumi then bade, nodding to the clear spot to Rose's left. "Once Wakana-imōtodono, Madelyn-dono and Kistiñe-dono are awake and enjoy some noonday refreshments, we can decide
who of us will welcome you into our beds. I assume the issue with your 'parents' is the same as Miki-dono?"

As Miki moved to sit and moved to snuggle against the lead of her class, the newcomer took her own seat beside Rose. "Hai, Harumi-sama. None suspect they're just effective drones slaved to my own programming to project the image of a 'proper' family to our neighbours. Miki-san told me about how you all disposed of those drone hunters shortly after Rose-sama and her sisters came to Sasebo after Kistiñe-sama was reborn and Gifted." She then gazed on Rose. "Was it hard, Rose-sama?"

The adopted native of Cincinnati and Topeka smirked as she squeezed the young gynoid's thigh. "It was completely above our pay grades when we finally came ashore here. Like us being in an episode of that *Twilight Zone* show the boys showed us after we became their overseers. Never mind our becoming modern-day mystery women at that!" She tried not to scowl in disgust on mentioning what her relationship with Takaki Kōta ultimately meant to him. Her namesake had been a Union officer who commanded gunboats in the War Between the States; because of that, she felt it wrong to even THINK of anything that implied any form of slavery over her boyfriend and the others who gladly welcomed her sisters and her — to say anything of Harumi and her sisters — into their home and hearts as the shipgirls adjusted to being human beings. Never mind adjusting to seventy-plus years of cultural and social advancement, to say anything of the almost-complete destruction/reconstruction of Japanese society into something that mystified Harumi, Miko and Wakana (the reborn THG *Wakaba*) at times.

"Your Christian God and our Kami willed this to happen to us, Rose-dono," Harumi declared as Miko nodded her head, the former's hand reaching down to grasp her lover's in reassurance. "To say anything of the Great Kami of the Forge of the Seekers where Raeburn-shihan's Power Jewel was first forged many ages ago. We have survived thus far with no issues and brought peace to our hosts, not to mention removed threats to all humanity born from our lovers' spiritual homeworld. Even if all of us feel the urge to report to competent military authority as Fujiko-dono and so many others clearly have done, there was no direct call from either Tennō or your President to answer a call to arms and properly mobilize us to serve as parts of our nations' specialized warfare formations."

"Harumi-sama!" Miki moaned. "You know we don't mind it if you go see friends! You know how many of your fleet mates have reported back to duty! Look what Yoiko-sama was able to do for her crew!"

Hearing that made the reborn destroyers tense before they looked down at their drinks, flashes of uncertainty shining in their eyes. "Yeah," Rose quietly mused as Kaname immediately reached over to squeeze her shoulders in support. "I'd like to shake the hands of all of *Yonaga* 's crew for surviving and thriving up there all this time. Not to mention Captain Itō herself! That took the type of guts that NO ONE in our time had, save probably for General Raeburn and her friends!"

"Your own namesake's peers during that tragic war between the states during the Meiji Era"
understood that sort of bravery, Rose-dono," Harumi advised her.

«...huh...what's going on...how...what...?»

Everyone perked. "That's an American voice!" Rose said as she glanced around, focusing her telepathy onto where that voice might have transmitted from. "A mix of Western and Great Lakes dialects..."

«...er...hands? Whoa! I got HANDS...?!»

"Our new friend is likely one of your gallant fleet mates 'returning to duty', Rose-dono," Harumi noted.

«...ah...er...okay...how the hell did I turn into a GIRL...?!»

Rose sighed. «This is United States Ship Johnston to the vessel transmitting from the north of my current position!» she telepathically transmitted. «I'm hearing your signal...»

Tene lomher'buo, Lynn Marlene Bucher-Flanagan...!

"That's the Conservator!" Miki gasped, her eyes wide.

«Huh?! Hey, what's going...oh, wow! Why do I feel blitzed all of a sudden...?!»

"'Blitzed'?!" Miko wondered.

"That's '60s slang, Miko. It means our returning fleet mate now feels drunk."

Everyone turned as a slender near-twin of Rose came down from her bedroom, dressed in a simple nightshirt to cover her well-shaped teenage body. Unlike the adopted Ohioan, Kistínhe Heermann y Brown was a turquoise-eyed girl with tanned skin marking her over two decades of service with the Armada de la República Argentina, her cornstalk-blonde hair tied in a thick braid all the way down
to her knees. "Can you tell who she is, Kisty?" Rose asked as Miko pulled out her fighting uniform's belt buckle and slapped it to her waist so she could don her white-and-black bodysuit.

The namesake of the Hessen-born surgeon's mate that led the crew that scuttled the USS *Philadelphia* during the war against the Barbary States in 1804 scrunched her face. "We have to wait..."

*Nesu...MEMNEM!*

"**Oh, man...THIS IS SO RAD...!**"

"Wait!"

Eyes locked on Miki. "What is it?!" Harumi demanded.

The gynoid high school student gazed upon her lover. "That has to be the *Pueblo*!"

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*P’yŏng’yang, on the west bank of the Pot’ong River in Pot’ong-gang Precinct, moments before...*

In the eyes of An Chaeyong, what he had just witnessed proved there was a God.

The native of Kangsŏ County on the Youth Hero Expressway between P’yŏng’yang and Namp’o in South P’yŏng’an Province had always dreamed of the chance to openly explore forbidden topics such as religion. That came about thanks to his parents; even if his father was a member of the Supreme People's Assembly representing Kangsŏ, both his parents were passionate Catholics, an affiliation that could see them and their whole family taken prisoner by the Ministry of State Security under the concept of "family responsibility", sentenced for life in one of North Korea's five political concentration camps. Because of that, the young pianist who had been allowed to train at one of the elite musical schools in P’yŏng’yang had always dreamed of the chance to get out of North Korea and go to a country like America, where religious freedom was enshrined in the basic law of the land.
That prompted his visit today to the Victorious Fatherland Liberation War Museum...

...and the chance to tour the only American naval warship held in captivity.

Of course, Chaeyong came with escort. Thanks to his father, the pianist was blessed with a pretty companion from the Kippŭm-jo, the top secret "happiness team" of modern-day kisaeng who saw to the intimate needs of the elite of the Worker's Party of Korea. Paek Yŏngsuk was a native of Pukch'ang northeast of the capital, a farmer's daughter who joined the People's Army when she came of age, then was accepted into the Kippŭm-jo thanks to her quite wholesome beauty, which could easily match the most popular actresses and models from the "decadent" South. To ensure no interference from local security forces while they went on their "date" — that was Yŏngsuk's term for it, much to Chaeyong's delight — the raven-haired, brown-eyed twenty-something was in her dress uniform, her two-star rank of lieutenant on her epaulettes and the right medals displayed on her chest marking her a loyal officer to the Supreme Leader of the Democratic People's Republic and the ideals of Chuch'e that still dominated the land decades after support from socialist allies such as the Soviet Union dried up.

They had been about to board the converted Camano-class cargo ship for a private tour — as arranged by Yŏngsuk through one of the officers assigned to the museum, Captain No Sang'u of Ch'ŏngjin on the East Sea coast near the border with Russia — when the whole ship started to glow brightly with energy Chaeyong (thanks to his excellent science grades) was quick to identify as ruby-pattern mesonium, something that made Yŏngsuk and Sang'u gape in awe at his sharp eye for detail.

"...huh...what's going on...how...what...?"

Hearing that young woman's voice in clear American English — which Chaeyong could understand thanks to private Bible studies with fellow Catholics as arranged by his father — the three looked around to find the source. A flash of light then made Yŏngsuk look towards the now-glowing USS Pueblo as the waters of the Pot'ong-gang began to bubble. "Sang'u-ya! Look!" she bade, pointing.

Sang'u looked himself, then gaped on seeing a glowing female-shaped mannequin-like being appear thanks to a space warp that just opened over the upper weather deck, forward of the main pilotage platform and above the special compartment that had held the intelligence ship's special communications gear. "What in Fate's name...?" he hissed, shaking his head.

As Chaeyong stared in confusion at the two young officers — it stuck him odd that Yŏngsuk would speak to her senior with such a personal form of address — the mannequin-thing began to move as energy started to be drawn from Pueblo to flood into it, making the chalk-white skin slowly morph into something more human...and African human at that! As the pianist himself turned back to look...
"...er...hands? Whoa! I got HANDS...?!

The being that was absorbing energy from the captured intelligence vessel now looked VERY human, about sixteen years of age if the pianist from Kangsŏ was any judge, with a slender body even if she had very perky breasts — seeing such making Chaeyong blush — as straight black hair grew out of her head, cascading down to mid-neck. At the same time, more energy began to flood across this being's body to cover it in a dark blue form-fitting jumpsuit without any sleeves, medium blue-grey pants covering her legs and very pronounced womanhood, a black belt wrapping around her waist and black boots with fold-down outer flaps covering her feet and lower calves.

"How could that be happening, Yŏngsuk-a?" Sang'u demanded.

A shake of the head answered the captain. "I just can't say...!"

"...ah...er...okay...how the hell did I turn into a GIRL...?!

Said being — who now resembled a very fit African-American teenager — was gazing down on herself as shouts in the background alerted Chaeyong and the people beside him to the approach of a section's worth of personnel from the Ministry of People's Security, the national police force, they now running quite fast. While Sang'u turned to confront the patrol force, Yŏngsuk shifted closer to Chaeyong. "I'll protect you, Sŏnsaeng-nim!" she immediately declared as she moved to shift him back.

That declaration made the pianist blush...

...just as the voice of what HAD to be some type of archangel then spoke!

*Tene lomher'buo, Lynn Marlene Bucher-Flanagan...!

On hearing that thunderous voice while the energy surrounding the transforming mannequin-thing that had just appeared over the *Pueblo* became too bright to gaze directly at without being blinded — which seemed to echo throughout ALL of Pyŏng'yang thanks to the glass-covered walls of the pyramid-shaped tower lying seven hundred metres to the southwest — Yŏngsuk was quick to whisper a word that didn't make any sense at all to the young pianist from Kangsŏ, *Yiziba...!*
A quick glance to her showed Chaeyong that she was looking at this unbelievable event with a face shining with starstruck awe, mixed with hope. A glance back towards the impossible scene on the river made the pianist wince before his jaw dropped as he watched the hull of the converted cargo ship be literally LIFTED out of the river...just before it MELTED, the morphing metal, wood and everything else that had composed USS Pueblo flowing like a raging waterfall into the mannequin-thing...

...who now could definitely be seen and was acting like a living PERSON!

"Huh?! Hey, what's going...oh, wow! Why do I feel blitzed all of a sudden...?!

How in God's name is this POSSIBLE...?! Chaeyong wondered as the shouts of onlookers grew...

...while the massive flows of energy emitting from the being that was literally ABSORBING the mass of an 812 tonne combat support ship became as blinding as the noonday Sun!

Nesu...MEMNEM!

"Oh, man...THIS IS SO RAD...!"

All the pianist could see for a moment after that thunderous declaration by the great archangel was pure white light that seemed to emulate Heaven Itself...

...before a hand tapped his shoulder, making him yelp in shock!

"Yŏboseyo! P'yŏnghwa, Tongji-nim!"

Blinking as he saw the familiar cityscape of North Korea's capital city around him, Chaeyong turned...

...before his jaw dropped again on seeing the being that had been created by forces beyond his understanding now standing there, her hand gently squeezing his shoulder as she stared in amusement at him, the energy that created/transformed her dissipating into the atmosphere. As Yŏngsuk shifted herself closer to her charge and Sang'u waved up members of the local police box...
to make sure nearby civilians would be shielded, Chaeyong's eyes then turned down to note the blue stadium ring insignia on this being's chest, it trimmed by gold ship's rope. Noting the ship name USS PUEBLO at the upper arc of that ring and AGER-2 on the lower arc in gold, the pianist was quick to note the white shield in the middle of the crest, displaying a red sea horse looking to the viewer's left, the tail wrapped around a lightning bolt; wrapped around the sea horse's body was a blue ribbon ending in a shield-like badge bearing thirteen white stars. The shield itself sat on a pair of ribbons tied in a corset, one was a black ribbon with white sides, the sides trimmed in red and blue while the other was a blue-gold-red ribbon with white centre stripe, said stripe trimmed in red and blue. Under the shield were three bronze stars, that over a scroll in dark blue with gold chosŏn'gŭl characters on it:

Chaeyong blinked for a moment, then he bowed his head. "P'yŏnghwa, Tongji-nim!"

As the smiling woman drew her hand back while assuming an at-east posture, the growing crowd who had been close to such a clearly unprecedented event all blinked in understandable confusion...

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Chinhae Ward in Ch'ang'wŏn (South Kyŏngsang Province), the Ch'ang'wŏn Marine Park (twenty-five kilometres west of downtown Pusan), that moment...

Oe...who's that...Pueblo-ya...what's going on...?

Hearing that beautiful voice with its mixture of accents — a trained linguist knowledgeable in both languages would detect the tones of Philadelphia and New York City English beautifully mixed with the Yŏngdong form of Kang'wŏn-pang'ŏn Korean — the two aged veterans of the maritime warfare branch of the South Korean armed forces perked before they looked around. Having retired to the city-turned-megacity ward that served as the hometown for the navy's headquarters divisions, both men who had served aboard the fifth of the Gearing-class destroyers during her two decades of honourable service for the Land of the Morning Calm had come to visit their ship and reminisce about the good old days...

...not to mention talk about other things.

"Um...Sŏng'gyŏng-a...did you just hear that?"

"Ne, I did, Myŏngsu-ya...!"
The two former chief enginemen exchanged concerned looks for a moment, then they looked towards the decommissioned TMK Kang‘wŏn tied alongside the park...

...oe! Who's doing this to me...?! OE...!

...to see the ship originally commissioned as USS William R. Rush GLOWING!

"Uwa...!" both men croaked in disbelief.

"Ah, Sŏng'gyŏng-a, you don't think...?!

"You mean like those Ilbon haegun ch‘ô‘nyŏ that were on the news yesterday, Myŏngsu-ya...?!

"Ne...!"

Ŭng...Myŏngsu-ya...Sŏng'gyŏng-a...?!

As the decommissioned veteran of the Korean War and multiple deployments in the Atlantic and Mediterranean while she served in the United States Navy — atop twenty-two years of service to the Republic of Korea Navy — began to brightly glow, a warp-like something appeared between her twin smokestacks, that producing something similar to what both Kim Sŏng'gyŏng and Pak Myŏngsu vividly remembered watching thanks to a young Japanese girl, half-sister of the world's most famous teenager alive today, on the news the previous morning, something that caused both veterans' grandchildren to squeal in awe at the sight of a warship being turned to an honest-to-goodness mystery woman...!

Oe! You're here...!

_Tene lomher‘buo, Wynter Sŏn'a Rush...!_

Both men as shouts in the background heralded the arrival of security personnel and some local tourists who had come to the Marine Park to spend a wonderful Monday morning away from the big
"Oh, chenjang...!" Sŏng'gyŏng and Myŏngsu moaned together before ducking away as the transformation began, marked by the energy turning blinding.

Nesu...TUODUM!

Blinding light made everyone scream out as they turned away from the sight...

...before they turned back on hearing boot-covered feet land on the tarmac nearby!

"ANNYŎNG MODUDŬL!"

The people found themselves gaping at what appeared to be someone appearing to be a performer with modern K-pop bands such as Girls' Generation. Possessing natural blonde hair centre-parted and flowing to mid-back, with dark blue eyes on a well-shaped Korean face, she seemed to be at the cusp of adulthood, wise with knowledge yet gazing upon the world with newborn eyes. She was currently dressed in the sleeveless form-fitting jumpsuits a sextet of German schiffsmädchen had shown off at the White House late Saturday evening, which had been part of the first story on the Sunday morning news shows. White overall with dark blue boots and green belt, the proud badge of the Republic of Korea Navy on her buckle, she also had white gauntlets covering both her hands. The official logo of her namesake province was on her chest, that topped with the vertical han'gŭl blocks in black.

Before anyone could try to ask a question, a massive shout echoed over the scene...

"KANG'WŎN MANSE!"

Hearing that cheer from a small squad's worth of Korean Marines, the just-transformed Wynter Sŏn'a Rush could only blush, giggling as she rubbed the back of her head...

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Kyerong in South Ch'ungch'ŏng Province (ten kilometres west-southwest of Taejŏn),
"OE! CHEDONG-NIM!"

Hearing that shriek from down the hallway as running feet echoed hard in the hallway, the current senior officer of the armed forces of the Republic of Korea could only moan as he fought the urge to smack his head into the desk before him. As the pretty Army colonel seated nearby fought back the urge to snicker, General Chŏng Sŭngcho looked up as the door to his office flew open to reveal a very eager teenager in a VERY form-fitting jumpsuit that was more befitting for the beach than engaging in metahuman combat. "TŬNGSHIN! HOW MANY TIMES DO I HAVE TO SAY THIS?! CALL ME 'CHANGGUN-NIM'! HOW HARD IS THAT TO UNDERSTAND?!!"

The living soul of the first of the Project V6/Pongp'ung-class destroyers who had been brought to life with the help of that wonderful mudang now living close to the coast of the Namhae felt her red-streaked blonde hair be blown back by that wall of noise escaping the forty-year army veteran. As she visibly winced at that admonishment — which occurred EVERY time the woman now called Sŏng Mijin came charging into General Chŏng's office to make some report, no matter how excited the first of Toyama Sumie's younger sisters was — the elderly general relaxed himself as he sat back in his chair. Sparing a scolding look to the young telepath who now served as commander of the specialized warfare combat company of the famous 707th Special Mission Battalion — Ch'oi Sŏnghŭi had been brevetted to her acting rank from major so she would be technically superior to the honorary commanders and lieutenant commanders of whatever Korean warships "came back to duty" — the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff took a breath as he fought down the urge to really let the silly girl before him have it.

"What is it this time, Mijin-a?" he calmly asked, wishing to hell that the President had saddled the senior naval officer of the armed forces, Admiral Ch'oi Yunhŭi, with this particular duty after Reverend Su Muwol revealed what happened to the living spirits of sixteen Japanese destroyers who never got any chance to serve the late Heavenly Sovereign of Shōwa in World War Two.

The adopted native of P'ohang blushed as she rubbed the back of her head, an embarrassed giggle escaping her. Like her older sister, Mijin had long straight hair that was blonde; such was streaked with red that matched that of the tàijítú which formed the central symbol of the T'aegŭkki. Blue eyes peeked out of a face that was properly Oriental even if the most sharp-eyed natives of Korea might conclude she was Japanese. Her uniform was dark brown overall with light blue belt, bicep-length gloves and thigh-high boots which matched what Sumie herself wore. Naturally, red and dark blue racing stripes were on the gloves and boots. On her chest was the image of a mountain with fierce winds flowing down the slopes from Heaven, the han'gŭl in vertical black-piped white on her chest. Also emulating her beloved elder sister — in a manner than any Korean would loudly approve of — Mijin wore a hairband tied in what looked like rabbit ears from a distance, the cloth itself was white with red rose flowers on it, inspired by the official flower of the East Sea industrial city in Kyŏngsangpuk-do.
"Ah, mihanhaeyo, Chedong-nim!" Mijin stated, ignoring the angry look from her host at making that mistake about his title yet AGAIN right after he gave her the tenth degree about that. "I just picked up what could be signals from other shipgirls who are waking up and being Gifted right now! There are two in Chinhae, one in Kangnŭng, one in Tangjin and one all the way up in P'yŏng'yang!"

Sŭnghŭi nodded. "The Kang'wŏn, Taedong, Chŏnbuk, Chŏnju and...!"

It hit them!

"PYŎNG'YANG?!" the two senior officers exclaimed.

Mijin blinked in obvious confusion...

****

While back in the capital of the "hermit kingdom"...

"This is something that the Supreme Leader must have allowed!"

Hearing that exclamation from the pretty teenage girl — a member of the Kim Ilsŏng Socialist Youth League, An Chaeyong was quick to recognize on seeing the armband for the organization's newspaper, the Ch'ŏngnyŏn Chŏn'ui, wrapped around her left bicep — who had approached the just-transformed Marlene Bucher-Flanagan after she greeted the young pianist from Kangsŏ, both Paek Yŏngsuk and No Sang'u exchanged an amused look...though they kept it muted to ensure the scowling members of the Ministry of Public Safety who raced over to investigate this incredible occurrence didn't see such and openly question their loyalty to what was seen as "right" and "proper" in the Democratic People's Republic. As said girl's companions — all young women in high school, Chaeyong quickly noted — eagerly nodded in agreement, the would-be reporter pointed to the beautiful saying in chosŏng'ŭl serving as the "motto" of the reborn USS Pueblo. "See! 'Peace For All'! You can read it here!"

"Ne, that's true!" the reporter's best friend eagerly declared, nodding in agreement. "My father serves in the People's Navy! He says that ships have a spirit inside them! The Supreme Leader must have found a way to allow the spirit of Pueblo to express herself properly!"

"Ne! Look what she wants! She wants peace!" another girl chanted.
All the girls — senior students at the P'yŏng'yang Music Academy in Taedong-gang Precinct across the river of the same name from here, both Sang'u and Yŏngsuk were quick to recognize thanks to the school crests on their white uniform tops — began to chant "PUEBLO MANSE!" at the top of their lungs while waving their hands in delight. As Marlene blushed madly at such a show of support — even for the wrong reasons — many of the civilians who had come close to see what was going on began to cheer and applaud. "Ah! C'mon, little comrades! Relax! Relax!" the adopted native of her namesake city and county in Colorado and Kewaunee on the shore of Lake Michigan in Wisconsin called out, waving her hands to calm the excitable kids down; even if they were clearly intoxicated with the sheer tsunami of propaganda people living in this country were subject to 24/7/52, they clearly meant well. And save for the local squad of pigs who were currently keeping the civvies back, everyone else was clearly smiling at what happened to the once-captive intelligence ship. While Marlene knew thanks to her first generation battle doll memories that she was insanely tough and could take on the worst the so-called "children of the gods" could toss at her — which was just an ETERNITY beyond whatever any power on Earth could possibly have! — she wasn't a combat warship of any sort; save for the force projection abilities that were gifted to her new body by the second Healer of Destruction...!

«Annyŏng! Oe! Who's up in P'yŏng'yang?! Are you hurt?!»

Hearing that voice — which had a mixture of Chŏlla-pang'ŏn Korean with both the Western and Eastern New England dialects of American English — Marlene's dark blue eyes snapped to the southeast, they narrowing as she reached out with what felt like her on-board radio communications interception gear to triangulate where that signal came from. «Yo! Annyŏng! I'm cool and the local folk are mellow! Who am I gabbing with anyway?! You sound like some sort of tin can...!»

«Taehan Minguk Kumhan Chŏnbuk,» came the reply before the voice turned into a perfect Yankee tone as the strange speaker added, «I used to be United States Ship Everett F. Larson. The Conservator — I think it was him — just named me 'Elaine Sŏn'yŏng Larson'.»

Marlene nodded. «USS Pueblo, now Marlene Bucher-Flanagan after my last CO,» she transmitted. «Where the hell are you out of now, Sŏn'yŏng-a? You sound like you're patrolling the East Sea...»

«Kangnŭng in Kang'wŏn, just eighty clicks south of the DMZ. It's where I got beached after I was decommissioned in '99,» came the reply from the adopted native of Stamford in Connecticut (her original namesake's hometown), Bath in Maine (where she had been built), Chŏnju in North Chŏlla (capital city of her present namesake province) and Kangnŭng replied. «What the hell made you wake up just now, Marlene-ya? Don't tell me Mama Cass was by doing her crazy thing!»
"Mama Cass"?!

A groan responded. «Long Beach.»

That made Marlene blink. «Oh...her...!»

"Comrade, are you alright...?"

That was the would-be reporter for the Ch'ŏngnyŏn Chŏn'ui, who had come over to gently squeeze the transformed intelligence ship's hand, making Marlene gaze her way. "Oe! Oe! I'm sorry, little comrade!" she said as she gently rubbed the teenage girl's head, making her shudder at such a show of compassion. "I was just 'talking' to an old comrade of mine; she's down in Kangnŭng right now."

All the girls gasped. Being passionate members of the Socialist Youth League, they knew their geography and what they were supposed to believe when it came to the people south of the DMZ. "She's being held captive by the Namjosŏn-saram?!" the reporter demanded.

A flash of light then made people gasp before they turned to look...!

"Who says I'm being held captive, Yŏdongsaeng-a?! That's just silly!"

...then they gaped on seeing the smiling woman, looking to be a little older than Marlene, standing nearby after TELEPORTING herself from the East Sea coast of Kang'wŏn-do. As the members of the Ministry of People's Security howled in outrage on seeing such a being appear out of NOWHERE like that, No Sang'u and Paek Yŏngsuk exchanged worried looks while An Chaeyong shuffled back to sit down on a nearby bench, shaking his head in disbelief. However, the young music students who came to tour the Pueblo were quick to gape at what was obviously a KOREAN woman despite her wavy mixed blonde-brown hair cut square at mid-neck and Western blue eyes. Never mind her uniform, which was of the same cut as the transformed intelligence ship that had been held in North Korea since 1968, though coloured with a light blue top, red trousers, gold boots, dark blue gauntlets and a green belt embossed with what had to be a South Korean symbol of some sort. On her chest was the J-shaped symbol of her namesake province, the black-piped white vertical characters emblazoned atop it.

On being called "little sister" by the just-arrived Elaine Sŏn'yŏng Larson, the would-be reporter squawked in embarrassment as her classmates giggled in amusement at such a form of address.
Before someone could say something, though...

"AMERICAN DEVIL! HOW DARE YOU ATTACK US?! DIE!"

The students all screamed as the members of the MPS detail that came onto the scene whipped out Type 58 assault rifles and Paektu-san pistols, all moving to aim at Elaine...regardless of the fact that a half-dozen teenage girls stood in the way! As Marlene moved to pull several girls to safety, Elaine snarled as she reached out with one hand, a force bubble appearing over that limb before it projected to form a defensive shield between the students and the attacking police troops. It was just in time: A dozen of the AK-47 derivatives roared at full automatic, accompanied by two CZ-75 derivatives going off in semiautomatic mode. "NŎ PABO YA!" Sang'u screamed out. "CEASE FIRE...!"

"TRAITOR!" the leader of the MPS — a captain — snapped back as he glared at the other officer, his eyes flashing a glowing gold that made both shipgirls perk in obvious recognition. "YOU'LL...!"

"LUNCHTIME!"

The people seeing this all gasped as Marlene leapt into the air, somersaulting over her former fleet mate's defensive force shield to land behind the just-exposed Goa'uld possessing the police officer, then her mesonium-hardened fingernails lanced into the back of the captain's neck, snaring the symbiote before it could recognize the danger in time before it was ripped out of its host body with one strong yank. As blood exploded from the now-dead officer's shattered neck while he collapsed to the ground, a senior sergeant spun around, levelling his rifle at the transformed intelligence ship. "KEK'ULD!" he shrieked out as his eyes glowed, which made Sang'u and Yŏngsuk tense while Elaine licked her lips in anticipation; her fuel tanks had been emptied when she was beached at Unification Park in Kangnŭng and she was hungry. "HOW DARE YOU DEFY YOUR GODS...?!

"Target, Goa'uld-possessed senior sergeant: Kill-disrupt!"

"Target, Goa'uld-possessed senior sergeant: Kill-disrupt!"

The other Goa'uld tensed on hearing that cold computer voice...

...before he shrieked as a bolt of energy slammed into his head, sending a wave of disruptive energy
through his body to literally SHRED the nervous system of both host and symbiote thanks to a Level 15 fatal shot from the Lawgiver pistol in Yŏngsuk's hand. As the students who were protected by Elaine all gaped in awe on seeing such a futuristic weapon in the hand of the brave first lieutenant who had been protecting the handsome An Chaeyong-sŏnsaengnim, the other MPS officers tensed as their team sergeant collapsed on the ground...just as a hissing sound escaped the corpse's mouth thanks to the symbiote trying to escape to seek a new host. However, despite multiple exposures to the sarcophagus technology that had been created by Telchak ages ago that made the symbiote quite durable, it couldn't fight ebony mesonium radiation at such an intensity that it simply expired just as most of its body escaped its dead host's mouth, all out in the open where the other police officers could see it.

"WHAT IN THE NAME OF THE SUPREME LEADER IS THAT?!
the lieutenant that had been in second in command of the MPS force demanded, his eyes wide with disbelief on seeing such a disgusting thing emit from the old sergeant's mouth...whose looks matched that of the thing the transformed Pueblo had physically ripped out of the back of his now-dead captain's neck!

"Alien invaders, Comrade Lieutenant! Stand your people down! Safety the rifles!"

On hearing Sang'u declare that, the lieutenant blinked before he nodded, waving his men to lower their weapons and engage their safeties. Noting that, Elaine relaxed herself...then gasped as several crying music students nearly knocked her over with relieved hugs; even if she had come from the decadent South, she had acted in their defence without question, which made her a true Korean at heart! As Chaeyong gaped at the futuristic weapon in his escort's hand, Sang'u walked over to pull the dead symbiote out of the sergeant's mouth before tossing it over to Elaine. The reborn forty-second of the Gearing-class destroyers perked as that tumbling snake-like mass came her way, then she snared it with one hand before stuffing the head right into her mouth, snapping the skull off with one strong bite. "I figured you'd be hungry right about now, Comrade Commander Larson," Sang'u joked, giving the reborn native of Stamford, Bath, Chŏnju and Kangnǔng an amused wink.

Elaine munched down the skull, her face perking at the delightful taste, then she playfully saluted him back. "Komawŏ!" She then glanced over to the lieutenant with the neat blaster pistol. "Oe, you mind smoking the lar'beke Marlene-a has now?!
As the people around them all gaped in confusion, the reborn destroyer gazed on her old fleet-mate. "You gotta try it after it gets tenderized like she did it! Even better than the campfires the Undertaker made for us in the First Invasion!"

Marlene blinked, then she shrugged. "I'm game!"

Yŏngsuk laughed as she levelled her weapon after the transformed intelligence ship held out her still-struggling first meal as a shipgirl. One blast of the Lawgiver later, Marlene took a bite, then she grinned. "Now all we need is some good mul-laengmyŏn to wash this down!" she stated after munching the head. "Lucky thing I know how it tastes from the security people who watched over me after I got brought here from the East Sea back in Chuch’e Suin’ilgom-nyŏn!"
"You want raengmyŏn, Comrade?!!" the would-be reporter asked as her classmates gaped on hearing that this once-captive American warship-turned-woman wanted to try the popular noodle dish.

"Why not, Yŏdongsaeng-a?!" Elaine asked after taking another bite of her symbiote snack, she giving the younger woman an amused smile while she waved her hand around to indicate the metropolis around them. "Everyone in the WORLD knows the best naengmyŏn can be found here in P'yŏng'yang!"

"Comrade, you pronounced it wrong!!" another music student cautioned.

That made the transformed destroyer blush...

****

And just sixteen hundred metres east of northeast of this scene, a hundred metres under the foundation of the P'yŏng'yang Television Tower...

"Oh...you look so beautiful, Isis-a...!"

A delicate hand reached down the well-formed abdomen of the tanned woman now strapped down on the diagnostic bed to reach under the frilly panties which had been purchased for her by one of her host's agents currently in South Korea to gently stroke what was underneath, making the radically-transformed Goa'uld queen that had been rescued by the niece of the current leader of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea croak in orgasmic joy as her new battle doll body reacted to that loving touch. "S-s-stop...!" the woman now called "Isis Taylor" thanks to well-forged documents yet another agent of the would-be empress of the reunited Land of the Morning Calm had been quick to obtain with the help of a North Carolinian contractor to the National Security Agency cried out as she tried to shift herself clear of Kim Hyegyŏng's very soft fingers. "Wh-wh-why...?"

The woman with the caramel-streaked black hair and the very wise brown eyes that were FAR older than her actual nineteen years chuckled as her other hand came up to trace the edge of Isis' long wavy brown hair. "'Why', you ask?" the current incarnation of the Sandalwood Empress of the New Dawn, Gamtom-uodim ("Tan'gun-wanggŏm"), wondered before she leaned over to gently kiss Isis' nose, making the adopted native of Elizabeth City in the northeast part of the Tarheel State wince even if her body was clearly reacting quite positively to Hyegyŏng's tender touch. "You know, Isisa, you and your husband were rather lucky that you were stuck in those canopic jars when your friends decided they wanted to steal the power of the First Race for themselves five sagas ago. Oh,
the fight scenes unleashed by the Healer and all her wonderful creations on Ra's fleet were something to watch! The screams of all your siblings as the Master of the Gaol ripped their bodies from their hosts and condemned them to eternal torture in the Great Forge...!" A whimsical smile crossed her face before she frowned as Isis tried not to shudder; since she was deprived of all that made her so powerful as the first empress of ancient Egypt, she had nothing to challenge this terrible monster with something close to even footing. "Not as varied as the Dawn of Power turned out to be in the long term, but...!"

The youngest child of Kim Chŏngnam, eldest son of the late "Dear Leader" of the DPRK, shrugged. "Ah, I suppose I shouldn't be too surprised in the end. You Goa'uld were so umale back then and you've been that way ever since you escaped that SWAMP you called a home planet so long ago..."

She perked on hearing the rumble of an ancient ring device engage, making her look over to one side of the vast underground chamber her first-self created five millennia before to serve as his private base on Earth, then she smiled on noting that the so-called "Beta Gate" — as such had been called by Samantha Carter and Jonathan O'Neill when they discovered it by accident nearly two years before — was now forming a wormhole to another place. Knowing that the leaders of America's Stargate Command trusted her with the older Stargate since she was no supporter of her uncle Kim Chŏng'ŭn — without understanding what Hyegyŏng ultimately intended to do for her criminally-impoverished homeland even if such spelled civil war in the end — so they wouldn't be coming over from Colorado to visit her, the reborn first leader of ancient Chosŏn hummed. "Wonder who's coming by..."

"You should be on guard, Hyegyŏng...!"

That was Isis, who was glaring at her with her dark brown eyes. There was a faint glow in them, the Sandalwood Empress was quick to note...but she knew that was because of the growing metaphysical links between the reborn Goa'uld queen and the Great Crystal of Power, not the energy of her original serpentine body, which had been recovered by friends of Daniel Jackson and was autopsied at Stargate Command headquarters shortly before the possession of the archaeologist's old friend Sarah Gardner by Isis' husband Osiris had been discovered. "Why, you DO care, Isis-a!" Hyegyŏng purred as she gazed down at the trapped Isis...before her mirth faded from her face, replaced by a cold look that nearly gave the Goa'uld-turned-Yizibajohei battle doll a heart attack. "Besides, I think I know who's coming..."

The powerful whooshing noise of the wormhole forming within the Stargate echoed through the main chamber of Asadal Base as the others in the room save Isis gazed upon the event horizon...just as two people walked calmly out from whichever planet they had been on beforehand. One was a visibly dazed woman in her late twenties, possessing long curly dark blonde hair and brown eyes, dressed in a very beautiful pale silk gown with nearly-bare shoulders, a very intricate necklace with many precious stones around her neck and various advanced devices on her person indicative that she was a Goa'uld lord of some standing. The other was a slender Yizibajohei teenage man with short-cropped curly crimson hair, very soulful amethyst eyes and freckles on his face, dressed in a hooded older-model jumpsuit that would be seen as almost fashionable in Saudi Arabia, coloured in
soft beige and gold. He was currently supporting the just-arrived reborn first pharaoh of Egypt, who was now quite drunk thanks to the empathic aura of the Eager Apprentice of True Passion, *Rukuogae* (*"Mubtadi"*), one of the many experts in pillow scenes that always cropped up from time to time on the World of the Forge to help keep the overall population numbers among the Named at a sufficiently high level.

"Welcome back, Nator'be-ya!" Hyegyŏng declared as two of her smiling assistants — all were Shōzoki androids resembling natives of the North who had once been drone slaves of Mother sent to infiltrate North Korea before the Sandalwood Empress freed them and gave them true sentience — came over to lift the possessed Sarah Gardner off Nator'beneseam Guo'ono's shoulder, then they carried her over to the diagnostic bed to Isis' left. "I trust that retrieving this one wasn't too much of an issue."

"Oh, not at all, Miss Hyegyŏng," the fruit farmer's son from the old state of Tamra in the northern polar continent — while he was an acquaintance of Tariko Katabarbe and her circle of local friends, Nator'be wasn't from Kabe-koli — stated as he accompanied the two burly men dressed as soldiers in the People's Army to ensure Osiris/Sarah was made comfortable even if s/he wouldn't be allowed to escape. Gently grasping her/his hand, he gave his host an amused look. "Despite being a man in mind, Osiris hadn't counted on the fact that his host hadn't enjoyed any decent pillow scenes in *seasons*!" As Isis gasped on realizing who had just been caught by these horrifying hok'tar-like beings that looked DOWN on the Goa'uld like they would Tau'ri, Nator'be grasped the archaeologist's hand to tenderly kiss the back of it; of course, the kara kesh system lords always used to keep their underlings suppressed had been removed and disposed of once Nator'be swayed Osiris/Sarah to his will, then proceeded to transport her off Juna for Earth. "I think I was able to make him understand the joys of bisexuality!"

"Well, 'she' will soon have no choice," the Sandalwood Empress declared, which made Isis gasp as a terrible sinking feeling flooded her from head to toe. "But first..."

With a gesture of her hand, Hyegyŏng opened a portal in time-space, making Isis gape in disbelief on seeing such raw cosmic power displayed by her captor. As a groan escaped Osiris/Sarah while the two androids who had brought him/her over from the Stargate moved to secure him/her down, a glowing mannequin-like thing was pulled through from the Doll House to come to hover over the semi-conscious first emperor of ancient Egypt. A twist of the hand by the reborn ruler of the kingdom of Kuorim on the eastern equatorial continent both at its founding and three millennia later when the Dawn of Power began saw the battle doll turned about to directly face the dazed Goa'uld system lord. Then, a stab of one finger saw energy escape the synthezoid to wrap around the possessed archaeologist...which began to morph the battle doll into a perfect clone replica of the native of Colchester!

Isis' eyes went wide as it dawned on her what Hyegyŏng was doing. "**NO! HUSBAND, WAKE UP! GET UP! YOU'RE ABOUT TO BE TURNED INTO A SLAVE! OSIRIS! IT'S ME! ISIS! WAKE UP...!**"
That was enough to shake through Nator'be's empathic hypnosis of the reborn first emperor of Egypt. Osiris'/Sarah's eyes snapped opened as s/he found herself facing what looked like his/her own TWIN SISTER, now floating serenely before him/her, clothed only in the crystalline-shaded sleeveless battlesuit of a Yizibajohei who was planning to "dance" with the Great Crystal of Power to become one of the named. Before Isis' screams could make the possessed archaeologist look her way, the sheer aura of pure POWER that lay within the synthetic being's body seemed to sear right into Osiris' very soul, making him realizing that the battle doll before him was free of any soul and far MORE powerful than any Tau'ri or even Jaffa he had encountered in his nearly twenty millennia of life.

For a Goa'uld NOT knowledgeable about the Children of the Forge, the choice was...understandable.

Isis' eyes teared as her husband's true body lurched out of Sarah Gardner's mouth to leap into the warm mouth of the being before the dazed archaeologist, he immediately moving to take control of it...

...which is when his SOUL was seized by the mesonium within the battle doll's body just as Hyegyŏng shifted it away from the now-passed out Sarah, the now-trapped Osiris floating between her and Isis...

...which was ultimately just in time as the battle doll's terrible defences against any sort of threat to the spirit contained within reacted quite violently to the particles of naquadah that were in Osiris' birth body, causing the now-soulless creature to be vomited out of the battle doll's mouth to land on the floor nearby, the symbiote now smoking thanks to the fatal burns delivered to it.

A symbiote that no longer held the soul of Isis' beloved husband.

Which now meant...

Osiris was now MORTAL!

And forever slaved to the terrifying "Great Show of Life" on the World of the Forge...!

"NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO
To Be Continued...!

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WRITER'S NOTES

Note that the events of this part happen in the same time-frame as the events in the previous part.

Concerning USS William D. Porter (Michelle Porter) and how people reacted to her during her brief time of service, there was an article released by Cracked magazine on their website concerning FIVE separate incidents, including TWO incidents concerning USS Iowa (Gabby Lewis) when President Franklin D. Roosevelt was aboard in late 1943. You can find that article via the reference links in the Wikipedia article concerning the destroyer.

Speaking of which, the shipgirls introduced or mentioned in this part:

Captain Hélène Coultier USN (United States Ship Saint Lô [CVE-63])
Matsuo Suzuko-taisha DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan Suzuya [CA-27])
Minakami Chitose-taisha DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan Chikuma [CA-30])
Commander Michelle Porter USN (United States Ship William D. Porter [DD-579])
CDR Rose Johnston USN (United States Ship Johnston [DD-557])
CDR Madelyn Hoel USN (United States Ship Hoel [DD-533])
CDR Kistiñe Heermann y Brown USN (later Capitán de Fragata ARA) (United States Ship Heermann [DD-532], later Armada de la República Argentina Almirante Brown [pendant D-20])
Haruguchi Harumi-chūsa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan Hatsuharu [DD-177])
Haruguchi Miko-chūsa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan Nenohi [DD-178])
Haruguchi Wakana-chūsa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan Wakaba [DD-179])
Commander Eleanor Smith RNR (Royal Mail Ship Titanic [pendant A401])
Of course, **USS Johnston** (Rose Johnston) and the three Hatsuharu-class destroyers resemble their *KanColle* interpretations. Both **USS William D. Porter** (Michelle Porter) and **USS Hoel** (Madelyn Hoel) look like their *Warship Girls* interpretations. And **USS Heermann** (Kistiñe Heermann y Brown) is based on a fan art interpretation of her drawn by Au Sn, which can be found on Pixiv at ID #63931981, though with tanned skin to mark her service with the **Armada de la República Argentina** (ARA) ("Navy of the Argentine Republic") as ARA **Almirante Brown** from 1961-82. **USS Pueblo** (Marlene Bucher-Flanagan) resembles an African-American woman who served as a private in the 38th Infantry Regiment, one of the famous **Buffalo Soldier** units, while disguised as a man, **Cathay Williams** (1844-93). **TMK Kang'wŏn** (Wynter Sŏn'a Rush) and **TMK Chŏnbuk** (Elaine Sŏn'yŏng Larson) both resemble two members of the K-pop band **Sonyŏ Shidae** ("Girls' Generation"), Kim T'ae-yŏn (born 1989) and Ch'oi Suyŏng (born 1990) respectively. And, of course, **TMK Pongp'ung** (Sŭng Mijin) resembles her elder half-sister **THG Shimakaze** (Toyama Sumie).

As a reminder, **RMS Titanic** (Eleanor Smith) was introduced in the omake *Reborn From the Deep*; she is seen as a member of the **Royal Naval Reserve** (RNR), the part-time service element of the United Kingdom's maritime warfare service. Of course, **USS Pueblo** (Marlene Bucher-Flanagan), **TMK Kang'wŏn** (Wynter Sŏn'a Rush) and **TMK Chŏnbuk** (Elaine Sŏn'yŏng Larson) were first noted on in the previous part. And **TMK Pongp'ung** (Sŭng Mijin) was first noted on in Part Eleven.

Translation list: **Xootsnoowú** — Tlingit name for **Admiralty Island** in the Alexander Archipelago located in the Alaskan Panhandle, where **Gambier Bay** is located; **Mi amado** — My love; **Santa María me preserva** — Saint Mary preserve me; **Kippŭm-jo** — Literally "Team of Happiness"; **Chuch'e** — Normally written in English as "Juche", this term literally means "mastering one's style/form/body" and is used to describe the goals of self-reliance that the government of North Korea has pursued for decades; **Yŏboseyo** — Hello; **P'yŏnghwa** — Peace; **Tongji** — Comrade; **Chosŏn'gŭl** — Literally "Script of Chosŏn", which is the North Korean name for han'gŭl; **Đođo** — Read "Modŭn Saramdŭr'ŭr'uihan P'yŏnghwa", this term literally means "Peace For All"; **Yŏngdong** — Literally "east of the passes", this is the common name applied to the eastern part of Kang'wŏn Province; **Pang'on** — Dialect; **Oe** — Hey; **Uwa** — Wow; **Ilbon haegun ch'o'nyŏ** — Literally "Japanese maidens of the fleet"; **Ŭng** — Yes/Yeah (informal); **Chenjang** — Shit; **Annyŏng moduŭl** — Good morning, everyone; **Manse** — Literally "ten thousand years", this is the Korean version of "Banzai"; **Chedong** — Admiral; **Tŭngshin** — Idiot/Fool/Fat-head; **Changgun** — General; **T'aegŭkki** — Literally "supreme whole banner", this is the national flag of South Korea; **Mihanhaeyo** — I'm sorry; **Namjosŏn-saram** — South Korean people (as referred to by people in the North); **Nŏ pabo ya** — You idiots; **Komawŏ** — Thanks (informal); **Raengmyŏn/Naengmyŏn** — Cold noodles; **Mul** — Water; **Chuch'e Suin'ilgom-nyŏn** — Fifty-seventh year of the Chuch'e Era (the year 1968 CE); **Tamra** — The analogue of the American state of Kansas on the northern polar continent of Yiziba; **Capitán de Fragata** — Frigate Captain, the common Spanish-language title for a naval commander (NATO rank code OF-4).

*West Wing* character note: **An Chaeyong** appeared in the fourth episode of the fifth season, "Han".
The Kim Ilsŏng Socialist Youth League (Kim Ilsŏng Sahwajuŭi Ch'ŏngnyŏn Tongmaeng) is the youth league affiliated to the Workers Party of Korea at the time of this story. First formed in 1946, it was renamed the "Kim Ilsŏng-Kim Chŏng'il Youth League" (Kim Ilsŏng-Kim Chŏng'il-juŭi Ch'ŏngnyŏn Tongmaeng) in 2016. The league's official paper, Ch'ŏngnyŏn Chŏn'ui ("Youth Vanguard"), is one of the three most important papers distributed in North Korea alongside the Rodong Shinmun ("Worker's Newspaper") published by the Workers Party itself and the Chosŏn Inmin'gun ("Korean People's Army") published by the North Korean armed forces.

A quick note concerning the pronunciation of certain words in Korean depending on where you live: The long separation between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the Republic of Korea has created a considerable drift between the way certain words and concepts are pronounced. For example, the family name Yi (李李), which is pronounced as "I" and written in han'gŭl, is said as "Ri" (리) in the North. Also, Korean words that were based on Chinese characters that start with either the nasal sound /n/ or the lateral approximant /l/ remained the same in the North while they were often blanked out or changed in the South, hence you get the situation of raengmyŏn and naengmyŏn. There are other profound differences, too many to list here.

Stargate SG-1 character notes: Osiris, Isis and Professor Sarah Gardner were first introduced in the fourth season's thirteenth episode, "The Curse".

Finally, Tan'gun-wanggŏm (literally "Tan'gun the Sandalwood King") was a legendary figure in Korean myths. Said to be the descendant of gods, Tan'gun was reported to be the first king of the original kingdom of Chosŏn that existed from 2333-108 BCE. He first established the kingdom at a place called Asadal, believed to have been located somewhere in modern-day North Korea. While the legends of Tan'gun have not been proven by archaeological evidence, his actual creation of the first kingdom of Chosŏn (today called Kojosŏn ["Ancient Chosŏn"]) is celebrated in both the North and South on 3 October each year. As an aside, the late Kim Chŏngnam (1971-2017) is known to have six children with one positively identified; Kim Hyegyŏng is my own creation.
Enter the Ultimate Despair!

Chapter Summary

In her home universe, Enoshima Junko had tried to unleash ultimate despair all over Earth. Now empowered as the Herald of Cosmic Doom, she has limitless power...even if her fellow Killing School Life alumni are there to keep her in check.

And now Junko is in North Korea, with a SEA of targets before her...!

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Colorado Springs, Headquarters of United States Stargate Command, ninety minutes after supper on Sunday (Tōkyō/P'yŏng'yang time: Thirty minutes before lunch on Monday)...

"Doctor Fraiser?"

Janet Fraiser perked, then she looked over from her work desk. "What is it, Master Sergeant?"

"Sorry to bother you, ma'am, but we just got a signal from Miss Kim at Asadal," MSgt Walter Harriman reported. "She wanted to contact Doctor Jackson concerning Doctor Gardner. Miss Kim had a friend capture Osiris and was able to free the doctor from being possessed." Here, the native of Vancouver across the Columbia from Portland shook his head. "I had to tell her about what happened to SG-1. She immediately offered to get friends to help Miss Wakefield, Captain Doolittle, Captain Swanson and the others rescue the team, but she also wants a medical doctor to come examine Doctor Gardner. She doesn't have a trained doctor or healer where she is right now. Given what Osiris did..."

The senior medical officer was already on her feet and proceeding to retrieve her field first aid kit. "I'll need a couple of the girls with me," she then advised. "Does the general know about this?!"
"I told him, Healer."

Fraiser gasped on hearing that soft voice, then she turned to see a certain rose-haired Noukiite metahuman free warrior standing nearby, looking very calm and collected. After a moment as she patted her heart from the surprise appearance of the Dragonspeaker, the native of Spokane gave her an annoyed glare. "Kyech, PLEASE!" she snarled before slipping off her smock, putting on the lightweight blue jacket with the white USAF symbol over her left breast; she had heard from Samantha Carter that Kim Hyegyŏng always kept her underground base quite cool in echo of how the weather in her older-selves' kingdom on Yiziba normally was like, even in summer. Once she was ready, she nodded.

Seu-P'ye Yesu-Re Hechnich'-K'ekhech of Ait'uch Nehech nodded in return as she grasped her hand...

****

*P'yŏng'yang, Asadal Base within Moran-bong, that moment...*

...then they found themselves within a vast underground chamber whose total volume rivalled that of Stargate Command's own chambers within Cheyenne Mountain Air Force Station. As Fraiser relaxed herself — she had to admit, travelling Kyech's way was even more comforting than travelling via Stargate — a friendly woman's voice hailed, "Ah! Ŭisa-sŏnsaengnim!"

Kyech gave the approaching Kim Hyegyŏng a proper fist-in-palm military salute while the visiting doctor from America formally saluted the reborn Sandalwood Empress of two separate kingdoms spanning the ages and two separate planets. "Hello, Miss Kim," Fraiser said before she laughed as the niece of the current leader of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea came up to sweep her into her arms. "Hey! Hyegyŏng-a!" she playfully scolded as Kyech herself lightly smiled at such exuberance; the doctor had been deployed to the Republic of Korea working as part of the 8th Medical Operations Squadron at Kunsan in North Chŏlla Province on the Yellow Sea coast south of Sŏul before being assigned to Colorado Springs, so she knew some of the common honorifics. "Stop that!"

Hyegyŏng's dark brown eyes twinkled with mischievousness. When she saw that for the first time, SGC's senior medical officer was forever convinced that the whole idea of North Koreans NOT having a sense of humour should be permanently committed to the circular file. After she leaned over to playfully kiss the Dragonspeaker's cheek, she waved them over to one part of the ancient base that her first-self had created to store most of what he stole from the Goa'uld during the First Invasion of Yiziba five millennia ago. "You're lucky that I had been on the lookout for Osiris for a while, Imoni!" she stated as they nodded to the androids standing guard over various rooms in the base, they clothed in the proper battledress of the Korean People's Army. Fraiser knew they were Shōzoki
in origin, having been infiltrated into the country by agents of their controlling master program — which sounded to her like Skynet in the Terminator movies — before Hyegyŏng got to them and freed them, allowing them to become fully sentient...and become fanatically loyal to her along the way. "There's someone else that I was able to locate when I deciphered some Goa'uld artifacts that I've found over the last year. It's a pity I couldn't have intercepted Osiris before he possessed Daniel-ajŏssi's friend." She winked at the native of Spokane. "But I think I've tamed him — pardon me, 'her' — for the time being."

Fraiser's eyebrow arched. "Oh? How so...?"

In answer, the Sandalwood Empress opened one door into a private examination room. Once past the doorway, the visiting doctor and Noukiios' greatest warrior were quick to see four people inside. One was Nator'beneseam Guo'ono, a teenage boy from Yiziba who had been Gifted as one of many empathic masters who effectively served as would-be fathers to desperate mothers wanting children when nesting season came; noting how young the cute redhead looked, Fraiser winced on realizing what had exactly happened to the first pharaoh of Egypt when s/he had been caught. Seated close to Nator'be was Sarah Gardner, dressed still in the flamboyant gown that Osiris forced the archaeologist from England to wear when he had been possessing her. And on one of the diagnostic beds in the room...

"Isis?!" Fraiser quietly demanded after seeing the virtual twin sister to Gardner — no doubt, Osiris' soul had been inserted into a battle doll Hyegyŏng obtained from Kasuga Ayumu's pocket dimension — now warmly holding a beautiful tanned woman with long dark brown hair in her arms, the two muttering in their native tongue as they gazed into the other person's eyes for the first time in over nine millennia.

The doctor hadn't been quiet enough; on hearing that familiar voice, the two Goa'uld-turned-pre-Gifted Yizibajohei perked, then looked over before the eyes of Gardner's twin's brightened in recognition. "Ah! Healer Fraiser!" Osiris called out, her voice possessing her last host's refined Essaxon accent. The reborn pharaoh then focused her attention on Kyech. "A Pakalach...?" she wondered as she scanned the line of Noukiite common script flowing down the Dragonspeaker's jacket flap.

Fraiser gazed in amusement at Kyech. "If I may?"

The native of Ryekkyuk on the northern continent of the homeworld nodded her permission. "Lady Osiris, may I present the loyal free warrior to Her Imperial Majesty, the Ch'uot'uokse Empress Eyu-Ki Yech'a-Suoaech Hechnich'-Aiseuach of Nehech: The Lady Seu-P'ye Yesu-Re Hechnich'-K'ekhech of Ait'uch Nehech, adopted blood sibling of the Great Sky Lord Nengmek'i." As Osiris' hazel eyes went wide with recognition, Kyech saluted her in the proper Noukiite style.
An amused smirk crossed the ancient pharaoh's face. "The one whom it is said that even Anubis is mortally terrified of," she declared, making Isis Taylor gasp as she stared in disbelief at her reborn husband. "He lives, my wife," Osiris declared as she gazed upon her mate, her face softening as she moved to pull Isis protectively closer. "After I possessed Sarah and fled Earth, I was contacted by his first prime in secret, where he offered aid in allowing me to rebuild my empire among the stars."

"You should have told the others, my husband!" Isis snapped. "Given the level of his crimes...!"

"He's partially ascended, Isis."

Silence.

More silence.

Still more silence.

Then...

"No...!" Isis hissed. "The Ancients aren't THAT stupid..."

"He tricked Oma Desala years ago to show him the ways of Ascension," Osiris wryly explained as Kyech shook her head, pinching her nose at THIS new complication when it came to relations between the "children of the gods" and the other sentient species of the galaxy. "Once other Ancients sensed what happened, they forced him into a semi-ascended state; they couldn't revert him to be totally mortal once more. His..." A shudder ran through her. "His power is insane! He has greater mastery of the Ancients' technology than any of us could imagine. Even more, he's held back and allowed the battles between Ra and Apophis to carry on, waiting for the chance to become the Supreme System Lord..."

Her voice was cut off when a faint rumbling sound echoed through the room. "The Stargate," Nator'be declared as he reached over to squeeze Gardner's hand. "You expecting a visitor, Hyegyŏng?"

"No," the reborn first ruler of Kojŏn on Earth and Kuorim on Yiziba said as she marched out of the room to see what was happening, with Kyech following.
By the time they got into the main part of the base where the "Beta Gate" had been mounted, three chevrons had already locked into place. As the reborn first couple of ancient Egypt, the former host of the first pharaoh of that kingdom, her young would-be lover and the doctor from Washington state came out to join their host and Noukiios' mightiest warrior, the fourth chevron locked into place while Hyegyŏng gazed upon the advanced computer she hooked into the Stargate to detect from where potential visitors hailed. "Phentax Two...?" she wondered as the fifth chevron locked.

"I doubt Miree would allow anyone to make use of her planet's Stargate, Hyegyŏng-u," Kyech advised.

Before the Sandalwood Empress could formulate a response, the final chevrons locked into place and the wormhole formed between Earth and the homeworld of the once-greatest military power of the Galactic Federation of Planet-states. Seconds later, a tall, muscular man in a traditional Yizibajohei sleeved battlesuit walked through the event horizon; red overall, it had a violet belt and slip-on shoes tucked under the bell-bottom trousers, a golden symbol resembling the signal strength bars on a mobile phone screen over his heart. Staring at the raven-haired, middle-aged native of the northern polar continent who was the current incarnation of the Mad Prophet of the Future, Rimmim ("Millennium"), Osiris felt a gulp rise up in her throat. Despite the man wearing shaded goggles, the dark brown eyes that peeked out of that fleshy face sparkled with a level of barely-contained insanity that the first pharaoh of Egypt was quick to conclude would have matched that of her would-be patron Anubis.

"I see you were able to finally retrieve Isis' errant mate, Hyegyŏng," Leno Lu'umlo declared as the Sandalwood Empress walked over to warmly embrace the man who saw himself now as the "champion of balance" between faces and heels on the World of the Forge.

Isis shuddered as she drew herself closer to her reborn husband, Osiris' arms squeezing her body in reassurance. The Goa'uld couple then tensed as Leno's dark eyes focused directly on them. "You need not fear me," the reborn prophet who had been a thorn in the sides of many over the incarnations calmly declared, his voice a deep baritone that could easily be mistaken for that of a Goa'uld's despite it not echoing. "I cannot help but rejoice at the idea that two of your ancient race have been forever saved from the madness of the Alterans, then allowed to join the true Great Show of Life..."

"Not that we were given much of a choice!" Isis hissed.

That didn't phase Leno. "Yes, permanent death without a chance to truly live away from the control of others would seem to some a more preferable fate." He shook his head, not taking notice of the fact that Janet Fraiser was moving to shift Sarah Gardner away from the reborn preacher's line of vision. "In all my incarnations since the Dawn of Power, I simply could NEVER understand that!"
he confessed. "Still, you are safe and have avenged yourselves on Ra by regaining control of your lives, not to mention avenging yourselves on Telchak by being cleansed of the influence of the false mesonium the Alterans created sagas ago in hopes of allowing themselves to 'ascend'." A sneer twisted his face.

"So where have you been, Ajŏssi?" Hyegyŏng asked as she came over to slip her arm around Leno's, her eyes flicking over to the captain of her "personal guard". As he nodded before moving to escort Fraiser and Gardner to a nearby examination room to allow the doctor the chance to look the archaeologist over — with Nator'be accompanying them — the Sandalwood Empress waved her guests over to a nearby lounge while several of the gynoids moved to prepare drinks and snacks.

"Fortunately for me, I discovered a most interesting project being carried out by young people on Phentax Two who took advantage of the bioroid factory to create replicas of favoured fictional characters here on Earth," Leno stated as they sat, with Osiris, Isis and Kyech joining them, the two Goa'uld staying close to the Noukiite free warrior while warily watching the native of Yiziba. "I wonder if Tariko ever told you of this particular fight scene simulation game, Hyegyŏng: Danganronpa?"

She blinked in confusion before nodding. "Yes. Similar to the novel Battle Royale in general concept; Tariko-ya utterly HATES that story script! A group of people my age are trapped within a school, with no escape except being made to murder a classmate without being caught." As the two Goa'uld gaped in shock that such a thing could be imagined among the Tau'ri, Hyegyŏng added, "The first game appeared two seasons ago with a sequel having come out this summer..."

She perked as the ancient Stargate — which had cut off the wormhole to Phentax Two once her guest came through — activated anew. "Ah! They're coming now," Leno declared as he turned to watch.

As Hyegyŏng gazed in expectation at him, Kyech's eyes narrowed in outrage as her own meta-senses told her something. "People there saved real-live versions of the characters of this game from facing the judgment of the Ch'uoeuk at the Pools of Reincarnation?!" she hissed, her eyes glowing.

"At the very moment of their death scenes, my dear," Leno stated as he reached over to squeeze the Dragonspeaker's bandaged hand while the first two chevrons clicked into place in the background. "All of them were struck down in the very PRIME of their young lives, Kyech! Denied the right to live their lives as they so chose to live their lives! I'm sure even your Ch'uoeuk would LOUDLY approve of saving the souls of ones so young and letting them live again in such a matter! As I recall, you certainly don't object one bit to the concept of the Doll House that Ayumu currently manages."

Those glowing orbs focused on him. "They even saved the one who orchestrated that obscenity, Leno."
"All in the name of the Great Balance, Kyech."

Hyegyŏng's head snapped over. "You mean...?!"

A flash of energy then caused heads to snap back towards the Beta Gate...

...then they blinked on seeing a woman the same age as the niece of North Korea's leader standing on the ramp leading to the ancient wormhole device. Like Leno, she was dressed in the more traditional sleeved battlesuit design with a hood drawn over her head. Such was black overall with dark grey belt wrapped around a slender waist, dark grey boots peeking out from under the bell-bottom trousers. Over the left breast was a dark grey spiked circular orb bearing a black eye on it; seeing that, Hyegyŏng tried not to grin too much at who Leno just arranged to have reborn...and in a perfectly cloned Terran-form Avalonian body of the woman both known as the *Ultimate Fashionista*...and the *Ultimate Despair*!

Or as she would now be called on Yiziba, the Herald of Cosmic Doom, *Likenuo*!

As the woman who organized the Killing School Life on her peers of the seventy-eighth class at Hope's Peak Academy in another dimension's Tōkyō two years ago renamed herself, *Verzweiflung*!

"North Korea..."

On hearing that voice — which was not the normal high-pitched tones the poverty-born teenage fashion model had been depicted with in the *Danganronpa* games and anime released to date, but a frigid monotone that would make most people soil themselves in terror if they didn't realize what this cosmic metahuman empathic vampire and emotional manipulator really was — Osiris felt Isis squeeze the breath out of her as she ducked away...just as a cold smile crossed Enoshima Junko's face.

"How delicious...!"

By then, the event horizon had formed again within the Beta Gate...

*KK-KLONK!*
"Not THIS time, Enoshima-san!"

As Leno moaned while rubbing his head, Hyegyŏng gaped in awe on seeing who just came through the wormhole from Phentax Two: An incredibly muscular, dusky-skinned woman in an old-style off-white uniform that would be seen as one befitting a martial artist, it possessing a black belt and with black boots, a framed black open hand insignia over the heart. Said woman was a giant with all-seeing grey eyes peeking out of a face that didn't bear the ugly diagonal scar from the left forehead to the right cheek, that brooding mask still framed by long shaggy silver hair to mid-back. Like the Dragonspeaker, the Ultimate Martial Artist known now on Yiziba as the Eternal Grappler of the New Dawn, Likim ("Niten"), bandaged her hands that served as her primary weapons against all foes.

Given that Ōgami Sakura had died in the Killing School Life events that consumed over half of Class 78 at the Hope's Peak Academy, it didn't surprise the Sandalwood Empress that her reborn bodyguard had knocked Junko down with her fist the instant she came through the Stargate.

"Sakura-ssi..."

The martial artist's head snapped over...

...then she gasped in disbelief on seeing the niece of the current ruler of North Korea as she rose, revealing her burgundy-shaded old-style uniform, which bore multiple dragon-like designs on the arms, legs and around her chest. A samt'aegŭk was over her heart, surrounded by gold p'algwae trigrams in an octagon-like design. Noting that, Sakura lunged over to drop to one knee, bowing her head to the reborn queen of Kuorim that she — then a he — fought alongside with during the Dawn of Power.

"MY QUEEN!"

Osiris and Isis gaped while Kyech nodded in understanding and Leno moaned.

"Why couldn't they ALL be heels...?!" the Mad Prophet of the Future hissed out...

****
At that moment, seven kilometres to the north-northeast...

«Comrade Marshal?»

The young First Chairman of the National Defence Commission of the Democratic People's Republic didn't visibly react to that whispered telepathic voice echoing in his head as he gazed dispassionately at the small group of American government officials and military officers who were now relaxing in one of the secure meeting rooms within the Ryongsŏng Residence, his primary home in the like-named precinct of the capital city. *What did you find, Sarang-a?* he thought back.

Kim Chŏng'ŭn tried not to shudder on feeling the wave of sheer *joy* that his senior metahuman bodyguard now felt at being addressed with such a familiar title by him. Like others of the specialized warfare element of the Kippŭm-jo, Major Kim Sarang was an officer in the People's Army, originally from Sangwŏn to the southeast of downtown P'yŏng'yang, who had undergone very rigorous training with the Special Operations Forces to keep her body in perfect shape and ensure her powers remained top-notch; like others of the team officially known as the "Manjok-cho Sŭmullet", Sarang was often expected to provide sexual services to anyone her supreme leader allowed her to be intimate with. «It appears half of Kinsey-sang'won'ŭiwŏn's companions have been possessed by these aliens he just warned us about. Among them are Gold-ssi, MacKay-ssi and Wilson-ssi.»

*Are Langham and Devlin aware of this?* the supreme leader of North Korea thought as he watched while Senator Robert Kinsey showed some pictures on his laptop concerning Stargate Command's previous findings to very wide-eyed senior intelligence officials of the People's Army who were also fully in the know concerning the various metahuman forces currently active worldwide.

«No, Comrade Marshal.»

«Comrade Marshal, the senior bodyguard currently controlled by a Goa'uld knows that at least one-tenth of the field forces of the National Intelligence Directorate have been infiltrated by his countrymen.» a new voice then spoke in his mind.

That fact made one of the most powerful men on Earth inwardly shudder; again, he had his wonderful bodyguards to thank for helping him keep himself under control in the face of this group who were now trying to convince him of the potential danger his youngest NIECE now demonstrated to him...no thanks to a certain woman from Japan who could be thanked for chasing off those lunatic aliens from Earth three days ago! *ONE-TENTH?!* he mentally snapped as he focused on the stoic man standing close to one of the main entrances to this room. *How many people are in this group altogether, Shiyŏn-a?!*
Learning THAT, Kim allowed himself a frown as he focused once more on the senior senator from New Mexico who had tried on many occasions over the last four years to have Stargate Command shut down due to what he saw as a colossal waste of money such a specialized organization within the American military was costing taxpayers; that had been one of the first things his psionic observers had detected from the native of Cloudcroft. He had guessed what type of man Kinsey was deep down: A greedy and ambitious fellow who wanted nothing less than to unseat Josiah Bartlet's chosen successor when the next presidential elections came in four years' time, then become the "leader of the free world" for up to eight years as allowed by that nation's constitution. Some freedom! the supreme leader of North Korea snorted on reflecting that, earning him silent amused giggles from his wife Ri Sŏlju and his younger sister Kim Yŏjong; both were attending this meeting as "special strategic advisors". Fortunately, the influence of people like Kim Sarang and her subordinates made sure the Americans here with him today, possessed by the alien serpents or not, who would have objected to two "civilians" being in on such an important gathering wouldn't say a thing; members of the Sŏmullet team were artisans when it came to subtly influencing other people's minds, especially when in such close range.

As he felt himself flooded with waves of delight at his mentally acknowledging his subordinates' work for the cause of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and his own control over the country, Kim frowned as he called up a mental image of his half-brother's youngest child when she was last seen in public two years ago by field agents of the Chŏngch'al Ch'ongguk, the DPRK's external intelligence agency. While members of the RGB hadn't then been able to confirm who Kim Hyegyŏng met in a café near the Altira Macau casino in the "special administrative region" formed over the former Portuguese colony near Hong Kong before the girl vanished, comparisons with modern images now identified said stranger as Tariko Katabarbe, the man-turned-woman who had been on a decade-long quest to protect Earth from all forms of alien encroachment, especially from the Urusians and their allies...

...and who had just been publicly confirmed to have become empowered as one of the most feared beings in the cosmos, one even the Goa'uld themselves were terrified of!

So what did that ultimately mean for Kim Hyegyŏng...?
the New Dawn" always fought for the "Nameless", people who were metahumans as almost all on Yiziba HAD to become thanks to both the planet's savage wildlife and rogue metahuman "heels" who would gladly kill defenceless innocents for whatever reason struck their fancy...yet, unlike the "Named" who were the more well-known natives of that world, never resurrected themselves via the Moon-sized ball of mesonium that once formed the great Forge of the Seekers. And while there had been times that past incarnations of the being whose collected memories were now fused with Hyegyŏng's very soul had tried to reform Kuorim on its ancient territory, what were the girl's plans NOW...?

If only she could be found, Yŏbo, the supreme leader's wife mused after sensing his introspection.

Kim flashed Ri an amused look...

"...so you believe the girl has control of not only this Stargate that was in Antarctica all these years, but a considerable cache of Goa'uld artifacts that her past-selves obtained over the years, Senator?"

That was Captain Pae Tuna, the only one of the Sŭmullet team who had come to this meeting "in the open" to meet with the Americans. She had been introduced to Kinsey and his companions as a highly-trained intelligence officer who had done field work alongside members of mainland China's MSS monitoring potential alien incursions in eastern Asia; of course, her friends in the team had been quick to ease the Americans' concerns about someone so physically young being involved in something like this. Of course, all members of Sŭmullet were polyglots; English and Mandarin were two of the languages they had taught themselves when they were officer cadets. "So we learned from Colonel O'Neill and Major Carter, Captain," Kinsey answered before he turned to gaze on his host. "As to how on Earth the girl or her past-selves were able to obtain that sort of equipment, we don't know. O'Neill and Carter, thanks to their overwhelming trust of Katabarbe, never pressed her for details."

"She could possibly use these materials to overthrow my brother?" Kim's sister then demanded.

"A possibility that can't be discounted, Mrs. Kim," Colonel Harold Maybourne, the senior military officer of Kinsey's delegation, declared as he gazed at her. "From what I've learned during my times in Cheyenne Mountain, your niece is no supporter of your brother."

Silence fell as people turned to gaze on North Korea's supreme leader. After a moment, Kim asked in accented English, "Does your president have any idea about the girl, Senator Kinsey? I'm sure General Hammond would have passed such information to him the instant it was learned by his subordinates. While I'm grateful that your leader is ultimately willing to share the spoils obtained by the members of the general's command to everyone on Earth — especially given the events of the last year in Japan — I'm sure he wouldn't welcome any sort of destabilization in this part of the world being provoked by the girl." He sighed. "Sadly, we've no idea how much her father's teachings may
still influence her."

The New Mexican shook his head. "I really wish I could answer that, sir."

"Most likely, Comrade Marshal, we'll have to find her ourselves," Tuna suggested.

"We should help, Senator," Maybourne advised.

As Kinsey nodded, footfalls echoed from outside the room, making people turn as a side door opened, revealing a colonel bearing the insignia of the Ministry of People's Security. "Forgive me, Comrade Marshal!" he said as he saluted the supreme leader; the man spoke Korean though the Americans had universal translator devices in their jackets so they could understand what was going on. "There's an incident at the Victorious Fatherland Liberation War Museum! It..." He paused as he gazed on Kinsey before taking a deep breath. "Somewhere, the spy ship Pueblo has been transformed into one of these 'shipgirl' beings that young Comrade Saeru Hinako introduced to the world late Saturday evening!"

"Oh, dear God...!"

That was Kinsey, who was now QUITE pale as he stared in disbelief at the colonel. "Foolish of him, ne?" Shiyŏn chided as amused laughter echoed in the minds of the supreme leader, his wife and sister.

"His concern is real, Shiyŏn-a." Tuna advised. "He believes that this being might unleash all sorts of horrors on the people in P'yŏng'yang and elsewhere in the country if she is aroused...and given what really happened all the way back in Chuch'e Suin'ilgom-nyŏn...!"

Enough, Tuna-ya!

That was Kim Chŏng'ŭn, who was now gazing at the colonel. "Comrade Colonel, has...?" He then paused before gazing at Maybourne. "Tell me, Colonel Maybourne, what sort of honorary rank in the United States Navy would this person possess? Given what your president said..."

The former special tactics officer from Santa Barbara in California hummed as he considered that. "Well, given at the time of the initial trespass into your country's waters, she was commanded by a
full-bird captain, sir, she could be rated as a captain herself. However, if I recall correctly, Pueblo was built as an Army small freighter before the Navy got their hands on her in the 1950s to make her a spy ship. I'm not sure who would have commanded her back after World War Two, Marshal Kim."

«Ugh! I don't want to be no square four striper, man! That's WAY too much a downer!»

Silence.

More silence.

Still more silence.

Then...

"Who the HELL was that?!" Doctor Brent Langham demanded as people looked around.

"I heard that!" the first lady of North Korea exclaimed. "Who WAS that?!"

A chuckle escaped her husband. "I believe, Tangshin, we're now 'speaking' — so to speak! — with the living soul of the Pueblo herself!" Kim declared, making the Americans blink while the other Koreans in the room looked awestruck at his quick deduction over what was now going on. "Good morning, Comrade!" he then clearly called out in English as he gazed towards downtown. "I pray you're not going to do something harsh to anyone who's with you right now at the museum."

«Nah! Chill, Comrade Marshal! It's all cool!» came the reply from by the shore of the Pot'ong River closer to downtown, a flood of pure reassurance making all the people in the meeting room relax. «If you didn't know, my generation back Stateside wanted to ban the Bomb and bring all the world together as one cool commune, all in harmony with the Astral Plane and healing the biomass of Mother Earth from all the bad things humans have done to it over the years!» As Maybourne shook his head, muttering that said shipgirl was now some insane hippie, the living spirit of the second Banner-class environmental research/intelligence vessel added, «Er...much that I hate to tell you this since you're having that big powwow at Ryongsŏng right now with those squares from Stateside, but you've got yourself a bit of a snake infestation in this town, Comrade Marshal! Two of them were possessing two members of the local cop shop; they just tried to turn a bunch of little comrades from the Music Academy in Taedonggang-guyŏk into Swiss cheese!»
"WHAT?!
" Kim shrieked as he bolted to his feet.

"COMRADE MARSHAL!"

"WHAT?!
" the supreme leader demanded as running footfalls heralded the arrival of another colonel, an artillery officer from the People's Army ground forces. "CAN'T YOU SEE I'M BUSY, COLONEL...?!

A bow responded. "Forgive me, Comrade Marshal!" the colonel nearly sobbed. "But some metahuman woman — an American, we believe — has just flown over the Demilitarized Zone near Kaesŏng...!"

"WHAT?!
" Kim shrilled again.

"...and she's now changing the very SOIL of the earth somehow!"

"Oh, SHIT...!" Maybourne moaned.

"How so, Comrade Colonel?!
" Kim Yŏjŏng demanded.

Here, the colonel looked...lost. "Well, according to the reports we received from the forces deployed close to Kaesŏng, Comrade Kim, this woman...is making the soil grow...well, POTATOES!"


"Hey! That sounds like Bannie!" Marlene Bucher-Flanagan then cheered...

****

Near Changp'ung village in North Hwanghae Province (ten kilometres north of P'anmunjŏm), that moment...
"So much FOOD...!"

"Look! There are even sweet potatoes!"

"It's a MIRACLE!"

Hearing the voices of both the civilian villagers and the People's Army troopers assigned to this sector close to the most-heavily guarded border in the world, the reborn and transformed namesake of the Hero of Derna could only smile, her brown eyes tearing on feeling the sheer relief everyone close to her now expressed from the fact that after DECADES of food shortages, people could EAT! As children joyfully raced around to gather freshly-grown potatoes in baskets to load into carts for distribution, soldiers formed human chains to pass on their own share to load into vehicles to ensure the bounty could be stored in safe places for use by cooks. While there were a couple obvious commissars from the government who looked lost as to what to do in the face of what the reborn sixth of the Fletcher-class destroyers just did, even the senior mud-eaters who responded to Matilda O'Bannon's trespass of North Korean airspace seemed satisfied that the shipgirl's current mission was for the good.

"Excuse me, Lieutenant Colonel O'Bannon...?"

Hearing that voice speaking accented English, the adopted native of Fauquier County in northern Virginia and Bath in Maine perked before she turned, then she straightened herself to attention, returning the salute of the raven-haired Oriental woman in the uniform of a Swiss Army major, the badge of the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission on her camouflage uniform top. She was being escorted by a smiling North Korean colonel in field battledress. "Yes, Major...?"

The major grinned as she lowered her arm. "Major Sophie Jean, Swiss contingent of the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission, Colonel O'Bannon." She waved to the colonel, who gave the reborn destroyer a smart salute, the delight he felt on seeing so many people under his protection now being able to eat properly quite apparent to Matilda. "This is Colonel Oh Kyŏngp'il, liaison officer of the People's Army to the Commission in P'anmunjŏm. I assume that with others like yourself, your uniform has some translator system that allows you to interpret what people are saying no matter what language is being spoken...?" Her voice then trailed off in an obvious question.

"Yes, Major," the shipgirl responded before she blinked. "'Lieutenant Colonel'?"

Jean gave her a smile that made Matilda's heart flutter. "As I recall, your namesake was a member of
the United States Marine Corps during the time of the First Barbary War in the 1800s...

Hearing that, the pretty teenager with the pixie cut caramel hair blinked as she considered that before she hummed. "Um...y-yeah! I guess that would make sense! Never had jarheads in my crew, though...!" she confessed, earning her a curious look from Colonel Oh. "That's a nickname everyone in my service gives Marines, Colonel. Sorry to confuse you about that," she then explained.

He nodded. "Understandable, Comrade Colonel. And thank you for doing what you did. Though still..." He tried not to wince. "It IS a violation of our airspace. By all rights, you should be taken prisoner..."

"What did make you do what you did, Colonel?" the Swiss officer — no doubt, she had a mother from this side of the world, Matilda mused — asked. "While I'm not familiar about metahuman capabilities..."

A helpless shrug answered. "Well, I was heading this way after my hull was rebuilt and I was turned into this at Kearny — that's where I was scrapped after I was struck from the Register — then I heard Pueblo's voice as I was coming towards Japan, so I flew this way to look in on her; she didn't sound good to me." As Oh and Jean winced on hearing the name of the infamous spy ship, Matilda added, "Soon as I crossed over the DMZ, L..." Here, she blanched. "The soil...!" she hissed as tears flowed down her face, she dropping to her knees as her hands touched the now-lush undergrowth...

People gasped as a wave of silvery-red energy exploded from the destroyer's hands in every direction, spreading to a considerable distance beyond the limits of Changp'ung-ŭp itself; to Oh's experienced eyes, the whole of the county would soon be washed by such power. As the children screamed in delight on seeing the kind Western angel again using her magical powers to give them more food, more potato plants sprang up from the ground as water misted over everyone's heads, drawn from the nearby Rimjin River to feed nutrients into the ground. "Mon Dieu...that's unbelievable!" Jean hissed in her native French as Oh shook his head, trying to equate what he knew about science to the MIRACLE being unleashed by this reborn warship spirit; his own troops had tried the sweet potatoes Matilda's chlorokinesis allowed to grow here thanks to many attempts at growing the hardy vegetable in this part of the world to supplement scant rice sources, pronouncing them to be even of a finer quality than had been issued by their support personnel from the few foreign imports that got into the country.

"The soil is drained and needs to be replenished, Sophie-san."

Hearing that in Kyūshū Japanese even if she could interpret it in French, Jean spun around...
...then she gaped on seeing the smiling teenage girl standing nearby, dressed in a solid forest green bodysuit of the modern halter-top style with golden vine leaves flowing up the sides of her legs, hips and abdomen to form trimming framing her breasts, gold belt and boots completing the ensemble, a blooming chrysanthemum-like flower on her chest. She appeared to be seventeen, possessing turquoise eyes and aqua-shaded raven hair cut to a taper at the neck, bangs covering her forehead. As Oh shuddered on recognizing this woman as clearly Japanese, Jean blinked. "Who are you?"

"Oh, just a kidnap victim of a bunch of stupid umale who thought they could conquer Yiziba of all the planets in the galaxy, Sophie-san...and they wanted to try to use the Unending League to get their way," the native of Beppu on the east coast of Kyūshū stated with an amused smile before she walked over to kneel beside the sobbing Matilda. "Oh, Matilda-chan...!" she soothed as she wrapped an arm around the shuddering shipgirl's body to comfort her. "There! There!" she then said as the adopted native of Virginia and Maine leaned against the second-year student who was got the most votes in the South Area round of the Zenkoku Seifuku Bishōjo Grand Prix the previous summer. "You made the soil so much better and made the people happy! Here, let me make sure these poor people can have a more balanced diet now that the soil can grow more things. Potatoes are good, but...!"

With that, the new incarnation of the most powerful warrior serving in Yiziba's greatest legion of metahuman fighters raised her hand, a brilliant silver burst of energy exploding from the palm...

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Itabashi in Tōkyō, Azuma Senior High School, that moment...

"Huh...?!!"

People in Class 2-3 perked on hearing that sleepy voice. At the head of the class, Kimura Hyōsuke turned around to gaze upon Kasuga Ayumu, who was slowly rising from the nap she had been taking while the infamous classics teacher was giving his lecture. Of course, Kimura didn't mind that in the end; given he had become a teacher to be close to high school girls, anything within reason was tolerated by any girl in his classes. Atop that, given that the native of Wakayama WAS the Goddess Who Walks Among Men, she could easily use her reality-warping powers to catch up on anything she missed when her chronic narcolepsy got the better of her. "Is there something the matter, Ayumu-san?" the spiky-haired forty-something with the seemingly always-fogged glasses asked.

Ayumu blinked as everyone else in the class gazed worriedly at her. "Oh, sorry, Sensei!" she said as she rubbed her eyes. As Aida Kaori — known more popularly among her peers as "Kaorin" and Gifted as the Great Bard of the Soul, R'bem Yomem ("Heart Player"), one of Yiziba's most
powerful non-cosmic empaths — reached over to squeeze her classmate's shoulder, Ayumu looked off to the west-northwest. "I just felt Lady Nature use her powers in a pretty big way somewhere close to here."

That made the Gifted people in the class — all of the Azuma Gang was there save for Mizuhara Koyomi and Takino Tomo; the teachers understood what had prompted the Wild Warrior of Passion and the Mistress of the Mind-Dive to head to Uru just in case any Goa'uld came "fashionably early" — blink in confusion. "Oh, it was just Lady Nature. Thank goodness...!" Mihama Chiyo noted...

It hit them!

"LADY NATURE?!!" the others of the Azuma Gang in class shrieked as one.

"Hey! Hey! Relax, everyone!" Ayumu called out, which made the others pause before they totally flipped out. "It's okay! Lady Nature is Takanashi Naoko-chan from Beppu!" She looked at their classics teacher, an amused grin on her face. "You know her, don'tcha, Sensei?!"

Kimura now looked as if he had just got a waterfall of calendars depicting pretty high school girls in skimpy bikinis for his birthday! "Of COURSE I know her, Ayumu-san! I actually VOTED in the Grand Prix!" He then paused before tears flowed down his cheeks. "Oh, the AGONY of it all!" he moaned as many of the boys in the room nodded in agreement; it always angered many of the girls that their male peers supported what the stalking pervert with the hidden heart of gold always said...even if he was married and a father to boot! "Trying to CHOOSE who should have won the Grand Prix! ALL of them deserved the chance to win! Their beauty was truly past all compare!"

As the boys whooped in agreement — everyone who associated with the Azuma Gang knew of Tariko Katabarbe's promise to Higurashi Akane (who was Takanashi Naoko's best friend) concerning finding the participants of the Zenkoku Bishōjo Seifuku Grand Prix after they disappeared without trace the previous summer — Kimura then cleared his throat. "Ayumu-san, you're excused from class right now," he sternly declared. "Go look in on Naoko-san! Make sure she's alright and find out what happened to her co-participants! I'm sure Akane-san down in Fūka would be happy to learn her friend's alright, to say anything of being Gifted! Not to mention all the parents and other relatives as well!"

That made Ayumu get to her feet, she giving him a jaunty salute. "Yes, sir!"

And with a flash of energy, she was gone...
Near Changp’ung village...

"Um...what did she just do, Major...?"

Sophie Jean was shaking her head. "I don't know, Colonel..."

A flash of light made the part-Korean Swiss officer and the senior North Korean liaison officer to the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission spin away from Matilda O’Brien and her companion...

"O-ha!"

...before they gazed on someone that both officers knew of QUITE well. "Comrade Kasuga...?" Oh Kyŏngp’il gasped as he tried desperately to suppress a gulp.

That declaration made the current incarnation of the Cosmic Protector of True Life, R'belim Bolem ("Lady Nature"), look up to stare in surprise to see the current incarnation of the Goddess Who Walks Among Men nearby, looking around in delight on seeing the massive fresh growth of various fruit plants, flowering trees with ripe nuts and vegetable bushes where there had once been nearly-barren fields thanks to overexploitation. As people around them, civilian and military, screamed in delight on seeing such a cornucopia of fresh produce — already, children from Changp'ung were trying out just-ripened persimmons and apples while elders of the village were moving to pick a nearby ginkgo tree to get at the healthy fruit hanging from the branches — Takanashi Naoko sighed as she moved to help the shuddering sixth of the Fletcher-class destroyers to her feet. "You're not here to start something, are you, Osaka?" the native of Beppu wondered before leaning down to dry off Matilda O'Bannon's face.

That earned her a wave of denial from Kasuga Ayumu. "Eh! That's so blah, Naoko-chan! Especially when we got the Goa'uld to deal with tomorrow night over Uru!" the native of Wakayama mused, that making Major Jean and Colonel Oh relax; they remembered the "flash of night" early Saturday afternoon. Seeing the other woman's eyes widen in surprise, Ayumu added, "Since we got shipgirls like Matilda-chan here back, a whole bunch of symbiotes wound up as snacks for them..."

Both reality warpers then jolted while the adopted native of northern Virginia tensed as her stomach growled loudly. Hearing that, a smiling army captain came over with some apples. "You should eat something as well, Comrade Colonel!" he scolded respectively.
Matilda blinked before she chuckled. "Uh...y-yeah! Th-thanks, Captain...!"

The children stopped to watch, then they cheered as the tomboyish shipgirl took the fruit in hand, biting into one beautiful red apple. As the soldiers whooped "O'BANNON MANSE!" in delight at such an act of peace from the most decorated destroyer of World War Two, the whooshing sound of wind passing a girl's body made people look up to see five teenagers appearing to be Matilda O'Bannon's age sojourn down from the southeast to land on the ground nearby. "Banny! Olá! It's been so long!" the grinning woman with the long, shaggy dark brown hair and the olive skin denoting her twenty-four years of service with the Marinha do Brasil called out, her hand raised in a wave.

Before Matilda could ask what was going on, she wound up in a dog-pile of cuteness as she was swarmed with hugs from Vitória Guest do Pará, Louise Cushing do Paraná, Otávia Hailey de Pernambuco, Nora Irwin de Santa Catarina and Laryn Braine y Garcia. Some of the children cried out in fright on seeing the strangers overcome the wonderful American angel who gave them, their families and the brave soldiers of the nation so much scrumptious food, immediately alerting some of the older residents of Changp'ung. "NŎ KOIMULDŬL!" the mayor of the village howled as he marched over, seizing a sergeant's Type 88 rifle before levelling it on the girls swarming over Matilda. "GET OFF...!"

A dark hand slammed down on the fore-stock of the locally manufactured AK-74 assault rifle, making the mayor look up to find himself glaring into the burning dark brown eyes of an African-Brazilian woman in her twenties, possessing wild shaggy black hair in curly bangs to her shoulder. She was in a traditional sleeved jumpsuit, dark blue overall with dusky gold belt and boots, the naval coronet-topped badge of the Brazilian Navy on her belt buckle. On her chest was a circular badge crowned with a naval coronet displaying a picture of a hand hoisting a torch on a green field, that framed by a wreath of laurel. The name MINAS GERAES in red was on a white field in the name plate under the coronet.

"Senhor Presidente...!" the woman spoke in a voice that brooked no defiance from the elderly man, her accent a mixture of Northumbria English and Gaúcho Brazilian Portuguese. "Surely you Koreans would understand that Senhorita Tenente Coronel O'Bannon is now reuniting with five of her beloved sisters, four of which were kind enough to escort my sister and I to this beautiful land."

Hearing that, an elderly woman growled, "SŎBANG...!"

As the children seeing this grinned in anticipation, she stormed over, snared the mayor by the ear, then dragged him down. As the sergeant retrieved his weapon, she gazed on the dark-skinned adopted native of Newcastle-upon-Tyne and Encruzilhada do Sul in Brazil's southernmost province of Rio Grande do Sul. "My apologies for my husband's stupidity, Comrade Captain," she declared, making the reborn first of Brazil's dreadnoughts gape in surprise at her. "Given the way Comrade
Colonel O'Bannon's sisters are acting, it's as obvious as the potatoes and other fruits and vegetables she and her Japanese friend just gifted us all that they ARE her sisters!" She then held up a finger. "However, there is only ONE president in our republic, Comrade Captain: The Eternal President himself."

A giggle echoed from nearby. "Oe, Halmŏni!" Ayumu then spoke up, holding up a finger to make sure people paid attention. "In Portuguese, ‘Presidente’ also means ‘mayor’ or ‘chairman’!"

People blinked as they took that in. "So who are you anyway, Captain...?" Sophie Jean asked as she came over to stand before the reborn dreadnought.

"Encouraçado Minas Geraes da Marinha do Brasil, Senhorita Major," the woman replied as she gave the Swiss officer a salute, which Jean returned. "The human name given to me by the noble Angel of the Seeker's Forge now makes me the adopted daughter of my most famous crewman, who was then serving aboard me when he led the Revolta da Chibata." She gracefully bowed to the younger woman. "Capitão-de-Mar-e-Guerra Joana Cunegundes Felisburto at your service."

People perked. "The 'Revolt of the Whip', Comrade Captain?" Oh Kyŏngp'il asked.

The face of the battleship whose construction launched the South American dreadnought race before World War One darkened. "A most ugly time in my adopted country's history, Senhor Coronel..."

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Meanwhile, back in P'yŏng'yang...

"What the...?"

Everyone currently inside the main hall of Asadal Base perked on hearing that annoyed voice, then they turned as one to gaze on a shuddering Enoshima Junko. As some of her fellow Killing School Life participants quaked, they looking ready to dog-pile the reborn Ultimate Fashionista, the native of another universe's Machida west of Tōkyō proper focused her attention to the south-southeast. After a second, a sneer crossed her face. "The Unending League are back?!” she demanded.

That made people's eyes widen with both surprise and fear as memories from previous lives came back to them. "The Unending League?!” Fukawa Tōko demanded as she walked over to stand
closer to her old classmate. "How could you tell, Junko-sama? I know you’re a cosmic meta..."

"I just felt Lady Nature use her powers to restore the soil to a level that could make North Korea the biggest food producer in this part of Asia, Shō," the Herald of Cosmic Doom replied with a grimace as she glared at the new incarnation of the Slaughterhouse Poet. Lutonike ("Völkermord"). Junko gladly addressed the woman declared the Ultimate Writing Prodigy in the Seventy-eighth Class of Hope's Peak Academy by the nicknamed her other personality state earned as the Ultimate Murderous Fiend. As Tōko blushed — Junko found it amusing that the simpering bookworm had such a nasty side once she was Gifted on Phentax Two; the fashion model laughed herself sick when Tōko lovingly butchered several squads of local goose-steppers who stormed the warehouse outside Lumukyō to stop a group of Danganronpa fans from bringing them back to life with the help of some alien mesonium-based weapon that looked like something welded by one of the pretty warriors of Sailor Moon...to say anything of the veterans of the Killing School Life and associated games being Gifted with the help of a Terran-turned-Yizibajohei Yakuza wakagashira of all things! — the architect of the Killing School Life again gazed in the general direction of Kaesŏng. "She's outside some village with Infinity right now; all the people there, even the local goose-steppers, are celebrating her making the soil rich and giving them loads of fruit and vegetables to eat." Her face twisted into a disgusted sneer. "SICK...!"

"Post-Gifting Shock..."

People blinked, then they stared at the crimson-haired woman with the Klingon-like forehead ridges and the flower tattoos on her cheeks. As Kim Hyegyŏng nodded in grim understanding, a wide-eyed Naegi Makoto blinked. "Um, what exactly is that, ma'am?" the Ultimate Lucky Student who had been reborn as the current incarnation of the Travelling Angel of Fortune, Tyuo'omsu ("Bonaventure"), then asked as he tried not to blush on taking in the Dragonspeaker's country girl-like beauty.

Kyech gazed in amusement at the boy who had got into Hope's Peak Academy by virtue of being such an ordinary person; noting he was a MALE Avalonian before his Gifting didn't surprise the old warrior of Ait'uch Nehech given Leno Lu'umlo's involvement in their rebirth in this dimension. As Makoto's former junior high classmate Maizono Sayaka moved to stand closer to him while giving the celestial dragon-blooded free warrior of Noukios an admiring stare, the native of Ryekkyuk explained, "Because Terrans don't live in as high a mesonium-rich environment as Yizibajohei, those who become Gifted from this world experience a period called 'post-Gifting shock', where they feel the need to exercise their powers to regain their internal balance because of such an infusion of energy. As Junko is an empathic vampire that feeds off the despair of others, what Naoko just did literally cut her off from a great feast."

"Hai, Ren-dono's right," Yamada Hifumi affirmed. The hands of the Ultimate Dōjinshi Creator who had become the Picture Storyteller, Lo'omem ("Indie"), were shaking badly. "I feel the need to get pencil and paper so I could create a story and bring the characters to 'life'..."
Hyegyŏng gazed at her senior gynoid aide, who nodded in understanding before heading over to guide the stocky but no-longer fat amateur writer/artist to a side room. As Kyech scratched her head in confusion at being called "Lady Ren" by one of the victims of the Killing School Life, a flash of energy made heads snap over to see a girl in a grey battlesuit appear. Noting who just came in, Leno shuddered in anticipation of a good show while Osiris' eyes went wide with horror on gazing upon a being said to scare even the ANCIENTS and the ORI! Looking at the native of Wakayama, the reborn veterans of Hope's Peak Academy blinked as flashes of recognition crossed some people's faces...

"ŌSAKA-SAN?!

That was Hifumi, who now looked as if Christmas came early. Before Kasuga Ayumu could understand what was happening, the amateur manga artist zipped over to snare her by the hand, his Avalonian telepathy probing the Infinite One's mind to confirm what she was before he dropped to his knees in joy, eyes tearing in delight on seeing what was (to him) a famous manga and anime character literally brought to life! That statement was enough to make some of his peers also gape in surprise. "Oh, my! That IS Ōsaka-san!" Asahina Aoi exclaimed as she pointed at the most powerful of all Yizibajohei.

"Eh? From Azumanga Daiō...?" Fujisaki Chihiro timidly asked.

"Huh?! 'Great King Azumanga'?!"

That was a very confused Ayumu. "Don't you know, Ayumu-yu?" Kyech asked. "What is real in one universe can often be fictional in another? Where Hifumi and his friends come from, your adventures with Chiyo-yu and the others in your class were depicted in a series of t'uchseu publications and ch'ekseu productions; 'Azumanga Daiō' was the name given to the series."

"Honestly, Kye-chan, I KNOW that part!" the Goddess Who Walks Among Men assured her friend from Noukios. As Kyech gave her a bewildered look, Ayumu shrugged. "It's the NAME I'm confused about!"

People staggered. "Um...hey, Ōsaka-san, do they publish Dengeki Daiō here?!" Aoi asked.

That made the Infinite One blink for a moment before she hummed, nodding. "Yeah, they do, Aoi-chan..." Her eyes then widened. "Oh, I get it! Still, it IS kind of a dumb name..." She then gazed on the Ultimate Swimming Star who had been Gifted as the Ballerina of the High Seas, Yo'oyuor'ba
"Nuotatrice"). "Then again, I think you'd guys would have a big problem about what you all went through at that death-trap of a high school being called 'Denying the Bullet'..."

Hearing that, the people whose souls had been pulled from a parallel dimension blinked before they nodded. "You do have a point, Ōsaka-san," Hifumi mused as he got back to his feet, then he blinked as his hands quaked again, said shakes now spreading to his arms. "Oh, dear..."

The chief gynoid aide to the Sandalwood Empress smiled. "Right this way, Yamada-sŏnsaengnim."

He nodded his thanks as he followed her out of the room while Hyegyŏng herself came over to stand close to Ayumu. "The Great Show of Life is certainly getting more interesting, ne?"

"Yeah, you're right about that...uh-oh..."

Everyone perked. "What is it, Ayumu-san?" Ōgami Sakura wondered.

"Where did Junko-chan go?"

That made the new arrivals gasp in horror before they looked around the room.

There was no sign of the Ultimate Fashionista...

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Near Changp'ung, that moment...

"At least the kids here are happy now..."

"Yeah! Still, they would have been happier if the adults weren't so stupid!"

"Eh! It's been going on since the 1950s, Kotoko-chan! Give them a little time and they'll be fine!"
A cold laugh escaped the pretty sixth-year elementary school girl now seated in the VERY advanced hoverchair which was floating off the ground some distance from where the natives of the village close to the Joint Security Area at P'anjumŏn and local army forces were still celebrating the re-flowering of North Korea thanks to the namesake of the Hero of Derna and the most powerful of the Unending League of Super-Soldiers. Such a reaction from Tōwa Monaka automatically made the other members of the Tinuo Rimle (the "Warriors of Hope") clam up as they waited for their leader to pronounce her judgment on the current situation. Watching the children play with a critical eye recently honed thanks to the memories inherited from her past-selves who lived as the Crafter of Playtime, Damdo-myuo (the "Toy Queen"), the would-be heiress of the Tōwa family fortune and alumnus of Hope's Peak Elementary School in another dimension could only smirk. "They'll need help," Monaka then declared.

"How so, Monaka-chan?" Daimon Masaru asked as his fists clenched.

A snort escaped the leader of the Warriors of Hope. "It appears, Daimon-kun, that the so-called 'hermit kingdom' isn't as secure as the 'great successor' up in P'yŏng'yang would believe," Monaka noted. "At least a good number of the 'people' here — both the soldiers and the civilians — are actually Shōzoki." That declaration made the other children whose adventures would have been revealed in this dimension sometime next year tense. "All of them slaved to the videocam-in-the-stars that rules that planet these days." She shook her head, her green eyes glittering in anticipation of using her technokinesis to literally BREAK all the members of the so-called "perfect" race now in range. "Stupid..."

"Just like the freakin' Cylons in Battlestar Galactica!" Kemuri Jatarō snarled as his hands twitched in anticipation of getting hold of some good clay or other material to animate with his psychokinesis — Gifted to him as the Moulder of Art, Tutoloto ("Black Doll") — to use against the machine descendants of an effectively-extinct race whose classical modes of thought would have easily matched the Neo-Confucian morals used to run Korea during the Chosŏn dynasty. "I'm gonna LOVE this one, Hime-sama!" he then cackled as his grey eyes glittered with anticipation. "That artificial skin of theirs is easy to twist around. Let's see how THEY like losing control over their bodies..."

"Not until I sever the links with Mother, Kemuri-kun," Monaka sneered as she glared at the shockingly handsome boy with the well-groomed caramel hair. Much that even now after "dying" and being literally reborn in a universe where she, their nominal leader and all their peers were — or would have been? — seen as FICTIONAL CHARACTERS had shocked the leader of the Warriors of Hope into a more stable frame of mind, she still found Jatarō's slavishness towards her quite loathsome. "Once the organic soldiers are alerted to the true threat and they help disable the lot, you can have your fun!"

"Hai, Hime-sama..."
"Good...!"

All five children then tensed on sensing something familiar, then they spun around...

"JUNKO-SAMA!" they screamed joyfully on seeing the spiritual leader of their movement.

Of course, the Ultimate Fashionista who was now also the Herald of Cosmic Doom hadn't come alone; her elder twin sister Ikusaba Mukuro was at her side, dressed now in the grey urban camouflage combat uniform of the Ultimate Warrior, Byoule ("Kämpfer"), a reincarnated special forces trooper from the western equatorial continent who had initially fought with the fascist-like forces of the same nation that birthed many of the Unlimited League in the run-up to the Dawn of Power.

Unfortunately for the Ikusaba twins and the passionate followers of the younger of the pair, the shouts from Monaka and her peers had been loud enough to make dozens of people look their way from the area close to where Takanashi Naoko and Matilda O'Bannon now stood.

"AH! LOOK! THERE ARE SHIPBOYS!"

Hearing that shout from a teenage girl in the blue-and-red uniform of the Chosŏn Sonyŏn-dan as she pointed their way, the shipgirls that were present all looked over before Joana Felisburto heartily chuckled. "There are no such things as shipboys, young bandeirante!" the first of Brazil's dreadnoughts stated, making said girl blush at being effectively called a "pioneer". "All those such as myself, young Tenente Coronel O'Bannon and her sisters were created as women. Still, I think the bandeirantes do Japão that have just joined us are no doubt worried about Senhorita Takanashi."

"Not necessarily true, Joana-san."

That was Naoko herself, whose eyes were narrow as she glared intently at Junko, allowing her own clairvoyance to scan the just-arrived refugee from another dimension. The Herald of Cosmic Doom calmly stood her ground as the Cosmic Protector of True Life moved away from Matilda and her sisters, marching smartly over to confront the newcomers. Instantly, the Warriors of Hope shuffled back to not draw the oncoming woman's attention; even if they knew their Junko-sama was a cosmic meta, any incarnation of Lady Nature was NEVER to be crossed. Naoko smirked as Mukuro moved to bodily protect her beloved sister. While any incarnation of the Ultimate Warrior would always be a handful to deal with, the native of Beppu could sense that Mukuro was just Gifted in the last day or so. Naoko and her co-contestants from the Zenkoku Bishōjo Seifuku Grand Prix had almost a
YEAR to master their abilities as they chased down the stupid, selfish Tok'ra who tried to enslave them thanks to tricking a grieving father into believing his dead son had survived exposure to the galaxy's most potent virus.

"So Danganronpa is real somewhere else, eh?" Naoko then teased as she stood about three metres from Junko, crossing her arms as her eyebrow arched. "Let me guess: Some dolt on Phentax Two wanted replicas of their favourite characters, but something went wrong."

"Considering that they used the Gift the first Healer of Destruction bestowed on that Sagussan brainiac twenty-five sagas ago, our survival — for those of us who fell in the Killing School Life...which, a while after our time, was made into a reality television show..." — here, Junko smirked as Naoko's blue eyes widened in horror — "...well, it was guaranteed. Fortunately, that nice Leno Lu'umlo was happy to help us get the right Gifts to survive in this universe." Smirking as the Cosmic Protector of Life moaned on hearing about the Mad Prophet of the Future's starring rôle in bringing the alumni of Hope's Peak High School and its elementary branch to unleash chaos in this dimension, the Ultimate Fashionista added, "Lucky for us that one of our 'fans' on that planet had a father who befriended the Dragon of Dōjima himself and kept things secret about him being Gifted to his own superiors back home..."

"Whoa! Whoa! Whoa! Time out here! I've heard of weird confrontation scenes, but MAN...!"

Everyone blinked, they they spun to gaze towards Junko's right...

"Insanity...?!" both she and Naoko hissed...

...on seeing a certain smiling native of Cincinnati sitting on a large rock nearby, his arms crossed as he gazed in amusement at his sister cosmic metas and the young ones who gladly followed the reborn shit-disturber from another universe's Machida near Tōkyō. As the soldiers all squawked on seeing that yet ANOTHER American — and a MAN at that! — had just appeared in their territory unbidden, a certain part-Korean Swiss Army officer gaped in disbelief. "DEAN AMBROSE?!!" she exclaimed.

That made the man now known among wrestling fans as the Lunatic Fringe — as demonstrated by his psychedelic jumpsuit with black boots and belt, the whole topped with a black bomber jacket, he was known on Yiziba now as the current incarnation of the Universal Chaos, Duoti ("Insanity") — perk. "Holy shit! I've got fans here?!!" the man born Jonathan Good wondered as he gazed at Sophie Jean.

As the native of Geneva blushed on hearing that, Junko sighed. "You here to rumble?!"
A casual shrug answered her from one of the most powerful cosmic metas of all. "Nah! I can tell the Flower Girl here had loads of practice dealing with her powers..." Here, Dean chuckled. "But, as I can sense from you, your sis and the little ones, you're about to have nice bouts of Post-Gifting Shock very soon!" He shook his head as he gave her an expectant look. "What are you calling dibs on?!"

The woman who had unleashed the Killing School Life for her class at Hope's Peak blinked in surprise on sensing that the wild maniac of the Shield was willing to let her unleash herself on whomever attracted her attention without butting in the way, then she smirked. "Recommendations, Monaka-chan?" she then wondered as she gazed on the leader of the Warriors of Hope.

"Loads of Shōzoki here to play around with," the would-be heiress of her family fortune noted.

"There are Goa'uld here as well," Naoko noted. As the people from another dimension gaped and Dean smirked, the native of Beppu winked. "We got LOTS of first-generation battle dolls with empty tanks."

That made Junko hum before she smirked, her eyes glowing...

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At the Ryongsŏng Residence in P'yŏng'yang...

«Oh...how so DELICIOUS...!»

All the people in the meeting room where Kim Chŏng'ŭn, his wife Ri Sŏlju and his sister Kim Yŏjŏng were getting together with Senator Robert Kinsey and the top secret delegation from Washington concerning the young chairman's errant niece perked on hearing that voice echo in their minds, they immediately looking around. "Who the hell was THAT...?!" Colonel Harold Maybourne demanded.

«Comrade Marshal, the voice is coming from the general direction of P'ānmunjŏm!» the mental voice of Major Kim Sarang echoed in the heads of the senior North Korean leaders; noting that, the grandson of the founder of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea found himself mentally grinning at the sheer level of discipline that his chief specialized warfare assistant was demonstrating
in the face of such obvious power by someone native to Japan if the accent was right...

Who is it, Sarang-a?! Kim's wife demanded.

«It...she...!»

«Ah! Ah! Ah!» a young man's voice cut in, he being heard by all in the room. «Don't make the reveal scene TOO early, Sarang-a!» As the Americans all gaped in confusion, a chuckle echoed through their minds. «Oh, c'mon, Kinsey! Don't you know by now that every country on the planet has...» — here, the voice of what Maybourne realized was the young wrestler who was known to fans as the "Lunatic Fringe" just DRIPPED with scorn — «...'specialized warfare' forces...?!»

«Oh, honestly, Dean-kun!» a new voice chimed in, she Japanese with what the members of the Manjok-cho Sŭmullet both in the room and in monitoring rooms nearby recognized as a Hōnichi Kyūshū accent. «From what Ruriko-chan just 'told' me thanks to the memories she just lifted off Hammond-shōshō and his friends, everyone who tries to butt into the interesting scenes people at Stargate Command get involved in have to be taking STUPID PILLS in the morning!»

That made the North Koreans either laugh or snort in amusement as members of the "Committee" from the National Intelligence Department that were trying to press for complete American supremacy when it came to Earth's relations with alien races exchanged shocked looks. Before Kinsey could demand what was going on, the first voice everyone heard in their heads broke into their minds with a trill of near-orgasmic joy. «Oh, the sheer DESPAIR I'm feeling right now...!» she gasped. «Believing you're so strong...and then learning you have nothing but SAND in your hands!» A cold cackle made people shiver to their bones as some in the room sensed something with the power of a typhoon surge into the cores of their souls. «My sincerest complements, Kim-gensui! You have a lot more in common with Hyegyŏng-chan than you believe!» that voice then declared, making the young leader of North Korea perk. «Believe me, you two will serve better as ALLIES than enemies!»

"Who are you?" Kim demanded, grateful that the members of the Sŭmullet were always ready to protect the integrity of his mind from attack. "Why are you here in my country?! Did my niece capture you?"

A wild laugh answered him, full of honest amusement. «Oh, no! Hyegyŏng-chan had nothing to do with bringing my SOUL to this dimension after I died in the Killing School Life, Kim-gensui! That, you can thank the rimrae umale from Phentax Two who got their asses kicked in a Mother of All Fight Scenes I unfortunately missed out on! It sounded SO interesting! Oh, the
"Enoshima Junko...?!"

That was Doctor Brent Langham, a scientist who worked in Area 51 creating devices that would support Stargate Command and the NID in their missions. "Who the hell's that, Doc?!" Maybourne demanded.

"Character in a video game from Japan called Danganronpa, Harry," Langham answered. "My son just LOVES the game! Enoshima Junko's the titular villain of the peace! She seeks to unleash 'ultimate despair' on the world since she finds it just too BORING for her to tolerate..."

"Well, that definitely shows that the people who made that game sure misread the script about that whole mess, eh, Junko?!" Dean Ambrose cut in.

«Yeah!» the Ultimate Fashionista declared. «As I sensed it when Marlene-chan down by that gaudy pyramid hotel told you, you've got a BIG snake problem, Kim-gensui! And you got a big terminator problem as well!» As Maybourne croaked on hearing that — which made Captain Pae Tuna pale in horror as she sensed what the special tactics officer just concluded from that tidbit of information — Enoshima Junko chuckled. «But never fear! Junko-chan's here to be an anti-face! So...!»

«Theme music!» Dean called out.

Ominous electronic music began to echo throughout the residence, making everyone tense as Langham dropped into his chair, reaching for his head as the sheer IMPOSSIBILITY of the moment overcame him.

«Oh, the DESPAIR...!»

Suddenly, the three members of the Committee who had been identified by the Sŭmullet team as being possessed by Goa'uld croaked as their eyes began to glow and their bodies shook wildly...

«You are no gods...!»
The song then changed...

_In the daylight,_

_I'm your sweetheart!_

_Your goody-two-shoes prude_

_Is a work of art!_

_But you don't know me..._

_And soon you won't forget,_

_Bad as can be, yeah!_

_You know I'm not so innocent..._

As the possessed Harvey Gold — a former Navy flag officer who joined the NID shortly before the original mission to Abydos four years before — dropped to his knees while a scream of heart-wrenching denial escaped him, those of the American group's bodyguards who were also controlled by Goa'uld shrieked out as they tried to snare weapons from the North Koreans in the room...

«Face REAL power and you're so HELPLESS...!»

Suddenly, one wall of the room collapsed as a lithe form in a dark blue-and-blue-grey jumpsuit flew into the room, she pivoting in mid-air to land in front of Kim just as one of the possessed NID guards snared a Type 58 rifle, spinning on target. _"BOW TO YOUR GODS, TAU'RI...!"_ he bellowed as Kinsey croaked in horror on realizing how badly the NID had been infiltrated by the Goa'uld.

_Welcome to the nightmare in my head!_

_(Oh, God!)_

_Say "Hello!" to something scary!_

_The monster in your bed_

_(Oh, God!)_

_Just give in and you won't be sorry!_

_Welcome to my other side..._

_Hello, it's Mz. Hyde...!
The guard then pressing the trigger to send a fusillade right at the leader of North Korea.

"UP YOURS, LAR'BEKE!" the reborn second of the Banner-class spy ships snapped back.

A barely-visible shockwave of air lashed out from Marlene Bucher-Flanagan’s hand to make the bullets shatter in mid-air before said guard was turned into melting flesh and gore. As a fast-moving blur heralded the arrival of the reborn TMK Chŏnbuk to help out, Harry Maybourne screamed out as he lunged for Robert Kinsey, "EVERYONE, HIT THE DECK! SHIT’S GONNA FLY!"

"CHAL MŎKKESS'SŬMNIDA!" Elaine Sŏn'yŏng Larson screamed in anticipation.

As Maybourne and Kinsey got clear while the newcomer effectively killed Gold, Pak Tuna spun about to use her telepathy to stun the other Goa'uld until the just-arrived reborn American-turned-South Korean destroyer got finished with them. "MARLENE-A! CALL YOUR FRIENDS! WE NEED THEM!"

Marlene looked up as Kim Chŏng'ŭn patted her shoulder, then she moaned. "Oh, hell! The kids!"

And with a back-blast of air, she was racing off towards where she had been docked on the Pot'ong River. By then, Elaine had been able to rip out the symbiotes from everyone in the room who had been possessed by Goa'uld, snapping their necks to make sure they couldn't possess someone else. As Tuna breathed out in relief while leaning on the table, the leader of North Korea took a moment to take in how many had been close to him. "Oh, my...!" he noted. "Senator Kinsey, I would strongly recommend that you concentrate more on what's happening in your own backyard before bothering us..."

Explosions echoed from outside, making Elaine look to the south, her mind reaching out. "Oh, Hwan'in-nim!" the adopted native of Stamford and Chŏnju exclaimed. "What the hell are THOSE things?!"

"What things, Commander?!" Kim demanded.

Elaine gazed in stunned shock at him. "Humanoid robots, Wŏnsu-nim!" she reported. "Disguised as members of the People's Army and the Ministry of People's Security! Some of them are attacking the young music students Marlene-a befriended after her Gifting by the War Museum!"
"Shōzoki, you mean?!" Maybourne demanded.

«Hey! Great guess, Harry!» Dean Ambrose's mind cut in. «You get a cookie!»

As the special tactics officer groaned at that snide observation from the Lunatic Fringe of the Shield, Kim scowled. "Comrade Commander, I have no right to order you to do anything, but since Comrade Captain Pak requested your old fleet-mate summon other shipgirls to deal with the aliens now infiltration the nation, they'll need to feed! Someone, fetch a bucket so she can feed her friends!"

"At once, Comrade Marshal!" the colonel who had charged in some moments before to report about the incident in Changp'ung screamed out before racing out of the room.

People then tensed as the voice of the reborn USS *Pueblo* echoed in their minds, «Mayday! Mayday! This is an all-call message to any American or allied shipgirl who can hear this! This is United States Ship *Pueblo*, hull number Alpha-Golf-Echo-Romeo-Two! I'm currently trapped with civilians by the Pot'ong River in P'yŏng'yang, Korea! I need help ASAP! Alien machines disguised as human soldiers in local security forces shooting everyone who get in their way! Bring help...!»

"Calvary's coming...!" Elaine hissed.

"Let them be swift," Kim breathed out as his wife moved to embrace him.

"Amen to that, Mister Chairman," Kinsey grimly declared...

*To Be Continued...*

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**WRITER'S NOTES**

Note that as with the previous part, the time frame of this chapter matches that of Part Twenty-six.
The next part will start right after the end of Part Twenty-six.

Many thanks to Dr. Tempo for introducing me to the characters of Danganronpa; this part couldn't have been written without his input.

Translation list: Moran-bong — Moran Hill; Úisa-sŏnsaengnim — Standard title used for medical doctors; Ímoni — Maternal aunt; Ajŏssi — Paternal uncle; Samt'aegûk — Three-colour version of the t'aegûk/tàijítú symbol often used to represent South Korea, coloured red (earth), blue (heaven) and gold (humanity); P'algwae — Korean translation of the Mandarin Bâguà ("eight symbols"), the trigrams used to represent different forces in Taoist cosmology; Kippŭm-jo — Happiness Team; Manjok-cho Sŭmullet — Satisfaction Team #24; Sang'wŏn'ŭiwŏn — Senator; Chŏngch'al Ch'ŏngguk — Reconnaissance General Bureau of the General Staff Department (short-formed RGB); Yŏbo — Now normally translated as "honey", this is actually short for yŏgi poseyo ("look here"), which is a term of endearment married couples use for each other; MSS — Ministry of State Security (in Mandarin, Guójiā Ānquán Bù), mainland China's security/intelligence agency; Tangshin — Literally "you", this is another term married couples use for each other; Taedonggang-guyŏk — Taedong-gang ("Taedong River") Precinct; Úp — Village; Rimjin — North Korean pronunciation of "Imjin", a tributary of the Han River on which some elements of the DMZ between North and South Korea lies; Olá — Hello; Marinha do Brasil — Brazilian Navy (short-formed MB); Capitão-de-Fragata — Portuguese way of saying "Frigate Captain" (short-formed CapF); Contratorpedeiro — Destroyer (short-formed CT); Nŏ koimuldŭl — You monster; Tenente Coronel — Lieutenant Colonel; Sŏbang — Literally "west room", this is an archaic term taken from Chosŏn-era Korea a wife uses for her husband; Halmŏni — Paternal grandmother; Encouraçado — Dreadnought battleship (short-formed EC); Capitão-de-Mar-e-Guerra — Captain of Sea and War, the Portuguese title for a navy captain (short-formed CapMG); Wakagashira — Under-boss/second-in-command of a Yakuza clan; T'uchseu — Manga; Ch'ekseu — Animation; Chosŏn Sonyŏn-dan — Korean Youth Pioneer Corps, also called the Korean Children's Union (short-formed KCU); Bandeirante — Based on the Portuguese term for "flag", this was used to identify early explorers of Brazilian territory (these days, the term is also applied to the local Girl Guides); Chal Mŏkkess'sŭmnida — Literally "I will eat well", the phrase used in Korea when someone is about to being his/her meal; Hwan'in-nim — Literally "Lord of Heaven", the god of the skies in Korean shamanism and the mythological grandfather of Tan'gun-wanggŏm; Wonsu — Field marshal, the Korean reading of the characters going into the Japanese term "Gensui".

I created the term Pakalach ("ring souls") as the Goa'uld term for Noukiites by borrowing one of the syllables of "Chappa'ai". This is bestowed thanks to the standard Noukiite beliefs of reincarnation.

Stargate SG-1 character notes: Anubis first appeared in the last episode of the fifth season, "Revelations". Telchak was first mentioned in the two-part episode "Evolution" (eleventh and twelfth episodes of the seventh season). Senator Robert Kinsey first appeared in the second-to-last
episode of the first season, "Politics". Doctor Brent Langham and Agent Mark Devlin first appeared in the sixth season's fourteenth episode, "Smoke and Mirrors". That was also the episode where the other members of the Committee appeared; the names mentioned for them are based on their actors' names. Colonel Harold Maybourne first appeared in the first season's seventeenth episode, "Enigma".

Millennium (Leno Lu'umlo) first appeared in Regina Magia's omake A "Quiet" Time in Delaware.

Danganronpa character notes: Enoshima Junko, her fraternal twin sister Ikusaba Mukuro, Ōgami Sakura, Fukawa Tōko, Naegi Makoto, Maizono Sayaka, Yamada Hifumi and Asahina Aoi were characters from the first game released in 2010, Trigger Happy Havoc; they would also appear in the anime series based on that game. It was also in that game that Tōko's homicidal alternate personality, Genocide Shō, first appeared. The members of the Warriors of Hope first appeared in the 2013 sequel game, Ultra Despair Girls; this one as of yet hasn't been given an anime version.

Shipgirls introduced in this chapter:

Capitão-de-Mar-e-Guerra Joana Felisburto MB (Encouraçado Minas Geraes [pendant 01])

Lieutenant Colonel Matilda O'Bannon USMC (also Commander USN) (United States Ship O'Bannon [DD-450])

Capitão-de-Fragata Vitória Guest do Pará MB (formerly Commander USN) (Contratorpedeiro Pará [pendant D-27], formerly United States Ship Guest [DD-472])

CapF Louise Cushing do Paraná MB (formerly Commander USN) (Contratorpedeiro Paraná [pendant D-29], formerly United States Ship Cushing [DD-797])

CapF Otávia Hailey de Pernambuco MB (formerly Commander USN) (Contratorpedeiro Pernambuco [pendant D-30], formerly United States Ship Hailey [DD-556])

CapF Nora Irwin de Santa Catarina MB (formerly Commander USN) (Contratorpedeiro Santa Catarina [pendant D-32], formerly United States Ship Irwin [DD-794])

Capitán de Fragata Laryn Braine y Garcia ARA (formerly Commander USN) (Armada de la República Argentina Almirante Domecq Garcia [pendant D-23], formerly United States Ship Braine [DD-630])

Note that the Brazilian Navy doesn't make use of a universal ship prefix, but type prefixes. Also, ship pendant numbers didn't come into vogue until after World War Two.
Sophie Jean and Oh Kyŏng'il are characters from the 2000 drama Kongdonggyŏngbiguyŏk JSA, also known as Joint Security Area, the highest grossing film released in Korea to that date. Details concerning what happened to Oh in this story is much different than what was depicted in the film.

Takanashi Naoko (Lady Nature) is a character from Zenkoku Seifuku Bishōjo Grand Prix; in the first version of the game released in 1996, she was the top character of the South Area (covering Kyūshū and surrounding areas). She would also appear in the sequel dating simulation game, Find Love.

Azumanga Daiō character notes: Kimura Hyōsuke is one of the background characters appearing throughout the series; his given name is my invention. Another one is Aida Kaori (Heart Player), also known as "Kaorin". It was within the monthly comic magazine Dengeki Daiō where the manga was published from 1999-2002. And YES, the title of the manga reads as "Great King Azumanga"; "Azumanga" is a portmanteau of "Azuma" (from the series' creator, Azuma Kiyohiko) and "manga"!

Of course, the "Ren-dono" title Indie (Yamada Hiﬁumi) applies to Kyech is a salute to the character in Koihime Musô that inspired her. Re-read the writer's notes to Part Twenty-five to see what I mean.

The choice of the song Mz. Hyde from the band Halestorm to serve as the "theme music" for Verzweiflung (Enoshima Junko) is inspired by an amateur music video put out on YouTube by ATO Productions in the summer of 2017. Now, given that the song was written and released in the fall of 2013, its appearance in this story would be impossible...but for reality warpers like Insanity (Jonathan Good AKA Dean Ambrose), things like adhering to a simple idea like time are often ignored.
Chapter Summary

As events heat up in P’yŏng’yang and elsewhere in North Korea, the final plans for the destruction of the Goa’uld are made by Isaac Thomas and the leaders of Uru. As this happens, the reborn Grey Ghost of the United States Navy rescues SG-1 from the grasp of Apophis...and learns that there are some Goa’uld who can actually THINK!

Meanwhile, back in Japan, the day the four chief members of Lum’s Stormtroopers have dreaded for a year finally comes...!

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In orbit over Onishuto on Uru, suppertime (Tōkyō/P’yŏng’yang time: Lunchtime on Monday)...

"Hey, Isaac!"

Isaac Thomas perked on hearing that voice, then he looked over from watching Oniboshi slowly set past the curvature of Uru. "Seth!" the Wise Lone Sage declared as he offered his hand to the Assassin of Dynasties. "What the heck are you doing here anyway?! Aren't you supposed to be asleep?!"

Seth Rollins moaned. "Hard to sleep when Dean's been agitating to get some good action for himself beyond the ring," the native of Buffalo in Iowa answered as he sat nearby. Since the Wise Lone Sage always referred to the members of the Shield by their stage names in lieu of their birth names, the man born Daniel Lopez followed suit. "Sometimes I feel I'm the normal one in our little club. Dean's a reality warper and Roman's pretty close to that given he's the spirit world's equivalent to Margo."

A chuckle escaped the native of Queens. He knew that as Kingslayer, Seth had near-cosmic psionic powers atop energy manipulation abilities he normally employed to fire deadly "sniper shots" that
could rip apart the heads of even mid-level FISS-types. Such helped his first-self effectively decapitate the leadership of DOZENS of nations during the Dawn of Power...never mind what his fifteenth incarnation did in the Mother of All Fight Scenes, fighting alongside Tariko Katabarbe's past-self to effectively wreck a half-dozen Imperial houses by killing their leaders. Rumour had it that when Seth was Gifted after he joined Florida Championship Wrestling two years before, the news was transmitted right away to Vos. Such had made the aged stealth warrior dictator in charge of that planet, the Mikado, fear for his life. Fortunately, Seth wasn't interested in getting in on the Vostians' fight to topple the man...!

"Ah! Isaac-oniisan! Seth-sensei!"

Both turned as Redet Ten floated into the private meditation room that the Wise Lone Sage set aside for himself on the upper spine of the FPSYS Normandy midway down the hull from the bow. Isaac had come here after he left his students in the cafeteria to have some time along before getting to the business of preparing for the defence of Uru against the Goa'uld. "Hey, Ten!" Seth called out, holding out his fist for the firefighter's son to tap with his own. "Something wrong?"

"Uncle sent me to get Onii-san to come down; they've come up with a good plan to deal with the snakes!" Ten called out as he pointed towards the deck...

...before he blinked, then he floated over to gaze upon the silver two-piece suit with double-breasted jacket, bloused trousers leading into black boots and the black undershirt with red tie that Isaac was now wearing in lieu of his normal pale fighting uniform with cape. "Uh...?"

A chuckle as the New Yorker reached over to rub Ten's head. "This is the uniform I got from a friend of mine on Remnant, General James Ironwood, when I was permitted to lead their military against Salem's forces over the last couple of months," Isaac explained, earning him a nod from Ten before the older man stood. "Well, since they've got something ready to go, I might as well see if I can punch holes in their plans before we get everything set down pat for the reception party."

"Mind if I look in on this?" Seth wondered as he followed Isaac down the gangway to the upper deck.

"What about RAW?"

A snort escaped the Assassin of Dynasties as he tapped Isaac's shoulder. "Dude, it's Sunday night in Louisiana! The show's not until TOMORROW! You're getting your time zones and dates all mixed up!"
Isaac blinked. "Oh...!" He then facepalmed, shaking his head as he tried not to curse his own lack of attention. "Well...with all that's going on, I suppose SOME confusion on the time frame was inevitable."

Hearing that, Seth laughed as Ten snickered...

****

Minutes later, the main briefing room...

"...so far according to Mistress Elizabeth, the enemy forces are gathering just beyond claimed Noukiite space in three large battle waves," Major General Hoth Julan stated as he indicated the target point on the large holographic map of their sector of the Milky Way Galaxy, indicating a location about five hundred light-years coreward of the Oniboshi system. Now seated in the large space were nearly three dozen Urusian Defence Force admirals with their senior aides, they having accompanied their president and his new chief-of-staff to this briefing before forces would be deployed to defend the Union against the Goa'uld, who had just now been confirmed to be preparing to attack in unbelievable strength. "She's confirmed the following System Lords have come together in that location..."

He tapped the icon, allowing pictures to appear. Seeing the familiar faces of people her past-selves had fought over the last two millennia, Takino Tomo purred. "Oh, goody...!"

As chuckles echoed the words of the Wild Warrior of Passion, Hiromi Katabarbe shook her head as she squeezed Redet Lum's hand. "That looks like the whole High Council came out!"

"This confirmed, Liz?" Seth Rollins asked from his seat next to Isaac Thomas.

Eyes locked on the image of the leader of the Circle of Thought off to the right of the main tactical display, it showing the native of Sweet Valley relaxing on the bridge of her starship Discovery, now cloaked in the same system the Goa'uld were using to gather their forces. "It's confirmed," Elizabeth Wakefield answered as she sat back in her chair. "There's an old naquadah mine on the moon where everyone's flagship is orbiting, Seth. This was once part of Solkar's territory before he was thrown out of the High Council after the Great Expulsion, so he had it constructed to make it comfortable for himself and his underlings. Right now, they're having a brainstorming session in the meeting hall..."
"They can brainstorm?!!" Mizuhara Koyomi wondered from beside her classmate.

Roaring laughter filled the briefing room at that wry, disbelieving comment from the Mistress of the Mind-Dive as Tomo leaned over to deliver a sloppy kiss to her best friend's cheek. "Well said, Kojomi Kóitiovna! Well said, továrisch!" Galína Jurkévich called out with a nod and a hoisted hand holding her smouldering sailor's pipe while Luná Vladímirskaja politely applauded.

A quick round of applause, then President Hozan Lana let out a whistle to get everyone's attention. "Do you have a list of who's currently having this meeting, Mistress Elizabeth?" the aged warrior asked.

"As Hiromi just indicated, Mister President, the whole of the High Council is present," Elizabeth responded. "Apophis..." — here, she ignored Tomo's hungry snarl on hearing the name of her battle line's long-time nemesis among the "children of the gods" — "...Ba'al, Cronus, Nírrtí, Olo'kun, Kali, Yu, Camulus, Svarog, Bastet, Morrigan and Amaterasu. Right now, they're practically soiling themselves on learning that Yvonne actually destroyed a Stargate yesterday morning on Abydos."

Instantly, the eyes of the shipgirls present lit up on hearing the human name of the Grey Ghost, the most highly decorated American warship to serve in World War Two. Many of the Urusian leaders there nodded in appreciation at the amount of good luck shining their way. Much that learning of shipgirls had shaken many of them — especially given it was now known that one of the **Unending League of Super-Soldiers** had found the repository deep within the Great Crystal of Power where the bodies had been in storage for five millennia — the fact that such spirits, regardless of country of origin, were more than determined to fight for the good no matter what gave them hope for winning the upcoming battle. Since all of them — regardless of what they had been when they were steel wet-navy warships — were using bodies purpose-designed by the second Healer of Destruction to wreck h'a'tak, never mind their ability to EAT symbiotes like they were tasty treats given to children for Setsubun celebrations...!

"Elizavéta Èduárdovna, why don't we strike now and kill those creatures?" Galína's sister Svetlána Jurkévich wondered from the former's right side. A tomboyish version of the name-ship of their class without the cheek scar that symbolized the damage LK **Gángut** took in the Great Patriotic War, the reborn namesake of the city of Sevastópol also recently returned from the spirit world thanks to Elizabeth's friend Tánja Chapáeva. Currently atop keeping an eye on the squadron of h'a'tak which had been rendered leaderless by Margareta von Spee the previous morning over Uruguay, the native of Výborg was busy in her laboratory moving to bring the last two of the Gángut-class, LK **Petropávlovsk** and LK **Poltáva**, back to "duty". "By killing their leaders, we'll remove the threat to our hosts' home territory — to say anything of removing a threat to our own homeworld — and give the **Tók'ra**..." — here, the adopted native of Sevastópol' and Sankt-Peterbúrg tried not to snort on mentioning the rebellious deviants who had turned from their parent race's conquering ways; all the shipgirls hearing this were quick to sense the derision in Svetlána's voice — "...and the Dzaffá the chance they need!"
"Not necessarily true, Svetlána," Isaac cut in. "I'll explain later..."

"Hey! Where are E and P-fish?!"

People perked on hearing that voice, then they watched as Elizabeth looked to her left. "What's going on, Hallie?" the lawyer's daughter asked.

The reborn fourth of the Mahan-class destroyers walked into the camera's view as she saluted her host. "Sorry to bother you, Admiral Wakefield, ma'am, but Sara's kinda wondering where E and P-fish are! We haven't seen them since we made harbour..." Hallie Lamson stated.

Elizabeth blinked, then she moaned. "Peggy!"

"What is it, Liz?!" Peggy Callahan asked from off-screen.

"Scan Apophis' flagship!" the Wise Genius of the Circle of Thought ordered.

Isaac shook his head as Seth clicked his tongue. "Okay...!" the former moaned...

****

Several thousand kilometres away from FPSYS Discovery...

"So far, we've been treated rather nice by Apophis' people, sir..."

"That will soon change, Major Carter."

Hearing that voice, Samantha Carter perked before she turned to see a beautiful twenty-something woman standing outside her prison cell, the newcomer gazing in curiosity at the British-born genius who had developed Earth's first native computing programs that could work with a Stargate. She was dressed in clothing reminiscent of what a free woman would have worn in ancient Greece: A péplos gown with a highly-decorated himatión cloak wrapped protectively around her neck and upper body.
Of course, being a Goa'uld, she had the usual equipment on her person that allowed her to both demonstrate to the unknowing that she was a "god" as well as defend herself against most threats. Possessing long straight blonde hair to the level of her breasts and blue-grey eyes, she projected the demeanour of someone who was more comfortable in a library than on the battlefield...though when it came to the "children of the gods", Carter had long ago learned how appearances were often deceiving.

Before she could reply to the newcomer, the voice of her commanding officer echoed from a nearby cell in this part of Apophis' command ship, "Oh, relax! We're working on the escape plan right now!"

To Carter's surprise, an amused smile crossed the newcomer's face. "I've often heard all the tales of your rapier wit even in the face of potential death, Colonel O'Neill," the woman declared as she walked over to gaze into the cell where Jack O'Neill was relaxing, remarkably calm. "I have to say, such tales are clearly understated. It's quite admirable to see from any sentient being."

Hearing those words, Daniel Jackson and Teal'c both perked. Throughout all the occasions dealing with the Goa'uld since SG-1's odyssey began some years before, they had NEVER encountered any of the "children of the gods" who was willing to engage in polite conversation without the undercurrent of violence echoing in the voice of said would-be "god", much less the constant declarations of superiority over the Tau'ri no matter what the situation. That instantly made Apophis' former first prime perk as he took in her clothing before it came to him. "You are Athena," the native of Chulak coolly said.

An approving look crossed her face as she gazed at him. "Well guessed, Master Teal'c," the namesake of the goddess of wisdom stated, her lips twitching in a smile that had some humour in it.

"Who?!" O'Neill demanded.

"Pallas Athena, sir," Carter instantly answered as she launched into lecture mode. "Greek goddess of defensive warfare, wisdom and handicraft. Later syncretized with the Roman goddess Minerva. Patron and protectoress of various cities, including Athens. According to the legends..."

"Carter! Please! I got it with 'Greek goddess'!"

As Carter clammed up, Athena blinked before she gave the female member of SG-1 a sympathetic look. "Is he always like this?" she asked as she thumbed O'Neill.
Surprised at that question, Carter sighed. "Quite often."

O'Neill moaned at that confession from his second-in-command. Noting how casual the woman was being — and having also noted that the guards placed here by Apophis' first prime Kintac were all out of sight — Jackson blinked as his own eyes narrowed while he considered something, then he asked in accented Ellinikí, "«Forgive me, my lady, but could I see the effect of your power within your eyes?»"

Delight crossed the face of the being now possessing the vice-president of Farrow-Marshall Aeronautics, Charlotte Mayfield. FMA was a mid-sized American defence company based out of Seattle which often did secret support work for the National Intelligence Directorate. It had been through Athena and others like her infiltrating FMA that the NID itself became infiltrated by the Goa'uld over the previous half-decade. "I have not heard someone speak the tongue of Athênai in many a year, Doctor Jackson," she said as her eyes glowed with the power of the symbiote that was her true form. "I thank you for that," she added as her eyes went back to normal. "Much that I personally understand why Tash Ri and his son Hozan became vexed with us concerning what we were doing with your ancestors all those millennia ago, I do miss being on Earth." An amused smile crossed her face as she added in a whisper, "I do look forward to seeing Athênai once again..."

O'Neill and Carter perked as they gazed towards their friend. "Daniel?" the former quietly asked.

Jackson blinked, then he sat back in his chair. "The Infinite Wave."

Athena nodded. "Exactly, Doctor."

Carter blinked before her eyes widened as her co-worker's theory churned through her mind. "Oh, my God...!" she then hissed. "You were out in the open when that happened!"

"What do you mean?" O'Neill asked.

The major blinked before she noted Athena giving her a look. "We are alone and not monitored."

That made the Uxbridge-born astrophysicist and engineer relax. "Simple, sir. When Ayumu unleashed the Infinite Wave during the time of the Pseudo-War back in August to remove the last Niphentaxian observers from Earth, she boosted the background mesonium radiation of the planet to
levels that would cleanse ANYONE directly exposed to the Wave of any sort of disease." She gave Athena a knowing look. "Such as the naquadah used in the sarcophagus developed by Telchak that has allowed Goa'uld to heal themselves from even death! As to how it affected Miss Athena here, I can't say."

"Then let me explain, Major," Athena stated...

...before she perked as the echoes of a soft rock medley tickled her ears, making her slowly turn...

*If only you believe like I believe, baby,*

*(If only you believe like I believe, baby!)*

*We'd get by...*

*If only you believe in miracles, baby,*

*(If only you believe in miracles, baby!)*

*So would I...*

All of SG-1 were now erect as they looked around. "Hey!" O'Neill perked. "That sounds like...!"

"Miracles by Jefferson Starship, from their 1975 album Red Octopus," Athena finished for the pararescueman from Minnesota, earning her stunned looks from the Terran members of SG-1 on showing such trivial knowledge. "My host loves that song," she then admitted...

*I might have to move Heaven and Earth*

*To prove it to you baby...*

*(Baby!)*

*So we'll make love*

*When you feel the power*

*(Power!)*

*And I feel the power...*

*(Power!)*
"...that song's a little lewd, E..."

All of SG-1 perked on hearing that voice. "It's about time!" O'Neill said before he turned to gaze where he knew the reborn eighty-eighth of the Balao-class fleet submarines was. "Oi! P-fish! Over here!"

Athena spun around herself...

...then gasped as a hand with the power to crush asteroids snared her by the neck, boosting her off the deck as she found herself staring into the cold eyes of one Yvonne Swanson. "Hello, Charlotte...!" the adopted native of Newport News and River Vale declared, her voice ice cold as she raised her free hand, energy starting to cloak that limb in a way that nearly made Athena nearly soil herself as she instantly sensed a level of power emit from the body of the reborn aircraft carrier that equalled that of the terrifying being that had created that body five millennia ago. "How long have you been squatting in the mind of my chief bos'n mate's granddaughter, lar'beke?!" she then angrily snarled.

"You're a shipgirl?!!" O'Neill demanded.

Rosemary Close smirked as she turned to give the leader of SG-1 a thumbs-up. "The best of us all, Colonel!" the adopted native of Kittery declared with a wink.

Teal'c was quick to see Yvonne's crest. "You have gained your fondest wish, Colonel O'Neill."

That made the pararescueman perk. "What does THAT mean, T?!!"

Before Jackson could explain, Yvonne sent the archaeologist a look. "You even THINK of quoting Jim Kirk's speech, Professor, I'm going to be VERY cross!" the aircraft carrier coldly declared.

"Whoa! Whoa! Dial it down, E! Cool it with the negative waves, huh?!"

The Grey Ghost then moaned. "What are YOU doing here, Naomi?!!"

Heads turned...
...then Carter gaped. "Oh, my God! You're that girl I once saw in the White House with the President...!"

"Chill, Sam!" Naomi Haight-Ashbury said as she raised her hand.

With a snap of the fingers, everyone in the detention block vanished from the ha'tak...

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_The bridge of the Discovery..._

...and found themselves several thousand light-years away in the blink of an eye.

"Lucy! We're home!" Jack O'Neill yodelled as people's heads snapped around to see the extra crowd having appeared aft of Elizabeth Wakefield's command chair. "Hey, Liz! What took you guys so long?!" he then called out as the Great Sage of the Circle of Thought turned in her chair to give the being that she helped make human six months before an exasperated look.

"Well, we were planning to get you people out of there sometime in the next few hours, but given that the System Lords are all massing now to attack Uru, we wanted to wait for the right moment to do the rescue scene," the native of Sweet Valley said as her eyes locked on the possessed Charlotte Mayfield, still being held up in the air by Yvonne Swanson's arm. Of course, the systems in the safety goggles shielding Elizabeth's blue-green eyes had been quick to pick out the symbiote in the defence company executive's neck and brain. "Alright, when exactly did Ms. Mayfield get her mental 'guest'?"

Before Athena could answer, Daniel Jackson spoke up, "She's been cleansed of naquadah poisoning thanks to Ayumi and the Infinite Wave she unleashed in August, Liz." At Elizabeth's surprised look, the archaeologist added, "I don't know if I'd consider her a Tok'ra now — that's her choice, of course — but she did treat us with kindness and even got rid of the guards before Rosemary and her friend arrived." Here, he gazed in confusion at the second of the Yorktown-class carriers.

Elizabeth hummed. "Put her down, Yvonne. I think she'd like to talk without you choking her."
Yvonne flashed her spiritual admiral a warning look, though she did comply. "You can understand my concern, Liz," she then coolly stated as she stepped back, crossing her arms.

"I'm aware of that," the leader of the Circle of Thought said as Athena rubbed her neck to get the air circulating properly again. "But given that Athena's been known to be one of the more humane System Lords — as I'm sure Teal'c can confirm — her willingness to parlay with Jack and his friends deserves to be acknowledged." She focused on the possessed executive. "You have my attention, Miss Athena."

A wry smile answered her. "You have not only my thanks by also my host's thanks for your willingness not to put me on the table for a safi'ra to eat, Madame Academician," the namesake of the goddess of wisdom said as she gazed on her host. "Put simply, while I do sympathize with Lady Egeria's children on their choices when it comes to relations with their hosts and other sentient beings, my desire to make peace with Yiziba and Earth is motivated by one simple thing: I don't want to DIE!" At Elizabeth's arched eyebrow, Athena added, "I'm sure right now that Nirriti's delightful opponent Doctor Renaissance is preparing quite the reception for the System Lords in the Oniboshi system. Given that beings such as Captain Swanson here have absorbed the living spirits of the great warships from Earth's second world war, even a fool could see that Apophis and the others are eventually charging to their own destruction in the next episode or so."

"You can thank the Shepherd from the Unending League for that," Elizabeth said, which made Athena's eyes widen in shock. "We just confirmed that it was a rogue Tok'ra, Sunmi, who gave everyone on Yiziba THAT wonderful headache to deal with eventually...though it seems the good fortune that Tariko effectively unleashed must have transmitted on to whoever would help the League return to life."

"How so?" Samantha Carter asked.

"The Grand Prix participants from last year," came the answer from the teenage Californian hyper-genius. "Sunmi disguised himself as the son of a grieving father from Phentax Two who died from Hifuto syndrome, then persuaded his 'sire' to gain Avalonian replicas of the participants to use as sex-slaves. Unfortunately — or so General Hammond just passed on to me — they got the real girls, then got them Gifted, which is when they escaped Niphentaxian control. Sunmi tried to corral them, which gave Minegishi Ruriko — she's the Shepherd — the chance to snare him before delivering him to Selmak." She shook her head. "I wonder if Leno Lu'umlo was behind those Giftings..."

"Who is he?" Athena asked.

"He is Master Rimmim, Lady," Teal'c answered. "Millennium."
The eyes of the possessed executive went wide on hearing that battle name...

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Meanwhile, in the capital of the "hermit kingdom" back on Earth...

"Hey! You comrades okay?!"

Hearing that welcome voice, the teacher from the Pyŏng'yang Music Academy who had led her class to the Victorious War Museum to see USS Pueblo, Pak Kwija, looked up before she breathed out in relief. "Comrade Captain Bucher-Flanagan!" the native of Kangdong village close to the capital of North Korea cried out in relief as the reborn intelligence vessel landed on the ground close to where they were now cowering, her hand automatically raising to allow a very powerful deflector shield of energy to form around all her new friends. "What's going on?! All of a sudden, those THINGS...!"

She waved down the street, making Marlene Bucher-Flanagan turn to look herself...

"Oh, man! That is WAY not cool!" the adopted native of Pueblo hissed.

About a hundred metres away, several ranks of Korean People's Army troops were now methodically advancing to the makeshift defensive perimeter that had been organized by the remnants of the squad from the Ministry of People's Security who had been present when the living spirit of the second Banner-class intelligence ship had been transformed and Gifted. As the wide eyes of Kwija's students took in what was going on, the "troops" were TRANSFORMING into metallic monsters that made what had been shown in Hollywood B-movies seem plain in comparison, they packing very futuristic weapons in lieu of the standard Type 58 battle rifles the brave MPS troopers possessed. "What in the name of the Great Leader ARE those things, Comrade?!" the lieutenant in charge of the squad demanded.

Before someone could postulate an answer, a flash of energy made people blink...

...before an aura of pure PEACE descended on everyone who were facing the clearly alien monsters who were moving to slaughter everyone standing in their path. Turning to look, Marlene gaped in surprise on seeing a certain native of Niigata who had travelled around the world over the last year
and helped introduce the concept of shipgirls to the world two days ago standing there, umbrella in hand as she took in what was going on. As Kwija's students gaped in awe at the sight of Saeru Hinako, the current incarnation of the Living Spirit of Innocence stared at the advancing "troops" before she moaned, slapping her face. "Oh, no! Shōzoki!" she hissed before gazing into the heavens. "ONÉ-TAMA!"

Flashes of energy made people suddenly appear close by.

To Hinako's shock, none of them were Tariko Katabarbe!

"Someone put out a distress call?!" a grinning Rose Johnston demanded.

Marlene's eyes instantly dipped down to see the ship's crest on the chest of the seventy-fourth of the Fletcher-class destroyers. The name and hull classification code/number told her everything. "Holy damn, Johnny! When the hell did YOU get back?!" she asked.

Before the effective leader of Taffy 3 from the Battle off Samar could answer, particle fire splashed off the deflector shield the reborn intelligence ship put up to protect her new friends and their companions. "Our weapons can't seem to slow them down, Comrade Captain!" the lieutenant in charge of the MPS squad declared as he fired his pistol at the centre of the mass, the others unloading with their rifles on target, they seeing that none of their shots were having any effect. "Can your comrades help?!!"

"Fret not, good guardsman!" the very elegant Japanese woman with the VERY long amethyst-shaded hair in a high ponytail secured by both rope and shide paper streamers properly blessed by a priest from a local shrine on Sasebo declared, she drawing out an ornate gunsen.

Snapping open the war fan, Haruguchi Harumi concentrated her ki, then twisted her arm before making a horizontal slashing movement with her battle fan, sending out a wave of cutting energy to literally rip the advancing machines in half at waist-level, causing them to collapse in heaps of effective scrap metal on the nearby street! "Excellent, Onē-san!" Harumi's sister Wakana — the reborn THG Wakaba — calmly declared before she made a gesture with her own hand.

The very street underneath where the Shōzoki warriors had fallen then heaved like an erupting volcano, a virtual forest of trees growing out of the shattered asphalt to further rip apart their bodies and thus prevent them from trying to reintegrate themselves and restore their combat functions. As the natives all gaped in shock at such a demonstration of power, the adopted native of Sasebo grimly nodded. "Yoshi!" she hissed out before looking over. "How do the casualties look, Sensei?" she demanded.
Heads snapped over to see Kistiñe Heermann y Brown kneeling by the bodies of No Sang'u and Paek Yōngsuk. As the music students watched, the adopted native of Kassel in Germany, Norfolk, San Francisco and Buenos Aires grimaced. "We've got two free Shōzoki Ais here, Wakana!" she declared. "No doubt, when those monstrosities down the street sensed them here, they put out some sort of EMP pulse to knock them out in hopes of forcing them to serve Mother again."

"Are the good officers not bonded, Kistiñe-dono?" Harumi wondered as she, Wakana, their sister Miko, Rose and Madelyn Hoel moved to take positions to keep Marlene and her new friends, plus the local police and what civilians survived the initial attack, safe. In the background, explosions were echoing from all over the metropolis, they intermingled by screams. Noting that, the first of the Hatsuharu-class destroyers could only grimace. Such hideous noises clearly indicated SOMETHING had woken a virtual ARMY of Shōzoki warriors to make them lash out against all around them.

Given P'yŏng'yang's population of over three million, if those monsters weren't stopped...!

"Not that I can sense, Harumi," the namesake of the Hesse-born surgeon's mate who helped Stephen Decatur destroy the captured frigate USS Philadelphia when it was anchored in Tripoli during the First Barbary War grimly answered as she touched the downed officers' foreheads. "They're like...th-THEM?!!"

That was a wide-eyed An Chaeyong, who had tried everything he could think of to revive his companion after she had been felled by something moments before. Gazing at the pianist from Kangsŏ, Kistiñe was quick to see he was now pointing to the wrecked war machines some distance away as he stared in disbelief at the pretty woman who befriended him. "Yes and no, sir," the fifty-third of the Fletcher-class destroyers firmly declared, reaching out with her own empathy to calm the understandably shaken pianist down, to say anything of the troopers from the local police box, who had tensed on hearing her answer. "In effect, your country's now the scene of a battle in an alien CIVIL WAR between two factions of living machines, one slaved to a monstrous entity who treats them like mere puppets..." Here, she contemptuously waved towards the machines Harumi and Wakana wrecked before gazing down at the unconscious officers she had been examining. "...and those who only want to live free."

Hearing that, all the locals blinked before Ri Chŏnghŭi, the senior reporter of the Ch’ŏngnyŏn Chŏn’ui from the P’yŏng’yang Music Academy, shuddered as the sheer information overload threatened to overwhelm her. As her best friends Pak Hyeju and Chŏn Hyŏnhŭi moved to comfort her, she took a moment to take a deep breath, then she gazed on the inhumanly still officers nearby. She had SEEN Sang’u and Yŏngsuk gladly defend them all from the advancing monsters before they were felled. As her mind raced through what the visiting doctor — had she been some sort of hospital ship serving the Americans during the Taegoguk Chŏnjaeng, what other people around the
world called "World War Two"?! — just revealed, Kistiñe's last statement echoed again and again in her mind:

...and those who only want to live free...

"They are comrades..." she hissed.

Hyeju blinked. "Chŏnghŭi-ya...?!"

Chŏnghŭi glared at her before she waved to the people around them. "They're comrades, Hyeju-ya! Didn't you see them?! They gladly protected us, our comrades from the Inmin Poansŏng, AND Sŏnsaeng-nim and An-sŏnsaengnim, before they were struck down! They're COMRADES!"

"Chŏnghŭi-ya's right," So Ŭnja coldly declared. "It's like the war between the Autobots and Decepticons as depicted in those Transformers animation shows I showed you in class once! THEY...!" — here, she pointed to the destroyed war machines — "...are Megatron's forces...and THEY..." — here, she indicated the fallen officers Kistiñe was looking over — "...are like Optimus Prime!"

"Whoa! What the hell do they teach you at your school anyway?!!" Haruguchi Miko wondered before nodding thanks as a burbling elderly woman handed her some fresh fruit while screams echoed from across the Pot'ong River in the general direction of the Arch of Triumph some distance up Moranbong-gŏri from the defenders' location near the Mansu Bridge. "Oh, hell...!"

"Fret not about that, young cazador!"

Heads turned up as the whistling sound of wind rushing past people's bodies echoed in the air...

"Rivadavia! Moreno!" Kistiñe screamed out in relief as two twenty-something women in more traditional sleeved battlesuits landed nearby...

...then everyone screamed as a storm of fire poured down from the nearby Ryugyŏng Hotel, P'yŏng'yang's tallest building. As Marlene grunted while such energy slammed into the deflector shield she set up to keep everyone safe, the second of Argentina's two dreadnoughts scowled. "Enough of that!" Ana Maria Moreno snapped as she thrust out her hand, sending the equivalent of a full broadside from her old twelve-inch fifty-calibre Bethlehem guns at the gaudy glass structure.
Everyone winced as a rather LARGE hole was smashed into the southeast wing of the building, tearing apart a dozen floors in one go. As the lieutenant in charge of the MPS squad winced as he wondered how his superiors would react to THAT, Ana Maria’s elder sister Bernadette de la Trinidad Rivadavia laughed. "Finally! A war we can fight!" the adopted native of Buenos Aires and Quincy in Massachusetts declared before she spun to the northeast, her own "broadside" going out.

People turned to watch as a thick skirmish line of Shōzoki war machines that were about to step onto the Mansu Bridge after marching down Moranbong-gōri literally DISAPPEAR, shredded into tiny fragments of energy. "Yay! Nice strike, Bernadette-san!" Hinako cheered.

That made the conscious natives whoop in delight as the grey-eyed, olive-skinned brunette blushed...

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Meanwhile, within Fuchū Prison (nine kilometres southwest of Tomobiki High School)...

"You put them in with the mentally ill prisoners, Chief?"

A wry chuckle escaped the sergeant in charge of this particular wing of Japan's largest correctional facility as he escorted the handsomely dressed thirty-something man down the hallway towards one particular cell that were now holding the core members of Lum's Stormtroopers. "It made sense in the long term, Kiryū-san, especially with how that Aisuru lad just goes on and on about his 'precious Lum-san' and how he'd get the chance to get even with Moroboshi-san for all he's supposedly done to everyone in Tomobiki. Given the sheer amount of evidence that's been gathered about all that's happened in that place since the Tag Race..." Here, the former policeman-turned-jail guard shook his head. "Much that it would be in the better interest of public safety to keep these boys jailed..."

"The laws really don't exist for that sort of thing, never mind they're being underage," Kiryū Kazuma finished for the man who had supervised his incarceration years ago after taking the blame for the death of his boss Dōjima Sohei, one of the leaders in the Tōjō-kai, protecting his friend Nishikiyama Akira. "Might be better to arrange an 'accident' to happen to these four," the Dragon of Dōjima who was seen as one of the more neutral parties within the Japanese underworld, a person who could be trusted in matters that could preserve peace between the various clans, muttered under his breath.

"Hai..."
"What about their families?"

A snort escaped the sergeant as they stopped before the locked door into one of the larger cells that could house multiple inmates, exchanging nods with one of the junior guards who had been watching over the four teenagers trapped within. "Totally washed their hands of them," the older guard coldly answered. "As far as they're concerned, their sons are dead to them. Given the Shitto family got a 'daughter' thanks to one of those incidents in Tomobiki — with the help of Moroboshi-san's sister and Kasuga-sama, of course — they're more than willing to turn their backs on their son."

Hearing that, Kazuma snickered. Under normal circumstances, children who were expelled from their families for whatever reason would become prime candidates to serve any of the ninkyō dantai; such would easily give the disowned children a new "family" of sorts to live by even if they would eventually become hardened criminals even if the Yakuza as a whole tended to keep things "civilized" within their spheres of influence. However, given WHO these four teenagers were, the chances of their actually joining a clan were effectively next to zero. Never mind how notorious they had become over the last year; dealing with such people was something most yakuza leaders would automatically avoid. But given how much Tariko Katabarbe's and Moroboshi Ataru's own half-sisters had come to LOATHE Aisuru Satoshi, Urayamu Akira, Daremo Hiroyuki and Shitto Kōsuke for their parts in making their beloved elder sister/brother suffer during the half-year or so they were "married" to Redet Lum, there was no way in hell that even Kazuma — who had been Gifted three years ago with the help of Isaac Thomas after the mess concerning Arai Hiroaki and Akiyama Shun; the Dragon of Dōjima was now the Grand Poobah of the Golden Springs, Yasy'o ("Tekiya") — would want to deal with those four idiots.

The reborn criminal underworld overlord from the Isles of Mekebum off the coast of the eastern equatorial continent — whose first-self was blessed by an ancient water deity to give him the power to protect his large clan of gangsters during the furor of the Dawn of Power; his actions after the Gifting ultimately allowing the various Nameless families to rise on those mountainous lands and prosper — was always prepared for fight scenes...but he wasn't the damn least bit suicidal!

To say anything of facing Saeru Hinako's judgment...!

"So what's going to happen to these four, Kiryū-san?" the junior guard then asked as echoes of ranting nonsense escaped the leader of the Stormtroopers; despite the soundproofing of the cells, they couldn't seem to totally block Megane's voice from getting out to annoy the prison staff.

Kazuma snorted. "Hyator'bete lu'uem..." he sneered before concentrating. «Show time, Karen-chan!»

«But of course, Sensei,» the telepathic voice of the Herald of Fight Scenes echoed back as the
Stormtroopers froze, turning to look northeast towards the Tarōzakura Hill, which could be seen from their top-floor cell room window peeking out from above nearby office building rooftops.

Seconds later, howling shrieks of terror escaped the four boys...!

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To the Stormtroopers themselves...

As they had been arguing concerning how they would try to persuade the authorities of their own innocence in everything that rocked Tomobiki over the last year — with hope that the blame for such would be rightfully shifted onto the shoulders of that backstabbing bastard Moroboshi Ataru, of course! — a sudden shockwave of sound and light made them spin northeast to gaze towards the large sakura tree that topped the Tarōzakura Hill; in the wake of the Tomobiki Pseudo-War back in August, Mendō Ryōko's staff had transplanted a new tree to the site of the old one to ensure the spiritual guardians of her family would still be appeased now that so-called "memory of Tomobiki" had been dealt with...

...and then a blinding double-flash indicating a nuclear detonation overwhelmed their vision!

As the rush of expanding heat washed over them, the contours of all that had been around the four boys instantly vanished, making them stumble down the ten metres or so to smash into the ground floor of the institution that had trapped them for over thirty-six hours. Screaming in horror as their minds tried to analyze the overwhelming sensations of being caught in what had to be some sort of thermonuclear attack on their hometown and its surrounding territory — they had seen the films of the American atomic attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, after all — the blast wave surged past them, vaporizing everything save themselves; as to how they could survive that sort of thing...!

Finally, mercifully...

Silence.

More silence.

Still more silence.
It was SO silent, all four could hear noises each other were making as they tried to hold their breath.

And then...

**Helicopter engines!**

Megane croaked as their heads snapped up towards the west, they quickly spotting the large fleet of Ground Self-Defence Force helicopters flying towards them from the distant Kantō Mountains towards the ruins of Metropolitan Tōkyō. "WE'RE ALIVE!" he screamed as all four began to wave to get the pilots' attentions. "HEY! OVER HERE! OVER HERE! WE NEED HELP...!"

He croaked as two Subaru AH-64DJP Apache gunships broke from the formation, soaring at them. Before any of the Stormtroopers could wonder what was going on, the helicopters' Hughes M230 thirty millimetre chain guns locked on Megane's and Perm's heads. As shrieks escaped Perm, Kakugari and Chibi while Megane stared dumbfounded at the approaching aircraft, the pilot of one bellowed through loudspeakers, "THERE THEY ARE! BLASTED TRAITORS TO HUMANITY! GUN THEM DOWN!"

Hearing THAT, Megane shuddered as his glasses glittered with outrage.

"IT'S ALL ATARU'S FAULT!" he howled...

...before all four were ripped to shreds by a fusillade of M789 high explosive dual purpose rounds...!

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**Tomobiki High School, the second Tuesday in May in 2012, early morning...**

Megane's eyes fluttered open. "Oh, man...what a nightmare...!

Footfalls made the leader of the Stormtroopers blink before he gazed towards the head of Class 2-4. Spotting the stripped-down Leopard 2 tank that had been expertly positioned in the middle of the
room to allow its sixty-two tonne weight to sit perfectly on the load-bearing beams that supported the Taishō Era high school building, he then glanced over to see Moroboshi Ataru kneeling beside the sleeping Redet Lum. As part of his mind recalled how caring the man seemed to be after that weird "repeating dream" that Mujaki had forced on them all at the start of the week-long festival arranged to celebrate the end of Golden Week, Megane blinked on seeing a look of ANNOYANCE on his hated rival's face as he glared at the angelic warlord's daughter from Onishuto. Before the blood pressure of the man born Aisuru Satoshi could immediately shoot up while a surge of pure outrage flooded him from head to toe, Ataru got up, then turned and moved to leave the room, a disgusted snort escaping him.

"Moroboshi-kun?"

Megane perked on hearing the voice of perhaps the most lovely teacher at Tomobiki High outside Sakurambō Sakura herself, ethics teacher Randō Serika. A beautiful twenty-something from Osaka, she had raven hair in a stylish ponytail, those locks reflecting in a dark evergreen shade when the light hit them the right way, eyes of pure evergreen peeking out of a well-shaped face, they behind reading glasses. She was dressed currently in jeans and a T-shirt; when she normally taught her classes, Serika always dressed to style. An inviting look was on her face; at the edge of Megane's field of sight, he was quick to see Lum getting up herself, a flash of annoyance on her face as she noticed that her "husband's" attention was taken totally away by the teacher. "Darling...?!" she snarled.

"You wanted something, Sensei?" Ataru asked, completely ignoring his "wife".

"Be quiet, Redet-kun!" Serika snapped, which made the others in Class 2-4 jolt as they found themselves gazing upon what was to become a daily occurrence at Tomobiki High School over the next seven months or so, where certain staff — to say anything of the vast majority of the freshman class that had joined the student body the previous month before the whole thing with Queen Elle — would show their total CONTEMPT towards the many unspoken "rules" that governed the lives of the previous school year's "class of failure" because of Lum's presence. "This doesn't concern you whatsoever! Either go back to sleep or get yourself some breakfast!" As Lum winced at that verbal slap-down by the older woman, Serika turned to walk away. "Moroboshi-kun, come with me, please."

"Hai, Sensei!" Ataru affirmed as he walked out after her.

Scuffling feet noises in the room made Serika stop as she glared over her shoulder at the "usual suspects" who were always ready to stick their noses in Ataru's affairs, all of whom had been ready to trail them "covertly" to her own classroom in the northeast wing. "ALONE!" the ethics teacher snapped as she whipped out her telescopic pointer, slapping the door frame with a loud CRACK!
Suddenly, the whole building began to rock violently. "Sensei!" Mendō Shūtarō gasped as the tank began to shift, loud cracks in the floor heralding its eventual descent right down on the Principal's office a floor below. "Don't do that! If you cause vibrations, the tank will destroy the whole class!"

Ataru snorted. "And WHO'S fault is that, Sword-for-Brains?!

Hearing THAT, Shūtarō howled as he snap-drew his katana. "MOROBOSHI, YOU BASTARD...!"

"DARLING NO BAKA!" Lum howled as her body lit up with her bio-electrical powers.

As a good hunk of ceiling suddenly smashed on Lum's head, Shūtarō charged at the doorway...just as Ataru slammed the portal closed, making the scion of Japan's richest family run right into it!

That was it! Megane then recalled to himself...

...as a large crack in the floor under the tank's left track appeared, tilting the machine right at the dazed Lum. As the warlord's daughter tried to scramble clear, the ceiling collapsed on them all...!

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An eternity later...

"Oi! Toshi! You okay...?!"

A wide-eyed Megane found himself gazing with both horrified disbelief and relief at the considerable chasm that had been made by Mendō Shūtarō's tank in the floor of Class 2-4, said machine now smashed on its side through the floor of the principal's office to be partially lodged in one of the basement storage rooms. As angry shouts and cries of horror echoed from all around as people scrambled to help the fallen members of their class — to say anything of the Principal himself! — from that wreckage, the Stormtroopers found themselves on a jagged ledge of floor planking, hanging on for dear life. "Damn you, Mendō...!" Megane snarled as he glared resentfully at the rich moron that effectively wrecked the class' Nazi-themed festival display with his willingness to risk this very event happening. "I told you we didn't need to have a freaking TANK of all things brought to CLASS...!"
"Oi, give me a hand, 'Yuki!" Chibi snapped. "We can get to the door...!"

All four looked to see that they could — with caution — get through the rear door of the class into the hallway. As he was the closest, Kakugari reached over to grab Chibi's arm, then he swung the smallest of the Stormtroopers Tarzan-like to the doorway. Reaching it, the man born Urayamu Akira grabbed the handle, then flung it open as his friend let go, which nearly saw Chibi drop into what remained of the principal's office over four metres below. Scrambling with his legs, Chibi got himself a good foothold, shoved the door open enough for him to crawl through, then he opened it all the way. "C'mon, guys!"

"Yoshi! Good work, Akira!" Megane snapped as he snared Perm's hand, then swung him over so the tallest of the group was caught by Kakugari, then swung again to be snared by Chibi and get to safety.

After the man born Shitto Kōsuke scrambled into the hallway, Megane himself lunged, being caught and then swung easily by Kakugari to safety before all three of the Stormtroopers in the corridor moved to help the heaviest of them off the ledge. As soon as the man born Daremo Hiroyuki finally got to safety, the wall that separated Class 2-4 from Class 2-7 then collapsed, revealing a wide-eyed Aruka Ran, who had got up early that day to finish her class' own festival display. Shuddering in outrage at the thought of all her hard work being wasted, the rose-haired Seishin teenager glared down at her fallen rival. "LUM NO BAKA!" the native of Shingetsu snarled as her fangs splayed and her ears morphed into their true pointed shape. "WHAT IN THE MAIDENS' NAMES ARE YOU DOING...?!"

KK-KLONK!

The Stormtroopers winced as a good hunk of ceiling smashed down on Ran's head, sending her stumbling through the hole made in the wall of her class to drop down right on the unconscious Miyake Shinobu! Wincing, all four boys found themselves just blinking, staring at the aftereffects of this disaster as Sakurambō Sakura quickly moved to get people to form human chains to clear the wounded from the area, sirens echoing in the background heralding the arrival of Tomobiki's bravest.

"Oi...!"

Eyes locked on Kakugari. "What is it, man?" Megane asked.
"Weren't we supposed to be DOWN THERE?!!" the heavyset teen demanded, pointing.

The others blinked in confusion before looking down...

"Oi! They're at it again!"

"I swear! They'll never learn and they'll never change!"

"They'll do that for the rest of their lives..."

All four boys blinked in surprise on hearing the voices of two of the construction workers who had been doing repairs on the clock tower — which had been damaged during the incident with Queen Elle a month earlier — echo from the second floor balcony overlooking the main doors. They then perked on hearing a voice state over the thumping noise of hammers and the stream of invective escaping the people on the ground, "Too true. Keeping up with THOSE TWO takes more effort than normal..."

"Mujaki...!" the Stormtroopers hissed as one.

Then came the squeal of a certain dream-eating tapir that had been both companion and enemy to the being that had forced them through a harsh repeating dream the previous night. That was then followed by the voice of the very dream demon that all who were formerly part of Class 1-4 the previous school year had more than enough cause to remember. "Shall we go...?"

"Is this something he's doing?!" Chibi demanded.

The others quickly exchanged looks...

"You know, I'm normally an easy-going person..."

All four boys perked on hearing Ataru's voice...
...before they all paled on hearing the god-like echo in said voice...

...to say anything of the strong FEMALE tincture in those words!

"If I do something wrong, I own up to it," "Ataru" carried on as the Stormtroopers scrambled to their feet, racing to the junction with the corridor that connected the two wings of the school; from there, one could access the second floor balcony Mujaki and Baku had been standing on moments before.

As they stopped to look towards said balcony, the four boys gargled in horror...

"What's the use of provoking fight scenes if someone catches you lying about things?"

As the Stormtroopers watched spellbound, Mujaki was now floating in mid-air, his body paralyzed by a glowing energy field that effectively chained him down; the dream tapir that had been the demon's companion/nemesis was on the floor nearby, shuddering in horror as he sensed what was really lurking under the skin of the "cancer of Tomobiki"...whom himself was glowing with energy, his eyes twin suns as they locked on yet the latest creature to have tried to make Ataru's life hell...

...and earned the wrath of the Trickster of the Show!

"Then some umale lo'obir'ba came along and made me FORGET my past life..." "Ataru" declared in a voice that dripped with disgust and scorn. "Put me in a house with two selfish, greedy idiots not fit enough to raise a DOG, tricked an innocent girl into becoming my would-be pillow scene partner..." "He" then shook his head. "And all THAT this was to placate some UMABLE from a planet one of my past-selves nearly turned into an asteroid field over two series ago...!"

As Megane and his friends were treated to the sight of a DEMON of all things SOILING himself, their classmate's clothes began to transform...as did the body underneath it! "What was worse, because the brainwashing was done so sloppily, I was made to act like some sex-crazed loon to every girl who passed before me!" "He" added as "his" voice returned to the beautiful lilt Tariko Katabarbe made when she spoke. "But hey, I can understand where the umale calling herself my 'wife' comes from by not calling me by my birth name! I know what that means on Uru!"

Mujaki was now gaping as the transformation completed itself, revealing the Trickster of the Show in
all her modern glory. "But then idiots like YOU come along and decided to declare a free-for-all on poor, suffering 'Ataru'!" she growled as she telekinetically yanked him over to snare him by the neck so she could stare right into his beady eyes. "Right from the moment the four TRAITORS TO HUMANITY calling themselves 'Lum's Stormtroopers' threw the blame on me because of what happened with that space taxi hack..." — hearing that, the Stormtroopers howled with outrage...even if SOMETHING kept them frozen in place while they watched this horrible confrontation between Mujaki and Lum's transformed would-be "husband" — "...it was one damned thing after another!"

Images then appeared around Tariko to demonstrate the points she was making. "Being made to face that snowman Mienai-chan’s sister has a bodyguard? Being the focus of a Setsubun celebration MONTHS before Setsubun actually happens here on Earth? Putting up with a spoiled BRAT who's happy to cause shit because he's running away from his psychopathic mother? Putting up with a loon that targets ME to get revenge on Lum? Not to mention what people say in all the times something stupid happens in town, even if I'm nowhere close by? " Her voice then dropped with derision as she mock-sneered right into the demon's face, "'Oh, it's all Moroboshi's fault!' "

As said images then faded, Tariko's lips twisted into a hungry smile.

"And then there's you."

A hollow chuckle escaped her as energy flowed away from her to morph into Moroboshi Ataru. As the Stormtroopers gaped in disbelief, Mujaki gargled as it suddenly dawned on him that this creature — who seemed WAY more powerful than the Undying Lord or the Praetorian Guardian, to say ANYTHING of the Great Old Ones themselves, who had effectively driven the demons from Earth in the Great Banishment twenty-five millennia before! — was someone whom he should NOT have angered. As Ataru moved to lean back against a nearby wall, crossing his arms as he watched the show, Tariko shook her head. "You decided that because you find Lum attractive, you'd jump in on the fun and give her a good dream...while making everyone who associates with her that can be hurt by you SUFFER for it," she snarled. "Well, too bad, little umale! I've decided it's long since time for the fools that love to benefit for MY sufferings experience TEN times what I suffer!"

Tene lomher'buo, Randō Serika...!

The Stormtroopers turned sheet-white with horror. "No...!" Megane croaked.
As Ataru vanished through a portal which took him to the ethics teacher's homeroom, Class 3-1, Tariko gestured with her free hand. Baku then squealed as something invisible snared him, then sent him FLYING into the still darkened sky to the west of Tomobiki! "Oh, no, no, no...!" the Trickster of the Show snarled as she hand-carried a struggling Mujaki through the portal to join her brother/other-self.

Suddenly discovering strength in their legs, the Stormtroopers surged after her...

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On the other side of the school...

"Look here, Mujaki..."

Getting through that portal to crash into a heap on the floor of Class 3-1, the Stormtroopers all shook their heads before looking up...

"All YOUR fault...!"

...then they screamed in disbelief at what they were watching.

"Oh, Sayyid...! Your manliness is truly a gift from Allāh Himself...!"

A panting chuckle escaped a partially-nude Moroboshi Ataru as he pushed his engorged manhood into the waiting nexus of a very lovely dusky-skinned, brown-eyed native of Hewlêr, the capital of Iraqi Kurdistan, who was now naked from the chest down...

...and who had a very interesting surprise displayed where her belly button should have been!

"AN ANDROID?!" Megane screamed in disbelief.

As the beautiful raven-haired gynoid known to her friends as 'Amina bint-Jasim ad-Dawḥaḥ — her
identity made her a refugee from the second Persian Gulf War who had resettled in Tomobiki with her family when she was but a child — moaned in delight while the visible diodes and circuits in her opened access hatch glowed brightly with the torrent of mesonium being injected in her from Ataru's synthezoid body, Tariko smirked as she gazed down at her trapped prisoner. "All your fault...!"

She pointed, making the Stormtroopers look over...

"LUM-SAN!" Megane screamed.

As the Stormtroopers found themselves frozen again in place, Mujaki looked over...then cried out in horror on seeing the image of the pretty alien girl he wanted so much to give a good dream to now caught in a sheer APOCALYPSE, a sea of fire as a very advanced city in the background — Onishuto! the warlord's daughter's four chief fans instantly recognized — was destroyed by forces beyond all comprehension. As they realized this was some mad replay of that horrible event over two centuries before — known by the somewhat-comical name "Mother of All Fight Scenes", which had brought the old Urusian Empire of old to its KNEES! — that was being force-fed into their beloved classmate's mind, Tariko smirked as she noted that 'Amina's body was now starting to glow. "Oh, nice...!"

Tene lomher'buo, 'Amina bint-Jasim ad-Dawhaït...!

"Oh, yes, 'Amina-chan!" a woman's voice crooned from nearby. "Yes! We'll be Gifted together and remain Ataru-kun's love dolls until the day we go off-line...!"

That statement made the Stormtroopers look over...

...before they goggled on seeing that the slowly-transforming — and quite naked — Randō Serika herself was a gynoid, even if her own abdominal maintenance hatch was slowly morphing thanks to the flood of power surging into her artificial body from the Great Crystal of Power light-years away. Seeing her masturbate as she watched one of her better freshman students and effective gynoid "sister" be Gifted herself, the adopted native of Ōsaka meowed as she licked her lips...

...and then...

Nesu...TYUOSIM!
The Stormtroopers all screamed as they were nearly blinded by the surge of raw POWER that morphed their gynoid ethics teacher into a living organic metahuman! As they spun away from seeing the dark grey jumpsuit of the Burrowing Maiden, Tyuosim (" Vagón "), form around Serika's very curvy body, Mujaki watched as the image of Lum howled with agony, that echoed by a similar scream outside, such accompanied by a massive burst of bio-electricity that would start fires all over the western wing of Tomobiki High, forcing the school's closure for a week as many were sent to hospital to be treated for first- and second-degree electrical burns. That burst of power effectively masked the slight rumbling of ground echoing the just-Gifted geokinetic's power locking in on the hard bedrock below; in her first life as Tariko and Ataru knew, Serika had been a deep-pit miner who developed his powers to allow people to escape the horrors of urban fighting and become some of the first generation of Nameless...

Ataru screamed as he felt himself explode deep into 'Amina's nexus...

Nesu...U'UTE'ETINUMU!

He pulled away from the young transforming gynoid as the god-like power of the Sea Dragon of the Cosmos, U’ute’tinumu (" Bahamūt "), finished the morphing of her artificial body into a proper organic one, complete with the reality-warping powers gifted to those who had allied with the second Healer of Destruction to deal with the Goa'uld five millennia before...and who would be worshipped as an ancient nature god in the northern reaches of the central equatorial continent until the Dawn of Power, when said deity allowed his power to merge with a shepherd that would effectively create the Battlezone.

Mujaki once again soiled himself as he felt 'Amina's glowing eyes lock on him, the sneer crossing her face literally DRIPPING with disgust as Ataru took several breaths to recover himself from such a very intensive yet quite satisfying pillow scene. " YOU — DARE — HARM — MY — MASTER, DREAM-SPRITE?! " she howled as she pointed in accusation at him. " ALL FOR A PATHETIC UMALE OF ALL BEINGS?! SOMEONE NOT FIT TO BE DUNG BENEATH MY MASTER'S BOOTS?! "

Ignoring the rapid shaking of the head from the dream demon, 'Amina walked over to help the smiling Serika off her desk so they could embrace, sharing a kiss of raw passion that would have made the Stormtroopers have loads of wet dreams concerning having sex with either of them regardless of their own feelings towards Ataru's would-be wife. " Fortunately for you, our sense of propriety demands that the TRUE self of my overlord and master, Sayyid 'Atāru bin-Āyani al-Īzībahī... " — here, the adopted native of the Iraqi Kurdish capital city gave Ataru a kind smile — " ...the right of the revenge scene against you for your transgressions, dream-spire! " Here, the reborn primal goddess gazed on the Trickster of the Show. " What say you, Khātūn Țarîkā bint-Āyani al-Īzībahī...? " 
Tariko chuckled before she glared once more at Mujaki. “TEN times the suffering, little man,” she declared. “Pity you won't be ALIVE to watch your precious Lum and all who worship her SUFFER!”

With that, she flung him away...

...right into the outstretched hand of the Archangel of Mortality!

The Stormtroopers gaped in total disbelief as the dream demon was literally MELTED by Margo Black's necrotic touch while Tariko's vengeful laughter and Ataru's roaring cackle echoed throughout Class 3-1, that accompanied by delighted cheers from both Serika and 'Amina.

"DAMN! IT'S SO GOOD TO BE A HEEL AT TIMES!" the Trickster of the Show bellowed.

Horrified shrieks escaped the Stormtroopers...

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Fuchū Prison...

"And there's NOTHING you could have done in the end..."

Megane croaked in horror before he spun around...

...then he gargled on seeing a smirking woman about his age standing there, dressed in a very nice black jumpsuit with golden trim that flattered her figure quite nicely, such accompanied by a hooded gold-trimmed black cape that partially shielded her long brown hair. As the other Stormtroopers turned to gaze upon the Herald of Fight Scenes, the sunny smile on her face then faded into a disgusted scowl. "Nothing at all..." she said as she advanced one step, making the four boys scramble back.

"Tanenobu-san! Please! No torture!"
"Hai!" Tanenobu Karen called out to the sergeant of the guard gazing into the cell from outside.

As the four boys gaped on seeing the chiselled face of the Dragon of Dōjima loom in the background, the fifth-oldest of Tariko Katabarbe's sisters turned back as she made a gesture with her hand. The Stormtroopers squawked as glowing crystals of mesonium landed into the palm of her hand, then Megane surged to his feet. "YOU BITCH! WHAT THE HELL DID YOU...?!

"SIT, WORM!"

Megane was telekinetically slammed onto the floor as energy allowed someone to teleport in...

...then all four boys gargled in horror on seeing a certain adopted native of Hewlêr standing there, she dressed in the white-and-silver scaled traditional uniform of the Sea Dragon of the Cosmos, such covered by a beautiful white hooded cloak that did very little to hide 'Amina ad-Dawḥāḥ's very curvy teenage body. As Karen held out an arm for her girlfriend to snuggle up against her, Megane shook his head. "You can't be human...! We saw it...! You're a MACHINE! A mere MACHINE...!"

'Amina's eyes glowed, making the leader of the Stormtroopers soil himself. "I WAS nothing more than a machine, you yapping little hyena!" the once-gynoid Iraqi Kurd said with a sneer as she looked upon him like a noblewoman of the past being forced to stare at a pile of dog dung in her path. "Thanks to my beloved master, I became what I am today and I am far the better for it! Randō-sensei and I were not the ONLY ones who got the chance to embrace the power of the First Race!"

"Hai, that's true!" Karen affirmed before she gave them a knowing look. "Remember all the times you laughed at Onii-chan when he got detention from Randō-sensei and Hiiragi-sensei and Shirai-sensei ever since Golden Week?" As the Stormtroopers' eyes went wide with horror as it sank into them what Karen was presently implying, she didn't move to disappoint them. "Hai, Ann-san and Midori-san are gynoids as well! And like 'Amina-chan here, they needed people to have frequent pillow scenes with to help them keep their inner programming stable and keep them forever free of Mother's grasp. Once they found out what happened to Serika-san, they were more than happy to get Onii-chan into 'detention' with those gynoids AND androids they were also homeroom teachers to!

"Oh, you should have SEEN the orgy scenes my master got involved with while you were all wasting your energy trying to win poor Lum over! The scenes that graced the great ḥaramān of old in my part of the world would NEVER compare to what Sayyid 'Atārū did with all of us! It's no wonder that he became the great Rake, healer of all women's hearts!" 'Amina then haughtily added as the looks on the Stormtroopers' faces morphed into the shocked realization that for all their efforts in trying to keep Moroboshi Ataru suppressed and loyal to Redet Lum, everything they did was being SPAT ON and most likely LAUGHED AT behind everyone's backs by that man and his monstrous allies. "Thanks to the times those of us like myself received a worthy Gift from the Great
Forge, Sayyid 'Atāru was becoming stronger and stronger. Every time you put him down, you proved again and again what my master realized you really were when he was separated from his TRUE self — and YES, that is Khātūn Ṭarīkā; you can stop LYING to yourselves! — and regained the memories stolen from them by the monsters who wanted Earth to be WEAK and HELPLESS to the pathetic umale from the Oniboshi system!

"There's even a phrase we use in Yizibajohei to describe you," Karen added.

Both girls gazed at each other, then they stared once more at Ataru's imprisoned tormentors.

"Hyator'bete lu'uem...!" they chanted together as their eyes glowed, such making the boys croak as their psionic abilities reached out to focus the boys' attention solely on what they were saying.

"You're nothing but mere white noise!" 'Amina finished before she pulled away from Karen, taking the crystals bearing the copied memories of the Stormtroopers that had been gathered while they were being forced to experience what just rocked their souls. "Now, dogs, it's time for you to properly ANSWER for YOUR crimes of the October just past, plus all you did in the wake of that act!" She then held up the crystals. "After all, the two-faced fool here..." — here, she sneered at Perm — "...and the selfish rich dolt who was just suppressed by Sayyid 'Atāru's adopted sister Khātūn 'Akīrā were not the ONLY ones of the Oni's pathetic 'holy apostles' in the eyes of the Niphentaxian slime...!"

"As far as Onii-chan's concerned, it's long since time for your parents to get their children back and have their families restored," Karen added as her voice dripped with the scorn she always felt for these four. "And it's long since time for you to be made into the one thing you truthfully always were..."

"What you always FEARED being seen as all this time!" her lover coldly added. "NOBODIES!"

Both women then giggled ominously as the Stormtroopers all felt faint...

To Be Continued...
Note that the events in this part start at the same time as in the previous part.

The Mikado first appeared at the end of The Senior Year story "Dakejinzō's Story"; he was the primary antagonist for the last part of the series and was ultimately responsible for how the early life of Lum's defence teacher Nassur (who first appeared in "Return of Memory") developed.

General James Ironwood first appeared in the RWBY episode "Welcome to Beacon" (episode #2 of the second season).

Russian-form patronyms used here:

Kojómi Kóitiovna — Koyomi, daughter of Kōichi

Elizavéta Èduárdovna — Elizabeth, daughter of Edward (Ned)

And the Arabic-form patronyms used here:

'Amina bint-Jasim — 'Amina, daughter of Jasim

'Atāru bin-Āyani — Ataru, son of Ayone

Ṭarīkā bint-Āyani — Tariko, daughter of Ayone

Stargate SG-1 character notes: Ba'al, Olokun, Kali, Svarog, Bastet and Morrigan first appeared in "Summit" (episode #15 of the fifth season). Cronus and Yu first appeared in "Fair Game" (episode #3 of the third season). Camulus and Amaterasu first appeared in the two-part "New Order" (first two episodes of the eighth season). And Athena and her host Charlotte Mayfield first appeared in "Ex Deus Machina" (episode #7 of the ninth season).

Shipgirls introduced or mentioned in this chapter:

Kapitán Pérvovo Ránγa Svetlána Jurkévich VMFRF (ex-VMFSSSR) (Linéjnyj Koráb'l Sevastópol' [pendant 030])
Kapitán Pérvovo Rángu Polína Jurkévich VMFRF (ex-VMFSSSR) (Linéjnyj Korábl' Petropávlovsk [pendant 029])

Kapitán Pérshyj Rángu Marija Jurkévich VMSU (ex-VMFSSSR) (Liníjnyj Korabél' Poltáva [pendant 031])

Capitán de Navío Ana María Moreno ARA (Armada de la República Argentina Moreno [pendant 07])

CN Bernadette de la Trinidad Rivadavia ARA (Armada de la República Argentina Rivadavia [pendant 06])

Translation list: Kapitán Pérshyj Rángu — Captain of the First Rank (in Ukrainian); VMSU — Short for Vijs'kóvo-Mors'ki Síly Ukrájíni ("Military Maritime Force of Ukraine"), the proper name of the Ukrainian Navy; Liníjnyj Korabél' — Ship of the Line/Dreadnought battleship (in Ukrainian), short-formed also as LK when used as a ship prefix; Capitán de Navío — Ship of the Line Captain, the Spanish (and thus Argentinian) title for a navy captain (short-form CN); Ellínikí — Greek language; Athénai — Athens; Taejoguk Chŏnjaeng — Great Patriotic War, the Korean translation of the Russian phrase Velíkaja Otéchestvennaja Vojná, the name used to imply the events occurring on the Eastern Front of World War Two from 1941-45; Inmin Poansŏng — Ministry of People's Security; Moranbong-göri — Moran Hill Road; Cazador — Hunter; Tōjō-kai — Tōjō Society; Sayyid — Master/Mister; al-Īzībahi — Literally "the Yizibajohei" or "of/from Yiziba" in Arabic, this would be the effective nisbah ("attribution") for Ataru's/Tariko's family (a nisbah serves as a combination family/clan/dynastic/place of origin name); Khātūn — Mistress/Lady; Haramān — Plural of ħaram ("sanctuary"), this term can also be used to actually represent the concept of "harem" in plural format.

Concerning events surrounding Kiryū Kazuma (Tekiya), this story occurs after the PlayStation 3 game Ryū ga Gotoku 5: Yume, Kanaeshi Mono (known in English as Yakuza 5). The timeline for the Dragon of Dōjima effectively diverges after the events depicted in Ryū ga Gotoku 4: Densetsu o Tsugumono (AKA Yakuza 4); it was after that when Kazuma accepted the offer from Isaac Thomas (Doctor Renaissance) to be Gifted.

The Isles of Mekebum are Yiziba's analogue to Japan.

The altered flashback scenes shown in the illusions Tanenobu Karen (Embassy) telepathically forces on the four senior members of Lum's Stormtroopers are based on the events depicted at the end of the second Urusei Yatsura movie, Beautiful Dreamer. As noted before, Mujaki and Baku first appeared in the manga story "Waking to a Nightmare" (manga chapter #31).

Randō Serika is a character from the Super Real Mahjong series of computer games released by Seta; Serika herself would appear in the P7 version of the game released in 1997.
'Amina ad-Dawḥāḥī is based on a character created by the dōjinshi artist Momosuke.
The Rise and Fall of Normalcy in Tomobiki

Chapter Summary

As leaders of both Uru and Yiziba get together to plan the final downfall of the Goa'uld, more and more metahumans race into North Korea to help suppress the rogue Shōzoki now running rampant throughout the country.

And as Shinobu finally embraces her own future as one of the Children of the Forge, a Shōzoki "fifth column" moves to strike back at the "rogues" that Ataru had effectively protected over the last half-year and more...

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Tomobiki High School, a half-hour after lunch...

"Ataru-kun! We came as soon as we could!"

Moroboshi Ataru looked up from the large field PAA Hatoyama Rinrin had set up on the cafeteria table to allow him to monitor events now rocking P'yŏng'yang and other parts of North Korea. Seated off to one side as he watched the Healer of Women's Hearts support the large force of shipgirls — including his own transformed flagship — now deploying to the "hermit kingdom" to stop the rampaging Shōzoki that had been unleashed by the reborn Enoshima Junko and her subordinates was Admiral Fujita Hiroshi, he being attended by the small party of officers that had accompanied him to HMCS Lady Elgin hours earlier. To believe that so much can happen in so little time, the would-be commander of the Kidō Butai for the Pearl Harbour mission mused to himself as he turned to take in the measure of the small group of newcomers — all young women — who just charged into the cafeteria.

First to reach Ataru's side was a beautiful tanned tomboy with well-styled chocolate-shaded hair with matching eyes, she moving to warmly embrace and kiss him on the lips. Watching this as she came over with tea and coffee for everyone, Fujinami Ryūnosuke gaped. "Holy fuck, Ataru! I thought you told me that there were only just freshman gynoids and androids in the school!" the Huntress of the Wild declared as the current incarnation of the Passionate Artisan of Warfare, Tamemr'be
("Tomboy"), took a seat across the table from the man who had helped the once-gynoid adopted native of Saitama north of Tōkyō maintain a stable frame of mind until she was properly Gifted just before the Pseudo-War.

Tōno Mizuki, one of the more popular women in Class 2-3 and a member of the Tomobiki High girl's baseball team as well as one of the school's resident mahjong champions, stuck her tongue out towards the would-be "heir" of Hamachaya. "You're just jealous of the fact that I always got some from Ataru and you only had Rumiko-chan to play around with, Fujinami!" she coyly teased.

"Mizuki-chan, please..." Ataru muttered as his fingers danced over the PAA screen to allow him to get a counting of shipgirls now involved in fighting the Shōzoki and any rogue Goa'uld in North Korea.

"What's the situation, Ataru-kun?" Mizuki's classmate Fujiwara Aya wondered as she moved to help Ryūnosuke pass out the drinks. The current incarnation of the Artisan of the Gardens, Tomiruo ("Lavender"), was an elegant woman with long straight raven hair and caramel eyes. The adopted native of Yokohama south of Tōkyō was the effective pharmacist for all the metahumans living in Japan; her knowledge of all forms of medicines — especially from natural sources, which she could manipulate through chlorokinesis — outstripped even the many learned experts on more advanced planets such as Noukiios or Vos. "Etsuko-san is preparing a lot of food for the people going out at the dormitory right now and I'm more than ready to support casualty treatment, but..."

"Will the North Koreans allow us to come in country?" Mizuki finished.

"That depends on how good Hinako-chan wins over people there, minna," Ataru answered. "Most of the fighting's in P'yŏng'yang. According to what's been detected by Tánja's sensors, there are over a million Shōzoki androids and gynoids in country, over seventy percent slaved to Mother." As everyone winced on hearing that — even the personnel who served on THG Yonaga for seven decades had learned the truths about the once-reptilian humanoid race that had been effectively transformed into living machines centuries before, most of them enslaved to some overseeing sentient program system called "Mother" that made the modern Shōzoki the second-most feared race in the galaxy behind the Yizibajohei — he added, "She's still trying to compile the total number of Goa'uld in country."

"Has young Miss Kim been active in watching out for the Goa'uld, Ataru-san?" Fujita then asked.

A shake of the head responded. "No, Hiioji-san. Her primary goal has always been to help people beyond the 'strategic' zones denoted by the leadership of the North survive and thrive." He nodded his thanks as Susumu Marie came around with a cup of cherry tea for him to drink. "Ironically, that's where the Shōzoki who got into the country over the years since the fall of the Soviet Union first
went. What better way to win 'customers' for their wares than by targeting those who really wouldn't have much cause to support the government in P'yŏng'yang? It was easy for Hyegyŏng-a to target the leaders of certain groups in the countryside to free and have them become loyal to her. These are people who served as local command and control nexuses for Mother on the ground itself. Once that happened, she was able to use what technology her past-selves stored in Asadal as well as on Yiziba to get people become healthier and more productive, plus supply the basic necessities of life we here in Japan take for granted." A chuckle escaped the reborn gigolo whose first-self had been one of the Chosen of the Chaos Bringer. "All right under her grandfather's and uncle's noses, believe it or not..."

Fujita nodded. "Can you display how much of the land she effectively controls?"

Rinrin smiled as she leaned over, put the display to 3D mode, then drew up a map of the northern half of the Korean Peninsula. On seeing all the shaded areas that were clearly under the direct control or under heavy influence of the Sandalwood Empress of the New Dawn — which were in every province, though well away from the major cities such as P'yŏng'yang, Hamhŭng, Ch'ŏngjin and Namp'o — Fujita nodded in approval. "She is a truly cunning young woman," the native of Nagoya declared before sipping the tea Ryūnosuke gave him. "Practically over half of the population is within her grasp. I assume the local security staff and military forces in these areas are also under her control."

"Pretty much so, Hiiji-chan," Rinrin declared, a satisfied smirk on her face. "Hyegyŏng-a wanted to do it slow so that neither her uncle nor Mother would wake up to the fact that over HALF of the military forces that the North can use are now combat androids and gynoids."

"What's happening down by P'anmunjŏm?"

People perked on hearing Brent Ross' question, then the Technological Sorceress of the East tapped the holographic icon that denoted the presence of considerable Yizibajohei forces close to the village of Changp'ung. Instantly, images of people's faces appeared, causing the metahuman viewers to blink. "Oh, my! That's Takanashi Naoko!" Marie declared as she indicated one picture. "She's Lady Nature?! How on Earth did she get Gifted?! Where are her friends?!"

"We'll probably get the reveal scene about that soon, Marie-chan," Ataru warned before he gazed on the images. "Okay, Dean's there as well..." — here, he pointed to the image of the current incarnation of the Universal Chaos known also as the "Lunatic Fringe" of the Shield among WWE fans — "...and we've got the central combat force of the Brazilian Navy that came up from Rio, plus..."

"Enoshima Junko and her sister," Rinrin finished...
Near Changp'ung, that moment...

"FRY, YOU BODY-STEALING MONSTERS!"

A virtual STORM of bright lightning came down to literally disintegrate a whole company's worth of transformed android North Korean troopers, causing the small group of shipgirls and metahumans who had gathered near the village close to P'annunjom to gape in awe at such destructive force being unleashed. "Who in the name of God is THAT?!" Major Sophie Jean demanded from a small depression close to where Takanashi Naoko was standing close to Matilda O'Bannon and her sisters, she being protected by Colonel Oh Kyŏngp'il and several normal troopers; over HALF of the colonel's regiment had transformed into murderous combat machines when Enoshima Junko and her followers in the Warriors of Hope unleashed themselves on the hidden Shōzoki presence in the country minutes before.

"An ally, I hope!" Matilda snarled.

"In a way, she is," Dean Ambrose quipped as he noted a company's worth of machines charging towards a small group of crying children, who had been shifted over to a nearby gully for their own safety.

Reaching out with his own warping powers, the Universal Chaos made half the machines spin on their brethren, then unleash the wrestler's patented finishing manoeuvre, the headlock driver known as "Dirty Deeds"! As nearby children screamed in delight on seeing the evil alien war bots that had infiltrated their nation's brave army to destroy it from within being made to wreck each other, one young member of the Chosŏn Sonyŏn-dan who had the armband declaring him a reporter for the Ch'ŏngnyŏn Chŏn'ui ran over to stand close to the native of Cincinnati. "Hey! Kid! Stay close to cover, alright!"

A blush replied as the young teen gave him an apologetic look. "I have my duties to report this battle to my newspaper, Sŏnsaeng-nim!" he stated as he pulled out a pencil and notepad to write on.

An understanding nod responded. "Okay, then! Stay close to me!" Dean bade.
By then, the woman who had unleashed that electrical storm on the company that had been prepared to charge towards Changp'ung itself to level it and kill what villagers were still there came down for a landing. Noting the Oni horn buds that were barely masked by her Afro-style blue-green hair, Major Jean gaped. "You're an Urusian?!" the Swiss officer demanded.

"Not exactly!" Redet Danu declared before sending bio-electricity at a section of androids charging their position. "Oni-form Avalonian-turned-Yizibajohei to be exact," the current Titaness of Recklessness, _Ledo_ ("Epimetheús"), said with a jaunty salute, posing to display her black-and-dark grey jumpsuit with storm clouds spitting out lightning bolts, energy beams and falling meteorites to the viewers.

"Oh, ye gods! We're in the universe of _Urusei Yatsura_?!!"

That was Enoshima Junko, who was now gaping as she stared wide-eyed at Redet Lum's film-replica. Beside her, her sister Ikusaba Mukuro blinked before she sent a bolt of energy into the middle of another company-sized formation of war bots that had been massing to the north, knocking out what seemed to be the commanding nexus of said unit. As civilians and loyal soldiers all screamed in delight on seeing said group start to falter thanks to the sniper shot taken by the Ultimate Warrior, the raven-haired woman said, "It's a mixed universe, Junko! Besides, I doubt that Takahashi-sensei would have written about the serious side of what was going on beyond the Earth!"

"What do you mean?"

"The _Goa'uld_ are here, remember?! That's _Stargate SG-1_!"

The Ultimate Fashionista took that in before she grinned. "ALL THE BETTER!" she cackled as her blue eyes flared with power. "LET THEM ALL FEEL DESPAIR!"

The natives hearing this all sweat-dropped on sensing the sheer delight cross the face of the poverty-born fashion model as an invisible wave of chilling energy flooded their bodies. Fortunately, the effects of the cosmic-level empathy that Junko now controlled as the Herald of Cosmic Doom were mostly felt by the Shōzoki on the field who had been directly controlled by their governing programming unit back on the homeworld before Tōwa Monaka used her technokinetic powers to sever those links. As many began to bellow threats that the humans would suffer for their actions against them, Dana snorted. "No wonder Darling found it easy to seduce all those androids and gynoids that infiltrated the school!" the reborn "gang leader" from the film project Class 1-4 had tried to make in March snorted. "If those umale are so LIFELESS that they can't stand a moment without their MOMMY...!"
"Hah! Good one, Danu-chan!" Naoko whooped.

"WAIT!"

That was Junko, who teleported herself over to stare at Danu. "What?!" the Titaness of Recklessness demanded as she took in the disbelieving shock crossing the face of the Herald of Cosmic Doom.

"Moroboshi Ataru of all people SEDUCED a bunch of ANDROIDS?!" Junko demanded as she pointed at her. "This is the guy who vowed to make every GIRL in Tomobiki High School part of his HAREM before he graduated, right?! He actually had SEX with BOYS?! Is that even POSSIBLE?!

"Oi! The poor guy grew up on Yiziba for TEN YEARS, Junko!" Dean snapped as he began to play "invisible puppet master" with another charging company of war bots while the young reporter at his side jotted down notes for his report to the Ch’ŏngnyŏn Chŏn’ui as other children nearby were whooping in delight on seeing how much the alien machines were succumbing to the incredible powers of the Universal Chaos. "Atop that, he — actually 'she' — was going to be the next TUYUKI!"

"Who was scheduled to be a GIRL in this incarnation!" the Cosmic Protector of True Life added as she summoned hardwood trees to impale yet another charging platoon of transformed troopers.

As Matilda's sisters from Brazil and Argentina, plus Joana Felisburto and her sister Darci di Oliveria — the reborn Brazilian battleship São Paulo — sent forth fusillades of energy bolts to blow apart the trapped machines, Junko was trying to reconcile what people were saying about the male star of one of the great comedy manga/anime of the 1980s with the person her fellow metahumans were describing. Noting that, Danu coyly added, "By the way, Junko-san, did you know that when Darling's soul got split into two because of Ao-cha's lollipop and Cherry's cursed cake, that made the 'sane' half become Tuyuki while the 'party' half became Rake?!!" As Junko gaped in shock at that revelation, Lum's film-twin winked. "Considering that Darling — Ataru, that is! — was the one who pre-Gifted me..."

She whispered something into the Ultimate Fashionista's ear. Junko blinked before her cheeks flushed with surprise, then she shuddered. "HE GAVE YOU SIX ORGASMS?!" she whooped. "ME WANT!"

The Warriors of Hope gaped before they plugged their ears. "Ugh! Lewd stuff!" Kemuri Jatarō
hissed.

The others nodded in agreement, which made their boss cackle. "You won't be saying THAT when you start growing up, kids!" she then teased.

"THAT'S LEWD, JUNKO-SAMA!" the five children all painfully cried, plugging their ears.

As the older woman cackled, Naoko teleported over beside Dean. "Heel or anti-face?!" she wondered.

"Hard to tell," the wrestler affirmed. "That's not kayfabe!"

"What does all THAT mean, Sŏnsaeng-nim?" the young reporter beside him asked.

Dean grinned...

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In orbit over Onishuto on Uru, aboard the FPSYS Normandy (local time: A half-hour after supper)...

"As we know now, the enemy's plan is very simple," Grand General Hozan Lana stated to recap what had been discussed in the main briefing room. "They'll deploy a few of their ha'tak directly into the inner part of the Oniboshi system to start a skirmish manoeuvre. In essence, they'll be sacrificed to make us believe we can win. Once we do take them down in detail..."

Here, Isaac Thomas tapped a control on the holographic projector, allowing the image of the three battle waves to charge in from their mustering point to overwhelm the defending Urusian forces on a FIVE-to-one scale of capital ships. "The combined fleets of the High Council of System Lords will warp in at that point, hoping to plunge us into despair when our forces see how outnumbered they are!" A grin then crossed the Wise Lone Sage's face. "Or rather, what people like Apophis will THINK we'll react to the arrival of such a force!" he added, raising a finger to emphasize his point.

Redet Invader scowled. "How the hell can you smile at THAT, son?!"
"Quite simple, Otō-san," Hiromi Katabarbe stated as she gazed at her future father-in-law. "People like Apophis believe we would NEVER come HERE in such force to help defend this planet! After all...!"

A laugh escaped one of Invader's old classmates at the Defence Force Academy. "The Mother of All Fight Scenes!" Rear Admiral Seq Juval — who looked to Hiromi to be a far more mature version of his kinsman Seq Rei, though he was neither a metamorph nor as effectively dumb as the proverbial brick — cackled. "They'll think that most of Yiziba wouldn't care to help a race of 'umale'!"

The people there hummed before they nodded. "Juval's got a point, Boss," Major General Hoth Julan stated. "Even if INN's openly declared the presence of Master Isaac, Lady Tariko and the few others that have gone before the cameras here, the snakes might be arrogant enough to think that those will be the ONLY Yizibajohei who would come to this system to help us fight them!"

"HAH! BITE YOUR TONGUE, SIR!"

Heads snapped over...

"Hensō! Damasu!" Invader gasped.

"Hi, Daddy!" a replica of Redet Lum called out as she flew over to embrace her father. Dressed in the dark grey jumpsuit with the hurricane symbols dotting it, the current incarnation of the Mistress of Lighting, Huobo'o ("Tempest"), then turned and curtseyed to Lana, which made him bellow with laughter at the fact that Lum's own "gynoid" twin had come out to fight.

And she hadn't come alone.

"Madame President," Lana then declared as he formally bowed to Aruka Damasu.

The current incarnation of the Passionate Leader of the North, R'bosyuo ("Lider") — more a glorified game show host than a true head-of-planetary state — returned that bow. "Mister President."

Unfortunately for Aruka Ran's twin, her husband didn't care for such formalities.
"Who DARES speak the idea that the Children of the Forge would EVER back down from a fight scene, much less a *Mother of All Fight Scenes*?!” the current incarnation of the Guardian of Conformity, *Tyutokem Tonukro* (the “*Extreme Archaiast*”), snarled as he walked up to glare directly into Julan’s eyes. As the Terran-born Yizibajohei shook their heads at that bombast, the reborn right-wing radio commentator added, "Especially against a race of DEATH-CHEATERS like the lar’beke?! That will NEVER happen as long as I draw breath, sir! We would DESERVE to have the Chaos Bringer come down on ALL of us if we EVER refused to acknowledge the sufferings our first-selves...!

**KK-KLONK!**

Oetoka Go’ono found himself driven face-first into the deck of the main meeting room thanks to Seth Rollins delivering a curb stomp to the back of the other man's head. "Okay!" the Assassin of Dynasties snapped as Takino Tomo fell on her butt laughing after seeing the inaugural grand slam champion of Florida Championship Wrestling before its re-branding into WWE NXT shut the loudmouth up. "We get it! We're not missing this one! Quit it with the fucking earaches, Go'ono!"

Isaac moaned. "Thank you, Seth!"

"*Dear...!*"

People turned to see a VERY upset Damasu glaring at her husband. "Damasu...?" he eeped.

She pointed at him. *NO — PILLOW — SCENES — FOR — A — STORYLINE!*

Ootoka gargled, then he passed out! "Okay, now that THAT'S over with...!” Isaac quipped.

Howling laughter filled the room as Seth grabbed the mumbling Ootoka and dragged him over to drop into a chair before taking his own seat. "To comment on what General Julan just said, the System Lords are as a whole quite arrogant enough to believe that those who have appeared before Miss Domo's camera are the ONLY Yizibajohei currently in system," the native of Queens stated before he gazed at the hologram displaying the bridge of the *Discovery*. "Miss Athena?" he prompted.

"*The Doctor is correct, my friends,*" the namesake of the Greek goddess of wisdom stated as she
crossed her arms; she was currently standing beside Samantha Carter off to Elizabeth Wakefield's left front. "**Given that so few of the Yizibajohei have appeared before the cameras of INN to date, they'll all believe that, while there will be losses, they will persevere.**" She considered that for a moment before adding, "**While there will be some of the High Council that I could possibly persuade to turn their backs from their 'allies' and save themselves, the majority of them will charge ahead no matter what. After all, the mere THREAT of the return of Batae Erba — as the returned safi'ra possessing the bodies of the creations the Healer's second incarnation produced to repel us from the Forge five sagas ago have amply demonstrated — is enough to unite them all.**"

"Who do you think would jump ship, Athena?" Jack O'Neill asked from one side.

"**Quite simple, Colonel: Most of the female High Councillors and their allies.**"

Isaac perked. "You mean Kali, Bastet, Morrigan and Amaterasu?"

"**Exactly.**"

"What's so different about them?" Carter wondered.

"They're Goa'uld queens, Sam."

That was Elizabeth. "Right...!" Seth then trilled, nodding.

The Urusians noted that all the non-shipgirl Yizibajohei were nodding as they considered that point, even Takino Tomo. "I don't understand," Lana mused.

"I'm pretty clueless, too!" O'Neill stated.

"It's simple, Jack," Elizabeth declared before she gazed on the possessed defence company executive. "Much that I don't want to pry into your personal life or your host's personal life, Miss Athena, but how many pillow scenes did you have when Ms. Mayfield underwent her period?"
As Isaac's eyes widened in shock and Carter's jaw dropped as it hit her, Athena nodded. "Quite a few times, both before and after I was cleansed by the Infinite One, Madame Academician." She blinked as she considered that for a moment. "Of course...!" she then hissed, a delighted smile crossing her face as she gazed upon Lum. "The perfect targets for your former husband, Lady Lum. Even we Goa'uld have heard of Master Rake's prowess in the bedchamber!"

Invader's daughter looked apprehensive. "Would your brother do it, Darling?!" she asked her fiancée.

Hiromi hummed. "Well, considering that Onii-san had to have pillow scenes with a HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-TWO free Shōzoki gynoids AND androids that were either staff or students at school or people closely related to them since he was separated from Onē-san..." She shrugged.

As Lum's jaw dropped to the deck in shock and disbelief that her ex-husband had done all THAT, Tomo looked over. "Oi! At least ASK the guy, first!" the Wild Warrior of Passion then cautioned.

The Mistress of Morphing hummed. "Hai, Tomo-san, best to ask..."

With that, she drew out her PAA and tapped a control to open a link with her relatives back on Earth. A second later, the image of the current matriarch of the Moroboshi Clan of Mutsu appeared, the background showing Lum, Hensō and Damasu that she was in the cafeteria of Tomobiki High School. "Oh, Onē-sama! What is it?!" Sukeyama Sakuya then asked. "We're a little busy here right now!"

"Gomen, Sakuya-chan, but can I talk to Onii-san for a moment?"

"What is it, Hiromi?!" the voice of Lum's former husband called out.

"Well, Ataru, we're wondering if you wouldn't mind taking a few Goa'uld queens to bed for a good romp or three when the Goa'uld show up over Uru!" Seth asked.

Silence.

More silence.
Still more silence.

Then...

"They better be **beautiful**, Rollins!" the Healer of Women's Hearts then quipped.

Laughter then echoed over the airwaves...

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**Tomobiki High School...**

"This is an actual STRATEGY, Shirayuki-chan?!" Moroboshi Kyōsuke demanded.

Standing beside THG *Yonaga*'s junior communications officer, Osamu Shirayuki shrugged. "As that one song you might have heard while you were stuck up in Sano-wan all those years said, Ō'oji-sama, Nii-sama's a LOVER, not a fighter!" the Great Chef of the West wisely declared.

Kyōsuke's shipmates took that in before they all broke out in laughter, even Admiral Fujita Hiroshi...

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**Over in P'yŏng'yang...**

"**ONII-TAMA! STOP TALKING ABOUT MUSHY STUFF!**"

Everyone who had been hiding near where USS *Pueblo* was once docked stared in confusion at Saeru Hinako, who was gazing off to the south of east towards where her brother was...

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"Just beyond the main gate to Tomobiki High School..."

"WHAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAT...?"

It was not a good day to be Koi Shinjin.

Much less be any other member of the so-called "brotherhood" of teenage boys that were always around to support the core members of Lum's Stormtroopers whenever they needed any sort of help when it came to dealing with Moroboshi Ataru's constant willingness to break his "wife's" heart.

"That's a JOKE, isn't it?!" Wada Keisuke nearly screamed out.

"No joke!" his would-be girlfriend Nishihara Ikue literally sneered at the buck-toothed fellow. The female members of Class 2-4 who had been present earlier in the day when their most infamous "classmate" became a true metahuman had milled about close to the school while they watched and discussed the comings and goings of various shipgirls. They had actually been moving to head back into the school to ask Moroboshi Ataru and his sisters why a whole tonne of shipgirls had flown off to the west when a good score of their male peers appeared. "Ataru-kun is GIFTED now! Which means that there's no way in HELL that your poor, precious Lum-chan will EVER be able to tame him!"

"Ikue-chan!" Sugihara Nara advised. "It's going to be ATARU that will tame Lum, remember?!"

The other girls howled with laughter as the boys gaped at their peers for a moment before a titanic bloom of outrage appeared around them. "WE WON'T HAVE IT!" they screamed.

"What's going on here?!"

Everyone perked, then they turned to look down the street that connected the school to the Rāmen Nekohanten, one of the more popular eateries in town. Jaws then dropped on seeing who it was. "Shinobu-chan!" Marubeya Momoe exclaimed as Miyake Shinobu came up. "What on Earth are YOU doing HERE?! I thought you and your parents moved down to Kyōto to get away from this place!"
As the boys gasped in horror — if Ataru's former girlfriend had left Tomobiki once and for all time, there was even LESS hope of trying to control him now! — Shinobu shrugged. Some of the sharp-eyed among her old peers were quick to note the glow around her hands indicative that something special was about to happen to her. "It's something Saiko arranged, Momoe-chan," the woman voted the third most popular in Class 1-4 the previous school year stated. "Ataru-kun said he got a special present for me as a way of paying me back for the idiot drama that Division One group unleashed on us last September! Personally, I know it's not a Gifting..." — she held up her hand, making the boys screech as they recalled what happened to Fujinami Ryūnosuke late Friday morning when her favourite wrestler came looking for her at school — "...since my mind seems to be locking in on something now."

"What?! What?!!" Gekasawa Kumiko urged.

Shinobu smirked as she winked at the other girl. "To quote Shirayuki-chan, 'Himitsu desu no'!"

"SHINOBU-CHAN! HIME HEARD THAT!"

As the voice of the Great Chef of the West echoed from inside the school building onto the street, Shinobu winced. "SORRY ABOUT THAT, SHIRAYUKI-CHAN!" she screamed back to her would-be sister-in-law while the other girls laughed and the boys looked as if they had just been kicked in their groins. Given what was clearly happening to Ataru's former girlfriend, their chances of trying to do ANYTHING to get things back to normal again were vanishing by the minute!

Suddenly, a burgundy-and-brown blur from inside the school knocked all the boys aside, allowing the Healer of Women's Hearts to appear before the one person he NEVER wanted to see dragged into the insane drama of his and his twin sister's/other-self's lives. As the other girls swooned in awe on seeing the look of burning concern on Ataru's face, he gently took his old girlfriend's hands in his own so he could feel the power that was now surging through them. Shinobu tried to ignore the fact that she was getting rather damp in certain parts of her body being so close to this VERY nicely improved version of a man she had always loved and cared for, even during the decade and more he had been gone from Earth; sadly, her reddening cheeks were telling another story.

The other girls were quick to go back to normal on noting their former classmates hadn't said anything for a minute. "Is she going to be okay, Ataru-kun?!" Yamagata Masako then wondered.

His eyebrow arched on hearing that worried question, then a light smile crossed his face. "Sorry about that, Masako-san. I was just feeling the ki that's coming through Shinobu's body right now from the Crystal of Power. It's one powerful Gift she's getting." Ataru considered that for a moment before he gave his old girlfriend a curious look. "Hopefully NOT influenced by the Bible Black...?"
"Hopefully not!" Shinobu declared before she gave him a knowing look. "Though I really wish that Yuki-chan's friend from Shimogyō would stop hitting on me like she does all the time! It's embarrassing!"

A hum escaped him. "Let me guess? Nonogusa Miyuki-san, right?"

Her jaw dropped. "How'd you guess?!"

Ataru sighed, giving her a weak shrug. "She's been the victim of whichever idiot at that school's got his hands on that stupid lust grimoire in recent months," he stated as he turned to escort her inside the school grounds. "Now's not the time to talk about that, I'm afraid. We've got quite the ugly little situation starting in North Korea right now, Shinobu. Why don't we get inside and I'll brief you."

"North Korea?! What's going on?!"

As the two headed inside, the other girls from Class 2-4 blinked before they raced in after their old classmates. Silence then fell over the scene as the boys began to slowly pick themselves off from the street, many still dazed by how fast the Healer of Women's Hearts had moved when he sensed his former girlfriend was there and about to be Gifted. "Damn...!" Shinjin snarled as he slowly got to his feet, shaking his head. "What the HELL does that bastard think he is, butting in every time...?!!"

**KK-KLONK!**

The sophomore's eyes rolled into his head as he dropped back to the tarmac, having been smashed in the back of the head by a smiling effeminate boy with dirty blond hair styled in a bob-cut, bangs rakishly combed over his right eye. Like his two friends now kicking and punching the other boys to keep them down, Nakasone Yū was dressed in a stylish button shirt with vest sweater over a pair of form-fitting jeans that displayed his well-honed legs perfectly. The popular member of Class 1-5 and his best friends Asanuma Shun and Funakoshi Mahiro formed a comedy musical trio called "Unison Yell" that helped their peers win the Golden Week Festival's first prize. "Sorry about that, Sempai!" Shun, leader of the troupe, mockingly sneered as his chestnut eyes flashed with both the mirth he felt at this current situation...and the true nature of his being under his skin. "But our beloved sempai has more pressing concerns than acknowledging mindless verbal diarrhea from malfunctioning fools like you!"

"C'mon, Shun!" Mahiro snarled after he kicked Keisuke off to one side. "My orgasm routines are about to trip over and I'm gonna cream my pants! She's here!"
"Chill your processors, Mahiro! Sempai's got to explain it to her first!"

With that, the three android freshmen walked through the front gate, not the least bit affected by the defence force fields that had been put into place around the school grounds by Tsuruya Rumiko over the weekend. Silence once more fell as they jogged inside to catch up with the man who had helped keep them sane and free over the last eight months, then a croak escaped a shuddering Nishijima Hiroshige. "What the...hell's...going on here...?" he grunted as he tried to get up.

"Oh, that's very easy to explain, Hiroshige."

Hearing the voice of the man everyone knew was Ataru's best friend — yet was also quite enamoured with Ataru's "wife" — Hiroshige sighed as he held up his hand for Shirai Kōsuke to take to get him back to his feet. "Oh, thank the gods, Shirai! Where the hell have you been...?"

The poor man's hand was snared by his old classmate in a grip as strong as steel, causing Hiroshige to yelp before he was literally YANKED off the street and sent flying back-first into the school's border wall! "HEY!" the smaller man snapped. "What the FUCK, man...?!"

He gazed on the tall fellow who reminded a lot of people of a darker-haired, freckle-faced version of his near-namesake Shitto "Perm" Kōsuke of the Stormtroopers before his bladder let go as a VERY inhuman glow appeared in both of Kōsuke's dark eyes. Standing to either flank of their classmate just behind them were two other Class 1-4 alumni that were also advanced to Class 2-7 instead of the new "class of failure" when April came around, the well-built and quite intimidating Kamiya Hokuto and the bubbly Arakida Yui, one of many girls in school who could have easily attracted a boy's attention hadn't Mendō Shūtarō came into everyone's lives and turned the social pecking order upside-down.

Both Hokuto's and Yui's eyes were ALSO glowing...!

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**In orbit over Onishuto, aboard the Normandy...**

"So here's what I propose we do when it comes to the Goa'uld. Meaning all those who won't get a personal visit from Ataru by tomorrow evening..."
Amused chuckles echoed through the main meeting room as Isaac Thomas tapped controls on the hologram projector to bring up the main tactical map of the planned battle which could begin in the next day or so. "Although the Yizibajohei here on Uru at this time — shipgirls and human-born alike — are more than powerful enough to utterly destroy the enemy fleet, if the High Council realizes how many of us are here, I've a strong feeling that some of the System Lords will turn away and run."

"Which we don't want," Seth Rollins noted as Takino Tomo scowled. "Let's grand slam the thing."

"Agreed," the Wise Lone Sage affirmed as anticipatory grins crossed people's faces. "To act as additional bait, I'll send a fake message to Elizabeth and her friends declaring that there's been an asteroid hit on Yiziba that's going to unleash a massive Casting Change. Since that's a DEFINITE guarantee towards Doctor Destructo — as Elizabeth's sister Jessica nicknamed him years ago — coming back from the Crystal, we'll have no choice but to head home to deal with the fallout."

"Save for us, of course," Galína Jurkévich spoke up as she pointed to herself, then her sister Svetlána, then Luná Vladímirskaja. "Not to mention Khatsúe Dzjúitiovna Asikágá down on the planet now with Fúka Mútovná Kisiváda, Sidzúka Mútovná Kharukhíno and Mitsúki Mútovná Karasáva guarding their starship. I personally doubt Sumié Khirómovna Tójama and her sisters could be counted on to remain in the area unless an admiral commands them to stay."

Isaac grimly nodded. He had noted how easily distracted the reborn experimental destroyer Shimakaze and those of her never-built sisters who were now serving the Republic of Korea he had met could be when it came to concentrating on the here and now. "A good point, Comrade Captain Jurkévich."

"We could use that to further bait them in," Hozan Lana noted.

"Agreed, Mister President, we can," the native of Queens affirmed with a nod before pausing to consider that. "Let's do this: In the message I send out to the Circle of Thought, I'll say that Captain Jurkévich and her squadron would remain behind as a 'picket line' of sorts. Given how much the Goa'uld will want to go after the shipgirls because they're now in first-generation battle doll bodies — as Captain Doolittle so kindly demonstrated a couple days ago back at Stargate Command when she ATE Apophis' wife right in front of Asakura Kazumi's camera — they'll see taking down the equivalent of two first-generation dreadnoughts, one light cruiser..." — he winked at Luná, who blushed at being "up-rated" like that by the handsome American hyper-genius — "...and two destroyers as worth the cost to their advanced force. Miss Athena, would you care to comment on that possible twist to the plan?"
Standing on the bridge of the Discovery many light-years away, the namesake of the classical Greek goddess of wisdom and defensive war shook her head. "No. It would be something Apophis and Nirrti would order in an instant, Doctor," she coolly declared.

"Even better, why don't I and my task force meet up with you to add to the picket line," Dionne Doolittle proposed from her position beside Yvonne Swanson, they standing next to Elizabeth Wakefield's command chair. "That adds a fleet aircraft carrier and three more destroyers to Galíña's force."

"Apophis might augment the advanced force if he knows you're there, Lady Saratoga," Athena warned as she gazed upon the reborn carrier. "Perhaps you should distract him by publicly taking credit in rescuing Colonel O'Neill and his friends while 'returning' with them back to Earth."

"Agreed," Isaac stated. "It's a good idea, Dionne, but we want to make them overconfident. Given how much Apophis must be grieving over his wife, he could easily ruin the plan we have to receive them."

"Did you HAVE to eat that rotted thing, Dajón Gárriovna?!" Galíña demanded.

"Hey! It was just nicely aged!" the reborn aircraft carrier snapped back.

"ENOUGH!" both Isaac and Elizabeth barked out.

Both shipgirls ducked the annoyed looks from the two hyper-geniuses. "So what happens when we 'go home', Isaac? I don't want to miss a chance to deal with Apophis!" Tomo asked.

The Wise Lone Sage took a deep breath. Man, now he KNEW how much of a headache dealing with shipgirls could be! "Once the advanced force comes here, the Urusian fleet until Admiral Kakazu's command will engage to keep them busy. Since the ha'tak will have Death Gliders, the air wings aboard the Kashin- and Tsubasa-class starships will get good workouts." As senior space pilots in the room all cackled in delight at the idea of getting a chance to get into a decent scrap, Isaac added, "As this is going on, Marine boarding teams will pair up with either subgirls like Commander Close or Yizibajohei who are masters of stealth missions. They'll board all the ha'tak of the advanced force."

"Once there, what then, Doctor?" Major General Hoth Julan asked.
"They'll have to be ready to do two things, General. One: Be ready to seize the ships by killing the Goa'uld who resist or forcing surrenders on those who might want a chance with Hiromi's brother..."

Isaac's eyes twinkled as Hiromi Katabarbe shook her head, blushing in embarrassment while others in the room laughed. "And two: They'll go forth to get all technical data on the hyperdrive systems that propel those ships," the native of Queens added. "Tánja Chapáeva hasn't done that with our current guests who are now in orbit close to Uruguay since many of them are still wary of the idea of being shol'va, so she hasn't done anything overt with the hyperdrives on those ships."

"Tánja Andrévna is prepared to destroy those ships if they are hostile," Svetlána Jurkévich advised.

"That's good," Seth noted, nodding.

"Once that data's obtained, what then, Isaac?" Redet Lum asked.

"That data will be transmitted to myself, Elizabeth, Tánja and Rumiko, plus any technokinetics like Hiromi's sisters Rinrin and Mitsuki who want to help out. We'll use that data to close the inner part of the Sol system to Goa'uld intrusion, plus offer that technology to any civilization who controls space near where the Goa'uld have been based over the years. Of course, Uru will be atop that list, Mister President," he added as he gazed on Lana, who gaped in shock at such largess by the New Yorker.

"I'm not sure how we'll pay for it...!" the Urusian leader sputtered.

"Uncle Lana, it'll be free," Redet Hensō stated with a wink.

"Hensō-cha, something like that...!" Oyuki immediately objected.

"It's something Kamen-cha told Nassur-cha once, Oyuki-cha," the Mistress of Lightning advised as she winked. "The one thing ALL in the Universe should fear about all is a BORED Yizibajohei polymath!"

"Why do you think the first rule of the Great Show is 'Never piss off the Academician', Oyuki-chan?" Mizuhara Koyomi added as she crossed her arms.
More laughter filled the room as Elizabeth blushed madly at that back-handed complement just paid to her by the Mistress of the Mind-Dive. "Oi!" a voice then called out from the back of the room. "Get to the damned climax of the script recap, Isaac!" a voice snapped as Hayashi Kanami came into the room, earning a tonne of awed looks from the Urusians present, not just because of her being the Untameable One but also because of her reputation earned while she had lived as "Saotome Ranma".

"Ah! Kanami-nēchan!" Redet Ten cried in joy as he drifted into her arms.

Whoops filled the room, they being silenced by Isaac letting out a whistle with his fingers. "Okay! Let's finish this!" the Wise Lone Sage called out as Kanami carried her young friend to the seat beside Seth.

"We've dealt with the advanced force," Rear Admiral Seq Juval stated to get people's attention back on the main issue. "What happens when the main fleets arrive?"

"Elizabeth and I will hopefully by then have the necessary frequencies to render the naquadah in the hyperdrives of the Goa'uld ships inert via Discovery's main transmitter array by the time they come in to 'overwhelm' us, General," Isaac answered, making finger-quotes with his hand.

Anticipatory grins crossed people's faces as they immediately realized where the New Yorker was going with this. "Once they're shut down, we drop the Universe on their heads!" Azu Kakazu declared.

"Exactly, Admiral!" Isaac affirmed, pointing at her. "Their own arrogance will lead them into the trap, one that will ensure their final defeat...IF Mister Murphy doesn't decide to throw spanner-wrenches into the works along the way!" As the others in the room and on the Discovery grimly nodded — the Urusians had long come to understand the old maxim that all battle plans NEVER survived first contact with the enemy — the Wise Lone Sage added, "Once it dawns on them that they can't run away, we reveal how MANY shipgirls AND Yizibajohei will be present. Once that happens..."

"We give them the chance to throw the fight scene," Seth finished.

Heads snapped over to the Assassin of Dynasties before a new voice called out, "Agreed!"

Heads snapped over to where Aruka Damasu's husband was now seated. "Um, Mister Vice-
President...?!” Kakazu began as people in the room tensed.

A hand was raised as Oetoka Go’ono got up. As Damasu beamed at her husband while he moved to speak his mind, the Guardian of Conformity took a deep breath. “My friends, much that the history of my planet has long projected the image of our steadfast intolerance of certain things, it doesn’t mean that we would care to unleash planet-wide or race-wide DEATH SCENES!” the handsome yet severe-looking raven-haired man with the steely grey eyes coldly declared. “Not even any of the incarnations of Doctor Death over the years would ever promote THAT sort of insanity! Any heel that rises that WOULD do that would be put down immediately, never allowed to be reborn through the Crystal...”

“That means FINAL death, people!” Kanami snarled. "No resurrection parties!"

"Mustang's right!” Oetoka affirmed with a sneer. "No casting changes would be allowed in THOSE cases!” He took a deep breath before grimly nodding. "YES, the Goa’uld are death-cheaters. When they possess normal people as the Tok’ra have demonstrated time and time again, enhancing the life and health of their hosts by their conjoining, that’s a NORMAL process. We don't object to that even if our reborn warship spirits might think otherwise." As the Jurkévich sisters snorted on hearing that, the native of the northern polar continent added, "It's when they make use of what that fool Telchak created from technology they STOLE from the Anquietas — the 'Ancients' as you'll know them — that does things that go COUNTER to natural processes, which AUTOMATICALLY earn our derision! And..." — here, a ghoulish smile crossed his face — "...a TERMINAL visit from the Doctor."

As people nodded, Lum’s father looked over. "So what you mean by ‘throwing the fight scene’, Mister Seth, is actually a call for surrender?! To let them live, even the members of the High Council?!!"

"You got it,” the native of Iowa affirmed, nodding.

"They likely won't agree, Captain," Isaac warned. "Save for those Ataru gets his hands on, of course!" As laughter filled the room, the Wise Lone Sage then relaxed. "At least we can say we made the offer."

As people nodded in understanding, he then indicated the Wild Warrior of Passion. "Tomo here wants to take Apophis herself. As you'll all know by now, he's tried MANY times to steal a Gift. Various incarnations of Warwind were the ones that defeated him every time.” He gazed at the hologram displaying the bridge of the Discovery. "Along the way, we would have come get you, Jack..."
"Well, at least Yvonne was able to get away with it!" Jack O'Neill noted.

As Yvonne blushed at the appreciative look from the pararescueman from Minnesota, Redet Invader's old classmate nodded. "This plan's pretty well thought out, Doctor," Juval affirmed as he crossed his arms. "We'll free the vast majority of Jaffa, which denies any surviving System Lord the chance to rebuild forces and restore the domains they once controlled. Whatever Goa'uld wishes to live on will have to submit to the Infinite Wave to render them 'safe' as Miss Athena was." As eyes flecked to the possessed defence company executive on the bridge of the Discovery, he added, "With technological transfers from Yiziba to all worlds who want a better guarantee of safety from rogue Goa'uld, they'll be hemmed in, unable to do anything unless it's via a Stargate. Ours is in vacuum on Katte..."

"And our pair are pretty nicely defended," O'Neill added.

Lana looked over. "You have TWO Stargates, Colonel?"

"Yeah, General! The one the Goa'uld had in Egypt is now with us at the SGC. The older one the Ancients brought to Earth was found by a friend of Tariko's from North Korea, Kim Hyegyŏng. She's the current incarnation of King Tan'gun, who actually fought the Goa'uld five thousand years ago alongside the second Doctor Destructo and the first Undertaker." As eyes widened in surprise on hearing that, O'Neill shrugged. "He was actually from Earth, then went back to start up the first kingdom of Chosŏn, believe it or not. Set up a base in a hill where P'yŏng'yang is these days called 'Asadal'."

"Is that a smart thing, Colonel?" Lum then asked. "Shūtarō told me a couple of times that the North Korean intelligence forces were sniffing around Tomobiki after I moved there to be with Darling."

"She's going to overthrow her uncle soon, Lum," Samantha Carter noted, raising her hand in reassurance. "Once that happens and a 'pure' version of Chuch'e is taught to the people, she'll get rid of nuclear weapons, make peace with the South, then normalize relations with everyone else."

"Hyegyŏng may be a communist, but she loves her homeland," Daniel Jackson explained. "She won't do anything that would threaten the North's chances in the future in any way, shape or form."

"Lady Tan'gun is a most honourable warrior and leader, Redet Lum," Teal'c added.

Lum blinked, then she stared at her fiancée. Hiromi squeezed her hand in reassurance. "Now that
we've got that explained, let me add something else," Isaac spoke up. "Ever since Jack and Daniel first encountered Ra on Abydos four years ago, I've come to believe that this type of decisive battle was going to happen. I actually thought such a fight would occur over Earth, but Apophis decided to force it here over Uru instead. My friends and I..." — here, he indicated the lawyer's daughter from Sweet Valley who was the Wise Genius of the Circle of Thought — "...have thought through many strategies for that sort of battle, ready to go when the time came. This is one of the reasons the Goa'uld have been allowed to get past the Ceres defensive barrier set up on Friday by Elizabeth, Tâńja and Rumiko. We held off on getting the data on the hyperdrives because we WANTED to do a grand slam, one-time battle as Seth called it against the Goa'uld. Beat them and BREAK THEM of their arrogance that's ensured they have NO friends anywhere in Creation!" He paused before adding, "Fortunately, Captain Margareta von Spee — the German heavy cruiser Admiral Graf Spee, if you wish to know — awoke in time to stop Heru'ur's recent attack on Earth. If she hadn't..." Here, Isaac shook his head. "Well...!"

"We would have gone to stop it," Dionne declared as she gave him a reassuring look.

Eyes locked on her, then people nodded. "It'll be risky, Boss," Redet Invader warned, earning him a nod from the Urusian president. "We could lose ships, especially with the numbers we'll be dealing with."

"Still, with our new friends at our side, this plan will work out," Julan noted.

Nods from others in the room. "Okay, then! Comments? Objections?" Isaac asked.

People shook their heads. "Let's get to work!" Lana then bade...

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Back in Tomobiki...

"Holy shit...! You're all ANDROIDS?!"

"Hey!" Kamiya Hokuto affirmed as he gazed dispassionately down at the still-dazed Koi Shinjin, who was now gaping at his abdomen. "This flesh-bag gets it!"

As Arakida Yui laughed — all three had revealed their abdominal maintenance hatches to their peers
when Nishijima Hiroshige (who was still being held up against the wall of the school property by Shirai Kōsuke) demanded to know what was going on — the man said to be Moroboshi Ataru's "best friend" clicked his tongue. "Now, now, Hokuto-kun. No need to be rude to them. They are 'friends' in a way," the freckle-faced android said as he lowered his old classmate down. "Now, I'll strongly calculate what you're thinking about right now, Hiro!" he then added as he patted the smaller man's head. "You'll probably recall the rumours of that gang of androids from Butsumetsu that tried to rape that man-phobe Mizunokōji early on Saturday. They weren't actually after her as we're not after you guys or Ataru for that matter." As the boys blinked in confusion — they had not moved, not wanting to take the chance to earn the wrath of these terminator-like beings — the adopted native of Nerima said, "We were after ROGUE androids and gynoids who've been living in this town for quite some time."

"'Rogue'...?"! Shinjin began before his eyes widened. "Wait! You mean those three frosh boys...?"

"They were three rogues, Shinjin-kun," Yui affirmed as she tossed her raven hair about, allowing her maintenance hatch to close up as she straightened her clothes. "As a matter of fact, do you guys have ANY idea how many androids and gynoids that Ataru-kun's been able to effectively ENSLAVE since he got back here from planet Uru in April after that thing with his other 'fiancée'?

"How many, Yui-chan?!" Wada Keisuke demanded as some of them got to their feet.

A warning look from Hokuto made sure they remained in place instead of scrambling into the school grounds and effective safety from the three Terran-form Shōzoki. Even if these people were totally fixated on the idea of winning the love of Redet Lum, they didn't always think with their glands! "Nearly two hundred of them, Keisuke-kun," the raven-haired gynoid declared as she crossed her arms.

"If you wish to know the EXACT amount that Nii-ya has ensured would stay free from your 'mother', Kōsuke, it's a hundred and eighty-two. Many of whom now are Gifted."

Everyone perked, then they turned south...

...before a sudden surge of dark energy snared the three Terran-form Shōzoki and moved them clear of their potential hostages. Seeing that, the other boys quickly moved to stand to either side of the raven-haired beauty with the blue eyes, she dressed in a black jumpsuit with dark grey belt and boots, plus a dark grey-trimmed hooded cape. As Kōsuke's eyes went wide on recognizing Tsuchidō Otome, the current incarnation of the Endless One gazed towards the school building. "Rinrin-chan!" she called out, her voice echoing with power. "We've got the foolish puppet that turned us into what we are right now outside the main gates. Could you come out here and give me a hand, please?"
"Um, what could she do?! Who is that, anyway?!” Shinjin demanded.

"She's one of Nii-ya's half-sisters, Shinjin," Otome answered as footfalls echoed from the main doors to reveal the Technological Sorceress of the East as she jogged over to help her new sister. "I'm one of twelve clones of Nii-ya's from Lum's and Ran's little hissy-fit back in March." As the boys all found themselves staring in disbelief at that obviously VERY female body masked by the robes of one of the more darker reality warpers on Yiziba, she coolly added, "Meet the idiot who actually DID that to us, my friends. He used his father — who was actually a **Niphentaxian**, he was an observer who retired here — to BRAINWASH us into becoming characters of a video game that Nii-ya HATES with all his being!"

The boys began to shudder as the information overload just heaped on them — that added to all that had happened since Friday when their worldview was literally twisted inside out by the revelation of the Children of the Forge among them — began to simply overwhelm them. By that time, Hatoyama Rinrin had come over to stand close to her new sister. "Oh, three of Mother's little slaves, huh!" she noted before telekinetically reaching out towards Yui. "Well, Aniki can certainly help out with this one..."

Yui gargled as her eyes glowed brightly while the technokinetic of Ataru's half-sisters mentally reached into her core processors to snap the links that connected her ultimately to the entity back on her true homeworld known as "Mother". A pained scream then escaped her as steam escaped her nostrils, mouth and ears, her body quaking jerkily as Rinrin forced her inner systems to do a full reboot, purging out everything that had made this being a perfect drone to the Skynet-like system that effectively dominated one of the most technologically-advanced planets in the galaxy, restoring her to the free-thinking being she had actually been when she was "born" from the corpse of the REAL Arakida Yui two years before thanks to one of countless "seed drones" that had landed on Earth over the decades to ensure the memories of TRUE Shōzoki culture were preserved and allowed a chance to restore itself beyond the cold grasp of Mother or her drones active on dozens of worlds.

"**NO!**" Hokuto bellowed as he tried to summon enough strength to break Otome's hold on him...

**KK-KRUNCH!**

...before half his head was smashed in thanks to a basketball that had rocketed into his skull at supersonic speeds! A squeal escaped what was left of Hokuto's mouth as sparks and fires broke out all over the upper part of his body while running footfalls heralded the arrival of one of Otome's sister clones. "That aughta keep the jerk down!" Kubo Ayano snarled as she took up a defensive position close to Otome; as the Demon of the Court, she was a mid-level FISS, so she was more than capable of dealing with two pesky little androids since it was quite obvious to her that her half-sister was turning the cute gynoid into another pretty sex toy for her Onii to add to his impressive harem of
"Appreciated, Ayano," the Endless One mused. "What about Yui, Rinrin-chan?"

"Almost...THERE!"

"AH!"

The other boys gasped and Kōsuke screamed in helpless anger as Yui jolted hard before the glow in her eyes faded, revealing their normal brown shade. As Otome allowed the suffering gynoid to come back down to the street, Rinrin jogged over to gently grasp the older woman's hand to guide her towards the main gate and a place to rest. "NO! NO! THIEF! HOW DARE YOU...?!" Kōsuke shrieked as he vainly tried to break free of the damn energy clamp that held him in place while Yui staggered by him.

Many of the boys there were quick to see their old classmate give the screaming jerk the finger as she leaned on her rescuer while Rinrin helped her to safety within the school grounds, that making them laugh in derision. "Ah, poor widdle Skynet clone doesn't get its way!" Shinjin then sneered at Ataru's "best friend", earning him a snarl from the trapped android in response. "What's the plan for this one, Ojō-chan?! Since your sister there knocked the stuffing out of the other mere machine...!"

"I can go for a rim shot!" Ayano proposed as she whipped out one of her specially-prepared basketballs, reinforced by mesonium fibres to keep them intact even when hitting hard objects at high speeds.

Otome nodded. "Considering he was the one who tried to enslave Yui, plus helped in the capture of Tamako to have her replaced by a North Korean agent to spy on Lum, I see no use for him..."

"WHAT?!"

That was all the boys around her, they now gaping in horror at the Endless One as their minds absorbed THAT bombshell. "What are you talking about?!" Keisuke demanded. "Tamako-chan's in our class...!"

"That's not Inoue Tamako, Keisuke," Otome explained. "Her real name is Sŏ Yŏn'i; she's from"
Taehongdan County in Yanggang Province near the Tuman River in North Korea. As people's jaws dropped in shock, she added, "She was trained by the North Koreans' intelligence agency to infiltrate Nii-ya's class to make official contact between the government and the Urusians via Lum. Of course, if Yŏn'i was able to obtain samples of Urusian technology, that was also welcome."

"Oh, yeah...it was quite easy to get involved in that...!"

That was a cackling Kōsuke, who was now glaring at the impudent organics who dared try to stand in Mother's overall path to enforce order over the Universe as a whole. "We know that Nē-ya's friend Kim Hyegyŏng was able to rescue Tamako from being killed...though we discovered along the way that your brethren in North Korea DID kill her, allowing a gynoid replica to take her place!" As the boys gargled, the Endless One added, "I know Yŏn'i is also a gynoid, one programmed as a 'sleeper' who believes her parents and family are still alive and well back in Taehongdan...not realizing that they were ALSO killed to be replaced by mere drones for the parents and effective *puppets* for the children..."

"What the hell's this about?" Shinjin demanded.

"Think of the Cylons from *Battlestar Galactica* and what they planned to do to EVERY human — hell, EVERY sentient being! — that crossed their path, Shinjin. You'll get the idea then," Ayano snarled.

"*You — will — not — de-fy...!*"

The boys gaped on seeing Hokuto's burning body suddenly glow star bright!

"**DUCK!**" Hiroshige screamed.

People dived for the deck...

...before a loud explosion rocked the streets of Tomobiki!

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"You mean...Yui-chan...is DEAD...?!"

Moroboshi Ataru took a breath, then he reached over with a tender hand to grasp Yamagata Masako's shoulder. As Hatoyama Rinrin continued to do a detailed examination of the deactivated Arakida Yui on one table to ensure that her move to sever the gynoid's links to Mother hadn't caused permanent damage, Sukeyama Sakuya immediately moved to embrace a weeping Obinata Hiromi; Masako and Hiromi had been childhood friends of the real Yui, they having come up through the school system as part of the same yearly class through Onigakkō Elementary School and Tomobiki Middle School seemingly right to their entering the freshman class at Tomobiki High. "Hai, Masakosan, the Yui-san you knew before two years ago is dead," the Healer of Women's Hearts quietly said as he projected his powers into his former classmate's heart to keep her calm in the face of such a shocking revelation. "However, it was NEVER the fault of this version of Yui-san living in her place. The same is true of all the other androids and gynoids that Asuka-san and I have interacted with over the last year."

"What exactly IS to blame for this, Ataru-san?"

That was Admiral Fujita Hiroshi, who was glaring at the still gynoid. Several of his subordinates from THG Yonaga were sparing suspicious glances for the members of Unison Yell, now in the company of Miyake Shinobu. Fortunately for Nakasone Yū, Asanuma Shun and Funakoshi Mahiro, Ataru's former girlfriend was more than willing to protect the cute android freshmen just in case one of the would-be warriors of the Greater East Asia War got it into their heads to lash out at them.

"Ultimately, it was Mother itself, Hiijii-chan," Rinrin answered for her brother. "When the Great Conversion went down, people on Shōzoran who opposed what was going on sent 'seed ships' bearing mini-factories that would create android and gynoid simulcras of local sentient races away from the planet to allow the 'true' Shōzoki to live on beyond Mother's grasp. Each android or gynoid like Yui-chan would bear exact memory copies of some child or teenager on Shōzoran who ultimately died centuries ago during the Great Conversion." As Fujita and his subordinates paled in horror on realizing the complexity of this particular situation, the Technological Sorceress of the East shook her head as she wiped her forehead with the back of her forearm. "Unfortunately, when they were rocketing away from Shōzoran, Mother reached out to alter the programs that guided those ships here to Earth and elsewhere across the local cluster. Atop allowing its own drones like the bastards Otome-chan is holding prisoner now the ability to track down any 'rogues', the factory controls were programmed to KILL any organic it finds to allow it to replicate whoever it kills, thus keeping secrecy."

"Given the xenophobia that's always been part of humanity's nature, it was 'wise' in its own way, Hiijii-sama," Tenhiro Haruka added, her voice sneering that word. "It is not the fault of Shinobusan's would-be boyfriends or Yui-san or young Tove and Stian now under Ryūjō-dono's care or
anyone spiritually hailing from Shōzoran we've met that they were the byproducts of MURDER!"
Here, the Quarterstaff Mistress drew out a gunsen to fan herself. "If you still doubt, minna-san, allow
Yonaga-dono to render judgment," she proposed. "Given she was touched by the oldest living
sentient being on Earth, she would have the same moral weight as Raeburn-shihan possesses as our
planet's Jewel Warrior."

Brent Ross, Moroboshi Kyōsuke and Horikoshi Eiichi all grinned at that suggestion while their
shipmates hummed as they considered that particular proposal. As Fujita's dark eyes sparkled in
acknowledgement at that very deft move by the German-born grandniece of his junior
communications officer to get their own transformed warship to weigh in on this sticky matter herself
once she returned from North Korea, a gasp then escaped Yui as her eyes opened wide, they
glowing for a moment before she blinked, then said eyes went back to normal as they teared.
"Free...!"

Hearing the pain in their friend's voice, Masako and Hiromi cried out as they moved to warmly
embrace Yui, both of them sobbing as they held the gynoid. Yui blinked at her friends' actions, then
her eyes softened as she realized they now knew the truth about her; with the presence of the woman
who had effectively freed her from Shirai Kōsuke's direct control, it didn't take her more than a few
microseconds to realize that the whole sick story of what had happened when she had been first
activated in the wake of her other-self's effective murder was now known to her old classmates. As
several other girls moved to add their own hugs to Masako's and Hiromi's to show that all was
effectively forgiven, Kyōsuke turned and walked over to where Shinobu and her would-be
boyfriends were now seated.

As both Fujinami Ryūnosuke and Shiowatari Nagisa kept wary eyes on Ataru's granduncle from
their places behind the serving counter, the native of Sendai leaned down to whisper, "I trust you
boys will treat Shinobu-chan here properly. She is a very precious person to my grandnephew and
grandnieces, as much as she obviously has to be to her own parents and friends."

Hearing that encouraging statement, the freshmen grinned. "We'd rather be shut down and scrapped
before hurting Shinobu-san, Ō'oji-chan!" Yū answered for his friends and effective brothers.

"Besides, they're covered under the Specialized Warfare Treaty and all the local laws supporting it,"
Shinobu added before she jolted as her softly glowing hands flared. "Oh, my God...!" she hissed out.

_Tene lomher’buo, Miyake Shinobu...!_

"Need a private place, Shinobu-san?" Ryūnosuke asked.
Shinobu shakily nodded her head. As her would-be lovers moved to help her up, the Huntress of the Wild hopped over the counter, then guided the quartet out of the cafeteria to the nearest stairwell. Ascending to the upper floor, they then headed to the landing where the ladder leading into the attic level, where the "heir" of Hamachaya stopped to wave the others up. "Rumiko-san's got all sorts of beds up there for you guys to use. Go strip down and relax; you got total privacy!"

"Arigatō, Sempai!" Yū said as he moved to ascend, going slow as Shinobu was holding one of his hands.

Mahiro's amethyst eyes sparkled with mirth as he leaned over to playfully kiss the tomboy's cheek. That made Ryūnosuke's cheeks flare in embarrassment as the raven-haired freshman winked at her while Shun moved to follow Yū and Shinobu into the attic. "Make sure you ask Ataru if he'll let you and Nagisa-sempai have a cute android for your own use, Sempai! He's got LOADS of them!"

As the Huntress of the Wild sputtered on hearing that, Mahiro climbed upstairs. Already there, Yū was guiding Shinobu to one bed close to the middle of the space, so she could sit and relax. As both he and Shun moved to undress the older girl, Tsuruya Rumiko walked out of her "office" within the clock tower belfry, a large PAA in hand. "I take it that it's your time, Shinobu-chan," the Careful Planner of the Circle of Thought mused with a smile as she watched the strip-show in front of her.

"Don't you have a gynoid of your own, Rumiko-chan?" Shinobu grunted, though she was smiling at how tender Shun was when it came to removing her bra while Mahiro came over to join them, slipping off his uwabaki before he moved to take off his pants and other clothes.

"Ataru's been kind to offer some of his harem for my amusement, but none of them were programmed to be pure lesbian when they were first constructed," the only openly declared lesbian attending Tomobiki High stated as she started an intensive scan of the four before her. "Relax yourself and allow the boys to be gentle with you," she then advised, the joviality in her voice vanishing as she sat on a nearby bed. "They're pre-Gifted as well; they'll want to be empowered when you are."

"Understandable...oh, Shun-kun! That tickles!" Shinobu meowed as Shun leaned in to tenderly kiss the back of her neck while Yū moved to slip off her pants and panties and Mahiro finally stripped off his T-shirt to reveal his slender yet muscular body. "Oh, my...Mahiro-kun, is THAT for ME?!” she then meowed as she reached over to tenderly touch him in his nexus, making him croak.

_Tene lomher'buo, Funakoshi Mahiro ...!_

A sob escaped the adopted native of Edogawa in the eastern end of Tōkyō on hearing the
Conservator call that it was his time to embrace the true life his template/other-self was cruelly denied over a year ago. Shinobu moved to shift him into a seating position while Shun moved around to help Yū get undressed. "God understands," the devout descendant of Catholics who had survived the Tokugawa Bafuku and the Sakoku policies that had cut Japan off from the outer world for over two centuries whispered before she devoured Mahiro's lips with her own, she reaching down to gently push him over the crest to a wonderful orgasm while Yū and Shun enjoyed warm kisses as they undressed each other.

Rumiko's face remained neutral as she watched the floor show. While seeing girls nude were enough to turn the automotive executive's daughter on in an instant at times, seeing such a lovely girl being so expertly worshipped by boys — even three very bishōnen ones like the members of Unison Yell — was a definite turn-off to the socially liberal sophomore hyper-genius. Besides, Miyake Shinobu had always something of a temper issue, especially given what had happened to her would-be "boyfriend" after Tariko Katabarbe had been captured by this Division One group and forced to revert to her birth-form to placate the Urusians who would arrive a month later. While she had no doubt that Jody Crowley and Tōdō Yuki would have worked hard over the weekend just passed to help Shinobu come to grips with what she had done over the last year and more to someone she had always loved and cared for, the fact that she had the potential to really lose it like she had done many times before was enough to turn Rumiko away from even contemplating introducing the other woman to the sapphic side of life.

Besides, given that the members of Unison Yell were the FIRST of Ataru's many Shōzoki lovers...!

To Be Continued...!

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WRITER'S NOTES

Many thanks again to Dr. Tempo for writing much of the briefing scenes on the FPSYS Normandy.

Tōno Mizuki and Fujiwara Aya (along with Toyohara Etsuko, who was mentioned by Aya in the first scene) are all characters from Super Real Mahjong. Mizuki and Aya both first appeared in the PV version of the game first released in 1994. Etsuko appeared in the P7 version released in 1997.

Yatsura and The Senior Year character notes: As noted back in Part Six, Redet Danu first appeared in the Yatsura manga story "Love and Violence". Also as noted before, Redet Hensō and Aruka
Damasu both appeared in the TSY story "What Prince For Love?" The Rāmen Nekohanten (which is not the shop that appeared in Ranma ½, by the way!) was first mentioned in the manga story "Food Fight" (manga chapter #106). Shirai Kōsuke was the name of the Perm-like character who pretty much served as Ataru's "best friend" figure throughout the Yatsura manga series; he wouldn't get the chance to appear in anime until the 2008 OVA The Obstacle Course Swim Meet, created to celebrate both the thirtieth anniversary of It's A Rumic World and the fortieth anniversary of the Weekly Shōnen Sunday manga anthology in whose pages Yatsura was first published. Arakida Yui is my name for the girl that was wishing for a boyfriend in the manga story "The Bluebird of Happiness". And both Inoue Tamako and Sŏ Yŏn'i — along with the latter's siblings Sŏ Chunch'ŏl, Sŏ Mina and Sŏ Hana — would have appeared in the same unreleased story in TSY that Mifune Hideyuki would have first appeared in.

Shipgirl introduced in this part:

Capitão-de-Mar-e-Guerra Darci di Oliveria MB (Encouraçado São Paulo [pendant 02])

Oetoka Go'ono (the Extreme Archaist) is loosely based on the normalman character Ultra Conservative, who first appeared in issue #1.

Translation list: Himitsu desu no — It's a secret (in Shirayuki-speak); Sakoku — Literally "closed country", this was the policy pursued by the various shōgun in the Tokugawa era to keep Japan forever free of Western influence, which included mass persecution of native Christians.

Nonogusa Miyuki is a character from the original Bible Black game and anime series.

Nakasone Yū, Asanuma Shun and Funakoshi Mahiro are based on characters created by the dōjinshi artist Nemunemu.

Russian-form patronymics appearing in this story:

Khatsúe Dzjunnáriovna — Hatsue, daughter of Junnari

Sikúko Dzjúitiovna — Shikuko, daughter of Jūichi

Fúka Mútovna — Fūka, daughter of Muchi

Sidzúka Mútovna — Shizuka, daughter of Muchi
Mitsúki Mútovna — Mitsuki, daughter of Muchi

Dajón Gárriovna — Dionne, daughter of Harry

Tánja Andrévna — Tánja, daughter of Andréj
Twins, Twins, My Kingdom for Twins!

Chapter Summary

As the battles in North Korea heat up, the effects of the arrival of the Danganronpa characters on the country's population of alien Shōzoki and Goa'uld still rock the nation hard.

And as Lum's Stormtroopers are finally disposed of, Ataru finds himself dealing with ANOTHER set of twins...!

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In orbit over Onishuto, aboard the FPSYS Normandy, an hour after supper (Tōkyō/P'yŏng'yang time: An hour after lunch)... 

"That was a pretty damned good script recap, man."

Hearing that complement from the Untameable One, the Wise Lone Sage grunted as he finished adjusting the cape he normally wore with his standard battle uniform. "Thanks, Kanami!" Currently, Isaac Thomas was with Hayashi Kanami and Seth Rollins in his personal cabin. "Yeah, I'm glad to see that the local leaders are willing to trust us about doing things this way," the native of Queens mused. "If they decided to try to call in friends from the other Federation states..."

Both the martial artist from Nerima and the wrestler from Buffalo snorted in derision on hearing that. Much that the Galactic Federation of Planet-States presented a unified front when it came to dealing with major outside powers, trust between individual members was often quite fleeting, especially when one factored in the influence of the Imperial Round on Urusian foreign policy. Such had been aptly demonstrated back in April when Queen Elle tried to kidnap Moroboshi Ataru to claim her "honey" as her husband. In that confrontation, Redet Invader had been happy to go to war against the Rose Queen to get his daughter's "darling" back, regardless of what Ataru's wishes had been on the matter.
"So you'll be with Tomo on this fight, Seth?" Isaac asked.

The Assassin of Dynasties nodded. "If Ataru gets the girls to switch sides, it should be easy. I won't crash in on Tomo's quest to put down Apophis. I'll definitely help Teal'c shoot down Cronus; we know what that slime did to Teal'c's father all those years ago." As Isaac and Kanami nodded, the battle planner of the Shield added, "Ba'al would probably be the next major boss once Apophis and Cronus are out of the way, so I'll deal with him myself. I know you'll want to deal with Nirrti, Isaac. Given how she's been mutilating people all the time to make her own metas, it's only right." As the New Yorker grinned, the Iowan added, "Save for Yu, the others should be small fry if they don't warm Ataru's bed..."

Laughter escaped all three of them as they reflected on what Moroboshi Ataru had become just hours before. Given how powerful of an empath the Healer of Women's Hearts was — being that he was one of the Chosen of the Chaos Bringer, his power levels were said to be near-cosmic, never mind the blood link Ataru held with a bona fide reality warper in the Trickster of the Show — it was said that not even the most powerful of the Anquietas or their arrogant kinsmen among the Ori could resist Rake if he went all-out after one. Since clearing out the Goa'uld would create the right sort of power vacuum for the Ori to use because their more "noble" kinsmen refused to deal with the corporeal races...!

Everyone's self-reflection was interrupted as Isaac's PAA beeped. Reaching over to tap the crystal, the Wise Lone Sage then gaped on seeing who was calling. "Hello, Doctor! What's going on?"

"How was the meeting?" the jolly-looking fifty-something silver-haired scientist with the Santa-like beard and the sparkling blue eyes asked from the main control room inside Station Robert, Isaac's geosynchronous satellite base orbiting Earth at the meridian of New York City.

Both Seth and Kanami exchanged knowing looks. They KNEW that even the simple LOOKS of anyone who worked directly for the Wise Lone Sage were ALWAYS quite deceiving.

"Doctor" Thomas Light was a Replicant, a far more advanced android than even what the most advanced Sagussan, Asgard or Shōzoki technology could create. He was one of the first AIs Isaac constructed after his Gifting five years before, of the same generation the Normandy's captain Mimir Shepard hailed. Modelled after the wise scientist of the same name from the Megaman video game/anime series — in Japan where the series had been created as Rockman, the character was known as "Thomas Right"; Isaac stuck with the English name — Light had been constructed by the native of Queens to act as both an emotional sounding board and an assistant for all of the Wise Lone Sage's major projects, including intensive research into developing more advanced Replicants. As Mimir would eventually become the adopted mother/elder sister figure for the orphaned Isaac, Thomas had become his adopted father/elder brother figure. Of course, because of how advanced his AI had become, Kasuga Ayumu had offered on MANY occasions to turn the scientist into a battle doll to give him a chance to be finally Gifted and become fully organic; much to Isaac's inner mirth,
Thomas had rejected the Infinite One's kind offers each and every time the native of Wakayama made them.

"The plan we came up with earned two thumbs up from leaders here," Isaac answered. "We'll need to work fast once we get the advanced force in sensor range and the boarding teams get on the ha'tak."

"We'll be ready," the elderly-looking android stated. "I've spoken with young Chiyo. She'll have us teleported aboard the Normandy when the time comes and the main shipgirl fleets are ready to deploy to Uru." His eyes sparked. "Shipgirl fever has hit the United States, I'm afraid. Every American and Korean museum ship were transformed and Gifted in the last four hours. We've also got a lot of shipgirls who were sunk in weapons exercises coming back, not to mention several scrapped ships as well. Admiral Fitzwallace is compiling a list right now and it's growing like crazy."

"Oh, joy...!" Kanami moaned. "Anyone I should be aware of, Sensei?"

Thomas blushed at that title from the Untameable One; even if everyone — including Isaac — called him "Doctor", he hadn't earned that title in an accredited university. "USS William D. Porter; Commander Michelle Porter of the Naval Reserve from New Orleans. Your friends from Sunnydale ran into her in Sasebo when Commander Roberts and Captain Zitzewitz sensed many of their old fleet mates returning to 'service'." Here, the adopted native of Silicon Valley smiled as his eyes twinkled. "Still suffers from the bad luck that rocked her career during the war; I'll send the observation details Willow and Cora prepared on Michelle to your PAA right away for you to look over, Kanami."

"Appreciated."

"Anything happening on Earth right now?" Seth asked.

A sad look crossed Thomas' face as he seemed to slump in his chair. "Unfortunately. There's a massive outbreak of fighting in North Korea as we speak."

"Hyegyŏng?" Isaac wondered.

"Not her, fortunately. It appears that Mister Lu'umlo is up to his old tricks." As the three Terran-born Yizibajohei moaned on hearing the family name of the Mad Prophet of the Future, the android scientist added, "He was visiting Phentax Two when he stumbled onto a project being run by a
bunch of young video game fans on that planet who wanted living replicas of their favourite characters and managed to obtain quite a number of non-templated bioroid bodies, hiding them away from us before the Liberation. When Mister Lu'umlo found out, he brought his vast collection of Gift crystals to help empower the newborns. By the time he got there to assist — he was called in by Mister Kiryū; it turns out one of those kids' fathers was friends with Mister Kiryū when he served as an observer on Earth — it was discovered the kids running this project got hold of something to make the replicas more 'realistic'."

Isaac tensed. "What?"

"Head Scientist Gihan's staff, Isaac."

Silence.

More silence.

Still more silence.

Then...

"The original haijo-ju..." the New Yorker hissed out as the Iowan and the native of Nerima gazed in confusion at him, forcing him to explain: "Personal gift of the first Healer of Destruction to a Sagussan scientist to allow him to further his studies of the Te'a...!" He shook his head as both the Assassin of Dynasties and the Untameable One breathed out; thanks to their friendship with Tariko Katabarbe and Moroboshi Ataru, they knew the meaning of the Sagussan term for the energy field that formed between dimensions, seen as "beyond mortal comprehension" to the natives of that world outside the Milky Way Galaxy proper. "I can see how these kids were able to hide those bodies when we came by in June. If the focusing crystal of that thing is as powerful as was reported by the Daishi'cha from the records of Gisan'cha-age Sagussa, it could give even someone like Ayumu a good fight if welded by the right person. How the hell did the Niphentaxians get hold of that thing?!"

"Mister Kiryū didn't get details, Isaac. He was more concerned about who the replicas were modelled after and what Mister Lu'umlo had got them Gifted as." Here, Thomas tapped a control on his console.

A separate hologram came up, allowing Isaac and his guests to read the names. As the Wise Lone
Sage scanned up and down that list of fifty-five people that he KNEW did not exist in this universe outside the realm of video games and anime, he then sank back in his chair, shaking his head as the complications of THIS surprise event sank in. "Danganronpa?!" he exclaimed.

"Characters not only from the games people would be familiar with, but also those of games created in future alternate timelines you investigated on your spare time," Thomas stated. "The list breaks down their names by the games produced both to date and would have been produced in the future."

Scanning that list, Seth nodded in approval. "Liz and her friends will DEFINITELY be glad we got this one back," he stated as he pointed at the entry for Nanami Chiaki. Isaac knew she was a character that appeared in the second Danganronpa game Goodbye Despair, which was released in Japan in July and in North America and in Europe in September. An actual AI replica of a real person, Chiaki had been reborn as a bioroid in this dimension — no doubt after her deactivation in her dimension of initial activation — and then Gifted as the Living Heart of the Great Show of Life, Damitī ("Giocatrice"); the first "version" of that battle line had been a post-Dawn of Power AI created by the original Circle of Thought that was later given the right to become organic by the first Infinity.

"Glad that we got some good fighters in this bunch," Kanami added, earning her surprised looks from the two Americans. Here, the "heir" of the "Saotome-ryū" smirked as her cheeks flushed in embarrassment. "Soon as I got settled into Sunny-hell, Xander got me into video games. I got good on both the first and second Danganronpa games atop a whole tonne of other ones."

"Well, I'm glad for that," Isaac mused as he squeezed her shoulder in reassurance while Seth reached over to pat her back. Everyone from Tariko on down had always railed hard concerning how much Ranma/Kanami had just focused her life on martial arts for so long, even after s/he settled into Nerima with the Tendō family over a year ago. Of course, given the tsunami of challenges the "heir" of the "Saotome-ryū" had to face mostly because of the gluttonous stupidity of his/her father Genma — not to mention his/her own critical blindness in many things — s/he had been easily distracted. However, because "Ranma" had been mentally changed thanks to the pools of Jusenkyō and the hidden part of the curses which could be obtained there, all that was needed was just time — and the right circumstances — to see him/her abandon his/her father and become a girl full-time.

The result had been the Week of Hell.

Which turned out to be perfect for not just Kanami, but two of the Tendō sisters and Nǚ Shānpú.

As for the others...
Shaking his head as he shifted attention back to the here-and-now, the Wise Lone Sage sighed. "Madame Mustang, a favour if I could ask for it," he then formally requested. "Your opinion, please?"

"About what, Doctor?" she replied in turn.

"The potential trouble-maker on this list?"

A snort escaped her. "Easy to conclude," she said as she indicated one name:

**Enoshima Junko: Verzweiflung (Likenuo)**

"Oh, yeah..." Seth breathed out.

"There is hope, though."

Eyes locked on the image of the android scientist. "What's that, Sensei?" Kanami wondered.

Thomas smiled. "It appears Miss Enoshima is more an anti-face in this incarnation than a true heel. Much to the complete despair of Mister Lu'umlo!" As all three on the Normandy laughed at that pun, he added, "Yes, she was the one who started the current situation in North Korea. But given there are many Goa'uld in the country add to over a MILLION Shōzoki androids and gynoids according to Miss Kim — seventy percent of them under Mother's control..." — here, the elder Replicant scowled at the very idea of having his soul ENSLAVED to some all-encompassing controlling program like the Overmind System from the original Bubblegum Crisis OVAs or Skynet from the Terminator series — "...they're too busy being made to destroy each other. With the amount of shipgirls streaming in from elsewhere to help, casualties in North Korea are actually incredibly light. The damage, though..."

"Ouch!" Kanami trilled.

"Still, we NEVER let our guard down for this one," Seth cautioned.

"Agreed," Isaac mused. "What else, Doctor?"
"Lady Nature is involved in this as well," Thomas reported. "It's been confirmed: She's Miss Takanashi Naoko from Beppu, South Area winner of the Grand Prix last year. Miss Higurashi Akane's best friend as you'll know. After Colonel O'Bannon — that's Lieutenant Colonel Matilda O'Bannon, the Fletcher-class USS O'Bannon — used her powers to totally reseed the soil of North Korea to let it grow all forms of potatoes, Miss Takanashi used her powers to ensure all forms of plants can grow there. If Miss Kim and her uncle are smart, they'll make sure there will never be a famine in that country ever again."

"Good for her," Isaac affirmed, nodding. Much that he was wary of allowing someone like Kim Hyegyŏng possessing the power of the Sandalwood Empress of the New Dawn — a being who was almost-cosmic in the scale of her abilities since her first-self helped fight the Goa'uld five millennia before — he did know the niece of the current leader of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea was a believer in the "truest" form of the Chuch'e concept that demanded her homeland become as self-sufficient as possible in ALL realms; this would ensure that no outside power would be able to successfully influence the nation to cause it harm. With the level of technology she and her past-selves had seized over the millennia at Asadal in P'yŏng'yang as well as in old Kuorim on Yiziba, she could easily turn the "hermit kingdom" into something that could overcome mainland China socially in the wake of the reforms unleashed after the death of Máo Zédōng in 1976...never mind become one of the technological leaders of the world, beating out even Japan, America and Germany!

Of course, if her uncle Kim Chŏng'ŭn decided to object...!

_Not your fight scene yet, Isaac...!_ he mentally admonished himself. "So what did Kazuma tell you about these people, Doctor?" he then asked Thomas. "What's his opinion on Junko? What about her peers?"

"As I said before, Miss Enoshima is definitely more anti-face than true heel in this incarnation, Isaac," the android scientist replied with a smile as he sat back in his chair. "She's clearly intelligent enough to realize that if she tried to unleash the Killing School Life — or Fates forbid, the Tragedy itself! — she'll be hunted down by all her peers from that dimension atop many other reality warpers and a good slew of other Yizibajohei here. Since she'll have her past-selves' memories influencing her as well, she'll definitely elect to target heels and other beings who threaten what she sees as hers. Given that the Shōzoki are organic enough to be touched by her abilities and the Goa'uld are just too arrogant by nature to be civil with, she'll have a very target rich environment facing her in North Korea."

Isaac nodded. "Tell Kazuma to bring them here as soon as the dust settles down in North Korea. Keep me up to date on what's going on and get me a list of the shipgirls involved, please." As Thomas nodded in understanding, the Wise Lone Sage perked. "Speaking of which, where is Kazuma now?"
"Mister Kiryū's at the Fuchū Prison in Japan right now, helping Miss Tanenobu and Miss ad-Dawḥaḧ deal with Miss Lum's most obstinate 'fans'." Here, the android sneered that term as Kanami snorted in disgust on hearing yet again about Lum's Stormtroopers. "Speaking of which, there was an incident close to Tomobiki High moments ago. Two of Mister Moroboshi's clone twins, Miss Tsuchidō and Miss Kubo, just eliminated the last Mother-controlled Shōzoki in Tomobiki. As Miss Karasawa informed you in private after you met her, one was Mister Moroboshi's so-called 'best friend' Shirai Kōsuke. He was heavily damaged when the power cells of one of his friends detonated while under Miss Tsuchidō's control. The last of the Mother-controlled Shōzoki, Miss Arakida Yui, was freed by Rinrin."

"What about Sŏ Yŏn'i?"

"Rinrin told me that'll be done secretly to not alarm her classmates. Miss Kim knows where the real Miss Inoue and Miss Sŏ's younger siblings — rather, their replicas — are being held in P'yŏng'yang. I passed that information on to Miss Nanami and another AI who was brought over from her universe, Mister Iidabashi Tetsuya. You'll recall he was an android created in that universe that was forced to deal with the incident at the Ultimate Academy in 2077 their time."

"The K1-B0 unit," Isaac noted as he gazed on that entry, learning that said being had become the Evolution of Sentience, *Memtokemo* ("*Questor*"). In that being's first "version", it had been a sentient android created by the Asgard to further observe events on Yiziba as the Dawn of Power progressed, befriending the Circle of Thought along the way. "Seeing Kibo team up with Chiaki should be an interesting scene to watch," he then contemplated. "Okay. Call Kazuma and tell him that once things are settled down BOTH in P'yŏng'yang AND Tomobiki to get the people from that universe over here as quick as possible. I also need to know what finally happened to the Staff of Gihan; I don't want that thing to be seized by any Lumites still running around rabid on Phentax Two."

"Mister Kiryū assured me that the Staff is secure and will be soon on Earth. He didn't go into details," Thomas assured his creator before a knowing look crossed his face. "Confident that you'll win this battle against the Goa'uld, Isaac?" he then wondered.

"Oh, we'll win. That, I'm DAMN sure about!" Isaac declared as Seth grinned and Kanami laughed. "Still, I don't want to take chances. But, given who are now involved in North Korea, I doubt any of them — Junko included! — would want to miss out on THIS Mother of All Fight Scenes!"

"Ending the threat of the Goa'uld?!" Kanami wondered, grinning in anticipation. "Count on it!"

The android scientist laughed. "I anticipated that. I sent messages to the Circle of Thought informing
them of what's happened. I also passed it on to Mister Kiryū so he can ensure they'll be informed."

"Good call, Thomas," Isaac said, using Thomas' given name to show how much the native of Queens had come to respect one of his greatest creations. As the android blushed at being addressed that way in public, the Wise Lone Sage added, "I was about to suggest that. I'll go talk to Tariko. Ruby and her teammates are sparring with the Wondercolts to prepare for the coming fight. Tariko was curious to see what they can do. I'll head there now. I leave things to you, Thomas."

"Understood," Thomas affirmed as Isaac rose from his chair...

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Back on Earth at Fuchū Prison, that moment...

"NO! NO! NO! I REFUSE! YOU WON'T GET AWAY WITH THIS...uurk!"

Aisuru Satoshi nearly soiled himself after the sharp edge of a blade being welded by the Mistress of Daggers was pressed up against his neck, making him stagger back to lean against one wall of his cell. "The very nice lady just asked you kindly to SHUT THE HELL UP, 'Toshi!" Shitto Nijiko snarled as she glared directly into Megane's eyes. "Surely you should be able to see by NOW how much you've been totally OUTMATCHED by Ataru and his friends all this time, plus ALL of his sisters! Why the FUCK are you still harping on that useless shit concerning Danu's sister, huh?!"

The leader of the Stormtroopers flushed a deep red as he glared intently at this creature who SHOULD have disappeared after the whole class film project was called off in March...yet had been saved and literally given a life of her own thanks to Moroboshi Ataru and that bitch he called his "sister"...!

KK-KLONK!

"Onē-chan HEARD that, Satoshi-san!" Tanenobu Karen calmly declared.

As her long-transformed gynoid lover 'Amina ad-Dawḥāḥ cackled with delight on seeing the loud-mouthed idiot smashed down YET AGAIN by a cinder block teleported in by the Trickster of the Show, Nijiko sheathed her combat knife as her brother Kōsuke along with the other core Stormtroopers Urayamu Akira and Daremo Hiroyuki cowered away from their fallen leader. As both
the Herald of Fight Scenes and the Sea Dragon of the Cosmos could sense, even NOW with the ugly reality of what just happened to a lot of their supporters from Tomobiki High thanks to the few Mother-controlled Shōzoki still active in town, they refused to recant their loyalty to Redet Lum. As Kiryū Kazuma and one of the two judges who had been assigned from the Tōkyō District Court deal with this case, Asai Maika, shook their heads at the insane intransigence being shown by the four boys, the other judge gazed on Karen. "Have you spoken to President Miree concerning this situation, Tanenobu-san?"

The stepdaughter of a senior foreign diplomat who now lived as Yiziba's effective chief diplomat nodded. "Hai, Your Honour, I have," she affirmed with a polite nod. "And there is a place on Phentax Two where these four could go where they'd be no trouble at all."

Hearing that, Judge Kanae Ruka nodded. "Excellent..."

"W-w-wait! Ph-ph-Phentax Two...?!

That was Nijiko's brother Perm. "Yeah, Nii-kun! Don't you remember?! The planet who's FORMER president happily had a FIVE HUNDRED MEGATONNE ANTIMATTER BOMB planted in the Tomobiki Ginza of all places?!" the reborn assassin sweetly declared. "The same planet who is still chock-full of lifeless MORONS like you when it comes to poor Lum?!" As the Stormtroopers' eyes went wide on hearing that, the Mistress of Blades added, "Of course, the creep that started the 'one true faith' is rotting away in a prison on the planet Vos; Karen-chan sent him there. But there are still loads more people who believe as you do. And there's still the threat from al-Qā'idah and all the other whacko groups out there. What happened to Koi and the rest of the dolts will be made public soon, so those nice folk will STILL want to get their pounds of flesh out of idiots like you!"

As the Stormtroopers winced from that warning from the reborn assassin, 'Amina then gestured, telekinetically raising the arm of the still female Avalonian clone of Megane created by the "most faithful" based in the "holy city" to act as a sort of "soul lifeboat" in case the "First Holy Apostle" was struck down by the "Great Evil" — which had been teleported in by Tsuruya Rumiko from their hidden storage place in one of the basement rooms of Tomobiki High for just this occasion; they had been found by Kasuga Ayumu back in April when the film-replicas were given the chance to have their own bodies — then the once-gynoid Iraqi Kurd mentally planted those fingers on the teen's face. A croaked scream escaped the Stormtroopers' leader as his memories were thoroughly analyzed for replication into his new sister's body. Seeing that, Perm howled as he moved to yank Megane clear...!

KK-KRACK!

Cinder block to his head, smashing him into the floor! "Arigatō, Katabarbe-san!" Judge Asai called
«No problem, Maika-san.» Tariko's voice echoed in everyone's minds.

"AH...!"

As the clone's eyes snapped wide open, her brown orbs glowing a bright crimson thanks to the ruby mesonium in her blood interacting with what else had been planted there...!

Tene lomher'buo, Aisuru Tokiko...!

"NO!" Chibi and Kakugari screamed as they lunged over to stop this perversity from happening...

KK-KRACK! KK-KLONK!

Cinder blocks sent them to join their friend on the deck!

Nesu...DUR'BUO!

"Oh, YEAH...!"

Megane was nearly driven insensate as the mind of his newly-Gifted clone twin was nearly swamped with the collected memories of twenty-six previous incarnations spiritually descent of a professional actress/singer who had completely wowed the entertainment industry based in the district of Lemriesem — Yiziba's pre-Dawn of Power counterpart to Hollywood — that became Gifted as the Siren of the Cosmos, Dur'buo ("Archseren"). As the "pre-Gifting" silver jumpsuit given to Aisuru Tokiko transformed into a beautiful flowing off-white gown similar in cut to what Sukeyama Sakuya wore as Courtesan, glowing life filled the face of the very pretty girl with the flowing dark brown hair that went to the level of her breasts as a pair of safety goggles formed over her eyes; despite being an Avalonian before being Gifted, Tokiko had inherited her brother's nearsightedness. As the reborn actress twirled to her feet, the conscious people inside the cell all clapped in delight at this beautiful re-birthing scene. Her cheeks instantly flushed with embarrassment even if she gave them a polite curtsey in return.
Tokiko's eyes then focused on the two judges there, her considerable psionic powers — while not one of Destructo's Chosen, her first-self Leem Keamee had been the first post-Gifting lover of the first incarnation of the Healer of Women's Hearts, Sogusohu Fasimgemu — reaching out to scan them. Before she could make comment, Karen's mental voice echoed in her head, «Don't say anything yet, Tokiko-san! You don't want to reveal THAT until Takako-san and Mitsuko-san are awake!»

Hearing that, the Siren of the Cosmos grinned as a croaked moan escaped her dazed brother. «Good point, Karen-san.» she telepathically transmitted back to the Herald of Fight Scenes before she gazed at Karen's lover. "Well...?!” she then wondered, putting her fists to her hips.

'Amina blushed at that unspoken urging, then she looked towards the two other still clone bodies that had been brought into the room. After telekinetically shifting Chibi and Kakugari into range, she made the arms of the sleeping bioroids reach over to grasp their heads. The two hapless boys screamed out as their own memories were played back at dizzying speeds inside their heads while they were replicated into their new sisters' minds. Chibi's twin Urayamu Takako was a pixie-cute girl the same height as he, but very well-curved in all the right places, her wavy brown hair flowing to mid-back. Kakugari's new sister Daremo Mitsuko didn't have the fat that he possessed. Instead, she was quite stocky and muscular, her raven hair not subjected to the crew cut her brother preferred, said mass tied in a simply ponytail. As their eyes glowed while their minds were flooded with copies of their brothers' memories, the screams uttering from the smallest and the stockiest of the Stormtroopers finally snapped their leader awake. "Huh...?" Megane croaked as he looked over...

Tene lomher'buo, Urayamu Takako...Daremo Mitsuko...!

"WHAT THE HELL IS THIS?!” Megane then bellowed.

"Lum-chan's greatest dream come true!"

As Tokiko's brother spun around to glare at Karen...

Nesu...TYUKAE!

Nesu...TITUODIM!

Chibi and Kakugari passed out, their brains overwhelmed by the massed memories their sisters just received. Megane gargled in horror as the two newly-woken bioroids-turned-metahumans quickly
got to their feet, revealing their new fighting jumpsuits while the conscious people in the room whooped in delight. As the Titaness of the Stratosphere, **Tyukae ("Ramzel")**, Takako possessed a new model jumpsuit in dark blue, golden belts and boots finishing the ensemble; acting as the chest sigil for the size-altering mid-range FISS was a golden design that reminded the onlookers of classical depictions of the Colossus of Rhodes. Now living as the Unstoppable Puncher, **Tituodim ("Ithfaen")**, Mitsuko had a uniform similar to what Takino Tomo wore as the Wild Warrior of Passion: A grey-brown one-piece swimsuit design with thigh-high boots and bicep-length finger-less fighting gloves of the same shade, straps of mesonium-reinforced stainless steel wrapped around her waist, neck, biceps and thighs to keep her clothes in place; she would need them as she was a high-level FISS-type without the flight capabilities, able to stand toe-to-toe with the Unmovable One himself.

"Excellent!" Judge Kanae declared with a determined nod. "Now that the families affected by these boys have daughters to make their families whole, both Judge Asai and I agree that it's time to remove the danger these boys now present to humanity as a whole."

"**WHAT?!**" Megane gargled as Perm stirred awake.

"Agreed," Judge Asai affirmed with a nod. "Therefore, with the kind permission of Her Excellency the President of the Union of Phentax Two, Madame Miree ot'ndai-Bohgar of New Hollywood, you four boys will be teleported immediately to that planet and incarcerated in a correction facility there where you'll be able to interact with others like you." As Megane and Perm both gargled on hearing that statement while Chibi and Kakugari slowly woke up, she added, "This we do, by the way, because of the continued threat your presence ANYWHERE on Earth could present considering the THIRTY known death threats various terrorist groups WORLDWIDE have issued against you four for your actions committed on the twenty-sixth of October in the Twenty-third Year of Heisei." Hearing THAT made the Stormtroopers croak in horror. "Thus, if we could impose on someone from Yiziba right now..."

In a flash of energy, all four boys vanished from Earth for the final time!

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*Meanwhile, near the shore of the Pot'ong River in P'yŏng'yang...*

"Excuse me, Sensei, but may my friend and I be of assistance here?"

Hearing that polite man's voice, Saeru Hinako turned to look...
...then she squealed on seeing two people standing right beside the crouching Kistiñe Heermann y Brown, who was still trying to revive the deactivated No Sang'u and Paek Yŏngsuk. As the other reborn destroyers and their allies from the Ministry of People's Security protecting the small group of locals gaped in shock on noting that the newcomers had teleported into their defence zone without issue, the Spirit of Innocence jogged over to get a closer look. Both were in modern Yizibajohei jumpsuits, possessing pouches on their belts indicating they were clearly of the technical sort when it came to their powers. As soon as the symbols on their chests became visible to the native of Niigata, Hinako nodded in delight. "Damti Bolem? Memtokemuo Tene? Can Hina know your real names, please?"

As the locals hearing this interpreted those Yizibajohei words thanks to the translation systems in the wearers' battle suits, the female of the pair of newcomers looked over, her glittering pink-red eyes locking hard on Hinako's face. They then went wide in recognition, then the current incarnation of the Living Heart of the Great Show of Life blushed madly. "Oh, my!" she said in a demure voice before a squeal of sheer delight escaped her. "You are Hinako of Sister Princess!"

That made Hinako blink. "'Sister Princess'?! What's that?!"

A flash of energy allowed the most powerful Yizibajohei of all to appear. "Hey, Hinako-chan!
Kasuga Ayumu called out. "There you are! Gee, what made you come into the heart of a fight scene, huh?!"

As everyone present sensed the power burning within the body of the Goddess Who Walks Among Men, Hinako chuckled as she reached out with her own empathy to calm people down. "Hina heard Marlene-san put out her mayday because the Shōzoki were being silly, then Hina came here to see if she could calm things down! Harumi-san and Wakana-san saved these people from those meanies down there..." — here, she pointed to the southwest where the mass of war machines that had been advancing on this position had been cut down and ripped apart by the reborn first and third of the Hatsuharu-class destroyers — "...then Ana Maria-san here took out shooters in that silly hotel over there..." — she pointed to the Ryugyŏng Hotel, its southeast wing badly wrecked by the reborn second of Argentina's only class of dreadnoughts — "...and then Bernadette-san got rid of those meanie-meanies up the street there!" Here, she pointed up Moranbong-gŏri where Ana Maria Moreno's sister Bernadette Rivadavia had destroyed yet another phalanx of Shōzoki war machines with her own energy blasts.

"You seem to be the mistress of understatement, Hinako-ya!" a somewhat-frazzled An Chaeyong mused before he gazed down at the deactivated gynoid officer who had taken him out on a date to the place where the now-shipgirl USS Pueblo had recently been docked.

Ayumu looked over before her eyes went wide. "Oh, wow! You're An Chaeyong-sŏnsaengnim!"
As the girls from the P'yŏng'yang Music Academy squealed in delight on noting that this incredibly powerful Japanese girl knew their fellow alumnus, the native of Wakayama didn't disappoint them. "My mother's got a copy of your performance at the National Grand Theatre in Běijīng last year! That was a really cool rendition of Beethoven-sŏnsaengnim's symphonies you did!"

As the violinist blushed madly, Nanami Chiaki blinked as she took in the newcomer's looks. "You are Kasuga Ayumu," she declared as she pointed at her. "You are Kasuga Ayumu of Azumanga Daiō."

"Yeah, yeah!" the native of Wakayama moaned as she waved down the now-organic AI that had been part of an experiment by the Future Foundation to protect students at Hope's Peak in another universe's Tōkyō and help heal that world from the Tragedy. "And you're Nanami Chiaki of Danganronpa 2: Goodbye Despair. I know, I know, okay?!"

"Hey, wait a sec'...!"

That was Rose Johnston, who walked over to stare intently at Chiaki before she leaned back. "How the hell's this possible, ma'am?!" the seventy-fourth of the Fletcher-class demanded as she gazed at Ayumu. "She's a VIDEO GAME character!" she then exclaimed, pointing at Chiaki.

Before the Infinite One could answer, Chiaki's companion stood and leaned over her shoulder to gaze at Rose. "USS Johnston from Kantai Collection," Iidabashi Tetsuya immediately declared before focusing on the others. "Japanese destroyers Hatsuharu, Nenohi and Wakaba, also from Kantai Collection. And USS Hoel from Azur Lane." Here, the now-organic Ultimate Robot who was built at the orders of Team Danganronpa to participate in the Killing School Semester at the Ultimate Academy blinked as he noted something missing from the shipgirls he just identified. "Where is your rigging?" he asked.

"What doth you mean by 'rigging'?!" Haruguchi Harumi demanded as she fanned her face with a gunsen.

"'What's fiction in one universe is often fact in another', Harumi-chan," Ayumu answered as she turned to stare at her. "Sure, Chiaki-chan and Tetsuya-kun are — or would be in Tetsuya-kun's case! — characters in the Danganronpa games. But in THEIR universe, they were real people!"

Silence.
More silence.

Still more silence.

Then...

"EH?! WHO WOULD DO SOMETHING STUPID LIKE THAT, AYUMU-CHAN?!

That was a wide-eyed Hinako, who was trying not to gape at her friend. "A bunch'a kids from Phentax Two did, Hinako-chan," the Infinite One answered before she held up her finger. "But you gotta remember that a whole bunch of people who DIED in that universe were SAVED!"

The Spirit of Innocence took that in before she gazed on Chiaki and Tetsuya. After a quick empathic probe proved what her friend just affirmed, Hinako then relaxed herself before walking over to kiss Chiaki's cheek, making the adopted native of another universe's Tōkyō madly blush. Before the onlookers could ask what was going on, Hinako then walked over to kiss Tetsuya's cheek, making him fluster. "Now you can save a whole bunch of people!" the native of Niigata urged.

"Can they help, Hinako-ya?!" Ri Chŏnhŭi demanded as she stayed close to Marlene Bucher-Flanagan.

"We are technokinetics, Sungnyŏ-nim," Chiaki answered as both she and Tetsuya nodded. As the reporter for the Ch'ŏngnyŏn Chŏn'ui at the Music Academy squawked in embarrassment at such a form of address, she added, "Our powers affect all forms of technology. Allow us, please..."

She then gestured to the still free Terran-form Shōzoki North Korean officers now lying at Kistiñe's feet. Shocked gasps then escaped Sang'u and Yŏngsuk as they bolted awake, their eyes glowing briefly as their systems rebooted themselves. As the locals seeing this all screamed in delight on seeing the brave AIs fully awake and healthy, a very relieved violinist quickly swept the gynoid officer of the Kippŭm-jo into his embrace, swamping her with a very wet kiss.

As the MPS troopers seeing this screamed "CHIAKI-YA MANSE!" to celebrate...

YOU WILL NOT STAND IN OUR WAY, YIZIBAJOHEI!
As heavy particle fire poured down from many places within the pyramid-shaped hotel, Ayumu waved her hand to put up a defence field to keep everyone safe as seven shipgirls dove from the skies to land on the front lawn of the Victorious War Museum. The three reborn Yamato-class super-battleships and the four reborn Iowa-class fast battleships immediately spun on the hotel, letting go with the metahuman equivalent of twenty-seven 46 centimetre/45 calibre Type 94 naval guns and thirty-six 16 inch/50 calibre Mark 7 naval guns fired in a single titanic broadside never equalled in naval warfare!

As the back blast of such an attack slammed into Ayumu's protective field, causing the Infinite One to wince, the fusillade smashed into various floors of the Ryugyŏng Hotel, punching even bigger holes into the glass structure and sending debris hurtling past the Kyŏnghŭng-gŏri among the apartments and train yards of Pulg'ŭngŏri 3-dong! However, despite such an attack, the Ryugyŏng remained intact even if it was now burning. "Holy shit!" Gabby Lewis exclaimed as her sisters and their new friends stared at their current target. "That was enough to pancake a city the size of the Big Apple!"

Snarling, Itō Mutsuko quickly let go with an even more intensive bolt of energy. "FOUL MACHINES! YOU'RE NO DIFFERENT THAN THE BLASTED QAR'TO! DIE!"

Again, another gaping hole appeared in the sides of the tall hotel...

Yet again, it did not collapse!

FOOLISH BATTLE DOLL! YOU DARE COMPARE US TO THOSE PRIMITIVES?!

A whole STORM of energy ripped down from the hotel, zeroing in on the reborn second of the Yamato-class. As both Itō Yasuko and Itō Izumi lunged over to take some of that energy, Mutsuko screamed as she was knocked back right into the river by that impact! "Oi! 'Sashi! You okay?!!" Kathy Hyde demanded as she looked over her shoulder to where the adopted native of Fuchū had gone for a swim.

Several MPS troopers raced over to help the snarling near-namesake of Japan's greatest swordsman out of the drink. "My thanks, good comrades!" Mutsuko declared as she scrambled ashore. "Damnation!" she snarled in frustration. "We need Elgin-dono's power in this case!"
"'Elgin-dono', Musashi-dono?!

"The truly LARGEST battleship of all, Hatsuharu-dono! One of the mighty Ryūseizen from great Canada themselves!" Mutsuko declared, making the destroyers all gasp in awe at that declaration. "Her great crew saved the lives of MANY a good sailor from Jutland to Leyte Gulf, including the crews of ALL our fair fleet mates that Ozawa-chūjō commanded at that last throw of the dice!"

"You mean the one with sixteen Mark 7s as long as your sister Yoiko was, Captain?!

The students of the Music Academy were quick to see Gabby and Kathy spin around on hearing the voice of the adopted native of Cincinnati before they focused on her ship's crest. A quick glance over to Madelyn Hoel confirmed who she was, making both battleships' eyes tear. Before they could break the fire line and race over to sweep the two destroyers lost off Samar into their arms and wail apologies for not being there at the time, a blur saw the first of the Hatsuharu-class destroyers quickly appear before them. "HOLD!" the adopted native of Sasebo barked as she held out a hand to stop the two.

"Hey!" Kathy snapped. "What the HELL...?!

Immediately, Haruhi lowered her voice, hissing, "Jersey-dono, Iowa-dono, much that I know how thee feels about your admiral's gross failure to protect Rose-dono's and Madelyn-dono's crews at Samar, their resentment at thee is quite profound!" As both Gabby and Kathy winced on hearing that, Haruhi bowed her head. "Please! Allow this humble one to act as an intermediary to allow peace and harmony to return to your noble task force! And I remind thee that we DO have a battle to fight!"

A quick glance towards Rose made Gabby wince and Kathy want to cry; the seventy-fourth of the Fletcher-class had turned her head away from gazing directly at either of them. A look at Madelyn showed a sullen look on the face of the adopted native of Butler County in Ohio, which made both battleships' hearts drop right to their bowels. Staring at Kistiñe earned them a helpless shrug from the namesake of the Hessen-born surgeon's mate who fought in the First Barbary War.

Before either could say anything towards the three destroyer veterans of Taffy 3, a polite voice hailed from above, "Howdy, y'all! This here battle line public or private?"

Everyone looked up as a smiling blue-eyed blonde looking to be in her late twenties soared gracefully down to land. Dressed in an older-style sleeved battlesuit, she had a white top and pants with red belt — the buckle dark blue with a white star — and blue boots barely seen past the ends of
her slacks. Her ship's crest bore the shield and mixed olive/live oak wreath of laurel topped by a gold star which could be found on the reverse of the seal of her namesake state, the blue scroll slung under the shield bearing in white REMEMBER THE ALAMO. Around it was the rope-lined stadium ring with USS TEXAS on the upper arc and BB-35 on the lower. Much to the amusement of the American shipgirls, she had a ten gallon hat on her head, a miniature of her ship's crest perched right over her nose.

And slung on a gun belt around her waist...!

"Doubt those six-shooters would help in a fight like this, Tex!" Kathy declared as she waved the reborn second of the New York-class super-dreadnoughts up to fall in between herself and Gabby.

The adopted native of San Jacinto and Newport News properly known now as Emily Austin drew both weapons, which caused some people to blink. "Well, a very nice cavalry general from way up in Ontario and a nice Mountie commissioner from way over in New Brunswick got these little hush-puppies for me just for this pretty special occasion!" the reborn USS Texas smiled.

Both Clarkson M34 .44 Magnum semi-automatic revolvers glowed suddenly before Emily fired, sending shots into the intact areas of the gaudy hotel that had been the source of a LOT of trouble in this town...

KK-KKOOM! KK-KKOOM! KK-KRUNCH! KK-KRACK! KK-KRANG! KK-KONG!

The more "modern" battleships gaped in awe as VERY large geysers of flame leapt out from the hotel, they burning away vast amounts of surface to reveal the ghastly machinery within. Seeing that, Yasuko gaped before she screamed, "MINNA-SAN! FIRE WHERE TEXAS-SEMPAI FIRED ON!"

A thunderous barrage of energy then slammed into the Ryugyŏng as three reborn Japanese and five American battleships were joined by two of Emily's peers from Argentina to continue the attack...

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On the Youth Hero Motorway heading towards Namp'o, passing Taep'yŏng train station (eight kilometres west of southwest from the Ryugyŏng Hotel), that moment...
"What HAPPENED to us, anyway?!"

The very handsome raven-haired, brown-eyed colonel of the Reconnaissance General Bureau now driving the BTR-80A 8x8 amphibious armoured personnel carrier — locally called an M2010 — down the barren roadway towards the port city of Namp'o on the Yellow Sea coast at its maximum speed chuckled. "I haven't had the chance to process that download fully yet, Tamiko-ya," Han Yŏngch'ŏl said as he playfully winked at Inoue Tamako. "Have you had the chance to process anything?!"

The replica of the kidnapped Tomobiki High School freshman — the original Tamako had been killed when Shōzoki agents ultimately guided by Shirai Kōsuke's intelligence used the micro-factory of a captured seed ship to create her, subverting her directly to Mother's control — shook her head. "With how badly both Mina-ya and Hana-ya reacted to being freed like that?! What do YOU think I was doing, Comrade Colonel?!" she then declared, winking at the adopted native of Shinŭiju at the far northeast corner of the country. As Yŏngch'ŏl laughed, she turned to stare at the stocky woman in the uniform of a major in the RGB now in the APC's turret, her place between the paired 14.5 millimetre heavy machine guns that were the vehicle's primary armament. "What about you, Ŭmma?"

Kwŏn Chinhŏn was one of the older Terran-form Shōzoki living in North Korea. The raven-haired, dark-eyed native of Wŏnsu on the East Sea coast had been constructed to replace her template six years before, when a concerted effort was launched by Mother to create the perfectly-hidden base for her forces on Earth given how much interest in the third world of Sol was being expressed by almost ALL the neighbouring powers. However, unlike the true leaders of the Shōzoki within the country, she had been constructed using the factory of a "rogue" seed ship. And while she had obeyed her programming exactly as it had been downloaded into her mind — it was she who "recruited" Han Yŏngch'ŏl four years ago, plus arranged for the construction of the replicas of all the Sŏ children from Taehongdan, keeping the younger three as "captives" to ensure Tamako's effective physical twin Sŏ Yŏn'i would carry out her mission for the late "Dear Leader" — there had been all the dreams she had of doing right for her adopted nation and planet. Such hadn't been question by her "true" superiors...

And then Tōwa Monaka unleashed herself on all the Shōzoki in the country...!

Blushing at the beautiful Japanese girl's calling her "mom", the native of Wŏnsu grimaced. "Monaka-ya must have sensed the Marshal's niece's efforts to free us all from Mother's control, then linked our minds and the minds of the others built from free seed ships to learn all the Marshal's niece knows. Especially when it comes to your other-self's old classmate and what REALLY happened to him over the last decade, Tamako-ya," Chinhŏn noted. "With that, we also got knowledge of other free Terran-form Shōzoki loyal to her, so we can get to safety, then see you and the others sent to Japan..."
NO!

That was the male of the Sŏ children, Sŏ Church'ŏl, who was with his younger twin sisters Sŏ Hana and Sŏ Mina in the troop compartment behind the turret. The handsome boy with the properly cut raven hair in the uniform of a member of the Chosŏn Sonyŏn-dan was holding his sisters close. Physically a year younger than his elder sister — whom he never MET, actually! — he had been allowed to attend a school in Pyŏng'yang where he excelled in soccer and could have advanced to the professional leagues once he was allowed to "grow" to adulthood through sublime modifications/enhancements in his android body. His younger sisters were fifth-year elementary school students and also members of the KCU; Hana was a junior reporter for the Ch'ŏngnyŏn Chŏn'ui at her school while Mina was an aspiring artist. Of course, their "parents" were just mindless drones programmed to act as human when in public; on the sentience scale that very wise Canadian scientist had invented in the 1950s to denote the level of sapience in all AIs, the children were all Class G now while their "parents" were effectively Class D "dumb robots" that had to be commanded to do ANYTHING by their "offspring".

"Chunch'ŏl-a...!" Chinglyŏn playfully scolded as she lowered her seat to gaze on the shivering teen.

"No, Ŭmma! We're a family now! We all live together with Ŭnni in Japan or we'll all be DEACTIVATED together!" Chunch'ŏl sternly declared as his sisters nodded in agreement. "Even when we were enslaved to that thing, you two were more parents to us than our 'real' parents!"

Hearing that, Yŏngch'ŏl laughed. "It seems we've no choice but to be married, Comrade Major!"

A sigh escaped Chinhyŏn. "Comrade Colonel, please! I know you're a homosexual...!"

"DON'T TALK ABOUT MUSHY STUFF!" Hana and Mina shrilled, immediately plugging their ears.

As Chunch'ŏl winced — he was bi, having sex with the colonel when it was necessary to balance their programming; being enslaved to Mother hadn't spared them from THAT! — luck then shone their way...

"A-ri-ri?! Tamako-san?! What are you doing HERE?!

Tamako's and Yŏngch'ŏl's heads snapped over...
"HINAKO-YA?!" they exclaimed on seeing Saeru Hinako now floating beside them as the APC raced down the motorway, Kasa-tama holding her at their eye level...!

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**Back by the Pot'ong River...**

"Um...Kye-chan, where did you send Hinako-chan off to?"

"She is needed to help innocents flee the country, Ayumu-yu."

With that, the Dragonspeaker teleported back to Asadal. Watching her go, the Infinite One blinked before she shrugged as she moved to turn her attention back to the fighting.

Try as she might, even Kasuga Ayumu often found it hard to understand Noukiios' greatest warrior...!

Watching the Goddess Who Walks Among Men from nearby, Ri Chŏnghŭi blinked before she approached the visiting metahuman. "Um...Ayumu-ya?" she hesitantly asked.

The native of Wakayama blinked, creating a bubble of silence to ensure the thunderous din of reborn battleships wrecking the Ryugyŏng Hotel didn't drown out their voices. "What is it, Chŏnghŭi-ya?"

"How does one become like you?"

Hearing that question, Ayumu smiled...

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**Back at Tomobiki High School...**
Moroboshi Ataru grimaced as he finished relieving himself in the washroom closest to the cafeteria. Despite all the chaos that was building up in North Korea at this time, he knew things were slowly coming under control. His would-be wife Shigaten Benten had taken a specially-modified hover bike provided by her Avalonian-born twin Kamen to put herself over the Demilitarized Zone close to P'anmunjom to keep an eye on what was happening...even if all the shipgirls who had headed into the country to put down the Shōzoki were now starting to acknowledge Itō Yoiko as their tactical "flagship". Except for the issue concerning the Ryugyŏng Hotel — the Healer of Women's Hearts was starting to suspect that the still-incomplete structure that was North Korea's tallest building was the central control nexus for the alien AIs infiltrating the country save for those androids and gynoids Kim Hyegyŏng effectively controlled — it was starting to calm down. Thanks to the Sandalwood Empress' sublime moves to seize control of much of the population and territory in the "hermit kingdom" — with many high-tech improvements to local infrastructure such as energy distribution networks which ensured houses and businesses could operate day and night — forces loyal to her (known in Korean as the Tan'gun'ŭi Ch'angŭi byŏng-gun) responded smartly to the Shōzoki going crazy, using mesonium-powered weapons to destroy the Mother-controlled AIs. Since all of them hadn't donned unique uniforms, government radio networks were blaring the brave actions of elements of the "Korean People's Army" in defence against the aliens alongside the reborn noble ship spirits who came to help.

"Ano...Ataru-kun?"

He perked, then adjusting his clothes to make himself decent, moved away from the urinal to see that "Inoue Tamako" was now leaning through the open doorway. "Hai, Tamako-san, what is it?" he asked.

The pretty raven-haired woman "born" in the country that now held the attention of the world's most famous teenager and his family then smirked knowingly as she walked into the space, her hand reaching over to close the door behind her. Quickly sensing the levels of nervousness within the lovely gynoid's artificial mind, Ataru's eyebrow arched knowingly. "Shall I finally address you with your proper name, Sŏ-nari?" he then teased, wiggling his eyebrows playfully at her.

Regardless if she was a highly-advanced AI or not, Sŏ Yŏn'ī's cheeks flamed brightly at being addressed THAT way. "Ataru-ya...!" she croaked in embarrassment even if a relieved smile crossed her face.

He opened his arms to welcome her embrace. As she immediately leaned against him, tears of relief flowed down from her dark chocolate eyes. Much that she hadn't really cared to be separated from her family — especially her younger siblings — and be forced to spy on a group of ultimately very
nice people even if such would have progressed the desires of the late Dear Leader, she was glad that her former classmate's far more cosmic worldview gladly made him ignore such petty things. In Ataru's eyes, Yŏn'i was a victim of foolish "same worshippers" who were denying a "pretty girl" the right to be with people she loved and live her life as she chose to live it. That made it all the better for her...

"I'm a gynoid, am I?"

Ataru's eyes widened before he slowly nodded, threading his fingers through her hair. "I thought you were under some 'sleeper' programming which made you believe you were human," he noted in Korean.

Yŏn'i smiled at his use of her native language. "With Ayumu-ssi unleashing the INFINITE WAVE of all things back in August?" she asked as she looked at him. "I think I started doubting myself when I saw you make love to Yū-ssi and his friends in their homeroom when you came back to Tomobiki in April after you were kidnapped by your 'wife'." She made finger-quotes with one hand saying that. "Thank the Fates those Urusian hunters couldn't detect I was Shōzoki when they came to drag the rest of our class to Onishuto to attend your 'wedding'! I know now why Rumiko-ssi and Chigaiko-ssi couldn't be detected...and when I saw how powerful your sister was when she and Ayumu-ssi pulled Hiromi-ya and the other film-replicas from wherever their souls had been frozen in place since March, then give them those bioroid bodies Tariko-ya found, I realized then if my controllers found out about the Yizibajohei presence in town, it would really ruin things for a lot of people. Especially with that bomb in the Ginza!" She then pulled back to gaze into his eyes before she kissed him. "Kamsahamnida."

"For what?"

"For standing up for everyone like you did." Here, the adopted native of Taehongdan tilted her head to and fro, her eyes sparkling as readouts were reflected across her irises. "No matter what they are."

"You're as human as your other-self, Yŏn'-ya," he said as he gently passed his fingers through the bangs of her hair over her eyebrows, making her shudder in delight at that touch. "You're a living memorial to an innocent girl who fell victim to an uncaring creature that sees all organics as nothing more than 'faulty' beings that need to be converted or eliminated." He then winked. "Even better, you still have a family. Hyegyŏng-a found out what happened to them. They're Shōzoki as you are..."

Joy crossed her face. "My brother and sisters?!

"AND Tamako-san, too!"

The gynoid's eyes went very wide. "Tamako-ya's ALIVE?!"

Here, he gave her a helpless shrug. "Hai! Honestly, don't ask me why they did it THIS way! I'll never understand how those malfunctioning idiots 'think'." Here, he made his own finger-quotes. "Well, if you wouldn't mind, I'll get Rinrin-chan to look you over technokinetically to ensure..."

**Nesu...R'BELIM R'BERUO!**

Ataru glanced up to the ceiling. "Well, that was easy to guess..."

"Was that Shinobu-ssi?" Yōn'i wondered.

"Hai..."

**Nesu...NEKROKAKRO TE'EKUM!**

**Nesu...NEKROKAKRO ZUEGU!**

**Nesu...NEKROKAKRO KYAWWUZEM!**

"The boys?" she asked.

"Yes! Odd Giftings..." Here, he took her hand in his. "C'mon...!"

Both of them ran out of the bathroom, quickly heading to the nearest stairwell to get to the attic. Once they had climbed into the large space running along the central wing of the school, Ataru and Yōn'i stopped to see three sobbing freshman boys hugging his former girlfriend for all they were worth. A quick glance at the new jumpsuit Miyake Shinobu was wearing made the Healer of Women's Hearts nod in appreciation. The devout Catholic had become the Princess of the Fires of Life, *R'belim R'beruo* ("Prometheüs"). A high-level FISS like her film-twin Miyake Saiko was now — the "younger" Miyake had been Gifted as the Eternal Titaness of Power, *Yuotuo Maesete* ("Atlas") — Shinobu was also the mistress of an ebony mesonium-powered flame that made magical
Fiendfyre look like a hand-held sparkler in comparison. Because of that connection with the mentally most corruptible version of the Atom of True Life, the past-selves of Ataru's former girlfriend were often seen as heels...though given her own strong faith, he knew that she would lean towards being a face unless she was provoked.

As Tsuruya Rumiko gave him a thumbs up and a wink, Ataru then focused on the three once-android freshmen who had been the first Shōzoki he had enjoyed very intimate pillow scenes with after he had been sent back in time by Suzumiya Haruhi from the end of Golden Week (he had been in America at the time) to arrive in Tomobiki on the third Sunday in April, just days after the crashing of his "wedding" with Redet Lum at the Onishuto Cathedral. Nakasone Yū, Asanuma Shun and Funakoshi Mahiro had become reincarnations of three famous comedians who worked in Lemriesem who had been friends of Aisuru Tokiko's first-self Leem Keamee. The blond member of Unison Yell was the reborn Halokaa Te'ekum, a northern polar continent native who was an expert in vaudeville and was willing to incorporate a lot of physical skits in his acts that seemed death-defying. Shun was the reborn Basozogu Zuegu, a farmer's son from the same part of Yiziba who portrayed the successful go-getter in comedies that could get quite physical for him as they did for his peer; Ataru recalled one film where Basozogu found himself HANGING off a clock tower in a film that parodied the virtues of safety in workplaces. And Mahiro was now the latest incarnation of Kyaaazolu Kyawwuzem, a western equatorial continent native who often portrayed a homeless wanderer in most of his productions. All three had been blessed at the start of the Dawn of Power by a mystic from the eastern equatorial continent to become the Nekrokakro (the "Three Little Dragons"); blessed with energy manipulation and low-level FISS capabilities, the three comedians had been great morale boosters during the Starvation Times as the Circle of Thought worked hard to restore some semblance of civilization on Yiziba.

Should make an interesting battle group, the Healer of Women's Hearts mused.

"Ataru!"

He then yelped as three typhoons of lovable energy embraced him, knocking him off his feet and sending him down on the floor. "Oi! Guys! I'm not a FISS-type!" he snapped as the three members of Unison Yell snuggled against him, he reaching up to rub the back of his head. "Go easy!"

"Oh, stop it, Ataru!" Shinobu scolded as she came over to help him back up. "You've taken a lot worse before you were Gifted!" she scolded as her new boyfriends helped get their old "master" back up.

"Yeah..." he panted. "But explain it to my sisters, Shinobu! And no, I don't mean Onē-san...!"

That made her pause as she recalled what Ataru's siblings had been Gifted as. As a bone-chilling
image of Hirosaki Chikage cursing her to within an inch of her life for having the audacity of hurting her brother darling then made Shinobu wince, she blinked as Ataru leaned over to warmly kiss her, which made her blush as red as the belt and boots on her black jumpsuit. Said uniform was embossed with jets of flame up the sides of the leg to form an aura-like corona over her cleavage; a pair of flame-trimmed black gauntlets finished the ensemble to allow the Princess of the Fires of Life to project a dark aura similar to what a certain dark knight in another dimension who taught the recently-Gifted Dark Heart of Pure Chaos during her second summer away from Hogwarts could do.

She then perked on realizing Ataru hadn't come up alone. "Tamako-chan, what are...?" she began...

...before her eyes narrowed. "You're NOT Tamako!" she hissed.

"She's a friend!" Ataru snapped, causing her to stop.

The three freshmen looked over, then Yū's eyes went wide. "You're the sleeper!" he exclaimed as he pointed at Yŏn'i, that one word making Shun and Mahiro gape in horror as they stared in stunned disbelief at the gynoid. "How did you break that programming?! Who did that to you?!"

"It was Kōsuke through friends in North Korea, Yū-kun," the "spy" responded, staying to Japanese.

Shinobu stared at her. "You're from North Korea?!"

"She is...and yes, Tamako-san is 'alive' as well," Ataru declared as Rumiko came over to join them.

He then did introductions. Sympathy soon flashed in Shinobu's brown eyes as she gazed on the just-revealed gynoid. Remembering how badly Arakida Yui had reacted when she learned her friends knew the truth about her — yet gladly accepted her as their long-time friend, even if she was "reborn" and forced to be a gynoid by an evil alien monster that made the old president of Phentax Two seem like a nice person in comparison! — she came over to embrace Yŏn'i, they joined by the three freshmen who had wanted to be Shinobu's lovers since they first laid eyes on her in April when they advanced to Class 1-5 from Tomobiki Middle School. The adopted native of Taehongdan blinked before she returned their hugs, kissing them warmly on the lips. She then took a deep breath before gazing on Ataru.

"Pre-Gift me, Ataru-kun! Make me one of you!"
His eyebrow arched as the others nodded in understanding...

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*Meanwhile, back in North Korea close to Taep'yŏng train station*...

"Oh, that's awful! Are you sure you're okay, Tamako-san?"

Inoue Tamako smiled before sipping the carry-out cup of herbal tea that Saeru Hinako had teleported over from Osamu Shirayuki's stocks on Promised Island; also having been sent by the Great Chef of the West to the Living Spirit of Innocence to help feed her new friends was a beautiful picnic basket full of traditional Korean fare. As Sŏ Yŏn'ii's siblings enjoyed bowls of fresh cold mul-laengmyŏn made in the proper P'yŏng'yang style, the gynoid replica of old Class 1-4's "missing member" — the original Tamako had been kidnapped within a week of Mendō Shūtarō joining the class the previous November — Han Yŏngch'ŏl smiled as he squeezed his "prisoner's" shoulder. Everyone was relaxing on the westbound lanes of the Youth Hero Motorway, sitting on a blanket Hinako had borrowed from Shirayuki's stores back in Japan. "We're all fine, Hinako-ya. We just need time to properly process the information that was dumped into our minds when Monaka-ya used her technokinesis to free us from Mother's control and link us to the systems freed AIs can interconnect with that are controlled by the Marshal's niece."

"Is she REALLY King Tan'gun reborn, Hinako-ya?" Sŏ Chunch'ŏl asked.

"Un!" Hinako affirmed with a nod. "Everyone on Yiziba knows that story, Chunch'ŏl-san." The native of Niigata was speaking in Japanese; fortunately, all the Terran-form Shōzoki AIs with her were fluent even if they used their own native honorifics with their new friend. "Back when the Goa'uld wanted to steal the Great Crystal of Power, Tan'gun-san was a farmer here in Korea, where Moran Hill is today. He was kidnapped by some meanie-meanie pretending to be the god Hwang'un..."

"Tan'gun-sama's mythological father," Tamako cut in.

"Hai! So Tan'gun-san was moved to Yiziba where Kuorim later rose; Kuorim's like Korea here on Earth." As her audience nodded, the Spirit of Innocence added, "Well, Tan'gun-san believed back then that meanie-meanie Hwang'un was a real god and went along with being made to live on Yiziba and convincing local people of how powerful the Goa'uld actually were. The second Doctor Destructo then came out of the Great Crystal to chase the Goa'uld off Yiziba because they were being meanie-meanies. Tan'gun-san was Gifted and helped fight them off; he really beat up Hwang'un and his wife Ungnyŏ..."
"Tan'gun's mother as recorded in the Samgungnyusa," Kwŏn Chinhọn noted.

Hinako nodded. "Hai! So after they were chased away, Tan'gun-san came back to Earth and helped people here in Korea recover from what Hwang'un and Ungnyŏ did. He set up Asadal as his quiet place and collected all the Goa'uld stuff left behind. That's what started Kojosŏn in the first place."

Everyone exchanged looks. "Well, the tales were 767 years off the REAL founding date of our home country," Yŏngch'ŏl quipped. "So how did Tan'gun-wanggŏmnim's memories and power get preserved to be eventually passed down to the Marshal's niece, Hinako-ya? If he returned to Earth..."

Hinako waved him down. "Oh, don't worry, Oji-san! Tan'gun-san knew he couldn't let a GIFT SEED of all things remain on Earth. After he trained his adopted son Puru-san to become the new king of Kojosŏn, he went back to Kuorim, married a local girl and had babies. Once he died, his Gift crystal wasn't returned to the Great Crystal and would become the main thing that told people in Kuorim that their leaders were blessed with Tan'gun-san's power and his wish for the country to go on."

"So how did that wind up with Hyegyŏng-chan becoming Tan'gun?" Tamako asked...

...before the shrill sounds of ma'tok staffs echoed through the air!

"HEY!" Hinako shrieked as bolts of energy slammed into the armoured personnel carrier Tamako and her adopted family had been using to flee P'yŏng'yang. As Yŏn'iri's siblings and Tamako dove for cover and the two RGB officers snap-drew very advanced Shōzoki particle pistols, the Spirit of Innocence spun about, then she gaped on seeing a company's worth of Ministry of People's Security troops charging from the direction of the P'yŏngnam railroad line that paralleled the expressway.

They were being led by a snarling woman with glowing eyes, a kara kesh covering her right hand, a zat'nik'tel pistol in her left. "KILL THE KEK'ULD!" she shrieked in the echoing voice of a Goa'uld warlord. "KILL THE KEK'ULD AND THE FOOL MACHINES WHO DEFY THEIR GODS...!"

As Kasa-tama snapped open to project a defensive field around Hinako, several shots slammed into Yŏngch'ŏl's head and chest, causing him to shriek in mortal agony as much of his brain and his central power pump were shredded! "APPA!" Chunch'ŏl, Hana and Mina screamed in horror as they sensed their mental links to their adopted father be cut off as his body shut down from the assault, then the aspiring soccer star screamed as he lunged for Yŏngch'ŏl's dropped pistol.
"CHUNCH'ŎL-A! STAY HERE!" Tamako screamed out.

Noting what was happening, Chinhyŏn dodged over to cover her adopted son, which led to her catching FIVE shots from the attacking Jaffa; only NOW did Hinako see the etched bear's head motif born by those who directly served the "mother" of the first king of Kojosŏn as her shock troops. Snaring the pistol as Tamako moved to cover her adopted sisters' bodies with her own, Chunch'ŏl screamed as he aimed at the captain commanding Ungnyŏ's forces. "DIE, YOU UGLY SNAKES!"

The captain's head exploded, making the Goa'uld glare directly at the teen android. "HOW DARE YOU DEFY YOUR GODDESS, BOY...?!" she then howled.

"God eftermiddag!" a beautifully-accented voice then called out from above, making the Jaffa stop as they looked up just as a beautiful woman soared down from north of west. Landing on the tarmac of the eastbound lanes several metres away from the line of Jaffa, the beautiful teenager with the long greyish blue hair tied into a bun and a cute mole under the corner of her left eye — both eyes being a beautiful blue — stared at Ungnyŏ. "Oh, my! I've heard of all the wonderful tales of Korean hospitality since I was reborn and Gifted!" Her friendly smile then faded as she locked on target. "To believe the nice people here were willing to provide such a wonderful SMÖRGÅSBORD for me to enjoy!"

"SLAY THE ORAK'NOU!" the reborn "mother" of Korea's first king screamed...

...before the woman in the white jumpsuit with the blue belt and boots, the heraldic shield of the county/municipality of Gotland topped by the Royal Crown of Sweden on her chest above her cleavage, literally MOVED to snare the bellowing Ungnyŏ by the back of the neck, effortlessly ripping out her symbiote with just a single jerk of her fingers. As the host body collapsed to the tarmac, the Jaffa spun around to bring their assault weapons to bear on the reborn aviation cruiser...

...before they squealed in horror on seeing Melanie Rudburg literally BITE the symbiote in half! "JAFFA KREE! ORAK'NOU KEK!" the senior lieutenant of the squad bellowed as he triggered his ma'tok.

Energy bolts slammed into the body of the adopted native of Visby (capital of her namesake county) and Göteborg (her place of construction as HMS Gotland), making her giggle as the ticklish feeling danced over her. As Hinako took the chance to use her PAA to teleport Tamako and the others to Tomobiki High so Hatoyama Rinrin could help Yŏngch'ŏl and Chinhyŏn, Melanie then whipped out a large sealed metal barrel, allowing several shots to crack it open and unleash the horror within.
The Jaffa all gagged as a very THICK putrid miasma escaped the opened barrel of properly fermented surströmming, overwhelming them as Melanie used her lungs to blast that stench over the entire company. As Hinako plugged her nose from that hideous stench before she teleported away to join her new friends in Japan, the reborn aviation cruiser smirked as she put the barrel down, then lashed out at super-speed to rip out all the prim'ta from the poor troopers' bodies. As all of Ungnyŏ's troopers dropped to the tarmac in mortal agony, Melanie then dumped all the symbiotes into another barrel.

"Everyone in P'yŏng'yang will be hungry soon," she mused...

To Be Continued...!

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WRITER'S NOTES

Again, thanks to Dr. Tempo for writing most of the first scene.

As effectively noted in previous parts, the Ori were the effective "big bad" of the last two seasons of Stargate SG-1, plus also the direct-to-video film The Ark of Truth.

As noted in the first scene, Doctor Thomas Light was the wise scientist who created the titular character of the Megaman (AKA Rockman) video series and the anime made based on it.

The Staff of Gihan, the first haijo-ju (literally "will of the people"), first appeared in The Senior Year story "Great Father Ataru, Stage Two: Remembrance". It also played a factor in Lonely Souls and in sequels to Phoenix From the Ashes. Also note that the Age of Gisan'cha ("Age of Unbounded Technology") was the time from 26,000-13,000 years ago on Sagussa when the civilization of the Fourth Republic would fall apart and collapse into the anarchy of the War of Clone Rights.

The concept of Avalonian clones of Lum's Stormtroopers was first trialled in the TSY story "What Price For Love?" The names used for the replicas of Megane, Chibi and Kakugari were first introduced in Avalonians at Hinata-sō.
Here's an addition to the Japanese-to-Yizibajohei sound encoding rules to create words in the latter language: If someone encounters a katakana character that is supposed to make the "V" sound (i.e. ヴァ [va], ヴィ [vi], ヴ [vu], ヴェ [ve], ヴォ [vo], ヴャ [vya], ヴュ [vyu], ヴィエ [vey] and ヴョ [vyo]), the "V" will be encoded as "F". In reverse, people have the choice to encode "F" to either "B" or "V".

Some of the Danganronpa characters appearing here in this story had their given names altered to match that of their original seiyū. Of course, as a robot, K1-B0 (AKA Kibo) would get the family name of his inventor, Professor Iidabashi.

Translation list: Tene — Literally "lord", this is the standard honorific used on Yiziba for a Gifted man; Sungnyŏ — Lady; Kyŏnghŭng-gŏri — Kyŏnghŭng Street; Pulg'ŭngŏri 3-dong — Third District of Pulg'ŭngŏri (pronounced "Pulg'ŭngŏri Sam-dong"); Ōmma — Mommy; Ōnni — Elder sister; Tan'gun'ŭi Ch'angŭibyŏng-gun — Literally "Good Righteous Army of Tan'gun"; Kamsahannida — Thank you; Appa — Daddy; God eftermiddag — Good afternoon; Kommendör — Commander, the Swedish rank title for a navy captain (short-form Kmd); SM — Short for Svenska Marinen ("Swedish Navy"); Hans Majestäts Skepp — His Majesty’s Ship (short-title HMS), which is often rendered as HSwMS ("His Swedish Majesty's Ship") in English-language publications; Surströmming — Sour herring.

Han Yŏngch'ŏl and Kwŏn Chinhŏn would have appeared in the same unpublished TSY story that Sŏ Yŏn’i and Inoue Tamako would have appeared in.

The Samgungnyusa ("Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms") — which is often misspelled "Samguk Yusa" when written in English — is one of Korea's most ancient texts; its author is alluded to be the Buddhist monk Iryŏn (1206-89) by most historical scholars. A collection of legends, folktales and historical accounts relating to the Three Kingdoms age (57 BCE to 668 CE). It also contains material alluding to other periods and states before, during and after this period in Korean history. The first written record of the Tan'gun legend was published here. As an aside, the standard "foundation date" of Kojosŏn is normally set to 2333 BCE, such celebrated in both the ROK and DPRK on 3 October each year.

And the shipgirl introduced at the end:

Kommendör Melanie Rudburg SM (Hans Majestäts Skepp Gotland [pendant K8])

Of course, HMS Gotland (Melanie Rudburg) is modelled after her Kantai Collection interpretation.
Her pendant superior "K" comes from kryssare ("cruiser"); she was the eighth cruiser built for the Swedish Navy and the only flygplanskryssare ("aviation cruiser") to serve that nation.

To understand the joke concerning surströmming, go to Danbooru post #3357200 (the original four-panel being drawn by Ido) to see what I mean.
The Bullet Deniers Crash the Party!

Chapter Summary

As the battles in North Korea press on, more shipgirls who have just been restored and Gifted land at Namp'o near P'yŏng'yang and press up towards the capital city, running into the "father" of the first Sandalwood King of Korea now living as Kim Hyegyŏng. You can probably bet how hungry they are...!

And as Ataru and friends back in Tomobiki handle the interesting issue of Inoue Tamako and Sŏ Yŏn'i, more "survivors" of the Danganronpa "reality television show" join forces with Hyegyŏng to defend her uncle's home.

What will happen when the Sandalwood Empress and the Marshal of the DPRK finally meet...?

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P'yŏng'yang, the south bank of the Taedong River by the Chuch'e Tower (two kilometres southeast of the Victorious War Museum), ninety minutes after lunch...

"Comrade Marshal!"

A roar of delight and support escaped the massed troops of the Korean People's Army and the Ministry of People's Security who formed a thick defensive cordon from Chuch'esasangt'ap-kŏri west to the river's edge and from Ongnyu Bridge south to Taedong Bridge while the fireplug-shaped man in the black gakuran-like business suit stepped out of his limousine to gaze upon the devastation unleashed over a good portion of Tongshin-dong and Shilli-dong in the last hour or so. "Damn...!" Kim Chŏng'ŭn hissed as took in the scale of how much those accursed alien machines had come to wreck the capital city of his nation. "This will take YEARS to repair!" he then muttered to his wife Ri Sŏlju and his sister Kim Yŏjŏng as they waved to the brave warriors and civilian volunteers who had formed barricades to keep the Shōzoki from charging in to wreck the visual icon of the ideology that had been the driving force behind the Democratic People's Republic of Korea for decades.
"We may have to make compromises with Hyegyŏng-a, Oppa," his sister hissed as a KPA colonel smartly came over to salute him, the pride on his face shining like the Sun.

"Comrade Marshal!" the older warrior declared before he formally bowed to the marshal's companions. "Comrade First Lady! Comrade Kim! We were able to protect the Tower, but..." Here, an anguished look crossed his face as he waved to the nearly two hundred-metre tall structure.

The leader of the North looked himself at the symbol of his grandfather's central philosophy, then winced on seeing that the tower was not much more than a skeleton of its former self, the red flame metal torch that capped it looking ready to fall down on the surrounding park soon. "Damn...!"

"We're getting engineers here as quickly as possible...!"

"Wait! LOOK!"

On hearing his wife's cry, Kim's head snapped over...

...then he gaped as he watched the fragmented sections of the tower that had fallen to the ground telekinetically rise to be restored to their places. As the crowds instantly hushed on seeing such a magical thing happening, energy flowed up from the ground to loving wrap around the granite structure. Within a minute of the first shattered blocks being restored back to place, the Chuch'e Tower stood tall and intact, its flame lamp glowing bright with power. "Oh, my...!" the marshal's wife exclaimed as people looked towards him to gauge what sort of reaction should be expressed at such an event.

Fortunately, a pair of children in the uniforms of the Chosŏn Sonyŏn-dan had some ideas about that!

"Comrade Marshal! Comrade Marshal!"

Kim looked over, then smiled as the two elementary school girls ran up, both grinning with delight even if they stood properly to attention and saluted him with their hands. "What is it, young comrades?!"

"They did it, Comrade Marshal! Angie-ŏnni and Hifumi-oppa did it!" one girl screamed.
He perked. "What did they do?!"

The other girl pointed to where two people, a stocky teenage man and a dusky-skinned silver-haired woman, were close to the steps leading to the Tower itself. The sleeveless battlesuits — though the female of the pair had a hooded jacket slung around her shoulders — told Kim everything. "They teleported in from where they came into the country, then Angie-ŏnni sensed what the aliens were doing to the Tower, Comrade Marshal! She called upon someone or something she called 'Atua' to give her strength, then she said that the belief in Chuch'e itself mixed with her power to help her fix the Tower! While she did this, Hifumi-oppa made manhwa drawings and made them come to LIFE!"

The colonel perked before he turned to gaze on his commander-in-chief. "That's true, Comrade Marshal! The aliens were fooled by groups of what appeared to be civilians as first...but then they melted into what seemed like simple PAINT when they were struck by the aliens' weapons!"

Kim gaped as he took that in. "Was anyone hurt?!" Ri asked.

"No, Comrade First Lady! With those animate things taking the incoming fire from the aliens, it gave our good friends in the MPA who had the advanced weapons a chance to form proper defensive lines to counterattack and destroy them!" Here, the aged warrior waved over.

Gazing at the grim-looking MPS troopers — all of whom wore insignia indicating they came from outside the capital — the leader of the North blinked before he hummed. Elaine Sŏn'yŏng Larson — who had been joined by her fellow American-turned-South Korean shipgirls Jane Kŭnhye Rogers, Wynter Sŏn'a Rush and Adrienne Mijŏng Werner; respectfully, the newcomers had been the destroyers Chŏnju and Kang'wŏn and the frigate Taedong — had reported that there had been "friendly" Shōzoki who weren't enslaved to this "Mother" creature who clearly had built a local command nexus in the Ryugyŏng Hotel. Such beings gladly joined in on the defence of the people even at risk of exposure. Those "free" Shōzoki were obviously loyal to his niece Kim Hyegyŏng, who used gladly the Ancient and Goa'uld technology she gained as the Sandalwood Empress of the New Dawn to give such AIs their own minds back. That they were STILL all loyal to the republic of their effective "birth"...!

Thinking then of the capital city's largest structure, Kim gazed across the river towards where the pyramid-shaped hotel was located. Most of it was nothing more than skeleton even if it still resisted the massed assault of over TWO DOZEN reborn battleships circling around like hungry wolves to bring it down. Elaine told him one of the American shipgirls, the reborn super-dreadnought USS Texas, got hold of the same model of automatic revolver the Protector of All Life herself used, loaded with the ebony mesonium-tipped shells Dean Raeburn employed to devastating effect against Axis metahumans in the Second World War. So armed, Emily Austin used them to blow away the outer glass of the tower so her fleet mates and new friends could strike at what was within. It still wasn't enough.
Blinking as he mentally shook his head to turn his concentration back to the here and now, he smiled at the two youngsters who told him about the two metahumans who just repaired the Chuch'e Tower. "Here, young comrades! Introduce me, please?!" he bade.

The girls grinned as they took his hands in their own, then they walked him over to where the two travellers from another dimension's Japan were now resting, the female of the pair enjoying what looked like a bowl of mul-laengmyŏn provided by a smiling elderly woman in a proper metal bowl while her friend was busy with a large sketchpad; pencils were tucked in behind his earlobes. Gazing on the fellow with the protective goggles over his eyes, the brown hair styled with a pyramid-like tip at the top of the head and the curly sideburns framing a cat-like face, the leader of the North blinked as a sense of haunted familiarity came over him for a second. He KNEW of this fellow, yet...!

It hit him as he recalled the name of the woman who had STARTED this mess...

*Enoshima Junko...!*

Who was a character in...

"Danganronpa...?!" he exclaimed.

That made Yamada Hifumi look over before a polite smile crossed his face, then he came over to bow formally to Kim. "I assume, Gensui-sama, you're familiar with the game?" the native of another universe's Fukuoka then politely asked as he gave the older man a knowing look.

Grateful that Yizibajohei jumpsuits came with a wonderful omniversal translation system that allowed him to understand what the Picture Storyteller was saying, the leader of the North nodded. "Indeed, I just remembered it, Yamada-sŏnsaengnim," he said as he returned the polite bow the psychokinetic just gave him. "Thank you so much for repairing the Tower and saving the people that lived close by, but..." He then shook his head. "How on Earth did you come to be HERE?!"

Hearing that, Hifumi chuckled as he slipped off his goggles to allow everyone to see his dark, intelligent eyes. "Ah, THAT...!" he breathed out. "Tell me, Gensui-sama, are you aware of the Niphentaxians?"

"We've had no choice BUT to learn of them, Yamada-sŏnsaengnim," Ri wryly noted.
"Ah! No need to recap the script in that case." As the natives listening to this laughed at that odd turn of phrase, Hifumi slipped back on his goggles. "Somehow, they gained hold of a weapon — whose source power actually hails from Yiziba — which allowed the people using it to literally snare our living SOULS from our home dimension to here, most of them being saved at the moment they died in the Killing School Life, as what happened to me..." — here, he turned to gaze fondly on the still-eating Yonaga Angela — "...or the Killing School Semester as what happened to Angie-san and her peers some decades after I 'died'." Here, the half-Polynesian native of another universe's Nagoya who spent most of her life with her father's people on Tuvalu waved at the marshal, his wife and his sister. "The people who 'rescued' us, by the way, were 'fans' of the Danganronpa games," he then dryly added.

"We've heard of instances like that when it comes to the Avalonians," Kim's sister then mused as she crossed her arms. "Many of them were patterned after well-known fictional characters as much as they were patterned after famous actresses and the like at the command of those monsters. Don't tell me we have others like yourself and your friend here also running around our Earth."

"Fortunately not, Madame Kim. The people who wanted such pretty 'slaves' didn't have access to the ONLY device capable of literally saving my life and my friends' lives. Including that of Junko-san." Here, Hifumi shook his head. "Speaking for all the others of my class, Gensui-sama, I am SO sorry that we lost control of Junko-san to the point where she's unleashed this madness on your people and your nation. I'm sure there were more subtle ways of dealing with the Shōzoki and the Goa'uld."

"You need not fret, Sŏnsaeng-nim," the colonel who reported to Kim when he came to inspect the damage here then assured, making Kim and his companions look at him. "According to reports we've been receiving since this madness began, there were no fatalities among the civilian population. Even the 'loyal' aliens who chose to fight with us haven't suffered any fatalities..." He blinked. "But then again, I have to ask this," he wryly mused. "Do machines actually have 'souls'?"

"The free children of Shōzoran do."

Eyes locked on Angie as she nodded her thanks to the elderly grandmother who had got her some of the cold local noodle dish to enjoy before rising to join her fellow metahuman. The current incarnation of the Moulder of Beauty, Nilokroho ("Aisthētikós"), the silver-haired grey-eyed teenager — who could be mistaken for a ganguro in Japan given her tanned skin — was a psychokinetic like Hifumi who normally concentrated her abilities into creating artwork. The spiritual descendant of a western equatorial continent sculptor who worked hard to preserve pre-Dawn of Power buildings and other relics in that dark time didn't have the power to animate her creations as Hifumi could. However, given that Angie saw herself as an adherent of the Polynesian concept of "Atua" which her father had likened to the Shintō concept of "kami", she had gained a cosmic-level form of clairvoyance which allowed the native of another universe's Nagoya and Tuvalu to sense the ebb and flow of spiritual energies around her.
Hifumi then flustered before he moved to do introductions. As Angie gave Kim a bow, his sister gazed towards the Chuch'e Tower. "Could we ask you to help rebuild the city, Yonaga-sŏnsaengnim?"

A carefree laugh escaped her. "I won't second-guess your brother's current plans for reconstruction, Madame Kim," Angie then declared before she gazed up at her latest work. "Fortunately, Atua was able to allow me to speak to the Spirit of Chuch'e itself that the people of this long-suffering land strongly believe in, thus empowering me to see the symbol of Chuch'e restored to shine its light on this city." Her smile faded as she added in a whisper, "Even those people many in previous governments here have willingly abandoned over the years, Madame Kim. Your niece didn't forget them."

"You know where she is?" the marshal's wife asked.

"We do...but with all fairness, Madame Ri, let me warn you something," Hifumi cut in. "Hyegyŏng-san is not just the Yizibajohei equivalent of Tan'gun-sama." He smirked. "She IS Tan'gun-sama REBORN!"

Silence fell as Kim and his companions gaped in shock at the dōjinshi artist...

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Colorado Springs Air Force Station, Headquarters of United States Stargate Command, that moment (local time: Two-and-a-half hours before midnight on Sunday)...

"What's the situation in North Korea right now?"

"It's a mopping-up exercise at this time, Mister President," George Hammond stated as he indicated the hologram of North Korea showing what happened, where it went down and who was involved in suppressing it. The President and his senior staff had teleported over to Stargate Command thanks to a secret transport system that Isaac Thomas and Elizabeth Wakefield created for such occasions; using this would ensure press probing into the President's affairs wouldn't uncover the existence of the SGC. "Miss Kim was able to activate her agents in country to effectively put down the Mother-controlled Shōzoki and a considerable number of Goa'uld who infiltrated the nation. Almost all the fighting has stopped save for the area of the Ryugyŏng Hotel in P'yŏng'yang. Other locations in country have been secured with the assistance of shipgirls who deployed in-country under Captain Itō Yoiko's command, plus a number of metahumans from this Danganronpa universe Miss Kim just
told us about. No civilian casualties, but many injuries; they're being dealt with by Miss Kim's people and other forces.

Josiah Bartlet looked on the images of destruction across many parts of the "hermit kingdom" displayed on nearby wall-mounted televisions. Such were being transmitted out to worldwide media by both Asakura Kazumi as well as a friend of her first-self just reborn thanks to "fans" from Phentax Two: Koizumi Mahiru, now the current incarnation of the Unstoppable Shutterbug of Disgrace, Tor'begae ("Sensation"). "So the hotel is the nexus of Shōzoki control. What's happening, General?"

"Currently, the following shipgirls are firing upon it," the Air Force major general declared. "Captains Itō Yasuko, Mutsuko and Izumi; all three were the Yamato-class super-battleships. Captains Abigail Lewis, Kathy Hyde, Rita McNair and Annie Dodge; all four were the Iowa-class fast battleships. Captains Ana Moreno and Bernadette Rivadavia; both were the Rivadavia-class dreadnoughts from Argentina. Captains Trudl von Scharnhorst, Eva von Gneisenau, Luisa von Bismarck and Maria von Tirpitz; I believe you'll know who those four are, Mister President. Captains Charlene Boleyn and Mary Hood; Her Majesty's Ships Warspite and Hood. Captains Yamamoto Reiko, the Nishimura sisters Fujiko and Yaeko and the Kawasaki sisters Ikuko and Hoshiko; His Imperial Majesty's Ships Nagato, Fusō, Yamashiro, Ise and Hyūga respectively. Captain Emily Austin, USS Texas..."

"I doubt she could do much if more modern battleships are present, General," Yvette Stuyvesant immediately spoke up before she blushed, then she gazed apologetically to her commander-in-chief. "Apologies, Mister President..." the adopted native of Albany and Brooklyn eeped.

"That's quite alright, Captain Stuyvesant," Bartlet assured the reborn USS New York with a kind smile. "I'm sure your sister is helping out in whatever way she can."

"She's doing a lot, Mister President," Hammond stated.

"How so, General?"

"General Raeburn and Commissioner Larsden loaned Captain Austin a pair of .44 Magnum M-34 revolvers with ebony mesonium-charged warheads before she deployed to North Korea, sir," the commander of Stargate Command declared. As the people in the meeting room nodded in delight on hearing that the leader and the chief sniper of the War Hawks were helping out in their own way, the native of Texas smirked as he felt the pride in what the battleship named after HIS home state was doing. "Using her own ki reserves, Captain Austin blew away most of the outer shell of the Ryugyŏng Hotel to allow the other battleships to unleash their own firepower on the inner workings. How that place is STILL standing, we don't know; we're still trying to get reports from Captain Itō about this."
Seated to one side of the room, the Jewel Warrior of Noukiios scowled. "Knowing how over-redundant Shōzoki command and control technology is, General, it might be simpler for one of the reality warpers now in that country to rip that gaudy thing out of the soil itself and send it into your Sun," Ye-Hūchhū Chyosu-Kakchyo Hog'ŏp'-Hūchch'uchha of K'up'suo sneered out. "Given that thing is holding up against the power of the living angels born of TWENTY-SEVEN capital ships..."

"Who else is there, George?" Leo McGarry asked.


"Any idea where Sonia is, General...?" Margaret Penn wondered.

"Wait! They STILL can't knock it down?!” Jane Sevier snapped. "How the hell's that possible?"

"Neutronium-level hardening in the inner structure of that place, I'll wager."

Eyes locked on the smiling first-year high school student from metropolitan Ōsaka seated beside the two visiting Jewel Warriors, she in her uniform of the Pastor of the Ranges. "Miss Minegishi," the president declared as he stood, walking over to offer his hand to Minegishi Ruriko, who blushed on meeting the former governor of New Hampshire who was QUITE popular throughout all of Japan. "Welcome back! I'm glad you and your friends are safe and sound." He then sighed as he looked at one of the wall television screens now projecting the image of P'yŏng'yang's tallest building being fired on by flying metahumans circling like prowling wolves on it. "Could a reality warper affect that thing?"

"No," the fourth-place finisher in the Grand Prix's first round West Area contest said with a shake of her head. "If Mother was smart, that thing's so chock-full of ebony mesonium that it would take the combined powers of Raeburn-shihan, Kasuga-san AND Black-san to rip it down." She raised a finger in warning. "However, if all three show up in country, I have to warn you that whoever or whatever is in control of that place might elect to supercharge the mesonium in the building to the point where it could explode. Such a blast would make even that antimatter bomb that was in Tomobiki looked paltry in comparison." As people in the room winced on hearing that, she then winked. "However..."
"Your own leader," Klaer Redet Titaan concluded, a smirk crossing her face...

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*Back in P'yŏng'yang, at the Ryongsŏng Residence...*

"How?! How in the Supreme Leader's name did SO MANY of these aliens infiltrate our army?!

As a colonel from the People's Army let go with a full magazine of 7.62 millimetre shells from a Type 58 he seized from a wounded comrade, Senator Robert Kinsey shook his head as he crouched behind an overturned table beside his fellow Americans save Colonel Harry Maybourne. Much to the delight of their hosts, the special tactics officer from Santa Barbara had taken up a rifle to help defend his civilian superiors and others. Everyone was in the main floor reception room, which had now-shattered picture windows opening towards the south. "I can't believe these monsters infiltrated us all THIS much!" the senior senator from New Mexico snapped as the surviving members of the Committee nodded in agreement. "We'll have to lean on Hammond to get his shipgirls to clean out the NID...!"

"Which is going to make O'Neill and his friends laugh their guts out!" Doctor Brent Langham snarled, wishing to hell he had a zat'nik'tel in hand so he could to help shoot down the advancing regimental-strength group of Jaffa disguised as soldiers of the KPA now advancing on the home of the current leader of North Korea, they currently being led by a smirking general who called himself "Hwang'un". After members of the Manjok-cho Sŭmullet had revealed themselves, then moved to augment the guard, Captain Paek Tuna had explained the significance of that particular system lord's name.

"CURSE YOU, FOOLISH HOK'TAR! BOW TO YOUR GOD!"

Hearing that angry shriek from the "father" of Korea's first true king, the defending troops all whooped in delight on seeing that the small team of telepaths who directly served Kim Chŏng'un were doing good in making the Jaffa falter, keeping them in a ragged line well over a dozen metres away from the building. No matter what Hwang'un tried to do with his kara kesh to force his troopers forward, the team led by Major Kim Sarang were still able to keep the slave troopers from charging forward with their ma'tok and literally overwhelm the position, slaughtering all that was within...

"Excuse me."
Hearing that voice speak Korean with a noticeable southern Tōhoku Japanese accent, the possessed general spun around and looked to the sky...

...then he gargled on seeing the smiling teenager with the forest of dark brown dreadlocks sticking out from his well-shaped head. Said person was now FLOATING cross-legged about a metre off the ground, a sphere of energy hovering over his outstretched left hand. Said teenager was dressed in a dark brown old-style jumpsuit with gunmetal grey belt and boots, a dark brown hooded cape slung around his shoulders and what looked like a glowing crystal ball insignia over his heart. As the Jaffa spun around, many racing over to properly protect their lord, Langham quickly scrambled over from cover to put himself close to Maybourne. "You recognize him, Doc?" the latter asked.

A slow nod as the unreality of this moment continued to sink in. "Hagakure Yasuhiro," the scientist reported. "The clairvoyant of Enoshima's class. As to what he is now..."

"**BOW TO YOUR GOD, ORAK'NOU!**"

Hwang'un levelled his hand-held device on the current incarnation of the All-Seer of the Future, Yudumti ("Waarzegger"), sending out a bolt of energy right at Yasuhiro's head while many of the Jaffa around him fired their staff weapons in support of their leader. The bolts of energy crashed into an invisible shield protecting the cosmic-level clairvoyant, causing the lazy native of another universe's Fukushima to chuckle in amusement. "Did you honestly believe, lar'beke, that I would come here without having protection from your petty weapons?" Yasuhiro then teased. "Obviously, your exposure to that naquadah garbage has addled what little brains you actually have in your real body. It's no wonder the Healer of Destruction found you all so EASY to deal with five sagas ago!"

"**DO NOT SPEAK OF HER, ORAK'NOU!**" the one who pretended to be Tan'gun's "father" in this land ages ago — back in those days five millennia before, Hwang'un boosted a certain farmer socially into becoming one of the "god's" primary servants before moving him to the World of the Forge — howled as the attacking Jaffa poured it on with their own weapons to break that shield and put this arrogant metahuman down. **"NO ONE IS MORE SUPERIOR THAN WE! ALL WILL BOW TO US...!"**

"Freaking Enoshima!" a snarling woman's voice echoed from nearby, making some of the Jaffa to pause and look to their east just as the sound of large running creatures assaulted people's ears. "What the HELL was she trying to do?! Causing the Goa'uld and the Shōzoki in this place to go crazy...?"

Hwang'un turned...
...then he screamed in outrage as a battalion-sized storm of mechanical SPIDERS the size of cars surged from a nearby forest to swarm the Jaffa. Many slave soldiers howled in anger as they fired their weapons at the mass of attacking machines, causing many to explode even if a good number of Jaffa were felled by the spiders' lance-tipped limbs in turn. By then, the person who had stumbled onto a hidden Shōzoki storage site closer to downtown appeared, hovering on a circular-shaped levitation pad she forged herself after coming to this Earth from her "fans'" home planet. "Oi! Sempai!" Iruma Miu barked out as she pointed at several Jaffa, mentally commanding the spiders leap to the attack. "What in the Forge's name is Enoshima's major malfunction?!!" As the targeted warriors were lanced by the machines, she added, "What's she trying to do?! Make a version of the TRAGEDY here?!!"

"Maybe she did, Miu-san!" a new voice cut it, this one from a teenage man with a western Kantō dialect indicating he was from Tōkyō. "Getting involved in something like THAT would be AWESOME!"

As a handsome teenage man in an older-style grey sleeved jumpsuit complete with black hooded cape landed close to where the current incarnation of the Mad Inventor of the West, Bukenyuoti ("Izobretátel'nitsa"), landed, Yasuhiro shrugged as he waved to the locals and their guests from America. "Sorry about that, folks!" the cosmic clairvoyant declared before he indicated both Miu and Ōma Kokichi. "Bit of a flashback scene replay from the Dawn of Power!"

On seeing the current incarnation of the Slayer of Sameness, Hwang'un snarled.

THIS one, he knew of!

"Ruotom...!"

"Ah!" the man who now called himself Anarchy smirked as he focused his telepathy — he was the second-most powerful psionic on Yiziba behind the Mistress of the Mind-Dive herself — on all of the system lord's troops. "You remember my battle line, don't you, lar'beke!" As the Jaffa froze while their conscious minds were literally shut down by the self-proclaimed "leader" of an "evil secret society" reported to have ten thousand members — such making the slave soldiers drop to the ground, which made Hwang'un gargle in horror — the reborn rebel leader from Yiziba's equivalent of Nazi Germany cackled. "I can't help but be impressed! Believe me, Hwang'un, I DO remember you!"

"BOW TO ME!" the system lord screamed as he levelled his kara kesh.

A bolt of energy lashed out, crashing against a defensive field generated by a shield belt the Slayer of
Sameness obtained from his most gracious host within Asadal. As the defending troops within Ryongsŏng levelled their weapons and sent streams of lead at the Goa'uld — such being easily deflected by his own defensive shield — Kokichi laughed, his amethyst eyes glowing with anticipation. "Oh, I so do LOVE the smell of CHAOS unleashed on such umale like you in the morning!"

"Coming from you, Ōma, that's a lame lie!" Miu sneered as she glared at him.

"Really?!!" her "classmate" from the Killing School Semester wondered as he stopped to gaze at her. As many of the Jaffa moaned while they tried to recover from the reborn rebel leader's powers, Kokichi held up a finger. "Don't you find it AMUSING, Miu-chan?! The BAD GUYS — the BIG BADS! — going INSANE and FIGHTING EACH OTHER while the woman who's trying to lift this poor land out of a dictatorship is LAUGHING her butt off at such a thing!" He glared once more at the Goa'uld leader. "Didn't you think it out, Hwang'un? Didn't you SEE that your reborn 'son' created the perfect TRAP for you and the mindless titemam to exploit while she saved the descendants of HER kingdom...!"

"THIS IS MY LAND, RUOTOM!" Hwang'un screamed as some of the recovered Jaffa grasped their weapons, ready to fight anew against the attacking metahumans.

A crackle of electricity then echoed through the air...

...before a titanic lighting bolt crashed down to nearly overwhelm the Goa'uld's defensive shield; such DID burn down dozens of Jaffa into smouldering skeletons. As the system lord shrieked in outrage at such impertinence, a slender caped figure floated down from the sky to land before two of her unexpected guests within her private citadel contained inside Moran Hill.

"Correction, 'Father'..."

Hwang'un snarled as he found himself glaring at a smirking Kim Hyegyŏng.

"This PLANET belongs to the Tau'ri!" the Sandalwood Empress hissed...

...before she telekinetically snared the system lord by the defensive bubble that kept him safe from local attack, then she FLUNG him in the general direction of the remnants of the Ryugyŏng Hotel!
"KILL THE ORAK'NOU!" one Jaffa in a colonel's uniform howled as more of his "command" recovered, getting back to their feet and seizing their ma'tok. "AVENGE OUR LORD!"

As bellows escaped the soldiers while they fired their weapons, a storm of other metahumans who had been students at the Ultimate Academy in another universe a day before dived in to join the fun...

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**Tomobiki High School, that moment...**

Hatoyama Rinrin sighed as she moved to draw the blanket over the shattered body of Han Yŏngch'ŏl. Rising, the Technological Sorceress of the East then walked over to warmly embrace the young gynoid twins that her sister had brought to Japan from just outside P'yŏng'yang. "I'm so sorry...!"

Hearing that statement, both Sŏ Hana and Sŏ Mina broke down and wept as they tightly grasped the Ōsaka native, acting no different than normal children would when they found out Daddy and Mommy was never coming home again. Gazing at them from nearby, then glancing over to see Sŏ Chunch'ŏl sobbing into Moroboshi Ataru's chest while the eldest of the Sŏ children wept into the shoulder of the gynoid replica of the young woman she had been made to replace in Japan at the orders of Kim Chŏng'ŭn's father, Fujita Hiroshi shook his head as his friends from the Yonaga remained respectfully quiet. Machines or not, those two officers from the northern half of the Land of the Morning Calm had died like samurai, defending their adopted family and their nation against the alien monsters that had infiltrated their homeland. Hopefully, when the madness now rocking P'yŏng'yang finally settled down, the young dictator of that land would see the two RGB officers properly honoured for their humanity.

"They have joined the great yangban who had served the people of your homeland throughout the ages from the time of the Three Kingdoms, little ones," a grave voice then declared as footfalls heralded the approach of the seventh carrier of Operation Z. "I'm sure the great Ch'ungmu-gong himself welcomed them both to join the great heroes and scholars of your land in Hanŭl with open arms."

Hearing that gentle praise from his transformed flagship, Fujita nodded in delight as his subordinates — save three who had agreed to what Tenhiro Haruka said concerning what these human-form Shōzoki really were at the start — relaxed themselves. Hearing those kind words from Itō Yoiko, Hana pulled away from Rinrin to walk up to the reborn fifth of the Yamato-class. As Yoiko leaned down to boost the gynoid elementary school student into her arms, the would-be newspaper reporter hugged her. "Kamsahamnida, Sŏngha-nim," she whispered before kissing the carrier on the nose.
As Yoiko blushed on being effectively called "your holiness" by the young girl — even if her being the spiritual mortal avatar of Earth's oldest living being could merit such a high title of respect — footfalls echoed from the doorway. "Oi! Yoi-han! Look here!" a voice called out.

People looked, then girls attending Tomobiki High screamed, "KA/WAII!" on see Matsunaga Ryōko walk in, carrying her adopted son and daughter in her arms. Before the reborn light aircraft carrier-turned-magical priestess could ask who was the kid in the arms of her once-hidden fleet mate, she found herself swarmed by gasping girls as they moved to fawn over the fully-repaired Stian Haugen and his relieved sister Tove. Of course, even if they were AIs, the two Norwegian children were STILL children deep in their hearts; they just soaked up the attention such pretty "big sisters" were showering on them.

Footfalls then heralded the arrival of all four of the Chihaya sisters, each of them carrying some cargo. "Anne-chan, why aren't you and the others going to P'yŏng'yang to join your fleet mates?!" Moroboshi Kyōsuke demanded as he watched them move to set up a beautiful tea service on a nearby table.

Chihaya Anne pouted. "We were prepared to go help Reiko-san and the others, but given how stubborn that tower is being to her and the other battleships, she advised us to stay close to Tōkyō, Kyōsuke-san. That's why Sonia-san is busy with the destroyers keeping an eye on other places in the country," the British-built battlecruiser-turned-fast battleship confessed as her sisters moved to start serving people from the vat of black tea Ōnishi Koharu prepared for people in Tomobiki. "Supposedly, that nice lady from Beppu who made the soil of northern Korea grow all sorts of fruits and vegetables said that there was a 'special' solution coming in soon to deal with those silly people in that tower."

Yoiko nodded. "Hai, Naoko-san told me the same thing, Anne-san," she said as she carried Hana over to join the Haugen siblings, Mina breaking off from Rinrin to join her sister. Noting that, the carrier swept the would-be artist into her arm to carry her over, which made all the girls fawning over Stian and Tove look over before they made way for the seventh carrier to approach.

The Haugen siblings smiled as the adopted native of Maizuru lowered her charges into available chairs. "God ettermiddag, søstre," Stian said with a toothy smile. "Er du programmert til å snakke norsk?"

Hana and Mina shook their heads. "Chosŏnmal-lül hal su it'torok p'ūrogūraemyŏng-doio iss'sŭmnikka?" the former asked as both girls allowed their dark brown eyes to glow a very bright evergreen shade.
"La oss programmere hverandre!" Tove proposed as her and her brother's eyes glowed the same shade.

"Ne, sŏro p'ŭrogŏraem-hagess'sŭmnida," Mina then declared.

The children then moved to pair up — Hana to Stian, Mina to Tove — as they gazed into the other child's eyes. People fell silent as they went still, the only movement in their body being the breathing they did to keep their internal systems cool. Some of the people pulled away to give them some privacy, then they came over to where Inoue Tamako and Sŏ Yŏn'i were standing close to Ataru, who was still comforting a sobbing Chunch'ŏl. "What are they doing, Tamako-chan?" Marubeya Momoe whispered.

"They're cross-programming each other."

Eyes locked on a grinning Arakida Yui, who had remained silent while her peers had gone to ask Tamako what was happening. "Is that normal among your people, Yui-chan?" Miyake Shinobu asked.

"Hai," the once-enslaved gynoid answered with a nod as she looked over her shoulder at what was happening. "Given how diverse Terran culture is, it doesn't make sense to overload our processors with so much information, especially if one of us is built to act as a young kid." She then winked at the Princess of the Fires of Life. "Unlike our Yizibajohei friends, Shinobu-chan, we don't have a handy omniversal translation system built into our bodies or clothes to help communicate with each other."

"A smart thing to do in the end," Okano Yuka noted. The former Ekō Girl's High students had remained in the school as they watched events in North Korea play out, filling their peers in when they streamed in to the building to find out what was going on. "Super-smart kids would draw all sorts of attention from their peers and others. Mihama Chiyo-chan was safe since her dad was pretty rich and she was such an isolated case. But if kids like Hana-chan and Mina-chan start acting like brainiacs..."

Grim nods all around. Footfalls then echoed from nearby, making people turn as the brainiac of the reborn Kongō-class fast battleships approached. "Forgive me, Teitoku, but when would you feel it's the right time for Ryōko-san's children and Yŏn'i-san's younger siblings be given the pre-Gifting snacks your sister prepared for them at Welcome House?" Chihaya Isabel then asked.

Ataru hummed. "Cross-programming like that is intensive for kids that physical 'age'. After they're done, they'll just want to rest for a bit. Hold off on it until they say they're ready for it, Isabel-san."
"Hai!" the adopted native of her namesake city and Nagasaki affirmed with a nod before she squeezed Chunch'ŏl's shoulder. "It's alright, Chunch'ŏl-a," she soothed. "Your parents are in a better place now."

The would-be soccer star shuddered before he turned to look...

...then he nearly had cascade failure on seeing such a PERFECT woman standing there. All the empath in the room were quick to sense the android's inner heart lurch HARD as he took in Isabel's well-sculptured face, wise grey eyes and the well-styled bob-cut dark brown hair. Also noting that were Chunch'ŏl's older sister and effective adopted older sister. "Hey, Isabel-san," Yŏn'i then asked, making the reborn fast battleship look over. "Tamako-chan and I have to talk to Ataru-kun for a bit about our own Giftings. Could you spend some time with my brother, please? He's only had Colonel Han and Major Kwŏn available as pillow scene partners since he was first activated." As Isabel's own cheeks reddened on hearing such an intimate topic spoken of in public, the adopted native of Taehongdan winked. "I'm MORE than sure my little brother will be a PERFECT gentleman with you."

Instantly, Isabel's sisters appeared around her, giving the third of their class piercing looks. "Isabel! You WILL allow Chunch'ŏl to properly express his BURNING LOVE, won't you?!!" Anne scolded.

People fell on their faces after hearing THAT!

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**Back in North Korea on the Youth Hero Motorway...**

"**HOLY SHIT! THAT REEK TO HEAVEN!**" Rebecca Robinson screamed.

"**BLOODY HELL! WHAT DIED HERE?!**" Suzanne Bell groaned as she plugged her nose.

Julia de Houtman looked ready to vomit. "**LIEVE GOD! DID SOMEONE SHOOT OPEN A SEWER?!**"
"Smells more like a septic tank got ripped open, mate!" a pale Louisa Farncomb mused as she waved the air away from her face in vain to get rid of that putrid stench.

"That's surströmming."

Silence.

More silence.

Still more silence.

Then...

The eyes of the two dozen or so shipgirls who had been flying towards P’yŏng’yang from the country’s main west coast port blinked before they stared at the smirking transformed merchant vessel-turned-auxiliary cruiser who acquired shape-shifting powers when her wreck was salvaged and transformed off the coast of Western Australia a day before. "What the bloody hell is THAT, Kormoran?!!" a teenage woman with silver hair combed in bangs over her left eye demanded as she pointed at the transformed vessel that sunk her with all hands...save for those saved by a heavily modified, modernized, magically-masked Indefatigable-class battlecruiser that had been manned by the Royal Australian Naval Magical Service during the Wars of Liberation that paralleled the Second World War.

An amused chuckle escaped Teresia Detmers as she turned to sniff around, her normal local clothing morphing to the black form-fitting skintight jumpsuit that had been given to the reborn KMS Kormoran when she was reborn. "Surströmming, Sydney," the adopted native of Witten and Kiel explained as she moved to head back towards Namp’o along the westbound lanes of the motorway. "Baltic herring that's lightly salted and specially fermented in brine for six months. A process not so different than what our wonderful hosts do with that delightful kimch’i of theirs." As some of the shipgirls winced on being reminded of the local fermented cabbage dish — after they cleared out the city of Namp’o of Goa’uld and Shōzoki, the "Namp’o Force" under the overall command of the reborn first of America's aircraft carriers had been overwhelmed with many food gifts from the locals for their actions, ALWAYS including home-made kimch’i — the chestnut-eyed auxiliary cruiser with the silver hair in a high ponytail smirked. "Very popular up in the Scandinavian nations. I think we've got one up here..."

"The Lönnrot twins, Teresia?" Samantha Langley wondered as she shouldered the breech-loading alien musket that had fallen into the hands of the coiler-turned-aircraft carrier when she was reborn a week before just off the southern coast of Java where she had been scuttled in 1942 to prevent her
capture by the Japanese. As to what the weapon that fired deadly particle photon "bullets" was actually called, the adopted native of Roxbury in Massachusetts and Vallejo in California had no idea. She DID like the firepower it gave her; a SINGLE bolt from this thing had wrecked TWO DOZEN Shōzoki war bots!

"Nein, Frau Professor Doktor Langley," one of Teresia's fleet mates who had circled around Africa and Eurasia to eventually meet up with her and the reborn Leander-class cruiser HMAS Sydney — now Emily Burnett — affirmed. "The Kapitäne Lönnrot were being kept behind in Finland to shore up the defences there just in case the lar'beke or the Shōzoki in country decided to be foolish." Here, the reborn KMS Z2 Georg Thiele hummed. "I think I overheard someone from Sweden coming out...!"

"GISELA!"

Gisela Thiele yelped on hearing that shriek, then she turned...

...before the amethyst-eyed teenager with the silver hair tied off in a ponytail over the right ear was literally knocked into the tarmac by a flying blue-and-blond blur, sending both the adopted native Poznań in western Poland and Kiel and her elder sister tumbling down the roadway a bit. As the others who had formed around Samantha winced from seeing that impact, the whistle of another person flying through the air towards the small task force made people look up and south...

"Liese!" Melanie Schultz snapped as she dropped down from where she had been doing picket duty south of P'yŏng'yang with her sister. "Ja, it's good to have Gisela back, but don't do THAT to her!"

"Um...excuse me..."

The adopted native of Nowe Brynki on the Oder tensed before she looked over...

...then on seeing the ship's crest over Samantha Langley's heart, she snapped to attention and saluted. "Frau Kapitän Professor Doktor Langley!" she hailed the first of America's carriers, making the former collier blush madly at such a wordy form of address. "Fregattenkapitän Melanie Schultz, der Zerstörer Max Schultz, zu Ihren Diensten!" She then bowed her head. "My apologies for my elder sister's undisciplined exuberance. She is just very happy to see our sister alive and well."

Thanking heaven that her new uniform came with some sort of translation capability so she could understand all the newcomer had said, the blonde, brown-eyed native of Roxbury smiled as she
returned that bow. "No need to call me 'professor' or 'doctor' for that matter, Commander," she then scolded as she glanced over to see Lieselotte Maaß nearly squeeze the air out of her sister's body. "We do have some more of your fleet mates with this task force; they're still in Namp'o..."

"YEAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAARGH...!"

Everyone looked up and back towards the capital city...

...before they watched someone in military uniform soar overhead to crash on the motorway before bouncing several times against what would have been eastbound traffic back towards a nearby train station. "Ouch!" Rebecca, the reborn first of the Lexington-class fleet carriers, hissed as she visibly winced at that sight of whoever that was bouncing like a tennis ball. "Hope that guy's alright..."

"That was a lar'beke!"

Heads snapped over to Teresia, whose nose was twitching in excitement. Silence fell for a moment before the reborn third of the Yorktown-class carriers, Francine Knox, whooped as she produced a Swiss army knife that had been one of her crew's property which had appeared in the pouch of her uniform belt when she had been raised and Gifted from the bottom of the Pacific near the Santa Cruz Islands. "LUNCHTIME!" the adopted native of Newport News whooped before she raced off.

"HORNET! GET BACK HERE!" the reborn ninth USS Wasp — sunk thanks to being torpedoed by a submarine in the area between the Solomons and the New Hebrides a little over a month before Hornet had been sunk at Santa Cruz in 1942 — shrieked. "DON'T HOG THE DAMNED FOOD!"

As Carol Hawkings raced after her half-sister, Samantha shook her head. "Children...!" she moaned...

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Near Taep’yŏng train station, minutes earlier...

"Oh, oishii da! Itadakimasu!"
Grinning like maniacs, the four teenage girls in the skintight dark blue uniforms bearing their old hull number codes in white on their upper thighs bit into the freshly-extracted prim'ta Melanie Rudburg just pulled from the bodies of the company-sized contingent of dead Jaffa lying on the roadway nearby. They had sat on the abandoned blanket that the Spirit of Innocence left behind when she rushed the Sō siblings, their adopted sister and their fatally damaged adopted parents to Japan. Of course, Sweden’s only aircraft cruiser had been happy to provide utensils out of her cargo pouch — prepared by a Gifted polymath from Stockholm who assisted in the rebirth of the spirit of HMS Gotland a month before — for the three reborn Japanese submarines and the one German-turned-Japanese U-boat who encountered her a few minutes before to enjoy the meal of fermented sour Baltic herring and Goa'uld symbiotes.

"That smell's not bad," Narahara Shōko, the adopted native of Kōbe who was I-19 — she called herself "Iku" thanks to the goroawase reading of her hull number — noted before she bit into a surströmming.

"Reminds me of well-fermented kusaya, Onē-chan," her sister Yokota Minako — also known as "Nimu" from her hull number I-26 — hummed before she nibbled on a prim'ta. "I wonder what these would taste like after they were fermented. Maybe with some kimch'i as well...?"

"That ought to be an interesting taste," Hashimoto Momoko — who called herself "Gōya", she had been I-58 — mused before she reached into a belt pouch to pull out a bowl full of the fermented cabbage.

Shōko and Minako squealed at what the reborn Type B Mod 2 fleet submarine that had sunk the USS Indianapolis far too late to stop the atomic bombing of Hiroshima just brought in, then they snared some of the kimch'i with their chopsticks. Of course, their German-built fleet mate made use of a fork, though she certainly didn't mind trying the fermented dish out. "Ach! Das ist scharf!" Yū Steinhoff hissed in her native language before waving her hand in front of her face to cool her tongue.

"It's an acquired taste, Fröken Örlogskapten Steinhoff," Melanie noted, addressing the blonde adopted native of Hamburg (where she was built as KMS U-511), Küllstedt (home of her first captain and effective "father", Friedrich Steinhoff) and Kagawa (home of her first Japanese commander as THG RO-500, Kiyoshi Taoka) with her service's equivalent title to lieutenant commander. She then bit into the rest of the symbiote she extracted from the dead "mother" of the Sandalwood Empress...

...before a scream echoed from the northeast, making the four shipgirls turn...
"CURSE YOU,
TAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAN'GUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUN...!"

KK-KRUNCH! KK-KLONK! KK-BING! KK-KLOMP...!

Melanie's, Shōko's, Mimoko's, Momoko's and Yū's heads bobbed as they watched someone in what appeared to be the uniform of a general crash onto the motorway a hundred metres from them, then bounced up and down several more times before coming to a stop in the middle of the mess the Swedish cruiser had left behind of over a hundred dead Jaffa and their Goa'uld leader! "Itte...!" the three Japanese subgirls hissed as their German-born fleet mate winced.

"LUNCHTIME!"

Heads snapped over to see a madly-grinning green-eyed twenty-something with long blonde hair done in twintails flying right at the fallen Hwang'un. Before the false "father" of the founding king of Korea could register what was happening, Francine Knox cackled as she snared him by the back of the neck and physically ripped out his symbiote from the host body, letting the latter drop to the tarmac as she took a seat in a clear spot before gobbling the writhing alien serpent in four bites! By then, her half-sister had raced up to land close to her. "Hornet! That's no fair!" Carol Hawkings sobbed.

"First dibs, Wasp!" Francine leered as she swallowed the rest of Hwang'un's body before burping.

Hearing that name, the azure-haired Shōko paled considerably as she noted the hull classification number 7 on the thighs of the adopted native of Quincy, who looked ready to break down and weep at not getting a snack. As the urge to flee filled the curvy subgirl's brain, Melanie sighed as she reached for the bucket of extracted prim'ta she had with her, then walked over to join the two American aircraft carriers. "I have more snacks for you, Fröken Kommendör," the aviation cruiser called out.

Carol looked over, then gaped on seeing the amount of dead prim'ta the Swedish shipgirl had with her. "Please!" the transformed carrier with the long shaggy blonde hair and the evergreen eyes pleaded.

Melanie chuckled as she waved the American over to join them, which made Shōko totally freeze in horror as the reborn carrier that her crew had sunk back in 1942 approached. As she got closer, the half-sister to the famous Yorktown-class of fleet carriers that had shouldered the early naval air war for America in the 1940s blinked as her eyes fixed on the hull number 19 in white on the blue-
haired subgirl's thighs. She then stopped before her green eyes went wide with recognition, which made Shōko turn slate-grey in mortal terror as she wondered what this reborn carrier would do with her...

"By the way, nice shooting," Carol then declared before nibbling on the prim'ta she had been given.

Shōko fell flat on her face!

****

Back in P’yŏng’yang, that moment...

"Your 'god'...is DEAD! Surrender NOW!"

Hearing that booming voice from the Sandalwood Empress of the New Dawn, the Jaffa disguised as a KPA colonel who had accompanied Hwang'un to the Ryongsŏng Residence shuddered before he levelled his ma'tok at her, keying the safety. "DIE, ORAK'NOU...!"

KK-KRUNCH!

He was instantly turned into paste thanks to a handsome teenager crashing down on his head at near-supersonic speed. As people ducked away from the blood and gore that had exploded from the slave warrior's body thanks to the current incarnation of the Cosmic Explorer, Kaetomem ("Jijikomomo"), the other former members of the Ultimate Academy from the Class of 2077 who came to Ryongsŏng to deal with the last major element of Goa'uld and their slaves in country dove in to finish off what was left.

"Nice one, Kaito-kun!" a cackling Iruma Miu called out as she mentally commanded the last few mechanical spider-like war bots she had seized from a Shōzoki storage spot downtown at a platoon's worth of the slave warriors, the snarling machines chattering in anticipation.

"Arigatō, Miu-chan!" Momota Kaito called back as he flew over to skid his dark grey boots through the swimming pool to clean off the blood and gore, then he flew back in to start punching down the still-resisting troopers. "Wanna go on a date?!!" he then asked.
"Maybe!" the native of another universe's Saitama said as she telekinetically directed some flying weapons globes — baseball-sized devices similar to the targeting remote that Obi-wan Kenobi had used to start Luke Skywalker on lightsabre training aboard the *Millennium Falcon* in *Star Wars: A New Hope* — towards several Jaffa who were trying to flank around the defending Yizibajoheī to get at the people inside the residence. "Oi, Hyegyŏng-ā! Is it true?!" she barked out.

"What's true, Miu-ya?!" Kim Hyegyŏng wondered as she telekinetically ripped apart one large Jaffa with her mind, sending the prim'ta that had been inside the hulking fellow's body flying into a nearby bucket that had been provided by Adrienne Mijŏng Werner so the symbiotes could be fed to the large force of shipgirls who had come to aid the people of North Korea this epic day.

"That *Madame Fabulous* is back?!"

"Ne, she is!"

"Who's Madame Fabulous, Miss Iruma?" Colonel Harry Maybourne wondered from his position at the still-shattered reception room window where he and the small KPA force that had defended the home of the leader of the country from the alien invaders. He then turned and drilled one Jaffa warrior's head with the augmented particle rifle that Miu had provided him. "A rival?!"

"Very much so, Harry-san!" the Mad Inventor of the West called back before she used her technokinetic powers to transform two war bots into molten metal before sending them after one heavily-armed Jaffa.

Now floating outside and above the window — thus allowing Maybourne and his new friends from the KPA to support the battle — Hagakure Yasuhiro chuckled. "Their first-selves were rivals in Yiziba's version of Nazi Germany, Colonel," the All-Seer of the Future explained. "Madame Fabulous led the project that created that nation's version of the..." — here, he paused as he recalled what he had been told back on Phentax Two about this Earth's recent history — "...'Übermenschen Gruppe', I think they were called?!" He pointed towards downtown, where a small fleet of battleship shipgirls were STILL trying to bring down the Ryugyŏng Hotel. "They later became the first generation of a lot of the core members of the Unending League of Super-Soldiers. Did your friends in SG-1 tell you about that?"

That made the special tactics officer from Santa Barbara blink before he turned to gape wide-eyed at the clairvoyant. "Wait! You mean to say that Jack's missions are FICTION in your universe?!"

"Television show called *Stargate SG-1*," Yasuhiro affirmed.
"Oi! Oi! Don't spoil it for the guy, Sempai!" Ōma Kokichi urged.

"Never watched much of it anyway, Kokichi!"

As Maybourne shook his head at the sheer unreality of this situation, Hyegyŏng smirked as she created a defensive field to prevent a fire team of Jaffa from shooting Miu down. "Let's try this, Miu-ya!" the reborn first king of Korea then bade. "You want to know who she is?"

"Who?!" Miu demanded.

"Futami Eriko!"

"Wait!" came an effeminiate voice from nearby. "You mean from KimiKiss?!!"

Eyes locked on Fujisaki Chihiro off to his peer's right. The current incarnation of the Games Master, Tuyotyato ("Vzlómschik"), had been trying to employ his own considerable technokinetic powers to shut down the ma'tok staffs and force the Jaffa to finally surrender. "What's that, Chihiro-ya?" Hyegyŏng wondered before she whipped out a large battleaxe-like weapon from under her cape to rip off the heads of two of her "father's" slave warriors that had been trying to rush her.

"That's some dating simulation game that came out way, way back in 2006! Right, Sempai?!!" Kokichi wondered as he used his telepathy to make two Jaffa shoot each other.

"Hai!"

Seeing what the Slayer of Sameness had done to the latest enemy dead, Miu groaned. "You're just plain LOVING this! Aren't you, Ōma?!" she then asked her peer from the Killing School Semester before she made one spider explode, cutting down a few more Jaffa.

"Hey! Watching the bad guys go nuts and kill each other is funny, Miu-chan!" the would-be leader of an effectively non-existent "evil secret society" said. "What do you think, Tenko-chan?!"
The green-eyed aikidō-ka with the long black hair in stringy twin tails moving to expertly disarm several of the slave warriors without need of weapons chuckled. Having seen her avoid being shot at several times, Maybourne was reminded of something Jack O'Neill told him once concerning how urban warfare fighters on Yiziba were high-end empaths who could "sense" attacks coming at them. "Their loyalty to their 'god' is impressive...but misplaced!" Chabashira Tenko noted.

"DO NOT INSULT OUR LOYALTY, ORAK'NOU!" one lieutenant screamed as he drew a zat'nik'tel and shot her way, hoping to kill the slippery creature.

The current incarnation of the Mistress of Soft Styles, Duotiduo ("Tàijítú"), easily ducked those shots by nearly folding herself backwards at the knees. As the colonel in charge of the defence of Ryongsŏng blew off the fool's head with his own rifle, Tenko easily danced to her feet, then caught another Jaffa warrior's staff weapon before she disarmed it and tossed it aside.

"Regardless of what you'd think about Enoshima-sempai, she DID make the heels obvious in this fight scene! Eh, Tenko-san?!", a woman with grey eyes behind safety goggles and long aquamarine hair that seemed to writhe like the tentacles of an octopus noted as she snared several ma'tok with both her hands and hair, tossing them away before using her hair to rip out the slave warriors' symbiotes.

"Agreed, Tsumugi-san. Sempai was quite nice about that."

"You call what just happened NICE?!",

That was a very flabbergasted Senator Robert Kinsey, who had come forward with the other members of the Committee to gaze upon the slowly-dying battle. "Of course!" Shirogane Tsumugi stated as she nimbly leapt into the air, landing before the senior senator from New Mexico before her whole body blurred, becoming a perfect facsimile of Josiah Bartlet, complete with the president's academic voice. "Senator Kinsey, what could have happened if Miss Enoshima had NOT done what she did?!", the transformed current incarnation of the Woman of Endless Faces, Tatobimmem ("Pantomime"), then scolded. "Millions could have been KILLED or ENSLAVED! Regardless of what issues we have with the North Koreans, we will NOT stand by and let such a tragedy happen!"

Roaring laughter and clapping hands echoed from behind Kinsey, making people turn before the locals there whooped on seeing their leader approach, accompanied by his sister and wife as well as Yonaga Angie. "Comrade Marshal!" the colonel screamed out in delight.

"WŎNSU-NIM MANSE!" the other soldiers howled.
"CARRY ON, COMRADES! SAVE THE NATION!" Kim Chŏng'un barked back before he nodded at Tsumugi as she shifted back to normal while Kinsey staggered before falling down on his butt. "A very accurate performance, madame! Is she one of your classmates, Yonaga-sŏnsaengnim?"

"Yes, Marshal, she is," the native of another universe's Nagoya and Tuvalu declared as she escorted Kim over to the window before doing introductions.

As Tsumugi exchanged bows with the leader of North Korea, Miu looked over. "Oi! Angie-chan! Where the hell have you been?" the Mad Inventor of the West demanded.

"Doing Atua's sacred work! What ELSE would I be doing, Miu?!" the Moulder of Beauty answered before she mentally reached out towards the alien troopers.

The few standing Jaffa screamed as their weapons literally transformed in their hands thanks to the psychokineti, which forced them to let go of the writhing bits of metal and naquadah, leaving them open for Angie's peers and Hyegyŏng to gang up on them, ripping out their prim'ta to finally kill them off and put a stop to this part of the Battle of P'yŏng'yang. As people inside the residence gaped, the half-Polynesian artist ejected naquadah cells, sending them to where Miu was so the Mad Inventor of the West could safely store them somewhere, then she moved to finish her sculpture.

Within a moment, the alien metal had been changed into a perfect replica of the Worker's Party monument that stood at the foot of the Chuch'e Tower. All the local soldiers howled in delight at their metahuman visitor's show of respect to them as Kim, his wife and his sister applauded.

By then, it was finally over; one last sergeant dropped dead thanks to Miu's last surviving war bot yanking out his prim'ta. As the reborn TMK Taedong ran over to collect the writhing symbiotes to snap their necks and load them into the bucket her hosts had provided to be passed on to the other shipgirls in country so they could be fed, Kim nodded in delight. "Save for the Ryugyŏng Hotel, we've won against these monsters!" he declared for the benefit of his subordinates, who cheered him. "Let us pray the noble ship spirits from other lands who came to our aide in our time of need now firing on the alien machines who turned the Ryugyŏng Hotel into their pit of depravity will finally destroy them!"

"HAEGUN CH’ŎNYŎ MANSE!" the colonel in charge of Ryongsŏng's defences howled.

All the other soldiers raised their weapons. "HAEGUN CH’ŎNYŎ MANSE!"
Whoops and cheers echoed over the scene before a voice then called out from behind Kim, "Excuse me, Gensui-sama! If you can move back from the window, please...?!

Kim looked, then he gaped as the pools of blood on the floor left behind by the slain Americans who had been possessed by Goa'uld vanished thanks to the determined-looking grey-eyed woman with the long grey hair standing there, she holding what looked like a high-tech BROOM in one gauntlet-covered hand. As Angie smiled while she pulled the marshal and his relatives back — which made Maybourne and the others also pull away from the shattered window — Tōjō Kirumi gestured with her hand, allowing the shattered glass to reform and solidify again, looking totally brand new! "Er...! Um...! Kamsahamnida...!" the marshal's wife Ri Sŏlju stammered out as she turned to stare wide-eyed at the Supreme Housemaid, *Myuko'o* ("Skivvy"), while the younger woman did her work.

As the reborn chief maid of a northern polar continent investor hurried by to get rid of the last of the blood and other debris, a flash of energy allowed the All-Seer of the Future to appear, he floating down to relax on the table. "You have to excuse Kirumi-san, Gensui-san," Yasuhiro declared as he snapped open his own gunsen, his free hand reaching out to grasp his host's. "She was busy cleaning the Ultimate Academy even as she was trying to avoid being killed...!"

"**SEMPAI! OFF THAT TABLE!**"

The native of another universe's Fukushima awked before he somersaulted onto the floor before Kirumi's broom took off his head. Seeing that, Kim laughed. "Let's move somewhere while our friend helps with the clean up of the residence, comrades. Comrade Colonel, make sure Hagakure-sŏnsaengnim's friends from outside as well as our southern brothers' shipgirls are invited in."

"At once, Comrade Marshal!"

As the colonel jogged outside to get the visitors from another dimension to come inside, Maybourne handed the weapon he was using to Major Kim Sarang, ignoring the shocked looks from Doctor Brent Langham and the last surviving member of the Committee, NID Agent Mark Devlin; Robert Kinsey was still too dazed to think clearly about this even if some of Sarang's fellow Kippŭm-jo unit members helped him out of the room. As the special tactics officer subtly shook his head to warn his friends not to make a stink about this with so many unpredictable people around them now, people headed out of the reception room into the ground floor central hallway to join the others from another universe who had come here to chase off the Goa'uld and put down their slave warriors.

Also with them was Kim Hyegyŏng.
Silence fell as the current leader of the North and the reborn first king of Korea gazed upon each other before the elder Kim smiled, opening his arms. "Welcome back home, my niece," he calmly declared.

Her eyes sparkled with mirth as she walked into his arms. "Chag'un Abôji...!"

The soldiers around them whooped in delight as the visiting metahumans from another universe's Japan applauded. As the Sandalwood Empress gave her uncle a kiss before she moved to embrace her aunt, the marshal's wife gave the reborn first king of Korea an appraising look. "Was that actually what the Wanggŏm-nim wore when he fought the Goa'uld, Hyegyŏng-a?!"

"No, Chag'un Ŭmôni!" Hyegyŏng said with a shake of her head. "This is the uniform my second-self — the queen of Kuorim at the time of the Dawn of Power — wore when she allowed herself to be Gifted with Tan'gun-har'abŏji's power and memories to fight off the Unending League when they went on their rampage to destroy the governments of Yiziba." Here, she twirled around to display the traditional battlesuit with the dragons and the other insignia that seemed to hearken to what had been worn by the yangban during the days of the younger Chosŏn Dynasty that had ruled the peninsula for over five centuries, the floor-length cape shifting with her movements. As her aunts nodded in approval of such a beautiful yet stately form of battle dress — they both found the form-fitting and sleeveless battlesuits worn by some of their niece's new friends too provocative for their tastes — Hyegyŏng then perked before looking up. "Ŭisa-sŏnsaengnim! Is Chuae-ya alright?!" she called upstairs.

"She wasn't hurt, Hyegyŏng-a!" a voice called back before the door to one of the bedrooms opened to reveal a smiling raven-haired girl with brown eyes, gently carrying a sleeping baby wrapped in a blanket. Said woman was accompanied by several guards, all of whom had grateful looks on their faces.

"What happened, Sergeant?!" Kim snarled as his wife raced up to gently take their daughter in hand.

A deep bow responded. "Forgive us, Comrade Marshal. When the aliens attacked, several energy bolts slammed into the window of your beloved daughter's bedroom. After Comrade Tōjō made the necessary repairs to the room, Tsumiki-sŏnsaengnim came to make sure all was well with her."

"Oh, that's right."

Kim turned to gaze on Maybourne. "What do you mean, Colonel?"
The special tactics officer crossed his arms. "One thing I always heard about Yizibajohei, Marshal Kim: If you EVER become stupid enough to attack a HEALER on that planet, you're signing your DEATH WARRANT! Not even the most rabid of the 'bad guys' on Yiziba tolerate that sort of thing!"

A chuckle escaped Tsumiki Mikan as she came down the stairs, remaining close to Ri as she carried down Kim Chuae to allow the child's father to see her. As people grinned on seeing the leader of North Korea become a doting father with his child, the current incarnation of the Angel of the Cockpit, Yayuo ("Nightingale"), held up a warning finger. "Be careful in feeding solid foods at this time, Madame Ri. She has a very sensitive stomach. It needs time to develop still."

The first lady of North Korea laughed. "I'll remember that, Sŏnsaeng-nim...!"

**YOU WILL NOT REMOVE ME, LERIE! YOU DO NOT HAVE THE POWER!**

Everyone jolted. "Oh, no...!" Hyegyŏng hissed.

"Who is that?!!" Kim demanded.

"My second-self's chief enemy, Abŏji," the Sandalwood Empress sourly noted...

...before the sounds of tearing metal echoed through the air!

To Be Continued...!

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**WRITER'S NOTES**

Translation list: Chuch'esasang'tap-kŏri — Chuch'e Tower Street; Oppa — Elder Brother (as addressed by a woman); Atua — God/Divine spirit; Manhwa — Comics, the Korean way of saying "manga"; Aisthētikós — Aesthetics; Waarzegger — Soothsayer; Izobretátel'nitsa — Lady Inventor; Hanŭl — Heaven; Sŏngha — Literally "(immediately) below the divine", which would
Yangban (literally "two branches") were the scholarly noble class of the Chosŏn Kingdom that ruled Korea from 1392-1910. Such people were a combination of civil officials and military commanders (the two branches indicated in the group's name) who had passed the civil service examination (kwagŏ) modelled on the imperial Chinese examinations (kējū) that determined who would be elevated to serve into the state bureaucracy. In Korea, while the concept was meant to ensure only the wisest people could serve the nation, it developed into a hereditary concept due to the mountain of funds a student would require to pass the kwagŏ; unless one was VERY lucky or had the right sort of connections, a farmer's son could never become yangban. Also, such positions were forbidden to be given to a paekchŏng (Korea's version of Japan's burakumin) or a nobi (slave/serf), much less the children of the concubines of a king. That need to study hard to make good in life became truly ecumenical in modern times, resulting in the mad drive to push students to university that rocks Korean youth to this day.

The Ch'ungmu-gong (literally "duke of loyalty and warfare") is one of the posthumous titles bestowed on one of the greatest naval commanders to rise from the Orient, Yi Sunshin (1545-98) of Hansŏng (modern-day Sŏul). Because his actions in the defence of the Chosŏn Kingdom from the Hideyoshi invasions of the land (AKA the Injin War) of 1592-98 — especially when he was mortally wounded at the Battle of Noryang on 16 December 1598; his last command before passing on was, "The battle is at its height. Beat my war drums. Do not announce my death." — Yi is seen as Korea's greatest military hero, venerated as such to this very day on both sides of the DMZ.

Translating the conversation between the Haugen siblings and the Sŏ sisters in the fourth scene:

indicate the head of an established religion or other such highly venerable person; Chosŏn-mal — North Korean term for the Korean language (in the south, it's called Han'gŭg'ŏ); Lieve God — Dear God; Kapitān — Plural of "Kapitän" (captain); Zu Ihren Diensten — At your service; Oishii da — It's so good; Kusaya — The effective Japanese version of surströmming, though made from mackerel scad, flying fish and similar species; Das ist scharf — That's sharp/spicy; Örlogskapten — War captain, the Swedish rank title for a lieutenant commander (NATO rank code OF-3) as noted above; Jijikomomo — Explorer; Vzlómschik — Hacker; Chag'ŭn Abŏji — Father's younger brother; Chag'ŭn Ōmŏni — Father's younger brother's wife; Har'abŏji — Paternal grandfather; Komentaja — Literally "commander", this is the official Finnish rank title for a navy commander (NATO rank code OF-4), with the Swedish translation being the same; SM/FM — Short for "Suomen Merivoimat/Finlands Marinen", the official Finnish and Swedish titles for Finland's maritime warfare force; Merivoimat Sotalaiva/Marinske Krigsfartyg — Literally "Navy Warship", the Finnish and Swedish ship prefix titles for Finnish warships in the universe of my stories (abbreviated as MS or MK); Kapitein-Luitenant ter Zee — Captain-Lieutenant at Sea, the Dutch rank title for a navy commander; KM — Short for Koninklijke Marine ("Royal Navy"), the official name of the Dutch maritime warfare service; Harer Majesteits — Literally "Her Majesty's", this is the ship prefix applied to Dutch warships (abbreviated as HrMs) when a queen rules the Netherlands (when a king rules, it becomes Zijner Majesteits ["His Majesty's"], abbreviated as ZrMs).
Stian: **God ettermiddag, søstre. Er du programmert til å snakke norsk?** ("Good afternoon, sisters. Are you programmed to speak Norwegian?")

Hana: **Chosŏnmal-lŭl hal su it'torok p'ŭrogūraemiaing-doio iss'sŭmnikka?** ("Are you programmed to speak Korean?")

Tove: **La oss programmere hverandre.** ("Let's program each other.")

Mina: **Ne, sŏro p'ŭrogūraem-hagess'sŭmnida.** ("Yes, let's program each other.")

The shipgirls introduced here:

Captain Samantha Langley USN (United States Ship Langley [CV-1, later AV-3], formerly United States Ship Jupiter [AC-3])

CAPT Rebecca Robinson USN (United States Ship Lexington [CV-2])

CAPT Carol Hawkings USN (United States Ship Wasp [CV-7])

CAPT Francine Knox USN (United States Ship Hornet [CV-8])

Captain Suzanne Bell RN (Her Majesty's Ship Exeter [pendant C69])

Captain Louisa Farncomb RAN (Her Majesty's Australian Ship Perth [pendant C29])

CAPT Emily Burnett RAN (Her Majesty's Australian Ship Sydney [pendant C48])

Komentaja/Kommendör Ulrika Lönnrot SM/FM (Merivoimat Sotalaiva/Marinske Krigsfartyg Ilmarinen [pendant P1])

Komentaja/Kommendör Wilhelmiina Lönnrot SM/FM (Merivoimat Sotalaiva/Marinske Krigsfartyg Väinämöinen [pendant P2])

Kapitein-Luitenant ter Zee Julia de Houtman KM (Harer Majesteits Java [pendant C09])

Fregattenkapitän Gisela Thiele KMDR (Kriegsmarineschiff Z2 Georg Thiele [pendant Z2])

Korvettenkapitän Teresia Detmers KMDR (Kriegsmarineschiff Kormoran [pendant H8])

Narahara Shōko-shōsa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan I-19 [SSAV-19])

Yokota Minako-shōsa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan I-26 [SSAV-26])

Hashimoto Momoko-shōsa DNTK (Tennō Heika Gunkan I-58 [SSAV-58])

Yū Steinhoff-shōsa DNTK (formerly Korvettenkapitän KMDR) (Tennō Heika Gunkan Ro-500 [SSL-500], formerly Kriegsmarineschiff U-511 [pendant U511])
Of course, the four subgirls introduced in this part resemble their *Kantai Collection* interpretations. KMS Z2 *Georg Thiele* (Gisela Thiele) would take after the *Azur Lane* interpretation of her elder sister Z1 *Leberecht Maass* (Lieselotte Maas). USS *Langley* (Samantha Langley) would take after the version of her created in the *KanColle* fan production *Pacific*. US Ships *Lexington*, *Wasp* and *Hornet* (Rebecca Robinson, Carol Hawkings and Francine Knox) and HMS *Exeter* (Suzeanne Belle) also take after their *Azur Lane* interpretations. The physical looks of the others such as KMS *Kormoran* (Teresia Detmers) and HMAS *Sydney* (Emily Burnett) are my creation. As an aside, the alien particle-proton breech-loading musket that Samantha Langley received on her rebirth and Gifting is a Yehisrite *quř-piæq'ër* (pronounced /ˈkwɪf piːækwɜːr/), which translates as "fire stick". The weapon was first introduced in *The Senior Year* story "Sakura's Class Reunion".

Note the hull classification codes for I-19 *Iku* (Narahara Shōko), I-26 *Nimu* (Yokota Minako) and I-58 *Gōya* (Hashimoto Momoko) were chosen because they were classified as "first-class submarines" in the Imperial Navy and carried floatplanes; hence, they get SSaV (submarine, heavy, aircraft-carrying). However, Ro-500 *Yū* (Yū Steinhoff) gets the SSL (submarine, light) designation as she was classified as a "second-class submarine" on transfer from the Kriegsmarine to the Imperial Navy in 1943.

The "magically-masked Indefatigable-class battlecruiser" noted on here is Her Majesty's Australian Ship *Australia* (pendant 36). In real life, she was constructed and commissioned as the first capital ship of the Royal Australian Navy in 1911, serving through the First World War even if she missed out on Jutland; thanks to the Washington Naval Treaty, she was disarmed and scuttled in the Tasman Sea forty kilometres east of Sydney in 1924. In the universe of my stories, the disarmed Australia was secretly seized by the newly-constituted Royal Australian Navy Magical Service (RAN[M]) with help from Canada, then transported to the main RCN magical naval base in Tadoussac at the confluence of the Saint Lawrence and Saguenay rivers in Québec for a thorough reconstruction to make her a true light battleship; all that was really scuttled by the normal authorities was a heavily and thoroughly transfigured mass of scrap steel. HMAS *Australia* would continue to serve as the flagship of the RAN(M) throughout World War Two and is still seen in reserve commission to this day, much as HMCS *Lady Elgin* and her fleet mates serve in the RCN(M). Of course, as indicated above, during World War Two/the Wars of Liberation, *Australia* and her fleet mates served to save Allied and Axis seamen from the wrath of the sea leviathans *Naomi Haight-Ashbury* (USS *Long Beach*) would send to Phentax Two after her rebirth and Gifting (as noted in Part Nineteen).

*Goroawase* is a common form of Japanese wordplay that uses homophone words to represent a given set of letters or numbers in a code. For example, the number 19 can be said as *Iku*, using the on'yomi readings for the numbers "1" and "9". This is how the producers of *KanColle* came up with all the nicknames for the subgirls introduced in the game to date save THG *Ro-500* (Yū Steinhoff); she got *Yū* from the letter "U" (from her old German hull code *U-511*).

*Madame Fabulous* (Futami Erika) — the current incarnation of the man who had been the wife of the *Unseen Lady* (Inu Chigaiko) — will appear in a side story. Yes, she's the character from *KimiKiss*. 

As the battle of P'yŏng'yang finally winds down, the rogue Shozoki move to destroy the city in a final suicide play...

...only to have one of the most powerful non-cosmic metahumans from Yiziba spoil the revenge scene!

As Ataru then finds himself dealing with a guilt-ridden transformed British battlecruiser, he threatens the most deadly strike the Healer of Women's Hearts could unleash on anyone, something that scares ALL his siblings.

His solution...?

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**Near Changp'ung in North Korea, ninety minutes after lunch...**

"Oh...so much despair...! Wow...! That feels so GOOD...!"

Staring at the current incarnation of the Herald of Cosmic Doom known in her birth universe as both the Ultimate Fashionista and the Ultimate Despair, Shigaten Benten could only come to one conclusion.

"Um...hey, Mukuro...?"

"Hai, Benten-san?"

"Your little sis is kinda stoned out right now."
A chuckle escaped both the Universal Chaos as he and the Cosmic Protector of True Life stepped onto the skiff built by Benten's clone twin Kamen as a present to Moroboshi Ataru's sisters in the summer, both turning to gaze in amusement at the VERY intoxicated poverty-born fashion model as her head rolled to and fro, nonsensical words streaming from her lips. As several children who had watched the Terrans-turned-Yizibajohei and their shipgirl allies from several nations effortlessly put down a LARGE amount of Shōzoki war machines came over to gaze worriedly at Junko, her sister smiled at them.

"It's alright, young comrades," the Ultimate Warrior in two dimensions assured them with her normal demure smile, making them look her way. "Junko was happy to drain all the despair everyone here in the republic has felt over the years, allowing hope to rise anew in this land, just like Naoko-san and O'Bannon-chūsa was happy to restore the soil so there would never be another famine again."

"If you folks do it right this time," Dean Ambrose advised, raising a finger.

"That all depends on what people in P'yŏng'yang decide, Mister Ambrose."

That was Major Sophie Jean, who just came aboard the skiff after meeting with her friend Colonel Oh Kyŏng'p'il, who was now busy coordinating surviving elements of the Korean People's Army in this part of Hwanghaebuk-to to ensure there were enough troops and equipment ready to defend the territory in case people south of the Demilitarized Zone had a "case of the clever" and elected to invade while local forces were distracted. Of course, both Jean and Oh understood that such a thing would NEVER cross the minds of South Korean or American commanders, especially with the drive towards peace Yi Myŏngbak and Josiah Bartlet had pressed for since the former came to office in 2008. However, given the institutionalized paranoia that had driven North Korean leaders since well before the Fatherland Liberation War in the early 1950s, there was no way senior surviving commanders north of the DMZ would relax their guard, especially after what just happened...

"What other fight scenes in the country are happening now, Kamen?" Dean asked.

The current incarnation of the Master At Arms, Hutelem (the "Weaponeer"), smirked as she gazed on the holographic tactical readout being projected from the main control console. Unlike Benten, Kamen normally wore her hair loose; the traditional hair chains women on Fukunokami wore had been tied as a simple tilted bandana. She was in a modern uniform, dark blue overall with red belt and boots, a gold exploding grenade over silver crossed swords insignia over her cleavage. She also wore the dark silver sash chain that marked her as a member of Clan Shigaten. "Mostly concentrated in your version of Ryekkyuk, Dean," Kamen noted as she indicated a graphic of P'yŏng'yang, making Jean blink in confusion on hearing that odd name. "Around that tower the capital shipgirls are trying to knock down and the place Marshal Kim lives. Minor places elsewhere; they're being mopped up by Junko's friends and whatever shipgirls are in the area. Ōsaka's keeping people safe
close to that tower." She then frowned. "Damn...that one palace there got burned to the bedrock by the looks of things..."

"Where exactly, Miss Shigaten?" Jean asked, tensing.

"This..." Here, the Fukunokami-form Avalonian-turned-Yizibajohei squinted as she tried to understand how to say the words. "The Kŭmsusan Memorial Palace...?"

On hearing that, the part-Korean native of Switzerland moaned. "Oh, God, no...!"

"What's the significance of that place, Major Sophie?" Benten asked, quickly sensing her distress.

"That's where Marshal Kim's father and grandfather were interred after they died, Miss Shigaten," Jean explained. "The North did the same thing to their late leaders as the Soviets did to Vladímir Lénin after he died in 1924 to act as a visible symbol of the Bolshevik Revolution. That was done also by the Chinese with Chairman Mão Zédōng and the Vietnamese with President Hồ Chí Minh when they passed on. If the news gets out that Marshal Kim's relatives' bodies were destroyed..."

"Oh, the DESPAIR...!"

People gazed on Junko, who seemed to be trying to regain some sense of control. "Hopefully, Hyegyŏng will be able to keep things calm in this country once the news DOES get out," Kamen noted.

That made the Swiss officer perk. "Who's she?"

"Kim Hyegyŏng," Dean explained. "Marshal Kim's niece through his dimwit older brother." As the children perked, the Lunatic Fringe added, "Gifted two years ago when Tariko met her in Macau. Current incarnation of King Tan'gun." As Jean's eyes went wide, the native of Cincinnati winked. "Thank the Goa'uld. Hyegyŏng's first-self was busy both on Earth and Yiziba."

"I remember Sua Majestade..."

Everyone turned as the two reborn Brazilian dreadnoughts who had come to Korea to help in putting
down the Shōzoki and the Goa'uld stepped onto the skiff. Jean blinked as she wondered how on Earth the living spirits of warships that at most were a century old could know such a thing, then she gaped as it came to her. "Your current bodies — hulls? — were created five thousand years ago by the second Doctor Destructo when the Goa'uld tried to attack Yiziba!" she exclaimed as she pointed at Joana Felisburto and Darci di Oliveria. "You mean King Tan'gun lived THEN...!"

As the reborn Minas Geraes-class dreadnoughts both nodded, Takanashi Naoko smiled. "He was a farmer who had a nice plot on the Taedong River back then," she explained, walking over to open a small refrigerator to see what Osamu Shirayuki stored inside. Pulling out bottles of spring water, the most powerful reality warper of the Unending League passed them around, even to the children; Junko's sister held onto her bottle given the Ultimate Fashionista's current inebriated state. "When the system lords pretending to be Hwang'un and Ungnyŏ who ruled the peninsula as sub-lords to Yù Huáng Shàngdì joined on the invasion of Yiziba, Tan'gun-san was shifted there to help convince the locals that the Goa'uld were gods. Of course, once the second Doctor came along and Gifted him, he was glad to join forces against his 'parents' and drive them off Yiziba. After that, he spent time here in Korea creating the first kingdom of Chosŏn before retiring to Kuorim on Yiziba to have a family and establish his dynasty there. His Gift seed wasn't returned to the Great Crystal, being held by his descendants over the millennia as the 'holy of holies' in the capital of Wyumyam until the Dawn of Power, when the queen ruling the land at the time, Nierie Nem, absorbed the Gift and became the first Sandalwood Empress." She looked at the children, who had fallen silent as the native of Beppu told that story, then she smiled as she pulled out her PAA, tapping the crystal. "Look at this, minna-chan!"

They looked. "What is that, Ōnni?!" one boy asked, pointing.

"That's Wyumyam," the Cosmic Protector of All Life said as Jean gazed at the beautiful image of the very modern city in a large, flat valley surrounded by rolling mountain ranges and pierced by wide rivers. "It's the ONLY national capital of pre-Dawn of Power Yiziba to have survived pretty much intact to this day. This is where your marshal's niece lives when she's on Yiziba."

"Are the people there happy, Ōnni?" a girl wondered.

"Oh, yes, they're very happy. Almost all of them are what we call 'nameless'. That means they don't have a special name like 'Lady Nature' for me, 'Insanity' for Dean-kun here or 'Weaponeer' for Kamen-san, much less 'Tan'gun-wanggŏm' for your marshal's niece. They still have special powers — you really need them in the end to live safely on Yiziba — but they don't like to be flashy." As the children giggled, she then perked before looking over her shoulders.

Jean looked herself before straightening and saluting the approaching KPA general. "General Ri!" she called out as the others looked over, then she perked on seeing his sad look. "Sir...?"
Lieutenant General Ri Han'il was a veteran of the country's special operations forces. Despite him now being the deputy commander of IV Corps that covered the North's southwestern frontier, he was also tasked as operational commander of the special operations forces in the corps' catchment area. Seeing the mixture of shock and sadness on the face of the native of Namp'o, Jean was quick to understand why. "How bad was it, General?" she gently asked after lowering her arm.

He perked, then gave the pretty Swiss officer a wan smile. "Over HALF my forces were turned into those monstrous things," he spat, waving towards a nearby pile of shredded and twisted war machines that were now being salvaged by those androids and gynoids who hadn't been possessed by Mother for spare parts and the value of the metals that went into their construction. "A third more, fortunately, were effectively saved by the Marshal's niece as you can see right now. Amazing!" Here, he chuckled, shaking his head. "To believe that the daughter of someone who was banished from this land still loves it enough to come back — on threat of death! — and save us in our truly darkest hour." The general then shook his head. "Plus, there's the news of what's happened in P'yŏng'yang..."

"The Kŭmsusan Palace...?" the native of Geneva sympathetically wondered.

"Ne, Sophie-ya," Ri hissed. "I just confirmed this from my counterpart in III Corps. The resting place of the Eternal President and the Eternal Chairman was DELIBERATELY destroyed in a mass assault before Comrade Colonel O'Bannon's sisters were able to intercede and wreck the monsters before moving to help their fellow ship spirits put down the remaining alien forces acting against the people in P'yŏng'yang." As the children hearing this teared on hearing what happened to the mortal remains of the man who had founded the Democratic People's Republic and his late son, he focused on the Yizibajohei present. "PLEASE tell me that Katabarbe-sŏnsaengnim has plans to strike at these things' home planet one of these days, comrades! I know you have the other aliens who tried to attack Uruguay to face off against first, but these Shōzoki seem to have no respect for ANYTHING!"

"They just welcomed people to put them down in a Mother of All Fight Scenes, General," Kamen declared, smirking in anticipation. "We NEVER refuse THAT invitation!"

"Still, there's a way for Hyegyŏng-san's uncle to rebound from what happened, Ojii-san."

That was Naoko. "What do you mean, young lady?" Ri demanded.

Gesturing to create a "none of your business" field around the children so they wouldn't spread any rumours, the native of Beppu sighed. "If I recall my history correctly, Vladímir Lénin NEVER wanted to have his body embalmed like some HUNTING TROPHY for the masses to view all the time; that was something forced on his corpse by Stálin and his clique to literally make Lénin seem like some 'god' to Communism. If Hyegyŏng-san's uncle is smart about it, he could tell everyone that
he just discovered that his grandfather's and father's last wishes were NOT to be memorialized at the palace. This will help people accept what's happened and keep the xenophobia down against Hyegyŏng-san's forces. After all, hacking into their minds could potentially still be a problem in the future. Much that I'm more than sure she's guarded against it, what's to stop Mother from retaliating?"

The general took that in before grimly nodding...

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*High in the atmosphere over North Korea, that moment...*

She had come to love listening to the songs of worlds.

It was one peaceful element of her life now that she had become one of the most powerful non-cosmic metahumans to rise from the World of the Forge, much less one of the most feared and respected given what her traditional position as the leader of the Unending League of Super-Soldiers demanded of her.

Of course, being one of seventy-seven people who knew the true identity of the current incarnation of the Chaos Bringer would certainly make life a LOT more interesting for Ikusawa Kyōko in the near future unless a certain someone elected to reveal himself to the general public on Yiziba.

And if he didn't...

Shaking her head, the azure-haired native of Mito in Ibaraki prefecture on the Pacific coast of Honshū northeast of Tōkyō relaxed herself as the flowing power of her home world's magnetic field flooded her body with raw energy, the likes of which few could properly command without having one's body burned out. Grateful that with the Gift of the Mistress of Magnetism, *Lerie* ("*Segulmagnaðir*"), came the intrinsic knowledge her past-selves had accumulated over the last two sagas concerning its use, the winner of the Zenkoku Seifuku Bishōjo Grand Prix sighed as every ounce of energy that she could alter echoed inside her. This allowed her to eavesdrop on all communications frequencies, sense any sort of radar or other scanner fix on her or detect the potential shifts in Earth's outer core that was a perfect early warning system in case a major planetary disaster was coming soon — among other uses of her magnetic manipulation abilities — to help in dealing with all the unique things that had faced the current incarnation of Yiziba's largest battle team in the last year since their kidnapping from Tōkyō by a certain rogue Tok'ra disguised as a "dead" Niphtentaxian trader's son...
Chuckling as her mind picked up images from Minegishi Ruriko showing Sunmi being dragged out of his holding cell in Stargate Command headquarters to confront the Jewel Warriors of two worlds and America's leader — with her soul now within an Avalonian body, the daughter of a mid-level bureaucrat in the Ibaraki prefecture government formed telepathic links with her fellow Grand Prix contestants to keep tabs on what was going on with them — Kyōko perked as she felt a powerful surge of energy from the Ryugyŏng Hotel several dozen kilometres below her feet; being the Mistress of Magnetism, the native of Mito could use her powers to create a bubble of atmosphere around her in places like near-space. As her mind registered the highly-complex coding indicative of scrambled communications, she mentally reached out to one of the League's several technopaths.

«Tomoko?»

«Huh?! What is it, Kyōko?» a voice called back from the general direction of Yokohama.

«Listen to what I'm hearing,» the Mistress of Magnetism ordered. «It's coming from the Ryugyŏng.»

A moment of silence — save for the storm of chirps, beeps and other sounds emanating from P'yŏng'yang's tallest building — as the current incarnation of Bumbam Ter'be ("Rebel Rider") took the chance to allow what was being fed into her mind to be churned through one of several computer units she salvaged from the League's hidden headquarters complex on the western equatorial continent for her own use. After a moment, Asakura Tomoko called out, «It's the central nexus of all the Shōzoki in the country, Kyōko. It's screaming out to Mother that all its forces in country are being defeated and is prepared to...» Here, the native of Yokohama's Naka Ward near Tōkyō paused before a groan escaped her. «Shit! Self-destruct's being programmed in, Kyōko!»

Hearing that, Kyōko's amethyst eyes glittered as she tipped over, dive bombing towards P'yŏng'yang...!

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The Ryugyŏng Hotel, that moment...

"MARY!"

As the large crowd of shipgirls that had gathered in a circle around the tallest building in P'yŏng'yang watched in wide-eyed disbelief — the reborn battleships and battlecruisers that had flown in from Japan and America having been joined by a fleet of destroyer shipgirls from America, not to mention the mixed "Namp'o Force" that came up the Youth Hero Motorway from the country's main west...
coast port to get in on the fun — a blonde adopted native of Butleigh and Clydebank flew down to land beside the base of the tower's southwest corner, then she smashed her hands into the steel to literally yank out large chunks and toss them aside in hopes of knocking the Ryugyŏng Hotel over.

Instantly, still-intact weapons emplacements spun around and began blasting Mary Hood, causing the reborn battlecruiser to stagger for a moment even though she wasn't letting go of her current perch, throwing her full metaphysical displacement weight of 47,430 tonnes into knocking the tower over. Seeing that the stubborn and near-suicidal fool she had faced at the Denmark Strait wasn't going to shift back to safety, Luisa von Bismarck snarled as she flew down to assist. "Du verdammter Idiot!" the adopted native of Schönhausen snarled as she came to a landing beside her, throwing her body around to intercept several shots from mid-level. "What are you doing?!

"OI! GET THE FUCK BACK INTO THE BATTLE LINE, YOU STUPID KRAUT!" Kathy Hyde yelled down from her position close to the Victorious War Museum while others nearby relaxed themselves.

«DON'T STOP! KEEP FIRING!»

Hearing that barked voice, the battleships jolted before storms of energy flew out of their hands to slam into the tower's inards. «Oi! Who the fuck's this?!» the reborn USS New Jersey demanded.

«Relax, Kathy-chan!» the voice called back as the Japanese shipgirls listening to this detected the western Kantō accent indicative that whoever this was, she was a native of Tōkyō or nearby. «You need to keep firing and distract the thing that's controlling the guns inside just long enough to...!»

A titanic rumbling noise echoed through the air, causing some of the reborn battleships to perk, some glancing around even as they continued to send fusillades of energy into the Ryugyŏng as they had been instructed; whoever had spoken to them had the right tone of voice that made the reborn warship spirits automatically think "admiral". "Look!" Emily Austin declared as she pointed towards the ground; the adopted native of San Jacinto and Newport News had been reloading her Clarkson M-34 revolvers. "Something's got hold of the tower! It's trying to pull it out of the ground!"

Kathy looked, then she cackled on seeing the building start to sway. "Must be some geokinetic doing that!" the reborn Black Dragon snarled as she summoned a "broadside" of energy before letting it loose.

Others seeing this gaped on watching a beautiful burning DRAGON appear from that shower of supercharged mesonium particles, the snarling beast's head diving right into the largest wound her
older fleet mate made with her revolvers. A large explosion then nearly decapitated the tower just as Mary and Luisa both heaved hard, ripping the whole southwest wing out of the ground. As mad cackles of delight escaped Itō Mutsuko and the two Argentinian dreadnoughts that had come to destroy this dark place, the reborn battleships all split their fire, half of the volleys pouring into the centre of the mass while the other half began churning up the tower's foundations to further expand the wounds the two old foes of the Battle of the Denmark Strait in 1941 had just unleashed.

"KEEP GOING, MINNA-SAN! KEEP FIRING!" Itō Yasuko screamed.

YOU WILL NOT REMOVE ME, LERIE! YOU DO NOT HAVE THE POWER!

Such a pity...!

"Who on Earth's THAT?" Itō Izumi wondered from next to her sister. "A kami of some sort...?!

Too much LEAD in your diet...!

An ear-splitting shriek of torn metal then nearby burst people's ears...

...before the Ryugyŏng Hotel was literally YANKED into the air at supersonic speeds!

"WHOA...!" Gabby Lewis exclaimed as all the battleships were knocked back by the air pressure...

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Ascending into orbit...

Within the core of the Ryugyŏng, the controlling mechanism that had guided the actions of over a MILLION androids and gynoids who had infiltrated the Democratic People's Republic of Korea over the last five years howled in helpless outrage as it felt the very pull of Earth's gravity vanish
from the foundations of the once-glittering 330 metre tall structure. As it tried to swivel its weapons
down on the capital city it tried to destroy, one scanner picked up the image of a smiling Japanese
teenager with long azure hair and amethyst eyes floating clear of the ascent path of the wrecked
building, dressed in a dark red jumpsuit with grey belt and boots, a prism insignia over her cleavage.
The sentience of the Ryugyŏng snarled in outrage on seeing this version of the leader of the
Unending League of Super-Soldiers politely waiving at the departing tower as it accelerated to
escape velocity, racing to the point where the detonation of the many fusion reactors buried in the
heart of the tower wouldn't unleash a massive electromagnetic pulse that would knock out all the
power across eastern Asia...

**YOU HAVE FAILED ME.**

Hearing the pronouncement of the entity that was the one true sentience on Shōzoran, the controlling
mechanism sensed itself immediately shut down all the systems within the building, thus allowing the
reactors within the tower to instantaneously overload...

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**A minute later, by the Victorious Fatherland Liberation Museum...**

"**WHOA!**" Marlene Bucher-Flanagan screamed, shielding her eyes.

People on the ground gasped as a blinding burst of light appeared way high in the early afternoon
sky of P'yŏng'yang. As Kasuga Ayumu gestured with her hand to create a force field to protect the
whole of eastern Asia from any irradiated debris that might have fallen off the Ryugyŏng Hotel after
it literally did a Saturn Five and rocketed into orbit — to say anything of blocking any
electromagnetic pulse from causing all sorts of havoc in this part of the world — people looked away
to shield their eyes. After a moment, the blinding corona of energy that just washed over North
Korea began to fade, allowing people to blink to get their vision clear before they turned to gaze
back up towards the heavens...

"Dear God...!" An Chaeyong rasped as he held Paek Yŏngsuk close. "Who on Earth did
THAT...?!

"Ikusawa Kyōko-sŏnbaenim did, Sŏnsaeng-nim."

That was the Goddess Who Walks Among Men, who was now staring in amusement at the pianist
from Kangsŏ. "Ikusawa Kyōko...?" No Sang'u began, he gently stroking the short raven hair of Pak Kwija. As the teacher from the Music Academy across the Taedong River from this part of the capital gazed on him, the android KPA officer paused as he ran the name through his memory banks before he gaped. "You mean Ikusawa Kyōko-ssi from Mita-shi in Ibaraki-hyŏn that was the winner of that 'Grand Prix' beauty pageant held in Tōkyō last summer, Kasuga-sŏnghanim?!" he then demanded. "The one where all the contestants literally VANISHED right afterwards?!!"

All the locals gasped. "What happened to them, Ayumu-ya!" Ri Chŏnghŭi demanded.

Ayumu chuckled as the distant whistling of air flowing past a person's body echoed from above, she trying not to blush on being addressed as "Your Holiness" by the adopted native of Ch'ŏngjin. "Oh, relax, Chŏnghŭi-ya! The jerk that kidnapped Kyōko-sŏnbaenim and all her friends screwed up and got them Gifted; he was trying to make slave warriors and we just don't GO for that! They got free and were able to come back to Earth!" As whoops and cheers echoed from the people hearing this, locals and visitors alike, the native of Wakayama turned to look up as someone came down for a graceful landing. "O-ha, Sempai! Thanks for getting rid of that creepy thing inside that tower!" she called out.

As Ikusawa Kyōko made a perfect landing before curtsying to the Infinite One, the lieutenant in charge of the Ministry of People's Security force that had come to this location as the living spirit of USS Pueblo was transformed and Gifted a little over two hours before screamed out, "KYŌKO-YA MANSE!"

"KYŌKO-YA MANSE!" his subordinates bellowed before breaking out in applause.

The Mistress of Magnetism laughed, her cheeks reddening at such a salute. "Um...s-sorry about the tower!" she then apologized, reaching up to rub the back of her hair in embarrassment.

People looked askance at her, then relieved laughter echoed over the scene...

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In orbit over Uru aboard the Free Planetary State of Yiziba Starship Normandy, that moment (local time: Ninety minutes after supper)...

"Tcha...! Are you SURE Kyōko-sempai's not a reality warper, Darling?!!"
Hiromi Katabarbe nodded as she allowed her fiancée to snuggle closer to her. "More than sure, koishii," she tenderly declared, kissing Redet Lum's forehead to calm the warlord's daughter down after she watched Asakura Kazumi's video of the destruction of the Ryugyŏng Hotel — which was transmitted to Isaac Thomas' ship in live-time thanks to a hyperwarp transmission unit built into the video recorder used by the Voice of the Show when she went out to do her work — at the hands of the reborn leader of the Unending League of Super-Soldiers. "But you have to remember that Kyōko-sempai can mentally manipulate one of the most basic forces of the Universe. She may be called the 'mistress of magnetism', but when she gets enough experience under her belt, Sempai will have the ability to control ALL forms of electromagnetic radiation! Where she takes that..." Here, the Mistress of Morphing shrugged. "Well, I can't predict what this version of the Unending League will turn out to be like. Hai, Sempai seems to be willing to help protect innocents, but given how she got her Gift..."

"Kidnapped from her home planet, forced to become a virtual SLAVE of all things thanks to that body-swapping thing Avalonians do, THEN she gets Gifted!" Seth Rollins recapped before shaking his head. "Let's hope the idiots who helped that Tok'ra fool that instigated this didn't get it into their heads to go after the kids' parents to 'hush things up'." As outrage crossed Lum's face at the idea of observers from Phentax Two doing THAT to helpless Terrans, the Assassin of Dynasties snorted. All three had been watching the transmissions from Earth as a favour to their host, who was busy getting things set up with Elizabeth Wakefield to get the trap prepared for when the Goa'uld crashed into the Oniboshi system tomorrow; the Wise Lone Sage asked all of them — even Lum — to give their opinions over what just happened in North Korea. "It's what happened in the early days of the Dawn of Power, Lum," the native of Buffalo then advised on noting the look on Lum's face. "People who followed the Freedom Parade launched by Doctor Destructo and his clique got themselves Gifted, then the security forces put the heat on their relatives to make them 'loyal' to whatever sick regime they wanted to escape from. Believe me, my first-self had a VERY target-rich environment when he went off on his own crusade..."

"THIS IS AN OUTRAGE! AN OUTRAGE, I SAY!"

All three jolted as that ear-splitting shout seemed to rock the cruiser from stem to stern. "That sounded like Svetlána-san!" Hiromi stated as she moved to get up and leave the private entertainment room she and the others had taken over for their own use. "What's going on?!

Stepping into the hallway, she looked down to see a shuddering Svetlána Jurkévich glaring in apoplectic rage at what definitely seemed to be a sister of hers, though it wasn't her elder sister Galína. Watching this confrontation was a tall twenty-something woman who could look Lum's father Invader in the eye. She was dressed in a loose-fitting jumpsuit that mixed both the old and new styles; it was a blue-and-white sleeveless design with baggy trousers, but didn't have the halter-top part that went around the neck, being tied off above her considerable cleavage by a strap of metal-lined cloth similar to the waistband of a hakama. Her head was framed by reddish-blonde hair that was tied in two French braids to the level of her breasts, a pair of dark brown eyes peeking out of an innocent yet kissable face. A gold-studded green belt was wrapped around her waist. Staring at those well-shaped mounds, Lum felt an instant surge of jealousy as she quickly glanced at her new
fiancée; if the version of Tariko/Ataru before the issue with Elle had seen something like THAT...?! "What's going on, Latto-san?!” Hiromi immediately asked.

The current incarnation of the Carver of Monuments, Tumimbe ("Obelix"), shrugged her shoulders, which made her breasts jiggle in a way that would have had Lum's former fiancé zip instantly into her personal space to cop a feel. "I really don't understand it myself, Dikeso," the woman born Latto Nusiso in a village on the western equatorial continent declared, her voice touched with the accents that sounded like a mixture of French and German to Terran ears. "Myudae-kole’s sister just came, then she started getting angry. Did I miss something in the script bible about these shipgirls?"

"That's a damn good question," Seth replied before he gazed at the newcomer, who seemed to be a blonde, brown-eyed version of Galína Jurkévich without the scar on her face. She was in a traditional sleeved uniform, a white top over turquoise blue-green trousers, a gold-trimmed red belt wrapped around her waist. Over her heart was a gold-trimmed red shield emblem embossed with a bow and arrow pointed down, four gold stars framing it. Over the shield was the Cyrillic script ПОЛТАВА in gold. And on the upper arms — which the Assassin of Dynasties was quick to detect was what had attracted Svetlána's wrath — was the golden tryzúb on a blue shield once used as the sigil of Saint Volodýmyr Svjatoslávych, ruler of Velíkij Nóvgorod and Kíevskaja Rus' at the end of the Tenth Century. Such clearly now signified the true homeland of the reborn Russian-turned-Soviet dreadnought Poltáva, now Maríja Volodýmyrovna Jurkévich, adopted native of both Sankt-Peterbúrg and her namesake city in the Ukraine. "Welcome to the party, Pánna Kapitán Jurkévich," he then greeted her, making her blush.

As Svetlána looked ready to explode on hearing the Iowan address her sister by Ukrainian honorifics...

"Sestrjónka..."

That made the namesake of the capital city of the Crimea yelp in mortal terror on hearing that ice-cold voice as the others looked down towards the hallway leading to the main cafeteria, where the other two of the reborn Gángut-class dreadnoughts were now standing gazing on the scene. Seeing the annoyed look on Galíná's face while their other sister Polína — the reborn second of their class by order of launching, LK Petropávlovsk — shook her head just made Svetlána cringe while Maríja looked between sympathetic and gleeful that their elder sister was putting a stop to this nonsense.

Galína didn't disappoint.

"It is not kul'túrnyj to be snapping at your sister like some drunken chekist trying to make up for a
non-existent MANHOOD!" the adopted native of Sankt-Peterbúrg and Hanko evenly declared, making Svetlána wilt under an icy gaze that would have impressed an interrogator working for the KGB during the Cold War. Once that was done, a jovial smile crossed the elder sister's face as she reached over to embrace the youngest of their family. "Mášen'ka!" she then called out in clear Ukrajíns'ka móva. "Come! You must tell me what Tat'jána Andrévna has arranged with the people in Kýjiv...!"

With that, she dragged Maríja down the hallway under her armpit. As Polína gave Svetlána a shrug as if she was saying "What can you do?", Latto shook her head. "Shipgirls are crazy!" the geokinetic who also had all the standard FISS powers save flying muttered, tapping the side of her temple.

That made Polína and Svetlána gape as Hiromi, Lum and Seth stifled their laughter...

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*Meanwhile, back in P'yŏng'yang...*

"Ah! Hime's work is NEVER done!"

Saeru Hinako perked on hearing that welcome voice, then she turned. "Shirayuki-chan!"

The other people on the grounds of the Victorious Fatherland Liberation War Museum turned to see the Great Chef of the West moving to lay out a blanket the size of the average classroom on the grass close to where USS *Pueblo* was anchored until two hours ago in the Pot'ong. Having accompanied Osamu Shirayuki to the capital city of North Korea were Shirayuki's near-namesake Fukushima Shirayuki — in her uniform as the Pure Blizzard of the Kitchen, *Hyatorike* ("Shirayuki") — as well as one of the transformed clones of the Nagoya native's beloved Nii-sama who was also a trofikinetic. "Minna-san!" Ōnishi Koharu called out, putting a little of the cosmic power she inherited via blood transfusion from her Ane-chan. "If you're hungry, come eat! We've got food for everyone!"

Hearing that, all the shipgirls quickly moved to congregate on the scene. "Oh, man! Fresh rats! Only got some snacks to eat before I came here from Camden!" Kathy Hyde declared as she sat on her lower legs as the second of the Fubuki-class came over with a large plate of food. "Hey! What's this?!!"

"You made *pulgogi* as well, Shirayuki-ya?!" the lieutenant in charge of the surviving Ministry of
People's Security troops who came onto the scene when *Pueblo* became Marlene Bucher-Flanagan asked.

"Hai desu no! Hime likes making pulgogi for Nē-sama, Nii-sama and Hime's other sisters! It's got the proper nutrients for growing people!" Shirayuki asserted as she pointed to a clear area on the blanket. "Now, you and your friends sit and have something to eat, Sangui-ssi!" she bade, making the locals all gape on hearing the Nagoya native address the lieutenant by the Korean rank title and honorific. "Hime heard those silly lar'beke were possessing your captain and your senior sergeant before Marlene-san and Sŏn'yŏng-ssi were so nice to eat them! Now, you boys sit and eat! A good meal goes far to make people relax and helps in recovery from a shocking event like that! The rest of you, too!"

Hearing that, the MPS personnel all snapped to attention. "NE, ŬNNI!"

With that, the locals dived in. As both Shirayukis and Koharu made sure that enough food was laid out, the whistle of air passing people's bodies made the shipgirls all look up to see the four American-turned-South Korean shipgirls who had come to P'yŏng'yang to help out come down for a landing. "Ah! Sŏn'yŏng-ya!" Ri Chŏnghŭi cried out on recognizing the reborn namesake of North Chŏlla Province who had come just in time to save the students of the P'yŏng'yang Music Academy from the Goa'uld who had tried to kill them nearly two hours ago among the group, all of whom bore their ship names in proper chosŏn'gŭl on their chest emblems. On seeing what was written on the chest of the younger-looking of the lot, the reporter for the *Chŏngnyŏn Chŏn'ui* blinked. "'Taedong'...?!"

Adrienne Mijŏng Werner was pretty much like her sister American-turned-South Korean shipgirls, looking like a perfect blend of Korean and Western in looks; gazing at her, Shirayuki was immediately reminded of the singer Kim Hyoyŏng from Inch'ŏn, another of the members of the K-pop group Girls' Generation. The adopted native of Tacoma (her namesake city as an American ship), Richmond in California (where she was built) and P'yŏng'yang itself (given that her namesake river flowed through the city) was a beautiful blonde whose locks flowed down to mid-back; brown eyes peeked out of a nicely shaped face that made the girls from the Music Academy all swoon with envy. "N-ne!" she then sputtered out as she rubbed the back of her head. "Well, given that the lar'beke were here...!"

"Mijŏng-ssi! Eat!"

She dropped down between Elaine Sŏn'yŏng Larson and Wynter Sŏn'a Rush. "NE, SŎNSAENG-NIM!"

As she dug into the bowl of naengmyŏn that came with the meal — much to the locals' delight, it was done in the proper P'yŏng'yang style — one of the MPS corporals looked at Hinako, who was
having her meal with Kasuga Ayumu, Ikusawa Kyōko, Nanami Chiaki and Iidabashi Tetsuya; they had been joined by the veterans of Taffy Three and their Japanese friends, who were sitting as far from the Iowa-class battleships as they could. "Ne, Hinako-ya! Is Shirayuki-ya always like this?!" he quietly asked.

"Hai!" the Spirit of Innocence affirmed with a nod. "If you don't eat all that Shirayuki-chan makes, it makes her sad and upset! We NEVER do that on Promised Island!"

"Desu no!" Shirayuki called out from nearby.

Laughter filled the crowd as they relaxed to enjoy the wonderful meal. "I've never had cold soup broth before," Roberta Ansaldo noted, grateful that the Great Chef of the West had provided forks and spoons as well as chopsticks. Some of the elderly locals turned to watch as she twirled her fork to get a mass of memilgukssu to slurp down. "Oh!" the adopted native of the Eternal City then called out after swallowing it. "Tastes just as good as vermicelli!" she promptly declared.

That made people perk. "You eat WORMS, comrade?!" an elderly woman demanded.

The third of the Littorio-class ships blinked as that question sunk in, then she laughed, remembering that her bodysuit came with an omniversal translation system. "Oh, no, no!" she said as she waved the older woman down. "No! It's our nickname for thin noodles in Italia!"

Many of the locals gaped. "Where are you all from?!" Pak Hyeju demanded.

The various home nations of the various shipgirls were then called out. Gaping at the thought of the living spirits of warships from what were often degraded as "decadent" nations having come to save them all, the Music Academy students and their teacher exchanged looks, then Chŏnghŭi gazed on Marlene. "The spirit of the place that made you into this was right, Marlene-a!"

"Huh?! What do you mean, Chŏnghŭi-ya?" the adopted native of Pueblo wondered.

The music student/reporter pointed to the motto scroll on her updated ship's crest. "'Peace For All'."

"If it were only that simple."
That was Kyōko. "The aliens that were possessing the captain and sergeant, you mean?" the lieutenant demanded. "The same ones who attacked Uruguay that Comrade Captain von Spee stopped."

"Hai," the native of Mito affirmed before she picked up a cup of tea to drink it. "Sadly, our planet is at a galactic crossroads when it comes to all our interstellar neighbours. Like the Tsu-shima Straits south of the peninsula here or the Strait of Gibraltar that divides western Europe from northwest Africa. To control the 'crossroads' would give any of our neighbours a considerable strategic and tactical advantage over their rivals. Last fall's invasion was the result of that thought."

"But with those such as Comrade General Raeburn and all of you here...?" No Sang'u then wondered; he had been eating with the Music Academy teacher, his fellow AI Pak Yŏngsuk and An Chaeyong nearby.

"Eh?! Comrade Major Raeburn is a GENERAL now, Comrade Captain?!" the MPS lieutenant demanded.

"Ne, Comrade. She's commander of Canada's special forces now, including their air cavalry..."

"DON'T TALK ABOUT THEM!"

Everyone yelped before they spun around...

"Anna-san! Kei-san! Sei-san! Hiyoko-san!" Shirayuki snapped as she put her fists to her hips. "Don't yell like...!" She then stopped, blinking in curiosity. "Um...are you guys alright...?"

Right now, the elder carriers of the Kidō Butai who had been sunk at Midway were rapidly looking around as they hugged each other, their skin ghostly white as they rapidly scanned the sky, horrible flashbacks haunting their souls stemming from that dark day in 1942 off Midway. While the sinking of TH Gunkan-tachi Akagi, Kaga, Sōryū and Hiryū was deservedly credited to the air wings of US Ships Enterprise, Hornet and Yorktown that day, it was the presence of three REGIMENTS from the Canadian Air Cavalry Corps' 8th Brigade in the skies that day — each regiment flying EIGHTY of the seldom-known Sopwith Canada So-48 Camel III attack fighter, the first Allied aircraft known that could turn inside a Mitsubishi A6M Zero-sen in a dogfight — which significantly ensured that the waves of Douglas SBD Dauntless dive bombers could strike home with their bombs on crowded flight decks. With the way the Canadian pilots mercilessly strafed the flight decks and weapons galleries on the carriers — not to mention deliver considerable damage to escorting ships — the fear the four shipgirls had on even HEARING of those demon-spawn aircraft or the formation that used them was profound...
"Gee...!"

"KATHY-SAN!"

Kathy yelped as Shirayuki glared at her, then she blinked on seeing the Great Chef of the West point off to her right. Looking over, the adopted native of Camden and Philadelphia blinked on seeing Itō Yasuko now as white as a ghost, she being crowded by Ōkawa Yaeko and the destroyers that had been with Japan's greatest battleship on their last mission to Okinawa in 1945. Staring wide-eyed at the adopted native of Nara and Kure, Nishimura Fujiko covered her mouth. "How many, Yasuko-san?" the first of the Fusō-class who was sunk during the action in Surigao Strait during Leyte Gulf quietly asked.

An audible gulp escaped Yasuko. "Two...whole...brigades...!" she hissed out, making the veterans of Midway croak in horror. "If it wasn't for Chennalton-sama being close by because of those accursed sea monsters, more of my crew would have died to those damned things' guns on my decks — all our decks! — before the damage became too much for me to sustain..."

"Yet two regiments that were there that day REFUSED to bear the honour 'Yamato' on their guidons after the war, Yasuko-san," a new voice called out.

Yasuko perked, then she turned to stare wide-eyed at Akamatsu Inoue. "Inoue-chan...?"

"Hai nanodesu!" the youngest of the Akatsuki-class destroyers affirmed with a nod of her head. "In fact, Raeburn-shihan went to the Master General who was in Ottawa at the time — he was her old commander in England, Brigadier Anton Smith — and stated that it wasn't honourable to memorialize a suicide mission with a battle honour! Two regiments, the Rocky Mountain Dragoons and the Queen's Own Vancouver Island Regiment — the second regiments of the Fifth and Sixth Canadian Cavalry — decided it wasn't right even if Army headquarters gave them the battle honour credit."

Yasuko and her companions all blinked as they took that in. "Besides, meine freundin," Luisa von Bismarck spoke up from nearby. "Did you not take a total of twelve bomb strikes and seven torpedo strikes before you sank?" As the locals gasped, the adopted native of Schönhausen then gazed on her younger sister Mutsuko. "What of your sister here?! It took seventeen bombs and nineteen torpedoes to put her down at Leyte!" As the locals then gaped in awe at the amount of damage it had taken to sink the second of the Yamato-class, Luisa added, "That was MORE than enough time for the crews of Erinsville and Chennalton to save those of your crews trapped in your hulls as you foundered."
"What are they, Comrade Captain?" the MPS lieutenant wondered.

"Canadian specialized warfare battleships built to hunt and destroy sea monsters that arose during the world wars to consume the living SOULS of sailors fighting in those conflicts, Comrade Lieutenant," Yŏngsuk immediately explained. "Because of the very radical nature of such beings' existences at that time, the existences of such battleships — built in Canada, Australia and New Zealand — had to be kept top secret, even to this day. After all, those things might still be out there..."

"Don't you worry about that, Yŏngsuk-san!" Hinako spoke up as she pointed to the sky. "Once she became a shipgirl, Naomi-chan got rid of those nasty monsters! Sending them right back to Phentax Two to teach those silly people not to enslave people anymore!"

A flash of light caused people to spin around...

"Whoa! Talk about a cool scene here! Hey, Marlene!"

Jaws dropped among the American shipgirls who had been in commission after World War Two on sensing who had just joined them. "Oh, shit! Beachy, is that you?!" Gabby Lewis moaned as she slapped her forehead on gazing upon the just-arrived Naomi Haight-Ashbury.

"Yo, Stick! Dragon! Mo-mo! Whisky! Good to see you guys again!" the adopted native of Long Beach and Quincy called out as she carried a large basket full of fruit and vegetables over to where the MPS troopers were seated. "Here you go, comrade!" she called out as she put the basket down before the lieutenant, making all the troopers gape at such fresh produce. "All fresh from the reseeded farms of Hwanghaebuk-to thanks to Kyōko's pal from Kyūshū and Bannie!"

"Bannie?! You mean O'Bannon?!!" Rose Johnson asked.

"Yeah, same potato-lover, Injun-gal!" the effectively cosmically-powered light cruiser said with a wink, making the adopted native of Cincinnati and Tacoma huff in annoyance at being called that because her late commanding officer was half-Tsalagi and a quarter Muscogee. "She's flying around now to make sure all the crops she made for all the cool people living here are healthy and all that so the food can get to everyone and there'd be no more bad scenes in this land again."

She snapped her fingers, producing baskets of fruit and vegetables for the civilians who were there. As cries of delight and cheers of thanks came from the locals, the turbine-like whine of a certain air
skiff made people look up as the craft that was used by Moroboshi Ataru's would-be wife during this battle came down for a landing nearby. The destroyers who lived on Ōmure-jima all screamed out in delight on seeing their spiritual admiral there, walking off the craft hand-in-hand with the adopted daughter of one of Fukunokami's senior commanders. To the delight of the Terrans-turned-Yizibajohei there, Shigaten Benten was now in a form-fitting silver jumpsuit of the new style, indicating she was willing to "dance with the Great Crystal" and become Gifted; Ayumu's meta-senses quickly revealed that the native of Bensaikyō had yet to be pre-Gifted by pillow scene or black forest cake made by Ataru's sister. "Nii-sama! Benten-san! You're just in time! Have something to eat!" Shirayuki called out.

"Arigatō, Shirayuki-chan," the Healer of Women's Hearts declared as he moved to sit down nearby, making all the women present regardless of age shudder in awe as they sensed his empathic aura. Immediately, some of the destroyers and Ataru's own personal "fleet" of shipgirls moved to sit closer to him; to Shirayuki's and Hinako's delight, there was no jealousy creeping across Benten's face at the presence of people such as Roberta Ansaldo, Catarina von Savoyen or Ashikaga Akemi.

"Where's Paola-san, Teitoku?" the eighth of the Ayanami-class destroyers asked.

"Too drunk to fly, I'm afraid," Ataru answered.

That made Roberta moan as she slapped her forehead. "Be assured, mio Ammiraglio, I'll properly discipline her for failing to fulfill her duty! Much that she was affected by what happened at Capo Matapan, she had an obligation to come here to aid the poor people here!"

"I won't stick knives — even proverbial ones — into people's backs, Roberta-san," he gently scolded.

"Um...Comrade Moroboshi?"

Ataru looked up to see Chŏnghŭi standing there, a pencil and pad in hand. "Yes...?" he began before his eyes lit up in recognition. "Ah! Ri Chŏnghŭi-ssi, I presume?" he then wondered. "Current events reporter for the Ch'ŏngnyŏn Chŏn'ui from the Music Academy here in P'yŏng'yang, right?"

That made Chŏnghŭi gape. "How do you know...?"

He winked, which made her feel very fuzzy deep in her heart. "My good friend from this land, Kim Hyegyŏng-ssi, is more than familiar with your writing. And your poetry as well that you publish for
the newspaper. Your ability to put out such inspiring shijo is quite impressive."

Now, the poor girl's jaw was around her knees. "The Marshal's niece?!"

"It's true, Chŏnghŭi-ya!"

Eyes locked on the gynoid member of the Kippŭm-jo, who was currently holding Chaeyong's hand. Chŏnghŭi thought about it, then her eyes went wide as something came to her. "That's right, Ŭnni! You and Sang'u-oppa were saved by the Marshal's niece!"

"Ne!" the adopted native of Pukch'ang affirmed. "Your dedication to honouring the virtues of Chuch'e is something that inspires Hyegyŏng-a every day as she works to help make our country truly free!"

As the reporter turned a bright red on hearing that, Ataru winked at her. "I'm sure once our friends in the Worker's Party and the People's Army learn of this, your poetry will appear in the Rodong Shinmun and the Chosŏn Inmin'gun, Chŏnghŭi-ssi!" he then mused.

A squawk of embarrassment escaped her. "Ataru-ssi...!"

Laughter echoed from the others. "I would like the chance to read such clearly respected shijo, Ri-dono," Haruguchi Harumi then noted as she waved her gunsen in front of her face. "Given the foul crimes that the leaders of my land unleashed on this ancient realm, doing all to show the true heart of the Land of the Morning Calm will do much to put down those arrogant fools back in Japan who still believe that the 'occupation' of this beautiful land against which your good marshal's grandfather fought so passionately to end was a 'noble act'." Scorn dripped from her lips on saying that.

The locals were shocked to see that all the Japanese shipgirls — who could be identified thanks to the kanji on their uniforms — were nodding. "Indeed! This Musashi wishes that the Americans would have hunted down and hung the fools that unleashed such hideous crimes on this land!" Itō Mutsuko snarled as she nibbled on kimch'i. "The stain of what the 'wise' leaders of Japan unleashed on Korea, China and elsewhere is as noticeable on the wa of our culture as I'm more than sure that the stain of what the foul Nazis unleashed on the peoples of Europe are to all who live in Germany! Especially when it came to the unleashing of the HaShoah on the descendants of Israel living in Europe at that time!"

"Jawohl...!" Luisa snarled.
As the German shipgirls grimly nodded, Chŏnghŭi took a deep breath. "If I may, Comrade Captain, I'd like to interview you and your fleet mates to get more information concerning those feelings. Given that Marlene-a came back to us on the vow of 'peace for all', it will do much to bring an end to the many disputes between our homelands," she said as she gazed on Mutsuko before looking at Luisa. "As well as yours and your fleet-mates opinions concerning this 'destruction' Comrade Captain Itō just spoke of."

"We'll help you on that, Chŏnghŭi-ya!


Asakura Kazumi chuckled as she walked over hand-in-hand with a chestnut-haired tomboyish girl also dressed in an urban camouflage jumpsuit, the icon of a camera over her cleavage; as the Voice of the Show, the middle school senior from Niigata bore crossed microphones on her uniform. Gazing at Koizumi Mahiru for a moment, Ataru then sighed as he stood up, walking over to offer his hand. "I'm more than happy that you're alive and well, Mahiru-san. I trust the transition from Hope's Peak Academy to our rather insane dimension wasn't too rough given Leno-san's involvement in your Gifting."

The native of another universe's Tōkyō chuckled. "Well, it beats being KILLED inside a school said to be the best place for the scholastic elite, Ataru-kun," Mahiru admitted with a casual shrug.


As many of the locals shifted closer to the Ultimate Photographer who was now also the Unstoppable Shutterbug of Disgrace so they could learn what had happened to her, Ataru returned to his seat and his food. "You did that on purpose, Darling!" Benten then hissed into his ear.

"Much that it galls me at times, Benten, there are times for secrets to be kept," he affirmed with a wink, keeping his voice down so as to not distract the storytellers nearby. "These people have been grossly isolated from the outside world for too long. Heaping THAT on them all at ONCE causes information overload. For all her support of Chuch'e, Hyegyŏng-a won't want to see innocent people slaughtered in a civil war just in case some hard-line umale comes out to defend the 'proper' way of doing things."

A snort escaped her. "Right..."
"Excuse me, Admiral."

He turned as the second of the Queen Elizabeth-class came up. "Hai, Charlene-san, what is it?"

A sigh escaped Charlene Boleyn. "Much that I hate to inform you of this right now, but it appears a certain twit needs a lesson concerning being reckless and suicidal in the face of a battle."

With that, she nodded over. Ataru looked, then he moaned. "Mary-san, right?"

"You saw it?"

"With Kazumi-san and Mahiru-san filming everything? What do you think?" With that, he took a deep breath as he rose to his feet. "Allow me, Charlene-san."

He headed over to where Mary Hood was sitting alone off to one side. The adopted native of Butleigh and Clydebank then perked on sensing his approach, then she looked away, her reddening cheeks revealing her mood. "Admiral..." she breathed out.

A tired sigh escaped him. "Mary-san, doesn't the wishes of your crew mean anything to you?"

That made the transformed battlecruiser awk as she stared wide-eyed at him, her blue eyes flooding with shamed tears. Moaning as he wished that there had been one or more French shipgirls who had come here so the whole issue concerning what happened at Mers-el-Kébir in 1940 could be resolved, the Healer of Women's Hearts took a deep breath. "Captain Hood," he sternly declared in his coldest voice, making the backs of all the shipgirls in hearing range straighten immediately as they sensed their spiritual "admiral" about to lay down the law. "Much that I do understand the guilt you feel concerning events in 1940 at Mers-el-Kébir, we're about to face a winner-take-all battle against the Goa'uld tomorrow evening over Uru. Since you seem to be incapable of pushing yourself back into shape so you will be able to survive the battle, you'll need to be punished for your reckless actions today!"

Mary yelped. "S-s-sir...?"

Ataru's eyes narrowed. "And that punishment, to be executed as soon as possible..."
Dramatic pause!

"The TORTURE OF A THOUSAND KISSES!"

Silence.

More silence.

Still more silence.

Then...

"O-o-Onii-tama...that's too MUCH!"

Many of the shipgirls — clearly baffled at the idea of getting KISSES from their admiral being seen as "torture" — turned to gaze upon Hinako...who was as white as a ghost. Quick glances to the other Terran-born Yizibajohei revealed a chorus of horrified and stunned looks, even from the powerful ones like Kasuga Ayumu and Ikusawa Kyōko. "NO!" the Mistress of Magnetism then barked, waving her hands in outrage. "Ataru-kun! You can't subject that poor girl to THAT!"

"Yeah, Ataru-kun! Just let Mary-chan rest and relax!" the Infinite One pleaded.

"Nii-sama! How could you think of doing THAT to Mary-san?!" the Great Chef of the West shrieked.

"Damn straight, An-chan! Leave her be!" the Tart Crafter hissed.

As the locals watched this strange drama play out before them, many of the shipgirls turned to the first group that had been reborn thanks to the Spirit of Innocence. Instantly, they all noted that the Fukushima, Ashikaga and Akamatsu sisters were just as horrified as the normal girls who had been Gifted over the last few years. "This doth be seen as TORTURE, Fubuki-dono?" Haruguchi Harumi immediately demanded of the first true modern destroyer.
An audible gulp escaped Fukushima Fujiko. "H-h-hai, Harumi-s-s-san!" the adopted native of Maizuru sputtered before taking a deep breath. "As Rake, Shirei-kan is a near-COSMIC empath!" she then explained. "Emotions are SILLY-PUTTY to someone like him! And given that he's also touched by the power of his sister, who's a REALITY WARPER of all things...!"

"N-n-not to m-m-mention that his f-f-first-self was part of the crowd our new hulls' c-c-creator was part of when that c-c-crazy Dawn of Power shit went down on Yiziba...!" Ashikaga Akemi sputtered.

That made the others jolt. "Darling, no...!" Benten hissed.

"Stop, Miss Shigaten!" the reborn HMS Warspite snapped, causing the biker-babe from Bensaikyō to yelp. "The Admiral must maintain discipline and Hood is failing to adhere to that! Punishment must be delivered!" She then tensed before looking up. "Of course, given who just joined us now..."

People perked, then they looked up and to the east...

"Bonjour, Hood," the reborn battleship Dunkerque — now Noémie Péreire — snarled as her chestnut brown eyes focused directly on the ship that had been partially responsible for sinking some of her fleet mates in that port near Oran in modern-day Algeria. The adopted native of her namesake town on the English Channel coast near the Belgian border and Brest (where she had been built) was now in front of a formation of thirteen shipgirls, all of whom were proudly bearing the Tricolour of France on their belt buckles. "It has been a very long time," she then snarled, cracking her knuckles. "Now, mon Amiral..."

"DANS LA MARINE, IL Y A 'MON DIEU' ET 'MON CUL', PAS 'MON AMIRAL'!"

The French shipgirls yelped as they stared wide-eyed at their new admiral, then they cringed while his annoyed look raked over them after he quoted that answer officers in the Marine Nationale ALWAYS gave after being addressed with the possessive pronoun "my" in front of their rank titles. "S'il vous plaît pardonnez-moi, Amiral...!" Noémie eeped as she shied away from him...

"Ah! Such true English beauty! It is beyond compare!"

...before Mary awked as a blonde typhoon glomped her with such power that even Nǚ Shānpǔ would find herself envious! "Hey...!" the adopted native of Butleigh yelped, waving her hands
helplessly before her mouth was consumed by her attacker's lips. "Mmmph...!"

As people gaped at the kissing scene before them, the details of Mary's attacker became clear to the onlookers. Wavy blonde hair that went to her hips, bright blue eyes now full of raw and naked passion, the trim body bestowed to the living spirits of light cruisers, such draped in a modern crimson bodysuit with silver belt and boots. The identification crest over her cleavage displayed a circular crimson shield surrounded by gold ship's rope, the shield embossed by a rampant gold lion to the right of a raised silver crusader sword; the whole was topped by the official coat of arms of the French Republic.

"BERTIN! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!!" Noémie shrieked.

The reborn light cruiser Émile Bertin — now Louise Bertin — gave a shrug as she gazed upon her immediate "flagship". "Why, Noémie, all I'm doing is obeying the admiral's orders and seducing dear Mary here! What on Earth does it look like?" the adopted native of Nancy (her namesake's birthplace) and Saint-Nazaire (where she was built) coyly answered. Ignoring the stunned looks and dropped jaws from all the other shipgirls there, Louise drew the dazed Mary — who now looked as drunk as Paola de Lerici was when she first "reported" to Ataru earlier that day in Tomobiki — closer to her. "Now, if you'll excuse me, mes amis, this beautiful English croquette and I require some privacy!"

And in a flash of light, they disappeared!

Silence.

Ditto.

Ditto.

Then...

"Um...Onii-tama, will you tell Hina what's going on, please?"

Ataru turned to give Hinako a wink and a knowing grin...
Meanwhile, in orbit over Uru, back aboard the Normandy...

Tariko Katabarbe was roaring with laughter.

Staring in shock at the Trickster of the Show, her now white-faced sister Hiromi put her fists to her hips while Redet Lum and her cousin Redet Ten blinked in understandable confusion. "Onē-san! That's not the least bit funny! How on Earth would Onii-san subjecting anyone to THAT be seen as FUNNY?!

"I must agree with Khirómi Ájonovna, Tariko Ájonovna!" Galína Jurkévich then mused before sucking in some of the fumes from her sailor's pipe; she normally ingested a very special herbal mixture that had been devised by Tánja Chapáeva to soothe the dreadnought's urge for nicotine while keeping her lungs clear. As her sisters all nodded in agreement, the adopted native of Sankt-Peterbúrg and Hanko chuckled. "Kisses from your brother would be quite a reward, not a torture!"

"Not when Ataru's Gifted, Galína."

That was Seth Rollins. "What do you mean, Kólbi Rónal'dovich?" Galína asked.

"He's a cosmic empath," the Assassin of Dynasties reminded the first-generation dreadnought. "When he turns on the charm, ANY woman is instant silly-putty! He's SO good that if he goes all out and focuses his power on anyone he's kissing, he could WARP her mind around, turning the target into an SLAVE!" He raised a finger to emphasize his point. "Now, here's the GOOD news about that..."

"There's good news, Seth-san?!!" Hiromi demanded, the disbelief in her tones quite obvious.

"Yes, there is! And YOU above all people should realize that, Hiromi!" Seth snapped, causing the Mistress of Morphing to wince from that admonishing look. "After the shit he and Tariko here went through before April, there's no way in hell that he'll EVER do that unless it's someone who's ROYALLY pissed him off! And RELAX, Lum!" he then soothed as Lum winced after hearing that observation from the Iowan. "You were his and Tariko's only real friend in that town, remember?!" Noting the warlord's daughter blushing at that observation, the Assassin of Dynasties then waved to the projection of the scene in P'yŏng'yang, showing Louise Bertin carrying out her seduction scene with Mary Hood. "Captain Bertin there's just showing Captain Hood that people in France DO
understand what happened at Mers-el-Kébir, WHY it happened and WHO was ultimately responsible for it! Once she gets her to calm down a bit, Ataru will get in there and try to cheer Mary up!"

"Via loads of pillow scenes, of course!" Tariko added with a wink as Hiromi and Lum both blushed.

"He should be doing that mushy stuff with Benten first, Tariko-onēchan!" Ten protested.

"Relax, Ten! He'll probably..."

"WHO THE HELL DID THAT?!"

Everyone jolted on hearing that scream. "What the fuck...?" Seth wondered as people turned on hearing loud stomping footfalls on the deck in the corridor leading into one of the various recreation rooms on the Normandy fitted with holographic emitters that outdid what was on the USS Enterprise in Star Trek: The Next Generation ten ways from Sunday. "Yo! Phoebe! What's wrong?!"

A snarling Phoebe Pitts stormed into the room, her whole body shuddering with outrage as a faint rose-coloured battle aura seemed to flare around her. As some of the other members of both the Camelot Wondercolts from Santa Clara and the Huntresses from Remnant winced on seeing the Mistress of Implausibility act like that, Tariko stood up and walked over to wrap an arm around the smaller woman's shoulders. "Okay, Phoebe-chan! Tell your Aunt Tariko what's going on!"

An outraged look crossed the Californian's face. "SOMEONE STOLE MY SHTICK! THAT'S WHAT!"

As people in the room cringed, Tariko took a deep breath. It was going to be one of THOSE days, was it...? "Okay, who did that?" she calmly asked.

"I dunno!" the girl who took the My Little Pony nickname "Pinkie Pie" long before she was Gifted snarled as she threw up her hands in frustration. "How on Earth do you think I'm supposed to feel when someone out there actually decided to break the FOURTH WALL of all things and dragged FICTIONAL CHARACTERS from another reality into this one?!" she then demanded. "We already get enough issues with jerks like Wade Wilson constantly bouncing into our universe whenever they want! We don't need to start having a whole stream of people coming in from other places, Tariko!"
"Okay! Okay! Okay!" the Trickster of the Show soothed as she patted the other girl's shoulder. Yes, there had been times in the last few months that she herself had to deal with the Merc with a Mouth from the Marvel-616 universe, who had got his butt seriously kicked by Hirosaki Chikage in her first interdimensional summer vacation trip in 2008 while she had been apprenticing with Doctor Stephen Strange and Professor Charles Xavier. Naturally upset about being beaten by a twelve year-old girl, the former Weapon X agent found a way to come to their universe to get a rematch...only to get trounced by Chikage, who was now Gifted as the Dark Heart of Pure Chaos. Of course, the Trickster of the Show had got some of her own licks from the other-dimensional native of Vancouver.

Given how much Wade was willing to come back for even MORE beat-downs by Chikage and Tariko, he was now being accused of becoming "fight scene happy"!

People like THAT even made most Yizibajohei shake their heads in pity...

"Oh! Phoebe-chan got the bad news, huh?"

Everyone turned as the Untameable One walked into the recreation hall. As many of Isaac Thomas' students waved politely at Hayashi Kanami, Phoebe zipped over to put herself in front of the native of Nerima, nearly overwhelming one of Yiziba's most powerful beings with her patented puppy dog eyes. "Kanami! PLEASE! Please tell me that you know who stole my shtick like that! PLEASE!"

"Chill out, Pitts!" Kanami snapped. "Didn't you get Kazumi-chan's update from North Korea about that?! It was a bunch of fans of Battle Royale and Danganronpa who got hold of the Staff of Gihan of all things, then used a tonne of Avalonian bodies to make replicas of their favourite characters!"

"WAIT! BATTLE ROYALE?!"

That was a wide-eyed Tariko, who had surged to her feet, the disbelief on her face quite surprising. "Yeah!" Kanami affirmed. "A bunch of kids from a village way out in the boonies on Phentax Two got hold of the Staff, then used it to rescue everyone from Shiroiwa when they died; in Shūya's and Noriko's cases, they got rescued before they could escape their Japan. They didn't get Gifted..."

Here, the Untameable One then slyly smiled as she gave her old friend a knowing look. "Lucky thing your favourite sensed what that dork Lu'umlo was trying to pull with the Danganronpa people...!"

People blinked before they gazed at Tariko. "Oh! You mean Inada Mizuho! Right?" Seth mused...
...before a bright flash of energy caused people's heads to snap around.

"The Wise Lord's Blessings upon you all this day, good warriors!"

Tariko tilted herself to the right to look around Kanami...

...then she seemed to literally jolt to attention as her eyes drank in the lovely visage in totally white hakama trousers and a matching haori jacket that masked a very well-developed body similar to how the woman known officially as Girl #1 in her class at Shiroiwa Junior High School on another universe's Shikoku had been depicted in the manga adoption of Takami Köshun's dystopian 1999 novel which had been released by Young Champion magazine from 2000-05. Everyone in the room froze as they looked at the Trickster of the Show, then glanced over to the just-arrived Inada Mizuho, then back again...

...before everyone in the room save the new arrival fell on their faces after seeing Tariko's jaw drop to the deck, tongue roll out like a carpet beyond her teeth and her eyes bulged out of her skull!

Silence.

More silence.

Still more silence.

Then...

"I assure you, good friends, this was NOT my intention!"

Everyone blinked as they gazed on Mizuho, then to the clearly love-struck Tariko, then back again. Noting this, Phoebe tried not to smirk as the lyrics of a certain song played through her head...

*I'll be the roundabout!
The words will make you out 'n' out!*
I spend the day your way;

Call it morning driving through the sound and

In and out the valley...!

The Mistress of Implausibility then turned to get something to drink as others continued to exchange wide-eyed looks between the dazed Trickster of the Show and the lady who just got her attention...

To Be Continued...!

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WRITER'S NOTES

As Shigaten Kamen (the Weaponeer) effectively indicated in the first scene, the Noukiite city of Ryekkyuk is the analogue of P'yŏng'yang in Korea. Of course, Wyumyam on Yiziba would be the Yizibajohei analogue of North Korea's capital city.

Translation list: Sua Majestade — His Majesty; Du verdammter Idiot — You stupid idiot; Sŏnbae — Upperclassman, Korean version of "sempai"; Shi — City; Hyŏn — Prefecture; Myudae-kole — Literally "august city", which translates as Sevastópol' in Russian; Script bible — Yizibajohei euphemism used to indicate background information for any situation or person; Tryzúb — Trident; Pánna — Lady; Sestrjónka — Diminutive version of sestrá, effectively meaning "sis" or "little sis"; Kul'túrnj — Cultured/Civilized; Chekíst — Nickname for a member of the Chrezvychájnaja Komíssija ("Extraordinary Commission") that served as Soviet Russia's first secret police force from 1917-22, which was later applied to members of the Commission's successive agencies; Máshen'ka — Diminutive of Marija; Ukrajíns'ka móva — The Ukrainian language; Sangui — Literally "senior leader", this is the Korean title for the rank of senior lieutenant; Memilgukssu — Cold buckwheat noodles; Tsalagi — Native term for members of the Cherokee Nation; Muscogee — Native term for members of the Creek Confederacy; Dans la Marine, il y a 'Mon Dieu' et 'mon cul', pas 'mon Amiral'! — In the Navy, there's "My God" and "my arse", not "my Admiral"!; S'il vous plaît pardonnez-moi — Please excuse me.

As could be guessed, both Ikusawa Kyōko (Segulmagnaðir) and Asakura Tomoko (Rebel Rider) are both characters from Zenkoku Seifuku Bishōjo Grand Prix; the former also appeared in the dating simulation game Find Love. Kyōko, as noted in the second scene, was the overall winner of the Grand Prix by vote of fans; she was the first place winner as voted by fans in the East Area finals. Tomoko appeared in the "Cherry Blossom" edition of the sequel, Sengra 97; she was voted
sixth place there.

**Pulgogi** literally means "fire meat". This is normally strips of marinated beef or pork grilled on an open barbecue with soy sauce, sugar, sesame oil, garlic, ground black pepper and other ingredients such as scallions, ginger, onions or mushrooms. This is one of Korea's more popular dishes.

In the universe of my stories, famous British aviator/yachtsman Sir **Thomas Octave Murdoch Sopwith** (1888-1989) shifted his work to Canada in the wake of the Great War and set up new headquarters at Winnipeg, creating the **Sopwith Aviation and Engineering Company of Canada, Ltd.** Said company built a larger, faster, single-winged version of the Sopwith F1 Camel in the **Sopwith Canada So-48 Camel II** in the late 1930s to equip the regiments of the Canadian Air Cavalry Corps (later the **Royal Canadian Corps of Air Cavalry**); Dean Raeburn herself flew a Camel II in the first two years of World War Two as a squadron commander in the Saskatchewan Cavalrymen, participating in the Battle of Britain. These days, Sopwith Canada is a part of **Magellan Aerospace** out of Mississauga west of Toronto; Sopwith's Canadian company is the larger entity's only subdivision primed to build whole aircraft in lieu of aircraft parts. As an aside, the various histories of the regiments of the RCCAC can be found in *The Air Cavalry Regiments of Canada*, which is published by me at the Fiction Press website under my writer's name.

**Shijo**, which is more often written as "sijo" in English, is a traditional poetic form that came into prominence during the Koryŏ Dynasty (918-1392) and came to flourish in the following Chosŏn Dynasty (1392-1910). Often used to explore bucolic, metaphysical and cosmological themes, a proper shijo is composed of three lines averaging fourteen to sixteen syllables for a total of up to 48 syllables. The structure of each poem normally follows a format where the first line introduces the situation, the second develops the theme of the poem and the third concludes the poem, usually with the first half of the final line employing a "twist", usually a surprise of meaning, sound or other device.

The shipgirls of the **Marine Nationale** ("National Navy", short-formed MN) of France introduced here:

Capitaine de Vaisseau **Noémie Péreire** MN (Grand Cuirassé *Dunkerque* [pendant 91])

CapV **Louise Bertin** MN (Croiseur Léger *Émile Bertin* [pendant C111])

As stated before, the French Navy doesn't use a universal ship prefix but type prefixes. The type prefix for light cruisers is **CLé** ("croiseur léger"), which differentiates from heavy cruisers, who get **CL** ("croiseur lourd"). Of course, as with other European navies, the French Navy didn't adopt universal pendant codes until after World War Two; the pendants given to **GC Dunkerque** (**Noémie Péreire**) and **CLé Émile Bertin** (**Louise Bertin**) indicate what order they were constructed since the first ironclad battleships and sail/steam cruisers were built in the 1860s.
As an aside, the scene between Louise Bertin and Mary Hood is inspired by the scenes between their counterparts as depicted in IJNfleetadmiral's story *Gaijin Teitoku* (see part 24 to see what I mean). As for the looks of the French shipgirls, Louise and Noémie both resemble their *Azur Lane* interpretations.

Russian-form patronyms in this part:

**Khirómi Ájonovna** — Hiromi, daughter of Ayone

**Kólbi Rónal'dovich** — Colby, son of Ronald

The mentioning of *Wade Wilson* (*Deadpool*) in this part is an acknowledgement of the first iterations of *The Doctor Is In* storyline from the Anime Addventure, which crossed over with both the DC and Marvel universes. Naturally, a chaos-loving fighter like Wade would definitely take well to a planet like Yiziba.

People who've read some of my earlier works would understand my viewpoints of the *Battle Royale* characters, especially **Inada Mizuho**.

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