Crossover with Yatsura and other series; including characters and situations from the fanfic series The Senior Year written by myself and Mike Smith. As the world gears up to fight the Abyssals, Earth's first artificial intelligence is asked to look on the kanmusu. Remembering the fifth of the Yamato-class warships, Moroboshi Negako summons the Seventh Carrier of Operation Z, Yonaga, to fight the enemy. But forces from both on Earth and beyond conspire against the kanmusu, requiring even more help to win the war.
Kyōto, two months after the attempted marriage of Moroboshi Ataru and Redet Lum...

"You don't know how much it fills my heart with joy to finally see you this way, Negako-kun."

The dark-haired woman with the almost black eyes dressed in the black martial artist's gi with hakama smiled as she bowed her head politely. "It is a relief, Heika. Have all the necessary preparations been made concerning my becoming Ataru's legal guardian?"

"It was done," the Heavenly Sovereign stated with a polite smile. "The Family Court in Tōkyō was quick to judge against Ataru-kun's parents since they didn't arrive for the hearing when it was called." Here, both people in the reception chamber for the Son of Heaven in his palace at Kyōto smirked; they both knew WHY Moroboshi Ataru's parents had not been able to attend that court session. "Your testimony and the financial evidence brought by Komeru-kun's subordinates were more than enough to see it done without objection. Of course, the funds embezzled by those two were recovered from their savings accounts and their access to Ataru-kun's accounts has been totally cut off. The necessary modifications to the applicable kazoku were done right then and there, with Tariko-kun now established as matriarch of the Moroboshi Clan."

She nodded in return. "My thanks on my siblings' behalf."

He nodded in turn. It was the least he could do for the man who helped save the planet over a year before. And who was also a distant blood relative of the Imperial Family through Shōtoku Tennō, the sixth of eight reigning female Heavenly Sovereigns in Japan's history and one of the last Nara Period monarchs from the Eighth Century; the Moroboshi Clan of Mutsu were descent from a secret love child Shōtoku Tennō bore from her then-chancellor, Dōkyō. "When will the Noukiites allow Ataru-kun's classmates to return to Earth?"

"They gladly held off on allowing such until issues with Ataru were properly resolved," Moroboshi Negako stated. "I will signal Kyech to allow them to journey home from Uru, but hold them at the
Jupiter orbit line until Neyote's shielding systems that will detonate the warp cores of any Urusian or allied vessel passing the Ceres orbit line — as well as re-route attempts at using the Central Warp Chamber on Triton to teleport people to Earth — are in place and operational. Neyote gave me an estimate of three weeks before all is in place and operational. Most likely given that they will still be 'blocked' from travelling to Earth by Kyech, Lum and her friends will clearly attempt to force their way back to Tomobiki. If you desire, Heika, that can be stopped."

Her host nodded. "How soon will that THING in Tomobiki be gone?"

"In a month's time. Given the matter concerning how we made use of that device in liberating the Avalonians, any attempts at extraction now will significantly alter the time-stream. Kyech warned against it once Relota explained what happened after the Niphentaxians were dealt with. Fortunately, Neyote has been able to block attempts by observers on Earth to send signals to Phentax Two; this ensures that their superiors on Phentax Two cannot report to Ōgi that Ataru and Tariko have moved from the house in Tomobiki. Given their faith in Ōgi's leadership, observers on Earth are more than sure the 'Army of Lum!...' — the Heavenly Sovereign laughed on hearing that — "...is more than capable of dealing with the Noukiites and allow the Urusians to reassert their 'influence' on Earth. None of the observers I have noted in Tomobiki or Hiroshima have any idea that the Niphentaxians possess no deployable military force at this time."

He nodded. "Allow me to consider what to finally do with Ataru-kun's so-called 'wife'. In the meantime, there is something far more vital than placating the Urusians and their allies in the Galactic Federation. Have you been able to examine the remnants of the Abyssals that have been brought in by the kanmusu over the last year, not to mention young Hoppō?"

"I have." Here, Negako lowered her eyes, startling her host. To see such a display of embarrassment by the first true artificial intelligence on Earth was a shock to the Heavenly Sovereign. "As you know, I cannot operate successfully on the high seas thanks to water interfering with my ability to summon ki from the earth. The kantai musume have a greater chance of success against these creatures than I can provide unless they were close to shore or in littoral waters." She gave him a curious look. "Have the Canadians sent an alert to Deannette Raeburn and her friends? The First Canadian Specialized Warfare Unit can be of great assistance, especially Jessica Dover given her requirements."

"The recall signal was sent a month ago. They will be back on Earth in a week."

"Excellent."

"Can you help the kanmusu and their sisters elsewhere fight these creatures?"
Negako's face then lit up in an icy smirk. "It can be done, Heika..."

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**Shipgirl Samurai and Super-Ninjas!**

by Fred Herriot

C&C and story ideas by Staplesdex2, Wolfman-053, Rose Ash, Mike Koos, IJNFleetadmiral, Rorschach's Blot, Kiyone4ever, Hunter 1, KBTKaiser, Baran3 and Alex Darkfire.


Based on _Kantai Collection_, developed by Kadokawa Games; _The Seventh Carrier_, written by Peter Albano; and _Urusei Yatsura_ and _Ranma 1/2_, created by Takahashi Rumiko.

Including characters and situations from _normalman_, written by Jim Valentino; _Koihime Musō_, created by BaseSon; _Men In Black_, created by Lowell Cunningham; _Zipang_, created by Kawaguchi Kaiji; _Mahō Sensei Negima_, written by Akamatsu Ken; _Harry Potter_, written by Joanna Rowling; and _Due South_, created by Paul Haggis.

Also including characters and situations from the _Urusei Yatsura_ fanfic series _Urusei Yatsura — The Senior Year_, created by Mike Smith and Fred Herriot; the _Ranma 1/2/Ikkūtōsen/Urusei Yatsura_ crossover fanfic _Phoenix From the Ashes_ and its side stories, the _Ranma 1/2_ fanfic _Wanderers_ and the _Harry Potter_ fanfic _Harry Potter and the Icemaidens_, all created by Fred Herriot; the _Kantai Collection_ fanfic _Gaijin Teitoku_, written by IJNFleetadmiral; various _Kantai Collection/Harry Potter_ short stories written by Harry Leferts; the _Kantai Collection_ dōjinshi _Haruna Weather_ and _Katsuragi Weather_, created by Hisahiko; and the _Ranma 1/2_ fanfic _Misuteru_, written by Brian Drozd.

Note that all writer's notes will be contained at the end of the text of each chapter.

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_Eta-jima, the site of the Imperial Japanese Naval Academy, three weeks later..._
"Ichirō, you are performing this procedure incorrectly."

Hearing that cold, metered voice from the woman in the black martial artist's gi standing at the aft end of the control room overlooking the summoning chamber which had been used over the last three years to bring back the living spirits of over two hundred warships in humanoid form, the chief scientist of the Kanmusu-keikaku shuddered before he stared wrathfully into a pair of almost black eyes. "Then please tell us, Negako-san, how exactly SHOULD we be doing this?!" Shimada Ichirō snarled with no attempt at trying to be polite to the visitor from Kyōto, causing the shipgirls listening to this to gape in shock at such a show of bluster to a being who — if the tales about "Imperial Special Agent #49" were even the least bit true! — knew at least a HUNDRED ways of killing him with just one hand. "You have no knowledge of what we do here...!"

"The ki fields of the chamber are quite simple for me to interpret," Moroboshi Negako stated with the same tone she used in almost all circumstances, clearly not the least bit perturbed by the scientist's bluster.

Watching the ninjutsu grandmaster go at him, the assembled navy officers and shipgirls smirked as the "pet assassin" of the Chrysanthemum Throne verbally dressed Shimada down; very few liked the man even if they were grateful for what he had done in helping prosecute the war against the Abyssals. "Negako has seriously got to teach us how she can stay as cold as ice when she gives someone a smackdown!»" Tenryū hissed to Tatsuta in English; the shipgirls often spoke in that manner here because Professor Shimada never learned the language.

Some of the others snickered, making the scientist's forehead veins pulse. "How exactly can we make this work better, Miss Negako?" Rear Admiral James Vance, commander of United States Naval Forces Japan, asked. He was here representing his operational boss, Vice Admiral Joanna Collins, Deputy Chief of Naval Operations (Shipgirls) in Washington...even if there were only several dozen American shipgirls on duty, all currently working out of Eta-jima...and all of whom had been brought back to "service" through the chamber here in lieu of the recently rebuilt chamber at the Recruit Training Command at Naval Station Great Lakes north of Chicago. "All the major naval powers were able to get machines built to bring ships back as shipgirls, but only the Canadians struck gold right away, getting most of their whole World War Two fleet back, not to mention Warrior and Magnificent, plus a good slew of their Coast Guard fleet, Acadia and Saint Roch. We can't let the Canadians and the others in the Commonwealth shoulder convoy protection across the Pacific and Atlantic alone."

Negako nodded. "Understandable, James. Allow me to demonstrate."

Gently moving Shimada aside, Negako picked up a well-leafed through copy of Jane's All The World's Warships 1939-45, scanning the American section. "Since you are the one who asked about
this, James, I will summon several American capital vessels first,” the ninjutsu grandmaster stated before she tapped controls to energize the chamber, causing Shimada's subordinates to gape in shock on seeing how easily she could work the machines.

"Do we have supplies for them when they come in, Nagato-san?” Rear Admiral Saitō Ten'ichi, the commander of the Kanmusu-keikaku, asked his secretary ship.

"We can take in a total of ten extra battleships whose requirements match that of Yamato-san and her sisters, Teitoku,” the raven-haired battleship stated with an amused smile. "Fortunately, the Koreans were able to learn how the Canadians performed their ship summonings and recalled all of their fleet that were constructed in America during the Greater East Asia War. Convoys from Pusan, Ulsan and Kwang'yang to Fukuoka and Shimonoseki are seeing supplies brought in from China and eastern Russia safely since the airspace can be covered by the Korean Air Force and the Air Self-Defence Force, not to mention the national Ministries of Magical Affairs in Sŏul, Bēijīng and Moskvá, plus the Imperial Magical Commanderies of both Kyūshū and Chūgoku."

Saitō nodded. "Wonderful!” He then gazed on the other naval officers. "As soon as we can, minna-san, the new kanmusu Negako-sama will summon here will be allowed to return home if your superiors desire it so they can help your kanmusu programs properly catch up to our Commonwealth friends."

"'Negako-sama'...?!” Shimada sputtered...

...before he eeped on confronting two pissed off battleships. "Herr Professor Shimada, given Frau Negako's status with your own Heavenly Sovereign, it is only proper to grant her the respect she had long earned in the service of this country," Bismarck snarled, blue eyes flashing with disgust. "Allow her to proceed with her demonstration and we will be out of your way."

"Considering Miss Negako there made damn sure your country wasn't torn to ratshit after Shōwa Tennō finally called it a day back in '45, cussing her out like that is not 'cricket' as our British friends would say," Iowa icily added, her face splitting into a dangerous smile.

Shimada quaked while many Japanese kanmusu giggled on seeing the tall and curvy fast battleship dress down the portly scientist. Noting that, Negako smiled as she tapped the link to YouTube to access potential summoning songs. A moment later, she nodded on finding one good choice, then tapped a control to pipe the tune she wanted to play into the summoning chamber through the loudspeakers on the walls. The system glowed with power as a beautiful big band melody echoed through the loudspeakers, making the shipgirls perk. Within a moment, one of the monitoring technicians then gasped. "Negako-sama! We got something!” he declared, which made Shimada fluster in outraged denial and the naval officers gape in shock at how easily the ninjutsu grandmaster had done it.
"Wait a sec'...!"

That was Iowa. "You recognize the song, Iowa-san?" Yamato asked.

"Yeah, Yamato! It was written back in '61 by some guy name Red Mascara...!"

"There's actually a composer named 'Red Mascara'?" Roma instantly demanded.

"Calm yourself, Roma," Negako stated as her eyebrow arched Spock-like...

...just as someone with the same general build as the American battleship rose from the enchanted waters to walk up the inclined ramp, a curious look on her face. Seeing her, Iowa nearly broke down in tears on noting the dark-haired girl had the hull classification symbol 62 on her slate-grey bustier, though she didn't have such loud clashing colours on her thigh-highs or button shirt that her older sister normally wore. Like Iowa, New Jersey had long flowing hair even if it was as black as Navy coffee, her eyes a bright sky blue that were warm and welcoming. A flash of confusion crossed the newly-returned battleship's face for a moment as she looked around...then she gaped as Iowa charged into the chamber to swamp her with a happy embrace. Seeing that, Negako cut the playback of *I'm From New Jersey* as the surprised newcomer stared in shock on seeing how much her sister had changed, then she looked down at herself. Immediately, a pair of Shinto shrine miko from the base's multi-faith chapel then came out to greet the just-arrived American akitsumikami, they accompanied by the senior chaplain for the American forces in Japan. Seeing the latter, New Jersey braced herself to salute the older man before the miko moved to guide the understandably bewildered battleship out of the summoning chamber, a grinning Iowa moving to follow. Negako smiled as she tapped a control to activate the intercom link to the chamber. "Remain in the vestibule, Iowa. I will summon Missouri and Wisconsin now."

"Aye, ma'am!" Iowa called back over the speakers.

"Um...Iowa...?"

"Be calm, New Jersey. There is an explanation for this," Negako said.

She was quick to re-calibrate the chamber, then selected a new song. After the first verse of the *Missouri Waltz* played out, a second shipgirl emerged from the misty waters, dressed the same way
as New Jersey though her uniform was coloured in black and white with a white 63 under her bust, her blonde hair done up in a bun at the back of her head under her radar director-shaped sailor hat. Looking around in confusion, she blinked as the door to the vestibule opened, allowing a screaming Iowa to charge in and glomp her, making the other battleship yelp as two new miko followed the name ship of her class into the chamber. After Missouri was walked out by the shrine maidens and the American chaplain, Negako reprogrammed the machine, then brought up a song on YouTube. Sure enough, the fourth of the Iowa-class fast battleships who had served in the United States Navy came out of the pool after one verse of *Oh Wisconsin, Land of My Dreams*, dressed in a pale knee-length dress with a fedora covering her straight blonde hair, hull number 64 under her bust. Sure enough, the last of the Iowa sisters found herself greeted with a teary hug by her sister before another pair of miko and the chaplain came into the chamber to walk her out.

"Questions?" Negako then asked the officers standing behind her once Iowa had escorted her sisters into the monitor room.

As several of the battleships moved to greet New Jersey, Missouri and Wisconsin, the navy officers there all exchanged looks. "No, just a simple confession, Miss Negako," James Vance then stated, using the English honorific even if he spoke Japanese. "We're a bunch of *morons!""

"Do not disparage your attempts at trying to use this process, James. Simply put, you and those who seek to bring the spirits of fighting warships of your nation forgot that the name of the polity you all serve is called the 'United States of America'," Negako explained, ignoring the sulking growl from a certain scientist in the background. "In English, that is a plural noun even if your people have made use of singular pronouns and verb tenses when you've described yourselves ever since your Civil War in the 1860s. Each element of your union is unique and must be acknowledged as such when you make use of your summoning machine at Great Lakes. Doing that will ensure you can restore your entire battle line in one evening. You could even strive to summon all your cruisers as they were named after American cities...or future states and the incorporated and unincorporated organized territories such Alaska, Guam, Hawai'i and their sisters. Most likely, you could even summon the Montana-class battleships, the original South Dakota-class battleships cancelled because of the Washington Treaty, the original Washington as well as Illinois and Kentucky..." — mentioning those last two made Iowa and her sisters perk as they gazed her way — "...as they all were in various stages of construction or planning before the orders for them were cancelled; note Kii was brought back through this device...and she was only at thirty percent completion when her hull was scrapped to make way for more vital naval construction during the war." She indicated Yamato's and Musashi's demure-looking sister, a tall woman with long black hair styled as a Shinto shrine miko would wear it and dark brown eyes, dressed in a miko-like uniform of kimono and hakama, though coloured in a forest scene to mark her namesake province. "However, as Nagato just stated, bringing all those battleships, battlecruisers and large cruisers here to Eta-jima would severely overstrain the supply chain, so I suggest you allow the others to be summoned through the chamber at Great Lakes."

The American admiral nodded as Saitō clapped his shoulders. "Aye-aye, ma'am. You thinking of bringing Tirpitz, the Hipper sisters and Vittorio Veneto back tonight so Bismarck, Prinz Eugen, Roma and Littorio here won't be so lonely?"
The three battleships in question and the lone German heavy cruiser perked. "If you could bring back my sisters, I'm sure the demand for consumables won't be as large since only Tirpitz and Veneto will add to our current battle line here, Frau Negako," Prinz Eugen stated as the German naval liaison to Japan, Kapitän zur See Heinrich Kellermann, nodded in approval.

"It should be no problem, Negako-san," Nagato assured her.

"Very well..."

The base mess hall, two hours later...

"It's a pity we couldn't bring back more this evening," Akagi noted.

"Hai," Kaga agreed as they enjoyed the beautiful steaks prepared by the mixed staff of culinary experts to celebrate such a large summoning. All the elder fleet carriers of Japan, accompanied by Graf Zeppelin, now shared a table; the Japanese veterans of the Kidō Butai had welcomed their German counterpart as a long-lost friend even if the namesake to the developer of the first rigid-frame airship in 1900 hadn't been completed by the end of the Second World War and her seizure by the Soviets. "It would be nice to square accounts with Arizona-san, Oklahoma-san and Utah-san, not to mention the others of Battleship Row."

"That chance will eventually come, Kaga-san. Don't rush into it too quickly," Sōryū stated as she enjoyed her steamed rice. "We all owe them a deep apology for that damned bureaucratic bungle that made the Americans believe all along that Operation Z was a deliberate sneak attack on Pearl Harbour."

"They will understand, meine Freunde," Zeppelin assured the other carrier before sipping her tea. "The Americans are strange at times, but their sense of justice is quite strong. They are also quick to acknowledge honest faults and are happy to embrace new friends and old enemies alike."

The others nodded...before they perked as four American fast battleships made their way to the table beside theirs. "You mind if we join you?" Iowa asked.
"Please, Iowa-san," Shōkaku stated as she waved to the empty chairs.

They took their seats, then eagerly dug into the stacks of perfectly-made cheeseburgers. Thanks to the international presence at Eta-jima, the base’s culinary staff had been augmented with cooks from America, Canada, Britain, Australia, New Zealand and Germany to ensure their shipgirls got traditional fare...though older shipgirls like Iowa and Graf Zeppelin who had been on base for some time had gladly tried out the local cuisine; the namesake of the Hawkeye State was well-known for her love of Hakata-style rāmen. "My, to believe technology has developed enough to actually merge with magic to allow us to live as humans," Wisconsin stated as she sipped her Navy coffee.

"Planning to stay up late, Frau Wisconsin?" Zeppelin asked.

"It's alright, Countess," Iowa stated, making Zeppelin blush at her use of the English female equivalent of the first part of her name. "Navy coffee doesn't nail us with caffeine overload like it would the Quacky Quartet." Here, she nodded towards Kongō and her sisters, who were seated at a nearby table and chatting with some of the destroyers. As her sisterships snickered at that nickname for the four fast battleships — the Iowa sisters got a chance to see the Kongō sisters' eccentricities first-hand after they got the basic brief on their new duties from Admirals Saitō and Vance — the first of her class hummed. "Hey, you guys know Miss Negako more than we do," she then noted. "We know the whole bit of her moving to make sure the whack-jobs in the Black Dragon Society didn't start a freaking civil war after Shōwa Tennō issued his declaration of surrender in '45...but other than her being some sort of weird magical AI that was created by Major Raeburn's late teacher who became fully sentient back in 1808, we don't know anything about her. I can tell she's not fully human."

"We noticed it as well," Missouri added.

"That's understandable," Zuikaku muttered before sipping her tea. "Honestly, Iowa-san, we're as clueless about Negako-san as you. We know she's Tennō's personal assassin; if he wanted someone dead, she'd make sure that creep was dead." As the Americans nodded, she sighed. "Still, something is odd..."

"What is it, Zuikaku?" Shōkaku asked.

Her grey-haired sister looked over. "Shōkaku-nē, did Negako-san ask you about the Unit 731 special communications radio codes?"

Silence.
More silence.

Still more silence.

Then...

"Why would Negako-san be concerned about THAT?!" Hiryū said as disgust crossed the faces of the other Japanese carriers at hearing the common name for their nation's infamous biological and chemical warfare research unit from the dark days of the Second Sino-Japanese War and the Greater East Asia War. "Unit 731 wasn't concerned about naval operations whatsoever..."

"Oh, gods!"

Eyes locked on a white-faced Akagi. "What is it, Akagi-san?!" Kaga demanded.

"Funny name."

That was New Jersey. "What do you mean, Frau Jersey?" Zeppelin asked.

"The normal naming conventions for warships back then, Countess," the namesake of the Garden State stated. "Save for rare exceptions, battleships (and those converted to carriers like Kaga here) were named after the old provinces. Aircraft carriers built as such were named after birds and mythological creatures. Battlecruisers and heavy cruisers (and conversions like Akagi) were named after mountains. Normal cruisers were named after rivers and destroyers got named after plants, meteorological phenomena and oceanographic phenomena." Seeing the surprise on their hosts' faces, Jersey winked. "We became allies after '45 and I sailed with the future namesakes of many shipgirls here when I was brought back in the 1980s to build the Six Hundred Ship Fleet, remember?"
Hearing that made the Japanese shipgirls laugh. "True...!" Kaga noted.

"How was 'Yonaga' written, Akagi-san?" Zuikaku asked.

"'Era of Eternity'," the older carrier reported as she took out a pen from under her top and sketched the kanji 代永 代永 on a table napkin to show the others. "Clearly, this was meant to throw off spies who might have sought her. But what was she? Was she built as a carrier...?"

The others all hummed...

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The summoning chamber...

"Unit 731 commissioned an aircraft carrier?! That's far-fetched, Negako-sama!"

"It is the truth, Ten'ichi," Negako stated as she sipped her tea. The scientific staff had been dismissed by the commander of the Kanmusu-keikaku despite Shimada Ichirō's screaming protests about the ninjutsu grandmaster's "incompetency" when it came to using the delicate equipment. "It has been investigated by my clan since Nagaiwakai enquired about the fate of Kokeru's uncle Kyōsuke, the younger brother to my host at the time, Moroboshi Ryūbi. Kyōsuke was a naval navigation officer by training. Yet in late 1940, he was seconded to a liaison group to Unit 731 then under the command of Vice Admiral Fujita Hiroshi, as were well over two thousand others." She sipped her tea. "Including enough pilots, flight crew and deck staff to support an air flotilla of at least a hundred and forty aircraft of the standard types then in use."

That made Saitō Ten'ichi and Nagato gape in shocked disbelief before the battleship hummed as her mind ran through that information. "Hull 797..." she then concluded. "When Kii-san came back, she told me she had sensed that Hull 797 had been constructed somewhere...but where...?"

"Given this ship was hidden from Western agents to well past the end of the war due to the affiliation to Unit 731, I believe Maizuru would be the point of origin," Negako stated as she scanned the list of potential songs on YouTube.
"That would make sense," James Vance stated. "Maizuru was mothballed thanks to the Washington Treaty until '36 and it specialized in building destroyers. We wouldn't have spies in that part of the country and it would have been easy to hide this girl even if she was a Yamato-class vessel."

"But where would this ship have gone to so it could await the call to climb Mount Niitaka, Herr Konteradmiral Vance?" Heinrich Kellermann asked. "The only place I can think of is somewhere on the east coast of Korea or the Northern Territories beyond Hokkaidō, placed away from Soviet spies. Given that..."

"Why not further north than that?"

Eyes locked on the lone Russian officer there, many of the people present blinking in surprise. "What do you mean, Petróva-taisa?" Nagato asked.

Kapitán Pέrvyj Rάnga Sofίja Aleksάnna Petróva was the Russian naval liaison to Japan. Unlike many nations, the world’s largest country hadn’t been hit hard by the Abyssals over the last three years; only cities such as Sankt-Peterbúrg, Vladivostók, Sevastópol’ and Múrmansk had been wrecked. Thanks to help from the Koreans and the Canadians, all the World War Two-era Soviet Navy had been called back to duty as well as early Cold War ships...though, given the Russian tradition of using male pronouns for warships, they had come back as handsome shipboys and not cute shipgirls. "Negáko Xirósukovna, even if Stálin's lunatics were in charge at the time, we hadn't fully surveyed the whole of Siberia by the time the Great Patriotic War began in 1941. There might have been places on the Pacific or Arctic coast that they could have based such a ship even if he was a Yamato-class conversion. Maybe we can concentrate there."

Others hummed, then Negako's eyebrow arched. "Or simply use this song..."

She tapped controls on the computer. People perked as they sensed power flood the chamber, then they looked through the monitor portal as the vortex formed to That Place where kami of lost ships went to after they were sunk, scrapped or made museum ships (as was the case for Iowa and her sisters since they had been preserved at places which could be accessed by Abyssal submarines)...
With that, people got up to see what was going on...

"Now to see if this one will listen..."

With that, Negako tapped controls to play a song:

_Yuki no shingun, kōri o fun de._
_Dore ga kawa yara, michi sae shirezu._
_Uma wa taoreru sutete mo okezu._
_Koko wa izukuzo? Mīna teki no kuni!_
_Mama no daitan ippuku yareba,_
_Tanomisekuna ya tabako ga nihon..._

"Huh?!

Everyone in the Kidō Butai stared at Zuikaku. "What is it?" Shōkaku asked.

The pony-tailed grey-haired fleet carrier looked at her sister. "Shōkaku-nē...why is Negako-san playing _Yuki no Shingun_?! That's an _Army_ song...!"

Shocked looks crossed the six carriers' faces before they stared at the building that housed the incredible device that had been responsible for their rebirth as shipgirls. "Unit 731...?" Kaga began.

"An _Army_ unit...!" Akagi reminded the others.

"Negako-san asked about that...!" Sōryū hissed out.
"And now she's using that song...!" Hiryū advised.

"Which means...?" Shōkaku wondered.

Zuikaku blinked before her jaw dropped. "Yonaga-san...!"

With that, all six carriers screamed before they took off for the summoning chamber at flank speed, leaving behind a chorus of blinking destroyers and other shipgirls. "What were THEY talking about, poi?" a confused Yūdachi wondered as she gazed on her two best friends.

"I don't know...but if Akagi-sempai thinks it's serious enough..." Fubuki stated before she ran after the veterans of the Kidō Butai, making a whole tonne of other shipgirls blink before they raced off to follow...

"We got something!" Vance called out from the monitoring station; having been there when Iowa and other American shipgirls had been brought here, he knew how to recognize the signs of a successful summoning. "Someone's coming..."

"Nagato, signal to this one," Negako called out. "You were flagship during Operation Z. She may recognize you, then find reason to come in to report."

"Hai!" Nagato said before she concentrated. «Unit 731 affiliate to Operation Z, please signal in!» she called out through a mental radio transmission using the JN-25 secure radio code. «This is Nagato. Please signal in with ship status! Unit 731 affiliate to Operation Z, please signal in...!»

«Yonaga, this is Akagi! Please respond!»

Nagato jerked before she turned to see Akagi lead the veterans of the Kidō Butai into the monitor room while other shipgirls moved to stand in the large observation gallery off to the port side of the summoning chamber. "'Yonaga'?” the battleship wondered, her eyebrow arched in confusion.
"That's her name, Nagato-san!" Akagi stated. "She was the base ship for the Sixth Naval Air Flotilla; it was all seconded to Unit 731 to keep spies clear of her!" She then focused on the summoning chamber as the waters began to churn, the air chilling significantly. «Yonaga, this is Akagi! Please respond!» she transmitted out. «Yonaga, please respond...!»

"Would she even obey?" Saitō then hissed.

"If she was frozen up in Siberia, her crew might have become like all the other holdouts that ignored the order to stand down in '45," Vance warned.

"Since it's been seven decades since the war ended...!"] Sofija Petróva hissed. "Bóže moj! They would have died on her decks!" She looked towards the shipgirls in the gallery. "Továřišči! Get a monk in here, quickly!"

A wide-eyed Shimakaze rapidly nodded before she sprinted out, racing to the base temple to get whom the Russian captain called for. As the waters in the chamber bubbled, verses of *Yuki no Shingun* continued to play over loudspeakers as the air of the chamber turned very cold. Seeing this, Negako's eyes narrowed as she reached out with ki senses to detect what was coming...

«Did you climb Niitaka-yama, Akagi?»

Akagi tensed. "I heard that!"

"We all did!" Musashi exclaimed. «Yonaga! It's Musashi! Please! We've all had to answer the Heavenly Sovereign's call to duty once more! We need you! Come back to us! It's not so difficult! Listen to the song and home in on it!»

Silence.

"That might have been too much, Musashi," Negako advised; she had been able to interpret the signal thanks to her ability to read the battleship's ki.

«Onē-san...?»
Hearing that made all the destroyers yip in delight; they all knew there was a fifth Yamato-class ship still unaccounted for. "Everyone! Call out to Yonaga-sempai!" Fubuki cried. "Give her your support! Help her come back to us!"

Others nodded before they concentrated. «Yonaga-sempai...come back to us, Sempai...we need you, Yonaga-sempai...please come back to us, Yonaga-sempai...!»

"Put the song on immediate replay!" Saitō ordered.

"Already done," Negako stated...

...just as a head covered by ice-caked black hair emerged from the pool!

Cries of joy escaped the destroyers and submarines as cruisers and battleships whooped and shared hugs with sisterships and friends and the carriers of the Kidō Butai screamed in delight on seeing their long-missing companion finally returned. As the newcomer stately walked up the inclined ramp, the door to the monitor room opened to reveal Shimakaze with a middle-aged Buddhist monk in proper vestments. "I came as soon as Shimakaze-san told me what was happening, Negako-sama," Venerable Hayashigo stated as he bowed politely...then he turned to stare wide-eyed at the emerging shipgirl. "Buddha preserve us all...!"

"We'll be dealing with a massive case of survivor's guilt in this one, Venerable," Vance warned. "She's been frozen in the Arctic ice of Siberia since at least 1941, her crew trapped with her. They're all probably dead...!"

Hayashigo hissed out in horror before he nodded. "Understood..."

By then, the newcomer had fully emerged from the pool of enchanted water, ice dropping away her hair as the chamber's internal temperature began to heat up once more. She was a half-head taller than Yamato, Musashi and Kii, with all the great curves in the body that marked she had been a battleship before being rebuilt as a carrier. Her face was angular and stern, eyes the stormy grey of a hurricane; her hair was tied in a simply ponytail at the neck and extended to her waist. She was dressed in a kyūdō-ka's kimono top, coloured dark green and covered by a kendō-ka's black dō that shielded her chest and abdomen. In lieu of the thigh-high skirts and socks other carriers wore as shipgirls, this one had a black umanori hakama that reached down to a pair of red socks covered by zōri with ship's hulls under the soles, plus rudders and twin propeller shafts. Over her groin was a kendō-ka's tare shaped like the aft end of her flight deck, black with landing stripes, the katakana ヨ over her right hip. She also bore kuzari plates that covered the rest of her hips. To the surprise of many, she had sode covering her shoulders and deltoid muscles, kote tucked under her kimono...
sleeves to brace her lower arms and suneate tucked under her hakama leggings to protect her lower legs; seeing the amount of armour on her body, the shipgirls wondered what sort of protective armour the newcomer had possessed as a warship. To mark she was Yamato-class, the dark grey bow-like gorget with the Imperial Chrysanthemum that Yamato and her sisters all proudly wore protected this shipgirl's neck, the gold flower shining brightly.

To top it all off, a beautiful samurai's daishō was lashed to her left hip.

Once clear of the pool, the newcomer stopped, then looked up, her eyes scanning the chamber she found herself in as the final verse of *Yuki no Shingun* played out and the chamber's systems began to power down. Seeing the bewildering mix of modern and classic uniforms worn by the women and girls in the high gallery off to her starboard — whom she instantly sensed were warships transformed into human women as she had just been by whatever kami had brought her here from Sano Bay — Yonaga then focused on the other observation gallery off to her port forward. Seeing the mixture of naval uniforms there along with six girls who clearly were aircraft carriers made human, she focused on the one who clearly had chrysanthemums on his epaulettes. He perked on noting she had spotted him, then he stepped out of the gallery, appearing a moment later at a hatchway ahead of her. She was quick to assume he was a vice admiral thanks to the twin silver blossoms under the anchor on his solid gold shoulder boards. Much to her surprise, he came to attention and saluted first, which made her gape.

"Greetings, Yonaga-san," he said with a bow of his head. "Welcome to Eta-jima and welcome back to Japan. I'm Rear Admiral Saitō Ten'ichi, the commander of the Kantai Musume-keikaku, the Fleet Shipgirl Project of the Japanese Maritime Self-Defence Force, successor service to the Imperial Navy you should have served in all along. You obviously have questions about what just happened, but the world has need of your services against a threat unlike anything we've ever encountered before...thus provoking the need to summon the kami of the fighting warships of the Imperial Navy and other navies to combat..."

"The Abyssals."

That made him gape even if he shivered at her moaning voice. "You know...?"

"I have felt them over the last several years even where I was, since they emerged in the Arctic and began preying on ships travelling around Russia, Alaska and Canada," Yonaga said, her body quaking slightly as she tried not to allow her feelings for those disgusting yōma to overwhelm her in the presence of her new admiral. "They have tried to prey on my guilt at being frozen in Sano Bay since Shōwa Jūroku-nen, prevented from assisting the others in the Kidō Butai to execute Operation Z because of a damned earthquake that brought glaciers down, too thick for me to plow through without sinking." As people gasped on hearing what trapped Yonaga at the eastern end of Russia for so long, she closed her eyes. "They tempted me to join them to seek vengeance on those who left my crew to die alone...but I would not allow any of my crew's kami to be drawn from the Shrine of Infinite Salvation within my hangar, tricked into renouncing their vow to serve the Heavenly
Sovereign even if almost all of them refused to accept the call to lay down arms in Shōwa Nijū-nen..."

"All of them?" Saitō hissed out.

Yonaga nodded as the tears finally flowed her cheeks. "Almost all of them...!"

As she dropped to her knees, her whole body shaking in anguished grief, Yamato, Musashi and Kii sprinted from the gallery to run into the chamber and embrace their returned sister just as the guilt finally got too much for her.

A grief-filled scream that could wake the dead then burst from Yonaga's lips...

Café Mamiya, minutes later...

"Hoppō-chan! Hoppō-chan, what's wrong?! Hoppō-chan!"

As both Mamiya and Hōshō tried to comfort the screaming young Abyssal, both the food supply auxiliary and the first purpose-designed aircraft carrier exchanged confused looks. Like all the other shipgirls at Eta-jima, both had sensed the incredible number of summonings earlier in the evening and had just detected the last one moments ago...which is when the northern island princess born from the spirits of dead and grieving children in and around the small town in the Aleutian Islands known today as Unalaska looked towards the place where her "Hōshō-mama" and "Mamiya-mama" had been reborn as shipgirls, then howled in mortal terror before she tried to hide under a handy kotatsu, making it shudder and clatter as she desperately tried to make herself as small as possible.

"Hoppō-chan!" Mamiya called out as Hōshō lifted the kotatsu from the shivering child spirit, making Hoppō wail before she buried herself inside the carrier's skirt, gripping Hōshō's legs as she rapidly shook her head. "Hoppō-chan!"

The door to the café then slid open, revealing a woman in non-reflective black clothes as she marched in. Hoppō yelped at that sudden noise...then blinked on sensing a wave of familiar ki wash over her, which made her turn while Mamiya and Hōshō called out "Negako-sama!" on recognizing who just walked in. Before they could ask what was going on, the ninjutsu grandmaster found herself the recipient of a flying black-and-white missile as Hoppō chattered at a hundred knots at the
Earth Angel, waving like crazy in the direction of the summoning chamber as she tried to make the planet's first ever true artificial intelligence understand how BAD it was to have brought the *Angry One* here...!

Negako, of course, was not bothered by such a show of panic. "Hoppō, why do you look upon Yonaga as the 'Angry One'?” she asked, making Mamiya and Hōshō gasp on realizing the last ship summoning had brought forth the spirit of the warship most Abyssals viewed as the Devil incarnate. "After all, was it not your own progenitor who tried on several occasions to corrupt Yonaga by taking the spirits of her crew from her?” Ignoring the chorus of horrified gasps from the two "momboats” behind Hoppō, the ninjutsu grandmaster lightly smiled. "Did you not come here, Hoppō, because you did not desire to be like your elder siblings elsewhere and make war against humans? Yonaga would understand that. Besides, you are a child…and no samurai like Yonaga would harm a child.”

"Yonaga’...?"

Negako gazed over. "Fujita Hiroshi's flagship, Mamiya."

Hōshō looked at the café owner as Hoppō gaped at her "Mamiya-mama", surprised to learn that the food transport had once interacted with the Angry One. "You know of that ship, Mamiya-san?” the first true aircraft carrier asked.

"Yamato-san's, Musashi-san's, Shinano-san's and Kii-san's long-missing sister, Hōshō-san,” Mamiya confessed as her cheeks reddened, which made Hōshō gasp. "Like Shinano-san, Yonaga-san was transformed into an aircraft carrier during construction. I was the one who transported the last food supplies to her in the summer of 1941 before she disappeared. I honestly hadn't thought about her until now when Negako-san mentioned her name.” She gazed on Negako as Hoppō glanced fearfully towards the summoning chamber building; even if the young Abyssal was in the protective arms of the Earth Angel, the widespread fear of the Angry One among her kind was too ingrained in her to dismiss so easily...

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**The base mess hall, an hour later...**

"Oi! What's all this Ōyodo-chan just told us about mass summonings tonight?!”

Hearing that cheery man's voice, everyone turned before smiles crossed the faces of all the shipgirls
who had been brought back to "life" prior to tonight. "Ataru-sensei! Tariko-sensei!" Fubuki called out as fraternal twin teenage versions of Moroboshi Negako walked into the mess hall, dressed the same way the ninjutsu grandmaster dressed. "Hai! Negako-sensei was able to bring several shipgirls in!" She waved to Iowa's sisters, then indicated the other new shipgirls who joined the Kanmusu-keikakaku this evening. "Iowa-sempai, Bismarck-sempai, Roma-sempai, Littorio-sempai and Prinz Eugen-sempai got their sisters brought through, then we found the last of Yamato-san's sisters."

She pointed to the tall figure in green-and-black now in the serving line, flanked by Yamato and Musashi as they indicated what foods she could try. Gazing at her, Moroboshi Ataru and his spiritual and now genetic twin sister Tariko blinked in shocked surprise. "She's Hull 797?" the latter then asked, her words still inflected with a male tone even if she was definitely all woman underneath her black martial artist's gi with umanori hakama.

"Yonaga," Akagi called over from her seat beside Kaga and the others of the Kidō Butai as they waited for their would-be companion to join them. "She's the one your great-great-uncle served on as navigation officer, Tariko-san."

Tariko blinked. "Our great-great-uncle?! Ryūbi-hiijoichan's brother?!"

"Hai," Akagi confirmed...

"TEITOKU!"

Everyone gasped before a black-haired missile in modified miko clothing with petticoat under her skirt and thigh-high black stockings slammed into Ataru's back, sending him face-first to the deck! As people looked, the dazed teenager found himself showered with warm kisses by a giddy Kirishima, making the other shipgirls save the ten newcomers grin in delight on seeing the fourth of the "Quacky Quartet" being so passionate with the last host of Earth's first true artificial intelligence. A glance to Ataru showed a look that was a mixture of annoyed exasperation and amused indulgence, the latter emotion getting the better of him as he drew the fast battleship into his lap. "Kiri-chan..." he playfully scolded as he gazed into her face. "What did I tell you?"

"To not call you 'Teitoku','" the fast battleship cooed in mock innocence.

"So why are you calling me that?" he wondered. "Honestly, Kiri-chan! I haven't even graduated from high school, much less decided on a career in life! Just because I gave that one Abyssal the soulsword when you and the others were fishing the day after I got here doesn't mean that we're going to get married!" As Kirishima mewed in ditsy delight at the mention of a potential wedding in her future, he moaned. "Kiri-chan, I just got away from marrying an Oni...!"
"Oni"!

That was Yonaga, who had come up with her food tray, now stacked with sushi to the brim as well as fluffed rice. Ataru breathed out as he tried not to appear too bothered by Kirishima's imitation of a barnacle. "H-hai, Yonaga-san!" he sputtered before blinking, then he got back up, dredging Kirishima up at the same time. "They're aliens that look like the Oni of our myths. They came here threatening to invade us just over a year ago before the Abyssals started to be real pains in the ass. I had to face their champion in their version of a tag race to call the invasion off. I beat her by the skin of my teeth...but because I said something really stupid thanks to my then-girlfriend promising to marry me if I won, this Oni decided I was her husband. She tried to force a wedding on me three months ago, but a nice spirit-dragon from another planet whose people don't care for the Oni put paid to that soon enough!"

"Yeah! Thanks to Nengmek'i-ōjiichan, the Promise was finally fulfilled, Onē-san got out of your head and I was allowed to live my life as my own person!" Tariko added. "And with that, no more greedy parents..."

"...no more fan boys who'd sacrifice the planet to make said Oni notice them..."

"...no rich fool who thinks he's the Kami's gift to women, OR his family..."

"...no mooching monk or incompetent miko who also serves as a school nurse..."

"...no more so-called 'best friend' who'd stab us in the back in an instant..."

"...no more confused tomboys with a father who deserves to be poisoned..."

"...no more super-strong androphobes or their moron super-strong mothers..."

"...and no idiots from outer space with all THEIR problems!" Ataru finished.

By the end of that insane litany, Yonaga felt she had just sailed into Sea State Nine in the middle of a super typhoon. She then blinked as something came to her. "Wait! 'Promise'?! You mean the Bunka-gonen no Yakusoku?! Kyōsuke-san often spoke to Fujita-chūshō about that whole thing...!"
"Negako-san IS the Saikō Jinseijutsu, Yonaga-san," Akagi helpfully added as Shōkaku stood up to pull back a chair for the larger carrier to sit at. "When Ataru-san was in space, he found someone who could create a bioroid body for Negako-san...and Tariko-san here as well."

Yonaga blinked in confusion even if she nodded thanks to Shōkaku for offering the chair. "'Bioroid'?!" she asked as she sat down.

"Biological android," Tariko answered as she sat across from her great-great-uncle's old ship. "Basically, a purpose-grown human being created in a laboratory. In a magical way, all shipgirls and shipboys can be considered bioroids." Seeing the lost and confused look appearing on the carrier's face, she then groaned, slapping her forehead. "Shit! I'm sorry about that, Yonaga-san! How long have you been gone for, anyway?!"

"Since the summer before Operation Z was to happen, Tariko-san," Zuikaku said.

Hearing that, the Moroboshi twins winced. "Damn! You gotta catch up on all that?!" Ataru breathed out as he moved to sit beside his sister, with Kirishima moving to sit herself in his lap. As Yonaga's eyebrow arched in curiosity at such an open show of affection by the fast battleship, he smirked. "Don't worry about it. You'll have all your kōhai in this place get you up to speed soon enough. You'll need it when you deal with the Abyssals out there."

A slight flush crossed the carrier's cheeks at that show of encouragement from the young man. Seeing that, Kirishima tittered in amusement as she gazed fondly on Ataru. "And that is why you are fit to be our admiral, Teitoku," she coyly declared as she rubbed his cheek, making him roll his eyes.

A commotion from the main doors made all the shipgirls and the two "normal" humans among them turn to see a group of reporters come in, escorted by Self-Defence Force and United States Navy shore patrolmen and led by the base public affairs officer, a portly lieutenant named Kidō Matsuharu. "Why are civilians on the base, Onē-san?" Yonaga asked as Musashi sat beside her while Yamato, Nagato and Mutsu immediately headed over to greet the reporters.

"It's part of our duties to the people," Musashi stated as she moved to sip her tea. "Fortunately for us, the Abyssals have shown that the concept of monitoring modern communications is totally beyond them, so we don't have to be as security-conscious as people were when we were commissioned."

"Besides, it's a great morale booster," Akagi added with a knowing wink. "Especially when people learn that Negako-san has shown the way for our allies to bring back all their ships as kanmusu so
they can help us, the Canadians and the others in the British Commonwealth fight the war."

"I'll need a detailed briefing on that, Akagi-san," Yonaga then warned...

...before camera flashes went off. As the carrier gaped in shock at such a show of attention from the fourth estate, Ataru and Tariko shared a grin...

At the orbit of Jupiter, two hours later...

"WHEN THE HELL ARE WE GOING TO GO HOME FINALLY?!"

Hearing that from the leader of the group known as "Lum's Stormtroopers", the others of Class 2-4 from Tomobiki Senior High School plus their school nurse, said nurse's elderly uncle and the parents of their missing classmate sighed. "Will you stop that, Megane?!" Miyake Shinobu snapped as she glared wrathfully at Aisuru Satoshi. "There's no use complaining! Kyech-san is making sure things will go much better for us from now on since the Imperial Dominion is taking interest in what the Urusians have done over the last year! Sit down!"

"Yeah! Thank the kami for that!" Fujinami Ryūnosuke snarled from beside the only real female friend the beach café tomboy ever had. "Damn!" she breathed out. "I never thought dealing with aliens would wind putting me through this!"

"I sure hope Kyech-san makes sure that the stupid Oni never come back to Earth again!" another girl muttered darkly from nearby, which made Megane's forehead throb as a shudder of outrage flooded him from head to toe at such a show of disrespect towards the beautiful warlord's daughter whose presence in the Tōkyō suburb over the last year and more had changed the lives of so many. "Ataru-kun doesn't need to put up to all the crap Redet's forced on him and we don't need to put up to stupid tiger-bulls, selfish little brats, warped airheads, snow princesses and idiot space biker-bitches who couldn't hit the broadside of the barn even if the damned barn was in her face!" She sipped her tea as she gazed out the portal of the captain's gig aboard Urusian Defence Force Ship Kashin, looking at the solar system's resident giant which hovered in the near distance, partially eclipsed by the Noukiite star-barque that intercepted the flagship of Redet Lum's father Invader before it could close in on Earth. "Hope the Noukiites turn out to be a lot better that the Oni were...!"

An explosion saw her gaze into Megane's burning eyes! "HOW DARE YOU SAY SUCH A THING?!" he roared. "HOW DARE YOU IMPLY THAT LUM-SAN HAS HURT...?!!"
"Shut up, moron!" Ryūnosuke snapped after deckin Megane with an uppercut, then she glared at the three other core members of the Stormtroopers. "And no shit out of you jerks!" she snapped, making all of them cringe. "I'm sick and tired of listening to you fucking troublemakers bitch and complain about what's happened to us since K'ekhech-dono's friend nearly fried us all when he came to take Moroboshi over to that Okusei planet! You just can't stand the fact that there are people out here who won't put up to Lum's crap all the time!"

"You think Kyech-san's right about this whole marriage thing between Lum and Ataru-kun, Ryūnosuke-kun?" Shinobu asked as the tomboy sat back down.

"I saw the look on the idiot's face when K'ekhech-dono said that whole thing was a lie since it happened during a tag race," the other woman answered as Megane's friends and some of the other boys quaked on remembering what the alien metahuman warrior popularly nicknamed "She Who Speaks to Dragons" across the local cluster did to Redet Lum when the warlord's daughter again tried to publicly assert that she and Moroboshi Ataru were married. "Lum looked guilty before she started saying it was a lie! By the sounds of it, Moroboshi knows the whole deal now! He ain't gonna put up to Lum anymore, much less all the idiots who came with Lum after that shit with the world's oil started the crap with the Abyssals!" The tomboy glared at the Stormtroopers, which made the boys cringe as other girls also gazed on them with loathing.

That reaction was more than understandable. As soon as the "world oil-theft" incident made the news a week after the Tag Race, rampant speculation began in the world's news media about the Abyssals being affiliated with the Urusians. It wasn't true — the Dragonspeaker confirmed same when she had been asked by Shinobu, much to the disappointment of many girls in the class — but that hadn't stopped demands to the United Nations over the last year to have Lum banished from Earth...WITHOUT Ataru being forced off his home planet as well to punish the warlord's daughter for what she supposedly had "done"...!

"That's enough!"

That was Sakurambō Sakura, who was trying not to sigh in exasperation at people venting their spleens like that. While the true cause of the intervention of the ancient spirit-dragon known as Nengmek'i during the forced wedding ceremony between Ataru and Lum after the issue with Queen Elle was dealt with remained a mystery to her, the shrine maiden/school nurse now suspected that those who had been "invited" to a wedding between Tomobiki High's "star couple" were actually bit players in something so all-encompassing, it would change their lives even more so than the Tag Race had done. From what she sensed when their current hosts had been made to deal with natives of the Imperial Dominion of Noukiios, the Urusians as a whole didn't care for the people who
controlled the Alpha Centauri system, Sol's closest galactic neighbour; much to the surprise of the Terrans, the nearest colony of the Union of Uru, Toshitto, was thirty light-years from Sol! While many of the Terrans felt a sense of familiar acceptance when it came to the Uruusians due to Lum's residing in Tomobiki over the last year, the Noukiites were now endearing themselves to people from that part of Metro Tōkyō, especially girls like Miyake Shinobu. Was it because natives of one of the local cluster's four main superpowers resembled fair-haired Klingons from recent versions of Star Trek even if they behaved like ultra-advanced natives of India? Or was it because the Dragonspeaker was simply too powerful for even someone like Lum, much less her alien friends, to deal with?

Or was it just because of that warrior's impeccable table manners...?

"Alright! I know this is frustrating, but given that we might be at the flash point of a real war against a race who cares not for our current hosts, there's little we can do about it," the shrine maiden/nurse declared. "We've all had a rough time of it since the mess with Elle began, but I've been assured by K'ekhech-dono personally that we'll be back on Earth within days! They just want to make sure the Uruusians and their allies don't take liberties with Earth because Moroboshi has clearly won allies in driving Lum out of his life! AND NOT A WORD OUT OF YOU, MEGANE!" she thundered as she used her spirit-sensor to whack Megane down before the leader of the Stormtroopers could vent his spleen again at Ataru's "disloyalty" to Lum, then she glared the other boys down. "Now, fortunately, we're close enough to Earth to pick up news transmissions, so let's find out what's happened while we've been gone! Mendō?"

"Hai, Sensei!" Mendō Shūtarō stated as he tapped on the holovision device. "The signal will be delayed since we're millions of kilometres from home, but I was able to get NHK, the BBC and CNN satellite transmissions...ah!"

Everyone perked as the television screen-like image flashed a projection of a news studio in Tōkyō, a familiar presenter appearing as she read from the teleprompter, "...came in from the Kure Naval District at Eta-jima an hour ago. Thanks to the intervention of none other than the legendary Imperial Special Agent #49 herself, Moroboshi Negako-sama, some...!"

"WHAT?!"

That was a wide-eyed Moroboshi Muchi, Ataru's father; he had just ripped up his three month-old copy of the Yomiuri Shinbun on hearing that name, he gaping wide-eyed at the holovision. "Oji-chan, do you know...?" Shinobu began.

"Quiet!" the girl that complained about Lum hissed. "They had more summonings!"
Others shut up as they paid attention to the screen...though some of the boys were quick to see that Sakura was now as white as a ghost as she stared in horror at the images from home. "...largest number of summonings in one day according to Rear Admiral Saitō Ten'ichi, the commander of the Kantai Musume-keikaku," the reporter continued. "Among those summoned this evening from that mysterious Place where the beautiful akitsumikami from the Greater East Asia War have resided in since they were sunk, scrapped or turned into museum ships were three of the five sisterships of the American fast battleship Iowa, the sistership to the famous German battleship Bismarck, the four sisterships of the equally famous German cruiser Prinz Eugen, a sistership of the Italian battleships Roma and Littorio...and, much to the joy of all the veterans of the Kidō Butai, the long-missing fourth sister of Yamato-sama, who had been lost in the Arctic with her entire crew just before Operation Z (the attack on Pearl Harbour in 1941) was to be launched. We now turn to our correspondent..."

"They found Yamato-chan's missing sister?!” one of the big kanmusu fans gasped.

"Yeah! Kii-chan said she sensed Hull 797 had been built!" another boy noted.

"Quiet! It's Saitō-kaishō!" Shinobu barked out.

Eyes locked on the screen, which now showed a reporter standing in the main mess hall of Eta-jima beside Saitō Ten'ichi and four other officers. "...with Saitō Ten'ichi-kaishō, the director of the Kanmusu-keikaku," the reporter stated as she gazed on her camera. "Also with us today is James Vance-shōshō, commander of the United States Navy's forces in Japan; Heinrich Kellermann-taisa, naval liaison of the German Navy to Japan; Elios Tesei-taisa, naval liaison of the Italian Navy to Japan; and Sofía Petróva-taisa, naval liaison of the Russian Navy to Japan. With the assistance of Moroboshi Negako-sama, the woman seen as responsible for ensuring that the edict of surrender issued by Shōwa Tennō in 1945 was carried out, ten warships of the period of the Greater East Asia War have answered the call once more to serve their homelands tonight and have joined their friends and sisterships as kanmusu at Eta-jima." She turned to Saitō Ten'ichi. "Saitō-kaishō, how was it possible for Negako-sama to summon Iowa-san's, Bismarck-san's, Prinz Eugen-san's, Littorio-san's and Yamato-sama's sisters back to service? What was the great secret here?"

He chuckled. "It was a simple realization that we had to keep in mind that to bring our warships back, we have to remember their histories and acknowledge who and what they were named after, Miyoko-san. Negako-sama demonstrated that when she summoned New Jersey-san, Missouri-san and Wisconsin-san by using their namesake states' theme songs to call them back. Tirpitz-san and Admiral Hipper-san responded to Unsere Marine, the old march of the Imperial German Navy, whom their namesakes served as senior officers. Blücher-san and Seydlitz-san responded to Preußens Gloria, music from their namesake's old home kingdom. Lützow-san came on hearing Lützows Wilde Verwegene Jagd; that's a popular military quick march song named after her very own namesake. Vittorio Veneto-san came after hearing the music of the opera Risorgimento, which was written recently to commemorate the unification of Italy in the 1860s; the battle from which Veneto-san is named after is often seen as the last true act of the unification process. As for Yonaga-san, she responded to the old Army song Yuki no Shingun, given the terrible circumstances that befell
"Mrs. Yonaga was assigned as part of the Kidō Butai," James Vance answered for his friend. "But given that she was modified and extended in length to make her a near match to one of our old Forrestal-class carriers, the Navy planners back then realized she'd be a prime target for spies to hunt down. So she was 'commissioned' into Unit 731, then sent to a cove in the far northeast of Siberia in the summer of 1941 to await the call to climb Niitaka-yama." As the reporter gaped in shock on hearing that, Vance lowered his eyes. "Thanks to an earthquake trapping her in that cove due to falling glaciers, Miss Yonaga's crew was forced onto the sidelines...and like many brave soldiers who fought for Shōwa Tennō in those days, they refused almost to a man to believe in the call to surrender issued in 1945; they could still monitor events via shortwave radio receivers. Because of their isolation, Yonaga's crew felt they had no choice but to find some way to get out of that cove and carry out their part of Operation Z. From what Miss Negako learned after she talked to Miss Yonaga, they almost made it out in late 1983 thanks to another earthquake...but the cove was still blocked. That drove the crew totally insane with guilt and frustration...which, given how they were trained back then..."

"Are any alive?!!" an ashen-faced reporter gasped.

"Regretfully not," Saitō finished as the people seeing this on the Kashin gaped in horror. "The last of Yonaga-san's crew passed on from this life around the turn of the millennium, which made her sleep until Negako-sama summoned her to Eta-jima tonight. It was by the sheer power of her loyalty to the Imperial Throne and her fighting spirit that the Abyssals in the Arctic never corrupted her, much less took the souls of her crew to help them drive our wonderful Russian, American and Canadian allies out of their own northern ports."

"To add further to that, I've already spoken to my superiors in Moskvá," Sofija Petróva said. "Our icebreaker mál'čik-korabléj will head to where Comrade Yonaga's old hull is now to see if artifacts can be salvaged from it as soon as it is practicable. We're especially interested in locating what she called the 'Shrine of Infinite Salvation', a mixed-faith temple for the crew; the mortal remains of the crew save the last ones to die are contained there."

"For which, we're beyond grateful," Saitō added, which made the Russian blush.

"How horrible...!" Shinobu hissed.

"Damn! She's gonna be a mean one to the Abyssals, I'll bet," Ryūnosuke noted.
By then, someone was approaching the naval officers. "Ah! It's Negako-sama!" the reporter called out as room was made to allow a woman in solid black to enter the range of the camera. Seeing that image, Sakura gargled in underwear-soiling horror while Ataru's father looked as if he had been stabbed in the heart. Beside him, Ataru's mother Moroboshi Kinshō had a confused look on her face. "Negako-sama, how do you feel that you were able to recall so many ships back as kanmusu, plus show our allies how to bring their battle fleets back?"

"It was quite easy for me to interpret how such akitsumikami could be recalled to this plane of existence by a simple examination of the summoning chamber in Eta-jima," the woman who looked like a pretty female Ataru in her twenties answered. "In fact, James just informed me that the staff at Recruit Training Command in Great Lakes will attempt to summon the akitsumikami of the warships present in Pearl Harbour when the Kidō Butai launched Operation Z in 1941 within the next several hours. Of course..." She gazed off to her left. "...given the guilt Akagi and her companions feel concerning the circumstances surrounding that battle, I may have to proceed to the Imperial Palace and request Tennō issue an Imperial Rescript to ensure Yonaga's mission-mates do not do anything rash once the issue with the Abyssals is resolved."

"We have a right to seek that out, Negako-san!"

The camera panned to the right to focus on Kaga, who was walking up to stare intently at the ninjutsu grandmaster. "Kaga, the Heavenly Sovereign requires living warriors, not dead martyrs," Negako stated. "Just because we are striving to defeat the Abyssals does not mean that your life is something to throw away at a whim, even to regain lost honour. As Iowa herself told Akagi and yourself when she learned of your plan, many veterans of Pearl Harbour have long forgiven those who flew off your decks for what happened back then. I am sure those akitsumikami soon to come such as Arizona, Oklahoma, Utah and the others sunk and damaged that day will feel the same way."

"If they don't, they'll be kept away and put on Atlantic patrol," Vance vowed before he walked over and placed comforting hands on Kaga's shoulders, making the carrier blush at such a public show of support in front of the media. "Kaga, it was neither your fault nor Akagi's nor any of the other ships that were used in that attack that things happened the way they did. Back then, you were just tools to help fulfill the wishes of others. That you feel such guilt and remorse for that attack speaks highly of you as a representative of your nation." As the raven-haired carrier puffed with pride at that compliment, he pulled his hands back. "Besides, we in the West say this: 'Living well is the best revenge of all'. Those things out there you and your friends help fight in our stead WANT you to feel that way; it's how they can corrupt you as they did their damn best to Miss Yonaga! She fought it off! So can you!"

Kaga blinked, then she nodded. "H-hai, Teitoku...!"
"Kaga-san."

People turned as someone even taller than Yamato came up, escorted by her two elder sisters. "Holy shit!" the heavyset member of the Stormtroopers, Daremo Hiroyuki AKA "Kakugari", gasped. "She's Shinano-chan on steroids!"

"Yeah!" the smallest of the group, Urayamu Akira AKA "Chibi", hissed. "I'd like to see what she looked like when she was a ship! Look at that armour!"

"How many planes did she carry?!" the tallest of the group, Shitto Kōsuke AKA "Perm", then asked as he looked at several of the other kanmusu fans.

"If there were only seven carriers for that mission, she probably had a whole air flotilla to herself," Mifune Hideyuki, a minor member of the wider fan club surrounding Lum and an early convert to kanmusu fandom, mused. "Vance-shōshō said she was as big as a Forrestal. That's over three hundred metres long! After she came back and got her gear upgraded to make her a fleet carrier, Shinano-chan was able to carry the same number of planes Akagi-san does!"

The others in the crowd nodded. "What is it, Yonaga-san?" Kaga asked.

The raven-haired shipgirl bowed her head. "You are not alone in feeling guilt even if our honourable allies can't understand how the actions of our crew affect our own karma in the eyes of the Kami," she sagely declared before she gazed on the senior American naval officer. "Vance-shōshō, I thank you on my friend's behalf for such eloquent words in support of reconciliation. Do not be too harsh to her, much less the others of the Kidō Butai. As one raised in a Christian environment, you view suicide as a mortal sin, denying God's gift of Life to the one who would perform such an act. However, we Japanese do not see such that way. Death cleanses our karma of sin. To hasten our meeting with the Kami in Heaven is seen by us as an act to atone for sins against others, even if others perceive no fault." She shrugged, an impish smile crossing her face. "It is a cultural issue I doubt will ever be crossed..."

"Oi! Oi! Oi! This is getting too morbid here, people! Jeez, Yonaga-san...!"

Everyone from Class 2-4 gasped. "Ataru-kun?!" Shinobu croaked.

Mass face-faults then resulted on their seeing Moroboshi Ataru...with a certain fast battleship lashed onto his right side like a limpet mine! "Ah, Ataru-kun!" the reporter called out before people in Eta-
jima laughed on seeing Kirishima playfully lick his ear. "I see you and Kirishima-san...!"

Silence.

More silence.

Still more silence.

Then...

"MOROBOSHI!" Mendō screamed. "HOW DARE YOU SEDUCE THE PURE, BEAUTIFUL KIRISHIMA-SAN?!"

"ATARU!" Megane howled. "HOW DARE YOU BREAK LUM-SAN'S HEART BY CHASING THAT STRUMPET?!"

"MY IDIOT SON'S CHASING SHIPGIRLS NOW?! I WISH I NEVER HAD HIM!" Ataru's mother cried.

Very hard chairs were then used to shut them up. As the other boys cowered from the girls' grabbing furniture to bring peace to the captain's gig once more, the reporter's voice echoed from the holovision machine, "...some time now since you came here after your return to Earth a month ago with Negako-sama and Tariko-san. How do you explain dating a **shipgirl**?"

"Well, it's better than dating a lying, nosy, arrogant alien who tried to trap me in a 'marriage' when it went AGAINST even HER people's laws!" Ataru quipped, that making his now-former classmates aboard Kashin perk. "After all, even if she'll deny it to her dying breath given what her other marriage prospects seem to be like at the time, Redet Lum couldn't claim that I wanted to marry her when the ONLY time I tagged her horns was in a TAG RACE! And while the idea of being Kiri-chan's husband doesn't scare me much, we're in a war situation! There's no time to — as kanmusu would probably say it — deploy their own tenders; doing that would put Kiri-chan in drydock while Kon-chan, Hi-chan and Haru-chan are out fighting the Abyssals!" As Kirishima literally glowed as she considered what doing THAT could mean, he added, "Besides, they're still trying to learn what it means to be a kanmusu! Where does the 'ship' end and the 'girl' begin, so to speak. Or 'boy' for our Russian friends," he then added as he gazed on the lone officer from the world's largest country. "They need time to discover that...and the Abyssals aren't GIVING them the time! Let's not complicate the issue, huh? Hai, I find Kiri-chan attractive! Who on Earth wouldn't find her
attractive?! If she wants me to be her personal 'special boatswain', I'll be there for her! It's all part of the war effort!"

"What if Lum tries to come back? Much less your former peers from Tomobiki?" the reporter asked, making many boys quiver at her lack of using an honorific, which was clearly a show of gross disrespect towards the warlord's daughter. "Given what lengths Lum has taken to assert her 'marriage' to you...!"

"Well, we'll just have to make sure that it doesn't happen!"

People turned...

...then after another mass face-fault, everyone on the Kashin gaped in disbelief and shock at the sight of a pretty female twin of Ataru, looking exactly like he would had he been born female in the first place or had visited the infamous springs of Jusenkyō in China, dressed the same way as he in a black gi and hakama. "Ah, Tariko-chan!" the reporter called as Ataru's mother croaked in shocked disbelief at the sight and his father tried to hide behind what was left of his newspaper, his body quaking. "As you are the current Matriarch of the Moroboshi Clan of Mutsu-no-kuni by order of the Heavenly Sovereign, do you approve of Kirishima-san's interest in your brother?"

"THE HEAVENLY SOVEREIGN?!" Mendō shrieked out in disbelief and horror.

"Well, until Kiri-chan there finally stops acting like one of the 'Quacky Quartet' as some people call her, I certainly won't allow it at all," Tariko calmly stated. "However, giving Ataru the chance to serve as a 'special boatswain' for Kiri-chan will do him a lot of good and help deprogram him from the crap forced on us due to the weird luck we seemed to have suffered living in Tomobiki with those useless pieces of genetic refuse we once had to call 'parents'." As many of the people on the Kashin all stared at Ataru's parents, they were quick to see his mother turn an ashen shade of grey at such a public renunciation of them and his father quaking as if he was caught in a fair-sized earthquake, hiding behind his paper. "Not to mention my trying to be a 'special boatswain' to one of Kiri-chan's sisters. Ne, Kon-chan...?"

"NO!"

Tariko turned as the camera panned over just as Kongō charged up...then the lead ship of her class found herself yanked up into the air before she could try another Amazon glomp on Saitō Ten'ichi; the one-sided attraction the fast battleship held for her "Teitoku" had fed a tonne of gristle into late night monologues for months now. Suddenly realizing she had been jacked up by the ninjutsu grandmaster, Kongō gave Negako a pout. "Put me down, Negako!"
"No, Kongō, not until you cease embarrassing Ten'ichi like that. He views it as a violation of military fraternization rules between admirals and subordinates," Negako firmly scolded.

"But I feel burning love for Teitoku...!"

As Saitō groaned and Vance patted his shoulder, Negako sighed. "Tariko."

"Hai, Onē-san?"

"Proceed with your bribe."

"Hai, Onē-san!"

"Ha!" Kongō declared. "Not even Tariko-chan can...!"

"Kon-chan...!" Tariko moaned as she sniffed crocodile tears while she reached into her pocket. "I got some nice, fresh hēichá for you...!"

"Straight from Húnán...!" Tariko meowed. "All for you...!"

"N-n-no...b-b-burning l-l-love...Teit-t-toku, save m-m-me...!"

Another packet appeared, making Kongō croak. "Some shúpǔ'ěr from Yúnnán...!"

"Nooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooo...!"
Tariko moaned in faux regret as she turned away, winking at the camera while Kongō shivered at the yardarm. "I guess I'll have to drink it all *myself*...!"

Kongō lunged out of Negako's grip to prostrate herself before Ataru's twin. "«I surrender!»" she moaned out in English, drool dripping from her lips.

Silence.

More silence.

Still more silence.

Then...

"YOU SURRENDER?!

Everyone screamed in fright as a volcano of outrage exploded from Yonaga, who was now staring murderously at the kneeling Kongō, making the English-built battleship croak in horror as if she was one of her crew in basic training facing a VERY ticked off petty officer. "**KONGŌ-SAN! I DON'T CARE IF YOU WERE BUILT IN ENGLAND! THAT BEHAVIOUR WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN TOLERATED IN THE ROYAL NAVY! IN ALL MY YEARS IN COMMISSION, I'VE NEVER SEEN SOMETHING SO DISGUSTING! HOW DARE YOU EMBARRASS THE HEAVENLY SOVEREIGN WITH SUCH INSANITY IN FRONT OF OUR ALLIES?! I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU WOULD ACT THAT WAY! THE PRIDE OF THE IMPERIAL NAVY RESTS ON YOUR SHOULDERS AND YOU BEHAVE AS IF YOU WERE SOME YŪJO FROM YOSHIWARA?! I'LL MAKE YOU ACT LIKE A PROPER BATTLESHIP OF THE IMPERIAL NAVY OR I'LL HAVE YOU COMMIT SEPPUKU WITHOUT THE BENEFIT OF A KAISHAKU-NIN!""

Kongō screamed before she raced out of the mess hall at flank speed! As a scowling Yonaga surged after her with a giggling Yamato and a laughing Musashi following to ensure the returned carrier didn't leave parts of their older friend all over the base, Negako calmly gazed on the reporter. "That is why the Abyssals call Yonaga the 'Angry One'," she declared.

The reporter and all the naval officers there all looked as if they had just sailed through a tornado. As Kirishima shuddered on seeing her sister about to face the wrath of Yonaga, Ataru hummed as he
held out some packets of his own. "Some hēichá and shúpǔ'ěr for nightcaps...while I move to make sure your special rigging both topside and bottom is squared away, Kiri-chan?"

Kirishima gasped, then grabbed Ataru as she dragged him off while those watching on the Kashin flushed in embarrassment on sensing the sexual innuendo in his words. Negako watched them go, then gazed on Saitō. "I believe Kongō's behaviour concerning you will stop now, Ten'ichi."

The admiral looked ill in the mainmast. "Um...ah...arigatō, Negako-sama..."

"Dō itashimashite. If you will excuse me, Miyoko, I have duties to perform."

"H-hai," the reporter sputtered before she perked. "Wait!"

Negako stopped. "A problem?"

"What about Lum and her friends?!"

A cold, knowing smile crossed her face. "I will phrase it in a term our new friends from the Imperial Dominion of Noukiios will recognize quite easily: T'ech'ach Nechma Nukt'ech-kai Ket'echi." She then turned away. "The translation will be provided in five days. Oyasumi nasai."

With that, she headed off...as Shinobu reached over to turn the holovision's volume down. "She knows we're here. She probably helped arrange to keep us here to keep us out of the way while Ataru-kun moved out of the house," she hissed out as she stared at her classmates, making Ataru's mother croak in horror at that last observation. "If Tariko-chan is the part of Ataru-kun that was far better behaved when Cherry's cake and Lum's candy split him in two after Megane and his idiots pulled that stunt with the space taxi...!"

She ignored the looks from the Stormtroopers on being accused of causing the "world oil theft" incident over a year before; after all, everyone KNEW that the whole stupid thing was Moroboshi Ataru's fault through-and-through, just like everything else that had happened in Tomobiki since that damned day oil rained on their town! "Reporter just said she's Imperial Special Agent #49," Ryūnosuke cut in. "If that's true, she's very long lived or possibly immortal! She's a metahuman, too; how the hell was she able to put down all the idiots in the Black Dragon Society to make sure the War Hawks didn't have to sweep in to nail their asses to the wall after Shōwa Tennō called it quits back in '45...?"
"She is no metahuman..."

Eyes locked on Sakura, who now looked as if she was about to be dragged into Hell itself. "Sakura-sensei, you know what she is...?" Megane moaned.

"Hai," the miko/nurse hissed before she stood and moved to position herself before Ataru's father, putting her fists to her hips. "So tell me, Moroboshi-san... when did your son swear the Promise of Bunka-gonen?!"

Silence.

More silence.

Still more silence.

Then...

"Dear...?"

"H-hai..." Ataru's mother moaned out.

"How could you do it...?"

"Wh-what...?"

"How could you have a child with another man...?"

Hearing that, Kinshō jolted before she leapt to her feet. "IDIOT!"

The whole of the Kashin shook from stem to stern as the girls of Class 2-4 smashed Ataru's parents down. "YOU'RE BOTH IDIOTS!" they all shrilled out.
"Oi! What's going on here?!

Everyone turned as Redet Ten jetted in on his little hoverscooter. "Oh, Ten-chan!" Shinobu called out to Lum's maternal cousin, which made the Oni preschooler automatically gush. "Maybe you can help us!"

"S-s-sure, Shinobu-onēchan!" he said as he parked his machine on the deck close to the holovision machine, then he floated up to gaze into her eyes.

"What does 'Tech'ach Nechma Nukt'ech-kai Ke'echi' mean? It's Noukiite," Ataru's former girlfriend asked, grateful that many English lessons helped her master the more harsher consonant sounds other languages made use of.

Ten blinked...then he turned as grey as a typhoon as a look of mortal TERROR crossed his face. "WHAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH! SCARY PEOPLE! SCARY PEOPLE! SCARY PEOPLE! SCARY PEOPLE! SCARY PEOPLE....!"

And in a blast of retrojets, he flew out of the gig...

...before the entire kilometre-long battlewagon rocked with alarm bells as screams of a near-riot drifted through the open hatchway leading into the gig from the Kashin's main hull. "Guess it means something," Ryūnosuke quipped. "What the fuck did Moroboshi and his sisters run into, for fuck's sake...?"

"It is time for you to return to Earth."

Everyone blinked. "Kyech-san...?" Shinobu began...

...before a flash of eldritch fire made the Terrans vanish from the Kashin...

To Be Continued...
This story is set after the Kantai Collection anime series, incorporating shipgirls from other countries as has been introduced in the game, plus new shipgirls. For the Urusei Yatsura fans out there, this is set after the first movie Only You; however, factoring the Abyssal War into the lives of everyone from Tomobiki, certain events such as Fujinami Ryūnosuke's entrance would happen much sooner than in manga or anime continuity. In The Seventh Carrier storyline, this delves with an alternate reality where the Yonaga did not get free of Sano Bay before the start of the novel in late 1983, exploring what would happen to the crew in the wake of that and how it affected the ship's living kami. As I've done in other stories since I'm so used to looking at things that way, the modified universe of The Senior Year as introduced in Phoenix From the Ashes has been factored into the galactic situation beyond Earth, which takes what happened in Yatsura and expanded heavily in on it; there will be no need to read those stories as I'll include descriptions in narrative and conversation. Other stories mentioned in the title blurb just present characters and background situation; more explanations will come.

Be advised I write words using Hepburn (for Japanese), Scientific (Russian), McCune-Reischauer (Korean) and Hányǔ Pīnyīn (Mandarin) Romanizations.

Now...

1) Ye old translation list: Gi — Martial artist's uniform; Heika — Japanese equivalent of the spoken style "Your Majesty", this is the preferred form of address to the Heavenly Sovereign (Tennō); Kazoku — Family register; Shōwa — Posthumous name for Hirohito (1901-89), the 124th ruling monarch of Japan according to traditional order of succession; Akitsumikami — Literally "kami in the form of a person"; Kapitán zur See — Literally "Captain at Sea", German title for a navy captain (NATO rank code OF-5); Kidō Butai — Literally "Mobile Force", this was the tactical designation for the Japanese Combined Fleet's unified carrier battle group; Niitaka-yama — Literally "New High Mountain", this was the Japanese name for Yù-shān ("Jade Mountain"), the highest mountain on Taiwan (which was a Japanese colony from 1895-1945), which is taller than Mount Fuji in Japan; Kapitán Pérvyj Ránga — Literally "Captain of the First Rank", the Russian title for a navy captain; Bóże moj — God help me; Továřišči — Plural of Továřišč ("comrade" or "adventuring companion"); Kyūdō-ka — Practitioner of Kyūdō ("way of the bow"); Kendo-ka — Practitioner of Kendo ("way of the sword"); Dō — Breast plate; Umanori — Literally "horse-riding hakama", these are pleated trousers for use by cavalrymen; Zōri — Thong sandals; Tare — Protective groin shield; Kuzari — Lower body and upper thigh armour; Sode — Shoulder protection; Kote — Armoured lower arm sleeves; Sunate — Shin guards; Daishō — Literally "large and small", this was the sword set used by samurai, composed of a long katana and a shorter wakizashi; Yōma — Monster; Shōwa Jūrokû-nen — Literally "Sixteenth Year of Shōwa", the Japanese name for 1941 CE; Shōwa Nijû-nen — Literally "Twentieth Year of Shōwa", the Japanese name for 1945 CE; Bunka-gon no Yakuwakū — Literally "Promise of the Fifth Year of Bunka" (that was the traditional Japanese year name for 1808 CE); Chūshō — Vice Admiral
(NATO rank code OF-8); **Saikō Jinsei jutsu** — Literally "Way of the Supreme Life", this is the title given to the Moroboshi family's in-house school of ninjutsu in my stories (and often serves as Moroboshi Negako's default name before acquiring human form); **Kaishō** — Modern term for an admiral in the Maritime Self-Defence Force (the proper title for Saitō Ten'ichi is *kaishō-ho* ["junior admiral"]); **Shōshō** — Rear Admiral (NATO rank code OF-7); **Taisa** — Navy captain; **Unsere Marine** — Our Navy; **Preußens Gloria** — Prussia's Glory; **Lützows Wilde Verwegene Jagd** — Lützow's Wild Hunt; **Risorgimento** — Literally "the revival", the name given to the period of Italian unification from 1815-71; **Mál'čik-korabléj** — Plural of **Mál'čik-korábľ** ("shipboy"); **Héichá** — Literally "black tea"; **Shúpǔ'ěr** — Literally "Ripe (tea) from Pǔ'ěr"; **Yūjo** — Literally "woman of pleasure", traditional title for a prostitute; **Kaishaku-nin** — Literally "the person concerned with a mistake", the traditional term for the person who beheads someone committing seppuku to stop the pain.

2) **Shōtoku Tennō** (718-770) is the posthumous name for the forty-eighth Heavenly Sovereign of Japan according to the traditional order of succession. Given the name *Abe* at birth, she first succeeded her father **Shōmu Tennō** (real name unknown, lived 701-756) as the forty-sixth Heavenly Sovereign when he abdicated in 749 CE. Abe ruled until she abdicated the post in 758 CE in favour of her cousin, who later became known as **Junnin Tennō** (real name Ōi, lived 733-765); Abe was given the title **Kōken Tennō** for this part of her life. However, thanks to an internal court rebellion, Abe regained the Throne in 765, ruling as Shōtoku Tennō until her death five years later. She is known in history for supposedly having an affair with her chancellor, Dōkyō (700-772). In the universe of my stories, that affair did happen and a daughter was born of the couple named **Mirei**; it is she who is the ancestress of the Moroboshi family.

3) Translation of the first verse of *Yuki no Shingun* ("Marching in the Snow"):  

**Yuki no shingun, kōri o fun de.**  
(Marching in the snow, stepping on ice.)

**Dore ga kawa yara, michi sae shirezu.**  
(We can't even tell road from river.)

**Uma wa taoreru sutete mo okezu.**  
(The horses are beaten but we can't leave them.)

**Koko wa izukuzo? Mina teki no kuni!**  
(Just what is this place? It's all enemy country!)  

**Mama no daitan ippuku yareba,**  
(Oh, well, if we breathe a little bravery,)  

**Tanomisekuna ya tabako ga nihon.**
(I'll only ask for a couple of cigarettes.)

4) Please note that many names and personal circumstances here concerning the Urusei Yatsura cast are my invention or the invention of Mike Smith for use in The Senior Year if it doesn't match various information websites.
The Seventh Carrier Goes to School

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Tomobiki, the next morning...

"WHERE...?!

Having bolted out of bed, Miyake Shinobu blinked for a moment before she looked around...then the tension she had felt for over three months since she had been taken from this house by Redet Lum's friend Shigaten Benten finally flowed out of her like a Fundy tide. "Home...!"

"Shinobu-chan?"

She perked before smiling. "Okā-san!"

The door opened to reveal her mother, Kimiki. In a flash, Ataru's former girlfriend was in her mother's comforting arms. "Oh, my baby!" the former fashion model moaned in relief as tears flowed down her cheeks. "Are you alright?! You weren't hurt, were you?! When that UFO came by and literally yanked you and your classmates into space, I feared the worst!"

"I'm okay, Okā-san..." Shinobu assured her mother as she relaxed in her mother's embrace. "It was bad when Nengmek'i-sama came to Uru to take Ataru-kun to Okusei..." She caught herself. "Oh, gomen nasai! You don't know about Nengmek'i-sama and Kyech-san..."

A laugh escaped Kimiki. "Relax, Shinobu-chan! Kyech-san was more than happy to explain her side of what happened to Ataru-kun when she brought you and the others back to Earth last night; the shock of the teleportation knocked you all out. Negako-sama explained everything about the Promise of Bunka-gonen and how it affected Ataru-kun to all of us who had children kidnapped by that Benten woman..." - she ignored the slight wince from Shinobu on hearing the scorn in that word; regardless of how many teens in Tomobiki felt about the aliens who had come there over the last
year, most of the elder generation almost to the last would gladly wish them forever gone given their reckless behaviour in the past - "...when she, Ataru-kun and Tariko-chan came here a month ago before they headed to Eta-jima at the request of the Heavenly Sovereign to look in on the kanmusu and help put a stop to the Abyssals! Thank God for that," she then breathed out. "Oh, I got some tea for you!" With that, she headed out.

Shinobu watched her go, then she sighed. While Japan had suffered enormously because of those dark sea spirits that had prowled the world's oceans for several years, Tomobiki escaped any direct confrontation thanks to it being many kilometres inland from open ocean and the gallant efforts of special magical warriors answerable directly to the Chrysanthemum Throne who had protected shore-side cities, towns and villages from their attacks before the *Miracle of Tōkyō Bay* happened a month after the Tag Race and Kongō and her sisters appeared as kanmusu to chase out the Abyssals moving to wreck the capital, seeing the Fleet Shipgirl Project launched. Yes, it had been hard at times given the need to ration things, but the overwhelming threat the Abyssals presented to humanity as a whole forced a lot of changes that seemed to heal worldwide society from the bitter divisions of decades past, especially the Cold War. Korea was on the path to final reunification as people in Sŏul and Pyŏng'yang worked together to protect their peninsula from the dark sea kami. China and Táiwān had joined forces to maintain and strengthen ties as the latter's reborn navy helped protect sea trade. Russia had mended fences with America and Europe as well as the other former Soviet states...!

*God is testing us,* Shinobu thought as she gazed on the portable chapel at one end of her room. *God is testing us indeed like nothing ever before...!*

Kimiki soon returned with a tea service. "Some kuru-cha?" she teased.

Shinobu laughed. "Hai!" she said as she took the cup of fermented black tea. "We saw that on NHK before Kyech-san brought us to Earth! You should have seen Mendō-san and Megane blow a gasket when they found out Ataru-kun was dating Kirishima-san!" She then paused before sighing. "Tariko-chan...she's...?"

Kimiki tried not to scream. Lord only knew, her daughter's mixed feelings for Moroboshi Ataru were a pain to deal with at times. To have TWO versions of him even if one was a very beautiful woman would really confuse her, especially now in the wake of the announcement of Mendō Shūtarō's engagement to Mizunokōji Asuka several weeks before the issue with Elle slammed down on people. "Hai. She's the version of Ataru-kun that wanted you before his mother and Venerable Sakurambō forced them back together as one. I don't know what you know of Negako-sama, but when her living essence was forced into Ataru-kun's mind on his sixth birthday, it fractured his soul." As Shinobu croaked in horror on hearing such a thing, Kimiki added, "In effect, what Lum's candy and Venerable Sakurambō's cursed cake did was to give Tariko-chan a chance to get out and be 'himself' for a change." She sighed. "We weren't able to speak to either of them when Ataru-kun moved all his stuff out of his house, but from what I can tell and what Kyech-san warned your father and I about last night, they went through something awful on that Okusei planet before they were allowed to finally live in individual bodies." She then perked. "Oh, don't remove those ofuda from
the windows, alright?" she then advised as she pointed to the window of Shinobu's bedroom, where a pair of blood-stained ofuda were now posted. "The explanation will come in four days as Negako-sama said last night."

"'Tech'ach Nechma Nuk'tech-kai Ket'echi?" Shinobu asked with a knowing look.

Kimiki winked...then both jolted on hearing a scream echo from the direction of the Moroboshi home. "I see that Kinshō-san got Ataru-kun's last message."

"Eh?"

"'Grow old and die alone'," the former fashion model stated. "After all, how many times have you heard Ataru-kun's mother say 'I wish I never had him'?"

Shinobu winced. Yes, the behaviour of Moroboshi Kinshō when it came to her own son at times was reprehensible. Still, given Ataru's zest for living for the moment, it was too easy for people to believe he really didn't care at all for what had been said about him when it came to his behaviour. To learn that Ataru had basically turned his back on his parents was something that made Shinobu cringe; such anger seemed a totally alien thing when it came to her former boyfriend. But if Ataru felt that about his own flesh-and-blood...?

...how did he feel about her, much less his friends here in Tomobiki?

Or did he see them as friends now in the wake of Lum ruining things so much?

Lum came...and sanity went...! Shinobu mentally repeated a lament that had been said many times in this part of Metro Tōkyō when it applied to all the kooky weirdness that had rocked Tomobiki over the last year and more. Shaking her head, she then sighed as she moved to drink her tea.

She'd have to speak to her classmates about this...

Eta-jima, that moment...
A moan escaped Moroboshi Ataru as his eyes opened, allowing him to gaze on the ceiling of his private quarters on the base grounds, isolated from the shipgirl dorms even if there was really no difference at all between the accommodation blocks. Glad to have a proper bed under his back in lieu of a futon, he then sighed before looking right to see the incredible vision now curled up against him, a content smile on her face as she dreamily whispered statements that had echoed on her bridge in ages past. Thanking the Kami that it wasn't the normal nightmares the reincarnated fast battleship had of her final day of life as a warship in Ironbottom Sound back in the fall of 1942, Ataru gently slid himself out from under the covers. Squeezing Kirishima's hand in reassurance as the battleship moaned the absence of her "special boatswain" close to her flank, he got up, stretching as he gazed out the window at the parade grounds.

Sure enough, Fubuki was out on the field running her laps. Seeing the little destroyer go at it like she did, Ataru smirked before he headed over to the portable stove on the desk to warm up some water and finish off the fermented tea that he had offered his girlfriend the previous night in celebration of the return of ten capital warships back to service as kanmusu. One of which was the living spirit of his paternal great-great-uncle Moroboshi Kyōsuke's ship, the converted Yamato-class heavy armoured attack aircraft carrier *Yonaga*, the Seventh Carrier of Operation Z...whose presence that day in 1941 would have wrecked Pearl Harbour for months and extended the idiocy of the Greater East Asia War for a couple of years as America would be forced to effectively stage things from ports like San Francisco and San Diego until they got the bases in Hawai'i back up to snuff again. Shaking his head at the bitter truths of what war unleashed on those caught up in it, he sighed as he drew out two cups, then waited for the water to boil over. No matter if the living kami-in-human form called "kanmusu" in Japan had been in their original warship bodies or their present mystical bioroid bodies, it still was the bitter truth of war.

As Henry Blake once told Hawkeye Pierce in *M*A*S*H*, there were two rules of war:

**Rule One:** In war, people die.

**Rule Two:** Doctors couldn't change Rule One.

Ataru amended that second one long ago: *No one* could change Rule One.

But doing everything to prevent people from being victims of Rule One was okay.

That was why he, his twin sister and adopted older sister were in Eta-jima now.

That was why he had to cut himself off totally from everyone back in Tomobiki.
That was why he had gladly helped wreck the Galactic Federation of Planet-states - the informal League of Nations-like alliance of interplanetary powers the Union of Uru was an unofficial leader of - a month ago when he and his siblings helped warriors from the Imperial Dominion of Noukiios and the Free Planetary State of Yiziba destroy a planet named Phentax Twelve.

Not to mention the large fleet of warships based over nearby Phentax Twenty.

Which would effectively deprive Lum's people of their most powerful ally.

And would force the Urusians away from Earth until the idiots controlling that lot finally got a damned clue and started treating aliens equally.

Given Lum's own obsessive-compulsive behaviour concerning her "husband"...

*And pigs can fly!* he darkly mused.

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The refurbishment docks, that moment...

Yonaga's dark grey eyes slowly opened.

A moan escaped the tall and curvy battleship-turned-aircraft carrier as she sat up in the well-prepared salt water bath that she had been ordered to soak in as soon as she had finished disciplining Kongō before Moroboshi Tariko dragged the fast battleship off for some evening tea and a chance to "pillow" the very passionate kannusu before sleeping. *To believe a simple good night's sleep is such a wonderful thing*, the seventh carrier of Operation Z mused to herself as she stretched her arms to work the kinks out of them; she was stiff after many hours in the refurbishment docks as a crew of faeries - as the kami who were effective reflections of her lost crew were called - swarmed her hull to ensure everything was in tip top shape, plus update her on the incredible changes that had happened in the world since she had disappeared from it in the fall of 1941. It was wonderful even if it was quite dizzying to her...

"Sleep well, meine Freunde?"
Hearing that, she looked over to see the silver-haired battleship with the dark brown eyes in the next dock over. A near-equal to Bismarck in looks and general body shape, it was all too easy to remember who she was. "Ohayō gozaimasu, Tirpitz-san. Hai, I slept well. It's a good thing that whatever kami are allowing us to return to duty helped us better understand what being human is about. After all, all our crews were men...and we're women."

"At least our Russian brothers won't have problems," the "Lonely Queen of the North" mused. "Quite a change from what we were used to back in the 1940s, ja?"

Yonaga nodded. "Hai. At least Iowa-san's sisters will be able to adjust better to this since they were in commission during the 1980s and early 1990s as missile-carrying warships. The culture shock will not so bad. It must be nice now to be able to do missions and you'll be supported all the way."

"Ja, it will be," Tirpitz affirmed. "Hopefully, the nightmares stemming from Operation: Catechism and Operation: Source won't bother me too much..."

Yonaga considered that, then she nodded, grateful the faeries who represented her admiral's intelligence staff had been able to properly update her on the last seventy years and more of maritime warfare history, especially the fates of the shipgirls and shipboys in Eta-jima and elsewhere so that friendly fire incidents in the future were reduced to nil. Operation: Source was the brilliant attack on Tirpitz while she was at anchorage in Altafjord in northern Norway in the fall of 1943 by the Royal Navy. Carried out by brave crews in midget submarines who dropped pressure bombs under her, it put the battleship out of action for months; in many ways, that attack copied the midget submarine element of Operation Z that was meant to assist the aerial attack from the Kidō Butai on Pearl Harbour almost two years earlier. Operation: Catechism was the devastating attack by Royal Air Force Avro Lancaster heavy bombers carrying the deadly "Tallboy" ten tonne earthquake bombs that wrecked Tirpitz in Tromsø in late 1944; no warship armour, no matter how thick, could withstand a bomb twirling down like a rifle bullet from high altitude and bearing such weight and explosive power. "It will be expunged, Tirpitz-san," she warned.

"I wonder what nightmares you'll have," the battleship sympathetically noted.

"No matter what, I will endure..."

"Morning."

Hearing that rough voice, both looked up as a smirking shipgirl in old-style United States Navy
dungarees with a work smock over her chest came up, her olive-skinned face streaked with grease and oil and her wavy dark hair matted with dirt and metal shavings. "Ohayō gozaimasu, Vestal-sensei," Yonaga greeted the former collier converted into a mobile repair ship and was present at Pearl Harbour in 1941, anchored outboard of the battleship that eventually became the living symbol of the martyrs of that day. "Am I free to have breakfast?"

Vestal smirked as she tapped her iPad to scan what was there. "Good! All your equipment upgrades were installed while you were asleep. Defence-wise, you'll be the match of Midway and her sisters when they come back." She perked. "Oh, if you want to know, they did the first summoning at Great Lakes a few hours ago. All the girls of Battleship Row are back, not to mention all the other battlewagons from South Carolina onward, including Iowa's incomplete sisters, the Montanas, Lex's and Sara's sisters that were scrapped because of the Washington Treaty, plus the old South Dakotas. We even got the Alaska sisters as well on the first big summoning." She chuckled. "That will be confusing."

"What do you mean, Frau Professor?" Tirpitz asked.

Vestal blushed at that German rough approximation of the Japanese "sensei" honorific that was always applied to her given that she helped Akashi run the repair facilities at Eta-jima. "We now have two South Dakotas, two Indians, two Montanas, two North Carolinas, two Iowas and two ships named 'Massachusetts'. Plus two Rangers as the carrier that followed Saratoga was also named 'Ranger'. Atop that, one of the Alaska sisters was named after the Philippines, which is now an independent country!" Vestal reported. "We'll have to make sure the fleet's distributed in such a way that we don't end up confusing people when you call out a name. I can't understand how the Brits, the Canucks, the Aussies and the Kiwis kept it just to one ship per name..."

"Easily explained," Yonaga stated. "In the Commonwealth tradition, the name and battle honours are passed on to the next ship christened with that name no matter what type of ship it is, as if it was one ship all along. You Americans don't do that; honours and awards are always per ship, not per name."

The repair vessel hummed before nodding in understanding. "Oh, got a message from Arizona and Oklahoma to you and the other girls in the Kidō Butai."

"Being?"

"Don't commit hara-kiri, please! The war's long over and Ari sensed it when the veterans on your side came to her memorial at Pearl to apologize to Admiral Kidd and Ari's crew for their actions. Besides, they stowed ammunition outside the main magazines on her and that modified naval cannon shell that hit her was coming from straight up. As Her Majesty here can explain..." - here, Vestal leered at Tirpitz, who was sputtering in embarrassment at being addressed as that - "...bombs hitting
from straight up can't be deflected well by deck armour, especially since Ari wasn't as protected that way as you are, Yonaga."

"Inform Arizona-san and her friends that I would consider it an honour to fight at their side if circumstances dictate such," Yonaga stated. "Meanwhile..."

"WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE, BAKA?! YOU BACK OFF AND LEAVE KISARAGI-CHAN ALONE!"

Hearing Tariko's voice, Vestal moaned. "Oh, shit! Here we go again...!"

"What's going on?" Yonaga demanded.

"The Canadians salvaged a girl sunk near Wake Island when the girls here started to crank up their offensive against the Abyssals: Destroyer Kisaragi," the repair vessel said. "Since the whole project started, there's been a group of ship-breakers assigned to the grounds in anticipation of taking apart any shipgirl who's crippled too much to be of further use to the Combined Fleet." As Tirpitz gasped in horror, Vestal added, "Ever since Kisaragi was brought back, the yardmaster of that group has harassed Akashi, myself and the others to get their hands on her and recycle her parts. Of course, Admiral Saitō..."

She then gasped on sensing a volcano of pure FURY escape the aircraft carrier in the dock in front of her. As Tirpitz stared in horror at the sight of Yonaga rising like Gojira from her dock, the seventh carrier of Operation Z glared at Vestal. "Where are my swords?" she icily asked...

Moments later...

To many staring at this, it looked like some strange Mexican standoff between Moroboshi Tariko and a middle-aged man in a scientist's smock over a business suit, accompanied by a half-dozen dockyard workers in overalls and T-shirts, a familiar octopus clan mon on their chests. Behind the matriarch of the Moroboshi Clan was a badly-bandaged destroyer in a hospital gown seated in a wheelchair, currently accompanied by a shuddering Mutsuki. As other shipgirls, security personnel and shore staff began to gather around the scene, the doors to the refurbishment docks were flung open and a hastily-dressed Yonaga charged out, her daishō dangling from her hakama belt. Given the noise, the scientist and his companions turned to look...before they gargled in terror on seeing the seventh carrier approach them at flank speed, a murderous look on her face.
"Y-y-y-Yonaga-s-s-san...!" the scientist sputtered...

...before the loud SSHING! of a drawn katana made everyone save the dazed Kisaragi gasp before the leader of the Eta-jima detachment of Mendō Heavy Industries found himself about to become a head shorter. Before he could croak out a protest, Yonaga turned to stare in amusement at Tariko. "Moroboshi-dono, would you care to explain to me why this yakuza here is disturbing the peace and tranquility of our humble naval district?" the carrier sweetly asked.

"He's no yakuza, Yonaga-san," Tariko said as a cool look crossed her face, then she gestured with her hand. Burning ki then cloaked the extremity, which then formed into a blazing energy katana the size of the carrier's large sword; that was accompanied by a hissing, crackling noise that made the scientist croak on recognizing the similarity between Tariko's ki weapon and a lightsabre from Star Wars. As the people viewing this felt an Arctic-level chill suddenly wash over them, the workers accompanying the scientist gulped as they fearfully backed off. "So, should I call in the Men In Black?" she then teased.

The scientist jolted...as Yonaga's eyes went wide on recognizing that particular code phrase. Before the man could react, the carrier spun around, drawing her wakizashi out of its scabbard before plunging it into his liver, making him shriek in agony as she ripped it across his mid-abdomen, tearing his stomach and spleen as well as severing his aorta and inferior vena cava. As a torrent of blood and severed internal organs exploded from the cut to shower the ground at his feet, Yonaga twisted the short sword up to cut through the diaphragm and vent open the heart before she yanked it out of his body. That allowed him to collapse onto his knees, though he still had strength in his lower body to stay somewhat erect as he glared hatefully at the woman in black standing in front of him. "L-l-Lum-sama...will d-d-destroy y-y-you...!"

Tariko smirked. "T'ech'ach Nechma Nukt'ech-kai Ket'echi," she said. "Let me translate for you before you go off to the hell your whole stinking race deserves now..." The smile turned lethal. "'Mother Of All Fight Scenes'!"

The scientist cried out in terror...before his strength finally fled him and he collapsed on his face as the life seeped from his body. As all the onlookers gaped in shock and horror at how easily Yonaga dispatched the despised leader of the ship-breaking firm that had set up shop here on Eta-jima right after the Kanmusu-keikaku was launched, Tariko looked over. "Master Chief!"

A burly American master chief master-at-arms came up, saluting. "Ma'am?!

"Have the corpsmen take that alien refuse to the incinerator to destroy the body. The people who worked under him are confined to base for five days!"
Another salute responded. "Aye-aye, ma'am!"

As he shouted to co-workers to get hospital corpsmen to the scene, Yonaga nodded after a smiling Vestal handed her a cloth to clean her wakizashi before she sheathed both her swords. She then walked over to shift the dead scientist's head with her foot to part the hair over his ear.

His very elegantly tapered ear.

"Gods! He's an ALIEN?!"

That was the ship-breaking shop foreman, who looked as if he had been pitched into the Twilight Zone without any sort of helpful warning from Rod Serling. "An enemy alien who would gladly destroy us all in the name of the Oni your young master would gladly slavish over even as the lives of innocents elsewhere are made to suffer," the carrier coldly declared. "That is why Ataru-san needs to remove that Oni from this planet! Her very presence is as much a plague to all of us on Earth as the Abyssals are! Do you wish to explain to the Heavenly Sovereign why is it that you stood back and allowed this alien yakuza to kidnap a brave, wounded warrior just to turn her into a sex slave on his home planet because Moroboshi-dono saw them for the monsters they are and summoned a race of metahumans to wreck them to keep Earth safe from their kind?!"

As the people who answered to the Mendō Clan of Musashino gaped in horror at that statement, Yonaga stared at the dazed Kisaragi before she moved to head back to the refurbishment docks to fully clean up, then go have breakfast. She didn't notice the chorus of awed and adoring looks from the destroyers and submarines who had gathered there, not to mention the thankful looks from the cruisers and the understanding nods from battleships and carriers. As she disappeared into the refurbishment docks, Fubuki found herself gushing.

"Yonaga-sempai is so COOL...!"

Agreeing nods echoed from the others as Yonaga's sisters exchanged looks...

The main mess hall, an hour later...
"Vódka?"

Yonaga perked before she looked at the shot glass of clear liquid that had been placed in front of her breakfast tray by Hibiki. Gazing at the silver-haired destroyer who had been turned over to the Soviet Union at the end of the war in reparations, the carrier blinked, then smiled as she took it and swallowed the liquid in one shot. She winced as a certain hospital corpsman faerie began to berate her for drinking hard liquor when she had spiritually gone totally cold turkey for decades before a gentle buzz echoed deep in her heart and soul as the vódka went to work. "That was the first time I ever did that..."

"Did a lot of your crew commit seppuku, nanodesu?" Inazuma meekly asked.

"Hai, Inazuma-san," the carrier affirmed with a sad nod. "The frustrations and the boredom just got to far too many over the years. After the failed attempt at escape in 1983, it became chronic...and when Fujita-chūshō died in 1990, whatever hope the crew had when it came to getting out of Sano Bay..."

The destroyers sitting around her all had sympathetic tears in their eyes as they imagined what it must have been like for the seventh carrier to sense her crew endure such madness in a place where they had no hope of getting home save for breaking out of the barrier of glacial ice that had trapped them there since 1941; the idea of surrendering themselves to local Russian authority would have never been contemplated in that case. "So what was that monster, anyway?" Akatsuki hissed as she hugged herself. Even if she understood the concept of ritual suicide as much as any other shipgirl who served Japan did, to see it happen before her had unnerved her...even if she now viewed the great carrier with the same gushing awe Fubuki had showed earlier for having stood up for poor Kisaragi like that, plus defended Tariko-sensei like she did.

"A Niphentaxian," Yonaga explained. "Their home planet is commonly called 'Phentax Two'. A race of technological savants who have lost the ability to create their own culture and society, thus are chronically addicted to seeking out other societies to template theirs after. Such an addiction these days has a powerful religious slant to it; they would create 'churches' of sorts that would make people venerate a specific person they feel was touched directly by the Kami. Earth has interested them for centuries; they've had cultural observers here for decades." As the destroyers gasped at the idea of alien spies being embedded among humanity for that length of time, the carrier added, "A decade ago, their current leader Ōgi was saved by Ataru-san's would-be wife Lum when he was trapped in a foreboding swamp near the Urusian capital city. In gratitude for such an act, he created what he called the 'Church of Lum', viewing her as an arahitogami similar to how we view the Heavenly Sovereign. Said 'church' is now the one single 'faith' driving all of his kind; to defy such is to invite death on accusations of heresy or apostasy." As the destroyers nodded in stunned understanding, Yonaga added, "It was harmless at first...but that changed six years ago when this yakuza launched a biological warfare attack on the capital city of a planet named Vos, slaughtering five million innocent civilians even if the leader of that world tried to have Lum and her family killed due to their public support of a dissident couple from that planet. Given that, there's no way in Heaven that we here on Earth can trust such beings as long as such a genocidal monster as this Ōgi is in charge of that world;
the Union of Phentax Two is considered the most powerful member of the Galactic Federation of Planet-states, the alliance of worlds that Lum's people helped found around the time of the Meiji Restoration here.

"So why was he after Kisaragi-chan?" a shuddering Mutsuki asked as she gently comforted a dazed Kisaragi, who had to be hand-fed her meals due to her total inability to summon the will to do even mundane things like eating. "You said that creep would try to turn Kisaragi-chan into a...a...!"

"Sex slave. No different than the comfort women employed by our troops," Yonaga finished, which made the destroyers - who were at the development of young teenagers in the human scale - all cringe. "Hai, Mutsuki-san. Ōgi's people were able to enslave a race of artificial beings similar to Tariko-san and Negako-san to serve as such for his people, doing it in such a way that none could escape to advise the Niphentaxians' allies like the Oni such was happening. I don't know details, but Negako-san and her siblings were able to free those people from enslavement a month ago, delivering a vicious blow to Ōgi's forces along the way; clearly, they embraced all the lessons of the Pearl Harbour attack and used them. You'll have to ask our friends for information about that operation...but I suspect that 'mother of all fight scenes' phrase Negako-san will reveal to the people in four days' time has much to do with it."

The others nodded before footfalls announced the presence of the two training cruisers assigned as teachers at the kanmusu school that took up a significant part of Eta-jima's grounds. "Yonaga-san," Katori called out as she and Kashima bowed politely to the carrier. "When we start classes for the little ones, would you like to observe them to make sure the standards are up to snuff? Hearing about your admiral and how he was the real genius behind Operation Z, your insights on many things would help them understand their lessons more."

"Of course, Sensei," Yonaga declared as the destroyers all cheered...

Admiral Saitō's office, a half-hour later...

"A Niphentaxian spy?! HERE?!!"

A shuddering admiral glared intently at Tariko, who didn't seem the least bit bothered by what happened. "Hai, Saitō-kaishō," the matriarch of the Moroboshi Clan affirmed. "I didn't get close to the religious goose-stepper until about a week ago...but since I'm not as experienced as Onē-san when it comes to reading people's ki, I wanted to make sure of it. Onē-san was busy doing her in-depth ki analysis of all the kanmusu, remember?" As Saitō Ten'ichi nodded in understanding and the other naval officers present shook their heads in frustration over this delightful new wrinkle in their
lives, Tariko added, "I finally marked him for what he really was yesterday afternoon when he tried to push Akashi-sensei into turning Kisaragi-chan over to his group." She didn't stare at the ship-breaker staff seated nearby, all of whom looked confused at the unbelievable revelation that had just been dumped on their heads. "But I couldn't deal with him until he showed up this morning to come get her."

"And Yonaga-san decided to deal with it," Mutsu noted with an amused smile.

"And Yonaga-san decided to deal with it," Tariko jovially parroted, which made the shipgirls giggle even if many still were chilled on seeing a relatively normal human being (if one ignored the ears and the fanatic religious devotion to Tariko's would-be sister-in-law) killed like that in a mock act of seppuku.

Saitō nodded. "Are you getting your people to sweep out the rest of them?"

"It is being done, Ten'ichi."

Eyes locked on Moroboshi Negako, who had placed herself off to one side in a position which would allow her to see everyone else in the room. It had unnerved the normal humans working at Eta-jima when she showed such behaviour in the beginning, but they had got used to it by now. The Mendō personnel, who had not had to deal with the ninjutsu grandmaster until now, looked as if they were facing Yonaga's wakizashi themselves; if this woman was indeed the legendary Imperial Special Agent #49 herself, there was no power their employer's family possessed that could possibly hurt her or those she chose to protect. Given that Negako did bear a resemblance to the most despised enemy of their employer's son and heir, it was understandable that they were feeling as if the whole world had gone mad; should Young Master Shūtarō push it...!

"We didn't know he was an alien, Teitoku!" the foreman stated. "How in the name of the Kami was he able to infiltrate himself into our group like that?!"

"That's how good these people can be in mimicking behaviour from other races," Tariko coolly advised, resisting the urge to quip about the normal level of incompetence people working for the Mendō family showed at times. "And if you think that was bad, you better know that these folks look on Shūtarō as Lum's 'fifth holy apostle'." As the ship-breakers all gaped at her, she smirked. "You think that's crazy? Tomobiki's chock-full of the slimebags! And we don't need them to encourage Shūtarō or Megane's gang of idiots into doing something that could hurt people elsewhere! Lum's just ONE person in the end! There are over seven billion people on Earth! Who gives a shit about what Lum wants in the end?! Given that she's as psychotic as that bastard's leader back on Phentax Two..." Shaking her head, she nodded politely to Saitō, then marched out of the office, a litany of curses in many languages flowing from her lips.
As the ship-breakers winced on hearing that storm of profanity, Saitō sighed. "Gentlemen, you'll be confined to base until the issue with these aliens is dealt with in four days' time. Once that happens, I will be speaking to your employer about your presence on Eta-jima. Your being here is wrecking morale among the kanmusu and that can't be allowed at this time, not with the threats from the Abyssals. Master Chief, escort them to guest quarters."

"Aye, sir," the master-at-arms who responded to Tariko's call after Yonaga killed the scientist said with a nod before he motioned to his subordinates...

Meanwhile, out in space close to Jupiter...

"GONE?!"

"Yes, Boss! All gone!"

Hearing that from his executive officer, the giant warlord that had led the "invasion" on Earth over a year ago gaped in shock before he sat back in his command chair on the bridge of the Kashin. "How in the name of the Maidens did they leave?!" Redet Invader demanded.

"Most likely, Lady K'ekhech teleported them back to Earth, Boss," the younger man with the eye patch stated; on seeing him for the first time, Lum's Earth friends had immediately been reminded of the anime character of Captain Harlock. "There was trace energy residue in the gig."

Invader grunted. "Signals! Call over to Chancellor Nakkyek!" he ordered his pretty young communications officer. "I'm getting tired of this! Lum wants to be with Mr. Groom! Let's get it done!"

"Yes, Boss!" the woman there said before she made the call.

The view screen on Kashin's keel-mounted pilotage platform flicked on to reveal a beautiful woman about the same age as Lum, though she had the forehead ridges and caste tattoos on her cheeks that marked her true planet of origin. She had shoulder-length silver hair that was pulled away from her forehead and formed a bob cut around her face; deep purple-blue eyes filled with both intelligence
and friendliness peeked out of a well-formed face. She was dressed in the vestments of an Imperial Chancellor, a regional governor general who controlled the "outmarch" systems that formed the Dominion's flank frontier with Uru and several other systems, including Sol's. It had been hair-raising at the start when it came to launching the tag race given that Seu-Ch'ek Yech'a-Mung Hechnich'-Nakkyek was well known across the local cluster for her compassion towards helpless beings and her determination to reign in the mass banditry that had plagued the Imperial Outmarches for years; if something had gone wrong concerning Earth, Uru would have been in a war with Noukiios in an instant!

Given the chancellor had once been the adopted mother of the Dragonspeaker...!

"Yes, Captain," she said, gazing neutrally at him. "How can I help you today?"

"Now see here, Madame Chancellor!" Invader snarled as he straightened himself. "What's this about Lady K'ekhech teleporting all of my daughter's friends to Earth?! My daughter's been cleared to live on Earth by the Special Committee! This is an act of war if you keep her away from her husband...!"

She moaned. "Kyech!"

A sudden puff of air behind Invader later...

KLONK!

The large captain was now driven face-first into the deck thanks to the tall, curvy crimson-haired Noukiite woman appearing to be in her late teens currently standing behind Invader's chair, a raised fist bandaged in protective tape hovering over where the Oni's head had been seconds before. "Ataru and Lum are not married, Invader," Seu-P'ye Yesu-Re Hechnich'-K'ekhech calmly declared as her chestnut eyes glowed with the nigh-immortal power that flooded her veins and made her perhaps one of the most powerful sentient beings in the local cluster. "Why do you continue to believe that lie?"

Invader moaned...just as a screech of outrage thundered from the turbolift tube that connected the bridge to the battlewagon's main hull. "STOP SAYING THAT, YOU MONSTER!" Redet Lum howled before she let go with a massive blast of her bio-electricity upon the nosy animal-lover who had butted in so thoroughly after her spirit-dragon friend had wrecked her wedding.

The energy hit...which made Kyech (as she was known to close friends) howl with laughter at that ticklish feeling danced over her. While the bridge crew gaped in disbelief as they got a close
demonstration of the Dragonspeaker's Superman-like power, the turbolift came down, carrying Lum's three childhood friends and her maternal cousin with it. As they stopped to morbidly watch the warlord's daughter unleash herself on Kyech, they just shook their heads; even if they all had their own reasons to see Lum married to Moroboshi Ataru, they knew that butting heads with the likes of the Dragonspeaker wouldn't get her anywhere.

After a couple minutes, Lum dropped to the deck, exhausted...then Kyech snared her by the neck and threw her into the deckhead, causing the Oni to yelp as the impact knocked her out, her body dropping face-first to the deck. Noting the bridge crew wasn't willing to do anything to get on the Dragonspeaker's bad side by trying to stop her, the crown princess of Neptune took a deep breath. "Chancellor Nakkyek, please!" she called out to the woman on the view screen. "Could you make Lady K'ekhech leave my friend alone?!" Oyuki demanded.

Hearing that plea, Kaep' (as she was known to close friends) closed her eyes. "That you are willing to defend your friend speaks highly of you, Your Highness," she stated as she gazed upon Oyuki. "Still, how can you continue to condone your friend's behaviour not just towards a man whom she is NOT married to by Urusian law or tradition (much less Terran law, I might add!)...but to many others on Earth, in Tomobiki and beyond? Can you answer that?!"

"She loves him!" Oyuki snapped.

"Ataru does not love Lum. Not after he learned how much she lied to him."

Eyes locked on Kyech. "How the fuck do you know that?!" Shigaten Benten then snarled, resisting the urge to yank out her sash chain to try to rope the Noukiite metahuman free warrior with it to make her back off.

"I found him after Nengmek'i brought him to Okusei," the Dragonspeaker stated. "I sensed right away that Ataru's soul had been permanently fractured, creating two separate beings inside him. He also was host to Earth's first artificial intelligence; her spirit was placed within his mind when he was six, which helped in fracturing his own soul." As many on the bridge gasped in shock on hearing that, Kyech added, "I took him to the university where your own sister Kamen currently studies, Benten. There, we had two bioroid clone bodies..."

"WAIT A SEC'!" Benten shrilled. "I DON'T HAVE A SISTER! WHAT IN BENSAITEN'S NAME ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?!"

"Ask your father," Kyech calmly stated before she focused on Oyuki. "You also have a sister named Mienai." As the Neptunian crown princess jolted on hearing that, the crimson-haired free warrior
stared at Lum's other childhood "friend" and once-rival for the hand of her former fiancé Seq Rei, Aruka Ran. "As do you, Ran. Her name is Damasu. And Lum has one as well; her name is Hensō." She gazed on the groaning warlord's daughter nearby. "All are bioroids, not gynoids as Ōgi promised Nassur when they were created five years ago to serve as living targets to ensure his enemies didn't hurt you. When Nassur and Cinba discovered the truth after I sensed what happened, they allowed your sisters to travel to Okusei to live their lives." She lightly smiled. "They are fully aware of what has happened to you. All of you were fitted with meson crystals in your minds so they could act exactly as you at whatever time they were needed. Hensō 'saw' what Lum did that day she declared Ataru her husband, then explained everything to Ataru after I brought him to the university."

Silence fell as the three exchanged looks. Oyuki then took a deep breath, shaking her head in annoyance. Parents! "If you will please excuse us, Lady K‘ekhech, Chancellor, we need to speak to Lum's father about this. Benten?"

"Right," the biker-babe from the planet Fukunokami snarled as she yanked off her sash chain, then lashed out to lasso Lum's father with it around the neck. As he gargled on sensing that hardened metal crush his throat, Benten grabbed him and slammed him into his chair. "Hey! Old Man! You got some serious explaining to do right now!" she snarled at him. "About my sister...!"

As Invader sputtered in shock, Kyech smiled as she teleported off the Kashin...

Tomobiki, lunchtime...

"Oi, guys!"

People perked on hearing that from the front gate of Tomobiki High School, then turned as Mifune Hideyuki came up, laptop computer in hand. "Oi, Mifune! What's up?!" Fujinami Ryūnosuke called out; given that members of Class 2-4 had just got back to Earth the previous evening, the school's elderly principal had allowed them to take a day off to rest and recover before heading back to classes. Despite that, almost all of their number had come by the rustic old schoolhouse to spend time together, plus take the chance to meet up with peers to relay news of what happened in space. "What's with the computer?!!"

"Naka-chan's latest podcast! Just came out today!" the kanmusu otaku replied.
That made people gasp as many of the other kanmusu fans perked. "Naka-chan's latest podcast?!!" Marubeya Momoe asked. She was one of Mendō Shūtarō's more ardent fans in the class; even now that he was "engaged" to the young heiress of his clan's greatest rivals, many of the girls in Class 2-4 and elsewhere in Tomobiki still dreamt of the chance of scoring with him. "She normally puts those out on Fridays!" It was a Monday. "Why's she putting out one now?!"

"Is it Yonaga-san?" Kakugari asked, ignoring the shuddering Megane. Ever since the class had come to school, the leader of the Stormtroopers had been surly with his peers, looking as if he wanted to race down to Eta-jima and rip apart Moroboshi Ataru with his bare hands. Seeing even his closest friends gush about the kanmusu was making the bespectacled student see red.

Didn't ANY of these idiots remember their sacred oaths concerning Lum...?

"Hai!" Hideyuki said as he sat on the blanket that had been brought to the school by Momoe's best friend Gekasawa Kumiko, then he moved to open the laptop and boot it up. "Got it recorded; it was broadcast live an hour ago. It's got Ataru and Tariko-chan in it, plus Negako-san...!"

"GOOD!"

People moaned, then Shinobu calmly raised a nearby rock that was at least a half-tonne in weight while she smiled in mock sweetness at her once-rival's chief fanboy. "Megane-san, would you like me to compound all the wounds Nengmek'i-sama gave you three months ago?"

Megane gargled before he made himself as small as possible even if his heart raged at that show of "defiance". Ever since Lum had first been beaten by the Dragonspeaker of Noukios a week before when they tried to sail back to Earth from Uru, the tarts lapping up Mendō's ass had become quite bold in putting his allies among the boys down and making sure they didn't try to show their support for the warlord's daughter; it had even caused a lot of his peers who were fans of the kanmusu to reject being part of the Stormtroopers...which was simply unforgivable in his eyes. Flashing Ataru's former girlfriend a thankful smile, Hideyuki finished turning on the laptop, then pulled out a pair of speakers from his carryall bag to plug into it. As he moved to get the file brought up, footfalls heralded the arrival of the school's chief administrator, accompanied by the town's most unique resident bar none. "Ah, Mifune-kun! I thought I said that you and your class were to take the day off," the Principal calmly joked as Kotatsuneko move to set up his space heater table nearby.

Hideyuki chuckled as he moved to shift the laptop onto the table. After the large three-furred cat-ghost nodded his permission, the kanmusu otaku set up his machine, then he called up the file in question while his peers shifted themselves around to get a better look. "It's a special podcast that Naka-chan put out because of Yonaga-san, Kōchō-sensei," he explained. "Just got posted in the 'Net an hour ago and I wanted make sure people saw it! Ah...!"
He tapped controls. "Ohayō gozaimasu, minna-san!" a cheery voice called out over the speakers as the image of a bubbly brown-haired light cruiser in her normal orange-and-black "traffic cone" work uniform appeared; the background put Naka inside one of the buildings at Eta-jima, no doubt near the classrooms where newly-summoned kannmusu learned their trade. "This is Naka-chan, idol of the Kanmusu-keikaku, with a special podcast put out in the wake of yesterday's incredible summoning of ten kannmusu thanks to the last true hero of the Greater East Asia War, Moroboshi Negako-san herself!" she declared as she winked at her virtual audience while her theme music played in the background. "We're here today at the Kure Naval District to watch as Yamato-san's long-missing sister Yonaga-san - along with nine other new, wonderful friends - begin their great quest to learn what life in the Twenty-first Century is like! So I came here to the classrooms for the destroyers to see how Yonaga-san is doing!" She then perked as she looked off to port. "Ah! There she is now! Yonaga-san!"

The camera panned over as an incredible visage then appeared, having stepped out of a classroom accompanied by a smiling Kashima. "Hai, Naka-san..." Yonaga began before she stared a question at the camera being aimed at her. "What is this?!" she demanded. "I know we don't need to be as security conscious as we were back during the war, but why are you having this film made?!!"

As the silver-haired, pony-tailed training cruiser tried not to giggle at the carrier's flustered expression, Naka waved Yonaga down. "Now, now, Yonaga-san! Relax!" she scolded the taller shipgirl. "After all, there are loads of people who want to know all about you! There was nothing at all about you save that construction on your hull was cancelled before your keel was laid down and that was it! That's how good the Kempeitai and Tokkeitai were in hiding your existence! People in Japan and elsewhere want to know about you, their newest defender against the Abyssals! That's why we're letting people see you now!"

Hearing that, Yonaga looked lost. "Oi, Naka-chan! Slow it down, huh?" Ryūnosuke urged. "She's going through enough culture shock as is! Jeez...!"

Others watching this nodded, then they perked on hearing footfalls echo from behind Yonaga. "Yonaga-san, this is part of our duties now as so willed by Tennō," Yamato stated as she came up to give her sistership a friendly squeeze on the shoulder, a smile crossing her face as the carrier instantly stiffened on hearing of the Heavenly Sovereign's wishes. "Be at peace with yourself, sister, please! I, Yamato, would be hurt if you are lost in this day and age!"

Yonaga winced. "Onē-san, Ataru-san warned me about that tick in yours and Musashi-onēsan's speech patterns," she then chided before shaking her head. "It's just as bad as the way some of the others speak!"

"Most of those afflicted are destroyers, Yonaga-san!" Kashima advised. "Even if we are the kami of
warships, they are children deep down! Leave them be!

The carrier gazed on the training cruiser, then she sighed. "If my admiral's old training petty officer from the Naval Academy was alive today, he would commit seppuku to avoid dying of an apoplectic fit out of shame at the lack of serious discipline here, Kashima-san! We're in a war situation! People are starving worldwide! Why aren't we sweeping the seas clean of those yōma so that food could be delivered to isolated islands?! We are failing our duty!"

Hearing that made most of Class 2-4 scream in joy on hearing such a rallying cry from the seventh carrier of Operation Z. "It's the same thing that keeps Musashi-san, Kii-san and I stuck in port often," Yamato lamented. "Supplies! Fuel, spare parts, the materials to make spare parts and everything we need to keep people alive and healthy while we fight the Abyssals! The Canadians, the Koreans, the Australians and the New Zealanders are working wonders with us as they try to keep the sea lanes clear, but since the Americans are still lagging in summoning kamousu, we can't really go on offensive operations just yet!"

"Yonaga, please contain yourself," a cold, neutral voice then declared as Naka looked to starboard. "I know you are driven by the kami of your crew to prove yourself before Tennō, but your supply needs will be even greater than that of your sisters." As Moroboshi Negako walked into the range of the camera, the ninjutsu grandmaster added, "Remember what Kyōsuke believed in. If one must die, one must make one's death mean something. Do not put yourself in the same situation Yamato found herself in when she was forced on Operation: Ten-gō."

Yonaga blinked as Yamato gave her a worried look. "I would rather be sunk in battle than be sacrificed to an atomic bomb as Nagato-san was, Negako-san!"

Negako seemed not the least bit phased. "Hai, that is true. The Americans' fear of the Soviets at the time truly blinded them to many truths, especially given their shocking lack of respect at what the people of the Soviet Union had suffered because of Adolf Hitler's desire for living space for his 'master race'." As Yonaga nodded, the ninjutsu grandmaster added, "Remember all the lessons of that war and remember the Go-sei taught here. Do not blind yourself as Hiroshi and most of his crew blinded themselves in the long term."

"Shisei ni motoru nakarishika?"

"Genkō ni hazuru nakarishika?"

"Kiryoku ni kakeru nakarishika?"

"Doryoku ni urami nakarishika?"

"Bushō ni wataru nakarishika?"
Yonaga gasped before she turned, stunned to hear the five simple reflective questions once written by a good friend and Eta-jima classmate of her late commander Fujita Hiroshi, Matsushita Hajime, who commanded the Imperial Naval Academy in the 1930s. "How do you know the Go-sei, Missouri-san?" she asked, surprised the American fast battleship could say that so easily even if her words were flecked by her Midland accent. "I can tell you memorized them..."

"It's taught at Annapolis as well, Miss Yonaga," Missouri stated with a wink.

That made the carrier gape. "What?" she eeped out in shock.

"It's taught at Annapolis," the battleship repeated herself. "Our governments may have had a ton of disagreements back in those days that set us at each others' throats like that after Pearl, but we know a good thing when we see it! We adopted the Go-sei after the war and the midshipmen were always taught to ask those questions of themselves before lights out."

Silence fell as Yonaga took that in, then a smile crossed her face. "I see..."

Everyone then perked on hearing a snappy jazz tune faintly echo from a nearby classroom. As Yonaga gaped in shock on hearing such music being played in this place, Kashima giggled. "Ah, it appears our wonderful guests from Canada are getting a little restless at this time," she said. "Come along, Yonaga-san. It is time you met some samurai from the land of Green Gables!"

She took the carrier's hand and pulled her down the hallway, the others in the crowd following. As they went, Naka faced the camera. "It looks like Yonaga-san's going to have a tough time of it...but I'm really hopeful for her," she stage-whispered to her audience. "Now, let's see if the girls from Group C-4 are going to prank Yamato-san because of what happened two days ago."

As the audience in Tomobiki all snickered on hearing that observation - save for the still-sulking Megane - the crowd at Eta-jima reached the closed door of one classroom. Kashima politely knocked, which made the music instantly die. "Who's out there?!" a voice projecting the same physical age as many of the destroyers at Eta-jima called out from behind the closed door.

"It's Kashima, Chilliwack-san!" the training cruiser called out as several of Class 2-4 whooped; many Japanese were as much fans of Canadian shipgirls as they were their own kanmusu. "It's the class before lunch! Akashi-sensei and Vestal-sensei want to ensure you're fed before your diesels are looked at!"
A moan replied. "Chief! Don't you people believe in piping to lunch here?!!"

"Lay off the chief!" another voice barbed. As the camera panned on Yonaga given she was the "guest star", the audience was quick to see her concentrate as she tried to place accents. "You DID turn off the damned 1MC, remember!"

Kashima giggled. "We're coming in," she said as she opened the door.

The crowd walked inside to see a group of shipgirls appearing to be about twelve or so at a circle of desks with various musical instruments in hand and on the desks, all hooked to a very intricate sound system. Viewing this from across the world, the audience would immediately note that they were uniformly dressed in a diver's sleeveless skinsuit-like bodysuit, coloured a uniform bluish pearl grey which was bloused into zip-up, calf-length medium blue boots trimmed in black. They also wore an almost-black zip-up jacket bearing their names over the right breast, the stylized service patch of the Royal Canadian Navy over the left breast, ship's crests on the right upper arm and the Canadian White Ensign on their left arms. One could tell by a glance that all of them were of the same class of warship thanks to similar facial shapes and shared body builds; save for the different eye, hair and skin colours and the odd change of eye shape, the only thing telling them apart were the three-digit pendant numbers in black on their upper legs, barely visible under their naval combat jackets. All were now quite pale and looked as if they hadn't eaten anything decent in a week; such was the physical sign of a kanmusu who had recently exerted herself far beyond their design specifications. Yet there was an aura of quiet dignity projecting from all of them which made even Yonaga feel instant respect for these warrior spirits of the Great White North.

"You are all Flower-class?" the carrier then asked with a polite nod.

The shipgirl at the synthesizer smiled as she stood. She was a redhead with traces of silver in her short-cropped hair. To Yonaga's surprise, she looked completely Oriental, with the right coloured skin despite its current sickly pallor, though she had green eyes peeking out of her somewhat-childish face. "We are," she said as she slowly walked over to stand in front of the carrier, staring her right in the eyes. "You're the one that stood the watch all alone up in the Arctic all those years, eh?" she then asked, her eyebrow arched knowingly to show she knew the answer. "Don't you worry about your crew, Miss Yonaga. Saint Roch is on the case right now. We'll make sure they all come back to be buried at the Yasukini Temple soon enough. There won't be any MIAs on the commissioner's watch, not even after all this time."

Hearing that almost drove the carrier to tears at such a show of understanding by this corvette, one of many whaler-type coastal patrol ships pressed into ocean escort duties and whose crews had braved the Atlantic in all seasons to escort convoys to Britain in the face of a relentless submarine campaign waged by the Germans to starve the island nation to submission. "You have my thanks for such
words. You are Her Majesty's Canadian Ship Chilliwack," she said as she gazed on the corvette's crest, which showed a red stylized maple leaf on a white field embossed by a green four-leaf clover within the standard circular frame of a commissioned ship in Her Majesty's Navy of the Dominion of Canada.

"Same." Chilliwack then smirked before she shook her head. "That's got to be the damndest sea story I've ever heard, both as a ship and as a shipgirl." She then offered her hand. "May I shake your hand?"

Stunned, Yonaga held out her hand, allowing the corvette to grasp it. As some of the others whooped at the sight, the other corvettes got up and slowly walked over to also shake the seventh carrier's hand. Introductions were then made before the Canadians all went back to their desks to pick up their instruments. "You do know, Chilliwack-san, it is an hour before lunch," Kashima reminded the corvettes as Naka faced the audience, shrugging.

"We know, Chief," Chilliwack said as she gave the training cruiser a knowing look. "But since the Hotel Yamato is here..." - she ignored said super-battleship's indignant squawk at being called that when it was well known how much she HATED being addressed that way - "...we're going to get Dauphin's revenge for this big klutz hurting her feelings like that two days ago!"

Yonaga tensed before she spun on her sistership. "Onē-san, explain! NOW!"

Yamato shuddered. "Chilliwack-san, please!" she moaned, eyes flooding with tears as she bowed. "It's not that I didn't appreciate Dauphin-san cooking poutine for all of us, but greasy food like that doesn't sit well with me!"

"Then you should'a told us that you hate French fries done that way and Dauphie would'a baked them right, then put in the healthy stuff! Poutine can be served that way!" Agassiz snarled as she strummed her guitar while she gave the super-battleship an evil eye. Yet another Japanese-Canadian in physical looks, she had dark golden hair cropped close and dark green eyes, matching her ship's crest of a dark gold diamond embossed by a red maple leaf on a sea of wavy horizontal green and white bands. "She cried her eyes out when you only ate a small bite before setting that plate aside! So stay still for a moment..."

"One, two, three..." Chilliwack called out.

"UCHŪ SENKAN YAAAAAAAAA-MAAAAAA-TOOOOOOOOOO!"
As Yamato yelped in horror on hearing all the corvettes bellow that fanfare, her cheeks turned as red as cherries while Naka laughed as she shifted herself beside Chilliwack, then as they launched into the fanfare of the famous anime series theme music, all the corvettes sang out...

Saraba chikyū yo!
Tabidatsu fune wa
Uchū Senkan Yamato.

Uchū no kanata
Iskandar e
Unmei seoi
Ima tobidatsu!

Kanarazu koko e
Kaette kuruto
Te wo furu hito ni
Egao de kotae!

Ginga o hanare
Iskandar e
Harubaru nozomu
Uchū Senkan Yamato!

By then, someone else had come into the classroom as Yamato shivered in the wind from being bombarded by a rendition of THAT DAMNED SONG. The viewers in Tomobiki all were quick to recognize who it was even if many had also quickly swung into singing the famous theme music. "Ataru-kun...!" Shinobu whispered.

On the screen, Ataru stood between Chilliwack and Naka, exchanging looks with the cruiser and the corvette...before he joined in for the second verse!

"ATARU, YOU BASTARD! HOW DARE YOU EMBARRASS YAMATO-SAMA...?!"
"...l-l-like th-that...?" Megane moaned after getting a rock smashed into him.

"Dōmo, Shinobu-san!" Ryūnosuke whispered.

As others nodded in gratitude, Shinobu smiled at her friend while on Hideyuki’s laptop screen, the poor super-battleship was subjected to the Canadians’ well-sung version to the theme music to the series based about her ship-self...

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**Eta-jima, that moment...**

"Um, Onē-san...?"

"H-h-hai...!" a still-flustered Yamato sputtered.

"'Space Battleship Yamato'?"

Yamato squawked again in helpless, embarrassed outrage as she and Yonaga, followed by a snickering Musashi and a smirking Kii, walked into the main mess hall. "Tell me, Yonaga-san, are you aware of anime?" the second of their class then asked as they moved to pick up serving trays, then got into line.

"Motion picture version of manga," Yonaga answered. "What of it, Onē-san?"

"In 1974, an anime series was produced to show a story where Onē-sama was effectively rebuilt into a starship to save Earth from evil aliens threatening to destroy it," Kii helpfully explained, making Yamato groan as they moved to select salads and other opening courses. "That song our Canadian friends sang in the classroom to avenge Dauphin-san's humiliation is the opening theme music to that series. It's quite popular here, Onē-sama."
Yonaga took that in. "Do people not care for the traditional forms of entertainment, Kii-san? To waste away in front of such an infernal machine...!"

"Oh, don't worry! They still have kabuki, nō, sumo and all the other traditional arts," Kii assured her. "But given how much the Americans showed mercy to all of us after they forced Shōwa Tennō to finally submit to their demands when Truman-daiōrō faced the ugly choice of using what Oppenheimer-hakase and his friends had created or launch an invasion of the Home Islands with the Soviets crashing down on us at the same time, it's not so surprising that so many here in Japan have come to like Western forms of entertainment. Even if it was to help keep the communists out of the country, America did help us rebuild." She then winked as her sister. "Besides, anime has millions of converts over in America and in Europe, Onē-sama. It's not like the Chūshingura, but there is vengeance over what happened back then!"

Musashi laughed at that. By then, they had been served battleship-sized meals and were now making their way to a table to sit among themselves; Yonaga had vowed to spend at least one meal a day with her sisters and one with her mission-mates from Operation Z to help her reconnect with those who had been reborn in this modern age and had been given the opportunity to better adapt to such a different age. And while she still found herself totally at sea when it came to so many things, Yonaga did appreciate how much effort the Americans had poured into healing Japan from the damage inflicted on it during that dark time. Yes, her crew had vented time and time again about "victor's justice" when they heard of the Tōkyō war crimes trials. However, Yonaga had to admit that if such an enemy who could be so gracious in victory and had gone out of its way to help a wrecked foe stand tall and proud once more, respect for that enemy's culture was right and proper. Even more so, the Americans' great heart and sense of fair play ultimately saved the people of Japan from still being brainwashed by that bastardized version of bushidō the militarists who launched that war gladly force-fed on them all...and in the name of a clearly deceived Heavenly Sovereign at THAT! At least some of those foolish idiots took the honourable path to redeem themselves before Shōwa Tennō when they realized what they had done, Yonaga darkly mused as she nibbled on her tōfu salad.

"Oi! Can we join you guys?"

The sisters looked over as Negako and Tariko approached. "Please," Yamato bade.

The two "ordinary" humans sat. "What do you think, Onē-san?" Tariko teased as she gazed over at her adopted sister. "Were you able to sense what the moron squad back in Tomobiki thought of Naka-chan's podcast?"

"They witnessed it through Mifune Hideyuki's laptop computer straight through the Canadians' delightful rendition of Yamato's theme music," Negako stated.
"Negako-san! It's not MY theme music!" Yamato shrieked out.

"Yamato, remember what Tennō desires of you."

That made the brunette battleship awk before she sighed. "Negako-san, much that I understand that helping maintain morale among the people of Japan is part of our duties, I...!" She shook her head before she waved to herself. "In that story, even if it demonstrates the virtues of true bushidō to the audience, my 'anime self' was made to bear a **weapon of mass destruction** within her own bow! How am I supposed to condone THAT after Hiroshima and Nagasaki?!!"

"'Weapon of mass destruction'?" Yonaga asked.

"A giant energy cannon called the Wave Motion Gun. Or as a lot of the cruisers started calling it when they saw the series, the 'Fuck You Gun'," Tariko provided. "It takes power from the main stardrive system and punches it out in a super-sized bolt of explosive energy that could wipe out whole fleets or turn a continent the size of North America into a funeral pyre! Seeing that thing gave Nagato-san, Saratoga-san, Prinz Eugen-chan and Sakawa-chan flashbacks of what they went through at Bikini back in 1946 during the whole Crossroads bullshit!" As Yonaga gaped on hearing that some idiot in Japan had actually dreamt up of such a thing, Tariko shrugged. "It's like Gojira films! Yeah, it protested the hell out of tests like that because the crew of that fishing boat got radiation poisoning after they blew up the first big H-bomb, but showing a film where this super-sized radioactive dinosaur is stomping Tōkyō into kindling even worse than what happened during Operation: Meetinghouse...!"

"YAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH! GOJIRAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA...!!"

Before Yonaga could demand to know what was going on, a soothing shush echoed from nearby. The carrier looked over to see a shipgirl almost as tall as she kneeling before a moaning Naganami, who was trying to curl herself into as small of a ball as possible. Noting that the screaming destroyer was being comforted, Yonaga turned back to her meal...then she blinked as she gazed once more on the taller shipgirl whispering tender words to the shuddering destroyer. She was Western in looks, supermodel-slim with dirty blonde hair in a short ponytail; she wore a decorative black bandana to force some of those locks away from her face, which was pierced with deep ocean blue eyes. Her clothing was a white nurse's uniform with ankle-length skirt underlined with a petticoat; it was similar in style to what was common in World War One, with green trim and the Red Cross stitched on her upper arms and the outer flanks of her thighs. Her boots were Edwardian-pattern high-heeled ladies' footwear in rust red. Noting her curiosity, Negako stated, "That is Britannic, Yonaga."

The carrier's head snapped over. "**Britannie**?! You mean...?!!"
"Titanic's and Olympic's sistership," the ninjutsu grandmaster explained.

Yonaga blinked, then scanned around...before she focused on what were clearly twins of the ill-fated passenger liner-turned-hospital ship approaching the scene, though they were dressed in matching white peasant blouses and black ankle-length skirts trimmed in gold by their feet; their boots were the same. As Britannic helped Naganami to her feet, one of her sisters gently ruffled the destroyer's hair. "There, there, Naganami...there's no need to be scared," she cooed, her voice flecked with a faint Irish burr. "That mean, nasty lizard isn't anywhere close to the base! Now, let's sit down and have some tea...!"

Nodding, Naganami was guided to a table, then she was permitted to sit in the hospital ship's lap while the sister who hadn't spoken went to get tea. "How did they come here?" Yonaga then asked Negako, surprised to see British liners as kanmusu in Japan. "If they came back as kantai musume, they..."

"Should be in Britain right now," the latter finished.

"Hai! Atop that, only warships are to be summoned...!"

Tariko snickered. "Blame Kon-chan and her sisters for that one, Yonaga-san."

An eyebrow arched in response. "Kongō-san?"

"Hai! You know she was built in England, right?"

"The Vickers yard at Barrow-in-Furness. Hai. What of it?"

"Since this was before the Commonwealth nations managed to pry open shipping routes and we could get British, Canadian, Australian and New Zealander kanmusu visiting us here at Eta-jima, Kon-chan got a little lonely since she didn't have people to enjoy afternoon tea with," Tariko explained. "So one day about a half-year ago, she gets this weird idea about going to the summoning chamber and calling over some British shipgirls. However, she wasn't trained in doing that...but after she shanghaied her sisters to help out, they figured it out."
"It was the same approach I took in summoning yourself and the others," Negako added. "Titanic responded to a love song written for a movie based on her maiden voyage released in 1997; it is seen as the second most lucrative film produced, with total earnings to date of over two billion dollars American." As Yonaga gaped - she knew what the value of the American dollar was like these days - Negako added, "Naturally, when she answered the summons, so did Olympic and Britannic. They wanted to sail as a team for the White Star Line, but the arrogance that saw Titanic sunk and the intervention of World War One that took Britannic left Olympic alone until White Star was absorbed by Cunard in 1934."

"Oh! Tell her the rest, Negako-sama!" Kii urged.

"There were more?" Yonaga asked.

"Look where the Canadians are sitting, Yonaga-san," Musashi bade.

Yonaga looked...then gaped on seeing three girls dressed similarly to Olympic and Titanic at a table, having been joined by Chilliwack and her sisters; also seated with them were Akatsuki and her sisters. One of the reborn passenger liners was a girl the same height as Yamato, Musashi and Kii. The others were twins about the same height as Kongō and her sisters. All three were redheads with black bandanas in their hair; again, they wore their hair in simple pony-tails. One of the twins had a blue neck choker. Seeing that and noting the period clothing, Yonaga smirked. "Mauritania, Lusitania and Aquitania."

"Indeed," Negako confirmed before sipping her tea. "Of course, Ten'ichi forbade any of the kantai musume from making use of the summoning chamber."

"Why have they not been allowed to return to Britain?" the carrier then asked. "I know kanmusu can be transported by aircraft anywhere in the world since the Abyssals lack decent anti-aircraft suites and their own carrier aircraft can't hope to reach the high altitude a Boeing C-17 Globemaster III can fly."

"They agreed to remain here since there was a war on and they did understand how lonely Kongō was," the ninjutsu grandmaster stated. "They have their duties here. Britannic assists Akashi and Vestal when it comes to the refurbishment docks. All of them can serve as mobile replenishment ships when needed; they accompany destroyer divisions on long-range patrols since they can outrace enemy submarines and most surface craft. Aquitania and her fleet mates, plus Titanic and Olympic, were also modified to armed merchant cruiser standards; Cunard possessed an understanding with the Royal Navy concerning that to win funding for Aquitania's, Mauritania's and Lusitania's initial construction. Because of their presence, we have expanded our reach to where the Imperial forces achieved at the height of World War Two just before the action at Midway. Here on the base, they assist in various etiquette classes."
"Of course. Remember, you are all akitsumikami, living as human beings in lieu of existing as warships," Negako stated. "Once the Abyssals are dealt with finally, what happens to you then? You will not be dismantled since you are effectively human; that is the primary reason Ten'ichi and the staff here wish to see that ship-breaking firm removed from the grounds. It would be murder in the eyes of Tennō and many of the people of Japan, not to mention elsewhere. In a month's time, you will undergo menarche." Ignoring Yonaga's squawk on hearing that, the ninjutsu grandmaster added, "Destroyers frequently undergo same as they mature; it will be very interesting when all the Commonwealth corvettes and frigates endure menarche since they were all summoned to Cornwallis, Torpoint, Crib Point and Devonport at nearly the same time."

"We'll be having dancing classes this afternoon," Tariko added.

"Dancing classes'?!" Yonaga gasped. "Why do we need to learn how to DANCE?!!"

"Flexibility," Negako stated. "I handle martial arts training and when you are all truly comfortable with yourselves as human beings, I will also teach you some of the more esoteric forms my family school have long mastered."

That made the carrier gape before she gazed on Tariko. "That energy sword your sister created today when I gutted that yakuza who sought to enslave Kisaragi-san!" she stated, her mind spiralling at possibilities. "We can do that?!!"

"Easily," the ninjutsu grandmaster purred out.

"YA-CHAN...!"

Yamato gasped on hearing that incensed shriek, then she looked over...

...as a shuddering blonde American about the same size as Kongō stormed into the mess at flank speed, her blue eyes flooding with outraged tears as she zeroed in on the wide-eyed super-battleship. Before Yamato could demand what was going on, the other shipgirl came up and slapped her on the cheek, making everyone gasp in stunned shock on seeing the star international couple among the shipgirls get into a public fight like that...before they all gaped as the new arrival screamed before
swamping Yamato with a hug members of a tribe in China would loudly approve of. As Yonaga stared in confusion at such a scene, she perked as two others came in. Near-twins to the sobbing shipgirl in her sister's arms, they had light-coloured hair and blue eyes with the same general body build. They were also dressed in the curious grey/black/white camouflage uniforms American naval personnel at the base wore; the carrier knew it was called the "Navy Working Uniform". She then noted their names over their left breasts, which made her gape on realizing who the woman in Yamato's arms was.

"Enterprise...!" she seemed to hiss out as she slowly rose.

The whole room seemed to freeze as people gaped in horror, their minds instantly churning up dark images of what the Seventh Carrier might do to the legendary Grey Ghost, the most decorated warship of the United States Navy and the one who had been always there when Yonaga's mission-mates for Operation Z had been sunk during the Greater East Asia War. They then relaxed as Yamato moved to comfort the weeping carrier in her arms. "There, there, E-chan...stop crying like that...it's very embarrassing and you're making my sister upset...!"

"WHY?!" Enterprise shrieked out as she stared at the taller shipgirl. "Why did you do it, Ya-chan?!!" She then slapped Yamato on the shoulders. "I can appreciate private pictures of you, but why did you pose for a calendar?!"

Silence.

More silence.

Still more silence.

Then...

"WHAT?!" Yamato shrieked out in horror.

Hornet pulled out a calendar from under her jacket. "Better see this, Yamato," the carrier that had launched the incredible Doolittle Raid in 1942 said as she opened it to show the battleship the picture for April. "Aoba created it."

Yamato looked...as did Yonaga.
"ONĒ-SAN!"

As the super-battleship instantly found herself wishing she could sink again into the waters of the East China Sea, her sister literally exploded with outraged fury, "ONĒ-SAN! AND I THOUGHT KONGŌ-SAN'S BEHAVIOUR LAST NIGHT WAS REPREHENSIBLE?! WHAT ARE YOU DOING DRESSED IN SUCH DISGUSTING CLOTHES, ALLOWING A PICTURE TO BE TAKEN OF YOU?! DON'T YOU KNOW THAT BIKINIS WERE NAMED AFTER THE LAGOON WHERE NAGATO-SAN, SAKAWA-SAN, SARATOGA-SAN, PRINZ EUGEN-SAN AND SO MANY OTHERS WERE SACRIFICED TO THOSE THRICE-DAMNED ATOMIC BOMBS?! HOW COULD YOU WEAR SOMETHING SO SCANDALOUS?! DOING THAT IN PRIVATE FOR ENTERPRISE-SAN IS ONE THING, BUT TO DISPLAY YOURSELF LIKE THAT FOR THE PUBLIC?!

Mass bow-faults resulted! "She...approves?!

Bismarck smiled as she got back into her chair, then helped her sister up. "Wait until I show you Hood's love letters to me, jüngere Schwester...!"

As Tirpitz gaped in disbelief at her sister, Yamato broke down in tears as Musashi and Kii immediately moved to comfort both her and Enterprise. Tariko then held out her hand. "Can I see this, Ho-chan?"

Hornet handed the calendar over. "Wait until you see the picture for November."

Tariko blinked, then she looked at Yamato's picture. She was depicted in a seductive pose at one of the rocks that lined the shores of Eta-jima, the sun setting on her just perfect to make a beautifully romantic scene for her lover...especially given the VERY skimpy bikini she was shown in, chosen to match her hair perfectly. Gulping, she then flipped through the other pages, quickly noting who else had posed for this calendar. "Oh, fuck me...!"

She then got to November...before she passed out, blood exploding from her nose!

"Ah! Tariko!"

Instantly, Kongō and her sisters were at the passed-out teen's side; they had been seated nearby. As
the calendar fell to the deck, Kirishima picked it up, then flipped the pages to November. She then
gargled on seeing what was there before she held it out for Kongō to see. "Um, Onē-sama..!

Kongō looked...

...then she turned as grey as ash before twin jets of tears exploded from her eyes.
"WHAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH! I CAN'T GET MARRIED
ANYMORE...!"

As the crowd gaped in shock, Negako shook her head as she sipped her tea...

To Be Continued...

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WRITER'S NOTES

1) As I stated in the previous chapter, I make use of the McCune-Reischauer school of Romanization
when it comes to Korean. To avoid misunderstandings, the word Sŏul is meant to represent the
capital city of the Republic of Korea, spelled more commonly as "Seoul" in Latin script. The
Revised Romanization that was introduced in the South in 2002 is one I've never been comfortable
with, so I make use of the older system as I believe it to be a much better way of representing the
sounds in Korean through Latin script.

As an aside, I base Noukiite sounds on Korean, though vowel sounds are the same as in Japanese. If
you see an apostrophe after a consonant, it means the sound prior to it is forced through the mouth as
if you were spitting out something.

Also, Noukiite adult name order goes this way: (Caste rank)-(Family name) (Gender/Birth order
rank)-(Given name) Hechnich'-(Style name). The term Hechnich' literally translates as "sacred
true bone rank", which eventually evolved into the honorific used with someone's courtesy name,
which is what the Chinese and other East Asian cultures in classical times used as a mark of
adulthood. In modern times, Hechnich' is normally translated "Lady"/"Lord".

2) Translation list for this chapter: Kuru-cha - One of the two Japanese readings of 黒茶 (in
Mandarin, hēichá); Seu - Endogamic rank prefix for members of Noukiios' "flowering youth"
special "free warrior" caste; **Yech'a** - Gender/Birth order rank prefix for the second daughter; **Yesu** - Gender/Birth order rank prefix for the first daughter; **Kempeitai** - Literally "military polite corps", this was the Imperial Japanese Army's law enforcement branch (and later secret police akin to the Gestapo of Nazi Germany); **Tokkeitai** - Literally "special police corps", this was the Imperial Japanese Navy's smaller equivalent to the Kempeitai; **Ten-gō** - Literally "Day of Heaven", this was the code-name given to Yamato's last mission on 7 April 1945 (known sometimes as the **Battle of the East China Sea**); **1MC** - Literally "One Main Circuit", this is the term applied to the main public address system on American and Canadian warships; **Nō** - More frequently written as "Noh" and short for **Nōgaku** (literally "skilled music"), this is the oldest form of traditional Japanese musical opera, dating from the Fourteenth Century; **Daitōryō** - President (of a nation-state); **Hakase** - University professor; **Jüngere Schwester** - Younger sister.

3) For those who haven't seen the first episode of the *Kantai Collection* anime, here are the translations of the Go-sei ("Five Reflections") as composed by **Matsushita Hajime** (1884-1953, Imperial Navy Academy 31st Class [1903] alumnus):

**Shisei ni motoru nakarishika?**

("Hast thou not gone against sincerity?")

**Genkō ni hazuru nakarishika?**

("Hast thou not felt ashamed of thy words and deeds?")

**Kiryoku ni kakeru nakarishika?**

("Hast thou not lacked vigor?")

**Doryoku ni urami nakarishika?**

("Hast thou exerted all possible efforts?")

**Bushō ni wataru nakarishika?**

("Hast thou not become slothful?")

And yes, the Go-sei is still used with the modern Japanese Maritime Self-Defence Force...as well as the United States Navy as Missouri noted above.

4) Ship's badges in Canada were not made official until after World War Two. For corvettes and frigates that never got a badge due to being decommissioned after the war's end, I'm making use of designs made for namesake corps of the **Royal Canadian Sea Cadets** (the Navy's national youth program for people aged 12-18) or basing them off their namesake municipality's corporate crests.
5) For those who don't know the theme song for *Uchū Senkan Yamato*:

*Saraba chikyū yo! Tabidatsu fune wa Uchū Senkan Yamato.*

(Farewell, Earth! The ship we’re travelling in is Space Battleship *Yamato*)

*Uchū no kanata Iskandar e unmei seoi ima tobidatsu!*

(Through space and toward far-off Iscandar, with Fate on our shoulders, we begin the journey!)

*Kanarazu koko e kaette kuruto te wo furu hito ni egao de kotae!*

("Surely we will return", we cheerfully answer the people waving their hands!)

*Ginga o hanare Iskandar e harubaru nozomu, Uchū Senkan Yamato!*

(We depart from the galaxy, going to Iscandar to a great distance, Space Battleship *Yamato*)

Mega-thanks to the people at the Star Blazers website for the translation.

6) The *Chūshingura* ("Treasury of Loyal Retainers") is the fictionalized account of the story of the *Forty-seven Rōnin* who sought to avenge the forced suicide of their lord in 1701 by striking down the man who effectively had the poor fellow killed two years later; in punishment for such an act, they were all made to commit seppuku at the order of Shōgun *Tokugawa Tsunayoshi* (1646-1709). The theme of the Forty-seven is a recurring one in *The Seventh Carrier* and its sequels, so Yonaga would definitely know the story and understand its meaning.

7) The places where Commonwealth shipgirls came back to life as noted by Negako:

*Canadian Forces Base Cornwallis (CFB Cornwallis)* was the Royal Canadian Navy's primary training facility, in operation from 1942 until Unification of the Canadian Forces in 1968. The base then served as the English-language basic training facility for the whole of the Forces until it was closed in 1995; all training was then moved to a unified school at Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu south-southeast of Montréal. Today, it serves as an industrial business park. Cornwallis is located on the south shore of the Annapolis Basin just off Nova Scotia Trunk Highway 1, about eight kilometres east-northeast of Digby.

*Torpoint* is a civil parish on the English Channel coast of Cornwall close to the border with Devonshire, just across the River Tamar from Plymouth. It is the location of *Her Majesty's Ship Raleigh* (HMS *Raleigh*), the "stone frigate" (naval shore facility) which houses the basic training facility of the Royal Navy. HMS *Raleigh* has been in commission since 1940.
Crib Point is a town on Western Port, a bay on the south shore of the state of Victoria; the town is part of the shire (local government municipality) of Mornington Peninsula and is located fifty kilometres south of southeast from downtown Melbourne. This is the location of Her Majesty's Australian Ship Cerberus (HMAS Cerberus), the stone frigate which houses the Royal Australian Navy's basic training campus. HMAS Cerberus has been in commission since 1921.

Devonport is a harbour-side suburb of Auckland, New Zealand's largest city; it is on the northern shore of Waitemata Harbour three kilometres northeast of downtown. The Devonport Naval Base is the major port for the Royal New Zealand Navy. The basic training unit, Her Majesty's New Zealand Ship Philomel (HMNZS Philomel), was commissioned in 1941 on the founding of the RNZN and serves not just as the basic training school and the officer candidate's school for the service, but also the centralized trades school for Navy-specific occupations.
The Prime Minister of Japan tried not to groan as he mentally wished that he had not agreed to bring the selfish brat sharing his helicopter ride to the Kure Naval District along with him; all the stupid boy had done since they had departed Tōkyō was complain about the fact that his classroom rival was now living at Eta-jima, well away from Tomobiki and all those who saw Moroboshi Ataru as the surefire guarantee to keep a certain alien monster still on Earth.

Four more days...! Abe Shinzō mused to himself as he turned to stare at Mendō Shūtarō. "Shūtarō-kun, your opinions concerning your former classmate are not relevant at this time! As he is recovering from the year of abuse he suffered at Lum's hand..." - he ignored the shiver from the younger man at the lack of any honorific concerning the warlord's daughter from Uru, to say anything of how he viewed such a disgusting accusation against her - "...and is willing to assist in the effort against the Abyssals, Ataru-kun was allowed to resign his place as a student at Tomobiki Senior High School and enter private tutorial. The same applies to Tariko-san even if technically she hadn't existed as a separate being until nearly three months ago. Nothing that you try to provoke with the Family Registrar or the Ministry of Education to force Ataru-kun back to Tomobiki will be allowed. It will displease the Heavenly Sovereign greatly."

Hearing that made Mendō gargle in horror before he seemed to shrink down on himself. Until the whole issue with Queen Elle had come up, the young heir to Japan's largest family fortune had been comfortable with his life. Interact with the common people at his school. Keep clear of his insane sister Ryōko's attempts at killing him. Bask in the adulation of his admirers in the school. Find a way to forge a relationship with Mizunokōji Asuka despite her androphobia. Try his best to make Lum - Mendō adamantly refused to think of the Oni as "Redet Lum" as it was seen as quite gauche to refer to any native of Uru by family name even if they were strangers - see what a mistake it was to pursue such a lout like Ataru. And punish Ataru for whatever slight he made against other people with the help of Lum's so-called "Stormtroopers".
However, after nearly being incinerated by the eldritch fire of a three millennia old spirit-dragon from the planet Noukiios for some reason that even now remained a mystery to him, Mendō had found himself in a place that was totally WAY beyond his comfort zone. With the usual lightning rod of weirdness that had earned the ire of his peers for every reason imaginable missing, Mendō's classmates turned on each other like a pack of rabid wolves, with the girls uniformly hoping Lum would never come back to Earth and the boys split between supporting Lum and moving to seek their own destinies. And once the Noukiites had demonstrated through the Dragonspeaker that Lum would not have an easy time of it as she tried to bring her would-be "husband" to heel, Mendō then found himself wondering if he was truly going mad.

To believe Moroboshi Ataru managed to get the Heavenly Sovereign on his side!

Whatever Mendō Shūtarō or his family could do to force Ataru back to Tomobiki would wilt like a flower in a desert in the face of such influence as that!

How did that happen...?!

"We're almost at the base now, sir," the co-pilot announced.

Abe nodded as the helicopter swept over the grounds of the former Imperial Naval Academy, moving to land on the old track field at the south end of the base overlooking the cove and the former site of Eta-jima Elementary School, which had been abandoned when the Abyssals began attacking coastal cities and towns en masse a year ago. The machine came to a perfect landing as members of the Prime Minister's protective detail opened the doors to scan the area for threats. Once the engines had been shut down, they then beckoned their principal from the passenger cabin. Awaiting them by one side of the track was the current commander of the Kanmusu-keikaku, along with his senior aide, the only battleship to survive intact at the end of the Greater East Asia War.

"Sōridaijin-san, welcome back to Eta-jima," Saitō Ten'ichi said as he saluted his senior civilian boss while Nagato gave the prime minister a polite bow.

"It's good to be here, Saitō-kaishō," Abe said as he shook the veteran naval officer's hand, then returned Nagato's bow with his own. "Nagato-san. Back to Saitō. "The Cabinet's curious about the new shipgirls that were summoned last night, especially our long missing aircraft carrier."

That made Saitō chuckle as Nagato grinned. "Understandable, Sōridaijin-san," the former stated as he waved the politician towards the main buildings. Mendō was made to follow along thanks to to the prime minister's guards, who moved to place themselves between him and Nagato; the battleship had fallen in behind her admiral. "«Um, sir...what's he doing here?»" he then whispered in English
as he glanced back at Mendō, knowing the prime minister was fluent since he had attended three semesters at the University of Southern California.

"As soon as Lady K'ekhech brought him back, he heard what happened to Ataru," Abe responded, knowing that the scion of Japan's richest family barely understood the language of world communication. "He wants his alien princess to come back so he can fawn over her."

Saitō chuckled...

...before he tensed on hearing the helicopter pilot squawk in outrage.

"Oi!"

Mendō jerked on hearing the voice of his hated rival.

"Say hello to your 'goddess' in Hell, sport! KONTŌ!"

As the scion of Japan's richest family spun around, the sound of something akin to a lightsabre being ignited echoed over the temporary helicopter pad.

That was then echoed by a shriek of mortal pain.

Mendō spun around...then dropped to his knees in horror on seeing the pilot now frozen thanks to a burning energy sword having been punched through his head from behind, said sword being held by Moroboshi Ataru! As the protective detail moved to surround the prime minister and Nagato instantly summoned her rigging and weapons, the pilot then dropped dead to the ground without any sign of physical wound or other means by which his life was exterminated. Ataru calmly made a slight gesture with his hand, the sword he had created from his own life energy dispersing into nothingness. Before Mendō could croak out a question, his former classmate knelt down to flick off the baseball cap the pilot had been wearing, then he gently shifted the hair away from his ears to reveal their alien taper, which made all the people there gape.

"Another one?!" Saitō demanded...
...then he tensed as Nagato surged over to the helicopter, ripping out the door to the co-pilot's station and yanking the young woman out with one hand as two of her twin 16 inch turrets spun around to lock on target. "**HOLD IT, NAGATO-SAN!**" Ataru snapped out as he stood and walked around the helicopter, that mysterious energy blade of his forming again. As Nagato got out of the way of that deadly spiritual sword, Ataru lanced it into the co-pilot's head, making her shriek out...though, much to Mendō's personal relief, she didn't drop dead.

The blade was dispersed as Nagato allowed her rigging to vanish. "She's like Negako-san and Tariko-san!" the battleship then hissed. "An...Avalonian...?"

"Hai," Ataru said as the co-pilot shook her head clear. "You okay, Ojō-sama?"

She blinked...then her eyes went wide as suddenly re-awakened psionic senses locked in on something about the young man her master viewed as the Devil. "You're one of us..." she moaned, staring in wide-eyed shock at him. "How...?"

"Thank your grandfather Ganzo," he said with a wink, making her croak in disbelief on hearing that name. "But before I say why, we have to clue your masters' so-called 'fifth holy apostle' in on the one thing Lum definitely did NOT tell him about life up there!" Ataru then gave his former class rival a weary look. "Or did you get the chance to learn about the Niphentaxians while you were recuperating on Uru after Nengmek'i-ōjiichan took me to Okusei?"

"I know some things," Mendō answered, surprised at how calm he just felt after seeing someone killed before his eyes. "They're an allied race of Lum-san's people, the most powerful in the Galactic Federation. The representatives of that race came to the hospital to pass on their sympathies to Lum-san for what Nengmeki-sama did, vowing their support to investigate what happened and why! It was during that time that we all learned of what instigated the Tag Race." He then tensed. "Moroboshi! You can't think of trying to sell us out to the Ipraedies or the Seifukusu! Are you insane?! If that...!"

Ataru laughed, which made the other man stop. "Oh, man! Figures you'd think that!" he said before giving Mendō a knowing look. "By the way, Mendō, while you were on Uru, did you ever hear the phrase 'They Who Must Never Be Named' or 'the You Know Whos'? Say in relation to events fifty years before the Union Revolution? You have to have seen that wreckage north of Onishuto while you were recovering from Lum trying to force me to marry her."

That made the scion of Japan's richest family pale. Indeed, he DID remember how the Urusians at the Onishuto Defence Force Central Health Unit had reacted whenever his classmates had asked about what had happened to the old town site of Uru's capital city as they were recovering from burns and the fallen debris of the Onishuto City Cathedral. How it had taken **two weeks** before the
curious Terrans even learned the proper demonym of the metahuman monsters that unleashed a level of destruction on that planet the likes of which couldn't be imagined by even the darkest horror or science fiction writer on Earth; it was at that same time that the members of Class 2-4 learned NOT to mention the words "Yiziba" or "Yizibajohei" in the presence of any alien if they didn't want said alien to die of a heart attack. "Moroboshi, are you MAD?!!" he shrieked, itching to grab his katana - which he had been forbidden to bring with him to Eta-jima - and try to hack off his hated rival's head for even CONCEIVING such a thing. "You have to know how much Lum-san's people are terrified of them! How could you even THINK of doing THAT to them?!!"

"Oh? And her taking the fucking planet hostage TWICE just to make me submit to her false claim of marriage just to avoid the Beef-and-Noodles King is any...?!!"

"**ATARU-SENSEI!!**"

He tensed, then he looked over...before he was nearly bowled over as a speeding blonde missile collided with him at flank speed, knocking him onto his butt. Before Ataru could say anything, he found himself with an armful of crying destroyer. "Oi! Oi, Shimakaze-chan! Calm down!" he called out as Shimakaze tried to bury her face into his chest. "What's wrong?!!"

Nagato looked, then she blinked on seeing a calendar flutter to the ground nearby; it had been dropped by Japan's fastest destroyer as she had charged in to collapse in a crying heap in the arms of Kirishima's "special boatswain". Walking over to pick up the folded sheets of paper, she opened it...then she gargled on seeing who had been July's "pin-up girl"! "SARA-CHAN?!!" she shrieked out...before she checked the index, then she moaned. "Aoba...!!"

Saitō groaned. "Gods! What has she done **this** time, Nagato-san?!!"

"Borderline pornographic pictures as calendar pin-up girls, Teitoku."

Everyone jolted, then the admiral sighed. "Excuse me, Sōridaijin-san..."

The prime minister gave him a sympathetic look. "You deserve hazard pay."

A sheepish smile responded. "It would be appreciated, sir..."
The admiral's office, minutes later...

"You had no idea whatsoever the picture Aoba took of you would be published?"

"N-n-no, Teit-t-toku!" Shimakaze burbled, dabbing at her eyes as she tried not to fidget. Seeing how much the poor fast destroyer had become totally unstrung at being publicly humiliated like that despite her normal mode of work dress - a pair of black thong panties under an ill-fitting skirt with her abdomen exposed, the whole under a too-short sleeveless seifuku jacket - Saitō and his subordinates had been caught totally off-guard. The co-pilot of the prime minister's plane, a woman named Fujikawa Satsuki, was gently squeezing Shimakaze's shoulders in support. "I wanted to send s-something nice and romantic t-t-to Fanta-chan in Brest over e-mail! I n-n-never knew th-that Aoba w-w-would make me s-some Page Three girl or s-something like th-that...!"

She bawled, earning her a warm embrace from the bioroid who had helped fly Abe Shinzō to Eta-jima. "'Fanta-chan'?" Mendō whispered to Ataru; the two were seated off to one side alongside the latter's sister and a moaning Kongō.

"Le Fantastique," the latter whispered back.

That made the scion of Japan's richest family nod in understanding. Thanks to growing cooperation between the various kanmusu fleets, relationships that spanned the once-deep dividing line between Allied and Axis warships had sprung up all over the place. Yamato's relationship with Enterprise was well known, as was Hood's with Bismarck. "Aoba-san, did you ask the girls for permission to use those pictures?" Saitō wondered, wishing he could swallow a bottle of sake right now to make this particular headache go away.

The cruiser in question was now in the hot seat before her admiral's desk. To ensure she behaved in the face of the line of lethal looks she was receiving, the would-be gossip reporter was effectively shielded by Moroboshi Negako; the ninjutsu grandmaster had her unflappable look on her face, which unnerved Mendō when he had finally met the famous "Imperial Special Agent #49" moments before. A glance around the room revealed that beyond Kongō (who was being comforted by Tariko, who had tissue pushed into her nostrils to prevent another nosebleed as she recalled what the fast battleship looked like in such a skimpy bikini), there was a humiliated Yamato (now trying to control a seething Enterprise), a hissing Littorio (barely being held back from strangling Aoba by her sisters Roma and Vittorio Veneto), a cursing Prinz Eugen (who had all four of her sisters trying to prevent her from calling out her rigging and shelling Aoba out of existence), a blushing Iowa (who was trying to hold back a growling New Jersey from ripping the would-be reporter apart) plus five other kanmusu who had been victims of Aoba’s camera and her total lack of common decency, not to mention sisterships and friends of same; Nagato's girlfriend Saratoga was now with her sister Lexington escorting a convoy from Táiwān to Japan with a joint American/Australian/New
Zealander team. "Um, it slipped my mind, Teitoku...!" Aoba sputtered...before she gargled on sensing a volcano of outrage from a certain carrier standing in Negako's normal spot at the corner of the room.

Tenryū (Tatsuta had been January's "pin-up girl") looked over. "Oi, Yonaga! I'll do the gutting and you can behead her!" the light cruiser proposed.

Aoba screeched as she stared in wide-eyed horror at Tenryū. "You do need some practice with your katana, Tenryū-san," the seventh carrier said, her voice like Arctic ice. "I'll do the gutting. You'll be the kaishaku-nin."

As the heavy cruiser in the hot seat sputtered in disbelief and horror at how serious Yonaga sounded, Saitō cleared his throat. "Negako-sama, would you please find all the copies of that calendar and get rid of them?" he asked. "Yonaga-san, you won't be beheading Aoba-san...but what you WILL do is go to her quarters, then practice your swordsmanship on all her camera gear!"

"TEITOKU!" Aoba shrieked.

"Oh, stop it, Onē-san!" her sistership Kinugasa snapped, looking as if she wanted to relive her sinking off Guadalcanal. "You know how much our allies frown on how teenagers are depicted in manga and anime these days! Could you imagine what pervert pedophiles might have done if you got pictures of other destroyers, much less frigates, corvettes or submarines?!"

"Oi! I don't do that...!"

"ENOUGH!"

The Aoba sisters clammed up. As James Vance tried not to chuckle and Abe Shinzō shook his head in amusement, Saitō took a deep breath. "Kinugasa-san, you'll make sure that everything your sister owns outside her camera gear isn't touched by Yonaga-san; her lack of experience in modern things may make her do something she'll regret later! Go now!" he then ordered.

Negako forced Aoba up. "I will assist, Ten'ichi." With that, she walked the heavy cruiser out, a grumbling Kinugasa and a stoic Yonaga following.

People relaxed. "You need the danger pay, Saitō-kaishō!" the prime minister then said with a wry
chuckle before he sipped the tea Ōdoyo prepared for him.

"Honestly, Sōridaijin-san, I need to be relieved!" the commander of the Kanmusu-keikaku moaned, making all the Japanese shipgirls tense as they stared wide-eyed at their leader. "Girls, it's not because of issues like this! Remember, I was assigned to this just after we lost the Kure Flotilla when the Seventh Fleet and the Canadian Pacific Fleet were wrecked!" As many of the kanmusu winced - they had either been there trying to help out or had seen the pictures of that horrid bloodbath known these days as the Second Battle of Iō-tō, a day that had gone down in history as a naval disaster worse than Pearl Harbour and Leyte Gulf combined - Saitō sighed. "It has been an honour and privilege to have led you all through this...but I'm tired, girls."

"Teitoku...!" Nagato whispered as many looked ready to break down and cry.

"Don't worry, girls. We're getting someone even better."

Eyes locked on Tariko. "What do you mean, Moro-..." Mendō then caught himself; even if this being was a reflection of his hated rival, she WAS a pretty girl. "Um, T-t-Tariko-san...?" he sputtered in embarrassment.

Before the matriarch of the Moroboshi Clan could answer, running feet echoed from the hallway outside. A rapid knock at the door later, it flew open to reveal a shipgirl in Canadian naval shore attire, though she was older looking than any of the corvettes on base. "Oi, Beaky-chan!" Shimakaze called out to the girl who had been indirectly named in honour of the capital city of British Columbia. "You know your diesels need to be looked at! Why are you...?!"

A panting moan escaped Beacon Hill as she tried not to collapse against New Jersey. "S-s-sorry about th-that!" she apologized before straightening herself and saluting Saitō. "Begging the a-a-admiral's pardon, s-s-sir, but there are two f-f-four-leaf flag officers coming here...!"

"Ah!" the prime minister called out in delight. "They're finally here!"

Everyone gazed in surprise at him. "What are you talking about, sir?" James Vance then asked as the other foreign officers who served both as naval liaisons and Saitō Ten'ichi's unofficial senior planning staff for operations in the northwestern Pacific exchanged confused looks.

"Don't worry, Vance-shōshō," Abe answered before he gazed on Saitō. "You'll be relieved by the former captain of the Mirai, Saitō-kaishō," he assured the Japanese admiral, which made Saitō gape.
"Umezu-kaisa was just promoted to rear admiral and has agreed to take charge of the Kanmusu-keikakuk.

As the people in the room gasped on hearing that they would now fall under the command of Umezu Saburō, the dimension-hopping and time-hopping guided missile destroyer captain who had managed to get his entire ship's company to safety before the Abyssals wrecked *Mirai* at Iō-tō, Nagato smiled. "He met Yamamoto-gensui himself when he and his crew were in that other dimension back in 1942." As all the shipgirls there gaped at that statement, she nodded to Abe. "Understood, Sōridaijin-san. We will gladly welcome Umezu-kaishō as our new Teitoku...!" She then tensed as she gazed on Beacon Hill, who now sat in Iowa's lap as she tried to recover her energy. "Wait! You said 'two four-leaf' officers, Hill-san! Do you mean they're Canadian?!

"Aye, ma'am!" the black-haired, green-eyed frigate answered. "A Navy admiral and an Air Force air chief marshal...!" She jolted as the Canadian officer in the room, Captain (Navy) Wendy Armstrong, cleared her throat. "Um...s-s-sorry, Captain!" the frigate sputtered out. "I mean an Air Force general! Keep forgetting that they didn't put the old titles back into use when they put the pearl grey back on their rank insignia a couple years ago...!"

A gentle knock echoed at the door. Bismarck opened it...then she gasped before snapping to attention, saluting. "Frau Admiral Thompkins! Frau General Dover!"

Everyone quickly scrambled to their feet as two women stepped into the room, both in Canadian naval combat uniforms even if the epaulette slip-ons of one was in Air Force medium blue with four pearl grey maple leaves in a diamond formation under the Crown of Saint Edward over crossed sword-and-baton in lieu of the gold-on-black insignia her companion wore. As always, family names were on tags over their right breasts, with the United Nations crest on the upper right arms; the admiral had the Canadian White Ensign on her left arm while her friend had the Royal Canadian Air Force blue ensign. The admiral wore a black beret while her companion had a blue wedge cap trimmed in pearl grey. Both officers wore general officer's cap badges, which was a stylized version of the Canadian Forces' tri-service crest. The admiral was Kongō's height, dark brown eyes peeking out of a friendly, round face, that framed with curly black hair styled in a simple bun above her collar; normally, it extended to mid-back. She had a pair of old-fashioned reading glasses. The general was about Yamato's height, with blue eyes peeking out of a Slavic face even if her skin colour was northern European pale; her hair was sunflower blonde and cut in a taper at the back of her neck. On looking deep into their eyes, the shipgirls tensed even if they didn't know these two warriors' histories and how much they helped keep North America free of Axis metahumans during the Second World War.

As it was said years ago in America, these two had definitely seen the elephant.

All the naval officers were instantly on their feet, saluting the two new arrivals. "Tompkins-taishō! Dover-taishō! Welcome to Eta-jima, ladies!" Saitō declared for them all...then he blinked before he
"I'll answer for that, sir," Heather Thompkins declared, her voice flecked with the tones of her native province even if she spoke Japanese fluently. As Abe nodded, the native of Québec City gazed at the others. "Given that America is moving to get its shipgirl project underway so that the world doesn't have to lean on Japan and the Commonwealth nations to keep sea lanes clear, the United Nations has decided it's time to unify the shipgirl and shipboy projects under one operational force commander to coordinate our response to those things. Since many of the nations in the Far East would have problems with an American, a British or a Japanese commander-in-chief, I'm the poor schmoe that got picked to be C-in-C." She then gazed at her military host. "Admiral Saitō, before Admiral Umezu relieves you and gives you a chance to take a well-earned rest, I expect as thorough a briefing as possible on operations and that Merlin-be damned thing you use to bring shipgirls here. I want to make sure I understand thoroughly what I'm dealing with before I start putting lives into harm's way!"

"It'll be my pleasure, Admiral!" Saitō declared, bowing deeply to her.

Heather then gazed around. "Which one of you is Mutsu?"

Nagato's sister tensed. "Hai, Teitoku!"

"Until such time as the cruiser Aurora joins me here to take up her operational role as senior Canadian shipgirl for the Western Pacific, I'd like a personal assistant to help me get my combined staff set up. Since Nagato here will be helping Admiral Umezu get settled in and since you've helped your sister direct your girls' actions after you all answered the Heavenly Sovereign's call to arms, I can use an experienced hand in helping me get up to speed here."

Hearing that made Mutsu blush. "It will be my honour, Teitoku!"

"Good!" Heather then gazed on Jessica Dover, an amused look then appearing on her face. "Now, Jess, don't go over to that café and eat the soul of that little Abyssal that lives there!" she playfully scolded.

The native of Winnipeg jolted. "HEY!"

"EAT HOPPŌ'S 'SOUL'?!!" all the shipgirls screamed out in horror.
"NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO! I'LL SAVE YOU, HOPPO-CHAN!" a screaming Nagato bellowed out, tears jetting out of her eyes...before she seemed to sway in the wind, then collapsed in a dead faint on the deck!

As the two visiting Canadian senior officers blinked in confusion, Mendō's eyebrow twitched ominously while Ataru and Tariko rolled their eyes...

Cafe Mamiya, that moment...

"Hoppō-chan! Calm down, Hoppō-chan!"

As her Mamiya-mama tried to comfort the child spirit - who had instantly hid herself under a very handy kotatsu screaming her guts out - Hoppō tried her best to not make herself spiritually too obvious to that whatever it was that was now in the base headquarters building nearby.

And she thought the Angry One's presence here was bad...?!

The kanmusu training building, an hour later...

"Dance classes?"

"Hai, Hishō," Nagato stated as she escorted Jessica towards a classroom next to the one the Canadians had taken over as their music room. Given the kanmusu as a whole referred to their overall commander by the traditional title "Teitoku" in lieu of proper Imperial Navy or Maritime Self-Defence Force rank titles, the resurrected warrior-spirits from the Greater East Asia War had fallen back on using a similar classical title for the Royal Canadian Air Force general. In Jessica's case, she got the Japanese reading of the characters that went into the Mandarin term fēijiāng ("flying general"), the title once applied to one of the more notorious warlords that helped rip China apart during the run-up to the Three Kingdoms period at the end of the Second Century CE, Lǜ Bù. Hearing that, the native of Winnipeg then wondered what would happen if a certain Army tactical aviation pilot that was one of her best friends had been assigned to take operational command of the world's shipgirl/shipboy forces.
'Shōgun' maybe...? Jessica mused to herself.

"It teaches us flexibility and allows us to better get used to living as human beings," the battleship added. "While the Kami that allowed us to be reborn as kanmusu did allow us to somewhat understand what being human and female is all about, Negako-san has shown us over the last month that we could improve ourselves immensely." She then chuckled. "Ataru-san's demonstration of his soulsword capability the day after he and his siblings came here when he saved Kirishima-san from an enemy submarine was quite an eye-opener for all of us."

"Hai, the soulsword is quite the devastating little trick, isn't it?"

Nagato chuckled, then she blinked. "Ano, Hishō...!"

"Relax," Jessica assured her. "I know Abyssal princesses when they're in child form are harmless babies deep down. You folks scored a hell of an intelligence coup when you allowed Hoppō to come live with you at Mamiya's café, just as the Russians did when they found Ártika on Nóvaja Zemljá and the British did when they found Sealtainn in the Shetlands." She sighed. "According to the current theory about them that our Ministry of Magical Affairs put out recently, child Abyssals are the living echoes of the spirits of children who have died at sea or have lost parents at sea for whatever reason. Reflections of the combined anger, grief, fear and all the other hurtful emotions a child experiences when he or she faces death...or learns that Daddy and/or Mommy aren't coming home again. If we catch them soon enough, we can save them from too much corruption by their adult counterparts. Given that kids like Hoppō have some attachment to the land, I wouldn't want to unleash Negako or Dean on them to see them killed for something that really isn't their fault in the long term."

Nagato nodded. "Understood, Hishō." Even if she wasn't personally responsible for raising Hoppō, she couldn't bear the idea of seeing the child face death at the hands of Moroboshi Negako or Jessica Dover's former commanding officer...!

They stopped before one door, noting there was a haunting religious-like instrumental song echoing from inside. Nagato opened it as she beckoned the Canadian inside. Stepping in, Jessica blinked on noting there were a whole flight's worth of destroyers and light cruisers teamed as partners on the floor, swaying to the echoing sound from the ghetto blaster that was in one corner of the room. Watching over this was Negako, who paused to briefly gaze on Jessica before she turned her attention back to the dancing partners. "Move as slow as you can to ensure Kisaragi does not stumble, Mutsuki," the ninjutsu grandmaster calmly bade as she focused on one couple. "The more you help her become used to moving again, the faster she will recover."
"Hai, Sensei!" a voice audibly choked with emotion answered her.

Jessica looked. Part of the reason that it had taken the War Hawks so long to finally hit the field after they returned to Earth two weeks before was the need to go over every piece of intelligence various nations had gathered concerning the Abyssals and who were being summoned to fight them off. She knew that the coquettish girl in the white-and-green seifuku was Mutsuki, named after a poetic term for the first month in the old Japanese calendar and lead ship of her class of destroyers. The girl with the longer hair currently in Mutsuki's arms was her sister Kisaragi, who was made to relieve history when she was sunk in the Wake Island operation nine months ago; thanks to a roving Canadian submarine girl, she had been found and brought to Eta-jima to recover. Said destroyer seemed to be almost as stiff as a mannequin, a dazed, lost look on her face as her sister held her close, though she did respond to Mutsuki's guiding her into swaying to the music. A glance at Mutsuki revealed a determined look on the destroyer's face; no doubt, seeing her sister in such awful shape was tearing the poor girl apart inside even if she had the discipline implanted on her soul by the memories of her crew to keep her eye on the ball and allow her to carry out her missions when called to sea.

The Canadian's eyes then narrowed as she focused more eldritch abilities to scan the salvaged destroyer. Yes, the body had been healed perfectly and the faerie ghosts of her crew were within her to help her operate with something resembling normal capabilities both as a human teenager and as a resurrected warship...but there was something within her body that was preventing her soul from taking full control over herself. Where the hell was it...wait...ah!

Smirking, Jessica walked over to the ghetto blaster to stop the music, making all the dancers pause as they looked her way...then Fubuki (who had been dancing with Yūdachi) gasped on seeing the four pearl grey maple leaves on this woman's shoulder boards. "ATTENTION ON DECK!" she barked out as she snapped to attention, making all her peers do the same. She then saluted the Canadian general. "General, welcome to Eta-jima!" she called out. "Pardon us for...!"

"At ease! At ease!" the pilot from Winnipeg called back as she slipped off her naval combat jacket to reveal the pale blue short-sleeved shirt she wore underneath it in lieu of the normal indigo blue, flame-retardant, long-sleeved shirt that was normally worn with the Number 5 Navy uniform. As soon as the left sized of her chest was revealed, all the people there gasped on seeing the several rows of medals and decorations under her command pilot's wings.

"Poi..." Yūdachi gasped in awe.

"Wow...!" Fubuki nearly gushed.

"Holy shit...!" Akebono breathed out, her normal disdain for higher-ranked officers vanishing on seeing how many medals were on this lady's uniform.
Especially the wine-red ribbon at the primary position at the top left of the "salad bowl", that bearing a dark bronze stylized Maltese cross.

"The Victoria Cross...!" Akatsuki croaked. "She has to be an elephant...!"


That made the dark-haired destroyer blush. "'Elegant'⁈" Jessica asked.

"Akatsuki takes her lessons in humanity well," the ninjutsu grandmaster stated as she gave the other woman an amused look...which caused the pilot to blink. Seeing such a show of emotion from the likes of the Saikō Jinseijutsu herself was truly alien, especially as Jessica could remember the only time the War Hawks faced her within the body of Moroboshi Ryūbi in late 1943. In that scuffle, Negako fought even Dean Raeburn to a standstill; it had taken Martin Larsden's hunting skills to drive her off. "But she requires improvement."

As the shipgirl in question blushed, Jessica chuckled. "Alright, I'll be happy to explain all these silly medals later. And no, Akatsuki, I'm not an elegant lady! I'm a flapper, born-and-bred in the years of Prohibition!" As all the shipgirls gasped on hearing that - Jessica clearly looked to be a woman in her mid-twenties at the most, hardly matching her potential real age - the native of Winnipeg winked. "After all, it was in Canada that the rum-runners got their booze to sell to folks like Mister Capone down in Chi-town!"

As some of the dancers laughed on hearing that flippant admission, Jessica then turned to the iPod that had been connected to the ghetto blaster to play songs. Calling up the selection, she scanned what was there, then smiled as she made her choice. "Now, let's pick up the music here..."

A snappy, fast jazz tune began to pound out, making all the destroyers save Kisaragi gape before some of them began to bounce and jiggle to the thundering melody of Sing, Sing, Sing; they recognized same from the times radiomen in their crew picked up signals over shortwave from the Armed Forces Radio Service...not to mention the times they had spent with American shipgirls like Enterprise and her sisters, who simply adored big band music. To the surprise of many, Tenryū laughed as she lunged over to grab the Canadian general, then yank her onto the floor. The others all cheered out on seeing the light cruiser do that, though Jessica was quick to swing her new partner into a fast jitterbug. People began to clap to the music as Negako remained still, though she kept her ki sight locked on the dazed destroyer in Mutsuki's arms.
Yes...

Now...!

"HOW DARE YOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOU...?!"

Everyone screamed as a dark aura of power exploded from Kisaragi's body, knocking her sister back as a snarling image appeared over her, making the dazed destroyer look like she was some Ha-class Abyssal fused to a humanoid body. As Tenryū moved to shield Jessica from this thing and others struggled to summon their rigging, Negako grinned. "Thank you for doing that," she declared as sickly green ki glowed in her hand. "SEISHIN-HASAI HI-KÔSEN!"

A bolt of energy lashed out to punch through the creature right above Kisaragi's head, making the destroyer jolt before she dropped to the floor like a marionette with her strings cut, causing whatever had been latched to her to howl at being burned clear of the shipgirl's soul so easily. Before Tenryū could draw her katana and charge at the monster that had clearly been infecting one of her kids like that, Jessica spun herself around to face it...

...just as her eyes glowed a brilliant reddish-gold. "Lunchtime...!"

The creature screamed in terror as an aura of burning energy exploded from the Canadian's body, forming the image of a fiery raptor that made the shipgirls gasp in awed. "She's a PHOENIX?!" Tatsuta screamed out in disbelief...

...before they watched the "phoenix's" head lunge over and snare the enemy destroyer-like thing that had surged out of Kisaragi in its beak, gulping it down in one go! As the once-nearly comatose destroyer cried out on feeling something ripped from every point on her body, her eyes going wide, the fiery image around Jessica faded, leaving behind a smirking general...

...who then belched out, hand snapping up to cover her mouth! "Excuse me...!"

"That's not elegant, Teitoku," Akatsuki then stated.

"'Hishō'," Nagato corrected, her mind reeling from what she just saw. "She's of the Royal Canadian Air Force, not the Royal Canadian Navy. Hishō..."
"OH, NO! IT'S A BOMB! I'M BEING BOMBED...!"

Everyone jolted...then Mutsuki screamed out, "KISARAGI-CHAN!"

A now fully-aware Kisaragi gasped before her sister buried her with a flying glomp. As the other shipgirls cried out in delight on seeing their once-lost fleet mate acting normal again, Mutsuki wailed with happiness as she buried her face in the crook of her sister's neck. That made Kisaragi blink in confusion for a moment before she looked around. "Mutsuki-chan..." she then rasped out, her larynx reacting harshly at her shouting after months of immersion in salt water and non-use. "I'm back at the Naval District...?"

With twin screams of delight and joy, Fubuki and Yūdachi lunged over to add their own hugs to the crying Mutsuki's while the other destroyers all cheered and wept, which made Kisaragi gape before her face softened, then she moved to hold her sister closer to her. "Mutsuki-chan...!" she whispered.

"Negako-san...?" Nagato hissed out as she gazed on the ninjutsu grandmaster.

Negako wasn't the least phased. "Hibiki!"

The silver-haired destroyer gasped as everyone fell silent. "D-d-Da...?"

"Translate from Russian: Dušá Ljudoéd Dneprá."

Hibiki blinked...before she croaked as memories of her Russian crew speaking of the legends of her adopted nation came back to her. Said tales being whispered out of hearing range from hidden agents of the MGB or the GRU given that retelling such folk stories were seen by hard-core communists as giving in to the "oppression" of religion, long denounced as the "opiate of the masses" by Karl Marx. She then stared at Jessica before she turned to Negako, her face as pale as a ghost's. "H-h-her...?!" she sputtered out in mind-numbing horror...

...before her eyes rolled into her head and she dropped in a dead faint!

Screams escaped others as Tenryū and Tatsuta moved to help Hibiki recover. As those not involved in the cute cuddle pile around Kisaragi exchanged looks, the just-recovered destroyer blinked.
"Um...what's going on here, Nagato-san...?"

Kisaragi jerked in shock on seeing said battleship on her knees, her stoic look vanished and eyes sparkling. "So kawaiiiniiniiniiniini...!"

Jessica snickered as Negako shook her head while Benny Goodman played away...

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**Tomobiki, mid-afternoon...**

"We're moving?!

Fujinami Ryūnosuke blinked as she stared wide-eyed at her father Fujimi. "Hai, we are," the old fisherman from Chōshi on the Pacific coast of Chiba prefecture replied as he sipped his tea. "I've already had you withdrawn from classes here; you'll be going into private study since we'll be living on the Eta-jima naval base." Seeing the goggled look appear on his "son's" face, the current master of the temporarily-defunct Hamachaya smirked. "A new and safe location to erect Hamachaya after we were driven from our home earlier this year."

The protest that had been swelling up her throat at the idea of once more uprooting themselves from a stable home and going elsewhere died on hearing where Fujimi now planned to live. "Why Eta-jima?" Ryūnosuke demanded. "The place is restricted to civilians because of the kanmusu. How the hell did you managed to get us a place there?! Not that I wouldn't mind being close to the sea again - and it would be safe since the kanmusu are there - but still...!"

A sigh escaped the older man. "You can thank Tariko-chan for that, my child."

That made her gape. "Tariko?! You mean...that other version of Moroboshi?"

"The same," he affirmed. "I don't know what K'ekhech-dono told you about what happened to Ataru-kun that saw his soul split in half to allow Tariko-chan to become her own person, but it really happened. I felt it when they came here a month ago to move his stuff out of his parents' home and relocate to Eta-jima." As she nodded at that - while not members of any known official martial arts school, Ryūnosuke and her father were quite adapt at some of the more esoteric things such as sensing out a person's ki - he added, "Tariko-chan is Ataru-kun deep in her heart. One more self-disciplined as he because he was the 'base' personality and his mind was far too influenced by
Negako-san using him as a living ki conduit in hopes of creating her own body before the Noukiites kindly gave her another option...but still Ataru-kun deep down. She..." Here, he sighed. "She has many of the same issues you have, my child."

Silence fell as the younger woman took that in. Despite the countless knock-down, drag-out fights that often rocked their relationship, Ryūnosuke knew that her father privately did accept the truth of her birth gender regardless of his loud insistence that his child was a "boy" and had to behave and dress as such. After all, how the hell was Ryūnosuke supposed to deal with women-only issues such as menstruation? Fujimi simply had no idea whatsoever concerning how to teach his child about that! Atop that, a marriage with the "daughter" of an old classmate of Fujimi's had fallen through when Shiwatari Shin and his son Nagisa had been killed by Abyssals striking into the Sagami Sea and catching them at their tea shop near the town of Fujiwara five months ago. That was the only time Redet Lum came close to encountering the sea yōma; prior to that, the Men In Black had gone out of their way to ensure the warlord's daughter stayed clear of them. With that migraine fully out of the way, Ryūnosuke stood a better-than-average chance of trying to build a life for herself as a woman and find a nice person who could accept her with all her faults; whether or not such a future life-partner would be a man or a woman was still up in the air...

"Oh, Negako-san left this for you."

A letter was handed over, Ryūnosuke's name written in scripted kanji. "Dōmo," the tomboy affirmed as she took the envelope, then opened it to draw out the folded sheet inside. She then scanned it before she snickered. "Shit...!"

"What?"

"Negako-sama must have got K'ekhech-dono to teach me how to read Noukiite," Ryūnosuke then explained. "She did it in a mind-meld that was straight out of Star Trek! Freakiest thing I ever went through even if K'ekhech-dono was really nice about it. The Oni didn't care for it too much...but what were they to do given that K'ekhech-dono was just too damned strong?!!" As the old fisherman gaped, she winked. "Keeps all the messages secret, after all..."

He laughed as she plunged into the letter, noting it was dated a month ago:

Ryūnosuke,

If you are now reading this missive, you have been returned to your father's side and you have been told of what Tariko arranged on your family's behalf to relocate to Eta-jima and re-establish Hamachaya on the grounds of the former Imperial Naval Academy. I would strongly suggest that
you take such an option, both for the sake of the kantai musume who currently are based there as well as your own sake. In many ways even more so than Tariko, your presence at Eta-jima will be of mutual benefit for the kantai musume and yourself; like both Tariko and yourself, they must adjust from a male-influenced "upbringing" given the presence of all-male crews within their hulls when they were actual ships and not human beings trying to embrace their new lives as females. As they learn, you learn, which will do more to assist in correcting the many misconceptions your father's upbringing has forced upon your life.

Before you inquire such, both Tariko and Ataru are supportive of such a move. Be assured you will need no longer have to worry concerning amorous advances from either of them; I am sure some more of the more amorous kantai musume would seek them out intimately as it is the ultimate plan to remove Redet Lum from Ataru's life once and for all time and seeing him dating another woman would guarantee that happens. My siblings see offering a chance to relocate to Eta-jima as a way of not just repaying you for the many times your personal space was intruded on by us-as-one being, but as a way of giving you a chance to take charge of your destiny in a way that will benefit you much more than what residing in Tomobiki has done for you to date. Many kantai musume will no doubt see you as a personal inspiration as they seek to develop their sense of self and as a potential intimate interest. I realize forming such intimacies gravely disturbs you given the conflicting life lessons Fujimi's inability to understand female issues forced on you, but as I stated, your presence in Eta-jima will be mutually beneficial to yourself and the kantai musume as a whole.

This, you now need to know, is also the Heavenly Sovereign's desire. On my first presenting myself to the Heavenly Sovereign as myself in lieu of possessing Ataru's body two days before I wrote this missive, I gave him an appraisal of all those who were forced by circumstance to deal with Lum. He found your story particularly tragic. As I indicated above, his desire to see Lum removed from Earth once and for all is profound; by "removing" you from the scene, those who support Lum's return to Earth such as Aisuru Satoshi and Mendō Shūtarō will be quite distracted since it would appear to them that Ataru is moving to "strip" Lum of potential local "allies". I am aware you do not care for Lum; without doubt, your experience on Uru after Nengmek'i removed us to Okusei would have disabused you of whatever positive images you may possess of Urusians as a whole, especially their arrogance when dealing with "lesser" species and their belief that their way is clearly the best for all living beings. Considering such was forced on them a millennia ago by the Seifuku Dominion (you will be aware of them by the time you read this missive), such an attitude cannot be allowed to influence Earth's future.

As you will no doubt realize on evaluating past interactions, Lum was without any control in the time she resided with us at Muchi's and Kinshō's home.

Forcing her to accept such could lead to a major intergalactic incident.

As to the "why", I will not commit same here. You will be briefed once you and Fujimi are at Eta-jima...or if you refuse this invitation, within hours of Lum being expelled from Earth once and for all time. I will not explain how here.
Destroy this missive once you have read it. It is for not just your security, but the security of all humanity. You are capable of rising to the occasion.

Moroboshi Negako

"Holy fuck...!" the tomboy breathed out.

"She didn't tell me what this was all about," Fujimi stated as he sipped his tea. "But from what I could sense from her, Negako-san was in deadly earnest concerning how much that alien girl has come to threaten all of humanity." He then chuckled. " Strikes me odd that our simply moving to Eta-jima will help save the planet, but given that we need to restore Hamachaya..."

She nodded, then reached over to get a long match. "Let's get packed..."

Eta-jima, the guest barracks, that moment...

"This...is some mad joke! Isn't it...?"

Tariko shook her head. "Sorry, man. No joke."

Hearing that from his current host, Mendō Shūtarō shuddered before he gazed upon the ship-breakers who had been based in Eta-jima for a year...and WITHOUT his family's knowledge! "Did you have any suspicions at all that this man leading you was an alien?" he asked the foreman, waving to the several internal security pictures of the man who had been gutted hours ago by Yonaga.

"None whatsoever, Young Master!" the foreman stated as the others shook their heads. "His behaviour was so perfect, I'd swear he had been working for the Conglomerate for decades! He never ONCE let on that he was anything more than a native of Japan! His loyalty to you and your family was absolute, which was expected...but as to his being an alien...!" He shook his head. "If Yonaga-sama hadn't shown his ears like that..." A hiss escaped him before he slammed his fist in frustration onto the coffee table. "We should have seen that!"
"That's how good these clowns are," Tariko advised, wincing on sensing how much this was tearing the man apart. Incompetent morons Mendō's people were, their loyalty to the family was absolute. "It was a survival technique that allowed his ancestors to weather being attacked by pretty deadly predators...which got evolved into something that's both fantastic and frightening at the same time."
She then gazed on Mendō. "When you were in Onishuto and you saw this jerk's countrymen, did they act kinda like Megane and his dolts do when it came to Lum or any of her friends? Like they'd worship the ground Lum walked on?"

The scion of Japan's richest family trilled for a moment before he shook his head. "No. Though now that I think about it, the few times I did see those people, the doctors and nurses at the hospital had us moved into private rooms. We didn't understand it at first; when some of the girls asked, they were told meetings with the Niphentaxians were always treated as high security affairs and they didn't want to deal with anyone from Earth." He then stared at his host. "But if what you just revealed about these people is true, Tariko-san..."

"They've been watching us for three centuries. They've had people like this jerk on Earth for over a century. Whole generations of observers have been born and grew up here, all made to believe watching over us and reporting on everything we do and everything we create to their bosses on Phentax Two was the right thing. Any attempt at trying to break clear of the many 'churches' that have been created over the years based on what they've seen here..." Tariko shook her head. "It's heresy. And that's a capital crime there."

Mendō jolted on hearing that. "Why are you so concerned about this?"

She gave him a knowing look. "Guess who their latest 'divine inspiration' is?"

Silence.

More silence.

Still more silence.

Then...

"Lum-san...?"
"Yeah," Tariko affirmed with a nod. "Ten years ago, Lum saves this kid named Ōgi - he's OUR age, believe it or not! - from the Terrible Swamps just beyond where her house is located outside Onishuto. He then gets it into his head to start up the 'Church of Lum', thinking she was an arahitogami!" As Mendō gaped at her, she shook her head. "It took off, becoming popular faster than any of Naka-chan's podcasts on YouTube! By the time the guy turned ten, he was the effective leader of a 'church' that had fifteen BILLION adherents! By the time he would have started high school here on Earth, he's the fucking PRESIDENT of Phentax Two!" She then shook her head. "Now, under normal circumstances, it wouldn't be so bad! Even if they all think Lum's touched by the Divine and all that, most knew when not to push things! It wouldn't be so much of an issue even with Lum living on Earth...except for three things."

"What could they be, Tariko-sama?" the shop foreman demanded.

"One: They created this 'holy book': *The Book of Lum*. Know what it contains?"

"I'm afraid to ask," Mendō snarled.

"Copies of your diaries."

"WHAT?!"

Smirking, Tariko reached under a nearby pillow to bring out a book similar to a normal hotel Bible, handing it over. Seeing the title - in both some strange alien language and in *Japanese* of all things! - Mendō flipped it open to scan the index. A moment's wide-eyed staring later, he shrieked, "**THE BOOK OF THE FIFTH HOLY APOSTLE TO THE LIVING GODDESS, MENDŌ SHŪTARŌ'?!**"

"Read it," Tariko bade.

Mendō flipped to the chapter, then he scanned what was there. A moment later, he seemed ready to throw up...then he gaped at her, a putting-it-together look flashing across his face. "The ofuda Negako-sama put in the mansion house...?"

"Right! You didn't get Cherry or Sakura to take them off, I hope!"
He immediately shook his head. "No! Cherry tried, but Negako-sama sealed it with ki based on her own blood, which he couldn't defeat!" He shook his head. "Gods! This is insane! Why hasn't Lum-san told us about this?!

"She was under direct orders from her dad to say NOTHING at all about it!" she affirmed. "Just like Schultz-gunsō always acted in Hogan's Heroes. 'I hear nothing, I see nothing, I know nothing!'" she then spat out with a faux German accent. "Now, this leads to the second issue: Given that Lum is a 'goddess' to these people, you and the Stormtroopers are the 'holy apostles' and all of Lum's friends from space and a number of people here on Earth are her 'holy friends', guess who gets to be the devil figure in this 'church' of Ōgi's?!"

Mendō winced. "Your brother..."

"Right...!" she drawled as she crossed her arms. "And here comes number three: Ōgi has proven himself to be willing to commit mass murder in Lum's name." As Mendō and the others all gaped in horror on hearing that, Tariko closed her eyes. "Did Lum ever tell you of Nassur and his wife Cinba?"

"Lum-san's former combat instructor and his wife," Mendō immediately affirmed. "Natives of the planet Vos; the Vosian Confederation is the largest local intergalactic power. They work as independent bounty hunters based out of an asteroid near the Shingetsu system, Ran-san's home colony."

"Well, they're dissidents from their home planet. Six years ago, the dictator in charge of Vos - his courtesy name would translate as 'Mikado' in Japanese; don't ask me what his real name was - tried to have Lum and her family killed because of their public support of Nassur-san and Cinba-san," Tariko reported. "Ōgi got wind of it, then sent a bio-bomb to Lecashuto, the capital city of Vos. It went off...and five million people died!" A sarcastic look crossed her face as her guests all paled. "Of course, the Mikado survived that...!"

"Gods...!" Mendō hissed out.

"Yeah! So you can understand why Ataru and I don't care to have someone like Ōgi lurking in the background like he's done over the years! Why do you think we had to make friends with the Yizibajohei of all races in the galaxy?!" As Mendō jerked, Tariko smirked, a grimace that had no humour whatsoever in it crossing her face. "Nice to have the galactic bogeyman..."
Running feet echoed from outside the room. "**TARIKO-SENSEI!**"

Tariko looked over as a panting pink-haired destroyer burst into her guest room. "Oi! Yūdachi-chan! You're not as fast as Shimakaze-chan, alright!" she playfully scolded, wagging her finger at the shipgirl. "What's wrong?"

"P-p-poi...!" Yūdachi moaned as her turquoise eyes teared. "Kisaragi-chan..."

As the ship-breakers winced on hearing that name, Tariko hummed. "Oh-ho! Something tells me Dover-taishō had a little afternoon snack today, eh?!"

Yūdachi nodded. "P-poi! Hishō got that phoenix inside her to e-eat this th-thing inside Kisaragi-chan after N-n-Negako-sensei used the Seishin-hasai Hi-kōsen attack on it!" She then sniffed. "Kisaragi-ch-chan's okay n-n-now...!"

She was instantly in the older-looking woman's arms. "There, there!" Tariko gently comforted as she stroked Yūdachi's long hair while the ship-breakers all whooped in delight and Mendō breathed out in relief. "Now we gotta wait for Onē-san and Dover-taishō to go clean out whatever evil gunk is inside Shōhō-chan next, then we're all together and merry!" she promised.

Yūdachi gaped, then screamed as she pulled Tariko into a jerky waltz. Watching this happen from his place by the table, Mendō could only shake his head...

The common room in one of the battleship dorm houses, that moment...

"Lovely tea you made here, Kongō."

"So glad that you can enjoy it, Veneto."

The Italian battleship politely smiled as her sisters giggled in delight on tasting some of the spare hēichá Kongō obtained from Tariko the previous evening. "This is so strange," Tirpitz then mused before sipping her own fermented tea. "Was it hard for you four to adjust to being human after that brave wizard summoned your souls from where we all were sleeping?"
Kongō and her sisters shook their heads. "Not really," Hiei affirmed. All the battleships who were currently residing at Eta-jima save Nagato and Mutsu - along with the five newcomers who had joined them last night - were relaxing in various chairs and sofas in the large space. A flat-screen television was set up on one nearby wall, transmitting a live feed from CNN. The news channel was running the lead story of the day: The summoning of the American battle line from the first dreadnought South Carolina to the last of the Montana-class battleships Louisiana (plus four uncompleted Lexington-class battlecruisers and six Alaska-class large cruisers) hours before. Much to the amusement of Iowa and her sisters, the metropolitan Chicago area was throwing a massive street party in celebration of the arrival of fifty-two shipgirls that would spearhead America's "official" entry into the Abyssal War in a very big way.

"Negi-san's spell was based on some research done by a former student of Master Hosan's around the turn of the last century," Hiei added. "He discovered it while he was reading through the archives at the Imperial Magical Commandery of Kantō's base in Mahora north of Tōkyō. Given that he is the son of one of the most powerful magicals in recent memory, it was no wonder he was able to bring all four of us back to service without the need of a summoning chamber."

"He's just a kid, believe it or not," Iowa noted.

"A child?!" Vittorio Veneto gasped in horror.

"He was a magical child prodigy," Bismarck explained before sipping her own tea. "Very bright young man. He earned the equivalent of a master's degree in English at his magic school, plus teacher's training before he was summoned to go to Mahora at age ten to teach a class of middle school sophomores."

"What grade?" Tirpitz asked her sister.

"Untertertia," Bismarck provided. "They're in the Obertertia year now."

"What grade's that?" New Jersey wondered.

"They were in Grade Eight," Iowa translated. "Now in Grade Nine."

"And he's just TEN?!!" Wisconsin demanded.
"Almost twelve now. He is a true knight in the Western traditions, Wisconsin-san," Musashi said with an approving nod. "He's fought everything from vampires to sorcerers to demons and everything else imaginable." She shook her head. "It's a pity Negi-sensei's type of magical isn't more accepted in Britain. The 'average' wizard there is quite a different type of being...!"

"Oh, gods! Isn't that right?!" Fusō moaned out, rolling her eyes.

"What do you mean?" Veneto asked...

...then everyone gasped as a whooshing sound echoed from outside...

...then they blinked as someone screamed from out of nowhere before a body flopped down onto the soft ground beyond the outside patio. "Lieber Gott!" Bismarck screamed as she bolted for the door, racing outside to see the newcomer moan as he tried to pick himself off the grass. "Are you alright, mein Freund?!" the blonde battleship demanded as she knelt beside him.

A dizzying moan escaped him as he looked up, fixing Bismarck with eyes as green as molten jade fire, which made her cheeks instantly flush as his handsome looks registered deep in her very human heart. "S-s-sorry about th-that...!" he muttered in English...then he gaped as a look of awe crossed his face. "Bloody hell! You're battleship Bismarck, aren't you?!"

"Yes, I am," she responded in the same way as Kongō screamed in delight on hearing that mix of Surrey and East Midlands from the handsome teen visitor with the messy black hair and the reading glasses. "So how...?"

He blushed as he made an apologetic nod. "Sorry about this, ma'am. I just was portkeyed from my godfather's house in London. Ruddy, stupid Ministry..."

Hearing that made Kongō moan as the other battleships emerged from the lounge. "Your Ministry of Magic, you mean," the British-built battleship concluded.

He blinked, then nodded. "Yes! You're battleship Kongō, aren't you?"

"The English-born returnee! That's me!" she declared. "And you are...?"
"Harry Potter," he stated as he moved to stand...

...then gargled as a bout of nausea hit him. Feeling his last meal surge up, he spun around, instantly spotting a handy garbage can.

He made it just in time.

As the battleships winced on seeing him upchuck his breakfast, eyes locked on Kongō. "Looks like portkey nausea to me if he came in from London just now."

"I'll go get Teitoku, Onē-sama," Kirishima volunteered.

"Good idea..."

Ten minutes later...

Harry sighed contentedly as he sipped the tea that had been made for him, looking a little healthier than he did when he first plopped down on the base grounds. "Thank you very much for the tea, Kongō-san," he stated, glad that he had remembered to take the special Japanese translation lozenge that had been prepared for him before he was teleported halfway across the planet.

"No problem!" Kongō stated as the other battleships smiled. "So, you're Harry Potter! All my friends in Britain told me about what they heard about you!"

He chuckled. "I assume Surrey's the source of all the stories."

"'Surrey'?" Iowa asked.

"County-class heavy cruiser, Norfolk variant, Iowa-san," Haruna immediately provided. "She was one of two that was cancelled as a way of persuading the great powers to accept the London Naval
Treaty in 1930."

The other battleships nodded in understanding. "But since work had been done on her, she could be summoned," Harry finished for Kongō's sister, which made the grey-haired fast battleship blush as he smiled in thanks. "Which was great given our people learned immediately from the Canadians how to outfit modern weapons and sensors into older hulls." He sat back in his chair, glad the tea Kongō had made for him was settling his stomach down; he would take the potions to help him adjust to the eight-hour time difference between Britain and Japan as soon as he could get his school trunk returned to normal size when Heather Thompkins came to look in on him. "I met her just after she was summoned when my relatives brought me to a rally in support of the Navy in Guildford before I returned to Hogwarts for my fourth year of studies." Noting that, he was glad shipgirls worldwide were always briefed on magical societies so he didn't have to explain much to his hosts. "What did she tell you about me?"

"Quite a bit, Harry-kun," Haruna stated. "She wasn't the least bit flattering concerning your current caregivers." As the other battleships tensed, she added, "Harry-kun here was orphaned thanks to a rebellious 'dark lord' that was tearing apart the majority of British wand magicals over a decade ago, just as the first battles between magicals worldwide and the Abyssals began." As the others in the room grimly nodded - until the shipgirls arrived on the scene, magical squads of warriors from all seaborne nations had been bled dry when they tried to stop the dark sea yōma from attacking defenceless normals - she added, "As the story goes, Harry-kun was responsible for this dark lord's downfall...though our friends in Gringotts told Hood-san and the others who investigated this when Surrey-san raised the alarm that it was Harry-kun's mother Lily-sensei who deserved credit for this yakuza's downfall...!"

Yamato giggled. "Taking speech lessons from my sister, Haruna-san?"

"Your sister?" Harry asked. He knew that Japan's greatest battleship had two "full" sisters in Musashi and Kii; both of them were present enjoying tea. He also knew that there was also a sister of the Yamato-class who had been rebuilt as an aircraft carrier in her first life as a warship, Shinano; there was no sign of the tall, raven-haired bespectacled shipgirl.

"Did the news of the summonings last night get to England?" Bismarck wondered.

He shook his head. "I recognize almost all of you...save for you two and you three..." He indicated Tirpitz and Veneto, then Iowa's sisters. "Did you all come through last night?" Harry then asked.

"Ja, they did," the German battleship assured him.
Introductions were then made, with handshakes exchanged between the visiting wizard and the new shipgirls to have joined Eta-jima's international battle line. Yamato then added, "Along with Bismarck-san's sister and Littorio-san's sister, Prinz Eugen-san was finally reunited with all four of her sisters, then my long-missing sister was retrieved as well late last night."

Harry gaped. Throughout his year at school even as he had been forced to deal with the insanity of the Triwizard Tournament, many muggle-born students from Hogwarts and Beauxbâtons kept him updated on the goings on with the shipgirls. It was understandable that the "Boy Who Lived" had become a fan of the reborn warships thanks to Surrey, who had publicly called out the Dursleys at that rally in Guildford eleven months ago when she noted how badly Harry's cousin Dudley behaved when it came to younger people at the time and had seen Dudley's parents Vernon and Petunia blame their nephew for such hooliganism...even when it had been as obvious as coal in a ballroom who was truly at fault.

Shaking his head from his self-reflection, he focused again on Yamato. He knew when Kii answered the call to duty at the turn of the New Year, she reported that Hull 797 (name unknown at the time) had been constructed somewhere. "I'm so glad to hear that your sister's back, Yamato-san..."

"Onēsan-tachi!"

Everyone turned as footfalls echoed from the hallway, then Harry gaped as someone who seemed to him to be as tall as Rubeus Hagrid himself walked smartly in the room. "Ara! Yonaga-san!" Yamato said with a smile. "I trust that Aoba-san's annoying little hobby won't bother us again?"

"It will not," Yonaga stated as she sat beside Musashi. "Who is this?"

Harry winced as he felt ageless grey eyes fall on him...then he tensed as footfalls heralded the arrival of the third of the Kongō-class battleships, who was now accompanying the current secretary ship for Japan's shipgirl fleet, her sister and the new overall commander of shipgirls and shipboys worldwide. "Here he is, Teitoku," Kirishima announced. "Harry Potter-san."

He instantly got to his feet along with the other battleships. "Madame Supreme Mugwump," he greeted her with a bow, then reached into his jacket to pull out a rolled piece of parchment. "I have a message from Professor Dumbledore, ma'am."

"'Supreme Mugwump'?" Jersey wondered.
Heather Thompkins smirked. "I'll explain that to you soon enough, New Jersey. Suffice to say, it's the main reason I got promoted to admiral from my old rank of navy captain to take charge of you all," she stated as she nodded thanks to Harry, then she snapped open the wax seal to unroll the parchment, scanning what was there. Her eyebrow then arched. "I see, then..." she breathed. "The quality of Her Majesty's Ministers for Magic in recent years clearly hasn't improved one bit. What a pity we can't get Gonebren opened up again..."

Harry winced. "Actually, ma'am..."

She gazed at him. "Yes?"

"Gonebren was brought back into commission at Easter," he explained with an amused smile. "Azkaban was destroyed by the Abyssals, wiping out the Dementors once and for all; seems the Abyssals were too strong for them. Fortunately, there was a group of Loch-class frigates and Castle-class corvettes based out of Scapa Flow who were able to get the prisoners and the wardens to safety before they were consumed by the Abyssals or drowned in the North Sea. After they signalled the Admiralty about what happened, the Queen was told, then she loaned the Keys to Gonebren over to the Navy to have the prisoners secured." He then smirked. "That idiot Fudge didn't find out about that until a week ago, then blamed Professor Dumbledore because of the thing with Voldemort."

The admiral sighed. "Alright. You have some potions for time zone changes?"

He nodded. "I got my trunk. It's shrunk down."

"Mutsu, I need guest quarters set up for Mister Potter here."

Mutsu bowed her head. "Right away, Teitoku."

As she headed out, Heather faced the others. "I assume someone can be a...

Hands instantly shot up!

"...host for Mister Potter?" the admiral finished as Harry blushed.
Laughter then filled the lounge as Yonaga shook her head in amusement. New footfalls then heralded the arrival of Heather's friend and co-fighter in the War Hawks; she was currently being accompanied by Vestal. "Hey, Heather!" Jessica Dover called out as all the battleships and the carrier bowed or nodded their heads to the veteran air force pilot. "Just got that issue with Shōhō fixed up just now. Any other tasty little snacks you need me to...?"

She then stopped, her nose twitching excitedly for a second as her eyes flared with power. Said eyes almost immediately locked in on the cute teenage boy now standing close to Yamato. Before Heather could say anything, Jessica walked over to stare intently into Harry's eyes, making him wince as he tried to shy away from that all-penetrating gaze. "Little morsel here..." she then purred as the firebird image suddenly formed around her.

As Harry tried to draw his wand to defend himself, the phoenix's beak lashed out to snip at something underneath that scar which reminded Bismarck and Tirpitz of the Germanic "sig" rune that had been used to write the initials to the Nazi Party's infamous Schutzstaffel. Harry croaked out in shock as he felt SOMETHING rip out of his head before he staggered just as a black, inky liquid poured out of the scar...which instantly evaporated into a dusty mist. A faint scream echoed before whatever it was that had been contained behind Harry's scar vanished into the energy creature now cloaking Heather's friend while he seemed to drop back into the chair he had been using; fortunately for him, Yamato was fast enough to catch him before he bounced his head off something hard. "An Abyssal?!!" Nagato demanded as Harry passed out with a pained moan.

"No!" Musashi stated. "Abyssals all sound female! That was a man's voice!"

"Who was that, Admiral?!" Iowa demanded.

"I don't know," Heather breathed out, shaking her head. "I haven't had a chance to get myself reacquainted with what's been happening in the magical realms since I got back to Earth two weeks ago. Vestal?"

The American repair auxiliary tensed. "Yes, Admiral?"

"Find Negako, then get her here if she's not busy looking over Shōhō or Kisaragi. I want her to make a full examination of Mister Potter here."

"Aye-aye, Admiral!"
As Vestal raced out of the dorm, Heather then called out, "Nagato?"

The secretary ship tensed. "Hai, Teitoku?"

"Send a message to Professor Konoe Konoemon over in Mahora. My compliments to him and ask him if he or someone from the Kantō Magical Association can spare some time soon to come down here and give me a full brief of what's going on with magicals in Europe, both Hogwarts and Meridiana alumni."

"Wouldn't you prefer to speak to Matsui-hakase over in Rijō, Teitoku?"

"I don't know him. I do know Konoemon."

"Hai, Teitoku, right away!" the battleship affirmed before heading out.

Heather then sighed before she gazed on Jessica. "Well?"

"Just a soul fragment of some sort," the pilot from Winnipeg reported with a shake of her head, her lips twisting into a frown of what seemed like disappointment to the shipgirls present. "Couldn't really tell who it was in the long term...but it seemed to be linked to all sorts of people and things."

Hearing that made the native of Québec City moan. "Great. A horcrux. Kongō?!"

The fast battleship tensed. "Hai, Teitoku?!"

"Tea, the strongest you've got! Put a shot of rum in it while you're at it!"

Kongō beamed, then she jovially saluted. "Aye-aye, ma'am!"

Within the abandoned Riddle Mansion outside Little Hangleton in England...
As several of the more fanatic Death Eaters watched in horror as their leader seemed to be consumed by eldritch fire, Severus Snape was trying not to hiss too much as he gripped his left forearm. It had been a normal meeting of the magical terrorists seeking to "purify" Britain...until a moment before when all of Voldemort's followers felt as if someone had stabbed molten knives right into the warped protean charms burnt into their bodies to mark their ultimate "allegiance" to the greatest dark lord to have ever risen on the planet. Just before Voldemort lashed out in anger at the show of such weakness, he recoiled as if someone had shot him in the centre of the head with an arrow or bullet. All the "faithful" - regardless of how much they were suffering by whatever it was that had tried to burn their nervous systems through the Dark Marks! - then watched in horror as the dark lord seemed to combust before their eyes, screaming in agony as something seemed to snip at his very soul.

Seeing that made Hogwarts' potions master grin savagely.

Albus Dumbledore's crazy idea about involving the Soul-Eater of the Dnipró in this mess that was threatening to bleed wizarding Britain dry just paid off!

Lily's son wouldn't have to be sacrificed to see that prophecy fulfilled!

"Severus...!"

Severus looked over as Lucius Malfoy gingerly made his way over to stand close to him; despite the scalding burning sensation in their arms, the current leader of Clan Malfoy of Avebury in County Wiltshire was made of stern stuff and could tolerate such abuse on his body. "It worked, Lucius!" the potions master hissed, glad that none of Voldemort's more fanatic followers couldn't hear them over the man's shrieking. "It proves it! The idiot used..."

"Horcruxes," the blonde aristocrat sneered as he glared at the dark lord...

...who then decided to explode!

A quick shield charm protected both Severus and Lucius from tongues of flame as many of the people who had been closer to Voldemort screamed in horror on seeing their resurrected leader once more transformed into a howling bodiless wraith...to say anything of their being nearly burned alive by the fire from that detonation. Reclining nearby, a shuddering, hissing Nagini tried to fight off
whatever it was that had seared into her mind like that... before she also detonated in a flash of burning energy and shredded body parts, knocking more people down! Noting one of them was a former friend of Lily Potter's husband, Severus yanked out his wand. "**ACCIO PETER PETTIGREW!**"

The rat-faced betrayer of the Potters and Sirius Black screamed as he felt himself yanked across the ballroom towards his "allies". A quick stunning spell later followed by a binding charm, Severus and Lucius were making their way out of the Riddle home as it began to burn from the released magical energy Voldemort's temporary destruction at the hands of a woman halfway around the world. Neither took notice of the howling dark wrath now bellowing vengeance.

"**CURSE YOU, POTTER! YOU'LL PAY! YOU'LL PAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAY...!**"

Severus smirked as he recalled his own appalling behaviour concerning the son of his oldest childhood friend, which was instantly noticed by Lucius; the latter had long ago figured out the former's desire to walk a middle path as all true Slytherins would when it came to the opposing sides of the blood politics that had polarized wizarding Britain for years. They remained silent as they passed the ward boundary of the Riddle home, then both men apparated with their cargo off to the south towards the Malfoy mansion outside Devizes...

*To Be Continued...*

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**WRITER'S NOTES**

1) Translation list for this chapter: **Sōridaijin** - Prime Minister; **Kontō** - Soulsword; **Kaisa** - Modern Maritime Self-Defence Force rank title for a captain (the proper rank title for **Umezu Saburō** from **Zipang** is **Itto-kaisa** ["First Rank Captain"]); **Taishō** - Admiral/General (NATO rank code OF-9); **Shōgun** - Literally "army leader" though normally translated as "commander-in-chief", this word is deprived from the Chinese term **Jiāngjūn** even if it uses slightly different characters (in Japanese 将軍, in Chinese 將軍); **Seishin-hasai Hi-kōsen** - Spirit-breaker Fire-light; **Dušá Ljudoéd Dneprá** - Soul-Eater of the Dnieper (River); **MGB** - Short for **Ministérstvo Gosudárstvennoj Bezopásnosti** ("Ministry of State Security"), the 1946-53 incarnation of the Soviet Union's external intelligence and internal secret police agency; **GRU** - Short for **Glávnoe Razvédyvatel'noe Upravlénie** ("Main Intelligence Directorate"), the Soviet Union's (and later Russia's) military foreign intelligence (and internal special security in Soviet times) agency; **Hamachaya** - Literally "Beach Tea Shop"; **Gunsō** - Sergeant; **Untertertia** - Lower Third (the grade title used in German gymnasien secondary schools, the local equivalents of British grammar schools); **Obertertia** - Upper Third (the next grade up from
Untertertia); Lieber Gott - Dear God; -tachi - Japanese language equivalent of the English plural "s" ending to nouns.

2) Iō-tō is the proper name of the island known to the West as "Iwo-jima"; like several other times interpreters tried to properly read and understand Japanese characters, the wrong reading of the 島 kanji was used in Allied reports. For those who don't know, Iō-tō (literally "Sulphur Island") is one of the Volcano Islands (Kazan-rettō), located 1200 kilometres (750 miles) from Tōkyō.

3) On thirty-four separate occasions, ships in the Royal Canadian Navy were given different names than what was originally planned for them. Escort ships such as Flower-class corvettes and River-class frigates were always named after Canadian towns; flower names were used by British ships and destroyers in RCN service were named after Canadian rivers before the Tribal-class ships were brought into service. However, when potential confusion between an RCN ship and a like-named allied warship occurred, the Canadian ship got a new name; on several occasions, names were changes due to local preference. For example, HMCS Beacon Hill (wartime pendant K407, peacetime code FFE-303) was named after the capital city of British Columbia, Victoria; this was to prevent confusion with the British aircraft carrier HMS Victorious (pendant R38).

4) In the universe of this story, I modified the storyline of Kawaguchi Kaiji's manga Zipang to have the time-travelling trip of JDS Mirai (DDH-182) be also a trip to another dimension. It makes sense in the end; if the Mirai had gone back to 1942 in the timeline the kanmusu remember, girls like Yamato would definitely remember encountering a missile-slinging AEGIS destroyer!

5) When the first two incarnations of the Royal Canadian Air Force was founded in 1914 (as the Canadian Aviation Corps) and 1918 (as the Canadian Air Force), Army-style rank titles were used; only when the service was properly re-formed in 1920 at Camp Borden north-northwest of Toronto did the Royal Air Force-style rank titles come into vogue. When the post-Unification version of the RCAF, Air Command, was restored to its pre-Unification name in 2011, it was decided to keep the Army-style rank titles; this was because the United States Air Force (which the RCAF was partnered with in the North American Aerospace Defence Command [NORAD] alliance) had used their Army-based rank titles since its foundation in 1947 and calling an RCAF general an "air chief marshal" (ACM) would be just too confusion to our friends down south!

As an aside, post-Unification Air Command/RCAF rank insignia was always gold on dress and work uniforms until 2015, when traditional pearl grey (which looks like silver from a distance) colouring used before 1968 was restored.

Also, since the rank titles "captain" and "lieutenant" signify vastly different ranks between the Canadian Army/Royal Canadian Air Force and the Royal Canadian Navy, the "(Navy)" suffix is always added to the base rank title to indicate an RCN officer in lieu of one from the Army or RCAF. A Captain (Navy) (short-form Capt[N]) has the NATO rank code OF-5 (equal to a
colonel) while a Lieutenant (Navy) (Lt[N]) has the rank code OF-2 (equal to a captain). When spoken, the rank titles are normally addressed as "navy captain" or "navy lieutenant".

6) My use of the term Imperial Magical Commandery (in Japanese, Teimajutsu-gun) to describe regional Magical Associations from Mahō Sensei Negima derives from my stories, which mixes the Negima and Harry Potter worldviews concerning how magicals are governed. Traditionally, the equivalent of a British minister for magic in Japan is the Mahō-Shōgun ("Supreme General of Magic"), who responded directly to the Heavenly Sovereign. However, as a way of placating European powers after the end of World War Two (which, in my universe, saw them stripped of magical colonies worldwide as a prequel to the end of colonization in the normal world), the Mahō-Shōgun at the time, Yomigawa Tsukiko (AKA Tsukuyomi), was retired and regional commandery directors such as Konoe Konoemon allowed to interact to the Imperial Throne. As a way of ensuring the Europeans couldn't dominate the post-Grindelwald War international magical scene, all eight of Japan's regional associations have independent votes at the International Confederation of Wizards (ICW). As an aside, the Imperial Magical Commandery of Kantō/Kantō Magical Association would be properly addressed in Japanese as Kantō Teimajutsu-gun and be given the short title Tōmagun.

Also, be advised that while I do take some inspiration from Pottermore, I do not care for the complete lack of historical and cultural understanding when it came to viewing magicals worldwide as has been recently introduced there.

7) Her Majesty's Prison Gonebren (HMP Gonebren) is my creation; I first noted the prison in Harry Potter and the Icemaidens, my first attempt at writing a series re-do. In the universe of my stories, Gonebren (known to most magicals in Britain as "You Know Where" as it is seen as the most foreboding piece of magical real estate in the British Isles thanks to its soul-eating inhabitants, the Hollows...and no, they're not Bleach-type hollows!) was the standard prison for malcontents before Azkaban was opened in the Eighteenth Century. Reason why was revealed in my third Wizards and Avalonians side stories to Phoenix From the Ashes. HMP Gonebren is located in Cornwall; the name "Gonebren" comes from the Cornish Goon Brenn, the local name for Bodmin Moor.

8) Rijō ("Carp Castle") is the nickname for Hiroshima Castle (Hiroshima-jō), headquarters of the leaders of the local domain until the Meiji Restoration. Hiroshima-jō was wrecked in the attack on Hiroshima on 6 August 1945; the castle was 600 metres (2000 feet) northeast of Ground Zero. The castle was rebuilt in 1958 and serves as a museum for the history of the area. In this story, it also serves as the headquarters of the Imperial Magical Commandery of Chūgoku (Chūgoku Teimajutsu-gun, normally shortened to Sanmagun), also known as the Chūgoku Magical Association. "San" in this case means "mountain" and is borrowed from San'in ("north of the mountains") and San'yō ("south of the mountains"); these describe parts of the western end of Honshū around Hiroshima.
9) The **Dnieper River** (in Russian, **Dnepr**; in Ukrainian, **Dnipro**) is the fourth-longest river in Europe, rising in Russia and flowing through Belarus and the Ukraine before it empties into the Black Sea. Jessica Dover's maternal ancestors are Ukrainian who migrated to Manitoba from the old Russian Empire before World War One (as my late grandmother Molly did in 1912).
Hoppō Chants A Haka

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Approaching Eta-jima from the Hō yo Strait, two hours before suppertime...

"BANZAI AUSTRALIA! BANZAI AOTEAROA! BANZAI LEXINGTON! BANZAI SARATOGA! BANZAI TAFFY THREE! BANZAI! BANZAI! BANZAI! BANZAI...!"

Hearing that joyous screams from the crews of nearby fishing boats as the mixed Australian/New Zealander/American shipgirl task force sailed between Nasake-jima and Tswaji-jima into the Aki-nada proper - which would give them a clear run to the entrance to Hiroshima-wan and the final approach to Eta-jima - the American Fletcher-class destroyer Johnston could only scowl as she looked over at the large battlecruiser forming the starboard point of the box formation of big gun ships and carriers for the group. "Hey, Zealand!" she called out. "Doesn't that bother you?! They always get your name wrong!"

A chuckle escaped the dark-haired shipgirl who had served as part of the Battle Cruiser Force at the biggest gunship slug fest in history off the Jutland peninsula in 1916. "Pay it no mind, you silly little sprite!" New Zealand gently chided as she winked before she reached up to adjust the bandana keeping her hair away from her dark blue eyes. As she allowed her G-band surface search radar to scan the approaches to Eta-jima, she ignored the brown-haired, green-eyed destroyer sticking out her tongue. After noting that the surface seemed clear of potential threats - some of the Bathurst-class minesweeper corvettes who had come with them had scanned the waters underneath all the way out to Imabari on Shikoku to make sure there weren't enemy submarines about - she looked over to her sistership. "Mind putting the signal out, dear?"

"Right," Australia chanted, reaching into her pants to pull a bullroarer on the end of a long string. She then twirled it over her head high in the sky.

A moaning, buzzing noise then echoed over the waters of the Seto-naikai...
Harry Potter's eyes snapped open. "What the bloody hell is that?!"

He then blinked as a fingertip probed the tender flesh around his famous curse scar...which no longer hurt from such a contact, surprising him a lot. "That is a bullroarer you are hearing, Harry," a toneless woman's voice answered as a dark-haired woman appearing to be in her early twenties loomed in his vision, making the Boy Who Lived tense for a moment as his growing magical senses nearly overloaded on feeling the waves of sheer **power** radiating from this person. He then relaxed as he sensed that she meant him no harm; while there wasn't any sense of welcoming warmth people like Albus Dumbledore radiated to other magicals, there wasn't the dark aura of evil such as what he detected when he had faced Voldemort in the Little Hangleton cemetery not two weeks ago.

"Battlecruiser Australia is now approaching Eta-jima with her sistership New Zealand; they just performed an escort mission from Táiwān to Fukuyama. They were accompanied in that mission by the aircraft carriers Lexington and Saratoga and the shipgirls who were members of Task Unit 77.4.3, not to mention elements of the Australia and New Zealand Combined Naval Shipgirl Corps."

"Taffy Three," Harry stated as he felt a surge of comfort wash through his head from that soft contact to his right temple. "One of the most famous ad hoc fighting formations in naval history. Escort aircraft carriers Saint Lo, White Plains, Kalinin Bay, Fanshaw Bay, Kitkun Bay and Gambier Bay. Destroyers Johnston, Hoel and Heermann. Destroyer escorts John C. Butler, Raymond, Dennis and Samuel B. Roberts. Back during the Battle of Leyte Gulf, they took on Yamato, Nagato, Kongō and Haruna, plus cruisers Chōkai, Haguro, Kumano, Suzuya, Chikuma, Tone, Yahagi and Noshiro, not to mention eleven destroyers. Because they were willing to fight so hard even at such long odds, the crews saved the troops landing at Leyte at the time and helped win the whole battle."

"You are versed in naval affairs."

He chuckled, shrugging. "Pays to have a shipgirl patron."

"The one being?"

"Her Majesty's Shipgirl Surrey."

The older woman nodded. "Name ship of a two-ship sub-variant of the County-class heavy cruisers whose construction was cancelled due to the demands of the London Naval Treaty of 1930; as preparation work had been done to commence her building before the order was cancelled for her
and her sister Northumberland, it was quite easy to summon both of them to duty at Torpoint. She is the one who managed to see you removed from your abusive caregivers before you attended your fourth form at Hogwarts." At Harry's dropped jaw and wide eyes, she gave him a faint smile. "Harry, your ki - in terms you will understand, your magical energy - is an open book to someone such as I." Noting his confusion, she added, "I am Moroboshi Negako. Natives of your father's society normally refer to me as the 'Earth Angel' or the 'True Heiress of Master Hosan'."

He gaped. Just after the disastrous end of the Triwizard Tournament two weeks before, Harry had been approached by a Ravenclaw named Luna Lovegood, a peer of Ginny Weasley's. She told him - in a voice that eerily reminded him of Sybill Trelawney's when she spoke the prophecy concerning Peter Pettigrew's escape from captivity a year before - that once Harry was free of the "nargle storm" descending on Britain thanks to the tragic murder of Cedric Diggory and had sought safety in the Land of the Rising Sun, he should listen to *everything* the Earth Angel told him. After confirming through Ginny that Luna had shown signs of being a Seer of some type, Harry kept that information in the back of his head while he had been escorted from King's Cross Station by Surrey to Sirius Black's townhouse in the Islington section of London to stay in a much safer location than 4 Privet Drive in Little Whinging ever was. It hadn't been quite safe enough; almost right away, the *Daily Prophet* started a smear campaign against Harry Potter and Albus Dumbledore, no doubt thanks to Cornelius Fudge's flat-out refusal to believe Voldemort had effectively returned from the dead.

"Um...nice to m-meet you, Negako-sama...!" he then sputtered out.

Negako's eyebrow arched, then she turned as someone stepped in. "Oi, the hero of the hour just came!" a voice called out as a teenage male version of the ninjutsu grandmaster came into Harry's arc of vision. "By the way, Onē-san..."

"Australia and the others. I am aware, Ataru."

That made Harry gape. "Bloody hell! *Moroboshi Ataru?!*"

The newcomer reared back in shock. "Not that I'd admit it!" he stage-whispered.

Hearing that, the visitor from Britain laughed, then held out his hand to shake that of the man who had effectively saved all of Earth over a year before from alien invasion. "Heard you're the poor schmoe who's credited for something his mom did to stop a Big Bad from ripping apart a bunch of backwards, wand-waving jerks over in Britain," Ataru noted as he gave Harry's hand a friendly squeeze. "How the hell did you do that, Harry? Slap the idiot with a wet nappy?!"

That made Harry howl out in delight...then he perked as footfalls echoed from outside his new guest
Looking over, he then moved to sit up on seeing Heather Thompkins walk in along with Kirishima, though he was gently forced back onto the bed by Negako's outstretched arm. "Ah, you're awake," the admiral stated as she sat down on the opposite side of the bed from where the Moroboshi siblings were, the fast battleship moving to stand beside her boyfriend. "Lucky thing that Albus got my special communications package when I got back to Earth; haven't had time to talk to him about what's happened in Britain since I was last on Earth..." She pulled out a device that resembled an iPhone without all the touch-screen functions on it, setting it horizontally on the nightstand beside his bed. A tap with the fingertip saw a holographic globe then appear over the screen. "**ALBUS DUMBLEDORE!**" she barked out.

A second later, a smiling grandfatherly image appeared, that accompanied by a cooing phoenix. "Ah, hello, Heather!" the headmaster of Hogwarts called from his office in Scotland, speaking in Japanese. "Did Harry get to you?!!"

"I'm here, Professor!" Harry called out.

"Wonderful! Tell me, Heather, did Jessica pull something out of Harry's scar?"

"A horcrux fragment," Heather stated as she tried not to look exasperated at her fellow veteran from the Battle of Nurmengard, the last magical/metahuman fight in the European Theatre of World War Two. As Harry blinked and Negako's eyebrow arched, the admiral from Québec City asked, "Who's the idiot playing around with that type of magic, Albus?! Not even Gellert was that insane!"

He sighed, shaking his head as if the weight of the world just slammed down on his shoulders. "A failed student that I personally welcomed into Hogwarts back as the war was starting, I'm afraid," he answered in a voice full of ashes. "His name is Tom Riddle...but he goes by 'Voldemort' these days."

That made her gape. "'Flight From Death'? Pretentious one, isn't he?"

"In more ways that I wish to admit." The headmaster sighed again, suddenly looking like the centenarian he was instead of the magical powerhouse he had shown himself to be in the past. "Harry, I am very sorry that I haven't told you about what I suspected about what was going on with your scar. Given your youth and my uncertainty when I began to suspect that is what Tom actually did to you, I didn't wish to cause undue alarm; you were already forced to deal with so many things. I can only apologize for that and I'm more than grateful that Heather and Jessica were able to remove that thing from your forehead."

"It's alright...but what exactly is a horcrux, Professor?" Harry asked.
"A soul fragment," Negako declared. "Thomas split his soul apart to anchor the severed part in an object of his choosing, thus keep his core soul bound to this life when his body was destroyed by your mother. However, given the size of the fragment as the echo of it in your ki signature indicated to me, I suspect it was but the latest horcrux created. One of seven, I would conclude, given how magically powerful that number is seen as in European magical lore."

Harry blinked, clearly surprised by that calm dissertation even if his stomach churned at the idea of actually having some piece of Voldemort in his head ever since he was a baby. "So why didn't the basilisk venom that got pumped into my blood back in second year destroy it?!" he then demanded. "The diary had to be another of these damned things now that I think about it, Professor...!"

As Heather gaped at the young wizard on hearing he once had an encounter with one of the "king of serpents", Negako explained, "Regretfully, the damage to your body was not acute enough to permanently dislodge the horcrux when Fawkes used his tears to heal you." As both Heather and Albus nodded, she added, "The circulation hadn't distributed the venom in sufficient quantities to that part of your body through the arteries in your head. No doubt, the blood magical field that was used to save you from the killing curse Thomas employed on you when you were a child caused interference as it tried to protect your soul before Fawkes intervened when he did; such a field was trying to keep your heart and other vital organs intact from the venom injected through your arm." As Harry winced on hearing that, the ninjutsu grandmaster stated, "There is a way we can further augment that protection. I suspect the stolen blood used by Thomas in his ritual to regain physical form two weeks ago will make you more vulnerable to him. Unless Jessica's intervention an hour ago has currently rendered him once more bodiless." She gazed on Heather to confirm same.

"What was the ritual?" the admiral asked.

Harry sighed as he closed his eyes. "'Bone of the father, unknowingly given, you will renew your son'," he repeated word-for-word what Peter Pettigrew had stated two weeks before to see his monstrous leader restored to true life. "'Flesh of the servant, willingly given, you will revive your master. Blood of the enemy, forcibly taken, you will resurrect your foe'."

A hum escaped Heather. "That's a nasty one." She then smiled. "But I doubt this Riddle would have survived Jessica's eating his horcrux." As Harry gaped at her, the native of Québec City winked. "In effect, what Jessica just did to you, Harry, is perform a little bit of magical meatball surgery. Yanking out that thing from your head not only destroyed the horcrux and removed that anchor link keeping Riddle in this life, it also wrecked whatever blood magic bond formed between you when this Pettigrew fellow used your blood to give his master a brand new body. If his soul's been torn apart as much as Negako just indicated, the magical backlash from what Jessica did would have destroyed him."
"I'm not confident that he's truly gone even if Jessica got involved, Heather. As Lady Negako indicated, Tom clearly has more horcruxes. They'll be hidden safely away," Albus gravely warned. "I'm waiting for a spy I have inside his ranks to report back; the Death Eaters - that's Tom's fighting group - were having a meeting at his current base when I had Harry portkeyed to Japan."

"Snape, you mean?" Harry asked.

A tired nod from the elderly headmaster. "Yes, Harry, Professor Snape," Albus gently chided. "Please don't relay that to Miss Granger or Mister Weasley if you write to them anytime soon...though I suggest you avoid doing that until the situation with the Ministry has calmed down somewhat."

"If you want, Albus, I can get Dean to pay you a visit," Heather proposed.

That made him perk. "Where was Dean assigned? And Martin for that matter?"

"Dean's now COMJFCSG: Commander Allied Joint Force Command for Shipgirls in NATO. Since the Russians and the other former Soviet republics are teaming up with NATO in dealing with the Abyssal threat, they wanted a commander on our side of the line they can trust since they got Svetláňa Múromeca to take charge of the CIS' shipboy projects. Since I was Supreme Mugwump in the ICW before you got to Geneva, I was made overall commander because of all the 'sparkly magical shipgirl bullshit' people love to complain about," Heather explained. As Harry and Ataru laughed on hearing that and Albus' eyes twinkled in delight, she added, "Dean's setting up her headquarters in London. Remember where Ike had SHAEF headquarters in Teddington before he went to the Continent in 1944?"

"Bushy Park."

"Go find her there if this Fudge idiot decides to be a real moron and starts making hassles at Hogwarts," Heather advised as she clasped her hands in her lap. "Dean will have tea with the Queen at least once a week, so she can go to bat for you in case the Ministry tries to yank you from my old post in Geneva."

"A pity I can't get Dean to serve as my DADA teacher. What of Martin?"

"Dean and Martin are both licensed gunsmiths," the admiral answered. "Their secondary duties in this mess is to get all the armament of every shipgirl and shipboy refitted to fire meson warheads."
We're going to make the sea a very ugly place for Abyssals to sail in wherever we trail our coats, Albus."

"A pity we never thought of doing that before this madness truly went crazy three years ago! I'll mention it to Saul Croaker when I get the chance."

Heather moaned. "Is he still in charge of the Unspeakables?"

Albus nodded. "Sadly so..."

She rolled her eyes as Harry gazed in confusion at her...

The main cafeteria, that moment...

"Wow! I can't believe the Commonwealth shipgirls are like that!"

A visibly recovering Kisaragi gazed on the iPad before her, her purple eyes spiralling in disbelief as she took in the information before her. She, her sister and Mutsuki's two best friends were seated at one table as they enjoyed some light snacks so they didn't spoil themselves for dinner. "They're so lucky," Yūdachi admitted. "Then again, the Canadians had it a lot easier when it comes to relations between magicals and normals, so they weren't so bugged about the idea of using magic based on the blood of all their lost sailors from Sable Island and Second Iō-tō to create their summoning machine at Cornwallis. You remember what people said about the Flower-class ships when they came back. It shocked the world when Sackville-san returned with the near-equal armament of a Halifax-class frigate, don't you?" She then shuddered on seeing the slightly lost look on her friend's face. "You sure you're okay...?"

Kisaragi slowly nodded. She was still low on energy, but was recovering from the months she had spent in a spiritual dazed nether-world, isolated from her sisters and friends because that bomb that sunk her had been also charmed to block her possible re-summoning through Eta-jima. Due to her being so out of it for so long, she couldn't gorge on food to get her energy back; she had to slowly build up her body's ability to use power back to when she could hit the high seas again and be part of the fleet as a fighting member once more.

"I'll be okay, Yūdachi-chan," she reassured her as Mutsuki squeezed her shoulders. "It's just like any
of us coming out of a long refurbishment period. I have to get back up to snuff in the class and in the bay, work in the new equipment Akashi-sensei and Vestal-sensei gave me, then do some local missions before I go out into the high seas again. It'll come in time."

"I'm sure glad Quadra-san was able to rescue you," Fubuki stated, deliberately avoiding the world "salvage" when it came to the other destroyer. "You should have seen how everyone freaked when she came to port with you slung over her back, muttering in German how heavy you were!" As Kisaragi gazed in confusion at the other destroyer, Fubuki explained, "Quadra is U-889. She was one of the two U-Boats who were surrendered to the Canadians after the Greater East Asia War ended in 1945. When the Canadians began mass summonings, she reported to Cornwallis along with U-190. But Canadians hate shipgirls having just numbers, so they got the Royal Canadian Sea Cadets to think up names for them. U-889 got 'Quadra' after the Sea Cadet training camp on Vancouver Island. U-190 was named 'Avalon' after the old Navy base in Newfoundland..."
Kisaragi hummed, then her eyes went wide. "Oh, that scary dance of theirs!"

"Poi!" the pink-haired destroyer affirmed as Hoppō nodded. "It's called a 'haka'! Aotearoa-senpai is actually New Zealand. She's the Indefatigable-class battlecruiser from the Great War! She was brought back along with her sister Australia when the Canadians taught them how to augment their World War Two ships with modern armament!" As Kisaragi gaped, Yūdachi giggled. "We all just call her 'Aotearoa' because that's the Māori name for New Zealand!"

"Haka!" Hoppō chanted.

"Oi!"

The four destroyers and the young Abyssal princess turned as Tenryū walked in. "Are they here, Tenryū-san?!" Fubuki called out.

"Just rounded the head and coming in!" the light cruiser called out as other destroyers overhearing this immediately rose to put away their dishes. "Get out there, you guys! Kisaragi, you stay back while the others do the welcome chant before Aotearoa-san does her challenge!" She then glanced down at Hoppō. "You're gonna be the leader of the chant, Hoppō-chan?" she asked.

Hoppō was practically leaping up and down in delight. "Haka!"

"Let's go!" Tenryū called out.

The destroyers screamed in delight as they raced out of the cafeteria, moving to stand on the seashore side of the parade ground, facing out into the harbour that cut Eta-jima almost in half. As Kisaragi followed her sister and friends, she noted there were a whole bunch of junior sailors from not just the Maritime Self-Defence Force but the United States Navy in their camouflage uniforms, the Royal Canadian Navy in their black flame-retardant combat uniforms with jackets, the Royal Australian Navy with their lighter-shaded disruptive pattern uniforms and the Royal New Zealand Navy in their dark blue button shirts and matching work trousers. Many of the destroyers had exchanged their seifuku skirts for the same type of grass skirt model Hoppō now wore. Before Kisaragi could ask what was going on, a gentle hand landed on her shoulder, making her turn to gaze on Kashima. "You stay right here, Kisaragi-chan," the training cruiser then bade. "We'll teach you the haka when you're up to strength."

"Hai...!"
As others gathered, Kisaragi looked out into the bay to see a large force of shipgirls approach in line abreast, ensigns of the United States of America, the Commonwealth of Australia and the Realm of New Zealand flying proud from mastheads. At the very centre were two battlecruisers flanked on each side by large American aircraft carriers, hull classification symbols 2 and 3 on their flight decks loudly declaring who they were. The battlecruiser to Kisaragi's starboard forward was dressed in a leather vest over corduroy pants bloused into crocodile-skin boots, a necklace of crocodile teeth wrapped around her neck and various talismans draped over her vest. She had a head of trimmed, curly bleached blonde hair covered by a felt slouch hat bearing a ship's crest. She also had a large Bowie knife tied off at her waist. To her starboard was another battlecruiser, dressed in the black T-shirt and shorts of the All Blacks rugby team with a grass skirt over her shorts and a necklace bearing a strange talisman around her neck. She was brunette with blue eyes, her hair pulled away from her pretty face, said face as well as her arms marked with war tattoos. The large carriers - Lexington and Saratoga, Kisaragi remembered - were dressed in old-style American Navy square rig, their M1903 Springfield bolt-action rifles slung over their shoulders. The smaller carriers - there were six of them - had World War Two-era Navy dungarees on, they carrying M1 Garand rifles; on seeing the deck numbers 63, 66, 68, 70, 71 and 73, Kisaragi's eyes almost popped out of her skull on realizing that the two famous converted battlecruisers were now accompanied by the escort carriers of Taffy 3...which meant that the three shipgirls who were the same physical size as the four Casablanca-class escort carriers now dressed in "cool" ripped Navy dungarees and the four shorter shipgirls in scuffed dungarees were the escort ships that had gladly faced down four of the biggest battleships in the world to keep them clear of the Leyte landing area one bright autumn morning in 1944. "Sugoi...!"

"KI ARO!"

Kisaragi yelped on hearing that shrieking cry...

...then she gaped on seeing that Hoppō had jogged out to the shoreline to lay down a beautiful fern branch before the approaching task force, then she fell back to place herself at the centre of the first rank of destroyers and their division leaders, which now included Fubuki, Yūdachi, Mutsuki, Tenryū, Tatsuta and the Akatsuki sisters. As the destroyers and destroyer escorts of Taffy 3 and New Zealand assumed aggressive, crouch-legged stances, Hoppō pointed at the new arrivals. "KIA WHAKARONGA! KIA MAU!" the young Abyssal then barked.

"HHHHHHHHHHH...!" the others in the receiving line roared.

"RINGARINGA E TORŌNA KEI WAHO HOKI MAI!"

The others hissed their agreement twice as many stuck out their tongues at the new arrivals. Once that was done, Hoppō cried out anew, "TIKA TONU!"
"UUUUUUU-EEEEEEE!" everyone bellowed as they slapped their thighs, then chests.

"TIKA TONU!"

"UUUUUUU-EEEEEEE!" everyone howled out, then began to slap their thighs and chests in a rhythm cadence before all the destroyers barked out in unison:

"TIKA TONU ATU KI A KOE,
E TAMA HIKI NEI KOE AKU WHAKA ARO, PAKIA!
HE HIKI AHA TO HIKI?!
HE HIKI ROA TO HIKI?!
I A HA HĀ!

"E TAMA, TE UAUA ANA
E TAMA, TE MĀ RŌ
ROA INA HOKI RA
TE TOHE O TE UAUA NA
E TĀ U NEI!
ĀNA! ĀNA! ĀNA! AUE...HĪ...!"

Silence fell over the scene as the approaching formation came to a stop right on the shoreline, their eyes focusing hard on the lines of destroyers and light cruisers arrayed ahead of them. At that moment, New Zealand walked out of the water, then knelt to pick up the fern leaf laid for her by Hoppō in a show of peace. Stepping back to place herself between Australia to port and Lexington to starboard, the tattooed battlecruiser allowed a smile to cross her face.

"TARINGA WHAKARONGO!"

The whole of Taffy 3 roared their response to the effective order to stand to.
"KIA RITE!" New Zealand repeated herself. "KIA RITE!"

More howls and snarls from the American destroyers and destroyer escorts as Australia raised her bullroarer to send out a steady message to the Dreamtime to warn the many gods of humanity that warriors now approached Eta-jima.

"KIA MAU!" the tattooed battlecruiser then barked.

For the destroyers and escorts, arms crossed the chests...which on shipgirls, was an intimidating sight given that many carried primary armament there!

"RINGA RINGA PAKIA!"

Hands slapped down against the thighs in a rhythmic beat.

"WAE WAE TAKAHIA, KIA KINO NEI HOKI! KIA KINO NEI HOKI!"

Once the proper beat was made, the challenge was bellowed out over the fields...

"Ā, KA MATE! KA MATE! KA ORA! KA ORA!
KA MATE! KA MATE! KA ORA! KA ORA!
T Ė NEI TE TANGATA P Ū HURUHURU
N Ā NA NEI I TIKI MAI WHAKAWHITI TE R Ā!
UPANE, KA UPANE!
UPANE, KA UPANE!
WHITI TE RA! HI!"

A wild bellow escaped the destroyers on both sides, then New Zealand fully stepped ashore, her combat rigging dispersing as she walked up to Hoppō. The little Abyssal stood her ground as the battlecruiser seemed to loom over her, then the dark-haired shipgirl went down to one knee as she
leaned in to rub her nose and forehead against Hoppō's in the time-honoured hongi. Once that was done, Hoppō bounced back from New Zealand, then screamed out, "HAKA!"

"BANZAI AOTEAROA!" all the Japanese destroyers all howled in turn.

People then whooped with delight as the others in New Zealand's force came ashore, their rigging dispersing as the larger shipgirls and some of the human shore staff who had stood behind the destroyers greeted the newcomers. "Hey, you guys!" Johnston called out as she, Hoel and Heermann warmly embraced Fubuki, Yūdachi and Mutsuki. "What's been going on since we went off?!!"

"Look for yourself, John-chan!" Fubuki said as she nodded over.

The three Fletcher-class shipgirls looked, then gaped on seeing who was now standing there under her own power nearby. "Hey! What the hell happened to you, Kisaragi?!" Heermann wondered. The surviving destroyer of Taffy 3 was built like her sisterships and looked the same age, though she had more tanned skin and shooter's glasses over her dark grey eyes. "You've been practically AWOL since Quadra hauled your butt ashore six months ago!"

"Turns out this mean Abyssal spirit was bonded to her, poi!" Yūdachi explained. "Not even Negako-sensei could get it out of her without killing her with either the soulsword or the spirit-breaker attacks, Heer-chan! So we had to wait until Hishō came here and she made us dance to Benny Goodman-sensei in dance class today, then this creep surged out of Kisaragi-chan...!"

"And Hishō ate it!" Fubuki finished.

That made Johnston, Hoel and Heermann blink. "Hishō?!" all three asked.

Their friends pointed over. The Americans looked, then gaped on seeing the blonde in the naval combat dress with air force rank insignia. "Shit! That's Jessica Dover! What's SHE doing here?!" the red-haired, green-eyed Hoel asked.

"Poi...?" Yūdachi trilled in confusion.

Johnston immediately slapped her sister in the back of the head. "Idiot! The Japanese wouldn't know too much about the War Hawks, remember?!" She looked over again to see the Royal Canadian Air Force's representative in the 1st Canadian Specialized Warfare Unit now talking to Saitō Ten'ichi and
"She was a substantive colonel and brevet one-star in the RCAF when she attended the Capstone course back in '90, Johnny," Heermann explained. "It'd be easy since people have been talking about this whole mess with the Abyssals being more metahuman than magical! If you wanna deal with metahuman problems, you gotta get the best! The War Hawks are the top dogs there!"

"What do you mean by 'metahuman', Heer-chan?" Mutsuki asked.

"Sorta like our Superman or your Ultraman, Matsu," the adopted native of Hesse in Germany and Virginia in the United States through her namesake (a surgeon's mate who had served in the Barbary Wars around the turn of the Nineteenth Century) explained. "Magicals are a type of metahuman. People who are strong like the Hulk, can manipulate fire like the Human Torch, run real fast like the Flash or do other crazy shit...or a whole mix of stuff like Superman or Captain Marvel can! That's a metahuman!" As the Japanese destroyers nodded, Heermann pointed at Jessica. "General Dover there was part of a team of four Canuck metahumans that kicked the living shit outta Nazi metahumans and metahumans from your Black Dragon Society until they went over to Europe in the spring of '44 to clean out the rest of the jokers fighting for Master Hosan's 'papa' and that Grindelwald jackass! She got a Victoria Cross, Distinguished Service Order, two Distinguished Flying Crosses and the Air Force Cross from the RCAF, plus two Bronze Stars and a Silver Star from us!" As the Japanese destroyers all gasped in awe, Heermann laughed. "Wait until you meet the general's boss!"

"Would they have promoted Major Raeburn?!" Hoel asked.

"They did...much to Deannette's complete despair. Welcome back, girls."

"Hey, Miss Negako!" Hoel called out as the destroyers beamed at Negako...then they blinked on seeing the boy accompanying her, dressed in normal clothing for someone from the West. "Hey! Who's the guy you got there?! A new boyfriend?!"

As Johnston and Heermann both hooted and the Japanese destroyers all gaped at the adopted Ohioan's chutzpah, Negako gave the destroyer an amused look. "No, Hoel. Harry is a wand wizard from England. He is the one that earned Surrey's interest a year ago due to child abuse issues." As the Americans gasped in shock on hearing that and Harry flustered in embarrassment, the ninjutsu grandmaster added, "He is understandably a passionate fan of kantai musume and wishes to acquire autographs from all members of your task unit, not just for himself of course, but for other such fans at his current school of education."
"Holy shit! We have FANS?!” Johnston demanded in mock horror.

Heermann and Hoel laughed in embarrassment...then all three tensed as something even BIGGER than Yamato came towards them, accompanied by the super-battleship in question and two of her sisters. "Holy FUCK!” Hoel gasped before she pointed to the green-clad carrier. "Who the hell are YOU?!”

"Yamato's missing sister," Negako stated before she gazed in amusement at the aircraft carrier. "Yonaga, may I present United States Shipgirls Johnston, Heermann and Hoel, pendants DD-557, DD-532 and DD-533 respectively." To the destroyers of Taffy 3. "Girls, heavy attack aircraft carrier Yonaga, fifth of the Yamato-class and the would-be seventh carrier of Operation Z."

Yonaga politely bowed. "Honoured, little ones."

The Americans blinked in surprise on hearing that the final of Yamato's sisters had come. "You were supposed to be in on the Pearl Harbour attack?!” Johnston asked. "Where the hell were you?! How come we never heard about you before?!"

"Unit 731 was involved, Johnston-san," Yamato explained for her sister. "The records were all destroyed when Ishii-sensei evacuated his unit..." - one couldn't avoid noting the scorn in the super-battleship's voice on saying that word - "...from Manchuria to Japan ahead of the Soviet invasion in the summer of 1945. No one knew any details save for Negako-san's family since the great-great-uncle of Ataru-san and Tariko-san was Yonaga-san's navigation officer."

"So where were you?” Hoel parroted her sister's question.

"In a cove called 'Sano Bay' at the northeast tip of Siberia, hidden even from all the surveys the Soviets and later the Russians made of the area, frozen in place thanks to an earthquake that blocked the entrance and trapped my crew there since the fall of 1941," Yonaga replied, making all the destroyers gape. "There I remained until Negako-san summoned me last night."

The three Fletchers then looked sick. "Wh-what about...?" Heermann stuttered.

Negako shook her head as a flash of grief crossed Yonaga's face before stoic calm returned and she seemed to straighten herself. "Damn!” Johnston hissed while Heermann bowed her eyes in horror at what happened and Hoel turned away to hide her tears. "Didn't anyone get the message to stand down in '45?!”
"Scarce few believed in it, Johnston-san," Musashi reported.

"Haka!"

Everyone saved Negako and Yonaga yelped on hearing that excited cheer, then they turned as Hoppō bounced over to them ahead of Hōshō. "You performed an excellent haka today, Hoppō," Negako then said, making the Abyssal princess beam in delight at that complement. "You learned all your lessons well."

"This is Hoppō?"

Hoppō blinked before she looked up at the very tall shipgirl standing beside Miss Super-nice Cook, Miss Brainy Silver-hair and Miss Pretty Flower-girl (as she mentally nicknamed Yamato, Musashi and Kii)...then she turned as pale as a ghost on realizing who this shipgirl was. With a scream of underwear-soiling terror, the Abyssal zipped behind Hōshō, making Yonaga blink in confusion. "I did nothing to her, Sensei," she confessed as Hōshō rolled her eyes.

"Pay it no mind, Yonaga-san," the first true aircraft carrier noted as she gazed down at Hoppō. "You possess something of a dark reputation among Abyssals given your ability to resist having the kami of your crew turned into fighters for them, much less resist their attempting to make you one of them."

"The 'Angry One',' Negako added.

Yonaga blinked, then she gazed on Hoppō, who was trying and failing to make herself invisible to the giant battleship-turned-carrier. "Hoppō-chan, if you had the power to protect the spirits of children from being turned into someone like you, wouldn't you have done so?" she asked, making the Japanese shipgirls gape in shock at such a soft turn of voice from this living samurai.

Hearing that made Hoppō blink as she thought about it, then she nodded. "Why would I allow myself to betray my spiritual oath to the Heavenly Sovereign?" Yonaga asked as she waved to herself before she waved to the three American destroyers. "After all, did not those who see themselves as 'wiser' than those like you ultimately fail to make our three brave knights here betray their spiritual oath to their nation's Constitution? Or make New Zealand-san or Australia-san betray their oaths to their Queen? How in the name of the Kami am I suddenly so different in the long term? Because I was alone and 'vulnerable' in Sano Bay, standing firm on my crew's behalf for so long?"
Hoppō blinked, then she shrugged. Seeing that, Musashi smiled. "Yonaga-san, maybe a demonstration of your sincerity is called for here," she suggested.

The carrier looked over. "How so, Onē-san?"

"To properly address a certain offence Irako-san has unleashed on our honoured guests from America," the second of her class firmly stated. "When they were first summoned here, all members of Taffy 3 were unanimously invited to reside with us in our quarters given how valiantly Johnston-san, Heermann-san, Hoel-san and Roberts-san fought against Onē-san, Nagato-san, Kongō-san and Haruna-san off Samar in 1944. However, Irako-san forced all of them into escort shipgirl quarters, even the aircraft carriers like White Plains-sensei."

Silence.

More silence.

Still more silence.

Then...

"I will speak to Irako-san about that, Onē-san," Yonaga coldly declared.

With that, she stormed off. A moment later, a terror-filled scream echoed over the grounds as a wide-eyed Irako found herself trying to stagger away from Yonaga's drawn katana, the carrier hissing out her "suggestions" concerning the proper quartering of the members of Taffy 3. As the others watched this, Hoppō blinked before she gazed up. "Not scary," she told Hōshō.

The Americans were all in awe. "She's cool!" Hoel breathed out.

"Definitely cool!" Johnston added.

"I'll fight with her any day of the week!" Heermann declared.
The Japanese destroyers nodded as Yamato and her sisters exchanged looks...

"Is this sort of normal in this place, Admiral Saitō?"

Saitō Ten'ichi winced as he tried not to chuckle in embarrassment. "It's just the bare bones of how crazy it can be here, Taishō-sama."

Heather Thompkins took that in. "Can you at least explain one thing?"

The director of the Kanmusu-keikaku tensed. "Hai?"

"Why is your chief assistant acting as if she's as drunk as a skunk right now?"

Saitō blinked in confusion, then he slowly turned to see a dazed Nagato nearby, now on her knees as sparkles and hearts popped all over her as she gazed on the destroyers gathered around Yamato. "Oh, Kami-sama..." he breathed before he turned and bowed low to his new boss. "Please forgive me, Taishō-sama..."

"Oh, dear...poor Nagato is having another Nagamon episode..."

Heather blinked, then turned as Saratoga approached her. "'Nagamon episode'?"

The aircraft carrier stopped, then shifted her Springfield to shoulder arms before performing a salute under arms, which Heather returned. "An interesting emotional tick concerning my beloved," the blue-eyed adopted New Yorker with the shaggy brown hair done in a bun at the back of the head stated with a bow of her head as she lowered her bolt-action rifle down to the ground in order arms. "Are you aware of the Japanese zest for cute things?" she then asked.

"I've seen it many times before," the Canadian affirmed, nodding in turn.
"Well, Nagato has a very overwhelming zest for cute things, especially small animals...to say anything of cute children," the carrier explained as she watched Lexington walk over and bonk the battleship in the head, making Nagato yelp out in surprised shock...before she turned as red as a tomato on noting that her new operational commander-in-chief had just seen her in such a state. "It almost got her into a gun fight with Bismarck over her cat Oskar once. People here call her 'Nagamon' when she gets into that mood. Heaven help her when she sees Hoppō do something that is simply too cute for description..."

"Haka!"

Everyone turned as Hoppō came up to them, a smiling Hōshō behind her. "Hello, Hoppō," Saratoga said, making the Abyssal look up at her before she smiled back. "Aotearoa told me that Father Kiwa was very pleased that you sang out *Tika Tonu* with such passion. That was well done, Hoppō!"

Hoppō flushed grey with embarrassment at such a compliment from the carrier, then she blinked before she gazed up at the dark-haired, smart-looking woman in the Canadian naval uniform. A moment later, she gasped as she sensed the massive levels of magic boiling inside Heather Thompkins' body. "Spitfire...?" she breathed out in awe before she bowed politely to the older woman.

Heather nodded. "You're from Dutch Harbour, aren't you?"

That made Hoppō nod. "Unalaska..."

"The modern name, ma'am," James Vance instantly cut in.

"I'm aware of that, Admiral Vance," the native of Québec City stated, making the American admiral fluster in embarrassment. "Yes, Hoppō. I'm Spitfire."

Hoppō considered that for a moment, then she looked over to where Jessica Dover was now conversing with several of the Japanese aircraft carriers and Graf Zeppelin. "Firebird...?" she then wondered, pointing to the native of Winnipeg, then she gazed back at Heather for confirmation.

"Yes, that's her," Heather affirmed with another nod.

Taking that in, Hoppō looked around. "Hunter...?"
That made the Canadian admiral smile. "He'll be here soon."

Hearing that made the Abyssal nod, then she looked around. "Protector...?"

A shake of the head responded. "No. She's in Britain. She'll be leading all the European shipgirls and Canadian and American shipgirls on Atlantic patrol."

"How unfortunate," Hōshō mused.

"Why do you say that, Hōshō-san?" Saitō asked.

"To have the nominal leader of the War Hawks away from her friends, Teitoku?"

That made Heather chuckle in amusement. "If Dean didn't trust we could operate here without her, she'd be here as well, Miss Hōshō," she assured the elderly carrier. "In the meantime, I think Hoppō looks like she's about to run out of energy. She really exerted herself today and needs a little chance to rest."

Hearing that, Hōshō chuckled as she guided her charge towards her restaurant. By then, Nagato had come up, bowing apologetically. "Please forgive me, Teitoku," she then declared. "My behaviour was most unbecoming of me."

Heather sighed. "You have a new direct commander coming soon, Miss Nagato. You better do something about that little tick if Admiral Umezu brings his command staff from the Mirai with him. While they have developed some ability to think out of the box, seeing a battleship turned into a gushing wreck because she saw something kawaii won't sit well with many of them, even Captain Kadomatsu. I've heard of what the crew of the Mirai went through when they were fired into that other universe; it was Dean who had to go there to get them back here." As the others gaped on hearing that, the Canadian said, "In the meantime, I think you need a little time with your girlfriend now."

The battleship blinked in shock, then she smiled in thanks before having her arm snared by Saratoga. After the carrier excused herself and her beloved from their new commander-in-chief, they headed off towards the battleship dorms hand-in-hand. Heather smiled, then she perked as Mutsu came up. "You handled that quite well, Teitoku." Nagato's sister playfully winked at the Canadian admiral. "You best be careful unless someone decides to target you."
A groan escaped the former Supreme Mugwump of the International Confederation of Wizards. "I've already had Québec hit on me when I got to Cornwallis to be briefed on things by Admiral Harlan." As the junior admirals and captains all chuckled on hearing that, Heather sighed. "I don't swing that way. Besides, the only man I'd welcome into my bed is still having issues about his suddenly being commissioned from staff sergeant all the way to being a commissioner in the Force; he's still unwilling to do anything with me since I became an officer long before he did." As the others all nodded in understanding, she trilled out, "I'll have to work on that with him over the next while."

"We'll be happy to help, Teitoku," Mutsu vowed, winking again; she ignored the rolled eyes from the human officers present. "After all, a happy admiral is a very successful admiral," the battleship then stressed.

"Even if you do it a little too much, Mutsu," Vance chided.

Mutsu shrugged, then she perked as three other shipgirls came up. "Si prega di scusarmi per un momento, la mia Ammiraglio..." Roma began.

Heather's eyes narrowed. "Signorina Roma, do you happen to have friends in the Marine Nationale?" she coldly asked as she stared at the Italian battleship.

Roma yelped as Littorio and Vittorio Veneto winced. "S-s-sì...!" the namesake of the Eternal City sputtered, wondering what she had just done to offend the admiral. "I'm friends with all the corazzate della classe Richelieu...!"

"Have they told you about how people react to being called 'my admiral'?

Roma squawked, then bowed. "Vi chiedo perdono, Signora Ammiraglio Thompkins!"

"Always remember that," Heather stated. "What's the issue?"

"Forgive us, Signora Ammiraglio Thompkins, but much that we are more than happy to have Veneto with us now, we're missing a member of our class and we were hoping that Signora Negako would be more than happy to assist us in bringing her here to join us at Eta-jima," Littorio spoke up. "Imperio."
The liaison officer for the Italian Navy winced. "Mio Dio! How the devil did we all forget Imperio?!" Capitano di Vascello Elios Tesei moaned out. Heather knew he was a relative of the famous torpedo boat commander who invented the manned torpedo that had been used to devastating effect in the Mediterranean Theatre of World War Two. "With your permission, Ammiraglio Saitō?!"

"Certainly, Tesei-taisa. We can actually use it to demonstrate the summoning machine to Thompkins-taishō," Saitō said with a nod. "After supper, ladies?"

Hearing that, the Italian battleships gasped before they bowed. "Grazie mille, Ammiraglio Saitō!" they chanted together as the other shipgirls all beamed.

Heather nodded. "Another thing, Elios..."

Tesei tensed. "Sì, Ammiraglio?"

"Why is it the representatives of the Marina Militare here in Japan are not wearing their proper ship's badges on their uniforms?" the Canadian admiral then asked. "New ones were devised for them all based on their old ship's crests from World War Two. Why are they not being worn on their clothing?"

That made the captain fluster before he bowed his head apologetically. "Please forgive me, Ammiraglio, but since our hosts don't wear such badges on their clothing, girls like Littorio and Roma weren't encouraged to do same. I am aware various communities in Italy moved to have new crests designed for them, just as communities in Canada had new crests designed for those shipgirls who didn't have proper ship's badges created after World War Two for them."

Heather nodded. "Get it on their uniforms by Friday!"

He rapidly nodded as the Littorio sisters all beamed. "Sì, Ammiraglio!"

She then gazed on Heinrich Kellermann. "Captain, I have two issues about your girls. First is the issue with the ship's crests. I saw Prinz Eugen wear her ship's crest on her blouse, but not the other girls. I know they've been made for everyone, even the destroyers and U-Boats. Get them on their uniforms as soon as possible. Also, make sure that Bismarck's cat has a collar with her crest on it to mark whom Oskar belongs to!" She then raised a finger. "Atop that, there are the Iron Crosses they're wearing on their uniforms. I want them changed to the style that's used these days as your
service's corporate logo. It's not as visually offensive in people's eyes as a swastika, but a lot of people in Germany note they're using the older style crosses and are getting uncomfortable about it; I know the shipgirls in Kiel have adjusted their uniforms to the modern insignia. Make sure that's done here by Friday!"

Kellermann jolted, then bowed his head. "Jawohl, Frau Admiral!"

"The same with all your girls, gentlemen," Heather then stated as she gazed on Vance, then Saitō, then the liaison officers for the Royal Australian Navy and Royal New Zealand Navy, Captain Paul Shields and Captain Keith Gordon. "Civilians across the planet want to see the girls who are putting their lives on the line wear their proper heraldic emblems on their clothing. I know groups like the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts and sea cadet services are running design committees to ensure even the girls here in Japan have proper crests. Having them wear those crests shows that they know that people are praying for them. Get them on their uniforms by Friday at the latest. It's a morale booster to the crowds at home! Always remember your duties to them, too!"

The other officers all barked their acknowledgement to that as the shipgirls present puffed in determination to not let all those wonderful people who were rooting them on to final victory against the Abyssals down...

Diagon Alley in London, an hour later (local time: Two hours before lunch)...

"'Morning."

The receptionist at the Daily Prophet's offices, then she looked up...before she gasped on seeing the brown-haired tomboyish woman appearing to be in her early twenties standing there, her icy, aged blue eyes fixed on the witch. Said woman was now wearing what appeared to be muggle soldier's combat clothing with a golden-brown beret on her head. She also had what appeared to be a crusader sword of some type in a scabbard slung over her back, the helm of the blade perched over her left shoulder. This woman ALSO wore a belt around her waist with two ominous-looking hand weapons at her hips. That didn't mention the intricate metal necklace wrapped around this woman's neck barely visible under her dark green jacket and the underlying collarless shirt, it framing a glowing focusing crystal about the size of the average galleon coin...though it pulsed with a level of power that not even the weakest squib could ignore when s/he stood in close range of what was known to magicals worldwide as the "Tear of the Stars", the Power Jewel of the Protector of All Life herself.

"L-l-l-Lady Raeb-b-burn...!" the poor witch stammered.
Hearing that noble title applied to her, Dean Raeburn tried not to sigh. She hadn't been ennobled in any way even if she was now seen as the matriarch of the Clan Raeburn of Clayhurst as she had been appointed by King George VI after World War Two for her more than six years of incredible service to the Canadian Crown; the Nickle Resolution of 1917 outlawed attempts by the Crown to bestow hereditary titles to natives of the Dominion even if there were still some people who could be seen as peers in the British system as recognized by the Queen, including one old peerage descent from the days of New France. As she hadn't been magically-born, the courtesy title "lady" wouldn't apply to her even in the Wizengamot of the Dominion of Canada based in Québec City; despite the old fogies that ran the legislative side of the Ministry of Magical Affairs in Canada often acting otherwise, there was no legal peerage anywhere in the Dominion these days. Still, being called "Lady Raeburn" did have uses. "This is the main office of the Daily Prophet, right?" the native of Queenston near Niagara Falls then asked, her eyebrow arching in amusement.

A rapid nod responded. "Yes, Lady Raeburn! How can we help you today?"

"I need to speak to your editor. I have an urgent advertisement from my friend Heather Thompkins and I need it put out in tonight's edition. Is it too late?"

A shocked gasp escaped the receptionist. "From Supreme Mugwump Emeritus Thompkins?!" she asked before shaking her head. "No, Lady Raeburn! Mister Cuffe will be pleased to get that advertisement out! Just a moment!"

With that, she rushed over to a nearby office, knocking on the door. After she had been permitted to step in, Dean relaxed herself, the urge to get out one of her Dutch Masters Honey Sports cigars to smoke it nearly overcoming her; even if she didn't have the manners one would expect of one of the richest people on Earth these days due to her many years living on the streets before her finding the Power Jewel on her twenty-second birthday in 1889 forever changed her life, she knew there was a time to indulge in her one true vice and when not to do it.

She blinked as a surprised scream echoed from the editor's office, the door soon flying open a moment later to allow a middle-aged man to march out, he followed by his receptionist. "Lady Raeburn! Welcome back to Diagon Alley!" he said as he offered his hand. "Barnabas Cuffe, editor-in-chief! You have a message from Supreme Mugwump Emeritus Thompkins?! Why isn't she...?!"

"Heather's in Japan right now taking overall charge of the shipgirl and shipboy forces to deal with the Abyssals; it's the reason we've all been recalled to duty," Dean replied as she shook his hand while the receptionist took her seat once more. As the two English magicals gaped on hearing that the War Hawks had come to help save the day, Dean added, "The message I need in tonight's paper concerns an orphan from your latest little internal rebellion some years back." She reached into her dark green pilot's jacket to pull out a rolled sheet of parchment, wrapped and sealed with a magical
sigil that made Barnabas blink in shock; clearly, he knew who's symbol THAT was. "Young kid that just got out of a really bad fight a couple weeks ago named Harry Potter." As the editor and the receptionist both croaked in shock on hearing that the Boy Who Lived had just earned the attention of the magical member of the War Hawks (and the second post-Grindelwald War leader of the International Confederation of Wizards, seen even in Britain as the most popular leader of the pan-national magical alliance in its three-century history), Dean added, "Kid was in pretty bad shape because some staleblood idiots pulled some bad ritual to try to bring back a moron named Tom Riddle - he's the murderous bastard with the battle name you're too scared to say in public - so when Albus asked Heather to take a look at the kid, she offered an apprenticeship to him while we help deal with the Abyssals. She needs that put out as soon as possible so that people here know where the kid is since he's recovering from this Triwizard thing he just went through and doesn't need to deal with crap coming down on him because he saw a friend murdered before his eyes. I'd like to get that on Page One." She then reached into her jacket to pull out a small bag of clattering galleon coins.

Barnabas felt his heart surge into his throat as that blasting hex slammed into him. He was under "strong advisement" from the Minister for Magic to cast Harry Potter and Albus Dumbledore in the most negative light possible due to "untrue" rumours about the possible return of You Know Who. Knowing there were forces in the Ministry that didn't want those rumours to upset the public, the editor of the Prophet had immediately realized if he went against Cornelius Fudge's wishes, he could incite a panic and bring the Ministry down on his head!

However, with the War Hawks now taking interest in Harry Potter, whatever Fudge's wishes were concerning the lad would be wrecked against a power possessing the spiritual hardness of the Rock of Gibraltar! Being a Ravenclaw alumnus and having grown up during the time the War Hawks operated out of Hogwarts in the latter years of Grindelwald's War helping clear out the metahumans and other creatures running rampant through Europe at the time, Barnabas knew that Dean Raeburn and her friends would NOT tolerate any interference from the Ministry when it came to the Boy Who Lived. Since the Protector of All Life, the Soul-Eater of the Dnipró, la Grande-Sorcière des Laurentides and the Hunter of the Mi'kmaq saw their loyalty first to the Queen, even Cornelius Fudge would rank lower than dragon dung in their eyes.

Besides, Dean was willing to pay for the advertisement in tonight's edition!

That ALWAYS counted for something at the Daily Prophet...!

"There will be people who won't like it," the editor-in-chief then warned.

A lethal smile crossed the face of the effectively immortal Jewel Warrior. "Send them to me, Mister Cuffe." She pulled out a sticky-pad of notes, then scribbled down an address to hand over. "I'll deal with them."
Hearing that, Barnabas smirked as he took the note, relief flooding him. He had been quite uncomfortable unleashing a smear campaign against Harry Potter. Doing that to Albus Dumbledore was one thing; the headmaster of Hogwarts had a hide as hard as a basilisk's when it came to dealing with the highs and lows of public opinion. But doing that to a boy who just finished his fourth year at Hogwarts, was forced to participate in the Triwizard Tournament of all things and who was responsible for the downfall of You Know Who years ago...?

"Hope you have a lot of ammunition, ma'am," he warned her.

Dean winked back. "I can handle it..."

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**Eta-jima, an hour later (local time: After supper)...**

"So this is the place the kanmusu come to when they're summoned?"

"Yeah," Moroboshi Tariko stated as she and Mendō Shūtarō sat in the observation gallery. They weren't alone; a slew of shipgirls of every type imaginable had come to watch their new commander-in-chief examine the machine, then there would be a summoning attempt for the last of the Littorio-class battleships. Seated nearby and looking anxious were Littorio, Roma and Vittorio Veneto, not to mention the heavy cruisers Zara and Pola and the destroyer Libeccio. "Looks kinda plain to a normal folk." She shook her head. "One of the downsides of being host to Onē-san for a decade and more: My ki senses are nearly overloading from all the energy that's being contained in this thing...OI!"

That was the tanned Libeccio, who had leapt over to put herself into the older-looking woman's lap, wiggling into place with a giggle. As Mendō gaped at the sight of the childish destroyer doing that, Tariko sighed. "Oi, Libe-chan! I know you're excited and all that, but I don't need to have Shūtarō here blow a gasket, then start acting like a broken record again, okay?!"

"We'll make sure you won't be hurt, Sorella Maggiore!" Libeccio stated as she gave Mendō a look that clearly said, *Be an idiot and I'll sink you personally!*

"Is he truly that bad, Roma?" Veneto then wondered as she blew away a locket of sun-bleached blonde hair from her forehead; like the others of her class, she wore a hat resembling the tops of their forward superstructures when they were actual battleships and not human women. She was dressed
in a formal green high-collar military uniform with blue skirt in lieu of the wide-collared white uniforms her sisters wore. Like the destroyer, Veneto's blue eyes were now locked on Mendō, the stare coming from her spelling out a clear warning.

"No, he's not as bad as one other guy I know back in Tomobiki, Veneto-san," Tariko answered for the namesake of the Eternal City, making the scion of Japan's richest family gape in surprise at that backhanded complement. "Yeah, he comes off as insanely arrogant at times, but he does have a great sense of honour and he does care for his current fiancée. He also has parents who do love him, which is more than what Ataru and I could say." At Mendō's dropped jaw on hearing those statements from this female version of his rival, she added, "He can learn. He just didn't get the chance Ataru and I got to learn some of the ugly truths about the peoples who live on planets close to us."

"Can you be sure that the Noukiites were telling the truth about what goes on beyond our planet, Tariko-san?" he asked. "I can understand your gratitude towards K'ekhech-dono for allowing both yourself and Negako-sama to be finally free of your brother's mind and live your own lives, but I also saw how much the Urusians and the Noukiites don't get along with each other. You may have been blinded by the Noukiites' own prejudices towards Lum-san's people!"

She nodded as Libeccio scowled. "Down, sprite!" Tariko then scolded, making the rusty-haired destroyer wince. "Yeah, that's a possibility...but Kyech never lies. She's not capable of lying to anyone. And she has way more experience than all the stories written about her throughout the Federation claim, man. She showed us some really crazy stuff when we moved to liberate the Avalonians with the help of the Yizibajohei about a month ago..."

"How many of them are here on Earth?" he asked.

"About five million according to Onē-san; she can sense things out through the ley lines across the planet with some meditation." As Mendō gaped in shock on hearing that, Tariko added, "Unlike the ones we pulled out of the Phentax system, they still have this genetic loyalty-lock in their bodies that enslaves them to their masters and suppresses their psionic capabilities; that's why Ataru had to use a soulsword to help Fujikawa-san snap out of what was forced on her when she was created." She then smirked. "Of course, we had to totally wreck the 'Army of Lum' - that's what Ōgi called his battle fleet - to get it done, but we got it done. Over TWO BILLION Avalonians are now free...!"

Mendō gasped. "TWO BILLION?!" he exclaimed. "Why did they have so many?!"

"Handy sex-slaves, not to mention the perfect workers for hazardous shit like starship engine rooms," Tariko answered. "By taking them out of the ships of the fleet, Ōgi's morons couldn't use their ships; employing the Avalonians wiped out what institutional knowledge they had in using their starships." She smirked. "Wrecking the fleet right after we dumped all the crews on Phentax Twenty was just an
afterthought, but Ōgi won't be bullying anyone else in the local cluster for a long time to come. Maybe the Vosians can finally go after him for slaughtering all those innocent people in Lecashuto six years ago...

"How many ships?" Littorio asked.

"Three thousand of them, including three hundred aircraft-carrying star battleships of the same type as the one that appeared over Tomobiki last year before we had to deal with Lum in the Tag Race," Tariko explained, which made the shipgirls gape; that was larger than the fleet of the United States Navy during World War Two by a factor of TWO! "Between the Yizibajohei and the celestial dragons like Nengmek'i-ōjiichan that jumped in on the fun, we totally demolished nearly all of it, plus wiped out their ability to fix or construct new ships that wasn't tied down to a planet. All in the space of three hours." She smirked. "Yep, Ōgi won't be acting so tough from now on..."

"ARE YOU INSANE?!" Mendō shrilled while all the shipgirls began hissing to each other as they wondered what a battle of that size in deep space must have been like. "If the Niphentaxians can't defend themselves, what of the Ipraedies and the Seifukusu, Tariko-san?! This is a perfect excuse for them...!"

"Why do you think we teamed up with the Yizibajohei?!" Tariko asked, making him stop as he gaped at her audacity. "They're as much the galactic boogeyman to the Ipraedies and the Seifukusu as they are to the Ursians! I'll lay you good odds that their leaders are all hiding under the bed now, wondering if Kyech won't call on her friends from Yiziba to deliver a cosmic curb-stomping on them next!" She snorted as she looked away. "I really don't want to do it, but the Oni need to eat some humble pie for the crap they've tried to force on everyone over the years...and all because their own native culture was wiped out when the Seifukusu owned the planet, leaving nothing behind and forcing them to use how the Seifukusu ran things to put their society back together again! You've seen Lum's arrogance when it came to us, haven't you?" She sneered. "Or is Lum so right in everything, you can't imagine her being wrong?!" She glared at him. "You've got your good points, Shūtarō...but there are way too many times you act like Megane when it comes to Lum!" As Mendō gorged at the idea of being compared to that lifeless fool, she snapped, "Open your eyes! You got the smarts! Lum never cared for you or anyone in town! You were all TOOLS to her to help her keep us trapped so she wouldn't marry that tiger-cow Rei! We are NOT interested in making her happy because her own people have spoiled her too much! It's time for her to see what the universe is REALLY like deep down!"

Mendō balked...before he perked as a gentle cough echoed from the summoning chamber, making him gaze down to see Heather Thompkins there, looking up at him with veiled amusement. "There's something you don't know about what was happening when Ataru was forced to face that girl, Mister Mendō," she coldly declared, her voice echoing through the intercom system into the observation gallery. "We were on recall notice to intervene in case Ataru lost the race. If the self-defence mechanisms included in the magic that allowed Ataru to bear Negako's essence within him didn't trigger to have him kill Lum, Dean would have been happy to put a bullet in her skull and wreck her father's ship before calling friends on Yiziba over to let the Ursians get a repeat
experience of the Mother of All Fight Scenes." As he gasped, his mind imagining Redet Lum's head being blown apart by a .44 Magnum bullet from Dean Raeburn's Clarkson Mark 34 semi-automatic revolver, the admiral turned back to examine the runes that had been etched into the metal of the chamber. "Atop that, thanks to those of your peers calling themselves 'Lum's Stormtroopers', you might have to deal with either someone from al-Qā'idah, Dā'ish or some other group of lunatics that took gross offence from what those boys did after the Tag Race that made that space-taxi come to Earth in the first place. Think hard about that!"

That made the scion of Japan's richest family gargle before he shrank on himself. "That's not possible...!" he hissed. "We would have been warned...!"

"We were all being kept ignorant."

His head snapped over as Ataru walked over to sit opposite of Tariko, Kirishima at his side. "What?! What are you talking about, Moroboshi?!!" Mendō demanded.

"Some idiots in the government teamed up with people in the Men In Black to keep people in town ignorant of what was going on beyond Tomobiki so that Lum wouldn't find out about how bad it could be," Ataru reported. "Yeah, it was probably because no one wanted to see how the Oni might have reacted to the Abyssals in case they attacked Lum or her friends...but it wound up keeping people in town pig ignorant of what was going on in the Middle East and everywhere else on Earth. After Megane and his goons pulled that stunt with the space-taxi after the Tag Race, leaders in both al-Qā'idah and Dā'ish issued fatāwā demanding that all those who supported the 'space demon' were put to death for their 'crimes against all of humanity'. You think your bodyguards or everyone else that works for you can protect you from some suicide bomber? You think Asuka-chan or Shinobu-chan could fight them off with physical strength if they brought sniper rifles to the party?" He shook his head. "They've held off to date because they have a good idea what the Oni might have done if Lum was hurt...but with Lum gone, they won't be held back anymore."

"Then Lum-san must return!"

Ataru and Tariko gaped in disbelief at him, then they shook their heads. "He doesn't get it," the latter said as she moved to hold Libeccio closer to her.

"True," he muttered as he squeezed Kirishima's hand.

Roma sighed. "Signore Mendō, you would submit the whole of Earth to appease this alien demonio you like so much?!!" the dark-haired, bespectacled battleship asked as she gave him a scolding look, making Mendō wilt at such a stare. "My sisters and I were there and in service when the Allied
powers followed a policy of appeasement when it came to il Duce and the Führer! That started a WORLD WAR!" As he jerked on hearing that, she added, "Do not be concerned about some terrorista pazzo from the Medio Oriente coming to your town to cause havoc for something that was ultimately instigated by four stupid and ignorant boys! Your local version of l'Arma dei Carabinieri are on the watch for those monsters! Don't compromise the security of humanity just for the sake of one idiot girl who doesn't seem to understand civilized behaviour! We can't afford to deal with the aliens while we're busy dealing with the Abyssals!"

That made him wince...

"What do you think, Taishō-sama?"

Heather hummed as she stepped into the control room. "He's not as ignorant as some of the others according to the Men In Black's observations," she mused as she sat at the guest chair provided for her by Shimada Ichirō and his staff. "He's not had his innocence totally taken away as Ataru and his sister have..."

That made Saitō Ten'ichi jerk before he sighed. "Forgive me, Taishō-sama, but I was asking about the summoning machine," he apologetically stated. "Agreed, Mendō-san needs to learn some bitter hard truths about how things are really going in this world, but we were moving to bring Imperio-san here this evening."

The Canadian perked, then she nodded, not embarrassed by her mistake. "It's a curious device. Not as blood-charged as the one in Cornwallis or the one at Torpoint. I can see why the native mystics back home and those normal-borns in Britain who dived in to help out all jumped on the idea of using blood magic from the lost sailors of the Commonwealth navies to ultimately give our shipgirls all the modern armament and sensors they could use to sweep the Atlantic, the Pacific and the Arctic close to Canada and Britain clear of the Abyssals. I'm surprised that you didn't try to augment it once you learned of our success in augmenting our own World War Two ships with modern armament."

Shimada sighed. "It was hard enough to build the original device from Negi-kun's research, Thompkins-taishō. Given the sudden drop of resources and the fact that our friends in the Tōmagun and the other magical associations were busy securing the coasts from attack, we haven't really had the chance to shut this down and rebuild it, much less produce a more advanced version." He took a deep breath. "There was also the fear of possible escalation. If we did as your people did, would the Abyssals use guided missiles...or Kami forbid, the ballistic nuclear missiles on American, Russian, British and French submarines sunk in the early part of the whole war?" He shook his head. "Granted, we could have done better, but there was no time and we were being pressed just as bad as the British were when they effectively wiped out the Royal Navy..."
"The professor is right, ma'am," the British naval liaison to Eta-jima, Captain Donald Stanley, spoke up. "We've been really worried about all the lost boomer submarines and the American and French nuclear-powered aircraft carriers that went down in the early part of this madness. We haven't really gone offensive against the Abyssals even if we could sink their fleets wholesale; doing that was just begging for trouble since we don't know their full strength..."

The Canadian admiral nodded. "Shall we get on with it?"

"Hai, Taishō!" Shimada stated as he began to power up the machine.

The chamber began to gently hum with power as a quiet hush fell over the room. Heather closed her eyes as she felt the surge of magic flow out of the chamber, firming her personal Occulmency barriers to prevent her mage senses from being overwhelmed by such a surge of power. Damn! It was simply no wonder...

"Hey, Heather..."

Hearing her friend's voice, Heather turned...then she blinked as she noted the child about the same age as Hoppō now lashed like a limpet mine to Jessica Dover's left leg. Said child was a girl with long black hair and blue eyes, a pretty white ribbon in her hair. She was dressed in a green-and-white uniform with a bare mid-rift, a short skirt that was common dress for Japanese shipgirls over her hips under a green over-skirt tied around her waist. She was gazing on all the officers and scientists with innocent wonder. "Who...?" Heather began before her senses kicked in to reveal that despite the fact that this was a baby, she was also a shipgirl. "Will someone explain her?!"

Saitō winced. "Um...forgive me, Taishō-sama...but this is Katsuragi-san."

Silence.

More silence.

Still more silence.

Then...
"As in the **aircraft carrier** Katsuragi?" the Canadian asked, her eyes wide.

"H-hai," the Japanese admiral stated with a repentant bow. "When she was summoned, Katsuragi-san was about the same size and emotional development of any of the destroyers. But there was an accident with the Eagle Staff the girls of Group C-2 had with them when they were forced to take a break from working far too much...and until either Beacon Hill-san can get back fully on her feet so she could use the Staff to restore Katsuragi-san to normal or we get Beacon Hill-san over to Vancouver so she could do a change of carrier ceremony at HMCS *Discovery* to allow someone new to use the Staff..."

"She's stuck as a baby," Heather concluded.

"Hai."

"Tei...?"

Everyone turned to gaze on the child who had literally held onto Jessica's leg; Katsuragi had now slipped off to stand on her own two feet. The very cute baby carrier was now staring in confusion at Heather, her eyes focusing on the four maple leaves on the admiral's epaulette slip-ons. "Hai, Katsuragi-chan!" Saitō stated as the carrier gazed his way. "She's an admiral from Canada."

A flash of confusion crossed Katsuragi's face for a moment, then she gazed on the senior admiral, seeing the Canadian White Ensign on her arm. "Ka'da Tei!" she then said with an energetic smile as footfalls echoed from outside.

"Ah! Teitoku, gomen ne! We should've warned you...!"

"Never mind, Miss Zuikaku," Heather said as Katsuragi squealed out on seeing the older carrier come in with her sister. "Could you make sure Miss Katsuragi doesn't get underfoot while we're busy with the demonstration here, please?"

"Hai!" Zuikaku breathed out before kneeling. "Katsuragi!"

The baby carrier looked over, then beamed. "Zui! Shō!"
And with a leap, she was in the armoured carrier's arms. "C'mon, Katsuragi," Zuikaku bade. "There are all sorts of nice new people you need to meet!"

That made Katsuragi nod as she was carried over into the observation gallery. By then, a certain wizard had joined the party. "Bloody hell!" he hissed on seeing the transformed Unryū-class carrier in Zuikaku's arms. "What the devil happened to Katsuragi-san?! She wasn't like this the last time I checked!"

"This is the result of Yūdachi-chan playing with something she shouldn't have, Harry," Tariko said, gazing on the pink-haired destroyer in question. "She knows now not to touch magical staffs that are bound to other shipgirls!"

Yūdachi's shoulders slumped. "Poi...!"

"Tari-nē!"

Tariko looked over as Zuikaku came up, Katsuragi in her arms; the baby carrier was now reaching out for Ataru's sister. Mendō moved out of the way as the carrier and her sister sat down beside their friend to await the summoning of Imperio. Libeccio also moved aside so that the baby carrier could scramble onto Tariko's lap. "Oi, Katsuragi-chan, you're a big girl now!" Ataru's twin stated as she pulled Katsuragi close, then she smiled. "Oi, Katsuragi-chan!"

"Ai...?" the baby carrier breathed out.

Tariko pointed. "Who's that?!"

Katsuragi looked, humming for a moment, then she nodded. "Vene!"

The hand pointed another way. "Who's that?!"

Katsuragi looked, humming again before she nodded. "Tirupi!"
And to another place. "Who's that with Big Sis Iowa?!"

"Jāziī!"

"And the next one?"

"Mizū!"

"And who's that beside her?!"

"Wizu!"

"What about the girl beside Eugen-chan?!"

"Hippā!"

"And the next one?!"

"Buryū!"

"And the next one?!"

"Zei!"

"And who's the other one?!"

"Ryuushi!"

"And the one with Yamato-onēchan and her sisters?!"
Katsuragi looked...then she paled before she shuddered. "Y-y-Yona...!"

Mendō blinked. "Why is Katsuragi-san scared of Yonaga-sama?"

The baby carrier looked at him, then humphed, pointing at him. "Baka!"

The scion of Japan's richest family fell flat on his face! As the shipgirls snickered, Ataru then whispered to Harry, "She got *that* one right!"

That made the English wizard snort...

*To Be Continued...!*

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**WRITER'S NOTES:**

1) Translation list: Aki-nada - Aki Sea, one arm of the Seto-naikai ("Inland Sea") dividing Honshū from Shikoku and Kyūshū; Hiroshima-wan - Hiroshima Bay; SHAEF - Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force; Piupiu - Grass skirt made of flax leaves often styled to allow geometric patterns to be created; Hongi - Traditional Māori greeting done by pressing one's nose and forehead at the same time to another person's; *Si prega di scusarmi per un momento, la mia Ammiraglio* - Please excuse me for a moment, my Admiral; *Corazzate della classe Richelieu* - Battleships of the Richelieu class; *Vi chiedo perdono* - I beg your pardon; *Mio Dio* – My God; *Capitano di Vascello* – Ship-of-the-Line Captain, the Italian title for a navy captain (NATO rank code OF-5); *Grazie mille* - Thank you very much; *Marina Militare* - (Italian) Navy; *Grande-Sorcière des Laurentides* - Grand Sorceress of the Laurentides (Mountains); *Sorella Maggiore* - Elder sister; *Fatāwā* - Plural of Fatwā (term for an Islamic religious judgment); *Terrorista pazzo* - Crazy terrorists; *Medio Oriente* - Middle East; *Arma dei Carabinieri* - Army of Carabineers, Italy's paramilitary police force.

2) Perhaps one of the most expressive forms of native Māori art is the haka, a traditional chanting movement often filled with stomping feet, rapid hand movements and sometimes grotesque facial expressions which was used as a war cry, a verbal challenge to visiting tribes or a demonstration of emotional and spiritual strength by a particular Māori tribe to future friends and allies. Made quite popular by New Zealand's world-famous All Blacks national rugby union team throughout the
previous century, haka has become quite widespread in all walks of New Zealander life, with hundreds of individual haka patterns used by everyone from government agencies, the armed forces to individual schools and communities, even those predominantly populated by white New Zealanders.

The most well-known of all haka is *Ka Mate*, seen as the signature chant of the All Blacks. Composed around 1820, its author is traditionally attributed to be the Ngāti Toa iwi (tribe) chief Te Rauparaha (circa 1760-1849); the haka was composed in the wake of a lucky escape from enemies. In that incident, Te Rauparaha was hidden in a food-storage pit by Te Whareangi (literally meaning "the hairy man") to avoid death. *Ka Mate* was first used by the All Blacks in 1906. Because of its popularity, the haka is legally protected via a letter of agreement signed between Wellington and the Ngāti Toa dated 11 February 2009, in which the government vowed to do everything to protect the mana ("prestige") of *Ka Mate* and ensure use of the haka would not cause it to come into disrepute.

As with all haka, *Ka Mate* begins with a leader chanting instructions before the whole troupe performs the songs. Hence, the translation:

**INSTRUCTIONS:**

*Taringa whakarongo!*

(Listen carefully!)

*Kia rite! Kia rite!*

(Prepare yourself! Prepare yourself!)

*Kia mau!*

(Hold fast!)

*Ringa ringa pakia!*

(Slap your hands against your thighs!)

*Wae wae takahia, kia kino nei hoki!*

(Stamp your feet as hard as you can!)

*Kia kino nei hoki!*

(As hard as you can!)

**CHANT:**

*A, Ka Mate! Ka Mate!*
(Ah, it is Death! It is Death!)

**Ka Ora! Ka Ora!**

(It is Life! It is Life!)

**Ka Mate! Ka Mate!**

(It is Death! It is Death!)

**Ka Ora! Ka Ora!**

(It is Life! It is Life!)

*Tēnei te tangata pūhuruhuru*

(This is the Hairy Man)

*Nāna nei I tiki mai whakawhiti te rā!*

(Who fetched the Sun and made it shine!)

**Upane, ka Upane**

(Together, keep together!)

**Upane, ka Upane**

(Together, keep together!)

**Whiti te ra! Hi!**

(Out comes the Sun! Hah!)

A more recent haka which is also quite popular is *Tika Tonu*, which was written by Waimarama Puhara (circa 1875-1922) as a message to his son Moana to aide the latter in overcoming difficulties he was experiencing at the time. While it was originally meant to be an encouragement for a young man growing up, *Tika Tonu* can also be seen as a song to show grit when facing any difficulty. This haka came to my attention in a beautiful YouTube video where a Mormon couple had friends perform *Tika Tonu*, such driving the bride to tears at such a show of respect for her culture as her groom also chanted the haka; search for "Wedding Haka" in YouTube to see what I mean. Anyhow, the translation:

**INSTRUCTIONS:**

**Ki aro!**

(Pay attention!)

**Kia whakaronga, kia mau!**
(Listen up, take your stance!)

Hi!

(Hah!)

Ringaringa e torōna kei waho hoki mai!

(Arms outstretched, out and back!)

CHANT:

Tika tonu!

(What is right is always right!)

U-e!

(Indeed!)

Tika tonu!

(What is right is always right!)

U-e!

(Ah, yes!)

Tika tonu atu ki a koe, e tama!

(Be true to yourself, my son!)

Hiki nei koe aku whakaaro, pakia!

(My concerns have been raised about you, so pay attention!)

He hiki aha to hiki?

(What is this problem you are carrying?)

He hiki roa to hiki?

(How long have you been carrying it for?)

I a ha hā?

(Have you got that? Right, let's go on!)

E tama, te uaua ana

(So son, although it may be difficult for you)

E tama, te mārō
(And son, although it seems to be unyielding)

Roa ina hoki ra

(No matter how long you reflect on it)

Te tohe o te uaua na

(The answer to the problem)

E tāu ne.

(Is here inside you.)

Āne! Āne! Āne! Āue, hī!

(Indeed! Indeed! Indeed! Yes, indeed!)

Of course, my attempt at trying to replicate the passion when both Tika Tonu and Ka Mate were chanted by Hoppō and the shipgirls here fell short; I'm not a New Zealander but a Canadian, so I've no idea how to put such a spectacle into words to do it justice. If you see the videos of these wonderful performances, imagine shipgirls doing it...and imagine how the Abyssals would react to it!

3) The Capstone Military Leadership Program course is a joint force command seminar offered to brigadier generals and rear admirals in the United States armed forces (as well as some allied officers) to teach them how to deal with commanding personnel from other services. The course itself was first established in 1982 and is taught at the National Defence University at Fort Lesley J. McNair near the southern end of Washington DC. Fort Lesley J. McNair serves as the headquarters base of the Military District of Washington (MDW), the joint forces command formation for the nation's capital.

4) When it comes to the "home" states/provinces/counties of various shipgirls, I either fall back on the actual town/city name of the shipgirl in question or the actual home state/province/county of the person the ship was named after. In the case of Heermann, she can claim she is a native of both Virginia and the German state of Hesse thanks to her namesake, Fleet Surgeon Lewis Heermann (1779-1833). The surgeon (who participated in the Barbary Wars by destroying USS Intrepid at Tripoli in 1804) was born in the Hessian city of Kassel. His place of residence in America after he joined the United States Navy wasn't recorded down, but he returned to active duty in 1808 at Norfolk in Virginia; it was here that he fought to get better medical care for Navy personnel. Some could easily say that Surgeon Heermann is also an adopted native of Louisiana due to his being based in New Orleans for the rest of his career. For those ships such as Saint Lo who are named after locations outside America, they would pick the place of their construction as their home state/province/county.

5) Kiwa is the name of one of the Māori gods of the sea; all the tales about him originated from the eastern coast of New Zealand's North Island. His name is actually used as part of a poetic term for
the Pacific Ocean, **Te Moana Nui a Kiwa** ("Great Ocean of Kiwa"). As the New Zealander shipgirls have absorbed a lot of Māori customs and traditions into their work, they would also gladly acknowledge the influence of the Māori pantheon of gods such as Kiwa. This is especially true for the battlecruiser/fast battleship **New Zealand**; at the Battle of Jutland on 31 May-1 June 1916, her captain wisely wore both a **piupiu** skirt and a sacred **hei-tiki** neck pendant to invoke the blessings of the gods. Doing that clearly worked; while several of HMS **New Zealand**'s sister battlecruisers were destroyed by critical magazine hits during that fight, the namesake of the Realm of Aotearoa came out of that battle unscathed.

6) As I have explained in other stories, the code-names used by **Heather Thompkins** (**Spitfire**) and **Jessica Dover** (**Firebird**) were chosen when the first versions of these characters appeared in my imagination in the early 1980s, long before I heard of the Marvel Comics characters using the same battle names. No copyright infringement is meant by their use in this story.

7) For those who want to see **Katsuragi** as a little baby, go to the **Danbooru** website and search for **Hisahiko**'s work. The short names she uses for the foreign shipgirls here are based off the katakana readings of their names.
Hogwarts, suppertime (time in Japan: Two hours after midnight on Tuesday)...

"So how are things over in Eta-jima right now, Aotearoa?"

An amused chuckle escaped the tattooed battlecruiser/fast battleship that was the co-leader of the modern shipgirl version of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps. "Party's winding down and people are heading to their racks...or to the refurbishment docks in the case of the new arrivals," New Zealand reported over the magically-hardened computer that was now at the head table of the Great Hall, loudspeakers allowing the gathered members of the Order of the Phoenix to listen in. "Harry's alright. Appears that Imperio and Tirpitz are taking an interest in the lad, just like Kirishima threw herself over Ataru after he killed that one submarine with the soulsword when he and his sisters came here. All the newbies are preparing for their first trip on the bay later on this morning with their rigging so they can get their sea legs back. So far, it's been quiet here; we only got hit once on the run from Tâiwān just north of the Pinnacle Islands, but that was brushed off pretty easily."

"Were there any cargo ship losses, Madame Aotearoa?" Albus Dumbledore asked.

"No, Professor...though the Yanks got jealous that we could deluge the lot with Harpoons and ASROCs and they couldn't," the battlecruiser answered. In the background, there was a peal of laughter from a small gathering of people at one of the open-air lounges close to the seashore. Albus was quick to recognize one as the aircraft carrier Jun'yō, a woman who was something of a notorious drunk due to a tragic incident early in the Abyssal War that haunted her right to this very day. "Those three little scrappers in Taffy 3 wanted to get in there and blast away with their guns and torpedoes, but we sank them all at range before they got any closer for a knife fight. At least Johnston and her sisters were able to sink a submarine when we sailed past Kagoshima."

"Well, hopefully, the people in Cornwallis will be able to perfect the new equipment upgrading mists soon, then get it shipped to Japan so we can get all the girls there refitted with missiles and modern technology," the cruiser noted. "It's no fair that we're able to fight with modern digital equipment and everyone who came out of Eta-jima is still stuck using analog machines."
The battlecruiser nodded in agreement. "Everyone's spirits here are up. Once General Dover got here earlier today, she used her firebird powers to yank out something really evil from that destroyer Quadra salvaged from near Wake a few months ago, no to mention that carrier that nearly got sunk at the replay of the fun in the Coral Sea. Atop that, Bisko, the Littorio sisters, Eugen and Yamato got their last sisters to come through the system. Even better, when Imperio came through, so did Fiume, Gorizia and all of Libeccio's sisters."

Surrey nodded. "That makes sense. The bonds between sisterships are often quite strong. That sort of thing should be looked at before folks at Great Lakes start doing summonings for the rest of the Fletchers, the Butlers and the Casablancas. If all the girls that come through there get upgrades..."

New Zealand sighed. "True..."

The cruiser took a deep breath. "Anyhow, I have to sign off now since there's a meeting of a special group that's going to help see that Riddle wanker put down once and for all. I'll call you tomorrow morning my time, alright."

"Right. Po pai."

The link was cut, then the raven-haired tomboyish shipgirl with the dark blue eyes took another deep breath. "Well, at least he'll be happy..."

"He should be here, Albus!"

Albus sighed as he gazed on Molly Weasley. Much that he was more than happy to see the matriarch of the Weasley Clan of Ottery Saint Catchpole volunteer to do anything to see Harry Potter safe, it could be seen by some as the first step towards an act of line-theft; atop being Sirius Black's immediate heir, he was also heir to his own family fortune (which he couldn't properly access until he was of age) and a top-tier seat in the Wizengamot. With all the players who were totally beyond the influence of wizarding Britain taking profound interest in the lad's future - as currently personified by the tomboyish shipgirl now seated beside the headmaster - that was a recipe for disaster, especially once the Queen finally weighed in her judgment on the viability of maintaining the Separation Act of 1692 in the face of the Abyssals and the shipgirls. "Molly, given the Ministry's current official stance concerning Voldemort's return two weeks ago..." - he ignored the shakes and jolts from the others in the room save Surrey on hearing that particular battle name - "...here is the very worst place for Harry to be. Atop that, I have had suspicions concerning what was buried within his scar. Hearing that the War Hawks have returned to duty to help deal with the Abyssals, I knew that the problems with the scar could easily be neutralized by Jessica Dover." He ignored the shakes and jolts from the others save the heavy cruiser on mentioning the birth name of the Soul-
Eater of the Dnipró. "It was. Doing that disembodied Voldemort and badly hurt dozens of his followers early this morning when Jessica used her powers to wreck whatever magical links had been formed between Harry and Voldemort in the Little Hangleton graveyard." As some of the people nodded, he added, "That will do a lot to disorganize and dishearten our opponents, which will give us time to help those in the Ministry who would side with us gain the upper hand against those such as Cornelius and Dolores, not to mention those factions in the Wizengamot who have always sympathized with Voldemort's cause."

"What was in Harry's scar, Professor?" Daedalus Diggle asked. "Why couldn't it have been taken out after You Know Who was put down the first time?"

"I didn't realize what it was back then...and given the sheer uncertainty of the time, Daedalus, I believed it was better to get Harry immediately to his relatives and safety, away from the furor that followed Voldemort's destruction at Lily's hands. That was clearly a mistake on my part...but it appears that the power of the prophecy we've been protecting in the Department of Mysteries came into play even if Harry's home life was clearly not what he deserved," the headmaster responded, shaking his head. "I have apologized for that. That he forgives me even after all the years of abuse and neglect he received from Lily's sister and her husband speaks well of his good nature, which can and will help him in the times to come." As the others in the room nodded, Albus added, "Atop that, given the many attempts those of Voldemort's allies who were still active made over the years between that night and when Harry finally came to Hogwarts to track him down - to say anything of how the losses we were taking thanks to the Abyssals were diverting everyone's attention from trying to seek Harry out because of what Lily did - I couldn't realistically do much more to see to his safety." He shook his head, then gazed on Surrey. "I'm more than grateful to you, madame, for your intervention towards that end."

"Well, as soon as Harry was away from those freaks, he did rebound quite nicely when he was staying with his godfather before coming here and being forced into that silly tournament," the heavy cruiser noted while some of the others in the room exchanged smiles. "And he forgave you in the end, which shows what a good lad he. Once Riddle's forever dealt with and his friends are all forced into Gonebren finally, it should be all roses for Harry in the future."

She ignored the shakes from wizards and witches on the mentioning of the prison which often was called "You Know Where" because of the magical-hating monsters born from the souls of normal people who had been killed or hurt by wizards over the last millennia and more that lurked within its walls. Even now, three centuries after Gonebren's decommissioning and the establishment of Azkaban on an island off the Shetlands as the new prison for the Ministry of Magic, many.magicals still feared the possibility of the Hollows surging forth from their current place of residence to drag wizards and witches into its dark walls to see their magic and their souls torn from them. Atop that, given that the keys to Gonebren had always been in the position of the reigning Sovereign since that time, the few attempts at trying to use those keys to trace down the unplottable location of the "Maze Among the Rocks" had wound up with wizards and witches forced into a mind-wrecking fatal stay within Gonebren's walls.
Very few knew the Keys of Gonebren were currently in the hands of the three operational flagships of the Royal Navy's shipgirl corps: Battleship King George V, aircraft carrier Illustrious and battlecruiser/fast battleship Hood.

Albus intended to keep it that way.

"So is Harry safe from Riddle now?"

That was Hermione Granger, who had willingly foregone a vacation in France with her parents to be at this meeting; given that she was Harry's best friend, Albus gladly invited her to stay a while at Hogwarts. While Molly had objected to her presence here, the fact that Hermione accompanied Surrey to the castle shut her up very quickly; after all, one didn't get into arguments with living personifications of missile-augmented heavy cruisers with a tactical defensive range of a hundred miles and the willpower to use same against people who had been more hindrance than help in the war against the Abyssals. Sadly, all of Harry's other friends such as Ron Weasley hadn't been invited here, though the headmaster would definitely get that changed soon; it was their future that the Order was fighting to guarantee. "He is, Miss Granger. I'm sure you've read a lot about Heather Thompkins even before the announcement came from the United Nations in Niagara Falls that she was made Miss Surrey's operational commander-in-chief." As the other magicals in the room nodded in approval, he added, "I can assure you she is far too skilled and experienced to not allow something Voldemort may have left within Harry to escape her attention. If something DID escape her notice, there are also Jessica Dover and Moroboshi Negako present to detect it. Given Negako's ki sensing abilities, I doubt nothing Voldemort could think of could escape her and her soulsword powers for long."

"Who is this Negako woman?" Sturgis Podmore then asked.


Jaws dropped. "Oh, my! We're going to WIN this one!" Elphias Doge exclaimed. "Did you have something to do with this, Albus?! It sounds like you!"

Albus chuckled as some of the others in the room whooped in delight. "Sadly, I can't claim any influence, old friend!" he confessed. "It turns out Negako's last host - and now adopted brother - is Moroboshi Ataru, that brave young lad from Japan who had to deal with that alien girl who claimed him as her husband last year, around the time Harry met Miss Surrey. It was he who found some way to allow Negako to finally acquire a body of her own, seeing the Promise of Bunka-gonen finally fulfilled...and he survived it as well! He's now in Eta-jima assisting Negako with the kanmusu there to get them better prepared for the necessary weapons and sensory upgrades to press home the fight against the Abyssals. Turns out that one of Miss Kongō's sister has taken a fancy to him."
"Miss Kongō?" Minerva McGonagall mused before sipping her tea. "Which one?"

"Miss Kirishima, Professor. Miss New Zealand just told Miss Surrey that," Hermione stated as she smiled on remembering when the four Japanese fast battleships had appeared at the Yule ball held in honour of the Triwizard Tournament. Having just escorted a convoy of container ships from China and Russia's Pacific ports through the Northern Sea Route over the top of the Federation itself to England while helping the Krasnoznamënnyj Sévernyj Flot clear out a pack of stubborn Abyssals who had taken up residence on Sévernaja Zemljá, Kongō and her sisters had been happy to sub in for Surrey as Harry's shared dates; the heavy cruiser was then on a mission to the Faeroe Islands north of Britain in support of the Home Fleet's move to deal with a seaport princess embedded there. "Ataru saved her life from an Abyssal submarine with the use of a soulsword just after he moved to Eta-jima with his sisters."

"Ah, I understand," Minerva breathed out with a nod, remembering the bright and intelligent battleship and the long conversation they had concerning how transfiguration could be factored into shipgirl magic to better allow the Japanese and their allies to upgrade themselves with modern weaponry. *Should have better listened to that conversation Miss Surrey had over that strange muggle machine of hers*, the transfiguration mistress admonished herself. "Good for both of them. What of Miss Kongō? Is she still chasing her admiral?"

"I'm sure Admiral Thompkins will put a stop to that soon enough if Lady Negako hasn't already, Professor," Surrey stated. She got a recording of that night's events from Kirishima and had showed it to all the shipgirls in Europe over the Internet within a fortnight. Seeing the ultra-passionate Kongō give a lecture about how to express "burning love" to wide-eyed wizards and witches from three schools while Hiei and Haruna had danced away with Harry made shipgirls from Scapa Flow to Toulon to Taranto to Kiel and all the way out to Eta-jima, Halifax and Esquimalt scream with laughter. It was no wonder the *Daily Prophet* (thanks to Rita Skeeter) went on an anti-shipgirl tear after that performance, claiming the "dark muggle golems" were on a campaign to "corrupt" the pure and innocent wizards and witches of Hogwarts, Beauxbâtons and Drumstrang with their "evil, muggle-influenced" ways. Of course, such a call to rise up and find a way to drive the shipgirls out of the lives of wizards and witches soon fell totally flat thanks to a not-so-subtle verbal threat from the Sixth Sea Lord of the Royal Navy, Vice Admiral Katharine Jones, to the Minister for Magic concerning possible Royal intervention in the affairs of wizarding Britain, something Cornelius Fudge wanted to avoid like a bad case of spattergroit!

"Albus!"

Albus looked...then he smiled as Poppy Pomfrey came into the Great Hall, a copy of the evening edition of the *Daily Prophet* in hand. "Ah, I was expecting this! Thank you, Poppy!" the headmaster stated as he held out his hand while the school's mediwitch came up to hand it over. "Now, let's hope that Barnabas didn't give in to Cornelius' pressure...AH!" he then exclaimed. "Wonderful!"
"What is it, Professor?" Arthur Weasley asked.

"Dean managed to get Heather's announcement concerning her taking Harry on as an apprentice into tonight's edition, Arthur," Albus reported as he scanned the large article on the front page, then he handed it to Minerva to have the paper passed around. "With that, I doubt that Cornelius will be able to have more slander published against Harry without people questioning its validity. After all, if Heather questions the whole matter concerning Cedric's death, people would be inclined right away to agree with what she said. A statement from me concerning this matter wouldn't aid the issue. But one from Heather..."

The others in the room nodded. Even if it had been decades since the War Hawks had actively defended Britain and helped liberate Western Europe in the latter years of World War Two/Grindelwald's War, memories were quite long and many of the elder generation of British wand magics could recall with clarity about how many lives the four Canadian warriors had saved. Heather Thompkins had taken advantage of that when she had sought to become Supreme Mugwump in the 1950s after retiring from active service in the Women's Royal Canadian Naval Service; all of Europe's representatives on both sides of the Iron Curtain had voted her in unanimously. Given how much Heather had helped support worldwide efforts at reconstruction in the wake of the awful damage Grindelwald's War and Tsukuyomi's War of Liberation unleashed on Europe even with the total loss of foreign magical colonies on other continents, many British magicals even now often expressed a desire to see her once more reestablished in her old post in Geneva. Once the news of Heather being made the United Nations' Flag Officer Commander-in-Chief of Shipgirls/Shipboys got out in the magical realms, the uncertainties many felt these days given how badly the Abyssals had hurt people would start to fade...and help make the acceptance of more open knowledge of magic worldwide among normal people more digestible for the average magical.

Albus knew THAT would soon come...!

"Well, Harry's safe! That's the main point," Rubeus Hagrid stated. "Soon as Severus gets here with his report about what Jess Dover did to Riddle..."

The main doors to the Great Hall then opened, revealing a pale yet slowly recovering potions master. "Professor!" Hermione called out.

Instantly, Poppy was at Severus Snape's side as he moved to sit close to the head table; Minerva got up to help. "My apologies for being late, Albus," Severus grunted as the medijack began diagnostic scans and Surrey got up to have a cup of tea made from the service the castle's house elves had left for the Order. "I was busy with Lucius making sure that all those who were hurt when Riddle so nicely detonated himself thanks to the Soul-Eater ripping out that abomination from Mister Potter's
"I didn't do it for you, Black!" Severus snapped back before nodding his thanks as Surrey handed him a cup of tea. "Thank you, Miss Surrey." He then gazed once more on Sirius. "Fudge's refusal to see reality could have had us all in a major bind if your godson was allowed to stay in Britain! As long as your legal status was up in the air, Fudge would be free to do anything to force Mister Potter to heel. Even his being in Japan now could be seen by some fools as kidnapping; there's no way the idiots in the Wizengamot will accept the testimony of a shipgirl despite threats from the Throne to force them to comply with the Queen's wishes. I doubt even the announcement Admiral Thompkins made in tonight's paper will sway some of those idiots. But once you're declared innocent of what happened to Lily and her husband, not to mention those muggles when you tried to capture Pettigrew, you can then endorse the admiral's move to apprentice your godson. There's no way in Hell ANYONE can object to that!"

Hearing that made Sirius blink before he slowly nodded. "I could accept that." He then smirked. "If Lucius thinks I'll make his son my heir, he's got another think coming, Severus!" he then warned. "Unless he agrees to admit the truth of what he did in the last war and not hide behind the 'Imperius Defence' like he did last time, I can disbar his whole family from getting a thing."

Severus nodded before sitting back and sipping the soothing tea Surrey made; that was expected from the once-disinherited heir of the Blacks of Grimmauld. Hermione sighed. "I wonder what's happening in the Ministry now..."
Government when it came to dealing with the dark sea spirits. "It appears to be Peter Pettigrew," she said. "Lord Malfoy, how exactly did you get the drop on someone like him?" Here, she waved to the stunned animagus, who was now in bindings in one of the holding cells of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement. "If he's evaded us for so long..."

Lucius Malfoy took a deep breath, a humble look crossing his face. "I heard about Harry Potter's accusation a year ago that Peter Pettigrew had somehow framed Sirius Black for the murder of those muggles when Sirius was captured, not to mention the betrayal of Harry's parents to the Dark Lord that night. Much that I found it quite hard to believe, it nagged on my mind. Just last night, my son took notice of a rat that he remembered once belonged to Arthur's son Ronald. When I noted the missing fore claw, I remembered that Peter's finger was all that was left of him when the scene was examined when he 'died'. I stunned him, performed the animagus reversal spell, then noted who he was. With help from Severus Snape, I was able to get him here around noon hour today. It surprises me that you weren't informed of this right away, Amelia."

Amelia looked embarrassed. "I was busy meeting with Lady Raeburn in Bushy Park in Teddington," she confessed, making the other magicals gape at her. "She's been promoted to general from her old rank of major and was asked to be the commander-in-chief of shipgirl forces within NATO in the Atlantic basin. Right now, she's busy forming her headquarters at the site where President Eisenhower established his command base before the invasion of the Continent in 1944..."

"'NATO'?" Lucius asked in genuine curiosity.

"'North Atlantic Treaty Organization', Lord Malfoy," Percy Weasley said. "It's a military alliance between the Western European powers, the Canadians and the Americans, originally meant to guard against the Soviets. Once the Soviet Union was no more, NATO remained in place and began to expand. It's concerned now with fighting the Abyssals and they're allying with the Russians under Marshal Múromeca to present a united front to keep our side of Eurasia clear."

Many in the area of the holding cells winced on hearing the name of the Bloody Siberian She-bear, the normal-born farmer's daughter who led a brutal decade-long purge throughout the Soviet Union to effectively wipe out the purebloods of old Russia and ensure loyalty to the regime formed in the October Revolution of 1917. She was also the one who led the liberation campaign between 1941 and 1945 to clear out half of Europe from Gellert Grindelwald's control; doing that earned Svetlána Iľična Múromeca the sobriquet "Liberator of All Europe" even if Albus Dumbledore was the one who had put his old lover down in the Battle of Nurnengard on the summer solstice after the European side of World War Two officially ended. Naturally, almost every British magical alive loathed the mere MENTION of that woman; had the Bloody Siberian She-bear been active in the country when Voldemort launched his rebellion, every pureblood adult alive would have been killed and their children forcibly "re-educated" to forever renounce any type of blood politics. And while Svetlána had been imprisoned to prevent the start of World War Three after her patron Jósef Vissariónovič Stálin died in the 1950s, she had been let out two years ago, restored to her wartime rank of chief marshal of magical troops of the Russian Federation, then put in charge of shipboy forces of Russia and the other ex-Soviet republics. While it had been a pragmatic decision and one
that saved thousands of lives from the Abyssals, it had people in the magical ministries of Europe quaking in their boots, wondering if Svetlána would decide to finish the job left half-done in 1945...even if Russians themselves had long rejected communism!

"Well, with Lady Raeburn here, we shouldn't have to worry about the Moscow Magical Front suddenly reforming," Lucius then quipped. "Eh, Cornelius?"

The minister for magic perked, then he nodded. "Yes, yes, Lucius, that's true! I should call in on Lady Raeburn myself to see what we can do to help her fight those damned things! Much that I'm still baffled about these shipgirls...!"

"They will fall..."

Hearing that hissed voice from the prison cell opposite where Peter was, Amelia looked over. "Says who?" she wondered as a shuddering Barty Crouch Jr glared at her. "None of our spells can work on a shipgirl. Even the Killing Curse does nothing save shut down parts of their bodies...which instantly start up again given the spiritual energy they possess. Their magic is too powerful!" As Barty sputtered in disbelief, the director of the DMLE added, "Indeed, they're as the Japanese have always seen them: Living divine spirits born from the united sense of loyalty, duty and hope of their builders and crews, gladly answering the call to arms to defend their homelands from the Abyssals. How could even your precious 'dark lord' stand up to the likes of one of them?"

"LIES! ALL LIES! THE DARK LORD WILL CONQUER...!"

Barty then screamed as something hot ripped up his arm. Gazing on the exposed limb, the observers watched as the Dark Mark seemed to tear itself apart, a vertical cut slicing the skull in half from chin to the top of the crown, the serpent's head cut off at the neck and disintegrating. "NO!" Barty wailed out. "NO! MY LORD! I CAN HELP YOU BE REBORN! PLEASE! COME BACK, MY LORD...!"

"Some after-effect of having that thing branded on his arm," Cornelius quickly concluded as Percy nodded. "Since he took it willingly, it's no wonder he feels so much loss because You Know Who is gone. But how did that happen...?"

"It happened to me, Cornelius," Lucius stated as he moved to bare his arm.

The others looked, then gaped on seeing the faint yet visibly mutilated mark that was burned there.
"Merlin! It's almost totally gone!" Percy exclaimed.

"Indeed, Mister Weasley. I felt it happen very early this morning," the patriarch of the Malfoy Clan of Avebury explained with a relieved smile. "Since I was under the Imperius, the bond I felt with the Dark Lord wasn't as strong as it obviously was with Barty. Thus it didn't affect me save for a headache when the Mark disintegrated. I've confirmed the others possessed in the same way - people like Severus Snape, Malcolm Parkinson, Cyrus Greengrass, Mason Nott, Lance Goyle and Vince Crabbe - experienced the same thing."

"LIAR!" Barty shrieked out. "YOU WERE NEVER POSSESSED...!"

"STUPEFY!"

The stun bolt slammed into the shrieking man, causing him to pass out on the floor. "Apologies," Amelia stated as she holstered her wand. "He's delirious with pain now. Have you had a chance to get a healer to look at your arm...?"

"CORNELIUS!"

Everyone turned as a middle-aged witch raced to join them, a copy of the Daily Prophet in hand. "Dolores!" Cornelius called back as his senior undersecretary came to a stop, panting hard. "Good heavens! What's the matter with you?!!"

"LOOK!" Dolores Umbridge snapped as she thrust the paper into his hands.

He looked...then gaped in shock as the message there sank in. "Merlin! Harry Potter's in Japan with Supreme Mugwump Emeritus Thompkins?!"

Jaws dropped. "Why would Harry be there, Minister?!" Percy demanded.

"Just a moment..." the minister bade as he scanned the notice there, then he hissed. "Oh, Merlin, I don't believe this! How could this have not been damned noticed in all the years he's been going to Hogwarts?! That poor boy!"
"What happened, Cornelius?" Lucius demanded.

"The Soul-Eater of the Dnipró just happened to the boy," Cornelius stated, making the others gasp in horror. "Supreme Mugwump Emeritus Thompkins was just made the commander-in-chief of the world's shipgirl and shipboy forces to deal with the Abyssals by Dumbledore's opposite number in the United Nations." None of the people listening to this noted Dolores' look on hearing again about the shipgirls. The senior undersecretary had been the centre of a passionate anti-shipgirl movement within the ranks of the Ministry who had done everything they could to try to regulate such beings as mandated by the Statute of Secrecy. Fortunately, such efforts had failed spectacularly...which had allowed Dolores' resentment towards those "evil muggle golems" to fester to near-paranoid levels. "At least the old fool did something right and got Harry over to see her just yesterday. The Soul-Eater is with her friend right now to help destroy those things...and she noticed the poor boy was POSSESSED by something that was possibly related to You Know Who! Damn! What the hell was Dumbledore doing placing the boy with magic-hating muggles with that damned curse scar not properly looked at?! It's a miracle the lad has his magic still!"

"Is he recovering?" Percy asked out of concern for his brother's feelings.

"Doesn't say here. Anyhow, Harry will be in Japan and be looked after by Supreme Mugwump Emeritus Thompkins and the Soul-Eater, not to mention Lady Moroboshi Negako, the Earth Angel." As Dolores turned a sickly shade of puce on noting the sheer level of spiritual and magical power that was now close to Harry Potter - which would make it totally impossible to reign in the lying brat and make him heel to the Ministry! - Cornelius sighed, shaking his head even if he seemed to stand straighter. "I'll issue an apology and retraction to what's been said about him in tomorrow morning's edition. Amelia?"

Amelia perked. "Yes?"

"Get your people to find Sirius Black. Offer some sort of amnesty to get the man in here so we can learn the truth of what happened when Harry lost his parents. Since we lost the Dementors when the Abyssals wrecked Azkaban, he won't be so afraid to come in." He shook his head. "Damn! Another fool thing I did! I'll put that in my statement to the press tomorrow morning!"

"Cornelius, that's the wrong response to take!" Dolores urged. "Sirius Black is responsible for the deaths of those muggles and Peter Pettigrew...!"

"Um, Dolores..."
Hearing Lucius, she looked at him...then noting where he was pointing, she gazed over before she blanched on seeing what was in a cell. "Pettigrew...?"

"Lucius caught the lying monster at his home yesterday," the minister stated, which made Dolores gape in shocked disbelief. "Harry mentioned this to me back at the end of his third year! I should have listened to the lad back then...!"

That made the senior undersecretary jerk. "Don't believe the...!"

"Amelia!"

Everyone stopped, then turned...

...before they tensed on sensing a concentrated tidal wave of incredible magic wash over them as the clanking of metal high-heel shoes echoed from the flagstone deck of Level Two. Now standing by the entrance to the corridor leading to the holding cells for the DMLE beside Alastor Moody was a certain reborn heavy cruiser in full battle rigging, one of her anchor chains extending from her waist to firmly bind the hands of Sirius Black. Also there were two other people Amelia knew were secretly part of the Order of the Phoenix: Kingsley Shacklebolt and Nymphadora Tonks; they were also accompanied by Remus Lupin. Much to Amelia's amusement, there was a knowing smirk on the rogue Marauder's face; she wondered if someone who was sympathetic to the Order had relayed to Kingsley, Nymphadora or Alastor that Peter Pettigrew was here and about to face some overdue justice. "Miss Surrey!" the director of the DMLE called out in greetings as Dolores looked ill and Lucius smiled in admiration at Sirius' quick move to secure his freedom. "How on Earth did you...?"

"A bit of a confession on our parts, Director," Kingsley stated as the scarred Alastor harrumphed and Tonks looked embarrassed. "We all believed in Sirius' innocence. When we got the chance to hear Harry's side of the story, it made sense that something odd happened when Pettigrew 'died'. Since we had to prioritize ourselves for the Tournament and the Dementors were wiped out - and given that Sirius did nothing towards trying to communicate with other Death Eaters - we waited for the chance to find Pettigrew to prove his innocence."

"Which Lucius just did," Cornelius stated, nodding.

"My thanks, Lucius," Sirius stated before he noted the other man's wrecked Dark Mark. "Looks like that whatever-it-was that half-blood bastard child..."
"LIAR! HE IS NO HALF-BLOOD! THE DARK LORD WILL COME AND KILL YOU ALL!"

Everyone jolted on hearing a wide-eyed Barty scream that out, frothing at the mouth as he glared in defiance at the godfather to the monster who had somehow put Voldemort down years ago. As the minister and the others gaped at how fast he had recovered from Amelia's stunning spell, Sirius asked, "What's with him?!"

"Like you were about to say, Black!" Alastor growled. "Whatever Jess Dover did to young Potter that tore out whatever Voldemort did to the lad years ago must have affected all those who got marked by that lying, murderous bastard!"

Barty grinned. "How does it feel to know you were BEATEN, Moody...?!"

He then croaked in underwear-soiling horror as four BL 8 inch 50 calibre Mk VIII naval guns in two dual turrets turned his way, ominous waves of magic echoing from a certain cruiser's enhanced sensory set homing in on him like a Dementor would to suck out his happiness. "You mind your Ps and Qs, you filthy murderer!" Surrey snarled out. "Once we get you over to Gonebren to allow the Hollows to have at you, you'll be behaving yourself soon enough!"

As Barty suddenly whimpered on hearing the name of THAT place, Amelia smiled. "As a matter of fact, we can send him to Gonebren right now!"

Dolores gasped. "Now see here, Amelia...!"

"Enough, Dolores!" the director of the DMLE snapped. "He was convicted for his crimes as a Death Eater. Adding escaping from Azkaban, killing his father, kidnapping and imprisoning Alastor for a year - plus conspiracy to kidnap and murder Harry Potter! - he would have got the Kiss for such actions once we got our hands on him!" As Cornelius nodded in grim agreement, she added, "Since we don't have the Dementors anymore, we need the Hollows!" She gazed on Surrey. "I assume the Queen can loan the Keys for the task, Miss Surrey...?"

"Just a moment, Madame Director. Suthrige!"

"POP! Everyone gaped on seeing a smiling male house elf standing proudly on the forecastle deck of the heavy cruiser's rigging, dressed smartly in an old-style Royal Navy square rig with sailor cap, the proud title **HMS SURREY** in gold on the tally. "Suthrige reporting as ordered, Miss Surrey, ma'am!" he reported as he gave her a salute which would have earned him many points with the
training petty officers at HMS *Raleigh* near Portsmouth. "What are your orders?"

"My compliments to Hood. I know she's at Whitehall right now. Have her come here. We've got one and possibly two more for the Gonebren Press Gang."

"Aye-aye, ma'am!" *POP!*

Dolores shuddered. "Now see here, you filthy golem...!"

"Are you threatening one of my troopers, toady?"

Everyone croaked on hearing that voice as Alastor looked around, his magical eye spinning. He then laughed, nodding in admiration. "Damn, Dean! You even can hide that cigar smoke of yours!" he called out. "Nicely done...!"

"Lucky thing I have my Jewel keep an eye on all my troopers," that voice called back as a shift of air made the crowd by Peter's and Barty's cells turn to see a tall woman standing there, the pulsing Power Jewel at her neck making almost all the magicals pale as they realized who had now joined them. "Now...!" Dean Raeburn snarled as she moved to loom like Pallas Athena did over Dolores Umbridge. "What the hell did you just call my trooper?"

The senior undersecretary sputtered. "Go away, you hideous muggle beast! You have no right to deal with anything concerning us! The law forbids it...!"

"Magical Royal Proclamation of 1941 says otherwise," the air cavalry officer calmly stated as she exhaled the cigar smoke into Dolores' face, making the witch sputter as she tried not to choke on those sweet-sour fumes. As some of the others hearing this winced on hearing the Protector of All Life declare that, the native of Queenston added, "You should damn hell know by now than any Proclamation of the Crown has priority over even your cute little Separation Act." Ignoring the sputter of denial from Dolores, Dean said, "I've every damned right in the world to protect those under my command and all those affiliated with them from backwards idiots like you. And that NOW includes every shipgirl of the Royal Navy and Royal Canadian Navy active from the Continental Divide in both North and South America east to well past Moscow! AND their adopted relatives, which Mister Harry Potter now is seen...as Miss Surrey here can confirm." As the heavy cruiser beamed on hearing that, Dean gazed in confusion at the man bound by her anchor chain. "What's with him?"
He was falsely accused of betrayal and multiple counts of murder when Harry lost his parents due to the magical terrorist Tom Riddle, also known as Lord Voldemort, General Raeburn, Surrey reported, ignoring the shudders from the people there save Alastor and Sirius on hearing that man's battle name. "He never even got a proper trial during Minister Bagnold's regime according to his own testimony to me when I met him after I rescued Harry from the freaks that had been taking care of him last summer." As people gasped in shock on hearing that, the heavy cruiser added, "Since the whole issue with the Triwizard Tournament and the visitation from other parts of the Continent to celebrate same distracted the Ministry too much - to say anything of the continued drain on the DMLE and other departments thanks to the Abyssals - I took it upon myself to have Lord Black watched over until such time as we could present him to the authorities to be dealt with. Since Lord Malfoy was so kind as to apprehend the real traitor to the late Lord and Lady Potter...!"

"Never did, Minister," Sirius admitted. "I do admit to feeling very guilty when it came to what happened to James and Lily that damned night! It was that which probably convinced Bagnold and Crouch to send me to Azkaban right then and there without presenting me to the Wizengamot for their judgment. It was my stupid idea to switch secret-keepers to Peter to throw off Voldemort's people once he decided to target my godson. We never once suspected he'd become a turncoat." A wry chuckle escaped him. "He always was a sneaky bastard...but I never thought he could pull something like THAT off..."

"Don't worry about that," Amelia stated. "He'll be tried and sentenced when we get the chance to present this to the Wizengamot. In the meantime, Miss Surrey, you can let Lord Black go. I don't think he's a flight risk."

"Aye, ma'am," Surrey stated as she drew her anchor chain off Sirius.

"Thanks!" he said with a polite nod.

Amelia nodded. "Sergeant Shacklebolt, Auror Tonks, I think you can keep an eye on Lord Black until we arrange for his 'friend's' trial with the Wizengamot."

"Yes, Director!" Kingsley and Tonks affirmed with nods of their heads.

"They'll be treated well, Amelia," Sirius affirmed. "What the hell's going on with Barty? Bad enough he was allowed to be smuggled out of Azkaban by his old man, but he also trapped Alastor in his own damned trunk while he was supposed to be the DADA teacher at Hogwarts! What the hell's going to happen to him?!!"
"He'll be sent to Gonebren..."

"He will NOT!" Dolores snapped...

...before a massive burst of air flowed through the air, accompanied by the loud *POP!* of a house elf teleporting her mistress' friend in from Whitehall. "You wanted to see me, Surrey?" a woman called out as Suthrige popped himself over to stand on Surrey's forecastle...then a sudden gasp of shock caused everyone to turn as the pride of the Royal Navy saluted. "General Raeburn!"

Dean turned, returning Hood's courtesy with her own British Army-style palm-forward salute. Like Surrey, the battlecruiser/fast battleship was in full combat rigging, making the magics all tense on seeing those four dual turrets with their BL 15 inch 42 calibre Mk I naval guns in ready positions. As she had been augmented with modern electronics and sensor suites on her rebirth as a shipgirl at Torpoint, Hood also possessed four quad Mark 141 launcher packs for RGM-84 Harpoon anti-ship missiles, four GWS-26 vertical launch systems for Sea Wolf surface-to-air missiles, eight 4.5 inch Mark 8 dual-purpose naval guns in single mounts flanking her superstructure, eight 30 millimetre DS30M Mark 2 automated guns and four Phalanx Mark 15 20 millimetre close-in weapons systems. Of course, the armour that hadn't saved her in 1941 had been heavily augmented with no weight loss thanks to the change of her propulsion systems to a CODLAG format that gave her the edge in speed and cruising range, to say anything of not having to spend so much time in refurbishment docks after a mission. "I trust Kathy's alright with the new command arrangement I've made for you girls?"

"She is, General Raeburn. Please excuse me. What's going on, Surrey?"

"One for Gonebren, Hood," the cruiser said as she nodded towards Barty.

Hearing that, the battlecruiser sighed as she reached into her skirt pocket to draw out a certain gold skeletal key. Given the presence of two shipgirls on Level Two right now, none of the magics were quick to sense the wild and ancient earth/blood magic infused into the Key of Gonebren...though they all gaped as the key enlarged itself to the size of the average broadsword. Seeing that, Dolores shrieked out as she lunged over to grab the key by the shank...

...only to vanish in a flash of light, a howling scream marking her departure!

Silence.
More silence.

Still more silence.

Then...

"Er...?" Amelia began, her eyebrow twitching ominously.

Hood chuckled, her blue eyes sparkling with false mischievousness. "You should keep in mind, ladies and gentlemen, that this key does have powerful anti-theft charms on it. She's in 'C' Block now," she loudly declared. As Cornelius gasped in horror, the raven-haired battlecruiser/fast battleship stared at him. "Minister, with all due respect, this key was entrusted into my custody at the order of the Queen! Because of that, I am bound to ensure its safe use until I am relieved at the order of Her Majesty! You have no right to complain about your senior undersecretary's appalling and disrespectful behaviour! Besides, this bright young lad here seems ready to stand in her place!" she said as she gazed on Percy, making the ginger-haired Wizengamot scribe blush madly.

"I'll make sure he's up to it, Cornelius," Amelia promised.

The minister looked ill in the mainmast. "Er...th-thank you, Amelia..."

With that, Hood stared intently at Barty, the reading glasses covering her eyes glittering in the torchlight ominously. As he gargled on seeing the blade of that key point at him, she smiled. "They'll take good care of you...and make sure you understand your Ps and Qs," she declared. "What are his crimes?"

"Seven counts of premeditated murder with the Unforgivables, two counts of being an accomplice to torture with the Unforgivables, membership in a terrorist organization moving to overthrow of the legal government of the land, kidnapping and holding a wizard against his will to impersonate him with use of polyjuice potion for criminal purposes, plus being an accomplice in the kidnapping and near-murder of Miss Surrey's charge, Lord Black's godson," the director of the DMLE stated. "One count of murder, the kidnap and impersonation charges and conspiring to kidnap and murder Mister Potter haven't been reviewed before the Wizengamot in a legal trial, Miss Hood. However, escaping from Azkaban Prison does carry an automatic sentence of death...but since Her Majesty refuses to employ the death penalty..."

"Well, that sounds like a candidate for 'A' Block," Hood stated. "Off you go!"
Barty screamed in mortal terror as the Key made contact with him, he vanishing in a flash of light while a brutal cold wind flowed through Level Two...

The Mahora Academy (north of Tōkyō), after dawn (London time: An hour before midnight on Monday)...

"Negi-sensei...why are you here at this time of day?"

Hearing that question from one of his would-be girlfriends, the slender and bespectacled sorcerer from the mountains of Wales perked. "Oh, just doing some late night research..." he answered before a yawn stole his voice, then he glanced out a window to see the sun well above the rise of hills that lined the eastern part of the university village enclaved within the city of Saitama. "Pardon me...early morning research," he corrected himself as he stretched.

Seeing that, Miyazaki Nodoka shuddered as the mixed feelings she had for the young native of Wales surged up from deep within her heart to nearly overwhelm her. While some of her peers were flatly convinced that Negi's roommates Kagurazaka Asuna and Konoe Konoka stood better chances at winning his love once the whole issues of their being students of his was finally out of the way in a couple years, the young volunteer librarian knew the odds were in her favour. Negi's sense of personal propriety forbade him from doing anything with his boss' only granddaughter (never mind Konoka's relationship with Sakurazaki Setsuna) and Asuna was a blood relative of Negi's late mother Arika Anarchia Entheofushia-Springfield; natives of Mars' sister planet of Nerio had long ago learned the lesson of what inbreeding could do to future children. Atop that, Nodoka wanted to make damn sure that Negi loved her and she loved him; there was no way in hell that she was going to get herself into a relationship with anyone when there was the potential risk of serious heartbreak in the future.

"What are you researching?" the raven-haired teenager with the dark blue eyes asked as she sat across from him at the table inside one of the cavernous reading rooms on Library Island some distance from the Academy itself.

"Looking for ways to help the shipgirls summoned through Eta-jima to get their equipment upgraded to modern electronics and weapons without forcing them to sacrifice too much in the way of performance," Negi explained as he gazed at the arithmatic diagrams before him, glad he was an expert in interpreting Chinese characters so he could convert the equations to something he could personally understand. "For the larger shipgirls like the battleships, the aircraft carriers and the heavy cruisers, it's not so difficult; they have the spiritual displacement that could take changes of armament from massed anti-aircraft guns to missile launchers. Smaller ships would have some serious issues,
especially given the propensity of local kanmusu to loath the idea of landing guns to make room for other things." He shook his head.

"Why was it the Canadians were able to allow their corvettes and frigates to come back so well-armed?" she wondered. "A frigate is one step down in size from a destroyer and a corvette is two steps down. Yet they came back..."

"Practically the equivalents of modern Halifax-class ships," Negi finished for her. "Hai, that would be quite an issue, Nodoka-san. In many places, we'd be looking at the same scale of rebuild the Italians put their battleships from the Great War through during the 1930s." He sat back in his chair. "Take Tenryū-san." He had chosen that light cruiser because Nodoka always saw that particular shipgirl as the one to admire the most given her stewardship of younger shipgirls such as the members of Destroyer Division Six. "As a ship, she was physically the same size as a Halifax-class frigate. She'd want to keep her cruiser rating, so we'd have to find some way to stuff the equivalent of a Kongō-class destroyer's Aegis sensors and modern weapons into a hull that's a little over eighteen metres shorter and HALF the displacement weight lighter. Now, that's quite possible as the Flower-class corvettes proved when they were summoned in Cornwallis. In their original form, they were a thousand tonnes soaking wet. In their 'modernized' form, they're spiritually nearly four times heavier; fortunately, they got the updated power systems to help them go faster than they did in World War Two. It's obvious that Tenryū-san and everyone like her can do the same...but how would such an upgrade affect her given the overall transformation from warship to human being?"
He waved to the books arrayed before him. "How would Tenryū-san adjust to such a change, Nodoka-san? It would be like putting her through a Star Trek transporter and reworking her from base DNA up! She would have to learn everything anew...!"

"Which we can't afford to do," Nodoka finished. "The Abyssals won't leave us alone long enough to allow that sort of thing to happen."

"Thus, we need Negako-sensei's brilliance for martial arts and Thompkins-taishō and her friends to weigh in with their power to help out for the time being," he noted. "Give us the breathing room so we could get shipgirls upgraded; it's only a matter of time before those mad geniuses in Cornwallis perfect that modification mist they're designing, then put it to work." He shook his head, his chestnut eyes misting over. "I thought I was so brilliant...!"

"Negi!"

He jolted on sensing Nodoka glare at him. "Stop that!" the volunteer librarian hissed out as her own eyes teared in sympathy. "You have saved more lives with what you did three years ago than any person - magical, metahuman or normal! - has done since the Abyssals first began slaughtering people on the high seas! Stop blaming yourself for not seeing the potential of the spells you used to summon Kongō-san and the others to drive them out of Tōkyō Bay! You unleashed the modern wonder of the world! Hai, people in Canada and Britain took it and ran with it...and that's done more
to keep humanity alive and safe on the high seas than anything anyone's done before! Who cares about that stupid secrecy statute?! You've heard Konoka-san's grandfather talk about that! It's pretty much gone! This is what you've dreamt of deep down for years, hasn't it?! To stop hiding like that all the time, show what you can do, help people with the gifts the Kami gave you and live your life without fear! You've seen all the Internet chat about people discovering magicals around the world! We're not like the barbarians who drove magicals into forcing that statute on everyone three centuries ago! Humanity has **evolved**, Negi-sensei! It can **work** this time!" She smirked at him. "Besides, doesn't this show up the idiots in London?" she teased. "All their knowledge they got stored in that ministry of theirs...and they couldn't make a dent against the Abyssals! You, the son of the Thousand Master, the ultimate magical rule breaker...!" Nodoka then shrugged. "You did it, Negi! And they can NEVER take it away from you!"

Negi blinked before he sighed. "Haruna-san?!

No answer.

"Damn it! It's really you!" he muttered...even if his eyes twinkled with mirth and delight at Nodoka's passionate support of him; he still remembered that time when Saotome Haruna used her own powers to create a literal copy of Nodoka that acted so passionate, it have given him nightmares for a week. "Sometimes, I regret giving you that lesson about magical politics in the British Isles."

"You have Albus' support in that end, Negi-kun," a new voice then called out.

"Kōchō-sensei," Nodoka called out as Konoe Konoemon came up to them.

"Burning the midnight oil, Negi-kun?" the elderly headmaster of Mahora and the effective leader of all Japanese magicals in Kantō wondered.

"Still trying to figure out how we can augment the Eta-jima kanmusu with new equipment and weapons, sir," Negi admitted as Konoemon sat down beside him.

"Well, you can relax for the time being," the headmaster stated. "Heather Thompkins has asked for me to come down to Eta-jima to brief her on all magical developments since she was last on Earth. She'll want to meet you since you're the genius who came up with the whole 'summon the spirits of warships' idea that saved millions of lives three years ago. Maybe she'll have some ideas as to how we can help our kanmusu and the other kanmusu improve themselves."
Negi gaped at him, then smiled. "I best have breakfast!"

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**Eta-jima, that moment...**

"Oh! Ohayō gozaimasu, Teitoku!"

Hearing that bright voice from the destroyer now moving to tie off her running shoes, Heather Thompkins blinked before returning Fubuki's salute with her own. "Ohayō, Miss Fubuki," the Canadian responded. "Off for a morning run?"

"Hai!" Fubuki stated with an eager nod. "Even if I've already upgraded myself to Kai Ni, I still have to stay in good shape for operations. Akashi-sensei tells me that it helps keep the times in the refurbishment bays down to a minimum, which decreases the work for her and Vestal-sensei and allows them to concentrate on more vital repair tasks." She then frowned. "I just wish that all the others would do it as well. Akashi-sensei and Vestal-sensei work hard enough for all of us! Putting more work on all of them is just wrong!"

The admiral hummed. "Well, we'll definitely change that. Excuse me," she said with a wink, then she looked over to the multinational colour party heading to the gaff-and-yardarm-augmented flag pole located by the headquarters building. "Gentlemen! Do you have all the colours to raise this morning?!"

The group stopped, then the senior rate present quickly marched over to stand before his new operational commander-in-chief, saluting. "Good morning, Admiral," the Australian warrant officer stated. "We have all the colours ready, including your own flag. Permission to raise the colours?"

"What colours do you have?" Heather asked.

"The Kyokujitsu-ki for the gaff, Admiral Thompkins. For the lines on the lower yardarm, from port to starboard: The British White Ensign, the First Navy Jack, the Dienstflagge der Seestreitkräfte, the Bandiera Navale Militare, the Canadian White Ensign, the Australian White Ensign, the Royal Canadian Air Force blue ensign and the New Zealand White Ensign. The order is decided according to the recognized establishment date of the service in question."

"Why is the American naval jack being flown instead of the national flag?"
"The President allowed it by Executive Order, ma'am."

She nodded. "Go on."

"Your own flag will be raised to the top of the staff given your presence here. General Dover's flag will fly from the upper yardarm to port, with Admiral Saitō's and Admiral Vance's flags set to starboard of the general's flag."

Heather nodded, then she blinked on noting that the Australian senior rate had finished his report. "You're missing one flag, Warrant," she then warned.

He tensed. "M-m-Ma'am...?"

"Where is the Z Flag?"

Fubuki gasped on hearing that. The Australian blinked. "The Zulu flag...?"

"Oui!" she snapped, slipping into French before returning to Japanese; all those assigned to Eta-jima from other nations had to be fluent. "We're in a war situation and the girls have to know that we are taking that situation seriously. That's even done when a battle is not being fought. Get that flag up on the port side of the upper yardarm; you'll have room there. Do it now!"

The veteran boatswain's mate tensed, then he nodded. "Aye-aye, ma'am!"

With another salute, he raced off to get the changes done. Heather watched him go, then she sighed. Fubuki looked up at her, her eyes wide. "Teitoku...?"

A sigh escaped the older woman. "In the last two weeks reviewing this whole mess, I've asked myself many times how you've all been able to keep fighting like you have with such little emotional and spiritual encouragement."

That made the destroyer blush. "We've endured, Teitoku..."
"Buongiorno, Ammiraglio!"

Both turned as a smiling Libeccio came towards them, dressed in a form-fitting track suit that showed off her slender body quite well. "Buongiorno, Miss Libeccio," Heather stated as she returned the Italian destroyer's salute, then she gazed down on the clothing. "A little exercise before breakfast?"

"Trying to tire myself out so I can get some sleep," Libeccio confessed, which made Fubuki giggle. "I was so wound up because my sorelle maggiori are here with me now and we can be together, I couldn't sleep a winkle last night!"

"Better get used to it soon, Miss Libeccio," Heather stated. "As soon as a certain someone gets here to help out with your armament, physical education periods will become mandatory!" As Libeccio gaped and Fubuki gasped, the admiral added, "It'll help prepare you both physically and spiritually to get ready for the big upgrade in equipment and weapons coming very soon."

That made both destroyers gasp. "You mean like the Canadians and the others in the Commonwealth, the Russians and the Koreans have?!!" Fubuki demanded.

"Yes," Heather affirmed. "I'm going to be meeting with Negi Springfield sometime later today so I can get a full idea of all the charms, runes and everything else that he used to bring Miss Kongō and her sisters out when they were needed three years ago. Once I have that, I can compare it to what the people under Admiral Harlan are doing in Cornwallis, then you can look forward to a very nice upgrade to get you up to where any British destroyer is now!"

That made the two younger-looking shipgirls gape. "But wouldn't that mean we'd have to land guns and torpedoes, Ammiraglio?!" Libeccio asked.

Heather winked at her. "Miss Libeccio, it's magic! When there's a will, there's always a way! Our job right now is to find it and make use of it..."

A bugle fanfare echoed over the grounds, making the three women gaze towards the flag pole in front of the headquarters building. Noting the flag party was about to raise colours, both destroyers and the admiral snapped to attention. A glance around told Heather that all the military personnel were also standing ready to pay honours. The volunteer band standing near the flag pole then began to play the *Gunkan March*, the official music of the Imperial Navy and the modern Maritime Self-Defence Force, which told all the people seeing this to salute as the Japanese naval ensign was raised up the line to the tip of the gaff. At the same time, both the "Z" flag and the white-with-two red
chrysanthemum rank flag of a rear admiral was raised to their positions on the upper yardarm, causing those Japanese shipgirls nearby to literally puff with pride on seeing that famous signal now flying high over the grounds of Eta-jima.

"The fate of the Empire rests on the outcome of this battle," Fubuki whispered the flag's message with reverence. "Let each man do his utmost."

Once those banners were in place, the band then swung into Heart of Oak, the march past shared between the navies of the Commonwealth. As that was played, the British, Canadian, Australian and New Zealand ensigns went up to fly from the lower yardarm. Noting that, Heather smiled; no doubt, the band director felt it was just foolish to play that same song four times over for each of the Commonwealth navies represented here. After that was done, next came Anchors Aweigh as the American naval jack went up to fly beside the British flag; at the same time, James Vance's dark blue rank flag with its two white stars went up to join Saitō Ten'ichi's rank flag on the upper yardarm. Then came Gruß an Kiel, the march of the German Navy. Heather was quick to hear the voices of several flottenmädchen sing out the lyrics as the German naval ensign joined the banners of the other services. After that came the Italian Navy's march, La Ritirata, which played out as the naval ensign of that nation joined its counterparts while Libeccio sang the lyrics with gusto. Finally came the Air Force March Past as the blue ensign of Jessica Dover's home service joined the others; with that, a medium-blue rank flag with four pearl grey maple leaves in a diamond formation went up to the upper yardarm to fly next to the "Z" flag.

"Sugoi!" Fubuki hissed out. "Hishō's flag is so beautiful!"

"Nice and simple," Libeccio whispered in agreement...then she blinked. "Eh?!"

"What?!"

"Where is the ammiraglio's flag?!"

The Japanese destroyer croaked. If the flag party didn't raise Heather's pennant up the staff, it would be seen as a scandalous insult...!

The band struck up a beautiful rolling tune as a dark blue flag with four gold maple leaves in a diamond formation was then raised to the top of the pole. Hearing that tune, Heather chuckled in amusement, making the two destroyers look at her. Before either could ask a question, the trumpeter blared out the musical command to carry on, which made the people saluting the colours relax before they proceeded to their duties. As she breathed out, Heather's ears picked up excited whispers from various kanmusu as they talked about the sight of the "Z" flag flying from their base's signal.
yardarm. Before she could say anything, Fubuki looked up. "Ano, Teitoku...was that the wrong
song?"

The admiral smirked. "No. That was *The Maple Leaf Forever*, Canada's first true patriotic song." She perked as the Australian warrant officer who had been in charge of the colour party came back over to join them, saluting as he walked up. "Interesting choice of music for when you broke my flag, Warrant."

He chuckled in embarrassment. "We had no idea which one to play, Admiral. The *General Salute* is only for when you're reviewing the troops..."

"Change it tomorrow to *Requiem for a Soldier,*" she ordered.

A curious look crossed his face. "Ma'am?"

"The theme music from the television series *Band of Brothers*, Warrant. The one based on the story of 'E' Company, Second Battalion of the Americans' 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment from World War Two," the admiral explained, then she nodded out towards the Pacific. "For those of us now on eternal patrol."

Both Fubuki and Libeccio bowed their eyes in respect to the thousands of brave sailors, military and civilian alike, who had died in the last decade. The Australian senior rate blinked as his eyes misted over – he himself could now count dozens of friends who were presently on "eternal patrol" as American submariners called it - then he nodded. "An excellent choice, Admiral."

"Tell the bandmaster also that the band better brush up on the regimental march of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police," the admiral then advised.

That made him gape. "You mean Commissioner Larsden, ma'am?!"

"That's him. Have the Force ensign flown between the Italian and the Canadian ensigns on the lower yardarm. There are no rank flags for senior officers of the Force, but you can fly the 'J' Division flag to mark him. I have a copy."

"What's 'J' Division, Teitoku?" Fubuki asked.
"The Force's formation in New Brunswick. That's Martin's home province."

The Australian senior boatswain's mate nodded. "Very good, Admiral. When will we be expecting the commissioner to arrive on the base?"

"Can't say when. His aide de camp should be here sometime today..."

"Admiral Thompkins!"

She looked over as a female American serviceman bearing the rate/rating badge of an operations specialist second class came towards her, she escorting a tall and strikingly handsome man in the blue service dress of Canada's national and federal police force, the four upwards-pointing chevrons of a staff sergeant on his lower right arm. As both Fubuki and Libeccio turned very interesting shades of pink on seeing the brown-haired, blue-eyed native of Nunavut, Heather smiled as she returned the salutes from the approaching servicemen. "Staff Sergeant Fraser. Petty Officer Halbright. You know each other?"

Sandra Halbright smiled as she gazed fondly on her companion. "I lived on East Racine Avenue before I joined the navy when the staff sergeant was assigned to the Consulate in Chicago after his dad was murdered. He helped me out of a bad spot and tutored me to get my grades up so I could join the service." She then giggled. "Lot of people on East Racine my age could say the same thing. It was a really rough part of town, but Staff Sergeant Fraser made it better."

"Out of your jurisdiction, Benton?" an amused Heather asked.

Benton Fraser seemed not bothered by the attention now being lavished on him. "Indeed I was, Admiral. However, even if I did not have any legal authority as I would have possessed were I in Canada, I did assist Specialist Halbright and dozens of her peers in evading the considerable influence of normal inner city street life, pass their General Educational Development tests and either apply to serve in the armed forces of the United States or seek out post-secondary education. It was only the right and proper thing to do in the end."

Sandra giggled again as Heather was quick to note several shipgirls were now giving Benton very frank stares. Before anyone could comment, a cat's meow caused the staff sergeant to look down and see a black-and-white patched shorthair cat now rubbing up against his left riding boot. Without hesitation, he leaned down to offer his hand for the purring feline's attention. After he sniffed the staff sergeant, his purring increased as he rubbed his head on Benton's fingers. The cat didn't resist him as
the Mountie gently scooped him into his arms and lifted him to face level. "I believe this is Oskar..."

"OSKAR?! WO BIST DU GERÄDE?! OSKAR! WO BIST DU?! OSKAR!"

Benton turned, then barked out, "ER IST MIT MIR, SCHLACHTSCHIFFMÄDCHEN!"

A relieved cry echoed from near the battleship dorms as Bismarck raced over to where her precious cat was. Saluting Heather on seeing the admiral there, the battleship then turned...before her face flushed as red as a cherry on seeing the handsome man holding Oskar. "Um...d-danke, Herr Polizeimeister..."

"Bitte," Benton returned as he handed Oskar over, then switched to accented Japanese as he added, "I would recommend that your cat is fitted with a collar with your bugwappen so there can be no mistake in case he gets lost again."

"By end of business today, Miss Bismarck," Heather added. "And your uniform."

The battleship jerked, then nodded. "Jawohl, Frau Admiral!"

With another salute, she was off as Heather rolled her eyes...

The mess hall, an hour later...

"So who was that guy?"

"He's a member of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police!"

"Eh?! What a freaking Mountie doing here?!"

Moroboshi Ataru blinked while overhearing some of the destroyers and cruisers chat with each other
about the events that had surrounded the raising of the colours that morning while he walked hand-in-hand with Kirishima to the mess. They were accompanied by his sister Tariko and her sister Kongō, the other two battleships of their class trailing them. Right behind them was Harry Potter, whose arms were currently being held by Bismarck's sister and the last of the Littorio-class battleships. Both Ataru and Tariko had seen the embarrassed look on the wizard's face when they had emerged from their guest quarters; clearly, for all his fame as the "Boy Who Lived", Harry just had NO experience whatsoever with the fairer gender. "You okay there, Harry?" Ataru teased.

Harry jolted, his cheeks reddening even more as Tirpitz and Imperio gazed fondly at him; the latter of the pair of battleships had immediately gone to meet up with her new friend in his guest bedroom after a night's stay at the refurbishment docks. "Give me a bloody dragon any day of the week, Ataru!"

"You fought a dragon, Harry?" Imperio asked. Like her sisters, she wore a hat that resembled the large rangefinder housings meant to be positioned atop her forward superstructure. She was dressed similarly to what Vittorio Veneto normally wore: A green high-collar parade jacket over a button shirt, the whole over a crimson skirt that went to mid-thigh; dark pantyhose covered her legs and hips. She had flaming red hair which matched the Italian flag, styled in the same bob cut Roma wore. Her eyes were a beautiful green that nearly matched the young wizard's; unlike Roma, Imperio didn't wear glasses.

"What the hell were you doing messing with a dragon, Harry?" Tariko asked as they stepped into the mess hall, then moved to get into the lineup.

"A stupid tournament I got shanghaied into thanks to a Death Eater; he's one of Voldemort's followers," Harry answered. "He actually found a way to disguise himself as our defence teacher in the year that just ended. Surprised the hell out of me he was able to get away with it with Professor Dumbledore there..."

"For all his experience, Albus is human as well, Harry," a woman's voice called out, making everyone turn as Moroboshi Negako came up to join them along with Yonaga and her sisters; of course, Yamato was now accompanied by Enterprise. "Sometimes far too trusting to the better angels of human nature when it comes to others. It amazes me even now that Deannette was able to train him in the autumn of 1944 to allow him to defeat his old paramour at Nurmengard."

"Could these Death Eaters be an issue for us, Frau Negako?" Tirpitz asked.

"There are ways to deal with them, Tirpitz. However, given the grave injury Jessica delivered to Thomas Riddle when she removed the horcrux fragment from Harry yesterday, I doubt they will be considering doing anything beyond the borders of the United Kingdom in the immediate future; magical traditionalists in that nation are shockingly ignorant about matters beyond their borders."
"How so?" Enterprise asked.

The ninjutsu grandmaster stared in amusement at the famous carrier. "Are you aware of how magicals in your country govern themselves, Enterprise?"

Enterprise nodded. "The Department of Magic is administered by the Secretary of Magic, who answers directly to the President in all matters that cross the security divide; these days, Secretary Quahog is currently the second senior advisor to President Obama when it comes to the Abyssals behind Secretary of Defence Carter. The Secretary of Magic is assisted legislatively by the Magical Congress of the United States, which is a single house parallel to the House of Representatives, though members serve for six year terms like normal members of the Senate do. There's a magical version of the Supreme Court; the justices are chosen by the Secretary with the advice and consent of the Magical Congress, just like the President has to obtain the advice and consent of the Senate when he makes appointments to specific offices such as the secretaries of Cabinet. The Secretary of Magic's directly voted into office by all magical electors every six years; the secretarial elections are always set three years after the congressional elections. There are no state-level departments of magic since overall numbers are too small even these days."

"What about the President of the Magical Congress?" Harry asked.

Enterprise stared in confusion at him. "There is only one president in the United States, Mister Potter. His name is Barack Hussein Obama the Second. He was elected to the office in the autumn of 2008, took the oath of office the following January and he'll be stepping down in January coming up because a president who hasn't been forced up from vice-president can only serve two consecutive four-year terms in the White House. There's no magical president whatsoever. The Magical Constitution spells it out that the Secretary of Magic be administratively subordinate to the President as part of his overall Cabinet even if the Secretary is directly voted into office by American magicals."

"Obama-daitōryō," Yonaga finished. "Harry-san, what have you read about this?"

Harry hummed. "Well, it was my friend Hermione who explained this to me, Yonaga-san. American magicals are administered by the Magical Congress of the United States. It was first formed after the Salem Witch Trials in 1693...!"

"Whoa! Stop all engines!" Enterprise barked out, making him gape in shock at her. "How in the name of God did people come to believe THAT?! The United States wasn't even an NATION until 1776! There's no way in HELL that someone could have thought up the idea of the United States back in the 1690s! Whoever wrote that stupid sea story was clearly running on bad bunker fuel!"
"I believe the point has been made here," Negako added. "No doubt, Harry, the mistake about the 'president' of the Magical Congress in the books your friend read was because the position of Deputy Secretary of Magic – that person is the Secretary's main administrative assistant in the Department of Magic - was also accorded an operational supervisory post within the Magical Congress as the 'president pro tempore' of the body, akin to the Speaker in the British House of Commons. She or he is nominated by the Secretary from the list of active congressmen, then voted into such a position by the Magical Congress."

Harry considered that, then he shook his head. "Hermione is going to freak!"

"Why do you say that, Harry?" Imperio asked.

"Well, she warned me about being careful concerning using magic here. Anyone who goes to Mahōtokoro who break the Statute of Secrecy are automatically expelled even for potentially permissible reasons such as self-defence."

That made Negako's eyebrow rise as the Japanese shipgirls listening to this all exchanged curious looks. "Where exactly is Mahōtokoro, Harry?"

"On an island near Iwo-jima..."

"Iō-tō, Harry-san," Yonaga instantly corrected. "The word 'Iwo-jima' is a Western mistranslation." As Harry quickly muttered an apology for making such a mistake, the carrier looked over. "Was there ever such a school, Negako-san?"

"Hai, Yonaga. Mahōtokoro was located on Minami-iōtō in the Kazan-rettō," the ninjutsu grandmaster answered. "It was established by Japanese magical isolationists who loathed the ever-growing influx of Chinese and Korean magical teachings that were being introduced to local practitioners within the Home Islands during the latter years of the Heian period. It was selected because it was many kilometres from mainland Japan and uninhabited, far out of reach of anyone who might seek to eliminate such teachings by destroying the school. However, Mahōtokoro fell out of favour when Tomohito Tennō allowed the founding of a Western-theme school at Nagasaki, Dejima, in 1550; it was through there that the Hogwarts-style of wand magic was first brought into the country."

"I've never heard of Dejima," Harry confessed.
"Not surprising," Negako stated. "When Dejima was established, Tomohito Tennō also decreed that district magical schools be maintained to ensure traditional forms of magic would be retained. They eventually evolved over the years into the current system of regional Imperial Magical Commanderies. With that, Mahōtokoro was seen ultimately as unnecessary in the grander scheme. Yomigawa Tsukiko ordered its closure after she was elevated to the position of Mahō-Shōgun in 1930; that made her the equal of your Minister for Magic. Whatever your friend read about how magicals are administered in Japan is completely wrong, Harry. No doubt, given that graduates of Dejima – who 'should' have supported the European colonial powers during the Second World War because they shared the same magical educational syllabus – all gladly supported Tsukiko in her campaigns across Asia and Africa to free local magicals from European control, those who wrote those texts believed it best to make their readers think Mahōtokoro still exists and such radical enforcement of the Statute of Secrecy is a factor of life with magicals in Japan, thus to deter anyone from travelling to Japan and learning the truth. Because of that, those who attend Dejima are forced to say they are students of Mahōtokoro when they travel to Britain because of threats of censorship by the Ministry of Magic." She gave him a knowing look. "If Albus did not tell you that Heather was here to see to your needs and help you recover from Cedric's murder, would you have come?"

He shook his head. "Not really..."

She nodded. "My point is made. You will obtain the chance to see how magicals are properly administered in this country later this morning when Negi Springfield comes with Konoe Konoemon to brief Heather on local magical affairs. You will be at that meeting so that you can bear witness to what has happened in your part of magical Britain since you began attending Hogwarts."

With that, she headed off to look in on some of the destroyers. Harry watched her go, then shook his head. "Who is Negi Springfield?" he asked.

Save for the newcomers, all the shipgirls were gaping in disbelief at him. Noting this, Tariko shook her head before she gazed on Ataru. 「Talk about being a country bumpkin or what?!」 she telepathically thought out.

「Amen to that,」 he thought back.

"Ataru-san?"

He perked, then gazed over at Yonaga. "What's wrong?"
"Who is Tomohito Tennō?" the carrier asked.

He blinked several times, then he chuckled. "Oh, sorry about that! Onē-san doesn't care at all about posthumous names. He's the Go-Ñara Tennō."

That made Yonaga gape. "Why does Negako-san hate posthumous names?"

"In her eyes, in the face of whatever awaits us in the next life, the whole concept of titles just falls through the cracks," Tariko explained as the line moved up and people in their group moved to pick up trays. "Atop that, Onē-san's sort of a 'just the facts' type of person, Yonaga-san. She wants the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. She's so freaking blunt about things at times, she'd be insulting people left, right and centre if they all weren't so scared of her 'Imperial Special Agent #49' persona. Things like nicknames just totally flies over Onē-san's head; she doesn't see the use in that sort of stuff. It takes a HELL of a lot to make Onē-san actually let her hair down around people. Heck, if she didn't know that Harry's first name is actually 'Harry' and not 'Henry' or 'Harold', she'd be calling him that instead. Look what she does when it comes to Raeburn-taishō? Everyone who's friends with her calls her 'Dean'. Not Onē-san! It's always 'Deannette'."

"She prefers proper formality, but not grandstanding," Tirpitz mused.

"Yeah! Which is weird since the only people she'd ever address by title is the Heavenly Sovereign and his equals such as the Queen of the Commonwealth or the King of Thailand. She must have got it from Master Hosan, I think."

"That wouldn't be so bad," Ataru noted.

The shipgirls all nodded. "It is sad, though," Kongō mused.

"Why do you say that, Onē-sama?" Hiei asked.

"How can Negako understand burning love if she doesn't open her heart?!"

Her sisters all hummed...
...then everyone perked as some destroyers screamed out in surprise, making heads snap over as a beautiful white owl soared into the mess, causing people to yelp as they ducked the large bird. Before someone could do something, the beautiful avian angled herself around a stanchion, then came to a hover. "What the hell's a snowy owl doing here?!" Chilliwack asked from a nearby table as some of the light cruisers moved to try to corral the newcomer.

A shrill whistle caused the owl to hoot, then she came down to land right on Harry Potter's outstretched arm. Seeing that, many of the younger shipgirls all gaped in awe at the sight. "Ano, Harry-sensei...?" Akatsuki began.

Harry chuckled. "Excuse me for a moment," he apologized to his battleship companions, then after handing his tray to Tirpitz, walked out of the line to allow the destroyers a closer look. "This is my owl, Hedwig."

Mass gasps escaped the growing crowd of shipgirls who had come up to gaze on the pretty bird. "Harry-sensei, you own an OWL, nanodesu?!” Inazuma gasped.

"Hai!" He then gazed on Hedwig. "Did you fly all the way here from Britain?!

Hedwig hooted at him, looking quite satisfied. "Oh, I get it!" the wizard then noted before he gaped. "You bribed Fawkes to flame you over to Japan?!

Another hoot from the owl, as if she indignantly said, "What?! Do you honestly think I can fly ten thousand kilometres in just a day?!"

"Well, that was smart! You weren't being tracked, were you?"

A more indignant hoot, as if Hedwig said, "I'm not that sloppy, Potter!"

"He talks to his owl?"

Harry looked over to see a wide-eyed Akagi gazing his way. "Of course I talk to her, Akagi-san! She's probably the only true friend I've ever had!"
Another smug hoot escaped the owl in question. Back in the serving line, Tariko moaned. "British wizards are just plain **weird**!" she muttered under her breath. "Oi, Kon-chan, is there something odd in the water they drink?!"

"Makes you wonder," the fast battleship mused, shrugging...

*To Be Continued...!*

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**WRITER'S NOTES**

1) The **Pinnacle Islands** is the Western name for the small islets near Táiwān known as the **Senkaku-shotō** in Japanese, the **Diàoyúdāo** on mainland China and the **Diàoyútái Liè Yǔ** on Táiwān. The islets are under dispute due to potential oil reserves being discovered in the area in 1968; when the Ryūkyū Islands were transferred back to Japan from American control (as asserted after World War Two) in 1972, the governments in Běijīng and Táiběi both loudly rejected Tōkyō's claim to the islets. The islets are uninhabited.

2) When the United Nations were looking for a place to establish their world headquarters in the 1940s, the twin cities of **Niagara Falls** in Ontario and New York state were considered a possibility thanks to **Navy Island**, which is located upriver from the Falls themselves in the Chippawa Channel, the branch of the Niagara River that flows west of **Grand Island** and forms part of the international boundary; the channel to the east of Grand Island is the Tonawanda Channel. Plans for the United Nations' headquarters site on Navy Island would have seen bridges built across the river to both the mainland of Ontario and to Grand Island; just Goggle "United Nations Navy Island" to see what I mean. Of course, given that **New York City** is on the Atlantic coast of the United States, moving the headquarters of the United Nations to a secure location inland and away from the Abyssals would simply just be prudent.

3) Ye old translation list: **Po pai** - Good night; **Krasnoznamënnýj Sévernyj Flot** - Literally "Red Banner Northern Fleet", the traditional name of the Russian Navy's formation based around Múrmansk on the Arctic Ocean coast; **Suthrige** - The Anglo-Saxon name for a kingdom that sat on the land occupied today by the English county of **Surrey**; **Kyokujitsu-ki** - The "rising sun flag" that serves as the Japanese naval war ensign; **Dienstflagge der Seestreitkräfte** - Service Flag of the Naval Forces; **Bandiera Navale Militare** - Ensign of the (Italian) Navy; **Buongiorno** - Good morning; **Sorelle maggiori** - Elder sisters; **Gruß an Kiel** - Greetings to Kiel; **La Ritirata** - The Retreat; **Wo bist du gerade?** - Where are you now?; **Er ist mit mir** - He is with me; **Schlachtschifffäden** - Literally "battleship maiden", this is the term I came up with to address shipgirls like Bismarck in German; **Polizeimeister** - Literally "master of police", this is the rough
German police rank equivalent of an RCMP staff sergeant; **Bugwappen** - Ship's crest; **President pro tempore** - President for a time; **Minami-iōtō** - South Sulphur Island; **Heian** - Literally "peace", this is the name of the period of Japanese history from 794-1185, considered the high water mark of Chinese and Korean cultural influence on Japan; **Mahō-Shōgun** - Supreme General of Magic.

4) I came up with the term "**Imperius Defence**" when I was writing **Harry Potter and the Icemaidens** to describe the moves by people such as Lucius Malfoy to avoid a stay at Azkaban in the wake of Voldemort's downfall. Other writers have done the same, so I can't say who was the one who first coined the term; I have seen it used in other fanfic stories. In the universe of this story, the term is used in a derisive manner by those who doubted such a story.

5) **Svetlána Il'ínična Múromeca** made her first appearance in Part 12 of **Wizards and Avalonians III: The Black Maidens and the Rail-Splitter**. Her rank of chief marshal of magical troops (in Russian, **Glávnyj Máršal Mágíčeskíe Vojsk Rossíjskoj Federácii**) would be the equal of a **generál ármii** ("general of the army"), which is the equal of a four-star general in the West (NATO rank code OF-9). Also, names of relatives of Harry Potter's classmates mentioned here are my invention if they haven't shown up in the books. Atop that, the **Dejima School of Wizardry and Witchcraft** (in Japanese, **Dejima Mahōmajutsu-gakkō**) is my creation; it was mentioned in **The Icemaidens and the Philosopher's Stone**.

6) The term **CODLAG** is short for "Combined Diesel-Electric and Gas". This is a form of ship propulsion that combines gas turbine engines (for high speeds) and electric motors powered by diesel engines (for lower speeds). The electric motors are directly connected to the propeller shafts. The gas turbine would be connected to the shafts via cross-connecting gearboxes; when the ship needs to go to cruising speed, clutches can be used to disconnect the turbine. The advantage of this system is that servicing costs are reduced, more power can be generated for shipboard use and maintenance costs and time are dropped due to the lesser number of drive units in this system. Given that **Hood** was built with four propeller shafts, she would have two CODLAG drive systems.

7) **Nerio** is my name for the **Mundus Magicus** ("Magical World") as depicted in **Negima**. In the universe of my stories, Nerio is NOT the planet Mars under magical disguise but a separate planet in a tilted orbit; the two planets were once one but separated by a massive asteroid strike millions of years ago that allowed all life-bearing elements that was on Mars to transfer over to Nerio. As an aside, the incident concerning **Saotome Haruna** moving to make an ultra-passionate magical replica of **Miyazaki Nodoka** was depicted in **Mahō Sensei Negima** manga chapter #175, "A Single Frame of a Youthful Summer".

8) Unlike many nations, the United States always insisted on its national flag, the **Star-Spangled Banner**, to serve as its naval ensign. The **First Navy Jack** is a thirteen-stripe flag similar to the national flag in styling without the blue canton, it embossed with a golden snake and the words **DON'T TREAD ON ME** on the lowermost white stripe. As many Americans know, the snake with the term "Don't Tread On Me" was a popular symbol from Revolutionary War of 1775-83. Until
1980, the jack (the flag flown at the staff at the bow of a warship) was always the canton of the national flag with the proper number of stars on it. In 1980, the Secretary of the Navy decreed the oldest active commissioned warship would fly the First Navy Jack (excluding the sail frigate USS Constitution). After the 9/11 attacks in 2001, all American naval warships began flying the First Navy Jack as a visible symbol of the country being engaged in the War on Terror...and in the universe of this story, the Abyssal War.

9) The "Z" Flag is one of the international maritime lettered signal flags. Under normal circumstances, it symbolizes a ship asking for the assistance of a tug (when flying alone) or warning that the ship is deploying fishing nets (if close to known fishing grounds). When used with number flags, the "Z" flag indicates Zulu Time, the military term for what was once known as Greenwich Mean Time (GMT). In Japan, the "Z" flag was used by the commander of the Combined Fleet, Fleet Admiral Tōgō Heihachirō (1848-1934) to send out a message of encouragement to his forces about to engage in the Battle of Tsu-shima on 27 May 1905 against the Russians; as had been arranged to all his crews ahead of time, the "Z" flag flying alone off the yardarm of battleship Mikasa represented the message "The fate of the Empire rests on the outcome of this battle. Let each man do his utmost." Since that time, the "Z" flag has been used in Japan as a symbol to encourage victory or success in all endeavours.

10) As indicated above, Requiem for a Soldier is the name of the theme music for the 2001 HBO television miniseries Band of Brothers, based on the 1993 historical work concerning Company "E", 2nd Battalion, 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment (COY E, 2/506 PIR) of the United States Army in World War Two as written by Stephen Ambrose (1936-2002). The song was placed to words and first published by Welsh mezzo-soprano singer/songwriter Katherine Jenkins (born 1980); the song was published in the 2007 album Rejoice.

11) For those Due South fans who might wish to know, East Racine Street in Chicago doesn't exist. There are both a North Racine Avenue and South Racine Avenue in the Windy City; both of them, however, are quite a distance from where the Consulate General of Canada is located at 180 North Stetson Avenue north of Millennium Park downtown. No doubt, the producers of Due South didn't want to imply too much in the way of real locations when they made the series.

12) Go-Nara Tennō (1495-1557), given the birth name Tomohito, was the 105th Heavenly Sovereign of Japan; he ruled from 1526 to his death. The "go" part of his name indicates he was the second ruler of Japan to use the name "Nara"; in older Western literature, he is often referred to as "Nara II". However, there is NOT a "Nara Tennō" listed among the of rulers in Japan that I can find!
The Seventh Carrier's First Voyage

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Eta-jima, the headquarters building, after breakfast...

"You can come out now, Judy. I know you're there."

A groan escaped the shadows at one corner of the room now set aside for Heather Thompkins' use, making Mutsu spin around as she summoned her rigging...then she stopped on seeing a woman standing there, arms crossed behind her back in the standard military at-ease position as she gazed into the back of the admiral's head, a touch of annoyance on her face. Said woman appeared to be in her twenties, possessing well-styled dark blonde hair and blue eyes peeking out of an angular face. She was currently in Canadian Army Number 3C service dress: A pale green open collar shirt over rifle green slacks bloused into polished paratrooper boots, a matching rifle green knit crewneck sweater over the top. On her shoulder rank slip-ons were the crown over "pip" star insignia of a lieutenant colonel, the rank insignia a stormy grey framed in black. In lieu of the standard national shoulder mark at the bottom of the slip-on, there was a three-letter regimental abbreviation in gold: RCF. "How...?"

Heather tried not to smirk. "Dean knew of you people since well before you were mobilized the first time in the 1890s," she stated as she gazed over her shoulder at the newcomer. "Miss Mutsu, you can put the rigging away. Even if the colonel doesn't understand manners at times, she means no harm." She turned to gaze on the iPad in her hand. "What are you doing here, Judy?"

Taking a deep breath, Judy Barnes moved to sit down after placing her hat on the rack by the window overlooking the grounds. As she dispersed her rigging, Mutsu's eyes went wide as she noted that the newcomer's headdress was an actual grey-fur coonskin cap of all things, the tail tucked over the left side and secured to a place under her cap badge! "'V' Commando was assigned to keep an eye on yourself and General Dover since you've decided to base yourself here in Japan in lieu of working out of Discovery in Vancouver as the Wizengamot hoped you would have done. Much that we know you can take care of yourself, being all the way out here in Japan — to say anything of General Raeburn being in Britain of all places — doesn't make people back home comfortable."
Heather gave the other woman a surprised look. "Since when did the Regiment ever care about what those idiots in Québec City think? You got the order to mobilize from the Queen three years ago when Prime Minister Harper asked for a Magical Royal Proclamation to make the security squads back off and let everyone work together against the Abyssals. There's nothing the Wizengamot can do to force you to do anything, much less force me to do anything."

"I know...but listening to those strutting popinjays say the same thing over and over again can give anyone a headache," Judy complained, which made the admiral chuckle. "Oui, we have the writ to take charge of shore defences against those things and helped reactivate the Navy Reserve Magical Service...but the Wizengamot wants to be seen as doing something." She rolled her eyes as Heather shook her head. "I swear, those fools can be as bad as the idiots over in Britain, much less the isolationist morons still in the States!"

"Ano...?"

Heather perked. "I apologize, Miss Mutsu. May I present Lieutenant Colonel Judy Barnes of Edmundton in New Brunswick. She's the commanding officer of 'V' Commando of the Royal Regiment of Canadian Foresters. Judy, this is Mutsu..."

"Second of the Nagato-class battleships, one of the so-called 'Big Seven' Washington Treaty battleships armed with sixteen-inch guns and part of the first class of the proposed 'Eight-Eight' Fleet. Though now with the original Washington and the 1920s version of the South Dakota-class having answered the call to arms, that will become the 'Big Fourteen',' Judy finished.

"Actually, it would be the 'Big Twenty-two' in that case, Barnes-chūsa," Mutsu stated with an amused smile, impressed that the visiting Canadian soldier was so well-versed in naval matters. "You forgot to include Kaga-san's sister Tosa-san, Akagi-san's sisters Tōgasa-san, Minako-san and Ashitaka-san and the four Lexington-class battlecruisers that were never converted to aircraft carriers; all were cancelled because of the Washington Naval Treaty. All would be armed with 406 or 410 millimetre guns as their primary armament." She then blinked. "Forgive me, Barnes-chūsa, but I've never heard of the Foresters."

"Don't be surprised," Judy noted. "We're the magical corps of the Militia of the Dominion and have been since well before the so-called 'Great Sasquatch Rebellion' of 1892 forced us to remind our American cousins that there IS an international boundary separating their country from ours." As Mutsu looked surprised — as far as she always understood, there had been effective peace between the Dominion and the United States since the early Nineteenth Century — the New Brunswicker added, "In Big Mistake Number Two..." — hearing that made Heather smirk — "...we formed the First Canadian Forester Division to augment the Americans' Seventh Cavalry Division in Europe and the Seventh Marine Division in the Pacific, plus helped secure North America from Grindelwald and supported the War Hawks' battles against the Übermenschen and the Black Dragon Society right to the Battle of Toronto after VJ Day in 1945. You know of that?"
"I know of the Seventh Marine Division," the battleship affirmed. "Yomigawa-gensui speaks of the warriors of that formation with profound respect. Unlike the normal side of the Greater East Asia War, the magical side was fought with considerable civility since Yomigawa-gensui’s final goal was to liberate all of Asia and Africa from being enslaved to the European powers; that was strongly supported by both the Americans and the Canadians. If she pulled it off while Grindelwald-daijin wrecked European magical governments and saw the Statute of Secrecy overturned, she would have turned on the militarists who launched the normal side of that war, forged a peace with the Allies, then convince Shōwa Tennō to allow Táiwān and Korea to be independent again since America had been moving to allow the Philippines to be independent around that time. But since Grindelwald-daijin was defeated by Dumbledore-kōchōsensei at the Battle of Nurmengard, the conflicting political goals across the secrecy barrier in both America and in Japan forced the normal part of the war to end the way it did...even if the magical side of that war ended in a mutually beneficial peace with Yomigawa-gensui’s goals ultimately fulfilled. Still, she never spoke about Canadian magical warriors fighting with the Seventh Marine Division."

"We only had one brigade loaned over to the jarheads as the round-out formation for the division, much like we sent two brigades to round out the Seventh Cavalry Division for operations in Europe," Judy explained. "The rest of the division was detailed to continental defence, plus supporting Admiral Thompkins and her friends in the War Hawks. Along the way, we helped the Americans reorganize their magical government after they got in the way when it came to the War Hawks and the fights they wound up being involved in..."

"All it needed was a little friendly 'reminder' to President Roosevelt of his ultimate executive powers over the Department of Magic thanks to the applicable clauses of the Magical Constitution," Heather finished. "Of course, that happened AFTER the Übermenschen bloodily demonstrated to the Magical Congress that their isolationist attitudes and magic wouldn't protect them from people who were effectively invulnerable to that. Once Magical Executive Order 9010 was dropped on the Magical Congress, Rappaport's Law was done away with..."

"What was that, Teitoku?" the battleship asked.

"A draconian 'no fraternization' law that tried to force all American magicals to isolate themselves from normal Americans...which also included a prohibition against marriages between normals and magicals, thus guaranteeing that normal-borns that were welcomed into the three main magical schools would have their parents and other relatives obliviated of all knowledge of their existence," Heather said, making Mutsu gasp in horror. "It was passed in 1790...but the Magical Congress totally ignored a clause in the Magical Constitution that allowed magical federal marshals of the peace to serve at the discretion of the President without any sort of operational interference from the Department of Magic; this was meant to check against any dictatorial moves by the Secretary of Magic against the normal government. In Abraham Lincoln's day, American presidents could call on a battalion's worth of marshals to help preserve the peace; that's why the Civil War was pretty much a normal-only affair. However, the influence of isolationism on the teachings of magical students at schools like Ilvermorny, Salem and Seven Hills began to drain the pool of magical marshals to the point where there was no one available to serve Warren Harding.
"After Judy's friends stopped an obliviation squad from attacking President Roosevelt in 1942 because they wanted to find a way to get me out of working with Dean and the others since my using magic was a 'threat' to the Statute of Secrecy..." — here, she made finger quotes — "...he asked the First Forester Division to help keep the magical peace in America while the Department of Magic was given a long-needed housecleaning in the wake of 9010. Rappaport's Law was declared illegal since there was a subordination clause in the Magical Constitution which made the Secretary of Magic answerable to the President on matters that crossed the security divide." At Mutsu's curious look, the former Supreme Mugwump of the International Confederation of Wizards explained, "When the law was seen as in effect, the Secretary had no effective check whatsoever on his or her behaviour as had been guaranteed by the Statute of Secrecy when it came to dealing with heads-of-state. The people who wrote up the Statute realized that to make it truly work, some sort of administrative subordination to the rulers of nations at that time had to be put into place to allow the subconscious magics of the land to help it be enforced. Here in Japan, the Statute couldn't be made effective until Higashiyama Tennō issued his Imperial Magical Rescript of Genroku-gonen declaring his accepting the Statute and legalizing the decrees made by Mahō-Shōgun Tokugawa Kameko which serve as this country's equivalent to the Separation Acts in the British Commonwealth."

"Normal or magical, such power is always controlled by the Crown in Canada or in Britain," Judy added. "Or by the Heavenly Sovereign here in Japan."

The battleship nodded, becoming more fascinated by the moment by this topic. "What of America, Teitoku? Right from the beginning, the Americans rejected having a dynastic monarchy, choosing an elected presidential system instead. How would the American version of the Separation Act have worked then?"

"They followed the Swiss approach," Heather stated. "When Switzerland became fully independent of the Holy Roman Empire in 1648, the magical advisors to the various canton councils discovered then that the underlying magic of their country that bonded Swiss human magicals together as a community had focused on the Confederation's founding document, the Federal Charter created in 1291 between the cantons of Schwyz, Uri and Unterwalden. In America, it was the Declaration of Independence in 1776 and the Constitution written in 1787 that serve as the national foci for the magicals of that land descent from European immigrants. Thus, when the Magical Constitution was agreed on in the same year the normal Constitution was written, the President was seen as the proper head-of-state when it came to interpreting the clauses of the Statute when it concerned keeping top-level intragovernmental communications active."

"This Rappaport's Law flew in the face of that," Mutsu concluded.

"Oui," the admiral affirmed. "But given how busy President Washington and his government was in getting things properly established on the normal side, the Department of Magic was allowed to go on its own way; the president understood what sort of work Secretary Rappaport had to pour into making her part of the federal government work and see to it American magicals were served."
"Oui. Madame Rappaport had a good reason to clamp down hard on that issue; the security breach in 1790 that started the whole thing was quite ugly. But as time went on, the fear of widespread discovery by 'no-majs' — that was the classical term for normal humans in America; you can obviously guess what it means — drove people in the Department of Magic into enforcing that law with zealous vigour. However, since such did win President Washington's support because of his own fear of foreign entanglements, the successive Secretaries of Magic always met with newly incumbent presidents as a matter of common courtesy over the Nineteenth Century and into the first decade of the Twentieth Century." She then scowled. "Until Woodrow Wilson was elected in 1913. The Deputy Secretary of Magic at the time, Seraphina Picquery, was of African descent...and there was no way in Hell that a 'good southern boy' like Mister Wilson would accept that. That caused the 'Scare of 1914' when he threatened to have Seraphina and all other non-white members of the Department and the Magical Congress removed from office by magical executive order. According to what Seraphina told me about that incident when I met her in late 1942, she obliviated the idiot to stop him from using that power to force Jim Crow laws down the throats of the Department of Magic...and all went completely quiet between magicals and normals for nearly three decades until the war started."

Judy laughed. "That KKK-loving fool deserved that!"

As Mutsu giggled, Heather nodded. "That he did..."

"So after Roosevelt-daitōryō forced his magical executive order on them to make them get rid of that law, what happened then?" the battleship asked.

"Well, they had to rebuild first from what the Übermenschen did to them," the admiral answered. "It had been quite bloody in places during the first couple of months after Pearl Harbour. Dean, Jessica, Martin and I were busy learning how to work together and we had to make sure the Dominion and Newfoundland was secured first. We weren't called down to America until around the time of Midway. What was worse for American magicals, radical rhabdophobes on the normal side of the line who held onto knowledge of magic — they're known as 'Scourers' — saw the coming of metahumans as a sign from God that it was finally time to launch a modern version of the Salem witch hunts that saw the ancestral organization of both the Magical Congress and the Canadian Wizengamot formed in 1693." At Mutsu's nod, Heather explained, "After hearing what the Scourers were after and how they were prepared to push things, the president asked Prime Minister Mackenzie King to send Judy's friends down to help out."

"We call it the 'Happy Hunting Time'," the sorceress from New Brunswick noted. "Madame Mutsu, my regiment was first founded as a volunteer militia force that could come to the aid of our Ministry"
of Magical Affairs to ensure our borders remained secured, especially given prevalent American attitudes towards the founding of the Dominion in 1867; the whole 'manifest destiny' garbage that drove them to nearly wipe out the native Americans as they expanded past the Appalachians all the way to the Pacific. By the letter of the Statute, all member governments cannot maintain active military magical combat formations. We got around it by being a part-time militia that could be called to duty only at the order of the Crown. But it doesn't mean we weren't ignorant of things outside Canada in the days leading up to our first 'international debut'...

"This Great Sasquatch Rebellion of 1892 you spoke of earlier," Mutsu stated.

"That's right. We've always had a very lenient attitude towards magical creatures of all sorts. When the Sasquatches moved to rebel against the Americans' suppression of them, they were chased north into Canada by the federal aurors...and we mobilized ourselves to send those fools back to America with their magic ripped from them and a warning not to cross the border again without risking all-out war. We had no choice in that matter." At Mutsu's surprised look, the New Brunswicker added, "Our version of the British law that regulates relations with non-human magical beings is known as the 'Statute of the Noble Tribes'. As a commissioned officer of the Canadian Crown, I am obliged to acknowledge the laws of the land within reason per my duties to aid the civilian power when I am mobilized for whatever reason. And believe me, I have friends among the Sasquatches and other sentient magical species. It's how that particular law was written in the first place. Just a logical carry-on of the Magical Royal Proclamation of 1763 that guides our relationship with the magicals of the First Nations, the Inuit and the Métis to this day."

An understanding nod escaped the battleship. "Canadian magicals such as you see beings like the Kobaloi, the Veela and all the lunar therianthropic tribes not as dangerous creatures that need to be either caged or exterminated...but as fellow sentient beings with their own inherent sovereign rights. That's why it was so easy for the Ministry of Magical Affairs to accord Canadian kanmusu the same civil rights as magical humans." She then smiled. "The International Confederation of Wizards didn't care to see that happen and hoped you'd reverse that decision...that is until Tennō threatened to recall Yomigawa-gensui back to duty as his Mahō-Shōgun to properly direct the country's defence against the Abyssals...!" Her voice trailed off as her golden brown eyes went wide in realization. "Oh, my! Barnes-chūsa, are you saying that your regiment...?"

"We are the effective psychological equivalents to Marshal Yomigawa when it comes to how the more conservative magical governments tend to look at Canada as a whole," the New Brunswicker affirmed with a deadly smirk. "'When the Foresters take up their war axes, the world quakes in terror'; that's what a lot of people in Europe and America have always said about us. Thank God that Professor Stewart — he's the current Minister of Magical Affairs — was for getting us into the game right away to protect everyone in the long term since the Mounties' 'W' Division was about to get bled dry due to their inability to force the Abyssals back even with the help of local native magical shamans. HE was the one who went to Prime Minister Harper to get him to get the Queen to drop a Magical Royal Proclamation to shut the idiots in our Wizengamot up; they've never cared for us working together even in part-time service."
"Why?"

"Because we have believed in the basic rule of war, Madame Mutsu: WIN the damned thing and make sure the enemy NEVER comes back to haunt you again!" Judy coldly declared. "We're often seen by many people worldwide as just being too wild to be trusted. We showed it when we effectively exterminated the Scourers when we cleared them out of Canada in the 1870s and 1880s, then went down to clear them out of America in the 1940s. We showed it when we welcomed the Sasquatches into Canada after idiots in Washington threatened to exterminate them all, then showed their aurors it means to challenge squadrons and troops of real soldiers in lieu of the piss-poor paramilitary force they had been at the time." She shook her head. "Damned miracle that we were able to whip the Seventh Cavalry and the Seventh Marines into shape before they headed overseas. If they tried to fight the Magische Reichsarmee or the Daitōa Kaitō-guntai without any real understanding of how to fight a war, they'd have been slaughtered. That would have made it easy for Marshal Múromeca to sweep in with the Moskvá Mágičeskie Front to subdue America for Dyádja Iósef!"

Mutsu winced. Having had to often help her own sister recover from the many nightmares of what she went through in Operation: Crossroads — which soon expanded to helping Nagato's lover Saratoga and others who endured that event like Prinz Eugen and Sakawa — the battleship had a very good understanding of how the politics of that period drove the mass nuclear tests ordered by Harry Truman in the wake of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. First coming to light thanks to Ígor' Guzénko's defection to the Canadians in 1945, the total scale of Soviet intelligence operations in the West and gain military and economic advantage over the West — driven out of a very understandable desire to NOT experience a repeat of the sheer destruction unleashed in the Soviet Union during the Great Patriotic War — was breathtaking to behold in its effectiveness and its audacity. Indeed, if the American magical government had been totally wrecked thanks to Gellert Grindelwald's metahuman allies in the Übermenschen and if someone hadn't come along to help shore the nation's defences against an attack by the veterans who fought under Svetlána Múromeca, the world would be a much different place: The Bloody Siberian She-bear was as known for her hatred of the Statute of Secrecy as her old opponent from World War Two had been.

_The world can never be a simple place_, the battleship mused to herself. "What are the goals of the Foresters in this war, Barnes-chūsa?" she then asked.

"As I said before: WIN the damned thing and make sure those monsters never come back to threaten us again!" the New Brunswicker growled. "If that means using every dark spell imaginable to destroy them totally and completely once we find out how they arise from the deep like they do, we'll do it! If that means going all out to destroy any potential support for the enemy by those doomsayers who think the Abyssals are God's judgment on mankind for some idiot slight or another, we'll do it! If that means using the residual mesonium particles burned into the Canadian Shield thanks to General Raeburn's Power Jewel and ancient blood magic rituals powered by the sacrifice of thousands of brave Japanese sailors at Second Iō-tō to help you and the other filles navire gain the power to overwhelm the Abyssals with modern technology to save lives in the future, we'll do it! To hell with the damned Statute of Secrecy! It became obsolescent when metahumans appeared in the 1930s...and it sure as hell has no relevance in the face of aliens like what Madame Negako's brother
had to deal with over the last year, not to mention whatever these things are that you've been fighting for the last three years! It's not our fault that others have constantly refused to open their eyes to how nasty the real world is!"

"Sit down, Miss Mutsu," Heather then ordered. "Judy, she'll be my aide de camp until Aurora gets here to become CANCOMWESTPAC. Atop that, she and her friends all deserve to know what we're doing back home to help get their gear upgraded so they don't feel obsolescent when fighting with our own forces! And they need to eventually know about what's going on at Gravé! As do I!"

Judy stared at her, then her jaw dropped. "You were never told?!"

"No! In all the four years I've had to threaten to sic Dean on Bill Harlan to get him to back off from dragging me into whatever was going on at Tadoussac, I was NEVER given any sort of explanation as to WHY they wanted me there! Even when I asked about it after the war ended, the admiral and his friends stayed totally mum about it! I couldn't even find out anything when I was Supreme Mugwump! Now I KNOW that the old fool is moving to get Gravé back up to speed again; you just confirmed that the Regiment is helping out!" She smirked. "How the hell was it possible that the summoning chamber in Cornwallis was brought into commission so fast after Drake Harlan lost the whole Atlantic Fleet plus a tonne of friends from America and Europe at Sable Island?!"

Mutsu blinked. Rear Admiral Francis Drake Harlan was the Royal Canadian Navy's effective counterpart to Saitō Ten'ichi in Japan, Joanna Collins in America and Katharine Jones in Britain; his post was designated "Flag Officer Shipgirl Forces" and his current headquarters was at the recently-reactivated training base at Cornwallis on the south shore of Nova Scotia's Annapolis Basin. His biography — as provided to Saitō two years ago by Harlan's operational liaison in Eta-jima, Captain (Navy) Wendy Armstrong — made him a fourth-generation Navy man whose ancestors had been officers in Canada's senior service since its founding in 1910. A maritime surface and sub-surface officer by training with two ship commands and command of the Atlantic Fleet under his belt, Harlan had studied naval engineering at the Royal Military College of Canada. Even if he was a trained and experienced naval operations officer, he always kept up with the engineering side of things no matter where he was, which made his taking charge of Canada's shipgirl project a no-brainer. Yet if there was an older Harlan who had been in charge of the Royal Canadian Navy's magical service...?!

"Harlan-shōshō is magical?!!" the battleship exclaimed.

"No, he never got an invite to attend the Institute," Judy replied.

"The Institute of Sorcery and Magic," Heather cut in on seeing Mutsu's confused look. "Our version of Hogwarts; it's on the Sibley Peninsula in Ontario."
"Does he know of his relatives?" Mutsu asked.

"Of course. Being non-magical and born of magicals doesn't have the stigma it would have in Europe; any attempts at expelling 'squib' children from the family would have 'W' Division on the bastards like flies on horseshit!" Judy explained, making Mutsu laugh. "It's understandable Drake Harlan turned out that way. According to friends who helped get Gravé up and working during both world wars, his great-grandfather, grandfather and father poured their magic into making sure what they created there was completely top-notch."

"What DID they create, Judy?" Heather pressed.

The Forester colonel grinned...

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**Near the refurbishment docks, that moment...**

"Ano...!"

Harry Potter blinked before he looked at Inazuma. "What is it, Inazuma-san?"

Hearing the English wizard address her so formally, the childish brown-haired destroyer madly blushed. "M-m-may I c-c-carry Hedwig-san, nanodesu...?"

He blinked, then gazed on Hedwig, who had perched herself on his shoulder. The snowy owl then looked at the destroyer before she hooted as she lifted herself off Harry and fluttered over to land on Inazuma's head. As her sisters gushed at the sight of Hedwig doing that, Tenryū and Tatsuta exchanged looks. "They actually use owls as virtual postmen in your country?" the former asked.

"Hai, they do," he affirmed, trying not to blush too much as both Tirpitz and Imperio continued to hug his arms. "So what's this ceremony thing...?"

"Oh, it's not a big thing, Harry," Kongō stated as she waved everyone on to the large structure that housed the workshops supporting the Kanmusu-keikaku and allied shipgirls, plus the refurbishment docks that were always available to help a wounded shipgirl recover and restore herself to full
"Any new kanmusu summoned here gets her first chance to take to the water within forty-eight hours of the summoning. We have so many that came through on Sunday and yesterday who need to get their maiden feet properly baptized by Ōwatatsumi-no-Kami and Arariel-sama after so many years away from their embrace...!"

"Ano, Akagi-san...?"

"Hai, Yonaga-san?"

"Is Kongō-san NORMALLY like this?"

"This is her being TAME today, Yonaga-san."

Kongō squawked, then she glared at the grinning veterans of the Kidō Butai, who were now standing with their once-missing mission mate near the entrance to the main workshop. "It's the truth, Akagi-san!" the fast battleship stated. "How long has it been since Yonaga-san sailed the high seas?! If she denies herself the blessings of Ōwatatsumi-no-Kami and Arariel-sama, she'll be cursed!"

"Stop that, Kongō-san!" Fubuki stated as she came up from the nearby landing, her body already encased in her sea rigging even if the hand-held version of her "A" turret mount packing a pair of 10 centimetre 65 calibre Type 98 dual-purpose naval guns was hooked to her skirt and not on her right hand. "Yonaga-sempai doesn't understand what's going on here! Don't deluge her like that!"

Harry gazed on Moroboshi Tariko. "Is she normally like that?" he whispered.

"She is...and that's why I like her so much," the matriarch of the Moroboshi Clan of Mutsu said with an amused gaze on the fast battleship.

Kongō sputtered as her face turned an interesting shade of cherry while her sisters all laughed. "Tariko-chan...!" the British-born shipgirl moaned.

"Yonaga-san!"

Everyone turned as Akashi and Vestal stepped out of the main workshop. Both were carrying a
cargo pallet that was laden with a flight deck almost as long as Yonaga was tall, a proper hassun-nobi daikyū with a long quiver filled with more arrows that the shipgirls had seen even Shinano carry, a backpack that possessed a forest of cannon of three basic types and was topped with both the outward-tilting funnel Yonaga had as a warship and a nice lattice mast fitted with American radar systems, small outer armour bracers filled with more anti-aircraft mounts, a kyūdō-ka's yotsugake to protect the right hand, plus a new pair of zōri that were fitted into what were miniatures of the carrier's hull, complete with thick rudders and a pair of propellers each. Seeing all that made even the other carriers of the Kidō Butai gape. "Um...Yonaga-san, don't you think you'd be shipping a little too much?" Zuikaku asked.

"I had my own armourer's shop deep within my hull, complete with a foundry to forge new steel." As the other carriers gaped in shock, she added, "Remember, my crew were monitoring events via shortwave radio throughout the war and the chances were there that they might have had to deal with a stray Soviet patrol or two." The fifth of the Yamato-class ships then smiled. "Over the years, my air defence armament was tripled in size with scrap iron and other materials we could barter from the Čukči peoples, who did secretly trade with their Iñupiat cousins over in Alaska. Atop that, there was the odd Soviet MGB and later KGB border patrol craft my crew were able to ambush if they got close to Sano Bay; their disappearances could be simply attributed to the weather."

"A one-ship mobile support base with full attack capabilities," a new voice then said as people turned to watch Enterprise and her sisters come up to join them, followed by Yonaga's sisters, all of them prepared to take to the water. The American carriers wore what appeared to be pinup girl versions of the old Navy khaki service dress: A short-sleeved button shirt with a tie draped over matching khaki hotpants. They also had armoured thigh-high stockings boused into calf-high boots coloured a mixture of blue, red, white and grey, their hull classification symbol numbers on the outer flanks of their lower legs. "You would have been one hard nut to crack during the war, Yonaga-san."

Yonaga chuckled as Akashi and Vestal moved to start fitting all the rigging in place. "As you would have been as well, Enterprise-san. You had the blessings of all seven Christian saints who look after sailors during that war."

"It got close at times," the Grey Ghost of the United States Navy noted.

"Oi!"

Both looked at Tariko's brother Ataru. "You're both beautiful ladies!" he then chided. "Cut it out with the testosterone, okay?! It'll upset the destroyers!"

Yonaga and Enterprise both blushed as some of the others giggled. "Yamato-san, Musashi-san, Kii-san, get into your rigging and get into the water," Akashi then said. "Even if we tried to keep the weight balanced when we upgraded all of your sister's armaments to what was standard for a
Midway-class after the war, we want to make sure she doesn't list or have too much weight in the bow or the stern. She has the mass to take it without straining her keel, but...

"Best be safe than sorry," Musashi completed. "It will be done, Sensei."

All three battleships immediately stepped into the water, their rigging forming around their bodies as they set their engines to station-keeping to await their sister. By then, all of Yonaga's rigging was in place save for her new sea boots and her landing deck. Akashi and Vestal grunted as they moved to lift the latter into place, making all the carriers gape. "You have an armoured flight deck?!!" Enterprise exclaimed as Hornet, Yorktown, Zuikaku and Shōkaku helped Akashi secure it to Yonaga's left arm. "What do you have there?!!"

"A layer of steel on the flight deck of 200 millimetres, plus a mixed layer of steel and concrete 650 millimetres thick on a splinter deck one level down above the hangar deck," Yonaga stated, making all the others gape in shock at how well protected the seventh carrier was. "In effect, my admiral insisted my flight deck was hard enough to equal my sister's turrets...which is logical in the end as what happened at Midway proved so well." Ignoring the winces from her mission mates who were sunk on that late spring day in 1942, she adjusted her arms to get used to the added weight on her body, then she slipped off her normal zōri to walk into her sea boots, which Fubuki had set on the edge of the water. Slipping them on, Yonaga felted the power of her refurbished engines and boilers flood her body, her new diesel and electric motors also turning on to energize all her systems. "Oh, this is wonderful..." she hissed out...

...and then she pushed off into the open water.

The destroyers screamed in delight on seeing that the carrier was evenly balanced on her keel; even if she wasn't tilting either forward or aft as she moved to join her sisters, Yonaga had bent her knees slightly as she allowed her engines to push her hull forward at about five knots. With a delighted laugh, the others of the Kidō Butai went into the water themselves to join her, followed by the three Yorktown-class carriers. "Everyone, let's go!" Fubuki called out as she got into the water and raced off after them.

Tatsuta, Tenryū and the other destroyers cheered as they followed their friend into the bay. Hedwig flew clear of Inazuma, then soared to land on Harry's shoulder. "Bloody hell!" the wizard snarled. "Better keep an eye on them!"

"You got a hovercycle?" Tariko asked.

"Even better!" Harry called out as he drew his wand. "ACCIO FIREBOLT!"
The Moroboshi twins and the two battleships who had been escorting Harry blinked on hearing that, then spun around as something soared out of the guest quarters towards him. Ataru and Tariko gaped as Harry snared the flying broom, then flipped himself onto the seat as he planted his feet into the footpegs before soaring out after the shipgirls who had headed away from the base and were now swinging to starboard to head out into Hiroshima-wan proper. Seeing that, Tariko chuckled. "You're gonna have a load of fun with that one, Onē-san," she noted as she gazed over her shoulder to watch Negako come join them.

"He has much potential," the ninjutsu grandmaster stated with something of a predatory smile crossing her face. "Go watch over them."

"Hai!"

"Imperio-san, Tirpitz-san, we'll get your rigging out now," Akashi promised.

"Danke!"/"Grazie!" both battleships chimed.

As Ataru and Tariko raced off and the two repair auxiliaries went back into their workshop to get Tirpitz's and Imperio's gear, Negako hummed, then turned back towards the headquarters building to discuss matters with Heather...

Out in the harbour approaching the passage into Hiroshima-wan...

"Even keel so far, Yonaga-san?" Akagi asked.

"I'm alright," Yonaga stated as she felt the parts of her internal structure respond immediately to her desires and commands. "Before we go anywhere..."

She drew her daikyū, then a couple of arrows from her quiver. Before the other carriers could say anything, she notched both of them into her bow, aimed to the north, then launched them. Everyone watched as the arrows transformed into three-ship flights, one of Mitsubishi A7M Reppū fighters and one of Aichi B7A Ryūsei attack bombers, all loaded to bear. "Eh?!" Fubuki called out before looking back; she had placed herself ahead of Yamato, who herself was ahead of her sister.
"Yonaga-senpai, why are you putting up combat air patrols?!"

"We are in a war situation, Fubuki-san!" the carrier admonished the destroyer, causing her to wince. "Even if it has been some time since a submarine came into this place to attack the base, we have to be constantly on guard...!" She then tensed as a message came in from one of her A7Ms. "Submarine!"

Everyone gasped before the destroyers immediately moved to do sonar scans. "Where?!" Yūdachi demanded. "I don't have a sonar contact!"

"Are you sure about that, Senpai?!" Mutsuki wondered.

"Just near the approach to the North Base basin!" Yonaga stated. "Vectoring in the bombers to try to chase this one up to the surface...!"

"WAIT!"

That was Enterprise. "E-chan...?" Yamato called out.

The carrier smirked. "Yonaga-san! Get your Graces to straddle this idiot with their bombs! Don't sink her! I think I got an idea who this eight-ball is!"

That made Hornet and Yorktown snicker as the destroyers seemed to slump. "It would be one of them...!" Ikazuchi snarled out in angry frustration.

"They're not being proper ladies!" Akatsuki muttered.

"Nekul'túrnym zmejá..." Hibiki hissed out in Russian.

That made Yonaga laugh, causing the silver-haired destroyer to gape at her. "Ty govorís' po-Rússki?!" the former Soviet destroyer exclaimed in shock.

"Ja žil v Sibíri v tečénije sém' desjat-pjat' let," the carrier advised...
...then everyone jolted as three 800 kilogram bombs went off well ahead of them, that followed by a shriek of anger, which made the destroyers all gape before they laughed. "I think you got her, Tex!" Yorktown called out.

"HEY! WHO'S THE FREAKIN' NUTCASE DROPPING BOMBS IN THE BAY?!"

All the shipgirls tensed...

...then they gaped on hearing someone scream out, "ACCIO SUBMARINE GIRL!"

Heads snapped up. "HARRY-SENSEI?!" Ikazuchi cried out...

...then the shipgirls jolted on hearing a howl of fright echo from ahead of them as a slender girl about the same size and age of Akatsuki and her sisters tumbled through the air to land in the wizard's outstretched arm. She was a pretty girl with long blonde hair in a high ponytail, possessing blue eyes on a plump face. She was dressed in a black two-piece bikini that showed off her maturing body well, the number 311 in white over her left breast. She had a Balao-class conning tower strapped to her back, that tipped with a propeller at the aft end. Her right arm had a form-fitting vambrace fitted with a 4 inch 50 calibre submarine deck gun on it while her left arm also bore a vambrate, though it was fitted with a twin Bofors 40 millimetre mount and a twin Oerlikon 20 millimetre mount. Three swivel triple tubes for 21 inch torpedoes were strapped to her upper thighs while swivel twin tubes were mounted closer to her knees. Her feet were covered by soft leather moccasins over what looked like her old hull. "HEY!" she screamed out...before her eyes locked on the really cute teenage guy that had just caught her from falling face-first into the bay. "Um...hiya...!" she sputtered out, her cheeks flaming in embarrassment.

Harry gave her an amused look. "Miss Archerfish, I would really suggest you don't try to be sneaky while there are people doing trial runs in the bay," he then advised before he lowered his Firebolt down to allow the submarine girl to get back into the water before putting his wand away. As Hedwig hooted in what appeared to be laughter, he added, "Especially someone like Miss Yonaga here."

He indicated the carrier in question...then jolted on seeing Yonaga's grey eyes sharply focus on Archerfish while four of her new 5 inch 54 calibre Mark 16 guns swung her way, causing the submarine girl to scream out, "HEY!"

"Archerfish," the carrier coldly declared. "Submarine number 311, correct...?"
The adopted native of Maine gulped. "Y-y-yes..."

"Seven war patrols, correct?" Yonaga pressed on. "During the fifth of which, you sank my sister Shinano on 29 November 1944...!"

Archerfish was now as pale as a ghost; all the submarine girls who had taken over the base at the northern end of Eta-jima for themselves had heard of the return of the fifth of the Yamato-class a day ago. "Um, y-y-yeah...!"

"Awarded the Presidential Unit Citation and seven battle stars to the Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal you received at the end of that war, correct?"

A rapid nod from the submarine...

...then she gaped in shock as a gloved hand landed on her shoulder in reassurance, making her stare up at Yonaga. "I will be conducting anti-submarine patrols every time I am out in the bay. Make sure your friends know."

As Archerfish blinked in confusion at that calm declaration, all the destroyers and cruisers endured embarrassing bow-faults! As the battleships and carriers stared at Yonaga as if she had grown a second head, Harry smirked.

"Sumasšédšij avianósec...!" Hibiki muttered, wishing she had some vódka...

Meanwhile, at a school in a certain suburb of Tōkyō... 

"Were you able to see him?"

Mendō Shūtarō perked on hearing that quiet question from the person beside him in Class 2-4, then he nodded. "I was able to see them both, Shinobu-san."
Miyake Shinobu blinked, then she nodded in acknowledgement of the slight gaffe she made when it came to speaking of her former boyfriend...who now effectively lived as two people, one male and one female; she now understood pretty much how Moroboshi Negako had played into that situation. "How are they?"

The scion of Japan's richest family sighed. "While admitting to being at fault for things he consciously caused in the last year, Moroboshi adamantly blames Lum-san as the source of all that went wrong in his life from the Tag Race onward. As does Tariko-san. As far as they are concerned, Lum-san will not be allowed back on Earth. They even know of a clause from the Tag Race Treaty signed between the Urusian government and the United Nations they can use against Lum-san and all her friends to ensure they will never come back..."

"AND YOU DIDN'T DRAG HIM BACK HERE?! YOU DIDN'T STOP HIM FROM PLOTTING SUCH EVIL AGAINST LUM-SAN?! WHERE'S YOUR LOYALTY TO LUM-SAN, MAN?!"

Shinobu sighed before grabbing the empty desk ahead of her and flinging it into Megane's face, nearly snapping his head off his neck as he was sent flying head-first into the blackboard! As most of the others in the classroom all smiled in thanks at that move to quiet the leader of the Stormtroopers, Shinobu looked back at her ex-boyfriend. "They seem quite content right now," Mendō then added. "Moroboshi is very happy to be with Kirishima-san and Tariko-san is quite earnest in her pursuit of Kongō-san. The destroyers and submarines all like them both; they help all the kanmusu try to better understand what being human is about..." He then smirked. "Hard as it to believe..."

Most of the others in the class nodded in agreement; much that it was sometimes hard for them to predict the behaviour of someone like Moroboshi Ataru, there were things about the man that one could set one's cell phone's clock to! Before Shinobu could say anything more, a voice called out from her left rear, "That's why you'll never be Ataru-kun's friend again, Miyake."

Shinobu spun around to find herself staring at a rather plain woman with short-cut black hair and deep brown eyes, who returned that surprised look with one of disgusted contempt. "What did you say?!" Ataru's former girlfriend snapped.

"You heard me," the other woman said as people quieted down to morbidly watch.

This was a unique event in Class 2-4.
Even if Shinobu had pulled away from Ataru in the wake of his gaining a "wife" in Redet Lum, everyone knew his former girlfriend still harboured deep feelings for the man; witness what had happened when the invitations to the "wedding" between Ataru and the sixty-fourth Rose Queen of planet Elle were delivered three months ago. Because of her sometimes mercurial temper, no one had dared confront Shinobu about what was going on between her and Ataru...

...until now.

"You're really no different than Redet. All you've ever seen Ataru-kun as was your personal punching bag, to abuse and discard at your whim." As a hissed denial escaped Shinobu, the other girl added, "Did you honestly think he would put up with that forever? He couldn't do anything about it when Negako-san and Tariko-chan were in his head; it was a wonder that he was able to pull off the Tag Race against that Oni monster!" As a groaned squawk escaped the dazed Megane on hearing that insult unleashed on his beloved Lum, the girl then added, "Once he was able to really think for himself, he decided he didn't want to have anything to do with you. I can't blame the man! You dropped him for this slick-haired jackass..." — here, she thumbed Mendō, making the scion of Japan's richest family squawk — "...when Redet proved to be too tough for you!" She pulled out an envelope and tossed it onto her desk. "Look."

Stunned by such a hurtful accusation by this girl — whose name always escaped her for some reason, as it did everyone else in the class — Shinobu looked down at the envelope, noting that it was filled with something. Opening it, she gasped on seeing ripped pictures stumble out to form a pile on her desk. Her eyes quickly locked on the torn images of HER there; she was quick to recognize them as portraits taken of her and Ataru over the previous decade, since they were in elementary school. "What...?" she croaked out in disbelief.

"My mother saw it all happen," the girl teased, the sneer in her voice making people in the class wince. "When they came back from Okusei, Ataru-kun and Tariko-chan tore apart their deadbeat parents' house, making sure those two bastards had NOTHING left of him OR Redet or the other alien monsters we've had to deal with since the Tag Race! She watched as Ataru-kun found EVERY photo album the deadbeats had, then take out EVERY picture to destroy them. Tariko-chan culled the ones that had you in them, Miyake. You can see what she did to them." She rose to walk out of the classroom; it was study hall now. "Wasn't Tariko-chan the one who had been interested in you when old man Cherry's cake and Redet's lollipop split them apart in the first place?" With a mirthless laugh, she moved to leave the classroom. "As much a monster as Redet was..."

As Shinobu seemed to lose all the strength in her body, Mendō leapt up to intercept the girl. "Ojō-san! You can't possibly mean such horrid...!"

KK-KRACK!
Everyone winced on seeing the scion of Japan's richest family having his head driven into the floor thanks to a ki mallet. "Keep your hands to yourself!" she snarled. "You're as much a traitor to the human race as Megane is!"

The others watched her leave, then began to look first at the moaning Mendō, then at the shuddering Shinobu, whose face was now awash in tears...

"Oi! Don't you think you were being a little rough with her?"

Inu Chigaiko stopped before she glared intently at Fujinami Ryūnosuke, making the raven-haired woman wince. The beach café tomboy had come up to the student book shelves located outside Class 2-4 to retrieve the last of her belongings before she would load it on a handcart for the trip to Eta-jima. Her father Fujimi figured walking the 833 kilometre distance to the naval base would take fifteen days while factoring in sleep and meals. It would be difficult, but there was no way in heck that they could bum a ride off a fishing trawler due to the Abyssal threat on the coasts and they certainly didn't have enough money for a train ride even on the local Sunrise Yume service. "It's high time your 'friend' makes a choice, Fujinami-san," the girl's basketball team forward said. "Ataru-kun's not the same guy we knew before we ran into the rose bitch. She can't treat him, much less Tariko-chan, like she did before. Not without learning her super-strength won't save her when they shoot her dead with a Lawgiver!" She smirked as Ryūnosuke jerked on hearing that threat towards her friend. "Ask Mifune to show you the YouTube video of the base security cameras showing Ataru-kun killing that Abyssal that tried to attack Kirishima-san."

Ryūnosuke jerked. "What?! Moroboshi KILLED an Abyssal?!"

Three...

Two...

One...

Zero!

"WHAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAATT...?"
The hallway windows of Class 2-4 flew open as Chigaiko's wide-eyed classmates stared in shocked disbelief at her. "Oi, Yon-san! That's a joke, right?" Perm exclaimed as some of the people there began to hiss at each other.

A mock surprised look crossed her face. "Who?"

With that, she walked to the washroom, ignoring winces from others in the class. Ever since a certain Hallowe'en party the previous fall, everyone in the school, staff and students alike, found it IMPOSSIBLE to remember Chigaiko's name. The truth about that situation finally came to light thanks to Moroboshi Negako, who revealed to the basketball player's parents Akira and Kindan that Chigaiko was the ninth victim of a terrible magical curse that was meant originally to attack an alumnus of the school known commonly as the "Red Cloak", someone who had terrorized his fellow students over the three years he attended Tomobiki High School. On being told, Chigaiko immediately recalled the old fool; even if it had been decades since he attended classes, the man born Hirota Matabei had come to the school's most recent Hallowe'en party to make people remember his "exploits". In doing so (according to Negako), a very powerful curse embedded within the physical structure of Tomobiki Senior High School that was meant to kill Matabei's girlfriend (which it had done) once more was unleashed, using Ataru as the target point given his status as the school's then-most hated student. Since neither Lum nor Shinobu really loved Ataru with all honesty (as Negako later explained to Chigaiko's parents), the basketball team forward wound up being hit with the curse's effects thanks to an incident where Ataru had gladly protected her from bullies in kindergarten.

Given that Chigaiko was now seen by the Moroboshi twins as yet another innocent victim of the madness that had rocked Tomobiki thanks to Lum, Negako had been pleased to offer a temporary solution for her. She made special omamori that allowed something of a blood ki ward to be formed around Chigaiko. Such gave her the power to nullify the curse's power temporarily when it came to dealing with individual peers or teachers. The permanent solution would come on Friday — no doubt along with the revelation of what that weird Noukiite phrase meant that caused Redet Lum's brat cousin Jariten to freak out like he did before the Dragonspeaker teleported everyone in Class 2-4 back to Earth from the Kashin — but for the time being, Chigaiko could make people acknowledge her by name in real time if she desired. She did that once yesterday when she formally resigned from the girl's basketball team; doing that had given her quite the laugh as her former teammates scrambled around to find out who the hell was this woman they never knew about that was now quitting their team.

Idiots...! she thought when she saw that. This school is full of idiots...!

Reaching the area of the west stairwell landing, she moved to head into the girl's washroom...then blinked on sensing someone step up from the main floor, the school's principal and vice principal Onsen Mark escorting her. Noting how tall she was — she could easily tower even over Sakurambō Sakura — Chigaiko stopped to give her a closer look...then she gaped as recognition dawned.
"Shinano-san...!" she breathed out in awe.

The third of the Yamato-class — by construction number; Shinano now pretty much accepted she was really the fourth of the class given when Yamato, Musashi and Yonaga had been brought into formal service in comparison to herself — blinked before her green eyes focused on the girl now gaping at her, then she smiled. "Inu Chigaiko?" she politely asked as she stopped before the basketball player.

"H-hai...!" the shorter woman sputtered, though she did note the flash of confusion in both the Principal's and Onsen's faces when the carrier mentioned her name; the curse targeting the Red Cloak never affected those who had never gone to Tomobiki High. "Um, wh-what are y-y-you doing here...?"

"Oh, I'm here to help your classmate Fujinami Ryūnosuke-san and her father get to Eta-jima as quickly as possible." Shinano pointed out the windows towards the west entrance. A glance outside revealed that a Ground Self-Defence Force Toyota Type 73 medium logistics truck was now parked by the gates, with several soldiers helping the elder Fujinami load his family's belongings onto the deck. Also present were a couple shipgirls in kimono-like dresses; seeing them, Chigaiko wondered if they were part of Destroyer Division One, who had been assigned to serve as Shinano's guard force when the carrier was out at sea. "No sense in forcing them to walk to Eta-jima. I couldn't believe what Tariko-san told me about how she and her father moved here on foot from Chōshi like they did. Have you seen Ryūnosuke-san, Chigaiko-san? We need to get going."

Chigaiko shrugged as she indicated the tomboy in question. "Arigatō," Shinano said with a polite bow...then she winked. "Don't worry," she then whispered. "Negako-san is making arrangements for your family right now."

Hearing that, Chigaiko chuckled, nodding. "Hai!"

With that, the carrier walked over towards Class 2-4. A hush had fallen over the students in the class as they gaped wide-eyed at the tall and curvy battleship-turned-carrier. Ryūnosuke cleared her throat before she bowed politely. "Um...osu, Shinano-san!" she sputtered. "What brings you around here?! Aren't you supposed to be down in Eta-jima with your sisters now?"

Shinano smiled. "My task force and I were allowed to dock at Ōminato when we brought the last convoy from Canada into Aomori and Hakodate to help everyone there get through the fall. Since the next convoy won't stage for a week, I can spare some time to help my new 'special boatswain' get settled in!"
Here, she playfully winked at Ryūnosuke while some of the boys in the class gaped in shock before they began to wolf-whistle. "**KNOCK IT OFF, YOU JERKS!**" the tomboy screamed out, making the hecklers duck. "Um, gee...!"

"It's alright..."

"Shinano-san!"

People turned as two grinning destroyers on the same scale of cuteness as the sisters of Division Six came charging up the stairs. The carrier sighed. "Kamikaze-san! Nokaze-san!" she scolded. "Stop making so much noise!"

Both Kamikaze and Nokaze blushed as they ducked from Shinano's annoyed look. "Gomen nasai, Shinano-san, but Fujimi-ojisan wants to have Ryūnosuke-san come down so we can get to Eta-jima before midnight," the latter said. As she had been torpedoed and sunk near Cam Ranh Bay northeast of Sài Gòn at the start of 1945, the raven-haired, dark-eyed Minekaze-class destroyer often wore a stylish áo dài in lieu of the normal kimono and hakama with high-heeled lace boots many of her peers dressed in. She had the undress ribbon for the Huân Chượng Dũng Cảm on her top; the destroyer had received Vietnam's bravery medal thanks to her rescuing many survivors from the sunken submarine Khánh Hòa two years ago while Destroyer Division One had done a sweep of the South China Sea, being wounded along the way. "We're here to get all of Ryūnosuke-san's stuff."

As people in the class gaped in shock, the tomboy blinked before she laughed. "Well, it's not much, girls!" she said as she nodded to the pile of books in her hand...then she squawked as Kamikaze came over to take them. "Oi...!"

"It's okay!" the purple-haired destroyer assured her before heading off.

The Principal watched her go, then he sighed. "You will be missed, Fujinami-kun," he declared as he offered a small folder to her. "Here are your class records. I'm sure Negako-san will see to it you can get yourself into a new school if you don't wish to take the home-schooling route her siblings now do."

Noting he was here to see her off, Ryūnosuke blushed. "Um...dōmo," she sputtered as she took it, then she blinked before she gazed on her now-former classmates. "Sorry to drop this on you guys like that," she apologized before bowing her head...then she squawked as a giggling Nokaze grabbed her by the hand and pulled her off towards the stairway. "Oi! Nokaze-chan! Lemme go...!"
They quickly disappeared down the stairs. Shinano shook her head before she gazed apologetically at her current host. "I am so sorry about that, Kōchō-sensei," she stated with a bow. "All my escorts have heard the wonderful tales about Ryūnosuke-san from Tariko-san and Ataru-san before we headed out to bring that convoy in two weeks ago. They're quite excited to meet such a survivor." She bowed again. "We'll take care of her, Kōchō-sensei. Please excuse me."

"Do be careful out there, Shinano-san," the Principal said with a return bow.

"We will."

With that, the tall carrier headed off to the stairs. She left behind a chorus of stunned faces in Class 2-4 as they watched her. After Shinano disappeared down to the main floor, everyone moved over to the windows overlooking the schoolyard to watch as Ryūnosuke was pulled over to join her father by Nokaze. Once the carrier stepped out of the school, she walked over to join her escorts and the Fujinami family on the truck's cargo deck while the soldiers got into the cabin, then guided the 1 1/2 tonne vehicle away from Tomobiki High School.

Silence fell over the scene as Ryūnosuke's former classmates exchanged shocked and confused looks. Staring at them, the Principal sighed as he beckoned Onsen back to the former's office on the main floor. "They must grow up sooner or later, Mark-kun," he quietly stated, earning a grunt from the other man...

Out in the Aki-nada, two hours before lunch...

This is what I receive for spending all those years isolated in Sano Bay...!

Yonaga was right now doubting her very own sanity.

"YOU BEFRIENDED A WO-CLASS AIRCRAFT CARRIER?!!"

The others listening to this all ducked as the raven-haired carrier stared in outraged shock at Haruna. "Hai, I did," the fourth of the Kongō-class fast battleships calmly replied as the ad hoc task force made its way towards Kobashira-jima, an uninhabited islet not even a kilometre wide located north
of Hashira-jima near the southern end of the bay. "It was an innocent thing at first." She giggled before she looked at a now-blushing Akagi. "While she was moving to explore what being human was about, Akagi-san got into knitting. Sometime before I got my Kai Ni upgrade last summer, she knitted a beautiful onigiri cushion for me." Hearing that, Akagi tried not to smirk as she recalled what prompted her to actually knit that cushion in the first place given Haruna's passionate love of onigiri and the rice rationing the base had to endure at the time. "It was the first time anyone outside my sisters ever gave me a present, so I treasured it." She then shrugged. "Then one day early this spring, a bird stole my cushion and brought it to Kobashira-jima."

Yonaga shook her head. "What does a cushion have to do with meeting an enemy aircraft carrier, much less BEFRIENDING one?!" she demanded.

"I'm getting there," Haruna chided. "Kongō-onēsama and Nagato-san went after the bird and tracked it to the island. They then discovered that the bird had obtained the cushion for his wife, who was then nesting four chicks. Once I saw that, I left it as is and Akagi-san created a new cushion for me."

"We later discovered that a Wo-class carrier who had been cut off from her mates thanks to the Sanmagun setting up the counter-jamming magical fields was living on the island," Kongō added. "Wokyū-san..." — she ignored Yonaga's look at such an unoriginal name for the enemy ship — "...learned of the birds, then fed and sheltered them from a typhoon that swept through the area. In many ways, Wokyū-san became as docile as Hoppō-chan is. Even Negako confirms it."

"Haruna noted what Wokyū-san did, then befriended her when they were fishing for the birds one day together on the north cliffs of the island," Kirishima added. "She naturally kept it secret from us as we didn't really understand at the time about how the magical commanderies were sowing much confusion among the enemy whenever they came close to the shores of the Home Islands. Akagi-san also discovered Wokyū-san along the way, but stayed silent about it."

"You are forgetting the most important part, of course!" Musashi declared.

"How so, Onē-san?" Yonaga asked.

"Ōi-san and Kitakami-san were on patrol there when I got sick one day," Haruna explained as the group — accompanied still by Harry Potter on his broom, plus the Moroboshi twins on sleek tan-brown machines that resembled a Bombardier Ski-Doo snowmobile with the drive treads replaced by a powerful jet engine and hovering systems — moved into the lee of Kobashira-jima, approaching a beach where there was a trail ascending the sheer cliff towards a wooded plateau. "They were discussing my illness when Wokyū-chan was listening to them from nearby." She then sighed. "Of course, given Kitakami-san's mood swings and very ribald sense of humour, she speculated that my having a cold could lead to even worse illnesses and even death. Wokyū-chan panicked on hearing that..."
"Then gladly created a feast of healthy food for our then-ill friend...and sneaked unarmed into the base to deliver same to her!" Musashi finished.

Silence.

More silence.

Still more silence.

Then...

"This one risked total destruction sailing into an enemy harbour unarmed and without her air group...all to bring food for Haruna-san?" Yonaga repeated.

"Hai!" Musashi chortled. "Once we recognized her bravery, we gladly allowed her to visit the base whenever Teitoku wasn't looking in our direction. Only when Negako-san came was Wokyū-san accepted in the same way young Hoppō is."

"But she stays on Kobashira-jima since she finds it peaceful there. She built herself a nice little home there close to where the birds currently have their nest," Yamato added as everyone moved to come ashore on the small beach, their rigging dispersing as everyone began to relax themselves. As Harry and the Moroboshi twins landed, Yonaga then came ashore, her rigging vanishing to — well, somewhere! — while the destroyers closest to her all cheered the first successful post-summoning voyage of the Seventh Carrier of Operation Z.

"WOKKYU!"

Everyone turned as a smiling woman appearing to be about the same physical age as Enterprise and her sisters come down to join them. With skin of alabaster, curly silvery hair and pale green eyes, she was dressed in her normal fighting rigging of a strapless armoured one-piece swimsuit over black thigh-high stockings flowing into high heel boots and an ankle-length cape hung from a circular ruff similar to what European nobles in the era of the Renaissance might have worn. She wore a black clamshell-like structure with a large toothy maw where aircraft would launch on her head, that topped with two glowing green radar domes that looked like eyes and ringed on the sides with dual-purpose naval cannon and various anti-aircraft mounts. Four octopus-like tentacles snaked down at
angles to her fore-and-aft line from the flight deck, reaching to her knees. Scurrying about her feet were several I-class destroyers, beings that looked like a weird mix of sperm whale and great white shark, though their armament wasn't deployed and they were bouncing around their flagship like a pack of excited dogs following their master. Seeing that, Yonaga could only shake her head, hopeful that when it came time to deal with these things out on the open ocean, their looks wouldn't make her hesitate to wreck them.

"Ohayō, Wokyū-chan!" Haruna said as she grasped the carrier's hands in her own. "We came to visit you and the birds, plus show Yonaga-san around." She waved to the carrier in question. "Please don't be scared of her. She's nice."

Wokyū blinked for a moment, then turned to look at the very tall shipgirl standing with Yamato and her two battleship sisters. She then turned as grey as a hurricane as her own magical senses quickly locked in on the carrier's aura, information that had been passed on by sisters in the Arctic flooding her with total panic as she realized that the Angry One now was on her island...!

"Wokyū-chan, stop that," Haruna scolded. "Hai, she's the Angry One...but she is very impressed when you came to visit me when I was sick."

Silence fell as the Abyssal took that in, then she gazed warily at the tall carrier for a moment before a healthier colour returned to her skin as she seemed to right herself. However, her escorting destroyers were all quaking as they whined in terror. Noting that, Yonaga seemed to freeze them with a glare. "Since when do proper escort ships flee their charge in the face of possible danger?! You should all be ashamed of yourselves!" she icily declared.

The destroyers all perked, then they seemed to shrink on themselves, bowing their heads in guilt at the carrier's scolding. Seeing that, Wokyū blinked before she pointed at Yonaga. "Samurai..." she whispered before pointing down to the daishō firmly secured to the taller shipgirl's hakama on her left hip.

"Hai, Wokyū-chan, Yonaga-san is a samurai," Haruna affirmed with a nod.

"An even better one that I'll ever be," Musashi stated.

That made the carrier blush. "Onē-san...!"

"Miei amici!"/"Meine Freunde"/"Hey, everyone!"
Everyone perked, then turned to look north. "Ah! Everyone else is doing their maiden voyages!" Fubuki cheered as a mass of battleships and heavy cruisers bore down on the beach, escorted by Libeccio, the three little "murderballs" of Taffy Three and the two German Type 1934 destroyers who had been summoned to Eta-jima over the last three years, Leberecht Maass and Max Schultz.

The destroyers who had come with Yonaga whooped in delight on seeing that as Iowa and her sisters came ashore. "This is just plain weird!" Wisconsin confessed as she went feet dry, her rigging dispersing. She then gazed in amusement at the Abyssal carrier standing there. "This the one, Stick?"

"Yeah, Whisky, she's the one who did a Campbeltown just to get some fresh rats to Dopey here," Iowa stated as she thumbed Haruna.

As some of the other shipgirls snickered, the fast battleship in question cutely pouted at that nickname. "'Did a Campbeltown'" Yonaga then asked.

"Oh, meine Freunde, you had to have seen it to believe it!" Tirpitz stated. "Campbeltown was a Wickes-class destroyer given over to the British in that destroyers-for-bases deal made before the Americans got into the war." At Yonaga's nod, the battleship added, "Because everyone in Britain was so scared of me going on a raiding mission in the North Atlantic even after they hunted down ältere Schwester here..." — she thumbed Bismarck — "...the British came up with this insane plan to use a destroyer to ram and destroy the gates of the Normandie Dock in Saint-Nazaire in early 1942. Campbeltown was chosen as the ramming ship. It was the most bravest thing anyone had ever seen."

"How many Victoria Crosses was it in the end?" Bismarck asked.

"Five of them, Frau Bismarck," a strange man's voice answered, the resonance of those tones making the shipgirls save Yonaga blush while Wokyū and her escorts quaked in excitement. "Along with that, the personnel assigned to carry out Operation: Chariot were also awarded four Distinguished Service Orders, seventeen Distinguished Service Crosses, eleven Military Crosses, four Conspicuous Gallantry Medals, twenty-four Distinguished Conduct Medals, fifteen Military Medals and fifty-one personnel were mentioned in dispatches."

People turned to look as someone came down. "How the hell did you get here ahead of us, Staff Sergeant?" Missouri asked. "We didn't see a boat..."

"General Dover flew me here when she noted Miss Wokyū on the island and came over to investigate the issue, Miss Missouri," Benton Fraser reported, which made all the destroyers pale in
horror as they remembered the previous day's incident with Kisaragi. The native of Nunavut was currently in rugged civilian clothes with his Stetson hat. "Be assured, the general doesn't consider Miss Wokyū or her flotilla a threat whatsoever. She is currently inspecting the bird nest that was constructed for the flock Miss Haruna befriended..."

"WHAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA...!"


Benton looked up. "General! Is Miss Katsuragi alright?!" he called out.

"Relax, Benton!" a familiar woman's voice echoed from overhead. "She just had a little spill on a tree stump when she was picking fruit for the birds!"

The carriers all gasped. "How did Katsuragi-chan get here?!" Akagi demanded.

Benton waved the shipgirls and the others to follow him. "It appears that Miss Katsuragi has taken to General Dover quite profoundly as you would have all noted last night when Signorina Imperio, Signorina Zara's sisters and Signorina Libeccio's sisters were summoned, Miss Akagi. When the general came to inspect the island, Miss Katsuragi lashed herself onto the general's leg and refused to let go. Given what I saw when Miss Wokyū's escorts immediately came to play with Miss Katsuragi, I realized there would be no harm to her whatsoever."

The carriers blinked before they giggled. "Looks like the general's got a new fan!" Hornet mused as they reached the crest of the hill, then turned inland towards a clearing that gave everyone a perfect view of the surrounding waters.

Everyone then winced on seeing a sobbing baby carrier being comforted by Jessica Dover. On the ground nearby was a turned-over basket, a considerable amount of fruit having spilled out from it onto the grass. Standing nearby was the sturdy bird shelter that was filled with a beautiful cushion shaped like a ball of onigiri, a chirping couple with their four chicks inside. Zuikaku came immediately over. "Are you alright, Katsuragi-chan?!!" she asked.

Hearing that familiar voice, Katsuragi looked over, then sniffed. "Zui..." she burbled before gazing forlornly on the spilled fruit. "Fr't...birdy...!"
"Calm yourself, young lady," a man's voice then echoed from nearby as Wokyū's escorts scampered over to try and crawl over the weeping carrier to lick her face clean of tears. "Our avian friends wouldn't mind a little dirt."

People turned...then all the shipgirls seemed to pale on sensing the aura of DANGER that billowed from the handsome twenty-something man who just emerged from a nearby bush. Said fellow had military-cropped black hair tinged in grey at the temples, a trimmed moustache over his mouth. His eyes were the dark grey of a hurricane which seemed to bore through everyone he gazed at. The man was in the dark blue tactical combat uniform of Canada's national and federal police force, a black tactical vest over his chest and a dark blue beret on his head, the badge of the Force positioned perfectly over his left eye. He had a Smith and Wesson Model 5906 automatic pistol on his right hip and carried the M1D sniper version of the famous .30-06 Garand semi-automatic rifle. Seeing him, the American shipgirls instantly braced to attention as they saluted the man who had killed more Nazi and Imperial Japanese metahumans than all his mates in the 1st Canadian Specialized Warfare Unit combined. "Commissioner Larsden!" Iowa called out respectfully, having spotted the man's rank insignia of a crown, "pip" star and crossed sword-and-baton on his shoulder slip-ons.

Martin Larsden smiled as he shifted his preferred long arm to his left hand, then returned the salute in the palm-forward manner the Force had copied from the British Army on its effective foundation in 1873. "Thank you, ladies." He then moved to kneel beside Jessica. "Now, Miss Katsuragi, you had a little accident here," he then stated as he reached over to gently thread his fingers through the carrier's sable hair. "Aren't you going to clean this up?"

Hearing that made Katsuragi blink before she nodded. "'Ai, Bugyō!" she said as she gave him a childish salute, then moved to right the basket before she scurried about to pick up the fruit that had been spilled. She then stopped as she looked at her collection before she pointed at the strawberries she found. "Bugyō! Di'ty!" she said as she gazed forlornly at the War Hawks' sniper.

Benton knelt beside Zuikaku. "You obviously need to clean the fruit now, Miss Katsuragi," the staff sergeant said as he pulled out a canteen, handing it over. "Use the water. Let it fall on the fruit, then use your hands to wipe them clean. It's no different than washing your hands every morning."

The baby carrier blinked, then unscrewed the canteen before dribbling the contents onto the fruit. Once they were all soaked, Katsuragi handed the half-empty canteen back. "Ari, Benny!" she said with a smile as Benton took the canteen back, then she picked up one of the strawberries and began to rub it.

The others remained silent as she cleaned all the fruit she had collected for the birds. Once that was done, Katsuragi blinked as she looked at her hands. "Benny! Di'ty!" she called out...then giggled as Benton poured some water over the hands. The baby carrier wiped her hands clear of the dirt, then smiled as Akagi handed her a cloth to dry her hands off. "Ari, Benny! Aka!"
"Now that you've done that, young lady, what next?" Martin then asked.

Katsuragi smiled as she reached over to pick up the basket, which was quite larger than she could handle. "Stop!" Jessica bade. "Katsuragi, you can't see ahead of you if you carry the basket! That's why you tripped!"

Hearing that made Katsuragi blink, then her eyes teared up again. Before she could break down and cry anew, Johnston and Hoel came up. "Stand down, kiddo!" the former said as she ruffled the carrier's hair. "We got this one!"

Katsuragi smiled as the two Fletcher-class destroyers picked up the basket, then walked it over to the bird shelter. "Ah! Ari, Jon! Höe!"

The birds chirped excitedly as they swarmed onto the basket to get at the berries and other fruit there. As the others watched this, Jessica smiled in delight...then her eyes started to glow as she gazed just south of east towards the channel that separated Nuwa-jima from Kurahashi-jima and opened out into the Seto-naikai in the direction of Imabari. "Incoming...!" she hissed out.

All the shipgirls tensed. "Got it!" Enterprise said as she shouldered her own Garand, then fired two shots. The bullets instantly transformed into two flights of Douglas A-1H Skyraiders, loaded to bear with both high velocity aerial rockets and cluster bombs. "Where exactly are the targets, General?"

"Just passing the northern tip of Naka-jima right now, heading towards us," Jessica stated as she felt a familiar hunger claw up inside her.

"Calm down, Jessica," Martin advised. "If you let that thing inside you lose, Miss Hibiki there will pass out. You'll also scare Miss Wokyū's little ones."

Eyes turned to the former Soviet destroyer, who was now gazing in terror at the half-Ukrainian pilot from Winnipeg; she had seen the glowing aura of energy form around the Soul-Eater when she sensed the enemy. Excited chatter then escaped Wokyū, making the shipgirls gaze her way. "Hishō, Bugyō, Wokyū-chan says that this is a group based out of Takaikami-jima north of Niihama," Haruna explained. "They sent out a coded message to her to inform her of what is happening. They apparently were able to avoid the magical blocking screens the Sanmagun and Shimagun put up to protect the islands." After another burst of words, the fast battleship added, "She hasn't been able to sense them before because they've been ordered by their commander to remain silent and observe movements in the Seto-naikai for possible actions by mobile fleets at sea."
"Like a lot of our submarines did during the war!" Iowa hissed out. "That's ten nautical miles! We can hit that from here, for Christ's sake!"

"No, Iowa-san! The back blast will harm the birds!" Yamato insisted.

"What are we up against, E?!" Yorktown asked.

Her sister's eyes were closed as she concentrated on the air chatter from the faeries flying her Skyraiders. "Cruiser squadron," she announced. "Four Ri-class heavies and four Chi-class light torpedo cruisers. Heading right in for us, speed of advance...!" She then hissed. "Shit! They're doing flank!"

"About thirty knots?" Martin wondered.

"Yes, sir!"

The sniper of the War Hawks made a quick mental calculation. "Miss Enterprise, don't attack the group. Let them think they're closing the range undetected."

Jaws dropped as the shipgirls all gaped in shock at Jessica's friend. "Herr Inspekteur! Even if you were able to kill those verdammten Übermenschen with your rifle, your maximum range was three miles!" Bismarck exclaimed. "How the devil do you propose to hit these things when they're at TEN miles?!"

"Yes, it is too far for my Garand, Miss Bismarck," Martin stated as he walked over to the long duffelbag that was put on the ground near the bird shelter, placing the Garand down. "Hence, the reason I brought this with me."

"This" was a nearly sixty inch-long bolt-action firearm with a bipod fitted to the front end of the forestock and a pistol grip holding the trigger. Topping it was a very complex telescopic sight. Extending the bipod, Martin pulled out a magazine filled with BMG .50 calibre bullets. A quick look around revealed to him a large boulder that would serve as a perfect shooting perch; he moved to set the rifle up on top of the rock, relaxing himself against it as he began to scan the area where the enemy ships have been spotted. Seeing that huge and sleek weapon, all the shipgirls couldn't help but stare at such a powerful firearm. "Bugyō-san, what type of gun is THAT?!" Fubuki finally gasped.
"It's a MacMillan Brothers TAC-50 anti-material sniper rifle, Miss Fubuki," Benton explained. "It is designated the C15 Long Range Sniper Weapon in the Canadian Forces. The currently second-longest confirmed kill was made using this model of rifle in Afghanistan by a corporal in the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry in March of 2002. Range was 2430 metres."

As the American and German shipgirls gaped at that statement, Jessica moved to stand close to Martin. "How close are you going to let them get in?"

"About four miles," the native of Miramichi in New Brunswick stated as he adjusted his scope before lightly smiling as he focused on the approaching cruisers. "Tut-tut," he then breathed out. "Such a close formation."

He took the magazine and loaded it into the rifle’s receiver, then calmly chambered a round. "Yeah, they are pretty bunched up, aren't they?" Tariko noted; she was scanning things with an alien pair of binoculars. "Cocky bitches, aren't they? Just dragging their coats down the strait...!

"What type of bullets do you have, Commissioner?" Enterprise asked.

"My standard load, magnified since I'm using the BMG .50 calibre round in lieu of the standard .30-06 that the Garand takes," Martin replied. "Range?"

The carrier concentrated for a moment as she got a triangulation from her Skyraiders. "Now 7.2 miles from our position. They're not scattering."

"Again, very foolish. Let's relax and wait."

With that, people quieted down as the birds calmly chirped away as they enjoyed the berries. Wokyū headed to her small hut to get some fried fish and snacks for her guests to enjoy while some of the destroyers went over to the several peach trees to pick more fruit for the shipgirls to nibble on and Katsuragi continued to play with the Abyssal destroyers, giving them some fruit. Benton drew out his own binoculars to allow Harry the chance to look. "You called it right, Tariko," the English wizard then muttered. "Arrogant or what?!"

"They're about to get a sharp re-education, Mister Potter," Martin stated.
The minutes passed as the cruiser force surged between Nuwa-jima and Kashima-jima as they closed the range on Kobashira-jima without any sort of defensive manoeuvres such as zig-zagging. As the shipgirls watched, they were quick to note there was no escort screen for the cruisers and they weren't even moving to aim their weapons. "Possible sacrifice play," Enterprise mused as the enemy force reached the five mile mark. "They think they're dealing with one rogue carrier and her escorts and that we'll not raise a finger to protect Wokyū."

"Or they think Wokyū-chan's still on their side," Ataru noted.

"They are crazed to die," Yonaga grimly noted. "I say we oblige them."

"They want you to do that on their terms, Miss Yonaga," Jessica warned. "Don't give into that urge. That's what they want in the end."

"Almost there," Martin said as he adjusted his aim for wind and spin drift; even if his personally-prepared bullets could do things that no other type of ammunition could match, there were still the potential natural variables.

Another couple of minutes passed. Once the enemy were in Martin's chosen engagement box, the commissioner then smirked as he squeezed off a round. The bullet streaked out of the barrel at triple the speed a normal .50 calibre round flew out of a TAC-50. Five seconds later, the Ri-class in the port forward position folded in on herself as the bullet slammed home and pierced her main magazine before detonating and turning her into a mist of shredded body parts and weapon fragments; the explosion also saw one of the Chi-class cruisers decapitated. By then, Martin had rammed a new bullet into the firing bed, sending it off to hit the heavy cruiser on the starboard forward point in the same location; the explosion from that also killed her accompanying torpedo cruiser and staggered the Ri-class right behind her. A third bullet made that heavy cruiser's head turn into a fine mist as it slammed hard into the trailing light cruiser, causing her torpedoes to explode en masse and making her nothing more than a dirty cloud of smoke and fragments. The fourth bullet then made the remaining Ri-class explode as her magazines went up, leaving one torpedo cruiser left. Martin took her out with the last round in his TAC-50.

Silence fell as the shipgirls gaped at the sight of a police officer having wiped out eight enemy warships with just a SNIPER RIFLE of all things. Martin remained calm as he field stripped the TAC-50 to clean it up. "Miss Iowa, what is the standard tactical range of the Mark 7 naval rifles you have?"

The blonde American battleship blinked. "Um...about 24 miles."
"Miss Bismarck, what of your SK C/34 rifles?"

Bismarck shook her head. "About 22.7 miles..."

"Miss Veneto, your M1934 rifles. How far?"

"Maximum of about 26 miles, Comandante," the Italian battleship stated.

"Impressive. Miss Yamato, your Type 94 rifles. How far can you reach?"

"About 42 kilometres, Bugyō-sama; that's 26 miles."

Martin nodded. "Ladies, as soon as I'm done with you all, you will be able to reach out to at least DOUBLE the combat range with your weapons. If it is possible, I will see the range of your primary armament even TRIPLED!" he declared. "Prepare yourselves to be able to fight over the horizon."

A chorus of dropped jaws and wide eyes answered him from the battleships as Jessica smirked. "Sugoi...!" Fubuki breathed out for them all...

To Be Continued...

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WRITER'S NOTES

1) HMCS Discovery is the unit of the Royal Canadian Navy that is headquartered in Vancouver. Discovery is a naval reserve division (NRD), a part-time infantry company-sized unit that can provide peacetime manning augmentation to the full-time Navy as well as serve as an auxiliary training establishment in wartime. Discovery was established at the start of World War One, stood down at war's end, then reformed as a "half-company" in 1924. The ship was christened and commissioned as such as 1941. In the British Commonwealth tradition, units such as Discovery (nicknamed "stone frigates") are seen as no different than warships on the high seas. In the universe of this story, as Canadian Forces Base Esquimalt is located at the south end of Vancouver Island where resupply had to come from air or via ferry, it was decided to relocate the Pacific Fleet's shipgirls and all their support structures at Discovery. Such was also done on the Atlantic side as
Given the exposed location of Canadian Forces Base Halifax in the city of the same name on the Atlantic coast of Nova Scotia, the Canadian Atlantic Fleet was shifted to Discovery's sister naval reserve division, NCSM Montcalm, in Québec City on the Saint Lawrence River over a thousand kilometres inland from the Atlantic. Unlike Discovery, Montcalm's origins ultimately go back just to 1923; there was no predecessor unit that served in the Great War and the ancestral unit of Montcalm was first established a year before Discovery's ancestral unit was reformed.

As an aside, the ship name prefix NCSM means "Navire Canadien de Sa Majesté", which is the French translation of "His/Her Majesty's Canadian Ship" (HMCS).

2) As the names of Akagi's sister Amagi-class battlecruisers whose construction was cancelled because of the Washington Naval Treaty of 1922 were all used in future ship constructions, the shipgirls mentioned by Mutsu were given new names from other mountains of Japan. Tōgasa was the first Amagi (the name was revised for an Unryū-class carrier built in 1942), Minako was the first Atago and Ashitaka was the first Takao; the second ships bearing the names of the last two battlecruisers were Takao-class heavy cruisers built in 1930.

3) The concept of the Seventh Cavalry Division (Magical) (7 CD) was first mentioned in the third Wizards and Avalonians side stories to Phoenix From the Ashes. In the universe of my stories, 7 CD was the main Western Allied magical combat force during Grindelwald's War; the British didn't have the numbers to raise a sufficient force against Gellert Grindelwald's Magische Reichsarmee ("Magical Army of the Reich"). The Seventh Marine Division (Magical) (7th MARDIV) would be the United States Marine Corps' magical fighting formation for the Pacific Theatre/Tsukuyomi's War of Liberation; their opponents were the Daitōa Kaihō-guntai ("Greater East Asia Liberation Army") under Yomigawa Tsukiko's command. The Moskvá Mágičeskie Front ("Moscow Magical Front") under command of Svetlána Múromeca was the Soviet Union's primary magical fighting force on the Eastern Front during the Great Patriotic War.

4) Translations: Daijin — Minister; Genroku-gonen — Fifth Year of Genroku, the name for the year 1692 CE in Japan; Chūsa — Navy commander/Army lieutenant colonel/Air Force wing commander (NATO rank code OF-4); Djádja — Uncle; Filles navire — The French term for shipgirls; CANCOMWESTPAC — Navy short code for "Canadian Commander Western Pacific"; Hassun-nobi — The tallest model of daikyū; Yotsugake — Four-fingered kyūdō-ka's glove; Nekul’túrnym zmejá — Uncultured snake; Ty govoríš' po-Rússki? — Do you speak Russian?; Ja žil v Sibíri v tečénije sém'desjat-pjat' let — I've been in Siberia for seventy-five years; Sumasšédšij avianósec — Crazy flattop; Omamori — Paper talismans meant to bring luck to the holder; Áo dài — Literally "long shirt", this is a traditional Vietnamese dress composed of a silk tunic with high collars that drapes down to the ankles, worn over pants; Huân Chưởng Dũng Câm — Bravery Order; Wokyū — Literally "Wo-class"; Miei amici — My friends; Ältere Schwester — Elder sister; Bugyō — Title for a magistrate in Tokugawa-era Japan; Shimagun — Short for Shikoku Teimajutsu-gun (the Shikoku Magical Association)
5) As noted in the previous part, there is no way the magical government of Britain's American colonies would call themselves the "Magical Congress of the United States" over SEVENTY YEARS before the concept of the "United States" entered political discourse. In my stories, the first magical government in North America aligned to Britain would be addressed as the American Wizengamot, equal in status to the British Wizengamot before the Crown; the bureaucratic organization attached to it was called the Ministry of Magic for the Colonies. After 1776 when the Thirteen Colonies became the United States, representatives from those states would establish the modern Magical Congress (and the American Department of Magic) while those representing Britain's still-existent colonies in Québec and elsewhere would become the Wizengamot of British North America (with the bureaucratic organization called the Ministry of Magic for British North America). After 1867 when Canada became a self-governing colony, the old Wizengamot would break into several operational parts, the central part representing the four founding provinces (Ontario, Québec, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia) forming the Wizengamot of the Dominion of Canada and the Ministry of Magical Affairs. The separated parts which represented magicals in places like Manitoba, British Columbia, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland would eventually re-merge with the Canadian Wizengamot when their host colonies became provinces of the Dominion in 1869, 1871, 1873 and 1949 respectively.

6) The Salem Witches Institute was first mentioned in Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire. An all-girls institute, it is based in the city of the same name in Massachusetts. The Seven Hills Wizarding Academy is my invention meant to be the all-male version of Salem; it is located near Lynchburg in Virginia. I first introduced Seven Hills in The Icemaidens and the Philosopher's Stone.

7) As I imagine Canada to be quite liberal in the magical worlds thanks in a large part to the War Hawks, more "proper" and "politically correct" terms for various beings would be in the vogue. The word Kobaloi is taken from a Greek term meaning "imp" or "goblin". The term lunar therianthrope is my term for were-beasts of all types; "therianthrope" comes from another Greek phrase that is applied to people who can morph into animals. Naturally in Canada, terms like "muggle" and "squib" would make people there look at you strange.

8) Ōwatatsumi-no-Kami is the ancient dragon-like god of the sea in Shintō lore; he is also believed to be another name for Ryūjin ("dragon god"). Arariel is the angel who takes charges of the waters of the Earth in Jewish Talmudic legends; another name would be "Azariel". The seven saints Yonaga references here when she speaks of Enterprise's luck in World War Two are Saint Ann (mother of the Virgin Mary), Saint Brendan the Navigator (the Irish monk from the Sixth Century CE rumoured to have voyaged to North America), Saint Elizabeth Seton (the first native-born American saint), Saint Erasmus of Formia AKA Saint Elmo (the one from which the electrical discharges on the tops of masts was named after), Saint Maturinus (a French missionary from the Fourth Century CE), Saint Nicholas of Myra (the one whose name was applied as a formal name later for Santa Claus) and Saint Peter the Apostle, Jesus' student and the man traditionally seen as the first Pope of the Roman Catholic Church.

9) The Čúkči are the natives of the far eastern end of Siberia. The Iñupiat are native peoples who
normally ranged on the Bering Strait and Arctic coasts of Alaska. The Čukči are normally called the "Eskimos of Western Čukótka"; Čukótka is the name of the autonomous district (ókrug) that occupies the northeast reaches of Siberia. The Iñupiat could also be seen as "Eskimos" by the traditional definition of same even if under American law, they are grouped with non-Eskimo indigenous cultures that lived elsewhere in the state.

10) I model some of the shipgirls depicted here from the Chinese version of Kantai Collection, known as Zhànjiàn Shàonǚ ("Warship Girls"). Unlike KanColle, the Chinese version was a lot more accessible both on iOS and Android platforms and was designed from the start to have an equal balance of Axis and Allied shipgirls. Such designs can be seen at the Danbooru website.

11) Inu Chigaiko is my creation; she first appeared in The Senior Year story "Darling's Secret Date". Over the years, I've allowed her to develop as the complete antithesis to all the background characters in Yatsura who are part of Class 2-4 at Tomobiki High School; she loathes almost everyone there and would support neither Mendō Shūtarō (too arrogant) or Redet Lum (naïve alien whose presence ultimately instigated the weirdness that haunted Tomobiki). Because she's a "nobody", Chigaiko wouldn't be known to anyone there outside Moroboshi Ataru; over time, I linked her to a magical curse that was used by a former victim of the Red Cloak (who appeared in Urusei Yatsura manga chapter #41) to seek vengeance on the man for nearly scaring her to death once. Of course, the Red Cloak's name mentioned here, Hirota Matabei, is my creation.

12) The story of how Haruna befriended a family of birds and later met and befriended Wokyū was depicted in Hisahiko's Haruna Weather.
Tōkyō, a house near Ueno Park, an hour before lunch...

"Done..."

Taking a look around the now-emptied family house located off the Shinobazu-dōri, the tall and curvy teenage girl with the rusty red hair and the blue-grey eyes could only nod in satisfaction. It had been a busy month for her after she had been asked by her only true friend to come help liberate an entire RACE from chattel slavery on a planet named Phentax Twelve, a fight that had been horrifying beyond even the darkest nightmares of a writer like Stephen King when the ugly truths about what was happening on that planet became apparent to the metahumans of Yiziba, the Moroboshi siblings and their allies of the Flower Youth of Noukiios. But she had persevered even if she had been forced to literally abandon her magically "birth" form for an Avalonian bioroid body, one that gave her advantages like nothing she could have ever dreamt of.

Once she returned to Earth and Moroboshi Ataru arranged to have his uncle's people go legally transform "Tendō Ranko" into Hayashi Kanami...!

"Hayashi-dono?"

"Hai?" Kanami asked as she gazed on the middle-aged JMSDF second-class petty officer standing at the doorway to the now-empty Hayashi family home, given to her in the will of her recently-deceased paternal grandmother Chiaki.

"The real estate agent's here to process the sale, ma'am," the chief of the detail assigned to help transport Moroboshi Negako's latest human student to the Kure Naval District reported. "Everything's tied down for the trip and the train ticket to take you to Hiroshima has been purchased. You'll be heading there alongside the Fujinami family. Taihō-san will be escorting you."
Kanami blinked, her eyebrow arching. "Fujinami? You mean Fujinami Ryūnosuke? The fisherman's kid from Chōshi that was in Ataru's old class?"

"Hai, the same person. She was just let go from Tomobiki High."

An acknowledging nod responded. "Good for her. She wasn't going to learn how to be a girl among those alien-loving idiots." Kanami then took one last look around the house. Hopefully, the people who would buy it would find it a nice place to live. "Okay," she breathed out. "Let's get this done."

He nodded in understanding. Moroboshi Negako had briefed his team on everything this poor woman had endured since she had been magically separated from Saotome Ranma three months ago, cast aside and seen as nothing more than a burden to her "family". Thank the Kami her grandmother was wise enough to make sure those lunatics in Nerima would never be able to hurt her again! he thought on reflecting on Kanami's tortured history. "Hai, Hayashi-dono!"

With that, she stepped out of her grandparents' family home for the last time. It had been a nice place to live, but it had felt like another person's home when people from Toranoseishin Finances first brought her here nearly a month ago. Much that her life had become a lot easier now that she was legally freed of any influence from any of the idiots back in Nerima, Taitō Ward was still far too close to the sources of her pain for her comfort. Watching her genetic "brother" finally enjoy his life free of Jusenkyō's cursed touch, reunite with his mother Nodoka and finally progress his relationship with her to levels of sweetness that would probably kill a diabetic...! Seeing all that constantly sent hot knives of pain into Kanami's heart and soul, especially since all the other idiots haunting Nerima simply reverted to type, seeing her as a handy target for their own moronic desires and wants. Well, now...!

Kanami smirked.

Oh, yes...

As folks in the West say, living well is the best revenge of all!

"Teitoku..."

Kanami felt her cheeks flush as that voice washed over her, then she gazed on the beautiful brown-haired aircraft carrier fondly looking at her. "Oi, Tai-chan! Cut it out, huh?!" she then teased as Taihō came up to stay close to her while the real estate agent rose moved towards her, papers in
hand. "Jeez! You're just as bad to me as Kirishima is to Ataru, for heaven's sake!"

Chuckles echoed from others as Taihō's brown eyes sparkled with passion and amusement. With that, the real estate agent got Kanami to sign the forms to transfer ownership of the Hayashi home to his company for re-sale; Taihō was happy to summon her rigging to allow her flight deck to be used to give her new "special boatswain" a level writing pad. "How soon do you figure you'll have a sale?" Kanami asked as she drew out her hanko and began stamping things.

"I've already got four prospective offers since I listed the property," the agent stated. "It'll be quite the commission once a sale's made."

"Good," Kanami affirmed. Dealing with people outside of Nerima had been a refreshing change. She didn't know if it was some weird curse that haunted her when she was still part of Rannia that made people be totally stupid around him; even if his behaviour had been quite crude due to all the years on the road training under Genma, the reactions of many people to him had been way over the top at times. While she often found herself missing the thrill of fighting others at her skill level, she certainly didn't miss the times jerks like Hibiki Ryōga, the Kunō siblings or the morons from the Nūjiézú village in China leapt to conclusions about some idiot thing or another, then attacked her.

The look on Nū Shānpú's face after Kanami beat her would-be husband Liào Mūsī into a near-coma in the wake of her return from space had been priceless.

That was followed by the look of terror the warrior-maiden from the Bāyánkālā Mountains of Qīnghāi displayed when Kanami began to tear her apart.

After the warrior-maiden had been rendered into a bloody pulp, Kanami used her new body's touch-telepathic powers to burn a message right into Shānpú's soul while she ruthlessly pillaged her memories for everything she had been taught by her great-grandmother Kēlún: <<Next time I see you, I will shoot you down like the monster you are, Shampoo! If you send your 'hubby' after me, the same thing happens! You don't have your great-grandmother here to protect you anymore; the Abyssals will see to her the next time she tries to cross the seas from China to return to Japan! Consider this MY Kiss of Death, Shampoo!>>

After her new sensei Moroboshi Negako used her own Avalonian powers and the thousand years of martial arts knowledge which was her birthright to blank out Shānpú's and Mūsī's memories of WHO had so badly hurt them, Kanami walked out of Nerima for the final time, leaving her "brother" to his fate.

As Negako coldly declared, "Zhòuquán-xiāng will NOT be denied in THAT manner."
And while there was regret in Kanami's heart knowing that the true power of those springs was going to kill Ranma in the next month or so — especially how it would affect Tendō Akane in the long term — such remorse had been swamped by the tsunami of blood-soaked memories from the Battle of Phentax Twelve.

When she learned that her petty dreams meant NOTHING in the face of how much a RACE of bioroids had suffered in the name of Ataru's would-be "wife".

Those memories had given her some woozy nightmares over the last month, worlds worse then what her undergoing the Neko-ken or the fears of being frozen in her cursed body unleashed on her before she became her own being three months ago.

Which, thanks to Avalonian technology, was now her permanent body.

It was hard to accept such a thing even now...

But given how much the just-freed Avalonians were more than happy to save Kanami in their own way when that lunatic Otako shot her during the liberation of the bioroid factory then marooned on Phentax Twelve, prompting Ataru to literally behead the religious goose-stepping bitch with his bare hands...!

Shaking her head out of her self-reflection, Kanami sighed as she stamped the last paper. "You know where to send the money?" she then asked.

"Hai, Hayashi-dono," the agent assured her. "The transfer should happen within a week or so at the latest. I'll text you when it happens."

"Dōmo," Kanami breathed out as she handed the papers back. Bows and handshakes were exchanged, then she stepped off her family's former property. "Get me the hell out of here, Tai-chan," she whispered as she grasped Taihō's hand.

"Hai, Teitoku!" the carrier said as she guided her special boatswain towards the waiting taxi for the quick trip to Tōkyō Station...
"So they're still at the hospital trying to figure out what's happening to the arrogant jerk?" Wahoo contemptuously asked.

Sensing the disgusted sneer in the American submarine's voice as she placed the last of her possessions into the box provided by the nice naval personnel who were helping to transport her from this place, Tendō Kasumi sighed. "Hai," she declared as her feelings for her family and their guests churned deep within her heart. "I have to compliment Negako-sama for making people believe it was something Ojii-san did to make Ranma-kun ill. No one's spoken about Kanami-chan since she left." She frowned as she recalled the reaction — or rather, lack of reaction — from the "usual suspects" when it came to the departure of Saotome Ranma's genetic sister around the time the Moroboshi siblings were going to launch their attack on Phentax Twelve to cripple the Urusians' most powerful intergalactic ally and liberate a race of bioroids from enslavement.

Shaking her head as she recalled the letter Kanami left behind describing her feelings about how people treated her during the two months after the day she was separated from Ranma thanks to Happōsai's incense burner, the eldest daughter of Tendō Sōun closed the box. "Well, that's that," she breathed out.

Hearing that, Yū grinned as she picked up the box and carried it out. "Danke, Yū-chan," Kasumi thanked her, making the Type IX-C submarine blush. Wahoo then came over to offer her arm. "Ooh, a gentleman!" Kasumi teased the Gato-class submarine, making the raven-haired subgirl madly blush. "Makes me feel like one of the nurses rescued by Sherman-taisa and the crew of the Sea Tiger."

Wahoo laughed. All the American subgirls had found Operation Petticoat as funny as heck. Even the Japanese subgirls got hooked on the 1959 Cary Grant and Tony Curtis film; the DVD of that movie always got played by someone every day at the northern base on Eta-jima. "Well, it probably explains why Balao loves to dress in pink all the time!" she admitted as they walked to the main floor, where Tang and Dasher were waiting. "Hey, guys! Guess who's a fan of OP Petticoat?" she told the other subgirls while thumbing her companion.

Hearing that made the others grin. "Well, one has to applaud her good taste," Tang stated as she slipped her arm around Kasumi's. "Just as we guaranteed when you needed to be taken out of this place, ma'am. Total stealth."

"At least you're learning everything Negako-sama is teaching you," Kasumi noted as they walked to the genkan, then slipped on shoes and boots; as American shipgirls always did when ashore, Wahoo,
Tang and Dasher were in Navy Working Uniforms, gold oak leaves representing their ranks of lieutenant commander in the United States Navy on their jacket collars and on their eight-point covers, their submariner dolphins glittering in soft gold over their left pockets.

The subgirls were quick to sense the cloud of sadness in the heart of their new "honorary boatswain's mate". "Sure you don't want us to stick some fish in there, ma'am?" Dasher gently asked as she contemptuously thumbed the dōjō.

Kasumi gazed on the building which was the focus of her father's and sister's dreams since before the death of her mother Kimiko effectively torn apart the Tendō family. Remembering the times she had to clean up messes Akane had made whenever she practised in that building, she shook her head. At least Ranma-kun had been responsible enough to clean up after himself, as did Kanami-chan, she mused. "No, Dasher-chan. Thank you anyway. Much that I think it would be satisfying to do just that, it would be hard to explain once people recover their senses after all that's happened to Ranma-kun." She tried not to scowl as the disappointment she felt at his open ignorance of his sister's sufferings crawled up to overwhelm her feelings for him, not to mention the helplessness she felt knowing the "cure" everyone sought to free Ranma of Jusenkyō's cursed touch had condemned the poor man to die...especially in the wake of Kanami's becoming an Avalonian, which had all but guaranteed that Ranma would die according to Moroboshi Negako. "We don't want to undo everything Negako-sama did for Kanami-chan and I when it came time to wash our hands of all this."

"That's true," Wahoo mused as she pulled out a cell phone. "Ono to Big Bird," she called out after the connection got through. "Got your ears on?"

A moan responded while familiar laughter echoed in the background over the sounds of a taxi driving somewhere in Taitō Ward. "Hai, Wahoo-chan! Please, there's no need for that CB lingo!" Taihō answered. "Is Kasumi-san with you?"

"Yeah! We're moving to ship her to Tōkyō Station now. How about Kanami?"

"I'm here, Wahoo-chan!" Hayashi Kanami hailed. "Everything okay, Kasumi-san?"

"I'm fine, Kanami-chan!" Kasumi replied. "The girls are getting everything on the truck for transport. I'll see you at the station."

"Hai!"
The link was cut as they passed through the gates. The subgirls weren't surprised to note Kasumi didn't stop to turn and bow in respect to the spirit of the house; then again, given what they sensed of her over the last couple of weeks as they planned this operation to extract her from Nerima, the eldest Tendō daughter no longer considered this place her home. Everyone then got into the loaned M998 Humvee provided by Fleet Activities Yokosuka; a master-at-arms second class was the driver. Behind the light truck was two more Humvees, one of which would be used as the cargo vehicle to get Kasumi's personal belongings down to Eta-jima. "Let's go, PO!" Wahoo called out.

"Aye-aye, ma'am!" the sailor replied as he turned the gears over.

Kasumi didn't even gaze on the passing buildings as the driver guided the vehicle towards Metropolitan Route 24, which would take them to Route 8 and then to Metropolitan Expressway 5 for the trip to Tōkyō Station. It was hard for her to do such even if this movement would be seen by neighbours. While members of the "Nerima Wrecking Crew", relatives and other hangers-on were now either in school, at Nerima General Hospital or indisposed thanks to Kanami and Negako, the normal residents of this ward of Tōkyō would have taken notice of the American light trucks driving through their streets and stopping by the Tendō residence. By tonight, Kasumi's absence from the house would have been discovered at least by her sister Nabiki. As to how people would react...

In every way imaginable, I'm as much a 'nobody' as Kanami-chan was, Kasumi then mused as the Humvee drove by the entrance to Okonomiyaki Ucchan. Never seen as a person with her own dreams but just a handy slave to take care of the house and cook meals. No wonder it was so easy to finally decide to walk away from it all and be myself for a change. She then gazed on Tang and Dasher, who had moved to cuddle against her; even if the subgirls often got derided as "lewdmarines" due to their overwhelming desire to be intimate with people thanks to their often operating alone while out at sea, they were far more appreciative of someone like Kasumi than even her own family were. Well, once Akane-chan realizes she can't cook and Oba-san finally gets tired of looking after her lazy husband and Oto- san, maybe people will learn something...

A dark part of her mind then snorted. Doubtful...!

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Tinworth Beach near Praa Sands on the English Channel coast in Cornwall, that moment (local time: Three hours after midnight)...

"Not sleepy, Drake?"

Hearing that from his closest female friend, Draco Malfoy blinked before he offered his arm, allowing Pansy Parkinson to slide into his embrace. While it was the middle of the night, they and
their friends had remained up for hours, having enjoyed a late evening celebration in response to the incredible events early that day thanks to the Boy Who Lived having encountered the Soul-Eater of the Dnipró in Japan. "Not really," the scion of the Malfoy Clan of Avebury stated as he gave the heiress of the Parkinson Clan of Keerford a smile. "In awe concerning what Professor Dumbledore did to get rid of the Dark Lord."

Pansy shuddered on hearing her boyfriend mention that particular man. It had been a hectic and chilling week and more since the end of school, when children of the Death Eaters who had escaped imprisonment in Azkaban a decade before found themselves forced to bow at the feet of the snake-faced maniac that had gladly slaughtered so many when he first moved to topple the Ministry of Magic. While Draco, Pansy and their peers were made to walk the walk and talk the talk to show their "loyalty" to Voldemort, they hadn't liked it one bit. Yes, they hated muggle-inspired beliefs that people such as Harry Potter and Hermione Granger held as sacrosanct...but to condone acts of mass murder to keep Britain "pure" in the wake of the Abyssals' appearance was nothing short of suicide!

Never mind the fact that the muggles now had the shipgirls at their side...!

Draco tried not to shudder as he recalled his first encounter with such beings at Christmas, when four beautiful Japanese kannmusu came to the Yule Ball as Harry's combined dates due to his own shipgirl guardian, Surrey, having been on a mission. The four sisters of the same "class" of "fast battleship" (whatever that meant) caused a sensation among the students from Hogwarts, Beauxbâtons and Durmstrang, acting so human...yet projecting auras of magic that eclipsed that of even Albus Dumbledore himself! Thinking on that evening, Draco had to admit that it was no wonder some of the more conservative people attending that ball had begun to rail about such beings, never mind the quite eye-opening lecture about "burning love" that the eldest of the Kongō quartet had given to many wide-eyed wizards and witches. Even if he hadn't spoken to the Lady Kongō or her sisters that evening, Draco hadn't done anything to bring any sort of unwanted attention to himself from the shipgirls by heckling Harry for dating "muggle golems" in lieu of a real witch. Much that he didn't really care for the idea of muggles making use of such magic to summon the living spirits of lost warships to fight the Abyssals, he was very fond of staying alive!

Besides, comparing the magical aura of a fighting shipgirl like the Lady Kongō to the likes of Voldemort, the man who had once driven wizarding Britain to its knees was a gnat in comparison to the passionate British-born, Japanese shipgirl who had come to fight for her adopted homeland in its darkest hour...

"Drake..."

Draco perked, then noting where Pansy was looking, gazed out to sea...
...before he paled. "Oh, bugger...!"

He then jolted on hearing a strange warbling noise, making him look up...

...then he gaped as a muggle machine a foot long came to hover over him before it descended to land gently on the flat top of the wood fence that bordered the beach deck of the cottage the Malfoy family owned on this stretch of shoreline six miles south of east from Penzance. As the two magical humans stared, the rapidly whirling blades atop the device stopped twirling as a hatch opened on the left side of the machine — at least, Draco assumed it was the left side — to reveal a tiny humanoid creature dressed in a dark green bodysuit.

"A faerie...!" Pansy hissed out in awe.

Both magicals bowed politely to the being; regardless of what "wise elders" in the Ministry of Magic often said about shipgirls, such beings were clearly touched by powers truly beyond any sort of mortal understanding, even by the experts among the Unspeakables in the Department of Mysteries. Seeing that, the creature returned the bow, then snapped to attention, giving them that odd hand salute Draco and Pansy had seen Kongō and her sisters use at the Yule Ball when they greeted representatives of the British, French and Norwegian magical ministries as well as the senior staff of Hogwarts, Beauxbâtons and Durmstrang.

«Howdy! Shouldn’t you sprogs be in bed right now?»

Both magical humans gasped as their minds registered those words deep in their minds. Gazing on the visiting faerie, Draco and Pansy then blinked; the tiny being had relaxed even if she was giving them a concerned look. The voice that had just echoed in their head possessed a British-like accent, but it wasn't spot-on. "Um...we were celebrating that our families are free of a dark lord that threatened to enslave us all," Pansy answered. "It ran rather late..."

«Oh, that Riddle stirrer!» the faerie replied, her voice full of disgust and derision. As both magicals stared at her, the pilot of the faerie-sized Kaman SH-2G Super Seasprite anti-submarine helicopter in the colours of the Royal New Zealand Air Force's No. 6 Squadron winked. «Don’t you fret! Our friends here in Britain will make sure that murdering arse won’t cause you more...!»

A series of explosions then lit up the southern sky over the Channel, making Draco and Pansy scream in surprise. The faerie seemed not bothered by it as she gazed over her shoulder. «Oh! Looks like Abyssals are coming this way...»
"WHAT?!" Draco croaked...

...then he turned as white as a sheet as a silver-haired being surged up from the waters twenty metres away, hissing in delight as triple 8 inch gun mounts locked in on the cottages lining the shore. Unseen by him or his companion, other Abyssals of different types and shapes also appeared, their weapons bearing on target; at that close range, it would be a total massacre.

"DRAKE!" Pansy screamed...

«You better duck,» the faerie pilot helpfully suggested.

...just as the ominous whistle of four VERY heavy shells racing at the Ne-class heavy cruiser moving to bombard all of Tinworth echoed through the air, that accompanied by the roaring noise of many anti-ship missiles closing in.

The impact was devastating. As Draco and Pansy morbidly watched, the cruiser's entire body from shoulders to hips *disintegrated* as magazines went up from the furious impact. Both magicals then gaped as fragments of turrets, guns, other equipment and the cruiser's very head flew at the cottage...only to deflect off some sort of opaque crimson force field that shielded all the buildings there, making Draco and Pansy drop to the deck as the suddenness of the moment came to overwhelm them. Off to both the east and the west of the Malfoy family cabin, the other Abyssals were ripped apart at the same time by both more gunfire and a flock of Harpoon missiles. As soon as what remained of the cruiser collapsed into a heap of bleeding, smoking wreckage in the waters of the Channel, the pilot of the Seasprite shook her head. «Bloody Canucks doing TOT shots! Then again, Toa Rangatira Erinsville has been doing that since bloody 1916...!»

"You're from New Zealand?!!"

"Daphne!" Pansy breathed out in relief as her best female friend ran up before she blinked, then she stared at the faerie. "How could you tell...?"

The blonde, blue-eyed heiress of the Greengrass Clan of Mutuantonis in East Sussex smirked as she waved towards her family cottage. "These autogyros...!"

«Please, miss! These machines are called 'helicopters',» the pilot corrected her as she affectionately patted the nose of her Super Seasprite.
Daphne blushed. "Sorry..."

«It's alright!» the pilot assured her. «We know how isolated magical folk in Britain are from normal folk. Damned, bloody crime if you ask me!»

The magicals blinked at the faerie's words concerning their lack of education when it came to muggles; much that they didn't care for muggles at all, that the faerie was so concerned about their lack of knowledge on such subjects was something they wouldn't ignore. "What's going on, Daphne?" Draco asked.

"More of these aut-..." Daphne caught herself. "Sorry, helicopters," she then corrected herself, earning a nod from the pilot. "Well, they landed at all the cottages to throw up wards around the buildings while some 'super battleship' — sort of like Lady Kongō and her sisters, but much bigger! — blasted them apart with her firearms and those missiles Commonwealth shipgirls carry..." She then waved towards her cottage. "An Australian helicopter landed at my cottage. It carried the ward stone that protected us from the attackers." She gazed on the pilot. "Are you really going to try to capture one of those things?!"

«Doubt we'll be able to do that in this particular scrap. Still, we and your law enforcement people can't keep fighting this war without knowing where they come from so we can go forth and permanently put an end to this madness, miss,» the faerie replied as shouts from different cottages echoed over the beach, indicating people there had been woken by the thunder of battle. «Much that we're prepared to fight to protect everyone, this war needs to stop...»

"AH!"

All three magicals looked over. "Loony?!" Draco exclaimed.

A delighted chuckle escaped Luna Lovegood as she ran up the beach and stepped onto the deck. "Oh, my! A helicopter from the Te Taua Moana o Aotearoa!" the blonde would-be reporter/naturalist from Devonshire gushed before she bowed to the pilot. "Excuse me, miss, but is your mothership nearby? I'm a reporter from The Quibbler. I'd like to do an interview. Is the battle still on?"

«She's coming now, miss,» the pilot replied as she returned Luna's bow.
"Bloody hell...!"

Draco, Pansy and Daphne perked on hearing that voice, then looked...

...before they gaped as three girls appearing to be THEIR age calmly sailed up to the shore to inspect the cruiser that had been prepared to wreck the Malfoy cabin. In the torchlight of the cabins, the Hogwarts students noted all three appeared to be sisters, dressed the same way in form-fitting skinsuits favoured by Canadian shipgirls. The grey of the suits was a smoky medium shade than the hazy bluish sky grey used by reborn warships of the Great White North. Pendant numbers were a deeper grey and the boots were black; the pendant numbers were also preceded with the letter "D". All had dark grey kiwi symbols on their left breasts; noting that, Daphne was quick to see the similarity to the kiwi-in-a-ring symbol on the helicopter's hull. They were dusky-skinned with Māori war tattoos on faces and arms; magicals of that Pacific chain of islands were well known in wizarding Britain. Their rigging was composed of a tall, solid pyramid-like mast dotted with radar arrays forward of a square funnel-like structure bearing the dark grey kiwi, that flowing into a hangar topped with a Phalanx Mark 15 CIWS and a surface search radar unit, that itself supporting a flight deck for helicopters. On the sides of the hangar were Mark 41 vertical launch missile systems for air defence missiles as well as single-barrel automated cannon. The quad Mark 141 clusters for Harpoon anti-ship missiles were on their legs above their knees. Vambraces on their lower arms held a Phalanx CIWS on the left arm and a 5 inch 54 calibre Mark 45 naval cannon on the right arm. Of course, Luna immediately recognized, these shipgirls from the Realm of Aotearoa wore jade hei-tiki pendants around their necks and piupiu skirts covering their hips and legs to above their pendant numbers.

"TOT shot with four of those bloody eighteen-inch rifles of hers!" the middle of the destroyer girls muttered, shaking her head as she tried not to shiver at the idea of being hit with such large shells. She had D24 as her pendant, her hair was silver, styled to hold three huia feathers at the back of the head (as her sisters also wore), her eyes were a deep sea blue and her war paint made her look like a living tiki statue from a distance. Before the others could comment, she looked out towards the Channel. "Did we get all the stirrers?!

"Give us a bit, ya damned kiwi!" someone's voice echoed over the waters as if they had been amplified with a Sonorus charm. The voice had a recognizable Outback accent to it. "We're still doing the anti-submarine sweeps!"

"Keep the helicopters there to protect the cottages, Miss Māori!" a deeper and older voice then barked out from somewhere way out in the Channel.

"Aye, ma'am!" the shipgirl who had called out responded.
Luna's eyes went wide. "'Māori'...?!

Her schoolmates gazed at her. "What is she?" Daphne asked.

The would-be reporter grinned as she pulled out a pen and pad. "They finally summoned the *Tribal-class* destroyers, Daphne!" she declared. "Oh, this will *definitely* make the next issue of the *Quibbler*!" With that, she bowed to the faerie pilot whose machine had protected Draco's family cottage, then ran off the beach deck to approach the three destroyers close to the shoreline.

«Excitable lass, isn't she?» the pilot mused.

Draco, Pansy and Daphne all nodded, the three still looking quite confused...

"Ata pai!"

Hearing that, Māori turned to see the blonde teenage girl with a spacey look on her face and the silver-blue eyes standing on the beach near the wreckage of the cruiser just destroyed by one of the Ōka Taniwha built in Canada decades ago; she was now dressed in rather dated civilian clothes, though not in the classical robes normally preferred by most British human magicals regardless of which school they attended in their youth. Noting people from other cabins were streaming out of their homes to see what was going on, the destroyer sighed before she slipped around the wrecked cruiser to come ashore. "Ata pai," she greeted the smiling girl...then blinked as she came up to perform a proper hongi with the tattooed destroyer, that making her sisters giggle in amusement, their hands moving to mask their mouths. "What's so funny?" the veteran of the Mediterranean Theatre muttered under her breath.

"She didn't do a haka, Tuahine Paari!" Te Mana advised, winking.

"Well, it would be stupid to distract Toa Rangatira Māori when we're in a potential battle situation," the human girl stated with a calm smile.

That made Māori gape. "You know of me?"
"Her Majesty's Shipgirl Māori. However, I see you're now properly addressed as 'Her Majesty's New Zealand Shipgirl Māori'. Sixth of the Tribal-class of 1937, born at the Fairfield Shipbuilding and Engineering Company in Glasgow, launched on the second of September that year. Sadly, you were sunk while docked at Valletta in Malta in 1942; they then found it too costly to repair you, so they towed your hull out to sea and sank it after the war." She then gazed in fascination at Māori's sisters. "Who are you two?" she asked. "Toa Rangatira Māori was the only Tribal-class named after an iwi from Aotearoa."

That made the other shipgirls giggle. "We're more recent construction," the one with pendant D77 answered. She had reddish brown hair in a fashionable ponytail to secure her feathers, light blue eyes peeking out of her face. Her war paint gave her a fierce look. "I'm Te Kaha, formerly second of the Anzac-class frigates, now adopted of the Tribal-class destroyers. My sister is Te Mana, who was fourth of the Anzac-class. When Tuahine Paari Māori heard the summons to come back, we went with her. Which was a good thing!"

"Of course," Te Mana added. She was a tomboyish girl with white hair similar to Māori's, her eyes a medium blue; her pendant number was D111. Her war paint gave her a more wise and stately look in comparison to her sisters. "None of them had any idea of how to use missiles, to say anything of helicopters."

"So I'm old fashioned! Sue me!" Māori declared with a snort.

"Miss Lovegood!"

"Luna!"

The girl perked, then looked over her shoulder. "Oh, Professor Dumbledore! Hermione! Miss Surrey! Over here!" she said, waving people over.

Now approaching them was an elderly wizard in beautifully coloured robes, a girl about the same age as the would-be reporter from Devonshire in normal civilian clothes and a reborn County-class cruiser in her sea uniform, which resembled the dark blue jackets and bell bottoms worn by Royal Navy sailors in the Nineteenth Century. "Luna!" Surrey called out as she ran over...then she stopped as she gazed in confusion at the three shipgirls hovering around the wreckage of what appeared to be a Ne-class heavy cruiser. Noting their pendant numbers and the war paint on their faces and arms, Surrey blinked as she tried to identify these shipgirls from her own internal database of shipgirls. Their gear marked them as having inherited the weapons and sensor outfit of the Type 45 destroyers recently built for the Royal Navy; all had been sunk three years ago even if their souls had been brought back as enhanced versions of their World War Two incarnations, either as D-class destroyers (for Daring, Diamond, Defender and Duncan) or Danae-class light cruisers (for Dauntless and
Luna Lovegood smiled. "Her Majesty's New Zealand Shipgirls Māori, Te Mana and Te Kaha," she said as she indicated each of the destroyers, then she gazed on them as she introduced the cruiser and the human magicals who just arrived from Scotland. "I believe you are aware of Her Majesty's Shipgirl Surrey. May I also present the headmaster of Hogwarts, Professor Albus Dumbledore. This is a schoolmate of mine from the form ahead of me, Miss Hermione Granger."

"Delighted, ladies," Albus stated with a polite bow of his head. "And thank you so very much for stopping this attack on our shores."

Māori's sisters came ashore so all could exchange hongi and handshakes with the new arrivals. "Lucky for us we were patrolling in this area when we spotted that task force moving in to attack the village," Te Mana stated as she nodded out towards the Channel before she turned back to the elderly wizard as a crowd of magicals began to stream onto the beach. "No doubt, they're now wising up to the fact that you people are moving to better shield the shores of the British Isles from attack, then elected to hit a magical village to sternly 'remind' you all that you're not as powerful as you'd like to think you are."

"Did someone call the Aurors?" Daphne Greengrass' father Cyrus then asked.

"They're coming now, Cyrus," Albus assured him. "Are there casualties?"

"None, Professor," Draco Malfoy affirmed.

Others in the crowd quickly confirmed that statement. "That was thanks to these aircraft that landed on our beach decks before the explosions happened, Professor," Blaise Zabini stated. He was currently accompanied by his mother Vanessa. In his hands was an Agusta Westland AW101 Merlin HM2 helicopter in the markings of the Royal Navy's 829 Squadron. As Te Mana came over to allow him to place the helicopter on her flight deck, he added, "They had ward stones that created barrier fields that deflected fire from the Abyssal ships before that battleship now in the Channel destroyed them with gunfire and missiles."

"What battleship?" Hermione asked, looking around.

"Don't know," the half-Italian heir to the Zabini Clan of Lewisham answered. "She struck from very
far out; over forty kilometres from the shore."

That made the dentists' daughter from West Sussex gape. "**Forty kilometres?!!** Not even a BL 16 inch Mark I gun from Nelson, Rodney or the Mark IIs on any of the Lion-class could hit from that far out! Are you sure of the range?"

"Ever since we had to start worrying about Abyssal attacks, we've all taught ourselves a simple ranging spell similar to how a muggle radar system can lock on something, Miss Granger," Vanessa Zabini answered as Surrey looked out to sea. "The range from our cabin to this mystery battleship was 41,210 metres when she fired. We know the difference between gunfire and missiles."

"She's armed with eighteen-inch guns, isn't she?" the cruiser asked.

Hermione gaped on hearing that; the only warships she knew of that had taken such wide-bore weapons to sea were the Yamato-class battleships...and all three of them were on the other side of Eurasia! "You know this ship?" Albus asked.

"Know OF her, Professor Dumbledore," Surrey answered. "Mostly through stories told to me by veterans of Jutland and a few other places in both world wars."

That made the headmaster blink as his mind ran through that before his eyes went very wide. "The Leviathan Homicidae, Miss Surrey?" he asked, making many of the magicals there gape; even if they really couldn't comprehend the idea of shipgirls and what they were fighting, they understood Latin. "They're real?"

"Not confirmed real," Surrey confessed before she gazed on the destroyers. "Unless you girls can say something about it?" she hopefully asked.

All three New Zealand shipgirls shook their heads. "We can't do it, miss," Te Kaha confessed before she winked. "Not yet, at least." She then perked as the Merlin placed on her sister's flight deck started up and lifted off, turning to head out to sea. "I'm sure that will change very soon. With what we've had to investigate since we were summoned, we'll probably be able to trace down the source point of these things within the next month or so." She contemptuously nodded to the wreckage of the cruiser now disintegrating in the water behind her. Looking at it himself, Albus was quick to see flicking reddish sparkles indicating the shells fired on the Ne-class were augmented with ruby mesonium, the mid-level version of the material composing Dean Raeburn's Power Jewel; such was now melting the Abyssal's remains and purifying the waters.
"Sorry about that," Māori apologized.

"Please, Miss Māori, don't apologize," Albus stated. "However, please extend our compliments to that shipgirl for such excellent shooting, especially if she has such powerful naval rifles as part of her rigging. Also, please advise her to be very careful in the future. Your magic is quite different from ours, but there are certain laws of magic we're all subject to. Such as..."

"Life Debts?" Māori finished. "Don't worry about that, Professor. Elements of 'A' Commando will be along in a while to get the story on this side of the line. Anything that might cause an issue, they'll be happy to help out with."

Albus took that in, then nodded. "Please ask whoever commands 'A' Commando to come meet me when he can so I can ensure no potential problems rise. The Foresters..." — he ignored croaked, horrified gasps from many of the people there — "...do possess a very undeserved reputation among European magicals. I don't want to start a magical war between Britain and Canada in the midst of dealing with the Abyssals; that will definitely make the Queen quite upset."

"Oh, that it will!" Te Mana stated as her sisters laughed. "In the meantime, we have to be off!" She then gave them a dramatic bow. "Po pai, everyone!"

"Po pai!" Luna said in turn, winking at them. "Please tell the Dragon Slayers that I would like a chance for an interview sometime soon!"

That made Te Kaha gape. "How...?"

"She's Luna Lovegood," Māori stated. "She's got Seer blood in her."

The other destroyers perked before nodding. "We'll pass it on!" Te Mana vowed.

With that, they surged out into the Channel, going to flank speed right away as they sailed to the southeast in the direction of the Channel Islands. Several of the younger magicals cried out as they waved the New Zealander shipgirls off. As soon as they were out of shouting range, the thunder of helicopter blades made people look behind them as the faerie-driven machines lifted off people's beach decks to rejoin their motherships. As children tried to chase off after them, Pansy gazed on Luna. "'Dragon Slayers'?" she asked.
"Dragon Slayers, Pansy," the would-be reporter from Devonshire calmly affirmed. "To the kanmusu of Japan, they are called the 'Ryūseizen'. Here in Europe, the term often used is 'Leviathan Homicidae' or translations of same as Professor Dumbledore just noted. Stories about them provide no concrete proof of such ships' existences, not to mention an explanation concerning what they were built to destroy in the first place since they never fought normal warships in either world war...though given that they're clearly active at this time and are shipgirls, they might have been constructed to fight primitive versions of the Abyssals." As people stared at her, Luna added, "They're warships of very large size, clearly influenced by normal naval construction methods, armed with the cutting edge weapons technology of the time they served in. They roamed the Atlantic and the Mediterranean in the Great War and all the oceans in the Second World War while our forefathers fought Minister Grindelwald and Marshal Yomigawa was liberating the colonies in the Pacific and Indian Ocean basins." She ignored the flash of disgust and loathing on the faces of some of the older people on her mentioning Tsukuyomi's War of Liberation, which had completely wrecked Europe's influence over the International Confederation of Wizards. "Those few people who did see the Dragon Slayers often had their memories suppressed of such sightings...but that didn't affect those shipgirls such as Warspite and her sisters, not to mention the other veterans of Jutland, not to mention Leyte Gulf and the other large Pacific battles. They remember them."

"An area-wide memory suppressing Obliviate spell," Albus stated before shaking his head. "Possible, but the power needed for such a thing would be enormous."

"What if the ships had mesonium built into them, Professor?" Hermione asked.

That made the elderly headmaster blink. "A good point, Miss Granger..."

Eta-jima, the base headquarters building, that moment...

"This does not surprise me."

Hearing that casual comment from the ninjutsu grandmaster now seated at one side of the room, Heather Thompkins tried not to roll her eyes. "No! You think!" she snidely declared before she gazed at the iPad Judy Barnes had given her. A device containing information that would kill many people from shock, from hardcore naval historians to the most passionate mugalophobic magical who saw the International Statute of Wizarding Secrecy as the one surefire thing to keep him safe from torch-bearing "muggles" wanting to burn him at the stake. "My God...we actually built these things...?!!" she hissed out.

"Why the secrecy during the Second World War concerning this formation, Judy?" Moroboshi
Negako asked the Forester colonel from northwest New Brunswick.

Beside her, Mutsu was trying not to crush the cup of cold tea made for her by Ōyodo before she rejoined the new commander-in-chief of the world's shipgirl forces in her new office; the disbelief the battleship now felt on hearing the incredible story about what had happened at NCSM Gravé and its sister magical naval reserve division and wartime dockyard based in a remote inlet on the central coast of British Columbia, HMCS Whidbey, was coming close to totally overwhelming her. Then again, she wryly mused to herself. Believing in something like the War Hawks would have been quite difficult...!

"During the First World War, it would be more than understandable," Negako added. "There was no corresponding magical war during that conflict and Canada's steel production capacity was nowhere close to being sufficient enough to explain preparing the necessary raw materials to permit the construction of such large warships. Not to mention forging naval rifles such as the Mark I 460 millimetre naval cannon fitted into Erinsville, Carolina, Lady Elgin and Lady Jane. By the time the Second World War began in earnest in 1939, the Dominion's steel production capability had increased exponentially, along with a marked advancement of indigenous weapons design and production capability; Deannette's Mark 34 revolvers and the Sopwith So-48 Camel II prove that."

"People felt it would have still been hard to explain in certain circles even with what the Übermenschen and the Black Dragon Society — not to mention the War Hawks, the Liberty Legion and the Soldiers of Freedom — were doing," Judy answered, making the battleship seated beside Negako wince as she recalled the archival footage she had seen of metahuman battles that rocked North America from Los Angeles to Québec City, from New York and Washington to Seattle and Vancouver and from Winnipeg to New Orleans. Fighting Abyssals was one thing. Fighting crazed metahumans powered by ebony mesonium that give them abilities equal to major kami was something else! "Naval officers are an observant lot; it's a necessity in their trade. If they saw something like Lady Elgin, they would have wondered how the devil did 'colonials' from Canada build a super battleship that outweighed the passenger liner Queen Mary, never mind how the Allied magical governments would have reacted to that discovery given Minister Grindelwald's ultimate goal of destroying the Statute of Secrecy. Hood, the largest British warship active at the time, was a little over HALF Elgin's displacement." She shook her head. "Never mind the whole matter that forced Admiral Harlan to do what he did to get these ships built so quickly with help from the Kobaloi, the Dweorg and other magical beings when native mystics loudly began to warn of these creatures' coming three years before Archduke Franz Ferdinand was assassinated in Sarajevo. Not even the most radical magical theorist at Sibley could accept what he warned about before he had Sunbeam and Sundown built in 1912. I've seen pensive memories from the crews concerning these things those ships hunted. Even if they weren't driven by any recognizable human-level intelligence, these creatures were a threat like nothing no one could dream at the time was possible. If they got out of control, it would have been a holocaust many magnitudes worse than what the Black Plague unleashed centuries ago. Clearly, they had to be precursors to the Abyssals we're fighting now; the magical residue is quite similar when it was compared to readings the battleships' crews took during the war. It was a miracle those ships were able to do what they did without causing a mass panic, to say anything of effectively allowing the Statute of Secrecy to be gutted."
"Not that such would be too bad," Mutsu whispered.

The sorceress from New Brunswick sighed. "Oui, not that such would be bad, especially now. There are enough Internet chat boards and websites out there that explain a lot about magicals. It amazes me the security specialists haven't picked up on it." She then blinked before laughing. "Then again, they were killing themselves trying to keep the Abyssals secret at the start. It's no wonder they just gave up on that sort of thing when everything went crazy three years ago! Waste of time and lives..." She shook her head.

"Are the Ryūseizen now kanmusu?"

Eyes locked on Nagato. Mutsu's sister had accompanied Negako to this meeting between Heather and Judy just after the New Brunswicker had dropped the big bomb about the existence of a formation whose existence had been kept top secret even from the run-of-the-mill magical. Given that such a formation had often forayed to those parts of the high seas not normally frequented by military craft in either world war, it was understandable that the cloak of security over the existence of eight specially-built, sea monster-hunting battleships had been so easy to maintain even in the many decades after VJ Day, especially given the potential links between such creatures and the beings that shipgirls and shipboys worldwide had been fighting over the last three years.

"They became same shortly after Sackville was recalled, Madame Nagato," Judy answered, trying not to wince on seeing the stunned look on the normally stoic battleship's face. Noting that, the sorceress from Edmundston wondered how the Canadian shipgirls at Eta-jima would react to the existence of capital ships in their service...even if the vessels of the First Canadian Battleship Squadron had been shielded from the crews of other warships thanks to the Statute of Secrecy. "They needed no summoning chamber; elder members of their crews who understood the nature of what was happening sacrificed their magic and lives to allow the transformation to occur at their docks in Tadoussac and Smith Inlet."

Nagato and Mutsu both gaped in horror. "What possessed them to do THAT, Chūsa-san?!" the latter asked as she exchanged stunned looks with her sister.

"Because all had relatives in 'W' Division who had died in the defence of the Dominion's shores and had become suicidal," Judy answered as Heather shook her head. As both battleships bowed their heads in sympathy, she added, "Atop that, they learned of the faeries that help you girls use your rigging, so they knew that echoes of their living souls would be reborn as such, thus allowing the ships of CANBATRON ONE to be 'manned' in the traditional sense."

"How armed?" Nagato asked. "Did they get their weapons upgraded?"
Heather hummed as she tapped controls on her iPad. "All secondary and anti-aircraft guns were landed in the 1980s to allow auto-loading weapons and missile launchers to take their places in case they might be needed to deal with a possible return of the creatures they once fought," the admiral stated. "Standard small weapon and missile kit for all of them are eight 76 millimetre 62 calibre super rapid OTO-Melera mounts, eight Bushmaster Mark 38 Mod 2 Typhoon Weapon Systems, four Phalanx Mark 15 close-in weapons systems, sixteen Mark 141 launchers in quad packs for Harpoons and four 64 cell Mark 41 vertical launch missile clusters carrying Standards, Enhanced Sea Sparrows in quad packs and ASROCs." As Nagato and Mutsu nodded in appreciation at that level of armament — both knew Iowa had long dreamed of getting the chance to rearm herself to make her more capable than she and her sisters had been even in the 1980s, a dream shared with Yamato, Musashi, Bismarck, Littorio and Roma — Heather added, "They also have a hangar at the aft end of the hull for two CH-124A Sea King anti-submarine helicopters; it would be easy to upgrade the flight packages for the CH-148 Cyclone. Given how big these ships are — even Sunbeam and Sundown — it doesn't surprise me they're able to carry so much."

"Atop that, the older ships had their British-designed main guns replaced by American-designed weapons before World War Two got started," Judy added. "The Sunbeam-class now carry 12 inch 50 calibre Mark 8 guns in triple turrets while the Erinsville-class and Lady Elgin-class have 18 inch 47 calibre Mark 'A' guns in dual turrets. Argo and Chennalton both have 16 inch Mark 7 guns in quad turrets. People who were doing the initial design work on the Montana-class ships in the States were happy to get test data about four-gun mountings before they switched over to the four triple-gun turrets in the final design."

"How did they get around the Statute of Secrecy?" Nagato asked. "Given how fanatical the Americans were in maintaining the separation between magical and normal back in those days, I doubt they would have taken this lying down."

"Fortunately, Admiral Harlan was friends with President Roosevelt," Judy said, which made both battleships smirk. "Atop that, the issue that forced him to upgrade the older ships was classified as 'metahuman'. As the President was interested in mystery men to help form a metahuman defence force just in case America got dragged into the war and Axis metahumans were drafted to serve Hitler — as the Übermenschen so gladly demonstrated after Pearl Harbour — it was accepted without question at the White House. No one in New York sensed a thing." She shrugged. "Thanks to a very handy 'notice me not' type of area charm over the people who were in the know over this, not even the best memory-retrieval expert in the Department of Magic could discover it unless they were actually there listening to the admiral brief the President on this."

"The same type of charm used on those warship crews who spotted these ships whenever they were in the area performing their tasks," Mutsu noted.

"Since we're magical, we aren't affected anymore by the 'notice me not' charms used on the crews whenever we sailed close to any of these ships," Nagato stated. "That's a relief. Too many of us have dreamt of the Ryūseizen..."
"Understandable," Judy cut in.

"What do you mean, Barnes-chūsa?" Mutsu asked.

The Forester colonel gave the battleships a knowing smile. "If there is one thing Bill Harlan drilled into his people to follow even in the middle of a mission hunting those things down...it was to never forget the law of the sea."

Mutsu's and Nagato's eyes went wide...

Passing between Tsuwaji-jima and Nuwa-jima, that moment...

"LOOK! LOOK! IT'S FUSŌ-SAMA AND YAMASHIRO-SAMA!"

"BANZAI! BANZAI! BANZAI FUSŌ! BANZAI YAMASHIRO!"

"AH! IT'S DAIJŪROKU-KUCHIKUDAI!"

"BANZAI! BANZAI! BANZAI YUKIKAZE! BANZAI AMATSUKAZE! BANZAI HATSUKAZE! BANZAI TOKITSUKAZE! BANZAI! BANZAI! BANZAI! BANZAI DAIJŪROKU-KUCHIKUDAI!"

"OI! WHO'S THAT WITH THEM?!!"

"SHE'S CANADIAN!"

"IMPOSSIBLE! THE CANADIANS NEVER BUILT BATTLESHIPS!"
Silence.

More silence.

Still more silence.

Then...

"EHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH...?!

As the gawking onlookers — a mixture of fishermen and other people who gladly sailed out from places like Yashiro-jima to watch the shipgirls sail in or out up close; many of the younger people on the Aki-nada seemed to be university students taking a day off classes — all began to chatter with each other as wild theories were tossed about like hot potatoes fresh out of the stove, Fusō tried not to moan as she gazed to her port quarter at the tall shipgirl that was forming the "tail end Charlie" position of their ad hoc formation.

"Um...does that 'notice me not' field of yours still work, Chennalton-san?" the raven-haired lead ship of her class of super-dreadnoughts then asked.

A wry smile answered her from the slender, tomboyish woman in the gunmetal grey sleeveless bodysuit that declared to anyone who met her that she was of the Royal Canadian Navy if one didn't recognize the white ensign now flying from her radar-equipped foremast behind her head of spiky raven hair. "The one handy thing I lost when I became a shipgirl," she replied, her voice flecked with a mix of Québécoise French and central Texan English that sounded exotic to the Japanese kanmusu sailing with her. "Not that it would matter now. The Statute of Secrecy is pretty much finished. Fortunately, there are enough normals and metahumans who are happy to wage a campaign over the Internet to make others find it easier to accept our magical friends. It'll be harder in places that have dealt with dark lords like this Riddle polecat in England..."

Rueful chuckles escaped the others as they threaded their way north-northwest to pass to the east side of Hashira-jima and the west side of Kurahashi-jima on final approach to Eta-jima. "You sure you can carry all of them into the base, Sempai-tachi?" Amatsukaze then asked as she gazed on the sleeping baby Abyssals — all of which rivalled Hoppō when it came to sheer cuteness — now lying secure on the turret tops of the three battleships in their formation.

Fusō chuckled; that had been the sixth time the ninth of the Kagerō-class destroyers had asked that
question since they had departed the Izu-shotō with their young charges. "It's alright, Amatsukaze-san. We're almost there."

"What's that Abyssal carrier doing on Kobashira-jima?"

Both Japanese battleships tensed on hearing that question from their new Canadian friend, then they exchanged looks. "That's a Wo-class carrier that pretty much is sitting out the war altogether, Chennalton-san," Yamashiro replied. "She's the one that Haruna-san befriended earlier this year."

"Ah!" the adopted native of la Haute-Côte-Nord in Québec and Dallas in Texas (thanks to her late namesake) breathed out, nodding. "Hai, 'V' Commando did report on that incident. Brave girl, that one." She then perked before gazing to her starboard flank, making all the others perk. "Recon flight."

The Japanese shipgirls all turned to look. "Skyraider!" Tokitsukaze called out. "Markings of VA-6! Enterprise-sempai must have launched them!"

"There's cordite in the air!"

Everyone gazed on their Canadian friend, who was scanning around, her nose twitching slightly. "There was a battle?!" Hatsukaze exclaimed.

"No! There's meson in the cordite residue. Since I'm the only one of my squadron in this part of the world, it has to come from one source."

"Who?" Fusō asked.

An amused smirk answered the raven-haired battleship. "Martin Larsden."

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**On Kobashira-jima, that moment...**
"Hishō! Bugyō! Hoppō scared!"

Hearing that alarmed statement from Katsuragi, both Jessica Dover and Martin Larsden gazed on the young Abyssal; she had come here with Hōshō minutes ago to join the impromptu party that was being held close to Wokyū's home. "What's frightening her?" Harry Potter asked as several people moved to surround the quaking Hoppō, who was switching from gazing fearfully out to the south-southeast to trying to curl herself up in a shivering ball of terror.

"Must be that strange shipgirl sailing with Fusō, Yamashiro and Yukikaze-chan's division," Moroboshi Tariko mused as she scanned things with her binoculars.

People noted that, then Kongō walked over to use her optical scanners and radar to scan that area of the Aki-nada. "They seem alright," the fast battleship noted. "Carrying a whole bunch of kids like Hoppō-chan with them..."

"Oh, my!" Kirishima noted. "It's a good thing that Nagato-san isn't here..."

"Hoppō...sisters...?"

People turned to see a wide-eyed Hoppō gazing in confusion at Moroboshi Ataru's twin. Noting that, Tariko beckoned her over. Hoppō walked over, then squealed in glee as Tariko boosted her up to sit on her folded arm as the latter moved to place the binoculars before the childish Abyssal's eyes. Gazing through the computer-magnified lenses, Hoppō blinked...then she beamed. "Hoppō sisters!" she cheered out as others gathered by the ledge to look. "Hoppō sisters!"

"Where did they come from?" Yūdachi asked.

"Probably from the Izu Islands," Johnston noted. "Fusō and Yamashiro were going to do a sweep of them with Yuki's squad to see if there were survivors from the attacks two years ago. If the only ones alive are like Hoppō..."

"No human survivors," Hōshō breathed out, her shoulders slumping in depression; the appearances of child Abyssals like Hoppō was always a dark sign that civilians had been killed in cartload lots on any of the outlying islands that had been cut off from the mainland of Japan at the very start of the general war. "At least we'll be able to learn what finally happened to the people on those islands once we learn their dialect of the Abyssal language."
"We will sink them all, Hōshō-sensei," Yonaga vowed. "Save for the young ones like Hoppō, of course." She glanced at the young Abyssal in the arms of her navigation officer's relative, making Hoppō gaze warily at the seventh carrier of Operation Z for a moment, then she looked once more through the binoculars.

"Yona! No scare Hoppō!"

That was a huffing and puffing Katsuragi, who was glaring at the taller carrier with all the childish fury she could muster. As Hoppō flushed at her friend's automatically leaping to her defence even against the Angry One, Yonaga shook her head, then gazed out to sea at the formation now closing the range with their position. Her eyebrow then arched. "Who is that at the rear?!"

Others blinked, then they focused their optics out to sea. After a moment, Yamato turned pale as Johnston and Hoel both began to babble like crazy. Kongō was hissing as she gripped her temples to prevent her from shaking her head off her neck and the four members of Kidō Butai sunk at Midway all had tears of joyous disbelief in their eyes. The others were exchanging shocked looks. "No way...it can't be! Not HER...!" Enterprise hissed out, shaking her head.

"It IS her, E-chan...!" Yamato nearly sobbed.

"WHO?!!" Yonaga snarled, her hand tightly grasping her daikyū.

"Calm down, Miss Yonaga," a calm man's voice cautioned, making heads turn to gaze on the Royal Canadian Mounted Police commissioner standing nearby. "No doubt, your sister is remembering how half her ship's company was teleported out of her hull after her magazine detonated and she began to sink into the East China Sea in April of 1945. As that ship now approaching us also did for Miss Johnston and Miss Hoel — and Miss Roberts, Miss Saint Lo and Miss Gambier Bay — off Samar the previous October, Miss Kongō a month later off Tâi-wān and Miss Akagi, Miss Kaga, Miss Sōryū and Miss Hiryū off Midway in June of 1942. As Miss Chennalton's crew were very glad to do while they carried out their primary duties destroying mindless sea creatures that many now think were precursors of what you've been fighting over the last three years."

Silence.

More silence.

Still more silence.
"Bugyō-sama...she's one of the Ryūseizen?!” Fubuki exclaimed.

"She is, Bucky!” Heermann stated, nodding rapidly. "Sixteen Mark 7s in four quad turrets and two stacks on a gunmetal grey hull, number '49' on her bow!"

"Who...?" Vittorio Veneto wondered.

"One of the Assassino Leviatano, Veneto...!” Roma hissed, making all three of her sisters gape. "Now that I can think of it, half my crew were pulled out of my hull as I was sinking...and there was a vessel like this one close by. Much different armament. Large guns in dual turrets, three funnels and a tripod foremost like the British built on their battleships during the Great War..."

"Lady Elgin or Lady Jane," Martin stated, making the shipgirls all gape at the man-hunter from New Brunswick. "Most likely the former; Lady Jane was assigned to the Pacific division of the First Canadian Battleship Squadron in World War Two while Lady Elgin moved from ocean to ocean wherever she was required."

Jaws dropped. "Bugyō-sama...you know all their names?” Yamato eeped.

"Of course I do," he answered as he observed the formation of kanmusu with the one Canadian shipgirl, a knowing smirk crossing his face. Seeing that made Jessica roll her eyes; excellent sharpshooter that the man-hunter from New Brunswick was, he often let his own pride at his observational skills get the better of him from time to time. He wasn't as bad as Sherlock Holmes or Bruce Wayne could be, but he did have his moments. "Try as those who organized the magical side of the Royal Canadian Navy Volunteer Reserve did to keep their missions secret even from the average magical, it was impossible to keep it from me since I helped train many of the people who served in 'W' Division in peacetime and mustered into the Foresters and the Naval Magical Service in war."

"We possess battleships, Commissioner Larsden?" Benton Fraser asked.

"Eight of them. Two built before the Great War, equivalent to the Austro-Hungarian Tegetthoff-class though much larger; Admiral Harlan didn't care for putting turrets amidships on hulls he designed."
Four built in the early part of the Great War, taking the super-dreadnought concept to a level no one could have imagined even in the 1920s before it was all stopped by the Washington Treaty. Two built before World War Two with help from President Roosevelt; they were test ships for the Mark 7 rifles Miss Iowa and her sisters carry. The one now accompanying Miss Fusō and her sister is one of that generation."

"Bugyō-san, would she know of the ship that was in the Sibuyan Sea when I was sunk?" Musashi asked. "It is not the one Onē-san met near Okinawa...!"

"That's her," Johnston stated as she pointed to the approaching shipgirls.

"...nor is it the one that Fusō-san and Yamashiro-san encountered in Surigao Strait," the second of the Yamato-class finished. "That one was armed like the one now approaching us, but has one funnel. Bismarck-san also knows of her."

"That would be Argo," Martin said as Jessica gaped at him and Bismarck nodded while she was being comforted by Prinz Eugen. Nearby, Ataru and Tariko were exchanging wide-eyed looks while Harry was shaking his head in disbelief. "No doubt, Miss Musashi, the one that rescued members of your crew was Erinsville, flagship of the First Canadian Battleship Squadron. Four dual turrets with guns your size, single smokestack pushed against the forward superstructure?"

Musashi hummed, then nodded. "Hai, that is the one."

"That sounds like the one that was close to the Solomon Islands when Hornet here and Wasp went down," Enterprise stated, thumbing her sister.

"Either her or her sistership Carolina."

"The Canucks built battleships?!" Hornet asked with an incredulous look.

"Magically-built and augmented with mesonium weapons and other equipment, Miss Hornet," Martin calmly supplied. "Constructed with the assistance of the Kobaloi and the Dweorg; the goblins and the dwarfs if you don't recognize their proper demonym, Mister Potter. Shielded from public view by the Statute of Secrecy and our Specialized Warfare Acts...but also masked from most magicals because of the types of entities they were designed to destroy while everyone was gutting themselves out. In essence, the First Canadian Battleship Squadron was the Navy's equivalent to my own unit during the Second World War."
"Does Heather know of them?" Jessica asked.

"No, she doesn't...though I suspect that the Foresters will correct that in due course," Martin calmly answered, which made the pilot from Winnipeg roll her eyes as she recalled meeting members of Canada's magical infantry during the war. "You remember the times during the war when Dean had to go off and meet some Navy admiral in Québec City whenever Heather got messages from Montcalm?"

She blinked. "Yeah! Wait a minute! He was an admiral...and our navy only had rear admirals as chiefs of naval staff until Percy Nelles got his second admiral's stripe in '41. Charles Kingsmill was only promoted as an admiral on the Royal Navy retired list in '17...and he died in '35! Who was he?!"

"Admiral William Harlan," he supplied. "Before you ask, ladies, he is Admiral Drake Harlan's great-grandfather," he added on noting many of the shipgirls perk on hearing that family name. "Graduate of the first class to come out of the Institute of Sorcery and Magic in 1890. He would go on to the Britannia Royal Naval College for naval engineering training, then served on several ships in the Royal Navy until he helped form the Royal Canadian Navy in 1910. He was made director of the Royal Canadian Navy Volunteer Reserve (Magical), then started the project to construct the Sunbeam-class battleships after he was advised to do such by an Innu medicine man who predicted that a 'terrible war' would soon engulf Europe and that the 'great spirits of the sea' would be roused by such fighting. No doubt thanks to the U-Boats the Germans used."

Everyone winced. "The kami of the seas were all angered by the bloodshed, especially during the Greater East Asia War," Haruna mused. "The Ryūseizen were meant to ensure the true innocents were not made to suffer."

"I always thought of them as the handmaidens of Susanoo-no-Mikoto," Akatsuki quietly said, making many people stare at the childish destroyer. "Yet my crew was rescued by one of them; maybe that one with Fusō-san and Yamashiro-san knows which one it was. I always wanted to thank her for doing that." She then shrugged, the cloudy look on her face instantly clearing up. "Then again, they have to be ladies! Two of them even have 'lady' in their name!"

"Hopefully, they'll love tea as well!" Kongō added, nodding.

"Of course they will, Onē-sama!" Hiei assured her sister. "After all, they make Red Rose tea in Canada! It's the best tea you ever had, remember?!!"
"Hai, hai!"

"She's Canadian, Hiei," Enterprise barbed. "They're Timmies fanatics!"

"Tim Hortons makes excellent teas!" Kongō asserted.

Laughter filled the air. "Canadian battleships...!" Tariko muttered, shaking her head. "You Canucks are a weird lot, you know that?! You write the damned book on 'specialized warfare' using metahumans, then you build these superships that were hunting Abyssals and saving thousands of lives when the rest of the world was going insane! Where do you people come up with this stuff, huh?!"

Martin and Jessica chuckled. "We can't build to the level our American cousins can," the former stated as he gazed respectfully on the American shipgirls there, making all of them blush. "Atop that, we never developed the martial traditions they did because we effectively negotiated our way out of British colonial control, so maintaining a large military never made any sense to us. In addition, our leaders are often very lazy; being next to the world's largest superpower does make defence planning in Ottawa much easier even if some people tend to forget their responsibilities to the citizens of the Dominion and our allies." As many of the American shipgirls nodded in rueful understanding at that, he then sighed. "We make do with what we have, Miss Moroboshi."

"Hey, listen...!" Heermann gasped.

People perked, then they blinked as a rich voice echoed over the waters...

It's knowing that your door is always open
And your path is free to walk.
That makes me tend to leave my sleeping bag
Rolled up and stashed behind your couch.
And it's knowing I'm not shackled
By forgotten words and bonds
And the ink stains that are dried upon some line.
That keeps you in the backroads
By the rivers of my memory,
All the American shipgirls gaped. "Who's the Glen Campbell fan?" Hoel asked.

"That's our mystery battleship, Hoel-chan," Tariko affirmed; she was glancing at Fusō's and Yamashiro's formation through her binoculars.

People blinked. "That's a curious mix of accents," Hōshō noted.

"That's quite understandable, Miss Hōshō," Martin stated. "Chennalton was built at a hidden shipyard in the magical district of Tadoussac on the Saint Lawrence River downstream from Québec City... yet her namesake was a native of Dallas." As the American shipgirls gaped in surprise, he smiled. "Peter Chennalton was a professor of transfiguration and conjuration from Seven Hills then on exchange to the Institute of Sorcery and Magic when the war began. He volunteered to serve as an unofficial observer for the Department of Magic aboard the Argo during the mission when her crew rescued a third of Hood's crew and half of Bismarck's." As the German battleship gasped on hearing that, he added, "When your crew were being teleported out of your hull and out of the sea after the British ships left the scene, Miss Bismarck, one of those creatures attacked to consume their souls; those things were then seen just as very ugly soul vampires no different that Dementors." As Harry winced on hearing that, the police commissioner added, "A lucky strike on Argo's 'Y' turret caused the crew escape hatches to jam just as deadly cordite gasses began to fill the space; it could have led to a possible turret explosion like the Iowa suffered in 1989." As the American battleship in question cringed on remembering that horrible accident, the man-hunter from New Brunswick added, "The professor was able to teleport into the turret to get people out of there, plus vent the turret out... but he eventually succumbed to the gas and died."

Silence.

More silence.

Still more silence.

Then...

"Damn...!" Johnston hissed out, her eyes tearing in sympathy.
"Chennalton-hakase died a true samurai," Yonaga stoically stated. "In the very same way as those gallant souls from New York's most brave did in 2001."

"Amen to that," New Jersey stated.

"Did he ever get a medal for it?" Missouri asked.

"An Order of Merlin at least?!" Harry added.

"Not until after American magicals were shaken out of their isolationist attitudes after Pearl Harbour," Martin explained. "America wasn't involved in the war at the time the professor died, so he wasn't eligible for the Magical Cross; it was later awarded at President Roosevelt's order after Rappaport's Law was done away with. The King also ordered that the professor receive the George Cross and the Order of Merlin First Class. He was also awarded the Orden Pour le Mérite Magique with Oak Leaves and Diamonds." That made Bismarck gape. "Ironically, one of Admiral Harlan's hidden magical supporters was none other than Gellert Grindelwald. But the professor's real memorial..."

"Battleship Chennalton," Yamato finished, then she giggled.

"What's so funny, Ya-chan?" Enterprise asked.

The Japanese super-battleship shrugged. "I'm sure Texas-san and all the others from that state would love Chennalton-sama once they hear her sing, E-chan."

"That's a good point," Iowa noted.

Laughter filled the air...

"We're here, Tomoko-chan. Wake up!"
A moan escaped the childish Abyssal as she slowly pushed herself into a sitting position on top of "B" turret of the nice Canadian magical battleship that had taken her off Izu Ō-shima a day ago, after two months of wandering around the devastated volcanic island at the entrance to the Sagami-wan. Physically at the age of five in human terms, the silver-haired echo of the lost children of the largest of the Izu-shotō had almost given into total despair and allowed the stormier elements of her soul to overcome her when the battleship with the French-sounding name came to her island, then did something which cleansed the darkness from her. By then, the task force commander by Fusō and Yamashiro stumbled onto the scene. Once Tomoko — her name had been chosen by Yukikaze — was confirmed to be safe, the group went to the other islands in the chain to see what happened there; given the more pressing need to get convoys to Japan and keep sea lanes clear, such investigative missions had been reluctantly put on the backburner by Saitō Ten'ichi's staff. After Kikuko, Shinmi, Noriko, Kanako, Takumi, Mimi, Takemi and Kiyoko had been pulled off the islands where they were born, Fusō directed everyone to base. Given there were nine Abyssal children that had to be transported to safety and the super-dreadnoughts could only carry a couple each due to their Kai Ni upgrades — and the need to keep flight decks clear in case the Abyssals attacked — the Canadian battleship was pleased to help carry four of them to Eta-jima; she certainly had the mass to do such even if there might be balance issues due to everyone being human-size.

"Home...?" Tomoko moaned as Mimi, Takemi and Kiyoko began to stir.

"Almost there," Chennalton answered as she guided herself towards an obvious cove on the north side of Kobashira-jima, the footprints in the sand indicating a considerable number of shipgirls had landed there. A glance up a cliff-side trail revealed a cheering Abyssal child running to the beach, she followed by the utterly too cute sisters of Destroyer Division Six, their two "momboats" and the four carriers of Kidō Butai who had been wrecked at Midway.

"Oi! Minna-chan!" Yukikaze called out, waving. "Look who we just met?!!"

The shipgirls on the island turned to gaze on the tall Canadian carrying four tiny children to safety. To the normal observer, Chennalton was the same height as Yonaga, possessing both the spectacular curves and sinewy muscles that marked her as a capital ship in her first life; given that she wore the standard Royal Canadian Navy sleeveless bodysuit even if it was shaded gunmetal grey, her every enticing feature was on display for others to see.

However, shipgirls could look on each other and see the ghostly echo of their first forms still shrouding their human bodies. Chennalton's was impressive. A remarkably wide hull for extra stability to allow better aiming for her quad main gun turrets. A hull a hundred feet longer than the final Montana-class design. A gently-sloped weather deck forward of "A" turret for excellent sea-keeping; the Canadians never ONCE followed the flat forecastle deck aesthetic the British used for their ships until HMS Vanguard was designed in the mid-1940s. An elongated stern aft of "Y" Turret to allow an internal hangar deck below the weather deck for her spotter planes. A well-designed superstructure taking inspiration from both American and British designs, split by two funnels looking akin to what was fitted on a Littorio-class battleship. In her heyday in the Second World War, Chennalton possessed a secondary and anti-aircraft battery that would have made her a
perfect carrier escort if her speed couldn't realistically match an Iowa-class. Now that forest of guns had been swept away to allow four large Mark 41 cell clusters to be shipped on her Number 01 level; seeing that, the other shipgirls immediately realized that if she only carried RIM-162 Enhanced Sea Sparrow missiles in the special quad packs designed for the Mark 41 system, Chennalton could put up over a thousand missiles to turn the sky above her into Death Valley for any attacking air formation.

Once her sea boots touched shore, Chennalton sighed. "Could I get people to take these kids off my turrets, please?" she then asked. "I don't want to stow my rigging and force these girls to learn how to jump ship."

Tatsuta, Tenryū and the Akatsuki sisters joined Yukikaze and her sisters into helping the Abyssals get off the battleships' turrets. Once that was done and Tomoko and her sisters were being guided over to meet Hoppō as others came down from the clearing near Wokyū's cabin, Fusō, Yamashiro and Chennalton came ashore, their rigging dispersing. In a flash, the Canadian shipgirl's naval combat dress jacket appeared to cover her top, the White Ensign of the Royal Canadian Navy on her left arm and a black Canadian ensign with the symbol of Her Majesty's Ministry of Magical Affairs for the Dominion of Canada in the fly on her right upper arm. Her ship's badge was over her name tag; seeing that, people could only grin on seeing the white star of Texas embossed with a red maple leaf in a blue field dotted with golden fleur-de-lis symbols marking her birth province of Québec. "Welcome finally to Japan, Chennalton-san," Fusō then stated with an amused smile, remembering to pronounce the Canadian warship's name as shen-oh-ton. "I'm sure you've sailed by the Home Islands many times doing your various deployments during the war, but..."

"Sadly, given the nature of my mission and the uncertainty my admiral's staff felt concerning revealing what happened even to ministers of magic regardless of what was the actual state of the world at the time, Madame Fusō, I doubt my docking at Yokosuka or any other location worldwide that could take a ship my size would go over well," the Canadian noted, her deep crimson brown eyes sparkling with a mixture of annoyance and wry amusement. As all the destroyers snickered as they imagined the shell-shock having one of the Ryūseizen appear in public like THAT would unleash, she added, "Much that it was hair-raising to sail around staying clear of things until I was needed to destroy the monsters I was built to hunt — not to mention what happened to those sailors my crew rescued — the need to preserve the Statute of Secrecy was always paramount."

She gazed on the four aircraft carriers standing there as she noted Kongō and her sisters coming to join them. "Before you ask, given the perceived need at the time to protect and preserve the Statute — along with the fact those of your ships' companies my crew rescued were legally dead in the normal world — security personnel from the Royal Regiment of Canadian Foresters supporting my squadron performed some intricate memory modifications on the survivors to let them live their lives in peace when it was over even if they had been denied knowledge of their past lives. Unlike our British or American cousins, we would never allow 'muggles' or 'no-majs' to be cast aside like used dishwater."

Hearing that made Kongō, Akagi, Kaga, Sōryū and Hiryū exchange looks, then the fast battleship
shrugged. "At least they were given the chance to live their lives in peace and harmony once the guns fell silent," she said as she patted the taller shipgirl's shoulder. "Now, it's time for some afternoon tea..."

"Not now, Kongō-san!" Kaga snapped. "Chennalton-sama...!"

The battleship blushed. "Madame Kaga, please! There's no need for that...!"

"...has been probably at sea for months now!" the carrier finished.

"Besides, it's nowhere close to tea time yet and I haven't had my morning cup of coffee," Chennalton cut in, making Kongō squawk on hearing THAT accursed word. "Afternoon tea is at four o'clock. Right now, it's 11:28 in the morning. I need coffee, so I'm going to raid the Timmies on the base as soon as we find a way to get these little ones over there." Ignoring the cute pout that appeared on Kongō's face after she said that, Chennalton then gazed on the child Abyssals she had helped bring to safety. They were chatting away with Hoppō as more came down to join them, including the humans in the group. "Ah, General! Commissioner!" she said as she snapped to attention, saluting the two members of the War Hawks now on the island. "Modified Argo-class helicopter guided missile battleship, flagship of the Pacific Division, First Canadian Battleship Squadron, Her Majesty's Canadian Ship Chennalton, reporting."

Jessica Dover and Martin Larsden returned that salute. "I just got told of you," the former noted as people relaxed. "I'm sure that Heather will find you insanely fascinating once she learns of you, Chennalton. Once we...!"

" WAIT! YOU'RE CARRYING HELICOPTERS ?! "

Everyone stared at Tenryū, who was now gaping in wide-eyed awe at the Canadian. A shocked gasp made people gaze on Yukikaze. "Sempai! You launched both your helicopters while we were passing Shikoku and Kyūshū! Shouldn't they...?!

Everyone then perked on hearing the warble of helicopter blades echo over the air. "Relax," Chennalton assured the destroyer. "They had extra fuel tanks."

Eyes turned to the sky as two helicopters soared down towards the gathering of shipgirls. Seeing they were moving to touch down, Chennalton moved to step out onto the water to summon her flight deck for them to land...then she perked as a signal came down from one. "<What?!>" she snapped in
The other shipgirls tried to listen into the communication with the faeries piloting the helicopters descending in their direction. Noting them as they came to a hover — which made Hoppō begin to make buzzing noises as she pulled out her Mitsubishi A7M Reppū fighter to pretend to "escort" the anti-submarine warfare machines — Chennalton then gazed apologetically at Enterprise. "Much that I hate to ask this of you, Madame Enterprise, but would you mind receiving these two?" she asked as she thumbed the helicopters. "They want to tell all their friends flying off the other battleships and the Tribals that they got the chance to land on the most famous aircraft carrier in history."

The American carrier madly blushed as others snickered, then she shrugged helplessly. "I've never landed a pair of helicopters before...!"

"Go on, E-chan!" Zuikaku challenged. "It'll be good practice for us!"

Hearing that from the grey-haired carrier, Enterprise sighed as she stepped into the water, her rigging forming. As she held up her flight deck, the first of the helicopters moved to come down between her midships and aft elevators, landing a little to port of the centre-line. As the destroyers whooped on seeing the Grey Ghost land her first helicopter as a shipgirl, the second helicopter landed aft of the first, earning the carrier another chorus of awed sounds from the destroyers. Enterprise gaped as she gazed on the machines on her deck, then she stared at Chennalton. "These aren't Sea Kings...!"

"No, they're CH-148 Cyclones; you'll know them as H-92 Superhawks," the large battleship said...then she blinked on seeing a flush appear on Enterprise's cheeks. "«No...!»" she moaned in French before she glared at the helicopters. "«WHAT IN THE NAME OF MERLIN'S THE MATTER WITH YOU IDIOTS?! YOU KNOW AMERICAN SHIPS ARE DRY SHIPS! WHY ARE YOU TRADING THAT ROTGUT WITH HER CREW?! »."

One of the faerie pilots stepped out of the first machine, saying something none of the shipgirls there could understand...which surprised them as interpreting faerie-talk was a skill a shipgirl needed to operate out in the ocean with their rigging. As Yamato immediately moved to help support her lover, Chennalton breathed out. "I apologize for this, Madame Yamato," she said as she gazed at the battleship whose crew hers had helped save in the spring of 1945. "When I was a ship, my reconnaissance pilots were all Dweorg half-breeds. Their version of what American magicals called 'gigglewater' in the 1920s could intoxicate your friend Madame Jun'yō with one shot glass !"

"J-j-just n-n-n-noticed...!" Enterprise muttered as she felt her forehead.

Seeing that, the other carriers winced. "Okay, we definitely keep this one away from Jun'yō and
Chitose!" Zuikaku hissed at her friends.

The others nodded. "Gentlemen, what made you do that?" Martin coldly demanded as he walked over to glare at the faeries, making the creatures quail as they found themselves facing the Hunter of the Mi'kmaq...who was NOT impressed by such actions towards an allied shipgirl, especially one like Enterprise.

A feebled warble answered him, which made the commissioner sigh. "It will NOT be repeated," Martin declared in a voice that brooked no objection, making even many of the shipgirls shiver in fear. "Get on Miss Chennalton's deck! Miss Enterprise, you're legally over the limit and in no shape to sail. I trust, Miss Yamato, you can carry your intended back to the base once we finally take our leave of Miss Wokyū. Heather can prepare a sobering draught."

That made the battleship blink. "I can do that?"

"I'm sure she can carry your umbrella while you head back."

That made Yamato blush...

_to be continued...

_writer's notes_

1) The first scenes of this part were inspired by the short Ranma 1/2 fanfic story Misuteru ("Forsaken"), written by Richard Drozd. For those wanting to read the original story, you will need to locate the archives for RAAC (rec.arts.anime.creative), which was the Usenet name for the main anime fic posting group during the 1990s and the following decade before sites like this one became popular. The name "Hayashi Kanami" for a full female version of Saotome Ranma was first used in Phoenix From the Ashes; the actual relationship between Kanami and her late grandparents is the same here as it was in PFtA.

2) Translation list: OP — Military short-form for "operation"; Genkan — Entryway of a Japanese house, where street shoes are removed and slippers are put on; Ono — Hawai'ian name for the wahoo (Acanthocybium solandri), a prized game fish related to the mackerel, tuna and bonito; Toa
Rangatira — Literally "master warrior" but also meaning "knight"; Te Taua Moana o Aotearoa — "Warriors of the Sea of New Zealand", this is the Māori name for the Royal New Zealand Navy (RNZN); Huia — Given the scientific name Heteralocha acutirostris, this is an extinct species (as of the early Twentieth Century) of wattlebird (a type of songbird) from the North Island of New Zealand; Tiki — Māori name for a humanoid statue carved of stone or wood, the word itself is derived from the first man created by Tūmatauenga, the god of war; Ata pai — Good morning; Ōka Taniwha — Monster killer; Tuahine Paari — Elder sister; Leviathan Homicidae — Latin for "Leviathan killer", which is rendered in Italian as Assassino Leviatano; Ryūseizen — Dragon killing ships; Dweorg — Old English term for a mythological dwarf; Daijūroku-kuchikudai — Sixteenth Destroyer Division.

3) The locations of the homes of various British wizarding families noted here are my creation if they don't match what's in the Harry Potter Wikia or Pottermore. Keerford is the old name of Carnforth in northern Lancashire. Mutuantonis is the Roman name for the city of Lewes in East Sussex. Lewisham is a borough of London south of the Thames west of Greenwich.

4) The term "TOT" used by the faerie pilot who helps save Draco Malfoy and Pansy Parkinson is short for "Time On Target". This is an artillery term that indicates all guns in a battery or higher formation would fire at the same time and strike the same location at the same instant to cause maximum destruction. Given the gun platform involved in the action off Tinworth Beach fired four 18 inch shells from a Mark "A" 47 calibre naval rifle and each shell weighs 1746.3 kilograms (3850 pounds), you can guess how much damage such heavy shells would do even to a heavy cruiser! The "why" will be explained in a future chapter.

5) I've always been fascinated by naval matters since I was a child; it helped spark my eventual interest in Kantai Collection. The warships of the First Canadian Battleship Squadron (CANBATRON ONE) introduced here are some of the earliest fictional creations of mine, having been developed while I was still in high school. Of course, there was really no way that Canada would be able to build such capital ships in real life; the political will was never there given the Dominion's location vis-à-vis potential foes and the economic base hadn't developed until World War Two jump-started everything. It depresses me when I think of the sheer lack of political or national will to have an armed military that can stand up on its own and perform its share of missions under the aegis of NATO and NORAD; hence, the statement Martin Larsden makes about it near the end of this part. Of course, once we factor in the magical element of things, constructing ships like HMCS Chennalton became easier to explain.

As an aside, the name "Chennalton" is derived from the name of the founder of the famous Flying Tigers (an American volunteer group of pilots who flew for China during the lead up to the Second World War), Lieutenant General Claire Lee Chennault (1893-1958). Of course, given that Chennalton was built in Tadoussac at the confluence of the Saguenay and Saint Lawrence Rivers, the French pronunciation of the name (in the International Phonetic Alphabet, it's said /ʃɛn-oʊ-tɔ̃/, with the stress on the second syllable) would be used; in America, the "ault" part of the name was pronounced as spelled.
6) In my stories, the **Magical Cross of the United States of America** is the equivalent of a first class Order of Merlin. The equivalents of the second-class and third-class awards of the Order of Merlin are the **Magical Star of the United States of America** and the **Magical Medal of the United States of America** respectively. The **Orden Pour le Mérite Magique** ("Order 'For the Magical Merit'") is the German version of the Order of Merlin. The Pour le Mérite Magique without any sort of embellishment is equal to a third-class Order of Merlin. The **Pour le Mérite Magique with Oak Leaves** is equal to the second-class award. And the **Pour le Mérite Magique with Oak Leaves and Diamonds** is equal to the first-class Order of Merlin. I was inspired by the Knight's Cross levels of the **Order of the Iron Cross** when I first introduced the concept of the Pour le Mérite Magique in the third *Wizards and Avalonians* story.
At the Jupiter orbit line (Japan time: Lunchtime)...

Shigaten Benten jolted as the Kashin seemed to rock from stem to stern. "What the fuck was that?!" the biker-babe from the planet Fukunokami demanded.

Seated nearby in the observation bubble on the top spine of the battlewagon as she gazed out towards the solar system's resident giant, the crown princess of the planet Neptune took a deep breath. "No doubt, that is Lum reacting badly to something she just learned about Ataru," Oyuki mused before she sipped her ice tea. "Given how much she had done to ensure he could never escape her, that he actually resorted to They Who Must Never Be Named to drive her off is..." She tried to suppress the shudder she automatically felt on thinking about the crazed metahumans of the planet Yiziba. "Understandable."

"Ataru thinks...WE'RE the Scary People?"

That was Redet Ten, who was seated on a couch nearby between Benten's and Oyuki's Avalonian sisters, Shigaten Kamen and Mienai. As the Oni-Urusian kindergarten-age child shuddered at the idea of actually being seen as akin to one of the Yizibajohei of all the races in the known galaxy, Benten's twin placed a comforting hand on his head. "You did become the Scary People to Darling, Ten," the university student now attending one of Noukiios' top-tier post-secondary institutions on the planet Okusei said. Much to the surprise of Redet Lum's friends, their Avalonian clone sisters had all adopted the style the warlord's daughter used for her "husband" given that in Urusian, the word "Ataru" meant "sex-crazed idiot". "Put it this way. You're a normal person trying to live your life, make a relationship work with your oldest childhood friend and doing normal things. Then one of the Scary People come along, threatening the Mother of All Fight Scenes on your home planet if you don't face her in a competition to save your people." As Ten gargled on hearing the ONE phrase in intergalactic discourse that NO ONE wanted to hear for ANY reason whatsoever, Kamen added, "Well, you pull it off by the skin of your teeth. Then this Scary Person decides you're gonna be her mate. Then she forces you to behave as SHE wants you to behave. Even more, she brainwashes your relatives and friends into treating her better than they treated you."
"In effect, Ten, that is what Lum did to Darling," Mienai finished.

Oyuki and Benten winced on hearing that harsh comparison while Ten turned a very pale shade as he imagined what being confronted by one of THEM could do to him. "But...he never treated Lum like she was one of the Scary People!"

"He couldn't really think it through, Ten," Oyuki's twin noted. "Don't forget, he suffered from a split personality and he was under the influence of a being who really didn't care too much for humans given how she had been treated when she became fully sentient centuries ago. You know about Tariko and Miss Negako now, don't you?" At Ten's nod, the housewife — Mienai was now married to one of the Flower Youth of Noukiios, who currently commanded one of the two large expeditionary armies now based on a planet very close to Earth — sipped her tea. "Yes, Darling found Lum attractive. But he never knew many things about her. What's even worse in his eyes, Lum deliberately kept him ignorant on many things. Your people's mating laws, for example. Not to mention Lum's so-called 'most faithful'." She sneered out that last part as Benten and Oyuki winced again on being reminded of HIM. "Once he was finally able to think truly for himself for the first time in a decade, he decided it was best to get Lum — and by extension, all of you — permanently out of his life. If all that happened to him over the last year, what would happen to the next Terran who encountered one of you? Your uncle gave him an enormous responsibility when he declared that Darling would be Earth's tag race champion last year. Much that this is hurting a lot of people, Darling is now taking that very seriously."

"'Sides, it's what Darling wanted in the end," Kamen added. "No aliens on the planet unless they learn how to behave themselves and stop treating Earth like their private play-pen. Turning to the Yizibajohei..." — she ignored the gasps from Oyuki and Ten, much less Benten's squawk — "...to keep them off Earth makes sure of it. Not even that bastard Ōgi's going to do anything about forcing himself on Earth to make his 'goddess' happy. Not that he can..."

That made Oyuki tense. "Kamen, what does that mean?"


The others gargled; the on-board translation fields within Kashin had perfectly translated that phrase. "How...?" Oyuki then hissed out, her mixed feelings for the natives of Phentax Two making her vacillate between relief that she wouldn't be seen anymore as a "holy friend" within the Church of Lum with the total lack of privacy being such forced on her...and sheer, outright terror at the idea that the Galactic Federation's most powerful military member had been subjected to a planet-wide holocaust of destruction that would render the whole alliance very vulnerable to its several larger neighbours. "Why...?"
"Why not?! 'Great Evil', remember?" Benten's twin sneered.

That made the Fukunokami moan. "Fuck! How did he pull THAT off?!!"

Her sister smirked. "He fucked a whole tonne of Yizibajohei."

The others screamed before they fell silent as they considered those words.

Three...

Two...

One...

Blast-off!

"HOW COULD HE TWO-TIME LUM...?!!" Ten screamed.

"HE AIN'T MARRIED TO HER, REMEMBER?!!" Kamen yelled back.

The Oni yelped in fright as he tried to make himself very small. Despite the visible serenity Avalonians projected thanks to a curious psionic power that allowed them to view an energy field they saw as divine — supposedly, this was the metaphysical echo of the Big Bang, an energy version of the transuranic element known more commonly as "mesonium" on Earth — Kamen had also inherited her genetic template's considerable temper. Given how she had been treated at first after she had been created to serve as Benten's literal stand-in in case enemies of the famous expat Vosian bounty hunter Nassur decided to target her, it was understandable. Ten was personally grateful that Nassur and his wife Cinba had helped transport Kamen and her sisters to Okusei so they could live their lives without threat of being "recalled" by Niphentaxian authorities, much less hunted down as "rogue robots"; despite Niphentaxian military power, they were still small in comparison to Noukiios' might. "B-b-but...!"

"Ten!" Mienai snapped as the air around her chilled. "You saw Hensō's memories of what happened. How many times did Darling tag Lum's horns?"
Ten gulped, then feebled out, "O-o-once..."

"And what was happening when that happened?"

"T-t-tag R-r-race..."

"What doesn't happen if an Oni's horns are tagged in a Tag Race?"

Ten shook his head. "Th-th-they're n-n-not m-m-married..."

"Right!" Mienai stated before sipping her tear. "Besides, it's what all of you have always wanted deep down," she coolly added as she gazed knowingly at her twin. "You never approved of Lum's interest in Darling. You got what you wanted in the end, Sister. Your friend is free to live her life once she stops LYING to herself about what happened in the Tag Race. And you wouldn't have to deal with Darling again. What's so wrong with that? All's well."

"Or is it Morningstar Plain that you're still thinking about?" Kamen added.

Oyuki and Benten turned ash-grey as they remembered what they learned via mind-meld with their twins, images taken directly from the Dragonspeaker herself concerning an event over two months before that had forever put a stop to Noukiios' chronic banditry issue on a grassy field some distance from the capital city of Okusei. How Kyech had been escorting her new friend to the university so Ataru's effective twin sister and Earth's first true artificial intelligence could be pulled out of his mind and allowed to live their lives as separate beings. How a virtual ARMY CORPS of highwaymen descended on the Dragonspeaker, hoping to overwhelm her by sheer numbers to remove their primary foe from this existence. How Ataru's horror at seeing people be literally chopped apart before his eyes caused something deep inside him to tap into a strange power and allow the darkest elements of his own soul to burst forth. How he had transformed into a creature that brutally mutilated thousands of bandits with his bare hands, fighting at Kyech's back until the last of them were shredded corpses on Morningstar Plain, all fit for the ch'enghap'i to feast on. And how — even if he had been personally sickened by what he had been made to do by the uncaring Fates — Ataru had vowed to keep that power in strategic reserve just in case someone came along and tried to attack him.

Never mind that most Avalonians — their own twins included — now viewed the man as the living mortal avatar of their own ancient god of death...!
"So you get the best of both worlds," Kamen stated. "Once Lum gets over her feelings for Darling, you get your friend back. Even better, there's no more Ōgi to worry about probin' your diaries like he loved to do all the time. And she don't live close to Darling, who could kill her with no problem whatsoever in case she does something stupid. Like force him to wear clothes to learn what he's thinking or spyin' on HIS diary..." — she smirked as Benten scowled and Oyuki shook her head — "...or forcing him to deal with all her friends with all their problems. You think he had any fun dealing with B-Boy, much less be KIDNAPPED to be made to play at Setsubun, never mind the shit with Elle?"

Another chorus of winces from the others...

...then everyone perked on hearing the lift from the main hull hiss, making them turn as Aruka Ran came up to join them, alongside her own Avalonian twin Damasu and the crown princess-regent of the Karasutengu. "I'm sure the Men In Black will let you go to Earth soon enough, Kurama," the rose-haired Seishin-Urusian teenager and "rival" for the hand of Lum's former fiancé Seq Rei said as the elegant wing-haired Tengu humanoid stepped off the lift to take a seat close to where Oyuki was. "Even if you're not interested in Darling anymore..."

"No, Ran, I've no care for Moroboshi even after learning of Morningstar Plain, much less about the Lady Negako and Tariko," Kurama stated as she sat, smiling in amusement as Ran paled in horror on being reminded of what Damasu had gladly told her about that bloody day on Okusei. It was quite apparent to the ruler of the planet Tengu: That particular ability now made Moroboshi Ataru a very lethal threat to the man Ran loved. "While the power of his alter-ego is quite impressive if he was able to keep up with Lady K'ekhech throughout that fight, not to mention earn the respect of the likes of the Lady Academician and Lady Infinity, I have my own reasons to not deal with him anymore. Given how much I abused him when I tried to make him a 'better' man — not knowing of his mental issues — I doubt he'll have any kind feelings for me." She smirked. "Besides, given his current romantic interest, I care not to have to deal with a Terran version of an angry ch'uongtechhu. Given what has been happening on Earth over the last several years, I don't want to have some idiot there blame me for helping unleash that mad flock of hit'kyechtechhu they've been fighting."

The others stared in shock at her. "'House angels'? 'Abyssal angels'? What in Kōri's Name are you talking about, Kurama?" Oyuki hotly demanded, making all her friends gape at her. It took a lot to get a ripe oath like that from the heiress apparent to the throne of the Kingdom of Neptune. Then again, given that the legendary ch'uokyek existed on Noukiios and her colony worlds, the chances were awfully good that the living heralds of the Lord of Heaven Himself existed and interacted with mortals throughout the Imperial Dominion. "Since when do the Terrans have to deal with such? I don't want to have some idiot there blame me for helping unleash that mad flock of hit'kyechtechhu they've been fighting."

That made Kurama laugh in delight on seeing the normal calm and collected Oyuki suddenly become so unstrung over such lack of intelligence. "My! To believe Earth's magicals and the Special Committee were able to keep THAT from you!" she breathed out before her voice dissolved into
snores for a moment as she moved to compose herself. After a moment, she took a deep breath. "Starting approximately fifteen years ago, sea ships began to disappear in increasing numbers all over the planet. It was ignored at first; travel on Earth's oceans is seen as hazardous and such disappearances, while quite tragic, were viewed as an acceptable risk. But the disappearances increased and it became obvious to leaders of magical enclaves on Earth that something strange was happening out in the oceans. As this was seen as their bailiwick thanks to this Statute of Secrecy of theirs that forces magical governments to keep control over what are traditionally seen as 'magical' beings, they moved to stop it and ensure normal Terrans never learned the truth. Three years ago, that changed, quite violently. Beings resembling humanoid versions of warships from both their world wars appeared and began to attack coastal cities and island nations wholesale, unleashing casualties at a scale that rivals the deaths of the whole Vosian Civil War and rendered nearly half a billion people homeless worldwide. Their numbers and powers were so great that the military fleets of every nation on the planet were wiped out in a fortnight." As the others gaped in shock, the Tengu princess added, "By the time your friend first met Moroboshi a year ago, Japan was literally cut off from all her trading partners. It surprises me Lum never told you about the rationing that was going on at the time.

"However, around three years ago, the Fates delivered an interesting solution to force the Abyssals to heel and allow humanity to regain control of the seas: The spirits of warships that fought in their Second World War, transformed into human beings with the ability to manipulate technomagical representations of their weapons and sensory. The 'shipgirls' as they are called; most of them are in the form of women our age...though in nations whose cultures refer to such vessels with male pronouns, 'shipboys' have appeared. With that, they banded together in their old fleets and took the fight back to these Abyssals."

"Why were we never told?!" Oyuki demanded as Ran gaped and Benten shook her head. "The Special Committee always promised people they would tell...!"

"They were nearly wiped out when the Abyssals launched their general campaign," Kurama cut her off. "Remember, they were based in New York City...and that is on the Atlantic Ocean." As Oyuki winced, the Tengu princess shook her head. "Besides, those agents who escaped the destruction of the Special Committee's headquarters that I was able to speak to when I visited Earth to seek a husband in the last couple years told me that they had discovered that in body, these 'shipgirls' and 'shipboys' are actually capable of parenting children with normal humans. Given the sheer power they possess, such will be passed on to offspring. What does that spell in the long term?" She sipped her tea.

"The Dawn of Power."

The room turned as cold as deepest space on hearing THAT phrase...!
"Hishō! Are you alright?!"

Jessica Dover blinked on hearing Fubuki's panicked voice, then she took a deep breath as the ghostly phoenix-like aura around her withdrew into her body. "I'm alright," she assured the wide-eyed destroyer. "I just didn't fully compensate for the spiritual mass you all possess when I teleported you back here from Wokyū's home. Get a good meal into me and I'll be as right as rain."

Moroboshi Tariko hummed as she considered that before she gaped. She understood all the extra issues when it came to teleporting a shipgirl. "You just moved three Yamato-class battleships at sixty-nine kilotonnes..."

"Plus four Iowa-class battleships at fifty-two K," her brother Ataru added. "Two Bismarck-class battleships at forty-two K, four Littorio-class battleships at forty K, Kaga-san here at thirty-eight K, Akagi-san at thirty-six K, two Shōkaku-class carriers at thirty-two K, two Funō-class battleships at thirty K, four Kongō-class battleships at twenty-seven K each, Katsuragi-chan here at twenty-two K, three Yorktown-class carriers at twenty K, Hiryū-san at eighteen K, Sōryū-san and five Admiral Hipper-class cruisers at sixteen K each, Hōshō-sensei at eight K, two Tenryū-class cruisers at four K, seventeen destroyers at two K each, plus your friends, Ataru, Harry and me and our hovercycles, not to mention Hoppō-chan and her sisters! AND Yonaga-san and Chennalton-san, too?!"

"Damn!" Heermann gasped. "Superman ain't got NOTHING on you, General!"

Kii then gazed on Yonaga. "What's your standard displacement, Onē-sama?"

"Eighty-three thousand tonnes," the seventh carrier answered.

"What about you, Miss C?" Hoel asked the Canadian super-battleship whose hand she had immediately grabbed onto before everyone left Kobashira-jima.

"Eighty-seven thousand tonnes right now," Chennalton answered.

Hearing that, Ataru shook his head. "Damn! That's 1,365,000 tonnes total! I don't even think Kyech
is anywhere close to being THAT powerful!"

"Don't be too sure about that," Tariko advised. "She can teleport between dimensions and between solar systems when she puts her heart into it."

He nodded. "True..."

Martin Larsden had perked on hearing that Korean-sounding name. "You're acquainted with the Lady K'ekhech of Noukiios, Mister Moroboshi?"

"We met her on Okusei when we were still stuck sharing one body, Larsden-keishi," Tariko explained as she and Ataru moved to guide their hovercycles over to a nearby storage shed. "Her friend Nengmek'i-ojiichan was the one who saved us from being made to marry Redet three months ago by nearly burning all the idiots down in the cathedral while we were trying to make a break for it."

"Why were you being forced to marry Miss Redet?" Benton Fraser asked.

"Because Baka Kā-san and Baka Tō-san were hell-bent on getting out of their middle-class lives and wanted to con Redet's parents into giving them good jobs while sacrificing us along the way, Benton-san," Tariko sneered. "And this is all because we lost our twin brother Kaeru when we were three! He was the favoured child, not us!" She shook her head. "Greedy assholes...!"

"I assume that Negako got matters resolved," Martin noted.

"Indeed I did, Martin. Welcome to Eta-jima."

People turned as Moroboshi Negako came up. "Nega-sensei!" Katsuragi cheered as she scampered over to hug the ninjutsu grandmaster's leg.

Negako lightly smiled as she gazed down at the baby carrier, then her eyebrow arched as she stared at Chennalton. The battleship returned that look with a placid stare, which made Negako's lips quirk in indulgent amusement, that action making her siblings and the two War Hawks present gape in shock. "Now, Katsuragi, did you ask Jessica to take you to visit Wokyū and her flotilla?"
"Ai, Sensei!"

"Excellent." She then gazed at Martin. "I assume it was you who dealt with that cruiser formation that was detected just an hour ago, Martin?"

"It wasn't too difficult," the man-hunter from New Brunswick declared with a smirk. "At least, I got all the battleships enticed with the idea of being able to double and possibly triple their gun range to prepare them to load missiles." As all the capital ships perked at getting that ability, he added, "Let's hope Admiral Harlan's technomages can finally devise the necessary conversion matrices necessary soon to let these girls carry modern gear."

"You have always been aware of the First Canadian Battleship Squadron?"

Martin chuckled. "I trained most of their petty officers and gun team sergeants when they were all recruits passing through 'Depot' Division in peacetime, Negako. There was no way a secret like that could be kept from me."

"Does Professor Dumbledore know, Commissioner?" Harry Potter asked.

"I'm sure he suspects such, Mister Potter. The rumours concerning the First Squadron are normally headed under the title 'Leviathan Homicidae' and the local translations in Europe. When the Seventh Cavalry Division — augmented with the First and Fifth Foresters Brigades — made the push on Nurmengard, he did overhear many of the Foresters who transferred ashore from their duties as gun crews aboard the battleships speak of their missions. Of course, no exact details were revealed, but Albus is a bright fellow. He wouldn't have been accepted as the apprentice of a man like Nicolas Flamel if he wasn't."

That made the American shipgirls gape. "Wait! Your gun crews weren't naval weapons technicians?!” Wisconsin asked Chennalton, using the old Canadian term for what the United States Navy would term a "gunner's mate". "Why?!

"Because in the normal world, they trained as artillerymen, Madame Wisconsin," the Canadian battleship replied. "It was necessary in that case."

"Oh! The TOT shooting, you mean!" Iowa said, nodding in understanding.
"TOT'?!" Vittorio Veneto asked.

"Time on Target, Veneto," New Jersey answered. "It's where you aim all the guns in a battery at the same place, then fire the guns to make the shells hit the target at the same time!" The raven-haired battleship then gazed at Chennalton. "One of your friends was out near Cape Engaño during Leyte! One of the two three stack battleships with the eighteen-inch guns! She took out one of those things you were built to fight! Admiral Halsey and his staff watched it; they thought it was the finest shooting they ever saw...even if they found it weird that she only fired one gun per turret in each salvo!"

"How was her mainmast angled? Pointing forward or aft?" Chennalton asked.

Jersey hummed. "Forward."

"Lady Elgin," the Canadian battleship affirmed. "She had 'E' Commando of the Foresters as her gun crew. They were the finest gunners in the squadron."

"But why shoot just one gun per turret, poi?" Yūdachi asked. "You and your friends have the widest width of any capital ship on the high seas, poi! There was no problem firing full broadsides at any sort of target, poi!"

"Madame Yūdachi, we were aiming at a target that was usually thirty metres wide from a range of forty kilometres," Chennalton explained, making all the other shipgirls gape in shock. "These things' 'magazines' — their magical cores, in other words — were at the centre of their 'bodies'. Sunbeam's and Sundown's crew learned this the hard way at the start when they swept in to clean up the mess from Coronel and the Falklands in 1914. Standard broadsides even with mesonium warheads didn't affect them unless we hit their cores. Thus, by the time Second Dogger Bank happened and Erinsville and Elgin were in commission, we were able to take them out even when they were using the physical forms of salvaged warships to try to protect themselves from our gunfire."

All the shipgirls cringed. "They used salvaged ships?!" Zuikaku exclaimed.

Chennalton nodded as she waved the others towards the mess hall. "Throughout the Great War; they changed their tactics and stayed as pure energy beings for the Second World War," she stated as Ataru and Tariko headed off to stow their hovercycles. As the destroyers winced at the idea of having their hulls salvaged to be possessed by those things, the battleship added, "It was quite distasteful to clean up even if they were 'performing' for Warspite and her sisters while they were busy fighting Jutland. Erin and Elgin had nightmares about that while they were adjusting to being shipgirls, but it had to be done. Just like Carol and Jane had to sweep into the Mediterranean to clean..."
up the messes left behind from Gallipoli and the other battles in that region."

"I take it Erinsville-san doesn't care for being credited in sinking the most number of warships in one day's engagement," Musashi noted. "I remember Warspite speaking of seeing all the ships sunk by her that day."

"Never mention it to her, Madame Musashi."

A sage nod from the ash-haired battleship. "I will remember that...""}

"Yamato-san!"

Everyone stopped and turned as a light cruiser raced over to them. "What is it, Ōyodo-san?" Yamato asked, surprised to see the shock on Ōyodo's face.

Stopping, Ōyodo took a moment to recover herself and stabilize the steam in her boilers before she gazed at Yamato. "The supplies, Yamato-san! Two CC-177s just landed at the airport! One of them was delivering Bonaventure-san and all her destroyer escorts; they even brought five American kanmusu with them who just reported to Great Lakes! But the other one had supplies...!"

"Magically shrunk?"

"Hai!" Ōyodo breathed out. " Enough to last for a month of intensive...!"

She caught herself as her mind noted on that unfamiliar voice, then she turned to look...before her jaw dropped to her bilges on seeing the tall battleship in the dark bodysuit with Canadian naval markings on her. Seeing this vessel's impressive spiritual echo made Ōyodo blink several times before she sniffed, the relief she felt overwhelming her. "You had all that brought for us...?"

"You people have been forced to operation on short supply for far too long, Madame Ōyodo," Chennalton stated. "Relax. Now that the Corps of Air Cavalry have regained flight status to contribute crews to transport squadrons and form defence squadrons to help with coastal patrols, we purchased spare aircraft from the American Air Force to help transport supplies and the Air Cavalry are teaming with the Foresters to get them to hard-to-reach locations. You can finally start taking your territorial waters back and keep them under your control." She raised a cautionary finger. "The pallets on Globemaster 706 that are marked with red stripes are to be handled with great caution and
They're mesonium munitions for my main guns, which can be fired by Madame Iowa and her sisters once their barrels are properly re-coated to stave off the wear and tear. We also have shells to fit everyone else here, just forged at the ammunition depot at Smith Inlet.

Ōyodo nodded. "Hai, um..." She noted the name tape. "Chennalton-san."

Chennalton winced; the light cruiser had pronounced her name as it was spelled in English, with the voiceless alveolo-palatal affricate "ch" to start the first syllable and not the voiceless palato-alveolar sibilant "sh" sound. "Not name!" a childish voice snapped, making Ōyodo look to see a very upset Tomoko glaring at her. Before the light cruiser could ask what was going on — she could recognize Hoppō, but hadn't known that she just gained nine sisters — the childish Abyssal knelt down to sketch the katakana シェノーットン on the sand.

That made Ōyodo yelp in embarrassment. "Sumimasen...!"

"It's alright, Madame Ōyodo," the battleship assured her. "It's a natural mistake. Just remember how General Chennault's name was pronounced."

"H-h-hai...!" She then perked. "Oh, Akagi-san!"

"What is it, Ōyodo-san?" the carrier asked.

"They shipped in your favourite," Ōyodo announced with a grin. "I'll mention it to the chefs to have it ready for tomorrow's breakfast."

With that, she headed off. People blinked, then gazed on the raven-haired carrier...before they winced on seeing the look of orgasmic JOY on Akagi's face. "Oh, shit!" Zuikaku moaned out. "She's gonna be zoned out all day!"

Sinking to her knees, Akagi moaned as she gazed skyward. "Maple syrup...!"

"Magically grown by house elves," Chennalton then teased. "Endless supply!"
The carrier squawked, then slumped in a dead faint as all her internal systems overloaded on hearing that news. "Chennalton-san!" Kaga gasped.

"Madame Kaga, as I just told Madame Ōyodo, you've been on short rations for your operational levels for years!" the battleship insisted. "Magical farms in Canada who've been cut off from their markets because of the Abyssals have a glut of supplies that need to be moved! It'll go rotten if it's not consumed! Don't worry; the Kantō Magical Association was able to pay for it all!" As Kaga gaped on hearing how much the magicals of Canada were willing to support them, Chennalton's nose twitched. "I do think I'm smelling poutine being...!"

"Poutine?!"

In a massive explosion of smoke and dust, the flagship of the Kidō Butai disappeared through the main doors into the mess hall. The others gazed that way, then Zuikaku moaned. "Damn!" the pony-tailed carrier moaned out. "Even if Kaga-san can be a pain in the butt at times, she's nowhere close to being as embarrassing as Akagi-san is when her cravings get the better of her!"

Kaga twitched. "Zuikaku-san...!"

"Kaka! Zui! No fight!"

Both yelped on seeing Katsuragi glare at them, then they ducked the baby carrier's angry look. "Hoppō, what poutine?" Mimi, the child Abyssal who had been taken off Mikura-jima by Chennalton, Fusō and Yamashiro, then asked.

"Poutine yummy!" Hoppō said as she took Mimi's hand in her own, then walked her into the mess hall. "Hoppō sisters eat poutine!" she declared.

The other Abyssals quickly scrambled into the mess hall. Chennalton watched them go, then she knelt before Katsuragi. "Katsuragi-chan, Erinsville baked a special cake for a good little girl like you!" the battleship then said.

The baby carrier blinked. "Erin? Shenō's friend?"

Chennalton held up her hand to allow the holographic image of a battleship to appear over the palm. As the others looks, Musashi hissed out in recognition of that ship, which distantly resembled a
hybrid of one of the second South Dakota-class battleships and a Scharnhorst-class light battleship... albeit with two twin gun turrets forward and aft along with a well-built tripod foremast, not to mention the wide, long stern to allow an internal hangar bay for spotter aircraft. Of course, the flagship of Chennalton’s squadron was depicted in her World War Two form, with forests of anti-aircraft guns and a heavy battery of 5 inch 38 calibre twin turrets on the side of her superstructure. Seeing that, Katsuragi blinked before she pointed. "Ryū'zen!" she gasped before pointing to Zuikaku. "Ryū'zen bring Zui home!" she declared, then she blinked. "Erin?"

"Hai, that's her name," Chennalton asserted. "When you were bringing all the brave people back to Japan after the war, Madame Zuikaku's survivors were transferred to you when you got wet from the bad storm!" As Zuikaku gaped, the battleship added, "You remember when Erinsville's crew made the rain go away?"

Katsuragi nodded. "Ragisuke wet! Erin make rain go away!"

"Do you want the cake Erinsville made you?"

A rapid, eager nod came from the baby carrier. "Ragisuke want Erin's cake!"

"Let's go!" Chennalton then gazed on Zuikaku, one of her signal lamps then flashing a message. «Get a seat away from the others. We're going to reverse what Yūdachi accidentally did with the Eagle Staff issued to Beacon Hill.»

Seeing that, Zuikaku nodded, grinning. «You got it!»

Everyone then raced into the mess hall...

Approaching Tinian, same time (local time: An hour after lunch)...

"Um...excuse me, Miss Jane..."

"Yes, Miss Juneau, what is it?"
"What are you hoping to find here?"

The large battleship calmly approaching the island from where the world's only two nuclear strike missions launched in wartime originated sighed. To normal humans and most magical humans, she appeared to be a statuesque yet quite well-muscled beauty with wavy and styled dark auburn hair framing a well-formed face pierced with dark blue eyes. Like all ships of the Royal Canadian Navy, she was in a bodysuit, gunmetal grey to mark her as one of the eight magical ships built to fight sea monsters in both world wars, the pendant number 04 written on her upper thighs in white. To shipgirls, she was a long, wide battleship, the largest and heaviest of all the big-gun ships ever built and worlds ahead of her time when she was launched in mid-1915 to hunt what were effectively seen now as "proto-Abyssals" by one hell of an incredible magical naval officer and native of Elgin County in Ontario named Bill Harlan. Possessing three funnels as warships of that age often had, her middle stack proudly bore the ubiquitous red maple leaf of Canada on its flanks. She still had her tall, well-balanced tripod foremast topped with modern radar systems and excellent optics. Her very clean decks were now dotted with four Mark 41 vertical launch systems, four quad Mark 141 launchers for the Harpoon anti-ship missile and modern dual-purpose guns augmented with Phalanx CIWS mounts and automated Bushmaster chain guns. Her wide stern with its transom end had been totally rebuilt to carry two Sikorsky CH-148 Cyclone anti-submarine helicopters; both of them were now aloft to help their mothership scour the island ahead of them. And she bristled with four twin-gun turrets carrying Mark "A" 46 calibre 18 inch naval rifles, forged at a special arsenal magically hidden in the Laurentian Uplands of northeast Québec near her birthplace at Tadoussac; their housings were shaped akin to what American fast battleships carried in the Second World War in lieu of the modified British-designed housings for the ship's old BL 18 inch 40 calibre Mark I rifles. With THOSE beauties, Lady Jane could reach out and touch someone from twenty-four nautical miles away!

"What I hope to find, Miss Juneau, is nothing," the adopted native of La Haute-Côte-Nord and Ottawa — through her namesake, the Chief Witch of the Canadian Wizengamot at the time the Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve (Magical) was established in 1910, Viscountess Jane Smith of Rideau — stated. "The natives of this island were lifted to Saipan when the Abyssals swept the Commonwealth clean of human habitation, then were evacuated to Japan. However..."

"One must never assume," the namesake of the capital city of Alaska noted.

"Yes."

"Hopefully, it'll just be little kids like those two we found at Ban-...!"

"Miss Sullivans, do NOT call that site by that horrid nickname!"
The Sullivans yelped on hearing that stern statement from the battleship she, William D. Porter, Cassin Young and O'Bannon were now escorting. "Sorry!"

Jane nodded. "I would think you would better remember your gracious hosts' own sensibilities," she added as the group of Japanese kanmusu sailing with the impromptu American/Canadian task force smiled. "That area is a war grave, no different than a sunken warship or a battlefield. Respect that...!

She perked as a signal came in from one of her two Cyclones, making the others all gaze her way. "What is it, Jane-san...?" Atago asked as she and Takao both braced themselves, making the members of Destroyer Division Four — Kagerō-class destroyers Arashi, Maikaze, Nowaki and Hagikaze — also tense.


The kanmusu all tensed, many faces paling as the potential implications of this shook them hard. They knew their history and what had been launched from that specific airfield in the summer of 1945 to bring the Greater East Asia War to an end in nuclear hellfire. "As a matter of fact," Jane added, her fists clenching in anger as she considered the ugly possibilities of what her scouts had just discovered, "...she's positioned herself beside the bomb pits where those things were loaded aboard Enola Gay and Bockscar. Something tells me this one wants to summon earth magic stemming from the uranium and plutonium that were used in those abominations of warfare to create similar weapons."


"Can you take it out, Miss Jane?" Sullivans asked.

"Easily," the battleship assured them. "However, to ensure that this thing doesn't try to reconstitute herself, I'll need my 'special' shells..."

"Go for Jane!"

"I hear you, Carol," Jane called back as the other shipgirls tensed; the Canadian battleship had given her companions the frequency she and her sister battleships always used while away from port. "You finished with Guam?"
«Just done. Spotted what's on the North Airfield?»

"Just got the basic look. Any details?"

«Yes. Two bombers with the magical auras of Nakajima Renzans cross-bred with Silverplate-augmented Boeing Superfortresses,» the voice of Carolina, the second of the Erinsville-class battleships and Jane's companion in missions that spanned from the Mediterranean during World War One to the Solomons and the central Pacific during World War Two, answered. «That princess has a disgusting sense of humour. I say it's time to terminally upbraid her on it.»

"True. But we do have to perform a 'May I?' dance, first."

«Understood. Let the others listen in.»

"Right." With that, Jane raised her hand, a large holographic screen appearing before her. Miniature versions of that screen then appeared before all the other shipgirls, making them gape in shock as the battleship manipulated the touch controls before her. "G.I. Jane, go for Solomon and Rose Puncher, Priority One. Side links to Clementine, Tavern Girl, Spitfire and Ladyhawke."

The American destroyers all snickered on hearing that nickname for the Canadian battleship; it had been chosen for Lady Jane by a normal-born officer who remembered a toy series produced by Hasbro back in the 1980s and the animated series based on it made by Sunbow and Marvel. A moment later, a viewing window appeared on the screen before Jane, revealing an image that had made every American shipgirl summoned either at Eta-jima or at Great Lakes gape in total disbelief when they first beheld their current commander-in-chief. «Miss Jane, good afternoon,» the President of the United States called out from the Oval Office. Also present with Barack Obama was the Secretary of Defence, Ashton Carter, and the Secretary of Magic, Professor Samuel Quahog. «Something wrong?»

"Something that requires the Prime Minister's input as well, Mister President," Jane replied. "Good evening, Mister Secretary. Colonel Quahog."

Samuel G. Quahog was a jovial man appearing to be in his late forties in normal human terms. A native of Washington County in Rhode Island, he was an alumnus of Ilvermorny from the Masters' Class of 1929. He was one of many who joined the magical wing of the United States Marine Corps to fight against the Greater East Asia Liberation Army during the War of Liberation; he topped out as a lieutenant colonel and deputy commander of the 72nd Marine Regiment, who helped the magical
natives of Indonesia fully free themselves from Dutch control when that war ended. A fan of quidditch and quadpot, he had been the second leader of a magical government now affiliated to the International Confederation of Wizards to throw his full support behind total cooperation with normal leaders when it came to dealing with the Abyssals, following the example of his old drill master from Edmonton. «Good afternoon, Miss Jane. Lucky thing you caught us all here in the office when you called in. Hello, ladies!»

All the American shipgirls had automatically braced themselves on seeing their president. "Good evening, Mister President. Secretary Carter. Colonel Quahog," Juneau answered for her subordinates with a bow of her head.

"Konban wa, Obama-daitōryō. Carter-daijin. Quahog-hakase," Atago greeted on behalf of the kanmusu under her command. "How is the weather in Washington?"

«Quiet evening, Miss Atago," the President stated. «Ah! There's Justin!»

«Hello, Barack," the voice of the Prime Minister of the Dominion of Canada called out from his office on Parliament Hill in downtown Ottawa. As many shipgirls immediately shivered on taking in Justin Trudeau's handsome looks, they were quick to note he had been joined by his chief deputies in dealing with the Abyssals, Minister of National Defence Harjit Sajjan (Lieutenant Colonel, the British Columbia Regiment [Duke of Connaught's Own] [RCAC], retired) and Minister of Magical Affairs Professor Edward Stewart (Warrant Officer Class I, "S" Commando, Royal Canadian Foresters, retired). «Hello, Jane! Girls, good to see you all again! How many others are in on this...?»

A new window then appeared. «I'm here, Mister Prime Minister. Ministers.»

«Miss Erinsville," the President saluted. «This must be quite an important message for you to get her involved in this, Miss Jane.»

«I'm here as well, Mister President, Mister Prime Minister," a new voice then cut in as a window displaying a large number of shipgirls with her. «I'm with General Dover and Commissioner Larsden now at Eta-jima.»

«Here as well, sir," the comforting voice the commander-in-chief of all shipgirls and shipboys hailed from her office at Eta-jima.

«Just got up," a grunting voice echoed from inside a tent in London.
«Long night, Dean?» the Prime Minister asked.

«No, Justin,» the leader of the War Hawks answered in amusement. «Erin had to go clean out a pack of Abyssals attacking Tinworth Beach.»

«Ah! Hello, Samuel!» a jovial voice then called out. «Mister President! Mister Prime Minister! My, it's nice to confirm some old sea stories!»

«You know why it was kept secret, Albus,» Quahog advised him.

Albus Dumbledore nodded; he had just apparated over to Dean's headquarters tent in Bushy Park. «Now I do understand. Please convey my compliments to Admiral Harlan for the level of security he placed over such a formation, Edward. It was superbly well done even if the Foresters in the First and Fifth Brigades drew on experience when they served with the First Battleship Squadron when they helped my people and the Seventh Cavalry Division stop Gellert.» His eyes twinkled. «If Miss Māori and her sisters haven't told you, Miss Erinsville, please accept my compliments at such excellent shooting this evening.»

«It was necessary, Headmaster,» the calm voice of the flagship of the First Canadian Battleship Squadron answered. «Even if your people have been kept critically blind in many ways due to the dangerous lack of teaching at Hogwarts because of constant government interference in the syllabus, the people in the Department of Magical Law Enforcement and their friends deserve George Crosses for their actions over the last decade and more. When I speak to Her Majesty the next chance I get, I'll personally pass on that recommendation.»

«Hear! Hear!» the Canadian defence minister chanted with a nod.

«What's the problem today, Miss Jane?» the President then asked.

Jane took a deep breath. "Mister President, Mister Prime Minister, my Cyclone scouts just confirmed the presence of an airfield princess on Tinian Island, right at the weapons pits on the North Airfield where two B-29 Superfortresses were loaded with nuclear munitions to perform attack missions on Japan in August of 1945," the battleship coldly declared, eliciting a chorus of screams from the background at Eta-jima; hearing that, she realized Chennalton was now in the mess hall. "It has been confirmed by my companion battleship Carolina. As of now, two Abyssal heavy bombers resembling a cross between the Nakajima G8N Renzan four-engine bomber and the Boeing B-29 Superfortress in Silverplate format used by the 509th Composite Group in those days are being
prepared over the bomb pits from where the Little Boy and Fat Man devices were loaded aboard aircraft for delivery to Hiroshima and Nagasaki on Special Missions 13 and 16. It is within the range of my and Carolina's rifles. Since it is American sovereign territory, it is only proper and right that I must seek your direct permission, Mister President, to use Mark XLVI high-yield mesonium munitions to destroy the princess AND those bombers. As well as your authorization, Mister Prime Minister, to make use of such weapons in an attack mission."

Silence fell, then the Prime Minister sighed. "Barack?"

"There is no one on that island, Miss Jane?" the President asked.

«We can confirm before we fire, Mister President,» Carolina advised.

"Please do so. If all is clear, you have my authorization. Justin?"

"You have my authorization, ladies," the Prime Minister declared.

Jane nodded. "Cruiser Juneau, do you confirm the President's statement?"

"I confirm," the anti-aircraft light cruiser said.

"Cruiser Atago, do you also confirm the President's statement?"

"Hai," the heavy cruiser affirmed with a steely nod. "I confirm."

«I confirm the Prime Minister's direct order to release Mark XLVI ordnance,» Erinsville called out from somewhere in the English Channel.

"Very well, Flag," Jane declared, echoed by her sistership, then the larger battleship took a deep breath. "For all those who were involved in Operation: Crossroads..." she declared. "Do NOT watch what happens next!"


As that declaration echoed over the mess hall — Chennalton was transmitting it from her communications suite to the flat-screen television sets on the bulkheads — Inazuma quaked. "Does she h-h-have to do th-this, nanodesu...?"

"Airport princess trying to redo the fuckin' missions to burn Hiroshima and Nagasaki to the ground?" Tenryū hissed out. "No choice, Inazuma-chan..."

"It'd be probably Tōkyō and Kyōto, Ten," Johnston mused from nearby as others in Taffy 3 shook their heads, stunned that the Abyssals were willing to go THAT far to strike down humans in large numbers. "General Groves was hot to trot to burn Kyōto to the ground since it was the only major city General LeMay hadn't been able to flatten by then. Your Heavenly Sovereign's there. And Tōkyō was where Kongō and her sisters first forced the Abyssals back three years ago."

"Poi...!" Yūdachi moaned as Fubuki, Mutsuki and Kisaragi comforted her.

"Oi, Eugen-chan!" Ataru barked out. "Don't look at it!"

Heads snapped over to see a shuddering German heavy cruiser standing, staring in determination at the main screen. As Bismarck got up to force Prinz Eugen away from looking at the images, the adopted native of Paris and Chambéry in the territory of her namesake's home duchy near Geneva shook her head. "NEIN!" she barked, making her companion from Operation Rheinübung jolt. "Verzeihen Sie mir, alter Freund..." she then hissed. "I need to see this...!"

"You won't do it alone, Eugen-chan."

That was light cruiser Sakawa, who got up to stand beside her fellow Crossroads veteran, her hand reaching out to grasp that of the heavy cruiser who survived both the Able and Baker tests in the autumn of 1946, just as Nagato could have done had not the radiation from the second bomb prevented damage control crews from boarding her to keep her afloat after the second test. Staring at this, Yonaga rose from her place beside her friends from the Kidō Butai to stand behind the cruisers, placing hands on their shoulders. They looked up at her, then shuddered as they felt the carrier's strength flood them. At a nearby table, Nagato and Saratoga tightly held each other as a hush fell over the room.
"What's the yield?" Iowa whispered to Martin Larsden.

"Five kilotons," the police commissioner reported. "The shells fly at 1,464 metres per second. At their standard engagement range of 41,000 metres, it takes 28 seconds for the shell to hit. At sea level, sonic speed..."

"Is 343.2 metres per second," the lead ship of her class breathed out, an awed whistle in her voice. "She won't hear the damned things coming..."

"That thing doesn't deserve a warning," Wisconsin muttered.

"Strange that there's no recon aircraft at Tinian," New Jersey mused. "Just because the whole island was a mass bomber base for the Twentieth Air Force, there should be recon aircraft or a CAP to protect the place from attack."

Iowa smirked. "Let's not call in Master Chief Murphy, Dragon!"

"Amen to that," Missouri breathed out...

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Northeast of Tinian, range 40,500 metres from the North Airfield...

Battleship Carolina remained effectively at station keeping, steering a course to keep her target — the bomb pit where Bockscar had been loaded with Fat Man — at exactly the same range before she fired her rifles. Sailing to the outboard of the second Erinsville-class battleship were members of Destroyer Division Twenty-four. Umikaze, Yamakaze, Kawakaze and Suzukaze had been placed under Atago's and Takao's command for a sweep of the area of the Marianas Islands since Naka was still recovering from her last escort mission from Canada and needed to take some time to catch up on her public relations duties. The dark-haired, tomboyish battleship with the almost black eyes kept her radar and optics focused on the treed island over forty kilometres away, just beyond the southern tip of Saipan. She had been shocked to note there was no standing air patrol over either island, to say anything of nearby Guam. Given the strategic import of what the airport princess was obviously doing...!

"Any signal, Sempai?" Suzukaze then asked.
Carolina hummed...then she perked as a message came in from one of her two CH-148 Cyclones now flying high over the east shore of Tinian. "Go for Jane."

«Jane here,» her long-time companion battleship called back.

"Sweep of the east sectors of Tinian show clear."

«Confirm sweep of west sectors also clear,» Lady Jane called back.

"Firing my first salvo in two minutes, mark."

«Confirm.»

To both sides of the tall woman now forming the spiritual core of one of the world's largest warships, four turrets adjusted themselves to bring their starboard tubes to directly target the pit where Bockscar had received Fat Man decades before to carry out Special Mission 16. In her technomagical soul, computers based on processor technology developed by highly-skilled programmers working for BlackBerry's magical wing went to work, performing intense yet basic trigonometry to ensure the four shells would land perfectly on target at the very same moment, unleashing the equivalent power of the Nagasaki atomic bomb on the demon now intent on doing same to Japan. Carolina then kicked her engines to reverse, committing a combat stop within two ship lengths before her turbines went to station-keeping to keep her steady. Once the computers made the final measurements, adjustments were made in her Mark "A" naval rifles...

"One minute, mark."

«Confirm.»

An eerie silence fell over the scene as the destroyers accompanying Carolina scanned with optics to ensure no spotter plane accidentally appeared to spoil the attack. Given that the kannmusu were based at Eta-jima, visits to the A-Bomb dome in downtown Hiroshima had been a natural thing for them to do. While it had been disheartening to see the wrecked trade building and see the photos and videos of that awful attack, it had convinced Umikaze and those like her to be far better than the monsters that had unleashed death and destruction on millions just to help Japan "equal" the nations of the West in that most awful of games: Empire building. After all, the carriers of the Kidō Butai weren't the only ones who felt disgust at the continued denial of things like the Rape of Nánjīng, much less
the issue of comfort women from Korea and elsewhere...

"Firing."

Four naval rifles roared as they spat out their shells, causing a sonic boom to burst over the scene as they were accelerated by the special propellant used by Carolina to send them flying at Mach 4.2 right at the North Airfield...

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**Eta-jima...**

Nagato felt Saratoga's hands tightly grip hers as she saw the graphic at the upper left corner of the main view screen in the cafeteria showing eight 1.7 tonne shells racing at over four times the speed of sound from the barrels of two of the Ryūseizen to their target at the northern end of Tinian. Both couldn't, wouldn't, look away from the main image, taken from one of Carolina's Cyclones at a safe range of twenty kilometres east of target point. It now showed the image of an island whose soil was blackening from the evil presence that placed herself at the spiritually darkest point on Tinian in Japanese eyes. While it was a relief to see the Abyssals hadn't put any sort of combat air patrol over the island to protect what they were doing there, their...

All the view screens nearly turned white as the ear-splitting roar of eight shells going off almost all at once nearly burned out the speakers and made many listeners wince. Some of the American shipgirls instantly equated that noise to an M134 Minigun firing right beside their ears; one had to have very well-honed hearing to pick out the individual detonations of those Mark XLVI shells as supercharged magical balls of mesonium slammed into cores of denser forms of the transuranic element often known to magics and mystics worldwide as "the Atom of the Mind and Soul", creating burning waves of energy that tore into the soil with the power of a thousand tsunami hitting a city all at once.

The airport princess that had based herself there was instantly annihilated by such terrible fury, her body crushed without giving her any chance to send out a call for help. So arrogant she had been in establishing herself far from the trade routes, she never considered being attacked by anyone...and not by any of the **Leviathan Killers**, to say anything of TWO of those murderous ghosts of the high seas no Abyssal had been able to track down since they all commenced general operations years ago. As her soul was shattered into metaphysical bits to be flung to the ends of the Universe without even any sort of death cry to alert others that Tinian was lost, released mesonium atoms from Carolina's and Lady Jane's shells burrowed into the soil, pumping waves of rejuvenating energy to purge the poison seeping into the dirt and bedrock of Tinian. As the last of the deathly plague that had sucked away the ambient magic of the island was exorcised from the island, fields of renewing energy spread out from the impact points to energize the seared grass, making the vegetation regrow itself.
By one minute after impact, the hellish fires that burned half of Tinian down extinguished, leaving behind a moonscape that totally blackened the island from the area of 42nd Street near the former West Airfield north. As Prinz Eugen and Sakawa both wept at such horrible power that had to be unleashed by two Canadian shipgirls — which struck them as so horribly wrong as Canadians were always seen as a people dedicated to the pursuit of peace and harmony, even in the face of the threat of weapons of mass destruction — a cry from Inazuma made people gaze at the childish destroyer. "The grass is growing, nanodesu!"

Awed cries of delight filled the mess hall as tendrils of luscious green seemed to surge north from the still intact part of Tinian, totally consuming what remained of the island’s international airport and the streets and worn airport runways that had pot-marked the land for seven decades. As that happened, a freshening wind then flowed over the island from the northwest, scattering the ashes of the airport princess and her installation out to sea. The cries of the watching shipgirls turned to wild cheers as the foundation of the North Airfield totally disappeared under a new blanket of lush green, forever erasing the mark of that dark part of World War Two from the wa of the island.

«Wait!»

Everyone gasped. "Atago-san?!" Fubuki called out.

«What is it, Atago?» Lady Jane asked.

«My spotter plane just picked up something near the docks in San Jose!»

«Vectoring in a Cyclone to investigate!» the battleship advised.

«I'm aiming my port guns to bear and closing range!» Carolina advised.

«Understood...!»

San Jose on Tinian, a half-hour later...
"Bad noise..."

Shaking her head as her mind echoed from that unearthly roar that had nearly deafened her just moments ago, Hattie grunted as she got up from the bed she had been borrowing at the Mietetsu Fleming Hotel just off 8th Avenue. Shaking her head, the childish Abyssal who had first woken after the attack on New York City three years ago then looked out the window. There was a lot of smoke to the north, but no other sign that something bad had happened. "Attack...?"

"Hattie, what noise?"

Hattie blinked, then gazed at the doorway as Hiroko walked in. While both Abyssals looked pretty much alike, the one from New York City had two grey scars on her torso, one near her neck on the left collar and the other at the level of her floating ribs on the right side. The latter was easily identified by the beautiful orizuru she carried on her person; Hiroko had the power to animate the folded pieces of paper and let them fly around to scan the area close to her. The American Abyssal shook her head. "Don't know. Bad noise."

Hiroko nodded. It had taken her and Nagako months to fully understand their sister from America, but the living spirits of the dead children of Hiroshima and Nagasaki from August of 1945 could now carry on a decent conversation with Hattie in the broken Japanese they were able to teach her, not to mention the basic form of Abyssal. "Hai, bad noise," she said. "Like bright day..."

Hattie nodded in understanding. She remembered through the spirits of children killed three years ago how bright and clear it was on Tuesday 11 September 2001 when hijacked planes struck the World Trade Centre, killing thousands because of America's selfish policies concerning the Middle East and how that aroused the fury of fundamentalist Islamic fanatics to strike back in a way that hurt the United States as much as Pearl Harbour did decades earlier. Of course, the number of dead on 9/11 was a mere tithe of what had been unleashed on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, but the feelings of pain, bewilderment, horror, agony and the hollow sense of loss because so many adults had been killed without any real understanding as to why had been enough to see them born and evolve had been the same no matter the time or the reason. It hadn't evolved to the point where they had become stupid grown-ups and started hurting people like other Abyssals had in the previous decade; neither Hattie, Hiroko nor Nagako wanted to be like that. While it was nice to know the fundamentalists from Arabia and elsewhere were in poverty thanks to the Abyssals cutting off their oil exports via the Persian Gulf, the three child Abyssals wouldn't think of doing what their "big sister" on the North Airfield planned to do to Japan...

"Gyro!"

That was Nagako; to tell the three apart, metal tags had been made with their names etched in Latin script and in kanji/katakana. The wide-eyed Abyssal was waving her hands frantically as she pointed
south towards the harbour. "What gyro, Nagako?" Hiroko then asked in confusion as Hattie looked out the window.

"Helo!"

The two Japanese-descent Abyssals blinked, then walked over to look out the window to see a grey machine hovering nearby, its blades whirling as the faerie pilots stared out the cockpit window at them. "Canuck!" Hattie said as she spotted the low visibility roundel with the maple leaf on the hull, not to mention the national flag of the Dominion on the helicopter's tail. "Canuck!"

"Which room, Jane-san?!" a voice shouted from the hallway.

"Third floor! Sixth room from the port end!" a voice echoed from outside.

Nagako blinked, then cheered. "Kanmusu!"

Loud footfalls echoed through the hallway as the Abyssals turned just as a busty blonde shipgirl with blue eyes appeared, smartly dressed in a medium-blue greatcoat with underlying black bloomers, dark opaque thigh-high stockings and a white ruffled button shirt with bow tie, her head partially covered by a very cute beret. "Pan-paka-pān!" she cheered as she threw her arms into the air in celebration, making Hiroko and Nagako whoop in turn as they echoed the shipgirl's movements while Hattie blinked in confusion at such weirdness.

Japanese. Go figure...

"Did you find them, Miss Atago?!" the voice called from outside.

"Hai, Jane-san, I did!" Atago declared as she leaned down to gaze intently at them...then she blinked as her eyes locked on the names mounted to the brass plates on their collar. "Hiroko? Nagako? Are those your names?"

"Hai!" Hiroko answered, then she pointed at the cruiser. "Atata!"

Atako jerked, then she blushed as she remembered that Hoppō called her the same thing. "Who
Canada?" Nagako then asked as she pointed to the hovering Cyclone, who was still in the air and visible from the window of Hattie's room.

"One of the Ryūseizen!" Atago said as the louder footsteps of a battleship approaching the room echoed from the hallway beyond.

That made all three Abyssals turn ash grey. "**SCARY SHIP!**" Hattie screamed out before she dived under the bed, said bed then rattling loud.

"Not scary!" the cruiser assured, making Hiroko and Nagako blink and Hattie stop shaking. "Jane-san and Carol-san made the bad stuff go away!"

That made the child spirits blink. "Hime gone?" Nagako asked.

"Hai! Carol-san and Jane-san had the right stuff to make the bad hime go away! Now the bombers will never fly! Pan-paka-pān!"

That made Hiroko and Nagako blink, then both cheered before the former placed her hands together. She pulled them apart, making a fluttering orizuru appear, it done in red. Atago gaped on seeing that...then her eyes widened in horror as she recalled the last time she saw something like that. When she had been part of a detail sent by Saitō Ten’ichi to escort the American kanmusu summoned to Eta-jima one day in August so they could lay a wreath at the Memorial Cenotaph in the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park and meet what few hibakusha were still alive. Atago then smiled as she recalled that event happened right after the shipgirls of Taffy 3 were summoned. At the ceremony, cackling grandmothers gladly adopted the cute destroyers and destroyer escorts — naturally, they had dressed in United States Navy full dress white uniforms for the occasion, rank insignia and medals from World War Two glittering in the sun — as honorary members of their families while the escort carriers of the group had their air groups fly missing man formations over the park in salute to the dead.

"Canuck!"

Hiroko and Nagako blinked, then turned as a very tall shipgirl appeared behind Atago, nearly colliding with the cruiser's stern as she gazed on the child Abyssals there. "The children of Hiroshima and Nagasaki," she quickly noted on seeing the names on the two Japanese-born child spirits' collars, then she focused on the American-born one now standing up. "Who are you, then...?"
"Why hurt?!"

That was Hoppō, who had seen the scars on Hattie's body from the mess hall at Eta-jima. "She's not hurt, Miss Hoppō," Lady Jane said as she knelt before Hattie, quickly spotting her name. "'Hattie'? As in Manhattan?"

Hattie blinked, then nodded. The battleship then pointed to the scar by the child's collar. "One World Trade Centre," she quietly said before pointing to the other scar. "Two World Trade Centre," she added, shaking her head.

"The 9/11 attacks, Miss Jane?"

That was O'Bannon, who had just come up to look on in things. "Obviously so, given her name," Jane said as she stood up. "You want to walk her out?"

"Aye, ma'am!"

"Banny...?"

That was Hattie, who had walked over to stare intently at the just-arrived Fletcher-class destroyer. As the adopted Virginian/Kentuckian blinked in confusion, both Hiroko and Nagako looked at her. "Banny...?" the former then wondered before she giggled. "Imo no Onna!" she then called out.

Nagako snickered. "Imo no Onna!"

Both child-spirits began to chant away as they danced around a confused O'Bannon. "Imo no Onna! Imo no Onna! Imo no Onna! Imo no Onna...!"

As Atago laughed, Jane shook her head. "Um, Miss Jane, what are they calling me?" the most-decorated American destroyer of World War Two asked as she gazed at the battleship. Even if she had been deploying from Eta-jima since she was summoned, she still had issues understanding the language. She was lucky that all the Japanese kamusū spoke English due to the heavy influence of the Royal Navy on the Imperial Navy as the latter service sought to establish itself.

That made O'Bannon blink before she sighed, shaking her head. «Suck it up, Banny!» Johnston then heckled from the mess hall at Eta-jima.

«Go for Jane.»

Jane perked. She didn't recognize the voice even if the identification code that had been flashed with the message marked him as friendly. "Who's this?!"

«Garb Heavy Four, ma'am,» the voice replied. «Support flight from Seventeen Det, sent compliments of Ladyhawke and Dragon Lord. Since your team found at least a half-dozen kids like the three you're with, we were ordered to fly you back to Inlet Island. We'll come down with four at Isley Field in thirty.»

Hearing that, Jane nodded. "Understood. We'll be there in an hour."

«Roger that, ma'am.»

Both Atago and O'Bannon looked sick. "Flying...?!" the cruiser eeped.

«And miss all the poutine being served at the mess today, Atago-san?»

Hearing that from Fubuki, O'Bannon whooped. "Okay! Let's go!"

With that, she picked up a cheering Hattie, then raced out of the room...

Eta-jima, the mess hall...

"My, I never thought that poutine would be so popular here in Japan."
Hearing that cutely accented voice, the members of the Kidō Butai, their German friend and the three Yorktown-class carriers all perked, then turned...

...to see a slender girl a couple inches shorter than either Sōryū or Hiryū now standing there. She was dressed in the standard blue-grey bodysuit marking her as a member of the Royal Canadian Navy, pendant 22 written on her upper thighs, her top covered by a naval combat jacket. She had navy captain's stripes on her epaulette slip-ons; like shipgirls and shipboys elsewhere, the rank was honorary for pay purposes. She had well-styled rust red hair in a left-side asymmetric cut flowing into a ponytail draped over her shoulder. Blue eyes peeked out of a weathered face. Her ship's crest was displayed on her right arm, her name on the tape over the right pocket. "Bonaventure-san," Kaga greeted the second of the Majestic-class light fleet carriers who sailed for Canada between World War Two and Unification. "Welcome to Eta-jima."

"Je vous remercie de votre accueil, Mademoiselle Kaga," the light fleet carrier bowed her head in thanks, then nodded her thanks as Zuikaku stood up to offer her a chair. "Merci beaucoup, Mademoiselle Zuikaku," she said in thanks as she sat, then took a deep breath. "My, that was a long flight from Greenwood," she then said in accented English as she slipped off her black beret.

"Were you just summoned, Frau Bonaventure?" Graf Zeppelin asked.

"About two weeks ago, along with all the Saint-Laurent-class, the Restigouche-class, the Mackenzie-class and the Annapolis-class. And adopted of same."

"'Adopted of same'?

"Oui. Back in World War Two, we got several of the Wickes-class and Clemson-class destroyers in the deal President Roosevelt made with Prime Minister Churchill to get bases in Newfoundland to press the Battle of the Atlantic against the Nazis," the Canadian carrier explained. "Niagara, Saint Francis, Saint Clair, Hamilton and Buxton weren't reborn among the various River-class steamers built in the 1950s and the 1960s. But they answered the call to arms when Admiral Harlan sounded action stations at Cornwallis. They were reborn as Restigouche-class and Mackenzie-class ships. Modernized, of course."

"How modernized?" Yonaga asked.

"Well, RIM-162 Enhanced Sea Sparrows in Mark 29 launchers carried astride their funnels and in
the old Limbo mortal wells, Mademoiselle Yonaga," Bonaventure said. "Phalanx Mark 15 CIWS for close-in defence, not to mention Bushmaster Typhoon Weapons System chain guns. One OTO-Melera 76 millimetre 62 calibre compact gun forward; the Mackenzie-class carry a second mount aft. Except for Ottawa; she was refitted with a Mark 13 launcher in lieu of her main gun."

Yorktown snickered. "One-armed bandit...!"

"Do not be so derisive," Yonaga stated. "The Mark 13 may be limited in load in comparison to the Mark 41, but it is versatile. Tell us, Bonaventure-san, did the Saint-Laurent-class and Annapolis-class come as helicopter destroyers?"

"Oui. They can carry one CH-148 Cyclone each."

"Do their crews drink dwarf rotgut?"

That was Enterprise, who had a wary look on her face; the most decorated ship in the history of the United States Navy had got a sobering draught from Heather Thompkins as soon as she returned to Eta-jima during the lead-up to the incident at Tinian concerning Lady Jane and Carolina. "Non, Mademoiselle Enterprise, not unlike the pilots for our battleship cousins," Bonaventure noted with a shake of her head, then she gazed in amazement at Chennalton, who was chatting with a flock of destroyers. "Amazing we did that..."

"You guys had the War Hawks, Bonnie," Hornet noted. "After that, having battleships in a magical squadron to hunt down leviathans seems tame!"

The Canadian carrier considered that, then she smiled. "Oui, that's true."

"What do you have for archery gear?" Hiryū asked; Bonaventure's sister carriers Magnificent and Warrior had both come to Eta-jima after they were summoned to learn the tricks of the trade from the Kidō Butai before assuming their roles as primary Canadian aviation ships for the Atlantic and Pacific Fleets.

"I'm getting used to a yeoman's bow, but I am willing to learn both modern and traditional styles," Bonaventure assured her, then she perked. "Nova!"

"Hey!" a grinning red-haired destroyer called out as she came over, escorting the world's most
famous passenger liner, both having trays of food in hand.

"Here's to a sister from Belfast," Titanic said as she placed the steaming pile of poutine on the table before Bonaventure. "And a better named one, too!"

Bonaventure laughed as she allowed the touch of an Irish burr to enter her voice. "Appreciated, Madame Titanic," she said with a nod of thanks.

"Always!"

As Titanic headed off, Terra Nova plopped herself down, then picked up her fork to begin nibbling her own poutine. "Rough flight in?" Hornet asked.

"Nah!" the adopted Newfoundlander breathed out as her blue eyes sparkled in amusement. She was slender yet wiry in build, her pendant 259 written on her upper thighs. "Some of the DDHs found it rough flying from Greenwood, but it was okay to me! No worse than Sea State Six on the Banks; remember sailing through that when I was doing sovereignty patrols to keep fish poachers away!"

"Not to mention help out in the Persian Gulf War," Enterprise noted. "What news about the Tribals? That'll be your last big class of ships to bring back."

"They're all back. Came through at a setup Admiral Harlan's great-granddad had built in Tadoussac since all the ships of that class were shared between us, the Brits and the Aussies in the war. Now it's us, the Brits, the Aussies, the Kiwis, the Indians and the South Africans given where all the names come from. They're all seconded to CANBATRON ONE now to help them investigate where all the Abyssals come from so we can nuke the damned things once and for all!"

"With proper weapons refits, I hope," Yonaga mused.

Terra Nova snorted. "What other way should they come back?!!"

"Nova!" Bonaventure instantly scolded. "It's not their fault that they couldn't get modern weapons outfits because they haven't had the time to modernize the summoning chamber here! Don't look down on them like that!"
The destroyer winced, then she sighed. "Yeah! Sorry about that!" She then hummed. "Still, it'll be easy to do refits to some people right now."

That made all the carriers perk. "How so?" Zeppelin asked.

"Well, you all need angled decks. Never mind that Akagi and Hiryū both have to get their islands put on the starboard side," Nova stated. "Not to mention getting the decks hardened to start taking jet fighters and proper ASW birds! Bonnie fires Trackers, Banshees and Cyclones out of her C1A1...!"

"What's that?" Zuikaku asked. *Oh, Kami-sama! Another gun nut...!!*

Bonaventure smirked. "You'll probably have heard of it by its common nickname, Mademoiselle Zuikaku," she stated. "'The Right Arm of the Free World'."

Silence.

More silence.

Still more silence.

Then...

"You're using an FAL?!!" Enterprise demanded as the Japanese carriers blinked.

"Oui! With it, I can put up my whole air group in minutes," the Canadian light carrier mused. "It surprised me that you didn't switch to an M14 when you began using a rifle to launch your aircraft in lieu of a combat bow."

Hornet sighed. "We're still trying to get Lex and Sara to use an M1...!"

"AH! It's a helicopter!"
Everyone jolted on hearing Kisaragi's shout, then turned...

...before Terra Nova moaned. "Damn it, you stupid trawler mauler! What the hell are you doing flying your Cyclone inside the mess hall?!"

People instantly focused on the last of Canada's Cold War-era destroyer escorts. Nipigon, a girl with the same type of body built as Terra Nova though she had gold-flecked red hair in a pageboy cut and blue eyes with pendant 266 on her legs, was standing in a clear space between tables, her sea rigging out. Such included a flight deck and hangar for her helicopter stuffed between her twin funnels. Flying near the rafters as Hedwig hovered close, a faerie-piloted CH-148 was moving to position itself over the green landing deck with NN in white at the aft end. As destroyers gasped on seeing the Canadian ship move to take on such a large machine, the Cyclone suddenly bucked as one of its engines flamed out. Nipigon hissed out on seeing that. "Oh, shit...!"

"I got it, nanodesu!"

Everyone watched in shock as Inazuma raced over to position herself right under the faltering helicopter, summoning her full sea rigging, which included her two aft turrets with their twin 10 centimetre 65 calibre Type 98 dual-purpose cannon. Seeing that, the Cyclone's pilot instantly moved to poise himself over the destroyer's "X" turret, then dropped his machine down to make a belly landing on the gun house roof; the landing gear wasn't spaced properly enough to make a proper touchdown. As the other destroyers whooped in delight at such a rescue manoeuvre, a certain police commissioner then cleared his throat. "Miss Nipigon!" Martin Larsden then barked out. "What on Earth are you doing carrying out flight operations inside a building of all places?!"

Nipigon jerked as the man-hunter's stormy grey eyes locked in on her as if they were peering through the scope of his sniper rifle. "Um, s-s-sorry about that, Commissioner!" the adopted Ontarian sputtered out. "We heard of that incident where Mister Moroboshi had to use that lightsabre of his to kill an abyssal to protect Kirishima and her sisters, so I put my Cyclone up to do sweeps of the area around the island. We have to cross those two bridges on Highway 487 to get onto Kurahashi-jima from the mainland, then Eta-jima from Kurahashi-jima."

Hearing that, Martin nodded as several local officers came his way. "A wise thing. Just remember to land your helicopter OUTSIDE a building from now on!"

Nipigon winced. "Aye-aye, sir..."

"Still, Martin-san, you have to admit, that was a splendid recovery by Inazuma-san, wouldn't you agree?" a strange voice then hailed.
Inazuma turned...

...then she gasped on seeing the smiling destroyer captain — now rear admiral — standing there along with members of his old command's senior staff. "Indeed it was, Saburō," Martin stated before gazing on Inazuma. "Well done."

Inazuma flustered. "Nanodesu...!"

Laughter filled the room as Mutsu came over. "Teitoku, welcome to Eta-jima," the battleship said as she bowed to Umezū Saburō. "Forgive my sister..."

"Do not apologize, Mutsu-san," the former captain of the *Mirai* stated as he politely saluted her. "I'm aware of your sister's issues with young ones like Hoppō-chan. I see she's now got many sisters of her own to care for."

Eyes looked over to one corner of the room, where a delirious Nagato was now gaping at the gathering of sheer cuteness as Hoppō and her new sisters gladly ate the piles of poutine and other good food prepared for them. "Kami-sama, I thought it was all a crazy joke when it came to her," Saburō's former combat officer, Captain Kikuchi Masayuki, noted as he gazed on his old co-workers.

"Given what she went through at Crossroads, it's understandable," the former first officer of the *Mirai* and Saburō's current flag captain, Kadomatsu Yōsuke, then stated before he gazed on Inazuma, who was now waiting for the Cyclone to shut down its engines so Nipigon could take the helicopter off. "Tell me, Inazuma-chan. Your pendant number was DD-6 back before the war, right?"

Inazuma blinked, then readily nodded. "Nanodesu, Kadomatsu-taisa!"

"Well, now you can designate yourself *DDH-6*!" Saburō then teased.

That made the childish destroyer gape. "Helicopter destroyer...?" she began before she shuddered. "But I'm not designed like Nipigon-san was, nanodesu! I don't want to land guns and torpedoes! I can't fight that way, nanodesu...!"
"Who says you can't fight with modern stuff?"

People blinked as Terra Nova walked up. "How would you modify her, Nova-san?" Mirai's former navigation officer, Captain Oguri Kōhei, asked.

"First thing, Captain, we land all the guns!" the Canadian destroyer stated, which made Inazuma yelp. "Relax, Ina-chan!" she playfully scolded, making the Japanese destroyer blush at being called such a cute nickname. "Those Type 98s were a good design and you can cook off 126 rounds a minute when you're doing full broadsides, but you've got two turrets aft. You have to unshroud them to fire broadsides if you're coming on your target head on. You can only cook off 42 rounds a minute if you hit head-on! We drop all of them and put an OTO-Melera 76 compact at your 'A' turret, you'll have 85 rounds a minute on auto-fire. If we shift your superstructure aft to put a 'B' turret on your 02 level, that's 170 rounds you're putting downrange to get rid of the bullies! Or even better, give you a Mark 41 VLS system there to launch missiles!"

"That'll let you clear the aft end to put a hangar deck for an SH-60K Seahawk that could carry Mark 46 torpedoes over the horizon," Nipigon added.

"She's gotta land the Long Lance launchers," Nova then warned. "They got great range, but those things are accidents just waiting to happen."

"Mark 32 tubes would do her perfectly. She could easily take four mounts and it gives her the ability to fire Mark 46 ADCAP torpedoes."

Inazuma gasped. "Twelve torpedo tubes...?"

"And ESSM, a Phalanx and Typhoon Bushmasters..." Nova noted.

"Always that," Nipigon affirmed with a nod.

Before the fourth of the Akatsuki-class could say anything in response to that, a moan caused people to gaze over at one table, where a certain baby carrier had been busy eating the nice cake one of the Ryūseizen had made for her. As the others watched, Katsuragi swayed. "Ragisuke...no feel good...!"

Her whole body then exploded in energy, causing everyone to scream out!
"RAGISUKE!" Hoppō cried out in horror...

...before the light faded to reveal Katsuragi, now restored to her normal teenage body, a surprised and confused look on the carrier's face. As the others in the room gasped on hearing that, Katsuragi blinked. "Um...did something happen...?" she asked as she looked around the mess hall.

Jaws dropped in shock...then people perked on hearing Hoppō sniff before she started to cry. As Hōshō went over to the child Abyssal's side and her new sisters moved to add comfort, Hoppō sobbed, "Hoppō want Ragisuke back...!"

Martin shook his head as the visitors from the Mirai all blinked...

To Be Continued...

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**WRITER'S NOTES**

1) The "sex-crazed idiot" interpretation of Ataru's name is from *The Senior Year*; this was something Mike Smith and I came up with to explain why was it that Lum pretty much refused to address him by name.

As an aside, Nassur and his wife Cinba were two of Mike's creations in *The Senior Year*. As in *Phoenix From the Ashes*, Cinba survived the shuttle accident six years ago shown in the flashback scene of the TSY story "Final Cinba". Also, Moroboshi Kaeru first appeared in the TSY story "My Darlings United". He was created to help better explain why Ataru's parents were borderline abusive to him over the years; even if Ataru's behaviour in *Urusei Yatsura* was inexcusable in the long term, her parents' selfishness (as witness his mother's "I wish I never had him" tirades) factored a lot into that situation.

2) Translation list: Ch'enghap'i — Vulture; Ch'uokyek — Spirit-dragon; Keishi — Commissioner; Verzeihen Sie mir, alter Freund — Forgive me, old friend; CAP — Combat Air Patrol; Rheinübung — Rhine Exercise; Wa — Peace/harmony; Orizuru — Literally "folded crane", this is a popular type of origami ("folded paper") hand sculpture that is shaped like a crane bird; Hibakusha — Literally "explosion-affected people", this is the term for survivors of the 1945 atomic
Je vous remercie de votre accueil — I thank you for your welcome; FAL — Short for Fusil Automatique Léger ("Light Automatic Rifle"), the official name of Fabrique Nationale's primary battle rifle design from the 1950s.

3) The Academician and Infinity are two of my Yizibajohei (pronounced /yɪzɪbəˈwoʊhɛi/) characters. As I've explained elsewhere, the Yizibajohei are a take-off of the Levramites from Jim Valentino's normalman parody comics from the 1980s. The Academician is the smartest person on Yiziba, with a hyper-inventive capability which puts her heads-and-shoulders above other geniuses in the known Universe. Infinity (also known as the "God[dess] Who Walks Among Men" depending on gender) is the ultimate-reality warper; I base her/him on the character of Captain Everything from normalman. Since the Anime Addventure website is now most likely permanently down (this is where I trialled the initial versions of the Yizibajohei, always within "The Doctor Is In" storyline for those who have access to backup files), you can see versions of both these characters in The Saga of Coyote and the Tempest and Manacled Dominatrix.

As an aside, the Dawn of Power was the time in Yizibajohei history when all the natives became metahumans, which transformed the planet into a place where only the bravest "norm" (non-metahuman) or "same" (person who shares a singular metahuman power with members of her/his own birth race) would dare tread. The Dawn of Power happened around the time of the birth of Christ on Earth.

4) Naval Weapons Technicians (NW TECHs) were the Royal Canadian Navy's version of United States Navy gunner's mates; it fell onto them to maintain and help operate weapons systems on a warship. In recent years, the combat technical trades in the RCN were merged as one "super-trade" known as Weapons Engineering Technicians (WENG TECHs); people in this trade learn all the combat systems on a warship after basic trades training, then elect to pursue expertise in specific types of equipment (weapons, sensors, sonars, fire control systems and communications systems) after they advance into journeyman training.

5) The CC-177 is the Canadian designation for the Boeing C-17 Globemaster III.

6) The Royal Canadian Corps of Air Cavalry (RCCAC) is my own creation; the idea of a Canadian Army tactical aviation service never existed in real life even if the Royal Canadian Army Service Corps (RCASC) created a helicopter transport platoon for group troop support and regiments of the Royal Canadian Armoured Corps (RCAC) made use of helicopter observation troops in the years before Unification in 1968. The Corps of Air Cavalry — one NEVER says "Air Cavalry Corps"! — is Dean Raeburn's home administrative service. Information about the Corps of Air Cavalry is available in The Air Cavalry Regiments of Canada, an information file at the FictionPress website under my writer's alias.
As an aside, the British Columbia Regiment (Duke of Connaught's Own) (RCAC) is a reserve armoured regiment based out of Vancouver in British Columbia.

7) A Warrant Officer Class I (WO1) is the pre-1968 Canadian Army title for the highest non-commissioned member rank; such a rank still exists in the British Army. In the wake of Unification, such people came to be addressed as Chief Warrant Officers (CWO); the symbol of the rank is the 1957 version of Canada's national coat of arms. A CWO is seen as having the NATO rank code of OR-9.

8) BlackBerry is one of the first true smartphones; the first models came out in 1996. The company that created these devices was originally called Research In Motion; the corporate name was changed to "BlackBerry Ltd" in 2013.
When Shipgirls Learn of Metahumans

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Eta-jima, the carrier practice range, mid-afternoon...

"Teitoku, welcome to the practice range."

"Dōmo, Miss Akagi," Heather Thompkins stated with a nod as she gazed on the archery range located on the western slopes of Hisako-yama overlooking the southern reaches of Etajima-wan near the harbour village of Washibe south of the main base property. Since the whole island had been pretty much abandoned when the Abyssals first began attacking en masse, the Kure Naval District had taken over Eta-jima for its own use. While much of the urban area was still wrecked and in need of either repair or demolition, the kannmusu who lived here didn't mind it; it gave them a vast space to practice all their skills without running the risk of an innocent bystander being hurt along the way.

Beside the commander-in-chief of the shipgirls, the newly-appointed director of the Kanmusu-keikaku nodded in appreciation at the rustic archery range that had been established for aircraft carriers. Accompanying the former captain of the Mirai were his senior staff. "I'm sure if Kusaka-san was still with us, he'd approve of all the hard training you girls do," Umezu Saburō noted.

That made the carriers blush. "If Kusaka-shōsa could accept the concept of kannmusu in the first place, Teitoku," Kaga dryly noted as she adjusted her clothing to prepare for a hard couple hours of work to recover from the many shocks she had endured earlier in the day. She was personally looking forward to some good practice. While it pleased her greatly to note that her long-time working companion was now at peak operational capacity thanks to the largess of magical farmers from Canada and the incredible Ryūseizen, it had been quite embarrassing to see Akagi loose all sense of self-discipline when confronted with piles and piles of fresh poutine, with the succulent promise of maple syrup for pancakes the base culinary staff were going to make tomorrow; Akagi got hooked on the condiment when the Canadian frigate Capilano brought a bottle of the stuff after making a successful escort run to Japan a year ago.

The other carriers chuckled as they continued preparations for the afternoon's practice while the naval officers moved to take seats at the back wall of the training hall, where archers would stand to
practice with their daikyū at the targets thirty metres downrange. Off to the port of the platform was the open air range, which is where carriers practised shooting enchanted arrows or bullets that put aloft aircraft from their air groups. "It's a pity Mirai was first in name," Sōryū noted as she looked over her daikyū to ensure the string was properly taunt. "We could use a kanmusu with that type of experience."

"Given what the Canadians have discovered over the last three years, that might have been quite some help for all of us," Enterprise mused.

Eyes locked on America's legendary "grey ghost" of the Second World War. Out of simple respect for their hosts and their own traditions, the American carriers always dressed in proper clothing for kyūdō-ka while practising at this range, protective plates bearing the first kana of their names as they would be read in Japanese. The second of the Yorktown-class was now scowling at her iPad; she was usually one of the early ones to finish preparing herself for practice. "What's bothering you, Enterprise-san?" Shōkaku asked.

"It's the data Chennalton and her friends have gathered to locate the source points for Abyssals," the American carrier mused. "They've compared it to what their crews detected in both world wars and in the brief times after the wars they did checks of their battle sites before going into Class 'A' reserve to wait for the next go-around. They tried to make connections between those readings and where fleet battles and areas where mass numbers of ships have been sunk, but there's no connection here. Nothing makes any sense, Shōkaku."

"Let me see," Heather stated.

The iPad was handed over. Scanning the map of the world there, the Canadian admiral was quick to note the different notations. A tap of the screen at any particular location brought up an informational window listing the historical "normal" battle during the world wars that occurred, plus what corresponding action ships of the First Canadian Battleship Squadron carried out to block proto-Abyssals from turning an already horrible situation into a potential massacre of humans that were in range of such beings. Also marked on the map were the exact locations where those creatures were destroyed in comparison to where normal warships or civilian craft had been sunk, such done with pinpoint accuracy; magical gyroscopes and other navigational aides aboard ships like Chennalton were as accurate as modern-day GPS satellites. However, after tapping controls to read on post-action reports and area analysis done back in those days and in the last three years, there was next to nothing that could be a red flag to indicate where such creatures could have first gestated before they swarmed forth to unleash destruction. Everything possible had been looked into: Known areas of mesonium deposits from the many times meteors composed of the Atom of True Life crashed into Earth over the last three billion years, hot spots of dark magic on neighbouring landmasses, water currents, the few times metahuman battles in the Second World War spilled close to the oceans...!

Nothing.
"I can see why this is so frustrating," Heather breathed out.

"Is this all the information we could access?" Kadomatsu Yōsuke asked; the officers of the Mirai's old command team had looked over her shoulders.

"Don't know. But I am going to lean down on Ed Stewart and Sam Quahog to get their magical investigators to pour through all the records on known magical sea incidents and have them added to this map," the admiral noted. "I can get Albus Dumbledore to do the same at the ICW to get everyone else involved; I can certainly guarantee that Svetlána Múromeca and Yomigawa Tsukiko could get the old Russian and Japanese archives opened up to access what's there."

"Why wasn't this done earlier?" Oguri Kōhei then wondered.

"The price all of humanity has had to pay for the inbred paranoia we all possess when it comes to confronting what is not normal, Captain," Heather stated. "This all stems from the Statute of Secrecy and how paranoid magicals are when it comes to keeping such a secret from normal people. Besides, given how gradual Abyssals attacks were in the years leading up to the first big mass battles, the response was well-contained even if the continued application of memory-erasing spells on people hit multiple times simply made them useless in the long term." She shook her head. "We should have been called into this far sooner. If magical ministries were hell-bent on keeping things secret, they needed to better coordinate things." She sighed. "Then again, no one ever listens to Canada. We're too radical even for liberal magical societies."

"Why is that, Teitoku?!" Hiryū asked. "Harlan-teitoku saw the threat right away as soon as the native Canadian seers and precognitives predicted things in 1910, then had Sunbeam-san and Sundown-san built to try to stop it. When it grew too big for them to handle, that's when Erinsville-san, Carolina-san, Lady Elgin-san and Lady Jane-san were built. They contained it beautifully, plus honoured requirements forced by the Statute to keep things secret from normal people. The same thing happened when Argo-san and Chennalton-san came into commission. The Foresters helped keep the war you were involved in contained, plus helped put an end to what Grindelwald-daijin was doing and helped liberate all of Asia and Africa alongside Yomigawa-gensui! Where was the problem?"

"Because they were top-of-the-line battleships and could easily work perfectly in a normal environment if the Fates ended up forcing that on Bill Harlan and his crews, Miss Hiryū," Heather answered as she gave Enterprise her tablet back. "It's typical contempt for 'muggle' things in the eyes of most magicals. Many still think — and are often encouraged to think! — that normal people use horse-drawn buggies to travel to other places, have gaslight to illuminate their streets, have no clue about modern illnesses since we still use leeches to vent diseases from the body and use muzzle-loading muskets for weapons."
The shipgirls all gaped at her. "You're joking!" Lexington stated.

"I'm not, Miss Lexington," Heather stated. "When I was Supreme Mugwump in the 1950s and 1960s, I tried to force through an update of knowledge concerning non-magical peoples worldwide at the various magical schools across the planet to ensure that if magicals had to go forth and work among the normals, they'd know what was going on and not stick out. After all, many magicals aren't simply ready to have the Statute's many protections ripped away from them. Japan was quite receptive about that, as were the Koreas, China and all of east and south Asia. So were the Americas and the nations of Oceania. The Soviet Union and their client states had done it since before the war. Ditto with Germany, Italy, Austria and Spain. But could you get Britain, France and the other nations of Europe to go along with it?" She shook her head. "Not a chance in the world. And it was still too soon after Gellert's move to wreck the ICW for the rest of the world to stop bowing to Europe all the time."

"It has changed, I hope," Saratoga stated as Nagato helped adjust her gi.

"Thanks to our opponents," the master sorceress from Québec City said. "As soon as the full scale of the threat finally sank into people around the world, magical ministries on all the island nations or nations with large islands like Madagascar, Greece, Sri Lanka, the Philippines and Indonesia tossed out the 'ensure no one learns the secret' policy and began to coordinate everything with local defence agencies to save lives and repulse the Abyssals. They got censured by the ICW in Geneva, but there was nothing done; the attacks were just coming on too fast and all the complications were making people panic." She smiled. "Then Nagi's boy made his little discovery, which added a massive new wrinkle in this delightful little goulash we all have to deal with."

An amused chuckle made the shipgirls perk, then they turned as three people approached from the direction of the naval base. "At least it is a positive discovery in many ways, Heather-san," Konoe Konoemon stated before he nodded as all the shipgirls bowed to him. "Konnichi wa, ladies. Afternoon practice?"


"Negi's still not getting enough sleep, Akagi-san," Miyazaki Nodoka said after she and Negi Springfield had bowed to their hosts. "Even now that we finally know the truth about the Ryūseizen! Hopefully, Harlan-taishō can finally find some ways to get you all modified and upgraded without Negi killing himself...!"

"Nodoka-san!" the teenage sorcerer from Wales moaned, his cheeks now a very bright cherry red. "I have a duty to all these people, remember?!!"
"Not to the point of hurting yourself permanently, Negi."

Negi and Nodoka gasped on hearing that toneless voice, then both warily turned as Moroboshi Negako came up to join them, followed by a curious Harry Potter. On seeing the Boy Who Lived, the son of the Thousand Master smiled as he walked over, his hand out. "Harry Potter, I presume?" he asked, his eyes twinkling.

Harry blinked, then he chuckled. "I am. You are?"

"Negi Springfield at your service."

That made the native of Somerset gape. "Any relation to Nagi Springfield?"

"My father."

"Ah!" Harry breathed out as he grasped the other wizard's hand. "My friend has told me about your father. Things some people written about him..."

"Don't apologize, please," Negi said as they shook hands, then he waved the other wizard over to the bench where Heather and her companions were sitting. "I know how isolationist and arrogant the leaders of your part of magical Britain can be. Makes me grateful at times that we were excluded like we were when the Wizengamot passed that law in 1705 that blocked Meridiana graduates from working at the Ministry of Magic. They are an uptight lot, aren't they?"

Harry moaned. "Short-sighted and stupid! Too much blood politics!"

Negi laughed. "Oh, we'll get along famously, Harry...!"

"NEGI!"

The native of Wales and descendant of the blood of Ostia gasped...
...before he found himself buried by a sextet of escort carriers who charged out of the change room on sensing he was there. "Ladies...!" he moaned.

"Miss us?" White Plains asked from atop the pile.

The others staring at this blinked before they all laughed...

Within minutes, Bonaventure had emerged from the change room to begin her first lesson in traditional Japanese archery. Unlike the tall daikyū bows used by the larger carriers or the specially-sized hankyū universally chosen by the six escort carriers of Taffy 3, the Canadian light fleet carrier made use of an English longbow, a present to her from her sister Magnificent and half-sister Warrior. That had made the veterans of the Kidō Butai grin as they recalled teaching the two other Canadian light fleet carriers the fine art of kyūdō a year before, shortly after both answered the call to arms at Cornwallis. While a longbow wasn't as tall as even a hankyū, the principals of kyūdō could still apply to English archery weapons. Especially the meditative element; a carrier needed to remain as calm and as collected as possible to force her will on her pilots and ensure the mission could be carried out with little problems.

As the training progressed, Enterprise and Kaga watched the Canadian carrier work away under Sōryū's and Hiryū's personal tutelage while Akagi took charge of the training for White Plains and her sisters at the port side of the hall. Also there was Yonaga, though no one presumed to teach the seventh carrier given the sheer level of martial arts skill and power she spiritually inherited from her late crew. Lexington, Saratoga, Hornet and Yorktown were at the starboard end of the building with Shōkaku and Zuikaku. On the open launch range off way to their port and well clear from flying arrows, Harry and Negi were spending time comparing the syllabuses of Hogwarts and Meridiana, the pactio system the latter now shared with Nodoka to help enhance his magic and how to perform certain spells; Negako was there to lend her expertise in how magic and ki interacted with each other. The human naval staff remained quiet as they observed the carriers, seated off to one side of the two fleet carriers. "She's got the determination to learn," the Grey Ghost mused after Bonaventure landed her first bull's eye, earning her approving nods from Sōryū and Hiryū. "Can't understand why Essex loudly told me to avoid her."

That made the converted battleship gape; everyone had just learned that all of America's wartime carriers had come back to duty at Great Lakes a day before as the recruit base in Illinois got up to full steam in performing summonings to bring back the Union's massive World War Two fleet. "How rude! Just because Bonaventure-san doesn't have our flight deck dimensions doesn't mean we can't operate with her! We do it with Warrior-san, let alone the Casablanca!"

"Yeah! We got that same message," Gambier Bay noted from her spot. The adopted Alaskan shook her head before she moved to notch her next arrow. Relaxing herself, the silver-haired escort carrier
— who looked way too small to be handling a hankyū! — took several deep breaths before she raised her bow, then lowered it to launch her shot. "Calling her 'Crazy Bonnie' and all that!"

She let loose her arrow, sending it right into the bull's eye. Everyone then perked on hearing an amused giggle escape the lone Canadian on the range. "Not so surprising, mademoiselle," Bonaventure stated as she relaxed herself. "I did an exercise with Mademoiselle Essex once. Her pilots thought mine were insane to launch and land planes as large as CP-121s and CF-102s from my decks."

"What are those? Don't recognize the models," White Plains complained.

That made the redhead blush. "Forgive me! The S2F Tracker and the F2H Banshee," she corrected herself. "Those were the fixed-wing aircraft assigned to my air group from when I was commissioned to when the Banshees were retired."

That made Hornet blink. "What's wrong with that? A Tracker is smaller than the Mitchells I carried for the Doolittle Raid! And the Banshee has the same wingspan as a Corsair! Your flight deck's only 120 feet shorter than mine!"

"You never had to land those B-25s, Happy," Enterprise reminded her younger sister. "Bonnie landed Trackers as a matter of routine."

"Could you show us?" Saint Lo asked.

Hearing that from the adopted native of Normandy in France and Washington state, Bonaventure paused before she gazed on Akagi. "Would you mind?"

The leader of the Kidō Butai blinked, then she nodded. "I'd like to see that myself." She then looked to the others. "Everyone stop!" she called out loud enough for all the other carriers to hear her. "We're moving to the launch range now! For those changing to firearms, please put away your bows!"

Everyone chanted their acknowledgement as people relaxed. The escort carriers all bowed in respect to the range before they scampered off to put away their hankyū and get their M1 Garand rifles, acting really no different than some of the emotionally younger destroyers like the Akatsuki sisters. Watching them, Yonaga nodded; while not as self-disciplined as she felt was proper, one had to be blind to not see the determination to carry through the fight burning in each of the "jeep" carriers'
too-human hearts. "The 'Greatest Generation',' she mused aloud as Akagi moved to stand beside her. "Aptly named..."

"Indeed, Yamamoto-gensui understood all too well the cost of challenging such a nation," the leader of the Kidō Butai mused as Enterprise headed to get her rifle and Kaga moved to join them. "Did Fujita-chūshō have doubts?"

"More than you could believe even if his devotion to duty blinded him to the need to stay silent even after the war ended, Akagi-san," the larger carrier mused, the buried grief inside her heart at her crew's almost-unanimous stubborn refusal to accept the call of surrender in 1945 flashing in her stormy grey eyes. "Then again, it is understandable. Nagumo-chūshō toured America during the 1920s, but he didn't really allow himself to properly absorb things as much as my admiral and Yamamoto-gensui did when they were there."

"That's understandable," a voice mused as the carriers turned to see Heather walk up to join them. "Nagumo was a battleship admiral through and through. The wrong choice to lead something as vital as Operation Z in my mind." She then gazed on Yonaga. "Admiral Yamamoto studied at Harvard when he was naval attaché to Washington after the Great War ended. What of your admiral?"

Yonaga grinned. "My admiral was a Trojan, Teitoku."

"'Trojan'?" Akagi and Kaga asked together.

"He went to the University of Southern California?!"

That was Enterprise, who was now walking over to join them, her eyes wide. In the American carrier's hand was her hand-crafted M1 Garand, built for her at the direct order of the President to celebrate her return to duty two years ago. "Indeed he did, Enterprise-san. Did any of your captains go there?"

"No, but I know of the school," the American carrier asserted. "The commander of Eighth Air Force in Britain during the war, General Eaker, was a Trojan." She then winked. "Actually, I do night courses over the Internet with USC," she added. "They were all shocked when I elected to pursue studies there."

"What are you studying?" Heather asked.
"Humanities with a strong politics minor, ma'am."

An approving nod answered her. "Good. What about you girls?"

Akagi and Kaga looked embarrassed. "We've never had a chance to consider such things, Teitoku," the former confessed. "We've just been too busy."

"Well, once we get enough of our shipgirls out there, we can give you people a chance to take a well-deserved break," a strange voice then hailed.

"Hello, Jim," Heather called out as James Vance came up to join them, returning the American commander's salute. "Good work, by the way."

That made the commander of United States Forces Japan blink. "May I humbly ask the Commanding Admiral to what she is actually referring to?"

"Encouraging your girls to further their academic studies when they get the chance to take a break from their duties. It's a good attitude to possess."

That made Vance laugh. "Well, it's your girls that started it, ma'am."

"Canadian kanmusu do university studies?" Kaga wondered, her eyes wide. None of the corvettes or frigates now at Eta-jima mentioned that!

"Over the 'Net and when they're back in Canada, of course," the American admiral stated. "I know Sackville's finished her freshman year through Mount Allison University in her hometown; she's going for a BSc in oceanographic sciences. Some of the older Flowers, Bangors and Rivers are doing the same."

"That's expected. Sacky served as a research ship for the Fisheries Department after the war until they made her a museum ship," Heather noted.

"What of you, Teitoku?" Yonaga asked.
"Bachelor of Arts in sociology from Concordia University in '52 with a minor in history," the Canadian admiral announced. "Plus a Master of Arts in National Security and Strategic Studies at the Naval War College at Newport in '88; this was after the year we took at the National Defence Academy in Kingston in '81."

"OUR Naval War College?!" Enterprise exclaimed.

"The War Hawks have always been on reserve recall in their services since they retired from full-time duty, E. A lot's changed since they gladly threw the Übermenschen out of North America and they needed to be ready in case of things like what we're now involved with," Vance stated as some of the other carriers streamed from the change room to join them on the launch range. He then nodded towards Heather. "The CDs they wear should have some extra bars on them."

"You don't earn time for a CD when in the Supplementary Reserves," Heather said, then she turned as Bonaventure stepped out of the change room, once more in her standard bodysuit, a small dufflebag in one hand and her preferred long arm slung over her shoulder. "Ah, there's a very familiar sight..."

Everyone moved to shift themselves onto the open field overlooking Etajima-wan. The range was basically a flat field with a small earthen ledge at the western end; it was from here that carriers did static launches of their aircraft to get used to putting such into the sky. As people moved to prepare themselves to sortie test flights, White Plains jogged over to raise a red caution flag over the field. "Flag's up for launch!" the adopted New Yorker called out.

"Hai!" Akagi called back, waving...

The main navy base...

"Poi...!"

Fubuki blinked before she gazed on her friend. "What is it, Yūdachi-chan?"

"The carriers are launching aircraft," Mutsuki said, pointing.
That made Fubuki and Kisaragi blink before they looked uphill...

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**The carrier practice range...**

Bonaventure placed herself beside a metal table set a distance from the cliff. Slipping the specially-built Fabrique Nationale/Canadian Arsenals Limited FN C1A1 battle rifle from her shoulder, she put that on the table while she moved to unload her dufflebag. From that came a 30-round FN C2A1 box magazine (in lieu of the standard 20 round magazine for the C1A1 or C1D) and three small ammunition boxes, plus the rifle's cover, carrier assembly and breech block, complete with the "rat tail" compressing rod that pushed against the return spring in the buttstock when the weapon was fired and the piston forced the breech back to eject the expended round and load a new cartridge. "You always disassemble this thing?" Lexington asked as the other carriers watched her.

"It's called 'caution', Mademoiselle Lexington," the light carrier stated. "Even if this is normally meant to double as my catapults, it's always smart to not have a weapon capable of firing bullets fully ready for use unless you intend to use it." With that, she slipped the breech block into the carrier. She took her rifle, pressing the locking catch lever up to allow the barrel assembly to fold down like normal flip-open shotguns did. The cover was then slipped on, then the combined carrier and breech block was slid into position. The rifle was folded back together, the locking catch clicking into place to announce that the rifle was ready to be loaded with a magazine and bullets. With that, Bonaventure pulled the cocking handle back to draw the breech into an open locked position, folding the handle back into place.

"Why doesn't it snap back into place?" Yorktown asked.

"Because there's no bullet to load into the chamber. It's no different than what happens when you fire all the bullets out of an M1," Bonaventure announced as she placed the rifle back down, then took up the magazine. Opening the ammo boxes, she picked out two from one, plus one each from the other two.

The other carriers noted they had colour-coded warheads: Two silver, one grey, one red. "What do the colours represent?" Shōkaku asked.

"Silver are Trackers, grey are Banshees, red are Cyclones," Bonaventure said as she loaded the grey bullet into the magazine, followed by both silver ones, then the red one. "One Cyclone for close range anti-submarine patrol, a Banshee for CAP and two Trackers to do some long distance patrol."
"That's a good package to put up," Enterprise noted, nodding in approval.

"Oui."

Taking her rifle in hand, Bonaventure then picked up the magazine, then slid it into the receiver. Walking over to a position where she was safely away from the others, the carrier pulled back the cocking handle to chamber a round now that a magazine was in place and bullets were ready to be loaded. "Flying Stations!" she called out as she aimed, her thumb taking off the safety...

Fubuki and her friends jolted on hearing the throaty bark of a rifle firing from uphill, then they gazed up just as a flash of energy produced...

"A helicopter!" Kisaragi gasped.

"Sugoi!" Mutsuki exclaimed. "Is that from Bonaventure-san?"

Two more rifle shots came next, that producing a pair of twin-engine, high-winged aircraft, making the destroyers gape. "Ah! Hornet-sempai's launching her B-25s!" Fubuki declared, pointing as the two aircraft swung over the bay.

"Poi!" Yūdachi said, shaking her head as she pointed up in emphasis. "Fubuki-chan, Mitchells have twin rudders! Those are single-rudder airplanes, poi!"

The other destroyers looked...

...just as a fourth shot echoed over the bay.

That was quickly followed by the most surprising sound any shipgirl from Japan would ever hear from something touched by their type of magic:
Two *Westinghouse J34-WE-34 turbojet engines* at full thrust!

"Poi...!" Yūdachi gasped as a straight-winged aircraft without propellers raced through the sky, banking hard right to soar down towards the base.

The destroyers screamed as a fast-moving McDonnell F2H Banshee — given the modern designation "CF-102" in Canada — zipped past them at over five hundred knots! The near-sonic speed pressure of such a pass made their skirts flutter to their hips, leaving their hair messed up while the faerie-piloted first-generation jet fighter calmly banked to port and moved to pass over the bay.

Seated nearby on a picnic table, Terra Nova and Nipigon shook their heads. "Now you guys know why we wear bodysuits," the former muttered.

The Japanese destroyers just gaped at them...then they balked as an anguished scream echoed from a nearby table. Looking over, they then winced on seeing a moaning Kongō look at the stains spreading over her clothes, a now VERY empty tea cup in her hand. "Don't you guys believe in canteens?" Nipigon asked.

"MY TEEEEEEEEEEEEEEA!" the battleship screamed, twin jets of tears showering the patio. 
"TEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEI-TOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO- KUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUU...!"

The main administrative building...

In his office, Saitō Ten'ichi moaned as he tried not to slump down on his soon-to-be vacated desk; his window was open enough to hear his would-be lover's pained cry from across the base. "I'm so glad I'm leaving," he whispered.

At her station, Ōyodo gave him a sympathetic look...

The training hall, that moment...
"So I would be allowed to put out podcasts about Chennalton-san?"

"Certainly, Naka," Judy Barnes stated as she walked down the hallway towards one of the classrooms alongside the Sendai-class light cruiser. "You've been putting out your war stories about the Ryūsei'en since you all came back as shipgirls, so it wouldn't sound so strange coming out of you. Atop that, the critical threshold worldwide when it comes to general knowledge about magical societies was effectively passed a year ago when things in Tomobiki started to go crazy. People know about Admiral Thompkins. Not to mention Sakurambō Sakura and all the other interesting magical incidents that befell Moroboshi Ataru over the last year thanks to that 'Urusei Yatsura' fan website, so it wouldn't be odd for the public to learn about Chennalton and her sisters."

"Especially with what Lady Jane-san and Carolina-san just had to do to Tinian, Naka-chan," Jintsū added, her finger raised to emphasize her point.

The fleet idol hummed before nodding. The effective destruction of Tinian at lunchtime had been detected both by high-flying Air Self-Defence Force Boeing E-767 airborne warning and control aircraft and Maritime Self-Defence Force Lockheed P-3C Orion maritime patrol aircraft who had been on reconnaissance missions south of the Home Islands; such information had been released in a statement by the Ministry of Defence right after lunch. That was followed immediately by a joint statement from the Gosho in Kyōto and the White House in Washington, revealing that a "trusted" formation of Canadian shipgirls had been the ones responsible for the destruction. Confirmation was made in those press releases that said formation had detected an airport princess on Tinian who was clearly trying to use the ambient energy of the earth to recreate nuclear weapons for an attack on Japan; it was also announced that a half-dozen Abyssal children similar to the famous Hoppō were rescued by the formation with help from kannmusu from Japan and shipgirls from America, supported by Canada's legendary Royal Canadian Corps of Air Cavalry. While Ottawa hadn't confirmed a thing, an announcement was coming from the office of Prime Minister Trudeau sometime in the morning several hours from now. In a warning statement from Minister of National Defence Sajjan concerning said announcement, the former commander of the British Columbia Regiment warned that certain details about such a formation were classified under the Specialized Warfare Act of 1949; while names of the shipgirls and their capabilities would be released to the general public, their origins and past missions would remain secret.

Naka hummed. "Would that be enough, Barnes-chūsa?"

"What do you mean?" the sorceress from New Brunswick asked.

"Introducing Chennalton-san to the public? I know the War Hawks have a lot of fame and a lot of people in Canada respect that, but something like the First Canadian Battleship Squadron would stretch it quite a bit, wouldn't it? Hai! She and Lady Jane-san and Carolina-san and the others are all
heroes for going out there to use their meson shells to destroy the wrecks of the nuclear submarines and aircraft carriers the big powers lost three years ago, but people are going to be curious about things! Does this Specialized Warfare Act of yours really have that sort of affect on people?! A lot of people...!"

"Know about magic," the Forester colonel finished. "Oui, that's correct. Oui, there are a lot of people out there who are willing to stand up for those such as Monsieur Potter and Monsieur Springfield in case there are some rhabdophobic fools out there ready to re-enact the Salem Witch Trials. But no one has the right to take those people who've lived under the protection of the Statute of Secrecy their whole lives and dump them into modern society without doing something to ease the transition over! The Specialized Warfare Act was written to fully augment the Separation Act of 1867, so there's no cause for concern! Besides, the emphasis the Prime Minister will make is the fact that a possible nuclear attack on Japan was stopped and that special warships — now shipgirls — from Canada helped stop it! That's the true news story of the day!"

Naka hummed as she considered that, then she nodded. "Well, it...!"

"Naka-san! Jintsū-san!"

Both light cruisers turned as a panting Kuma ran up to them. "Kuma-chan, slow down!" Jintsū called out. "There's no need to run out in the halls!"

The lead ship of her own class of light cruisers panted as she came to a stop. "You all gotta come out there, kuma!" she declared. "One of those new Canadian kannmusu is taking Inazuma-chan out into the bay, kuma! They put some sort of temporary flight deck on her so she can practice landing a helicopter!"

"What was her pendant number, Kuma-san?" Judy asked.

The cyan-haired shipgirl blinked, then hummed. "Number '234', kuma."

That made the sorceress blink before she giggled. "Oh, it would be her!"

"Pendant 234," Jintsū mused as she recalled the updates all the cruisers had been given on the new arrivals from Canada an hour ago. "Saint-Laurent-class destroyer, seventh of class, Assiniboine. Why does it matter?"
"She was the first one to be turned from a DDE to a DDH back in the 1960s, Miss Jintsū," a new voice hailed as the senior Canadian navy captain on the base came up, exchanging polite nods with the magical infantry officer as they were indoors. "She's the one who first tested the Beartrap system we use to bring helicopters down onto a destroyer's deck in a heavy sea. By the sounds of it, Miss Inazuma appears to be quite eager to accept being upgraded to a DDH."

"Can it be done, Armstrong-taisa?" Naka then asked.

"It could be," Wendy Armstrong affirmed. "An Akatsuki-class has roughly the same dimensions and displacement of any of the Cold War destroyer escorts like a Saint-Laurent-class. Besides, one of Beacon Hill's sisters, Buckingham, did trials with a temporary landing deck back in the '50s while trying to take aboard a Sikorsky HO4S Chickasaw helicopter." As the three light cruisers all blinked on hearing that, the native of Toronto added, "It's a good place for all of you to start learning how to use helicopters while you're at sea."

Jintsū, Naka and Kuma all nodded as they took that in...

The harbour beyond the main base, minutes later...

"Eh?! What's Inazuma-chan doing?!"

"Looks like she's doing a Bucky right now, Bucky!"

Fubuki jolted before she looked at Chilliwack as a crowd of recovering Canadian frigates and corvettes came out to gaze onto the waters beyond the main base, where a determined Akatsuki-class destroyer was trailing one of Nipigon's half-sisters as she prepared to land a helicopter while underway for the first time in her life as ship or shipgirl. "'Doing a Bucky'?!" the lead ship of her own extended class of destroyers asked. "What does that mean, Chilliwack-san?"

"Our 'Bucky' is Buckingham, one of my sisters," Beacon Hill explained as they sat at the picnic tables there. "Back in the '50s, they did what Akashi and Vestal just did to Inazuma: Nailed a landing deck on the aft end of the ship to see if she could land a helicopter. It'll be a lot different since the HO4S is way lighter than the Cyclone that Buffalo Brains there carries now..."
"Buffalo Brains'...?" Kisaragi feebly echoed.

Mutsuki then leaned over to whisper to Yūdachi, "Canadians sure have weird nicknames for each other, don't they, Yūdachi-chan?"

The peach-haired destroyer nodded. "Poi...!"

"Well, it's a good first lesson for them," Hill's sister River-class frigate Prince Rupert noted before sipping her mug of Tim Hortons. "Get everyone to give it a try. If they like the idea, they're DDHs. If they don't like it, they're DDGs. Nova and Nipigon have designed their Kai San upgrades."

Silence.

More silence.

Still more silence.

Then...

"Kai San upgrade...?!!" a wide-eyed Fubuki gasped.

"Sure thing!"

Everyone turned as Terra Nova and Nipigon came over to join them. "But how's that possible, Nova-chan?!!" Mutsuki asked. "None of us can go past Kai Ni...!"

The adopted Newfoundlander snorted. "God! You're still thinking you're all being forced to fight Big Mistake Number Two in worn hulls, right?!!" she asked. "You've only had three years service on your hulls since you all came through the quarterdeck at Eta-jima, remember?! You're practically brand new!"

That made the Japanese destroyers blink. "Nova-chan's right!" Yūdachi then stated. "We are all pretty brand new in these bodies, poi!"
"But to go to helicopters or guided missiles...?" Mutsuki asked.

Nova grinned as she slipped her hand into her jacket to pull out an iPad. She tapped on the screen before she smirked, then she turned the image to show Fubuki. "The honourable team of Her Majesty's Canadian Shipgirls Terra Nova and Nipigon proudly present the computer-modelled Fubuki-class destroyer, Mark IV-H model!" she proudly declared as the brown-haired destroyer gasped at the sight of what she could be turned into. "You'll put on about a thousand tonnes to have extra balance and get some jet engines in lieu of those old steam turbines of yours, but it'll prevent you from rolling too much when we get some decent radars and sonars on you! Plus give you a real fast gun with loads more ammo to cook off in case you gotta sink a fleet of destroyers...!"

"Not to mention hit them over the horizon with a SH-60K Seahawk carrying Mark 48 ADCAPs," Nipigon added. "And we'll throw in CANTASS for good measure..."

"CANTASS?" Mutsuki asked.

"'Canadian Tactical Towed Array Sensor'," Nipigon explained. "I've got it. It means instead of you pinging for submarines..." She made a shushing noise, making the Japanese destroyers lean close to listen in. "Be vewy, vewy quiet!" the adopted Ontarian whispered in a fair Elmer Fudd imitation. "I'm hunting Abyssaws!" She then pointed dramatically out to see. "A-hah! Thewe's the wascawwy Abyssaw wight now! Huh-huh-huh-huh-huh-huh!" Nipigon winked as her voice went to normal. "And you drop an ASROC from thirty kilometres away!"

"Poi...!" Yūdachi breathed out.

"And your torpedo capacity can jump up to twelve tubes!" Nova added.

Fubuki was gaping. "Twelve torpedo tubes...?!"

"And they'll all shoot ADCAPs!" Nipigon said.

Mutsuki joined in the gaping. "ADCAPs...?!"

"Plus ESSM, a Phalanx, an OTO-Melera 76 millimetre gun forward with loads of shells and a 32-
"HARPOONS?!" Fubuki exclaimed. She could sink BATTLESHIPS with those...!

Both Canadian destroyers nodded. "But, in case you don't like helicopters, there is the OTHER option!" Nova then dramatically declared as she tapped her iPad screen. "In case the customer is not satisfied with the Mark IV-H model, the honourable team of Her Majesty's Canadian Shipgirls Terra Nova and Nipigon now proudly present the computer-modelled Fubuki-class destroyer, Mark IV-G!"

She showed the picture to Fubuki. "Poi...!" a wide-eyed Yūdachi breathed out as Fubuki shook her head and both Mutsuki and Kisaragi continued to gape...

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On a train between Nagoya and Shin-Ōsaka, that moment...

"Did you have enough to eat, Ryūnosuke-san?"

Fujinami Ryūnosuke perked on hearing that concerned question, then she chuckled as Shinano sat across from her in the ninth of a sixteen-car Nozomi N700 series bullet train rocketing down the Tōkaidō Shin-kansen track towards Kyōto. "Hai, I did," the fisherman's daughter from Chōshi admitted as the carrier sat across from her. "Pretty good food, too. Oi, who's paying for this...?"

Shinano chuckled. "Actually, Tariko-san paid for the trip. Not just for yourself and your father, but Kasumi-san and Kanami-san as well."

That made the tomboy blink before she gazed over her shoulder at a nearby lounge area, where Hayashi Kanami and Tendō Kasumi were both relaxing, they being escorted by Taihō as well as a small squad of American subgirls. Noting the content look on the face of Saotome Ranma's magically-created twin sister and the aura of relief cloaking the eldest Tendō daughter, Ryūnosuke shook her head. "What's the story with Saotome's twin and Kasumi-san there?"

Shinano sighed. "It happened around the same time that you were all kidnapped by the Oni's friends. People in Nerima-ku were noting that Ranma-san was becoming depressed at not being able to be with his mother. You know of that?"
A snort responded. "Sure thing! Amazes me that woman never picked up on things! It's all over the freakin' Internet! Doesn't she use a computer?"

"I can't answer that. But what I do know is that one night, Ranma's father took an incense burner that Happōsai fellow once stole from those warriors in China, then used it to pull the power of the curse away from Ranma-san, thus making Kanami-san — or 'Ranko' as she was called — her own being. Then they forced her to pretend to be the Tendō family's 'country cousin' while Ranma-san was finally able to reunite with his mother; given Nodoka's possible reaction to learning of that curse, Ranma's father felt it necessary. After two months of being isolated from her life, Kanami-san got tired of it, then ran away from 'home'. Negako-san's people in Tomobiki picked up on what happened, then transported her to safety while her identity was reconstituted in accordance with the will of her paternal grandparents. While she was forcibly separated from the woman she does care for even now, Kanami-san has her life back under her control and away from any influence from any of those monsters in Nerima who would see her as just a handy target to vent their frustrations on."

That made the fisherman's daughter cringe as her father shook his head. "Met that fool Saotome once when he was training with that lech," Fujinami Fujimi mused. "A more selfish person I've never met. Why he allowed himself to be tied to such a monster as Happōsai, I'll never begin to understand. Thank the gods he never got it into his head to try to pull that idiot engagement scam he loved to use his boy for when he came by Hamachaya once." He chuckled. "That's part of the reason I raised you the way I did, child. Would you want to have anything to do with someone like that Ranma boy?"

"Indeed, the lad's problems — never mind the whole issue with Negako-san and how that allowed Tariko-chan to be what she is now — can be traced down to that stupid woman and her blaming everything under the Sun on everyone else but her," Fujimi muttered. "Not to mention her husband refusing to put his foot down on things before. The Moroboshi were not at the level of the Mendō or the Mizunokōji when it came to monetary wealth, but they were better off than what Ataru-kun's parents alluded to. Amazes me that so many in Tomobiki never saw it. Look how fast their home was repaired whenever something happened! That's quite unnatural even for Tomobiki! Did Negako-san say anything?"

Shinano shook her head. "No. Then again, we've never really pressed either Ataru-san or Tariko-san over what happened to them. Right after they arrived, Ataru-san saved Kirishima-san with his soulsword when that Abyssal attacked once, then they became literally inseparable. Then Tariko-san became attracted to Kongō-san; I don't think it was just to get her to stop chasing Teitoku like she
always does." As the Fujinami family laughed on hearing that, the carrier shook her head. "They've been good to the destroyers and submarines. Always there for dance classes and martial arts lessons, gladly answering questions about what being human's all about." She then giggled. "Oh, my...!"

"What?" Ryūnosuke asked.

"There was this one incident two weeks ago. Ataru-san was lecturing the destroyers about his adventures in Tomobiki in an afternoon class. Somehow, Kasumi-san — our Kasumi-san, of course — and Kagerō-san goaded Shirayuki-san into asking Ataru-san..." Her face then flushed a deep cherry shade.

"What?!

The carrier whispered it to them. Ryūnosuke then sputtered out in shock as her father laughed. "Kami-sama! How did the lad handle that?!" he asked.

"He called in Negako-san to handle that question," Shinano answered. "He didn't trust himself to give them an answer that wouldn't be embarrassing or force him into a situation that would have hurt someone badly. So he turned it over to Negako-san." She shook her head. "They all got the 'Talk' that day."

"How did Negako-sama handle that?" Ryūnosuke asked. Given what she had seen on that news show when she was aboard the *Kashin* plus what she had heard from her father about that particular woman, she doubted that the ninjutsu grandmaster would have done as most military sailors would have reacted to such a situation and brought out a "training film" for the destroyers to watch.

"A very visual description, including well-drawn diagrams on the blackboard that covered everything from intercourse to childbirth. That traumatized them all and made them shy from any man on the base — even Teitoku and his staff! — for a week," the carrier answered. "It turns out Kinu-san disabled the adult filters on the destroyers' personal computers because they were being annoying to her one day...and they got quite the eyeful as a result."

The fisherman's daughter moaned. "Shit...!"

"At least the lad understands his limitations now," Fujimi noted. "That was something that never struck home with him — or any of the others who loved to fawn over that Oni girl — until you were all kidnapped like you were."
That made his daughter moan. "Fuck! Tell me about it! If some of the shit I heard from others was even half-true, idiots like Lum and the rest of them always looked on Earth as their own private playground to do with whatever they want! No wonder Moroboshi turned to those Yizibajohei to chase 'em all off...!"

"’Yiziba’...?" Fujimi asked.

"Planet of metahumans near that Elle chick's home planet," she explained. "The place has been a damned no-go zone for anyone for over two thousand years, ever since they all got metahuman powers and turned the planet into a constant fuckin' free-for-all. No government runs the place and there's no sense of civility or order anywhere there. Turns out that over a couple centuries ago, the Oni got bit by the invasion bug and wanted to conquer that planet. The Yizibajohei trounced them so badly, you can't even say the damned name of the planet or the people in front of someone like Lum without them having heart attacks over it!" She shook her head. "Talk about using the biggest bully in the galaxy to make the stupid alien bitch go away! That's vicious!" She then shrugged. "Then again, I can't blame the guy! He nearly kills himself trying to tag her horns...then she turns around and says she's his wife?!"

"Just like Kuonji was with me, now that I think about it."

Everyone perked, then looked up to see Kanami standing there now. "Yo!" Ryūnosuke called out with a wave of her hand. "Heard what happened to you."

"I'll bet," the red-haired martial artist mused as she offered her hand, which the fisherman's daughter gripped. "Ataru always spoke kindly about you."

"Can't see why! How's it feel to be out of the Nerima zoo?"

"Been out of it for a month now while I'm recovering from helping Ataru, Tariko and Negako-san deal with an issue before they came back to Earth," Kanami confessed, winking. "Can't say anything more right now. Wait 'till Friday."

That made the tomboy laugh...
Five hundred kilometres west of the entrance to the Strait of Juan de Fuca, that moment (local time: An hour before midnight on Monday)...

"How the bloody devil have we allowed things to get THIS bad?!"

Hearing that snarling complaint from her team's air officer, the slender woman with the angular face, well-shaped Romanesque nose and curly dark brown hair sighed. "Because there was a treaty approved by the Crown on TWO occasions which normally declared this a magical matter," she calmly answered as her blue eyes focused on her friend. "No one considered for an instant this should be under our bailiwick until it was far too late to prevent people dying..."

The native of Wellingborough in England's County Northampton took that in, then nodded. "I am going to celebrate once that stupid secrecy statute is forever done and gone!" Captain Lynda Warbis hissed. "Even if people like Larry are trained to understand what normal society is like, there's still this stupid belief too many of them have when it comes to dealing with normal people..."

Rueful chuckles escaped the others in the cargo bay of the twin-engine multi-environmental transport aircraft now flying at an altitude of twenty-five kilometres over the calm waters of the Pacific. Far below the hull of the CY-199 Borealis, a convoy of empty container ships and other cargo vessels on the return run from Tōkyō were on the final leg of their journey back to Seattle and Vancouver to load up new supplies for Japan. Escorting them were one of several Canadian escort groups of frigate and corvette shipgirls based now at HMCS Discovery out of Vancouver, augmented by the seventh American carrier, some American destroyers (both shipgirls and actual warships) and the Dominion's second light carrier. Off to the far north way beyond the radar range of any of the River-class frigates of Group C-2 was the light battleship assigned to the Pacific Division of the First Canadian Battleship Squadron.

Reaching out with her telepathy to lock in on Sundown, Lieutenant Commander Maria Kennisson could only shake her head as she found herself agreeing to what her old high school classmate just complained about a moment ago. The twenty-three members of the 33rd Canadian Specialized Warfare Unit hadn't been placed on a war footing until over a year after Sackville's summoning at Cornwallis, as had other successor units to the War Hawks who could still field active and reserve military personnel. While most of Canada's teams of military metahuman specialists had been assigned to the defence of the Arctic in support of the various Canadian Ranger patrols and Coast Guard shipgirls, Maria managed to get her group on a "roving patrol" that could quickly switch from the Pacific to the Atlantic to backstop Canada's shipgirls while they carried out their missions. Such were always kept secret; worldwide fears of Canada mobilizing its population of metahuman warriors on both sides of the security divide had stayed the government's hands from going public on that even if such would have boosted national morale from Whitehorse to Saint John's through the roof.

Never mind what the alien reaction to it could have been...!
Lucky thing Miss Negako warned us about the Niphentaxians, the native of Hamilton who commanded the "Heroes Alliance of Canada" — as the team's resident prankster, Captain Russell Willis, long nicknamed 33 CSWU — mused to herself. Several of the older specialized warfare units whose members were all trained telepaths had swept in over the last week to clean out the observation posts set up by natives of Phentax Two across Canada. Thank God for a place like Quttinirpaaq Prison, Maria added as she recalled what happened to those aliens once they were brought into custody. While Quttinirpaaq Magical Penitentiary wasn't as horrid as Her Majesty's Prison Gonebren, it was still one of the most feared correctional institutions in the magical world; when one was sentenced there, one definitely faced what American criminals called "hard time".

"Maria?"

Maria looked forward towards the cockpit. "Something?"

"Looks like a carrier battle group with full escorts, including submarines," her team's technical guru answered, his blue eyes sparkling with anticipation as he looked at the touch-screen scanner readout before him. Lieutenant Commander Stephen Caldwell was blessed with hyper-intelligence. While not at the level of Yiziba's trójka of super-geniuses such as the Academician, the man code-named "Warlock" could create things that were magical in their own right; the CY-199 was one such product of his ability to design and build things that were light-years ahead of the best research being carried out in America, Japan and Europe. While the blonde native of West Lincoln near Hamilton had been taken aback by the mere concept of shipgirls at first, he smartly rolled with it and adopted to the new reality; when he wasn't busy with his unit on "field trips", Stephen worked out of Canadian Forces Ammunition Depot Dundurn near Saskatoon perfecting goodies for Canada's fighting shipgirls to unleash on the Abyssals. "Coming up astern of Wasp's position at ninety nautical miles."

"Why attack an empty convoy?" Lynda asked.

"To prevent new shipments from sailing to Japan because of the lack of hulls to carry the cargo," Stephen replied, a smirk crossing his face. "They know they can't strike at cargo aircraft. A Boeing 747 flies the great circle route over Alaska and Siberia to get to Japan, well beyond the altitude of their own air defence suites and air groups. They have to concentrate on ships to choke Japan off. Since they know our shipgirls, the American shipgirls and Japan's kanmusu will fight like wolves to make sure a convoy gets through, it's more economical to hit such ships when they're on the homeward leg of their journey."

"Hoping to hit them when they're sloppy," Russell Willis noted from the pilot's position; Stephen sat in the co-pilot's seat. Of course, the Borealis was flying itself; while not possessing a true AI to manage its many systems, the aircraft resembling a swept-wing version of the Boeing YC-14 tactical
transport prototype could manage itself when the auto-pilot systems were turned on. Which was
downright convenient for the members of 33 CSWU: Lynda was the only rated pilot of the group,
while Maria was a Navy intelligence officer, Stephen a Navy marine systems engineer and Russell
an Air Force construction engineer.

"That's what I'd do," Stephen noted. "I can see why many are now believing there's some sort of
human-like intelligence driving these things. It has to be more than just the spiritual echoes of the
memories of all the sailors lost at sea during the world wars that's making the Abyssals lash out like
this."

"Pity Maria can't scan them," Lynda muttered from her seat in the crew lounge, crossing her arms in
frustration. "We could have solved this ages ago!"

"That's why we need a live capture, Captain," Stephen noted. "We can't depend on Lorrie since her
powers are like Miss Negako's; they can't work as well over water. Sasha's running the patrol over
the Atlantic with Yukiko. Ursula's too busy shoring up the magical defences on the coastlines. And
Jim can't fly."

"So get me a damned Legion flight ring, Steph!" a voice then echoed over the communications link
with the team's field headquarters site in Saskatchewan.

"I'm still working on it!" the technical guru of the Alliance promised the team's legal officer, Captain
James Graham, another Hamilton native. "Much that I can do a lot on the fly, Jim, I'm not
Montgomery Scott!"

Roaring laughter filled the Borealis. "Maria, have Lynda take Liz and me down with her," a new
voice then spoke up as Lieutenant James Woodson came up to join them, followed by Sub-
Lieutenant Elizabeth Hampshire.

"I can't fight if I'm carrying you two," the pilot from England protested.

"Just put us down so I can form an ice ship for Jim and I to stand on," Elizabeth suggested, her hazel
eyes flashing in anticipation. "I can actually freeze the water all the way to paralyzing them, Jim can
sweep in to wreck them with his mega-punch and you can make the snatch of the carrier there."

"Liz, you've never created an ice field THAT big!" Stephen warned.
The wavy brown-haired native of Oakville near Toronto — she was one of the trained nurses in the Alliance alongside Maria's twin sister Lynn — smirked as she tried not to roll her eyes at her friend's concern. "I've practised."

"She has," Maria cut in. Saying that so bluntly didn't provoke a reaction with the others; all the members of the Alliance shared a subconscious psionic link with their leader since it made tactical commands in the field easy.

"Maybe I should go down," Russell then noted.

The others blinked, then Lynda moaned. "I'm a bloody bus driver!" the CF-188 Hornet pilot — she was normally part of 425e Escadron d'Appui Tactique in Bagotville northeast of Québec City — muttered as she shook her head...

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**Twenty-five kilometres below...**

"You sure there's something up there, Wasp?"

"I'm sure of it," the last treaty carrier of the United States mused as she held her M1 Garand close. "Aircraft at high altitude. High as those SR-71 Blackbirds I've heard so much about can fly. But it's the size of a C-17..."

Hearing that, O'Brien scowled as she tried to scan up with her own radar set. "Yeah, it's huge," the Simms-class destroyer who had answered the call to duty at the same time Wasp did muttered. "What the hell is it, anyway?"

"One of the secret airplanes."

Both American shipgirls blinked as Kirkland Lake shifted back to be in talking distance of the carrier and the destroyer. "'Secret airplane'?” Wasp asked.

"Some type of spec ops bird that always shows up watching over convoys on both coasts," the River-class adopted Ontarian noted. "Can't tell you the model type; hell, it's hard to get the serial
number of the thing when it's that far up. They show up and disappear from time to time. Any calls up to them don't get answers; they always operate under EMCON. Some of us have seen Abyssals get wiped out in cartload lots at a far distance whenever one of those things show up. Like what our Japanese friends always say about the Ryūseizen..."

"WAIT! Something's launching from it!"

The others tensed on hearing Vancouver's warning shout, then focused their radar scans straight up. "Three...! No, four people coming down!" Kirkland Lake called out. "Shit, are they doing some sort of HAHO or HALO jump...?!"

"No! Whoever is in the centre of the mass if FLYING!" Vancouver snapped.

"WHAT?!" the other shipgirls hearing this cried out...

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**Eta-jima, the carrier launch range, that moment...**

"Teitoku!"

Heather Thompkins perked on hearing that shout. "What is it?"

Nagato ran over, thrusting an iPad into the Canadian admiral's hands. "Flash traffic from Capilano-san!" the battleship announced; she had just got the warning signal relayed to her from Ōyodo in the base headquarters complex. "Unknown aircraft, possibly Canadian, spotted now flying over Convoy TVS-47, now 270 nautical miles west of the entrance to the Strait of Juan de Fuca! Three, possibly four, people just jumped from that aircraft at an altitude of twenty-five kilometres, descending to a position astern of Wasp-san." She tapped a control on the screen to show a graphic for the Canadian to see.

Heather hummed as people hushed while Umezu Saburō and James Vance both watched from either side of their new commander-in-chief. Pulling up her own iPad, the native of Québec City tapped controls to get into one of her personal files, then she smirked before opening a channel link. "Spitfire to Warlock."
"Warlock here," a gruff man's voice called back.

"State the Alliance's intentions."

"Telepath here. We're on a search-and-capture mission at this time, Spitfire," a demure woman then answered, making the other people there gape on hearing such an audacious plan while many of the shipgirls began to hiss to each other about how that could be done. "Morning Glory, Swiftsure, Frostfire and Crackerjack just egressed from our CY-199 to trap the enemy carrier force now west of TVS-47's and Group C-2's current position. Will seek to capture the carrier alive for interrogation and examination by myself and Warlock as soon as we return to Seventeen Det. Other units will be disposed of; if we can, we'll capture them." An amused chuckle echoed over the satellite link, which told Heather the signal encoding Stephen Caldwell long ago devised for use by Canada's fighting forces in this conflict just clicked in. "Jimmy's in the mood to smash things and Russ hasn't pranked anyone in three days, Miss Thomas."

As the naval officers surrounding the magical member of the War Hawks blinked in confusion, Heather chuckled. "I assume Lynda's doing the capture, Maria."

"Affirmative. Liz will freeze the enemy formation in place."

Heather nodded. "Commander Kennisson, you're 'go mission'."

She could sense the secret smile on the Hamilton native's face on saying that. Even if none of Canada's specialized warfare units were under the admiral's operational control, there was the still-strong teacher-student bond formed between the twenty-three future members of 33 CSWU with their four predecessors in 1 CSWU when Dean Raeburn and her people learned of the group of powerful teenage metahumans more than a decade before. Remembering the torrents of mental pain Maria Kennisson felt when she had been swamped by constant psionic "tsunami" surging at her via the thoughts of thousands of people after her powers awoke while she was a freshman at Centennial Secondary School in Welland near Niagara Falls, Heather still marvelled at the incredible resilience she showed after she got some training to use her abilities. "Aye-aye, Admiral!"

"They're specialized warfare fighters, aren't they?"

That was Umezu's former medical officer, Captain Momoi Sachiko. "'Specialized warfare'...?!" Oguri Kōhei began...then his own eyes went wide. "Thompkins-taishō! You mean to say that you've always had metahuman fighters...?!!"
"Always on standby in case the worst happened, Captain," Heather calmly cut the younger man off. "Just like what might have happened last year if things didn't go so well for Mister Moroboshi." As the others listening to this all grimaced, she sighed. "Miss Nagato, let's let everyone on the base see this. It'll do a lot for morale, just as much as Miss Chennalton's arrival did."

The battleship blinked, then nodded. "Hai, Teitoku!"

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**London, Bushy Park in Teddington, that moment (local time: An hour before breakfast)...

"Didn't get you up too early, Minister?"

Cornelius Fudge laughed as he shook Dean Raeburn's hand. "Had to stay up last night thanks to what happened at Tinworth Beach, Lad-..." He caught himself. "Forgive me, General. I forgot you're not in the Canadian Wizengamot."

"It's alright," the native of Queenston stated as he waved the British minister for magic to a nearby chair set up in the command tent being used by NATO's new Commander, Allied Joint Force Command for Shipgirls. Accompanying Cornelius were Amelia Bones, Arthur Weasley and Albus Dumbledore, not to mention Lucius Malfoy and Severus Snape. Of course, the presence of the Dark Marks on the forearms of the Hogwarts potions master and his former house senior couldn't escape the attention of Earth's Jewel Warrior. Fortunately for both of them, Dean had been thoroughly briefed by her current operational aide de camp about the difference between the murderous opportunists who had flooded Tom Riddle's ranks in the past and those who followed the true Slytherin creed of taking in all options before choosing a side. Atop that, given how much both Lucius and Severus cared for one of the kids who nearly got killed hours before...!

"It's an honest mistake people have made about me," Dean added as one of the junior Canadian servicemen — Albus' and Amelia's sharp eyes had quickly spotted the RCF regimental flash on the corporal's rank slip-ons — served tea. "I was happy to help the Ministry of Magical Affairs after I became my Jewel's Host in '89. By this, the British magicals all knew, the nigh-immortal Ontarian meant the year 1889. "The number of non-magical metas on Earth at the time could be counted on one's hand with fingers to spare, so what else could I do?" She lit her first cigar of the day; fortunately for those concerned with second-hand smoke, the leader of the War Hawks always used her Jewel to disintegrate fumes she exhaled before someone could inhale them. "But when the first real mystery men began to arise in America and Europe in the late '30s, I realized that while we all share certain traits, we do come from very different cultures."

"It's fortunate that you did understand that all along, General," Severus noted. He had also spotted
the epaulette flash of the Royal Canadian Foresters among several of the people in this tent city set up near where Dwight D. Eisenhower erected SHAEF headquarters close to Sandy Lane at the north end of the beautiful royal park close to the River Thames. Then again, working with members of Canada's elite magical militia would be natural to the woman; before Dean became the student of the Immortal Master in the 1920s, she was seen as a "special" reserve member of the Foresters, assigned to what later came to be called "S" Commando based in Saskatchewan. Perhaps that is what persuaded her to join the 10th Saskatchewan Cavalry when the Second World War started, he mused as he considered that fact about his host. The general is more Saskatchewanian than Ontarian or British Columbian. "As did your friends. It has done the world on both sides of the security divide many favours."

"It's a pity your team wasn't called in sooner," Amelia added. "Maybe the lives that were lost, mug-..." She caught herself, remembering that Canadians didn't care for terms like "muggle" or "no-maj". "I mean normal..." As Dean smirked, she added, "...and magical alike...well, all would be alive now."

"Well, that's for the historians to determine how many years in the future from now," the general stated. "Then again, it wasn't fair either to me or to the people of the world that I'd step into the role of 'mystery man' after the guns fell silent in '45. I can't have people depend on me being there to save them from their own stupidity; it wouldn't be fair to me. Even with my power, I can't be everywhere at once...and making people solely dependant on me to keep them safe and happy would destroy them in the end. Atop that, I'm a soldier; killing people's my stock in trade. In wartime, that's expected...but not in peacetime. Atop that, I've never hidden my identity as all of the Liberty Legion and the Soldiers of Freedom did. Yes, I didn't have living relatives, but I did have many friends; I wouldn't trust myself whatsoever if someone tried to hurt my friends." She sighed. "I can understand why the government in Ottawa was so hesitant about hauling us into this mess even after the blood spilled at Sabre Island and Iō-tō. Escalation is always something to keep in mind when metahumans come into play." She nodded to Albus. "He saw that."

"Indeed I did," the headmaster of Hogwarts mused. "Much that I hoped — and I think we all can say that — the fighting wouldn't have gone as far as it has, now that things have become dire and the Abyssals appear to not want to stop their attacks on people worldwide, everything must be done to suppress them."

"If only we could capture one of them," Arthur stated. "Study it. I know there are the very young ones like Miss Sealtainn who never developed any sort of magical or metahuman link to older Abyssals and gained the drive to kill people. Not to mention the odd adult Abyssal cut off by magical teams setting up guard wards on the shorelines, like that one Wo-class aircraft carrier Lady Haruna befriended earlier this year. We still don't understand much about them. Where did they come from? Why are they so angry at humans and other species? I know that Abyssals have attacked goblin treasure expeditions; it was a miracle my eldest son wasn't hurt that one time in Egypt."

"Well..."
"Spitfire to Ladyhawke."

Dean blinked as the others perked in surprise. "Heather, Stephen made sure our comm links are more secure than all the gold in bloody Fort Knox!" she snapped as she looked over her shoulder at one large flat-screen television hanging off the support bar at the southern end of the tent. It now displayed her former subordinate and now operational superior currently in a kyūdō dōjō, she now flanked by the commander of American naval forces in Japan and the former commanding officer of the Mirai. "What's with all the damned code-names?"

"Had to get you into the mood," Heather teased back. "Hello, everyone!"

"Good to see you again, Madame Supreme Mugwump," Cornelius greeted for them all. "It appears to be a nice day in Japan. Is there something wrong?"

"Not really, Minister," Albus' predecessor as leader of the International Confederation of Wizards replied. "I'm just relaying some interesting news for Dean here." She then gazed on her old commanding officer. "It appears that certain of our students from over a decade ago are doing something silly."

Dean blinked. "Why am I thinking of Russ?"

"Is the general abusing his chief engineer?!" a strange voice teased over what sounded like air whistling past his mouth at very fast speeds.

A new window appeared on the screen, revealing four people, with a woman and two men hugging another woman from both sides and the back...and all of them were now in what appeared to be free fall somewhere in the sky in the middle of the night; the low-light cameras in use these days made their faces as clear to the magicals as if it was brightest noon. All were now dressed in the white-and-grey Arctic Warfare pattern of Canada's CADPAT digital camouflage uniform system, though their clothes were skintight bodysuits in lieu of standard combat uniforms. The woman in the middle had blue air force captain's rank on her shoulders above the squadron title 425e ESC. The blond man hugging her from behind — seeing the anticipatory grin on that fellow's face, Arthur was reminded immediately of his twin sons Fred and George — was also a captain in Canada's junior armed service, bearing the branch title CME. The woman to the pilot's right was a Navy sub-lieutenant bearing the unit flash 15 FD AMB. And the other blond man to the pilot's left was an Army lieutenant with the regimental shoulder title 56 RCA. "You're ONE of my engineers, Captain!" Dean snapped back. Albus was quick to see the amused sparkle in the general's blue eyes as she said that. "What the hell are you doing imitating the Sky Hawks?!"
"We're going Abyssal hunting," the pilot in the middle replied over the whistle of air passing by as they dropped down at terminal velocity, she surprising Dean's guests by her East Midlands accent. "I'm needing some danger pay in this one, Dean. I didn't ask to be a bloody air taxi for these three!"

"You still love us, Lynda!" the army lieutenant called out.

Dean snorted. "What's happening?"

"Diving on an enemy formation that's about to surface near a convoy three hundred nautical from Juan de Fuca," the woman to the pilot's right declared.

"Actually, they just surfaced!" a new voice then cut in.

"Show me, Stephen!" Dean ordered.

"Aye, ma'am!"

A third window appeared, revealing a sea cloaked in near-midnight black even if it was displaying a light-enhanced view of the scene...but with many beings having just surged up from below, revealing a Wo-class carrier, four Ri-class heavy cruisers, two Chi-class torpedo cruisers and two squadrons' worth of destroyers. Target icons to both sides of the formation indicated that there were also sub-surface threats in the area. Seeing that made Dean gape; even if she wasn't a naval officer by training, she could tell that was just TOO big of a force to deploy against one single convoy. "What the hell...?" she hissed. "What's the size of the convoy heading into Vancouver and Seattle, Stephen?"

"Sixteen container ships: Six ULCVs, ten New Panamax size," came the response. "Total cargo capacity of all is just over a hundred and ninety thousand TEUs combined. Atop that, we've got four VLCCs with a combined cargo capacity of 880,000 tonnes of fuel oil and ten Valemax-class freighters with a combined capacity of 3,200,000 tonnes of dry goods and other raw materials. If they get sunk, that's going to lower the total supplies North America can send to Japan by sixteen percent. It'll take more than two years to build replacements."

"TEU"? Lucius asked, his mind reeling at the numbers quoted. While he found it often hard to emotionally accept the sheer scale of what muggles could do, he had to admit that when they built grand, they built VERY grand indeed!
"'Twenty-foot equivalent unit,'" Stephen Caldwell — as Albus now recognized — translated. "Think of a rectangular box twenty feet long, eight feet wide and eight-and-a-half feet tall. The volume inside the box is one TEU. The total amount the ULCVs — that term means 'ultra large container vessel' — in this convoy can carry is equal to TEN times that of the internal volume of Hogwarts Castle itself, including all the dimensionally displaced rooms."

That made the Hogwarts alumni gape in shock, even Albus. "Mister Caldwell, how on Earth did you determine that?" the headmaster then asked.

A morbid chuckle responded. "I taught them all how to stealthily enter the school when they were enjoying their winter term of their graduate year, Albus. We disguised it as a skiing trip to Kissing Bridge near Buffalo," Martin Larsden explained. Dean was quick to note that her team sniper had just joined into the mass video-chat, as did Jessica Dover. Atop that, there was a big crowd of shipgirls listening in. "This would have been when Lord Malfoy there was in his fourth year. Stephen, didn't you report someone playing a terrible prank inside the Slytherin girls' dorms around that time you went in there?"

"I remember that!" Russell Willis then stated. Seeing the resident prankster of the Heroes Alliance of Canada suddenly scowl made Albus gape in shock as he recalled what the team's magical advisor, Sub-Lieutenant Larry Brigham, once told him about the man; the native of Windsor was not known to get angry over ANYTHING! "It would have been a mass 'pink party' by the seniors there, forced all over the junior girls from freshman year up. Steph and I got together to make those idiots understand one does NOT do that to such pretty ladies!"


That made Lucius turn stark-white as he recalled what his future wife had told him about what happened. As Severus gave him a knowing look, the current lord of Clan Malfoy of Avebury took a deep breath. "Master Hunter Larsden, Lady Raeburn, please accept my thanks for your students' actions! My future wife and her sisters would have been three of the victims of that horrid event!"

"Does your group interact with 'W' Division or the Foresters, Mister Caldwell?" Amelia then asked. "Even if it is many years later..."

"We can get meson memory crystals to you as soon as possible, Madame Bones," Stephen assured her. "In the meantime, Liz, I think you're low enough!"
"Right!" the sub-lieutenant to the pilot's right — Elizabeth Hampshire, Albus then recognized, his heart aching at the idea of a NURSE being involved in a fight against Abyssals even if her cryokinetic abilities could help freeze things in place for Lynda Warbis, Russell Willis and James Woodson to use to destroy the enemy — called out as silvery energy formed around her arms...

West of the Strait of Juan de Fuca...

Smirking in delight and anticipation, the Wo-class fleet carrier now commanding a powerful task force of heavy and light cruisers, destroyers and submarines could only lick her lips in expectation of being able to sink a big convoy of defenceless merchant ships before they could get to the safety of the Strait of Georgia and Puget Sound to reload their holds with new cargo for the damned Nips across the Pacific. Driven constantly by the memories of sailors who had been burned to death when the slant-eyed bastards began using kamikaze tactics to stay in World War Two after losing a good chunk of their fleet at Leyte and the Marianas, she found it totally reprehensible that the citizens of the Land of the Free would actually want to HELP the Japs whose ancestors had murdered thousands in their sleep at Pearl Harbour, not to mention slaughter so many more across Asia to create their "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere"!

Thinking on that, she then recalled the early years of the current war. The thrill she and her group of cruisers, destroyers and submarines felt when they roamed the whole northern Pacific virtually at will, swiping it clean of enemy shipping while surface bombardment groups surged in to destroy villages in Japan and force the stupid natives to heel to their betters. The outrage they soon felt on seeing American and Canadian warships jumping in to defend the slant-eyed monkeys, necessitating the total destruction of the Pacific Fleets of the Union and the Dominion at places like Iō-tō. The frustrations stemming from dealing with magical policing forces of many nations, who gladly did their best to shield coastal towns and ports from attacks, not to mention try to jam inter-fleet communications to disorientate Abyssal forces. The grim, ugly necessity of denying the traitorous natives of North America any chance to rebuild their fleets and surge out anew; much that it hurt them to fire on people who gladly flew the Stars and Stripes, the carrier and her friends had long agreed it had to be done to make the Nips finally submit. Then the shock and horror of confronting the shipgirls, the living spirits of Jap warships brought back into human form that surged out to defend their homeland.

Then the damned Canadians got onto the shipgirl bandwagon...!

What was worse, the maple fudge-loving hockey fanatics didn't play FAIR!

It was bad enough to deal with determined Nip shipgirls prepared to sacrifice all to save their homeland and force the Abyssals back from their shores.
It got a million times worse when reborn Flower-class corvettes and Bangor-class minesweepers appeared mere weeks after the Kongō sisters returned...

All packing 57 millimetre guns that pumped out shots at 200 rounds per minute...

That didn't mention their six barrel 30 millimetre Gatling guns that could crank out a HUNDRED ROUNDS a SECOND to bring down aircraft...

And there were those Mach 4 missiles that could hit from THIRTY miles out...

To say anything of their using torpedoes that NEVER failed...

Then, when the River-class frigates came back with those anti-ship missiles of theirs that could reach out and sink someone from SIXTY miles away...

The Abyssals certainly couldn't ignore those damned magical staffs escort group leaders had available to use when they nearly got swamped...!

Didn't those lunatics in Canada understand ANYTHING?!

Before she could send her night fighters out to begin the attack on the convoy, the carrier blinked on seeing something silvery pour DOWN from the clear skies overhead to touch the calm seas dead ahead of her bow, creating something as tall as the highest mountain in the Rockies and as slender as a fragile needle of hay. Focusing her optics and radar on what had just appeared before her — it certainly didn't match anything known about what magicals in North America could do — she hissed on seeing that the construct was now plunging into the ocean dead ahead of her formation. As the destroyers all surged ahead to determine what it was, the carrier sent out signals to her cruisers...

**KRUNCH!**

In the blink of the proverbial eye, said carrier was now beached face-first on a sea of ICE many metres thick, her hull ringing with pain. As her own damage control faeries began an examination of her hull, she looked up, grateful her flight deck hadn't been twisted from the impact so she could launch...
Eh?

What was THAT?!

As the others in her formation moaned while they tried to pick themselves off the ice that appeared out of NOWHERE to beach them all, the circular walls of what appeared to be a stadium of some sort seemed to GROW out of the endless fields of frozen water. That made the dark sea spirits hiss out while the carrier slowly staggered back to an even keel, spitting out curses in her language at the massive intelligence SNAFU she just encountered. After all the years of scouring the seven seas to learn all its secrets, to have this...

...huh?!

"Okay, ladies! We don't have all night, you know!"

What the hell was some MAN doing standing at the gate leading into the stadium?

Especially dressed in a MATADOR'S uniform from Spain of all places?!

Complete with a long RED CAPE to boot, held off to one side!

As the carrier tried to figure out what was going on here, her cruiser escorts howled as they charged forward, weapons portals snapping at the bit to get at this strange human who was butting in the way of their sacred duty. As one of the Chi-class ships rapidly closed the range, the carrier blinked in shock as the man — who was quite handsome as humans came, with blond hair cut military short and sparkling blue eyes — just STOOD there, as calm as a cucumber...

As the torpedo cruiser got into point-blank firing range of her main guns, the "matador" smirked as he swept the cape clear...

...to reveal a beefier blond man with dark grey eyes, dressed in a form-fitting uniform that showed off all those gorgeous muscles...
She then gape on seeing the newcomer raise his right fist.

A GLOWING right fist!

KA-
**BOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOM...**

The carrier screamed as the whole area rang with the explosion of supercharged mesonium causing the poor cruiser's magazines to go up like a Roman candle!

As the other Abyssals croaked in horror at the sight of one of their own so easily turned into ashes while said remains were blasted out to sea in what appeared to be a torrent of lava, the "matador" smirked as his clothes morphed into an Arctic-pattern camouflage uniform matching his friend's. As his friend whooped after he wrecked a cruiser with the metaphysical mass of *six thousand tonnes* with ONE BLOW, the other pulled up his hands, deliberately cracking his knuckles as his smile turned into something that was totally evil.

"To paraphrase the great Mister Marx..."

He then crouched himself as his whole body began to glow.

"...'Of course you know, this means *war*."

The carrier screamed out as both men charged at the Abyssals...

__________________________________________

**Eta-jima, by the dockyard, that moment...**

"Poi...!"

"Nanodesu...!"
"Kuma...!"

"Bóže moj...!"

"Lieber Gott...!"

"Madre di Dio...!"

"Holy shit...!"

"What the hell ARE they?!"

"Four members of the 33rd Canadian Specialized Warfare Unit."

The mass of destroyers and cruisers having gathered ashore to watch what was happening on the other side of the Pacific via a specially-augmented iPad that Terra Nova carried with her all turned to gape in shock at Moroboshi Negako, who was now seated beside a calm Martin Larsden. "The Thirty-third...?" Tenryū exclaimed. "You mean to say that all this time, the Canadians...!"

"Regardless of the fact that metahumans as a whole decided to no longer behave as 'mystery men' in emulation of what had been depicted in North American comics in that time period after the Second World War ended, new metahumans continued to arise around the world," the ninjutsu grandmaster calmly stated. "Because of that, Deannette, Martin, Heather and Jessica created a private 'specialized warfare school' to help people such as Lynda, Elizabeth, James and Russell master their abilities." As Martin gaped in surprise on noting that the ninjutsu grandmaster knew of the identities of the four young metahumans now fighting the Abyssals off Vancouver Island, Negako added, "The price one was asked to pay to gain the right to endure such training was that those who went to this school were made to join the armed forces or national police agencies of their home nations after they graduated." As the shipgirls gaped, she nodded. "Even people from nations allied to the Soviet Union were allowed to travel to the Raeburn mansion at Clayhurst near Fort Saint John to learn how to use their abilities. That school is still in operation to this day; with the high levels of mesonium in Earth's biosphere, the coming of more metahumans is a certainty. Thanks to the signing of the International Specialized Warfare Treaty of 1956, Deannette's school gave the leaders of nations worldwide a sense that they could prevent a new 'metahuman arms race' from starting."

"No more Übermenschen," Max Schultz declared.
"Or the Black Dragon Society," Tatsuta hissed as she hugged herself.

"Indeed. It also effectively established a metahuman version of the 'mutually assured destruction' concept that became strategic policy in the United States and the Soviet Union when intercontinental ballistic missiles were developed."

"The 'secret airplanes'...!"

That was a wide-eyed Chilliwack. "Indeed, Miss Chilliwack," Martin stated. "The aircraft you and your friends know of is designated the CY-199 Borealis. It's a space-capable transport aircraft that can serve as a base ship for any specialized warfare unit that deploys in support of national or allied forces. The 33rd Unit's technical officer, Stephen Caldwell, was its designer."

"Commander Caldwell?!"

That was a wide-eyed Terra Nova. "Nova-chan, you know him?!!" Fubuki asked.

"Yeah!" the adopted Newfoundlander affirmed. "He's the chief weapons designer at the ammunition depot in Dundurn! He's the one who's help us adjust to all the modern gear we're shipping! He's the one who forged the new FN C1A1 rifles Bonnie, Maggie and Warrior carry! He even helped Nipigon and I design your Mark IV upgrades!" As the others all gaped, she shook her head. "Why...??!"

"Do you wish to end this war, Miss Nova?" the police commissioner asked.

"Of course!" Nova snapped.

"And the rest of you?!" he then demanded of the others.

"HAI!"/"JA!"/"SÌ!"/"YEŠŚIR!" the other shipgirls all roared.

Martin nodded. "Now watch closely..."
To Be Continued...

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**WRITER'S NOTES**

1) Translation list: **Etajima-wan** — Eta-jima Bay; **Hisako-yama** — Mount Hisako; **Shōsa** — Army major, Navy lieutenant commander, Air Force squadron leader (NATO rank code OF-3); **Gosho** — Literally "great place", this is the name bestowed to the Imperial Palace in Kyōto (the palace in Tōkyō is called Kōkyo ["Imperial Residence"]; **Rhabdophobic** — Adjective of rhabdophobia, my term to indicate a fear of magicals (especially wand-using magicals) by normals (it can also be called mageiophobia); **Tōkaidō** — East Sea Route; **Shin-kansen** — New Trunk Line; **-ku** — Name suffix for a large city ward; **Quttinirpaaq** — Top of the World; **Trójka** — Threesome; **425e Escadron d'Appui Tactique** — 425th Tactical Fighter Squadron (note "appui" often means "support" when used to translate other terms); **EMCON** — Emissions Control (term for total electronic silence from a warship, even from scanner systems or communications systems); **HAHO** — High Altitude, High Opening (term used for high altitude parachute drops where the chute is deployed shortly after leaving the aircraft); **HALO** — High Altitude, Low Opening (term used for high altitude drops where the chute isn’t deployed until the jumper is close to the ground); **CADPAT** — Canadian Disruptive Pattern (the current model camouflage scheme used in the Canadian Armed Forces for personnel out in the field); **VLCC** — Very Large Crude Carrier; **Madre di Dio** — Mother of God.

2) The **CD** is the Canadian Forces Decoration, the long-term service award of the Canadian military. To qualify for one, one must have served in either regular or active reserve capacity for a minimum of 12 years without spending time in detention. A bar is added to the award for every subsequent 10 years of service in the wake of the awarding of the original medal. When one is in the Supplementary Reserve — in effect, being retired from active or reserve duty but eligible to be recalled if required — one doesn’t earn time for the CD.

3) The different types of FAL rifle used by Canada and constructed by Canadian Arsenals Limited in the Toronto neighbourhood of Long Branch during the Cold War: The **C1A1** was the basic infantry sidearm with 20 round magazine and select fire capability while the **C2A1** was the squad automatic weapon with bipod, 30 round magazine, full automatic fire and heavier barrel to withstand the heat of so many shots being used. The **C1D** was a C1A1 with automatic fire capability and 20 round magazine meant to be used by naval boarding parties.

4) In Royal Canadian Navy service during the late 1950s, the McDonnell F2H Banshee fighter was not given a "CF" model code. All military aircraft in service with Canada were switched to a three-
digit model code system in the 1970s; this is the reason the McDonnell-Douglas F/A-18 Hornet and the Boeing C-17 Globemaster III are designed "CF-188" and "CC-177" in Canada respectively.

5) A "training film" is military slang for an adult pornographic film.

6) The 33rd Canadian Specialized Warfare Unit (33 CSWU)/Heroes Alliance of Canada were first introduced en masse in my story *Children of the Tensei*. This is a team of military metahumans that I created in the 1980s as a sort of answer to such comic book heroes as the Justice League of America or the Avengers. More information will follow in the narrative in future parts.

As an aside, the Liberty Legion and the Soldiers of Freedom would be the local equivalents to DC Comics’ All-Star Squadron and Marvel's Invaders.

7) The Canadian unit short-titles worn by members of 33 CSWU:

**425e ESC** is short for the 425e (Alouette) Escadron d'Appui Tactique, a fighter squadron based (as noted above) in Bagotville, located on the south shore of the Rivière Saguenay in the city of Saguenay northeast of Québec City and west of Tadoussac. Captain Lynda Warbis (*Morning Glory*) is a flight lead in the Alouette Squadron when she's not on callout with 33 CSWU.

**CME** are the Canadian Military Engineers, Canada's military branch who employ all field engineers and construction engineers. Since Captain Russell Willis (*Swingshift*) isn't part of the Army, he cannot address himself as a member of the Corps of Royal Canadian Engineers (RCE), which is the land wing of the CME.

**15 FD AMB** is 15 Field Ambulance, the reserve unit of the Royal Canadian Medical Service (RCMS) in Edmonton. Even if this is traditionally an Army unit — units of the RCMS were amalgamated into a separate formation, the Canadian Forces Health Services Group (CF HSVC GP), in the 1990s — members of the Air Force and Navy can serve in field ambulances, as witness Sub-Lieutenant Elizabeth Hampshire (*Frostfire*). As an aside, a Sub-Lieutenant (SLt) is the equal of an army lieutenant and has the NATO rank code of OF-1; the equivalent United States Navy rank is Lieutenant, Junior Grade (Lt JG).

**56 RCA** is the 56th Field Artillery Regiment, Royal Canadian Artillery, which is a reserve artillery regiment now assigned to 32 Canadian Brigade Group (32 CBG), the Army formation composed of units in Toronto and Niagara. Regimental headquarters is in Brantford west of Niagara, with batteries based in Simcoe (now part of Norfolk County) south of Brantford and in Saint
Catharines northwest of Niagara Falls. Normally, Lieutenant James Woodson (Crackerjack) is the battery captain (BK) of 10 Field Artillery Battery in Saint Catharines; in that situation, he effectively serves as the battery's executive officer.

As an aside, Lieutenant Commander Maria Kennisson (Telepath) and Lieutenant Commander Stephen Caldwell (Warlock) would wear the basic CANADA national shoulder flash in gold on their epaulettes; personnel in the Royal Canadian Navy do not wear individual unit tags on their epaulette slip-ons unless they’re in combat uniforms and are assigned to Army or Air Force field units. The same applies to Sub-Lieutenant Larry Brigham (Galaxy). When he is not a teacher at the Institute of Sorcery and Magic (ISM) on the Sibley Peninsula jutting into Lake Superior or on callout with his friends in the Alliance, he serves as a maritime surface and sub-surface (MARS) officer at HMCS Griffon in Thunder Bay; that is the naval reserve division for northwest Ontario.

Other members of the Heroes Alliance mentioned here are Captain Lorrie Malenko (Skyfire) (an artillery officer), Captain Sasha Spencer (Polaris) (an armour officer affiliated with Canada's senior armoured regiment, the Royal Canadian Dragoons [RCD]), Captain James Graham (Nickelodeon) (a legal officer), Lieutenant (Navy) Ursula Patton (Thunderbird) (a MARS officer), Maria’s twin sister Lieutenant (Navy) Lynn Kennisson (Psimold) (a nursing officer) and Lieutenant Aihoshi Yukiko (Sunbird) (a military police officer).

8) With the construction of new locks and deeper channels for the Panama Canal, the New Panamax standard for ship sizes was introduced. Vessels rated as such must be able to fit into the new locks built for the canal starting in 2006. The dimensions of the new locks are 427 x 55 x 18.3 metres (1400.92 x 180.45 x 18.3 feet). Ships sailing the new locks can only have a maximum above-water height of 57.91 metres (190 feet) to pass under bridges that span the canal.

As an aside, Valemax ships are very large ore carriers (VLOC) chartered or owned by the Brazilian mining and metal company Vale SA. The size of such vessels is as follows: They would have dimensions of 360 x 65 x 23 metres (1181 x 213 x 75 feet) and carry a maximum of 400,000 deadweight tonnes of cargo. Such ore carriers would be quite valuable for the amount of bauxite they can ship to Japan and Britain for the use of shipgirls there.

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