

I can't draw.

Guess what's back! So, after updating the other two Luffy fics available here on fanfic, there was a quick poll over on my patty on page that ended on the sixth. Stallion won by a landslide, something that is becoming amusingly routine.

This has been seen by Tomon, but not Hiryo. Unfortunately, he is dealing with a real life tragedy. I hope you all join me in sending your will wishes and prayers to him in this trying time.

Edit 10/6 - Hiryo has gotten this back to me! Thank him for his perseverance folks!

Chapter 40: Committing Snail Genocide

Scowling at not getting an answer via the crew's paired Den Den Mushi, Luffy set that aside for a moment, staring out over the distance towards where he could see Magellan's giant Hydra starting to form. He didn't do so in fear for his grandfather. No way was the poison user going to be any kind of threat to Garp. *Hell, the Old Fart's been holding back on me for a while, given how he mentioned being able to break Seastone. And then there's this hole. A Haki infused long-range Air pressure attack of that magnitude? Bastard Jiji.*

Nevertheless, Magellan's presence on the sixth floor was somewhat worrisome in what it implied. *The guards figured something out and were coming down here to shut Zoro at least down. And it's not like we're sneaking out here. But the more we can keep some secrets of how we've infiltrated and everything else the better.* "Sanji, Zoro, you two take the lead. I'm going to hang back for a bit. Jinbei, if you wouldn't mind covering me from above for a bit when we land? You're wide enough for me to hide behind."

Luffy had to shout to be heard over Jinbei's watery version of Geppo, but they all heard him. Zoro didn't question that, merely nodding, while looking down at his swords with a brief grimace, although Sanji raised his one visible eyebrow in surprise. Their newest companion, the Whale Shark Fishman was the first to actually put forth the question. "Might I ask why you are giving such orders? I would have assumed that having you in the lead would allow us to speed along as quickly as possible."

"Maybe, if Clay and Buggy could keep up with us." Luffy snorted cheekily as he stared ahead of them, ignoring Buggy's retort. A second later, he landed behind Jinbei, smirking a bit at Ace, who was hanging off of one of the former Shichibukai's shoulder. "Having fun there, Ace?"

Luffy was in an extremely good mood right now. Everything had gone pretty damn well thus far. Yes, there were a few issues, and breaking out was undoubtedly going to be tough, but so long as they were fast enough they might be able to break out without running into anything major. Nothing to bother a Shichibukai, Luffy or Garp anyway. *They might be able to send Kizaru*

here, that's the light guy's name I think, fast enough to make a difference. But against the four of us, he'd be overmatched pretty quick. And hell, I'd be interested to see how I'd do against him.

Ace grumbled. "This is so damn undignified. I ain't gonna be a dumbass and complain about being rescued, but couldn't you all've found some way of letting me retain some modicum of dignity?"

"Would you prefer I simply leave you here, while the rest of us clear the road ahead and then come back for you?" Jinbei joked. "Or better yet, let you try to walk on your own two feet?"

The fire logia user grumbled at that, knowing that he would be as weak as a day old kitten so long as he was in contact with the Seastone handcuffs.

"Heh, just put up with it for now until we figure out where the hell the jailers keep their keys, or, heh, use a year's worth of luck to find a sword that Zoro can use Haki with enough to make it's cutting edge strong enough to cut through them. But for now..." Luffy held up his fingers and from them small bolts of lightning flashed out, up over Jinbei and outward. It bypassed the edges of the large cistern they were standing in and the very few guards that had begun to gather on the gantries above, instead striking the small targets of the communications snails that had quickly begun to move into position to record what was going on.

Jinbei's eyes widened at that little trick as Luffy continued his explanation. "But the less they know of, or can report on anyway, the better for all of us." *In fact, if I knew how to get there from here, I'd probably just break off now and head to the communications center as fast as I could under my Umi-Sen-Ken. After all, if we can abscond with Ace entirely, there won't be any need for Hancock to turn on the World Government as openly as she would otherwise have to. We might even be able to create a trap or something. To say nothing of causing enough confusion for Makino and Brook to get Zoro's swords and get away.*

"Actually, if we get up to the second floor, I can direct us there," Buggy said, detaching one of his eyes and letting it float around them for a second as above them, Zoro and Sanji reached what would normally have been the floor of Blazing Hell, directly above the large reservoirs of previously boiling blood. Well, this one was empty at least, and the next one over was leaking now down into the hole here, but there were more than a dozen of the things.

The few remaining guards, around the hole Garp had made, charged forwards. Beyond the hole's lip, Luffy could see many of the others were fighting with the local prisoners through his Kenbunshoku. While many of the prisoners here had been subjected to Sadi-chan and her tender mercies, many had not been entirely broken, as Sanji and the others had seen when the chef accidentally started a riot in the cafeteria.

Still, Zoro was happy to see at least a few of them. "Yes! Swords!"

He charged forwards through the air, closing with one unlucky jailer who wielded a sword at him with haphazard skill, almost acting shell-shocked. Zoro's own sword came down at an angle smacking the man's sword wide, only to shatter at the touch of the other swordsman's blades. The things, he refused to call them swords, had become too brittle after Zoro had used his Haki through them during his attempts to cut Ace's handcuffs. The guard's swing had paused for a moment, and then the pirate was in the other man's guard, grabbing his wrist, breaking it, and grabbing the guard's sword out of the air before it could fall from his now-nerveless hand. "Love Cook, if you see anyone with swords, leave them to me!"

"I don't take orders from you, you National Treasure!" Sanji shouted in return as he closed with two others, kicking the swords out of their hands in such a way they flew towards Zoro.

The green haired man saw them coming, and dropped the second sword he had gotten from Ivankov's people, grabbing one of the swords Sanji had flung at him out of the air.

At that moment Buggy zoomed by aiming to slam his head into one of the other guards, one whose chin Buggy remembered, visible under the weird hoods the guards on this level used. As he sped past, the clown pirate couldn't help but notice that even the second blade from Ivankov's people looked as if it had been put through the ringer, bits and pieces of them falling off as it lay there.

Then the Bara Bara user was past and taking his revenge. "You, you with the mole on your chin! I remember you! You're the one who try to remove my nose aren't you, you flashy fuck! The boots on the other foot, now isn't it!?"

Zoro on the other hand simply kicked another guard out of his way, then slammed the flat of his sword into one prisoner, hurling him aside to glare across at Sanji. "You bastard! You aimed those at me on purpose."

"You're the one who asked for them! It's not my problem if you are too inept to catch your damn swords!" Sanji shouted, lashing out at both prisoner and guard with impunity.

Chuckling, Luffy shook his head, closing his eyes and holding up a hand, which rapidly began to develop a lightning ball in his palm. From that lightning ball, small bits of lightning flashed out and all around them over Jinbei, homing in on the remaining communications snails who were trying to make their way towards the conflict. "You don't want to have fun, Clay?"

"Don't even joke~~, Luffy-chan," Clay responded, twirling in place from where he had been dropped off by Zoro. "My wish to find Ivankov-sama has been fulfilled! Now if she wishes to stay here, who am I to gainsay her? But I would rather see the light of you know~~! Fighting like this only slows us down."

Nodding, Luffy looked over at Jinbei, gesturing to the ceiling above them. He had destroyed enough of the Den Den Video recorders now, and Sanji, Buggy and Zoro were busily devastating everyone in a position to see them. "Do you want to do the honors?" That this would allow him to see what more tricks Jinbei had was left unsaid.

Jinbei stared upwards, and held out his hand, grimacing a bit. "There isn't enough water down here any longer for this to be very easy, but...." His grimace deepened as the water began to condense in his hand, tinged with quite a bit of red from the nearby boiling blood cisterns that were made elsewhere on this floor. "Fishman Karate: Blasting Wave of a Hundred Fists!"

His hand disappeared, and Luffy smiled slightly at the sound of a machine gun going off, seeing someone else use a technique similar to the base form of the Amaguriken technique. But it was very clear that this was not the base form when blows struck the ceiling above. The fists crashed into the floor above like miniature versions of Garp's overpowered strike earlier, pummeling it, then breaking the stone into smaller chunks as it began to rain down. Luckily, as Luffy had already known, there wasn't nearly as much stone between the fourth and fifth floor. There couldn't be, since the heat that Blazing Hell gave off was part of Starvation Hell's specialty.

Since he had attacked at an angle from his current position, the debris from Jinbei's assault on the roof collapsed to the side of their current position. In fact, it came down onto several struggling guardsmen and prisoners well away from the center of the conflict around the lip of the hole Garp had made.

This caused several of them to shriek at Jinbei, at least two of them by name, their voices rising over the ongoing tumult. "Damn you, Jinbei! What is wrong with you warlords that you're always willing to sacrifice the little man huh?!"

"Yeah! If you're going to break out, the least you could do is let us try, Jinbei! I want to get out again, I want to pillage!" shouted one, pushing towards the edge of the cistern past Buggy to shout down at Jinbei, who stared up at the man stoically.

"Screw that! You can take all the plunder you want. It's been ages since I've seen a little boy's ass!" another man whooped from where he had just stabbed a guard through the back. Tossing his victim's body away, the man stood on an upper level gantry by one of the numerous cages, lifting up the guard's trident above his head. "Yes! They can't keep me in here forever! Little boys and girls of the world beware, I..."

That was as far as he got before Jinbei and Luffy's fists hit him at the same time. They hit with so much force that the man didn't just die, he literally came apart at the seams, his bones bursting out of his body like every bone had been turned into shrapnel exploding outwards, even as his body was hurled backwards in a spray of gore and bits of bone matter.

Landing on top of a cage next to where the man had stood, Luffy let a bit of his Haoshoku leak out, knocking out anyone in sight. "Right, there's something to remember. While I can't exactly agree with all the over-the-top sadism here, a lot of these prisoners deserve to be in hell," Luffy reminded everyone. "Which means from now on boys, any prisoners that get in our way are just as much a target as the guards themselves. Don't go out of your way to kill them unless they say stupid shit like this one, but I'm not going to care if we pile up the bodies."

In a place like this, Luffy's normal rules of engagement with low ranking Marines or even low ranking World Government officials did not apply. While such men and women, rare though they were, were just people following orders, Luffy had yet to see a guard in Impel Down that didn't seem to be taking sadistic pleasure in what they did, which he disapproved of mightily. He still wouldn't go out of his way to kill any of the jailers here but he certainly wasn't going to shedding tears for any that died on their way out.

Sanji nodded, and led the way upwards, but Zoro stayed behind for a moment, moving over to where Luffy stood. He was once more sniping, using his lightning powers and Kenbunshoku through the second hole in the roof that Jinbei had just made, targeting any Den Den Mushi he could find. *I don't think I could actually pick them out of the crowd before coming here, but using my sensing technique as much as I have at range has allowed me to train it to the degree that I can now. Silver linings, I suppose. Now if we could just get out of here before the Marines arrive in force, I would call it a good day. I doubt it's going to happen, but hey, a man can dream.*

He looked up from what he was doing as Zoro thrust a bushel of seven swords into his face. "And what I supposed to do with those?"

"You have that Haki-expanded space to work with. Stick them in there," Zoro ordered. "I get the feeling I'm going to need as many of them as I can get my hands on, and I only have two hands and one mouth to actually do the carrying on my own."

"So I'm a pack mule now? Funny, I could've sworn it said Captain on my door," Luffy murmured, but did as Zoro requested. "Although I might charge rent."

"You're the one that was forced to leave my swords behind remember? You owe me," Zoro growled, still very angry about that.

Luffy had to concede that, and he quickly followed up the others, with Zoro trailing behind for a second. Above, Jinbei and Sanji had dealt with a few guards, but there weren't many here. Indeed, Luffy couldn't sense any guards moving around Starvation Hell at all. That caused Luffy's eyes to narrow for a moment, before he shook himself, and looked over at Buggy and Jinbei, figuring the two of them were the most experienced there. "Do any of you know if we could get a communication signal through the rocks here without being part of the local network? I tried earlier, but we were too deep to get a response."

Both Jinbei and Buggy shook their heads, with Buggy's head actually coming off his neck and twirling in place for emphasis. "Are you an idiot?! We've still got hundreds of feet of stone between us and the surface, let alone the ocean beyond. You might be able to get a signal through from Wild Beast Hell if you are trying to communicate to one of the Sea Kings. But an actual ship, no."

When he spoke, Jinbei's tone wasn't nearly as scathing, but it was just as dismissive. "Remember that even level one is several hundred feet below the surface level where the entrance is. And the walls of this prison are so thick that even Garp would be unable to break through."

"...Jinbei, please, never say that in front of him! Gramps might think of it as a challenge. And I don't want to be here when he proves you wrong," Luffy muttered, as still more bolts of lightning came from his hands. Without anyone around, he didn't even bother with the little lie of creating a ball of lightning in his hand first, simply shooting them out directly from his fingers or forearms, though these were also meant for the prisoners on this floor, knocking them all out in their cages or those few that were moving around. "Still, your point is made. Two more floors to go, troops."

"Who are you calling a troop, you flashy ass?" Buggy growled, before pointing to one side. "If we want to make better time, we might want to start taking the actual stairs between floors. I think they're in that direction?"

"Bug-chan's right." Clay nodded, impressed with the other pirate's spatial skills even as he taunted his fellow captain, "That's toward the center of the floor, and while the floors all vary in size, they are still circular and connected by the central tower thingy... what is that called in buildings anyway?"

"No clue," everyone else answered, even Ace, although Buggy added with a strange sounding snicker, "Well, it kind of reminds me of this toddler toy. Circular blocks of wood around a central pipe of metal, with each block being larger than the one above it."

"Heh. Back on task, troops. Let's head up one more floor before we do that. Crimson Hell is going to be annoying for most of you after all so Wild Beast Hell's a good place to start using the actual elevator shaft," Luffy ordered.

This time he did the honors, disappearing for a second then reappearing up above them near the floor of the ceiling, while those below started to sweat under the heat and the intense impact of the artificial sun on this floor. Although it wasn't as hot as Blazing Hell normally was, they hadn't had to deal with it going up considering the immense hole that Garp had made between Freezing and Blazing Hell. That, and the sunlight beating from the artificial sun was nasty.

There, Luffy lashed out with a series of kicks, his body flickering into his lightning form for a moment, drawing a gasp from Jinbei, who now knew he was looking at a logia user rather than a Paramecia. "Oh my... the world is going to change from the events of this day. Far, far more than even freeing you or Garp, Ace."

"Heh. Yeah, as much as I might hate to admit it," Ace began over the rumble of debris falling and crashing to the ground nearby. "Luffy's been as strong or stronger than me for most of the time I've known him. Mix that with a logia fruit, you make the WeeGee's worst nightmare."

A few seconds later, though, as the group made their way up to the next floor, Luffy frowned. "Watch out guys." Bullets began to flash through the hole above them blindly, and he finished lamely, "They seem to have had a few guards nearby. Watch out for traps or anything else, they might have prepared their main defense there."

Those bullets were no threat to any of the people below bar perhaps Clay, although he was fast enough to dodge them at long-range, and Luffy could knock them away as he carried Clay on his back. Jinbei also simply swatted them aside, while Zoro used his blades to deflect the bullets, whereby Sanji bounced up into the air, dodging around the few bullets, and up into the next floor.

At first, as Zoro dealt with one of the Wild Beast Hell monsters, a giant hippo, the first mate thought that his captain might have become a worrywart. All around them were only beasts, charging towards the escaping pirates as they landed. The only guards were four men up on the roof of a nearby cage, and Swirly Brow had already dealt with them.

In the distance, Zoro could see a larger figure rising up over some of the jail cells that dotted the floor here, another monster of some kind.

At that point, the swordsman's perusal of the area was interrupted by a visitation of the weird.

"Spaghetti!"

"Hamburger!"

Turning, Zoro looked at the three attacking creatures, cocking his head to one side. "What are these things? They look like someone fucked a lion and somehow conceived children who have been beaten by the ugly stick."

"They're manticores, their bites can crush stone, so don't get bit!" Buggy shouted, as he turned his entire body into parts, hurling them into a large birdlike creature that had just appeared on the edge of a rooftop nearby. It squawked and fell back, but wasn't knocked

unconscious, instead nipping and clawing back at Buggy's parts, unable to hit them but doing a decent job of scattering them.

"Why are they speaking?" Sanji asked as he slammed a foot into one of the manticores, then ducked under a blow from a scorpion-like creature, although the size of a man. He smashed it into a second that had been behind it, but that second one and the first seemingly merged, the second one curling up in a way as if it had become part of the body of the second one. The now larger creature then charged forwards, all of its tiny legs working as if from a single mind.

"They have something like the intelligence of a peacock, so they can speak, but they can't really understand what they're saying. They're just parroting things back that they've heard," Buggy replied, dodging once more and pulling himself together high in the air above the cockatrice. He then brought his foot in a whirling arc on top of the creature, cursing as it merely stumbled.

Nearby, Jinbei, still carrying a complaining Ace, dealt with the sphinx as it reared up over the jail cells around the area. To the annoyance of Buggy, a single blow seemingly knocked the creature out. *Tch, is that what it means to be a power in this world? Flashy fuck, I'm so below that even now that I've got my own powers and everything! Nothing's changed in the years since Shanks and I were running around for Roger and the rest of the crazies. But... isn't that what I wanted? Yeah, it's good to float under the radar...Right?*

"And of course a lot of prisoners talk about food." Sanji nodded as that made sense to him, not noticing Buggy having a small existential crisis.

Four other manticores charged in from the other side, heading towards Luffy, and Clay, who stood over the unconscious form of another puzzle scorpion.

"Salad!"

"Steak!"

"Fried chicken!"

"Pussy!"

At that last, both Clay and Luffy's head tilted to one side as they said as one, "One of these things is not like the others."

Then they launched themselves forward. Luffy didn't even bother to use his lightning powers. Instead, most of his attention was on sending out tiny bolts of lightning towards the few Surveillance Mushi in the area, as well as feeling out what was going on elsewhere on this

level. He barely paid attention to the manticores as he danced among them, fists and feet lashing out with bone-breaking force.

Dealing with the manticores, puzzle scorpions and other beasts took the group of escapees barely a few seconds. However, as they were doing this, a sound began to percolate throughout the entirety of Wild Beast Hell. A flute of some kind playing.

None of them noticed this busy as they were with the fighting, but the moment he dealt with his last opponent, another puzzle scorpion, Buggy was able to hear the noise, and his eyes widened and alarm. "Dammit! Saldeath and the Blue Gorillas are here!"

Zoro's eyes narrowed at that, while Sanji and the others all nodded. They'd all seen the Blue Gorillas in action before in Blazing Hell. The large, vaguely humanoid creatures dressed in blue and light blue uniforms were a distinct threat to most prisoners even on Blazing Hell. They were incredibly strong even for someone of their stature, and wielding double-bladed axes. And they were also known to be almost as durable as an un-awakened Zoan.

"I know. They're setting up a defensive point around the elevator shaft. They've even got a lot of the animals bunched up with them. But that's the direction we need to go right now." The others all looked at Luffy in some surprise, and he smirked. "Think about it. Cutting Hell or whatever the first floor is called would be really annoying to fight in. Then there's the fact we don't know how long it'll take us to get out to the Everlasting Resolve. We can deal with the majority of the prison guards and everything right here."

"That's a point," Buggy agreed reluctantly. "The marines will only be allowed to enter in any numbers if they've hit the major panic button. And even then, marines on their own aren't as dangerous as marines manning their ships."

Jinbei frowned, not liking the idea of searching out conflict when they were trying to escape. But he could not say that the idea of getting some of his own karma back wasn't appealing. *And the Zoan types at least would be a threat, if they can somehow catch up to us, while we are dealing with the marine vessels outside*, he rationalized.

"Heh, a reason to cut some more of these bastards up, sounds like a great idea to me," Zoro drawled, being the first to leap up onto the top of one of the prison cells and race along. "I bet I deal with more of them than you do swirly brow!"

"You bastard, that's cheating!" Sanji shouted racing after them. "And you just turned in the wrong direction you lost child! Seriously, how can you not travel in a shitty straight line!"

Jinbei sweat dropped a bit, watching in amusement as Luffy cackled and followed after. "Are they always like this?"

“Beyond being crazy when it comes to getting stronger, my brother’s always been more than a little loopy. Stands to reason his crew would be too,” Ace mumbled into Jinbei’s back.

OOOOOOO

Magellan found himself flung backwards, rolling through the snow as he groaned in pain. Pushing himself to his feet quickly, he then dodged another punch that would have impacted his head. Instead it smashed into one of his horns, and he winced as he heard the horn crack before another blow to the side of his chest hurled him sideways. “Venom Armor,” he gasped, as his form became black and purple venom.

Another blow hammered into him, and he was hurled away, rolling through the snow, agony flaring through his head as the pain of the broken horn caught up with him. But Magellan was an experienced fighter. Ignoring the flashing lights going off in his eyes, he pushed himself to his feet and from all around his form, heads like those of a hydra formed out of his venom, charging towards his attacker, mouths gaping.

Garp seemingly stayed still for a moment, then his fists, which he had thrust into his pockets for a second, disappeared. An eye-blink later, each of the venom hydra head exploded, sending globules of venom everywhere. “Sorry Magellan, I would have tried to tank that, but your attacks are just so slow!”

The next second, Garp was in the younger man’s face, grabbing onto Magellan’s head with one large hand, and squeezing causing Magellan to gasp in pain as his skull creaked under the force of Garp’s hand, the spots in Magellan’s vision making a comeback. Blearily, Magellan noticed that Garp’s hand was covered in Busoshoku, which meant that Magellan couldn’t simply cover himself with venom and hope that the venom would do its job before he got hit. *This is going to hurt!*

From both of his arms, another venomous attack came, looking almost like the jaws of the beast as they tried to enclose Garp.

The next second Garp was gone, bouncing back and away from Magellan, releasing his grip and ducking around the poisonous jaws as they came at him, before lashing out with a kick that took Magellan straight in the chest, hurling him upwards into the air. A second later, the Chief Warden found himself pummeled by another blow that sent him back towards the hole that Inazuma had made down to Level 6.

Magellan hit the ground hard, skidding along the frozen ground for a moment, coming to a stop only when his head was laying out beyond the edge of the hole.

At this sight, those below let their thoughts be known in no uncertain terms. “Oh, hell yes! If we’re not getting out of here ourselves, at least we can get a show!”

“Magellan of all people, being taking to school by someone! The only thing that would make that sweeter would be if that fuck Garp was right next to him! Both of them getting their heads chopped off. Ah... now that’s a dream for the ages.”

Magellan growled, and slowly pushed himself over onto his side, taking in some of his venom into his mouth, chewing it for a moment. He then spat it downward, watching as a dozen large balls came out of his mouth, almost like bubbles made out of bubblegum. As they hit, each of them released condensed gas, even deadlier than the fumes his venom released normally. “Chloro Ball!”

The gas was so powerful that even those on level six could not fight it. Instead, many of them gasped and fell silent, or screamed and pulled away, holding their mouths and noses. Even those further away who hadn’t been able to see what the shouting was about stayed silent, having learned to fear Magellan’s power.

Garp allowed him to do that, standing nearby his arms crossed. Only when the shouts and shrieks from below faded away and Magellan turned back to them did Garp move.

Before Magellan could even think of protecting himself, another Busoshoku blow caught him in the stomach, hurling him away from the hole and towards the outer wall of Freezing Hell once more.

Once more Magellan proved he was extremely durable. Pushing himself to his feet, he ignored the feeling that at least two or three ribs had broken under that last blow. “Doku Gumo!”

Breathing out a massive amount of his poisonous breath, Magellan soon vanished beneath a fog-like cover of purple gas. The poisonous fog blocked him from Garp’s view, although Magellan had no doubt that as disperse as it was, the gas would fail to do anything to Garp. Normally it would weaken anyone who entered the fog area by taking away their senses on contact, but Garp knew Busoshoku. *But his Kenbunshoku is supposed to be very weak in comparison, so...*

Running to the side, Magellan kept the Gumo attack going for a few seconds, then his hands and feet all disappeared as he released tons of venom from them. It flowed around the area, hissing and burning away the snow all around them before forming into a massive hydra, one several hundred feet in length with hundreds of heads. When Garp’s air pressure attack blasted through the fog, Magellan shouted, “Venom Road!” and disappeared into the Hydra, dodging the blow as his body was carried through the venom by an internal current.

“Hah! That’s the spirit! Make me work for it!” Garp laughed, and began to launch punches at the hydra, a wide grin on his face as he did.

The hydra came apart, blowing bits of venom across two-thirds of the Freezing Hell. Only one of the blows caught Magellan, who had been in the Hydra's tail at the time. But that was enough to hurl Magellan through the air once more. A bed of venom flowed out of his back for a second, disappearing after a second.

Magellan then pulled in more of his poison fumes, his body bulking up for a second. "Doku Fugu!" he bellowed, taking the next two shots from Garp without flinching, something that caused Garp to roar in laughter again. The balls of poison that Magellan spat out at him were smacked aside, and then four more blows in quick succession hit, overwhelming the internal armor, a personalized version of Tekkai Magellan had come up with. Another kick finished the job, doubling Magellan over into a punch to the side of the head that sent him flying sideways.

Blood was pulling from his mouth joining the poison covering his body as Magellan once more pushed himself to his feet, appalled and horrified to see that Garp barely had any venom on him, let alone seemed at all bothered by his powers. "How! How are you doing this?! No use of Busoshoku should be able to save you from my fumes!"

"Is that a fancy way of saying you stink?" Garp snorted in laughter, dodging to one side as another venom ball raced past his previous position. A dozen more, each of them smaller, flashed out like pellets from a blunderbuss halting Garp in place.

That was all Magellan needed. "Against you, hah, against you Garp, I need my, hah, hah, my greatest attack! Venom Demon: Jigoku no Shinpan!"

From Magellan's body even more poison than before flowed out from every inch of his form, denser and redder than his normal venom. The venom formed into a massive version of Magellan, with arms that touched the ground, and so tall that the top of his form's head scraped the ceiling. The stone of the ceiling hissed and sizzled, almost coming apart as the venom did something to the stone, causing it to sicken or melt at the point of impact. Poisonous fumes arose from his body, so potent that dozens of prisoners scattered around Freezing Hell and even a few below gasped and collapsed, dying instantly at even the faintest touch of it.

Garp stared at this, then shook his head. "Monkey Special: Full Buso!"

Magellan watched as Garp's body suddenly became covered head to toe in Busoshoku. *But even that will not save him from Venom Demon!* His massive hands came down like miniature hills looking to pin Garp between them. "Fall, Garp the Traitor!"

"Maybe I will. Not to you though." With that, Garp charged forward, and his hands flashed to either side. The red venom nearly absorbed his blows, acting almost like rubber instead of the jello-like venom of Magellan's normal form. But even so, those large arms were pushed aside and the gas didn't slow Garp down at all.

Busoshoku essentially coated the body in armor made of the individual's willpower. The stronger the will, the better a person could use the technique. Nevertheless, it took a lot of training to take Busoshoku and push it inward, reinforcing the rest of the person's body rather than just the exterior flesh. Full Buso called for Garp filling his entire body, inside and out with Busoshoku. No one but Gol D. Roger had ever broken through the technique, and Magellan, Garp reflected, venom or no, was no Gol.

The next second, Garp's fist blasted through Magellan's Venom Demon, crashing into Magellan's head and then his stomach. Blood burst from Magellan's mouth joining his venom, and another blow followed to the head. Magellan might have been able to hold his form, but he'd already taken too many blows to the head. The last one let his attention falter, and the next second, a kick smashed him out the back of his Venom Demon form. And this time, as he rolled to a stop, he could not push himself back to his feet.

Despite winning so handily, Garp stared down at himself, at the Busoshoku covering his forearm, then slowly leaned down and wiping away the venom that had accumulated on his fist on the ground. A moment later, he slammed his hands together. A shockwave flashed out through the air from his hands, dispelling the remaining gas from Magellan's venom. Garp waited a few moments then let loose the breath he had been holding, shaking his head as his Full Buso began to fade quickly. "Damn, damn old age! I'm so much weaker these days."

Magellan groaned, now staring at Garp in something approaching horror, and Garp chuckled shaking his head. "Haha, It's true. Old age comes for us all. If you and I fought like this as I took on Chinjao, I would've finished you before you could have used that Venom Devil thing. If we fought back when all my hair was still brown, I would've beaten ya before ya could've used your Gumo attack. And if you I fought you when Roger and I were still having our feud..." Garp sighed and shook his head.

A tremor of raw fear went through Magellan at those words beyond any he had felt since he had become Chief Warden. It was often hard to remember why Garp was such a hero among the Marines. Especially for someone like Magellan, who rarely had left Impel Down in his entire life. Now he was forcefully reminded that this old man who had just basically taken him out without seeming to break a sweat was the same old man who had scoured the seas for Gold Roger, the Pirate King, the strongest man in the world then or now, his mere memory enough to keep people like Shanks, Whitebeard the other Yonko from claiming his title. Garp had fought on an even footing with him, and eventually had been the one to bring Gold Roger to justice.

"No, getting old isn't fun at all, well I suppose you can get away with more. More sleeping in public, or other little bits of fun here and there. But still, that's not exactly enough of an incentive, you know?" Garp sighed, shook his head and kicked at Magellan's arm as it tried to form into another venom attack. The Busoshoku strike coming after the air pressure of his kick broke Magellan's hand and several bones in his wrist and fingers causing him to cry out, the pain of all of his wounds finally eliciting a noise from him.

Garp allowed Magellan to groan a little bit, getting some of his faculties back from the pain of his new wounds before speaking again. "But seeing how well you'd do against someone like me wasn't the only reason I wanted to fight you, Magellan. I have a few questions I figured you might know the answer to."

"I will tell you nothing, traitor!" Magellan ground out between clenched teeth, blood flecking his teeth and dripping down from the side of his mouth to the ground, turning into reddish ice as the chill of Freezing Hell started to override the giant hole in the ceiling and the heat Magellan's venom gave off.

"It's nothing to do with your prison or anything like that, just a bit of background information," Garp wheedled. "Just tell me, and I'll even drag you over to the elevator. Maybe once my grandsons and I break out of here, someone will be along to see if they can put you back together again. Or I can just keep hitting you until you tell me. Your choice."

His eyes widening at the mention of the plural term of grandsons, Magellan thought about his options, which narrowed dramatically as Garp raised a foot above his head. Still, he shook his head slowly, the agony of the move causing his eyes to cross. "I, I won't betray the, the World Government..."

Moments later, as Garp raised his foot away from Magellan's now battered and bruised face, Magellan groaned out, "What do you want to know?"

"Where does CP0 train? Your second-in-command, he trained with them for a bit, didn't he? That's what rumors say, anyway." Garp held up a large finger, then a second one. "And second, I know that one of the Gorosei was here, about three months back. What did he want? And third, where the hell did you get those Zoan Fruits you used? You got all four of them in a single day. Where from?"

Magellan clammed up quickly at that. Both of those things were things he knew, but he refused to tell Garp anything about either.

Seeing this, Garp sighed, raising his foot again. "Gotta say I admire your courage, your common sense, not so much."

"You, you're the last one to talk of common sense..." Magellan began, before Garp's foot came down once more.

OOOOOOO

Contrary to expectations, the Blugori didn't charge the escaped prisoners. Instead, the first Blue Gorillas they saw remained beside squads of guards. There seemed to be three Blue Gorillas for every seven guard and all these guards were armed with muskets and sabers. The guards also wore the same uniform that the guards at the ingress point had, rather than the

pseudo-masochistic type of outfits the Blazing Hell guards used, and together they formed a strong defensive position near the elevator entrance to Wild Beast Hell.

Immediately these guards began to fire their muskets at Luffy and the others. The Blue Gorillas stayed in place, hefting their axes but not moving forward. Many of them also had large hammers or maces.

Those were the only ones in sight, but Luffy quickly shouted out, "There are Blue Gorilla all around us, and others too hidden in the jail cells. They're trying to ambush us."

With that, Luffy turned around, pointing. "Sanji, Buggy, Clay, handle the groups in front. I'll charge ahead of you in a second. Zoro, the Zoan types are coming up behind us. You and Jinbei deal with them. I figure, given my speed, I'm better at crowd control than either of you."

I suppose I could use Haoshoku, but Zoro and Sanji need some outlet for their frustrations of being captured and the whole... sword thing. I'm still a little guilty about that, so if this makes him feel better and take out the Zoans and the rest so they can't crawl up our ass later when we get to the surface, I'm all for it. "I'll take Ace too, Jinbei."

Jinbei might have objected to that if not for the sight of Sadi-chan and the three remaining animal types, the minotaur, the koala and zebra leaping forward. The three awakened Zoans were armed with massive cleavers and spears. Sadi-chan was wearing what looked like a combat version of her normal 'uniform' such as it was. Armor plates were visible on her chest, shoulders and legs, covering up the majority of the skin her normal pink devil girl outfit certainly had not. Her whip had also been replaced with a long metal whip of some kind, the edges of which glowed as she flicked it towards Zoro, who was closest to them from where they had charged out from their hiding place.

From the direction they had been charging towards, the one with the elevator, Hannyabal appeared, leaping up onto a rooftop and gesturing forward not with a trident as most of the other devil-like prison guards used, but a double-bladed naginata of somewhat strange design. Instead of the blade being that of a regular naginata, a wide slab of metal that formed directly into the polearm, the blades both looked like they had been taken from katanas, complete with the square-shaped tsubo. The polearm was as tall as Hannyabal was, and was of excellent quality.

Next to him was a tiny devil-like fellow wearing a white version of the regular uniform. In one hand, he held a small, almost comedic looking trident. In his waistcoat, there was a glimpse of some kind of flute. Judging by the description he'd been given, Luffy realized that this might be Saldeath, the Chief Guard.

"Take them! Encircle them, keep them pinned down until Magellan arrives!" Gone were any jokes or digs at his boss. Hannyabal was in fully serious mode for the first time any of the few prisoners nearby had ever seen.

Quickly the battle was joined. The first to reach their opponents was Luffy, who zoomed forward into a group of defenders. Blue Gorillas went down with cutting force Rankyaku, while guards were flung aside, broken or dead Luffy didn't know or care as he searched for communication Mushi with his Kenbunshoku.

The Blugoris on either flank charged now, groups of six going for each of the attacking prisoners, while nearly three dozen piled in from behind towards the more dangerous escapees. With them came giant rats. There were dozens of them, having been held back to add their weight of numbers to this, Hannyabal's line in the sand.

Buggy, who had moved forward to one side of Sanji, shrieked and used his Bara Bara Ho technique to dodge the first few blows from a giant double-headed axe wielded from one of the Blue Gorillas. Those same bits then zoomed forward to smack with bone cracking force into the monsters, who seemingly were able to shrug off most such strikes. This forced Buggy to cut down on the number of body parts, instead using a dozen rather than nearly a hundred.

Nearby, Clay smashed a kick into the side of one of the Blue Gorillas, only to have to duck under the shots from several of the prison guards. This left him open to an attack from one of the other Blugori, but he grabbed the double bladed axe with both hands, holding it in place. Two more dove down on top of him, their fists pummeling, and he was forced to kick the axe-wielding one away and rolled to the side to dodge them all before finding himself embedded in one of the prison cells by a blow from a massive mace that one of the other Blue Gorillas was wielding. Blood spurted from several cuts on his arm and side, but he avoided the follow up, catching that Blue Gorilla with a kick that hurled him into several of the guards.

The next moment, three Blugoris were sent flying as Luffy appeared in a burst of Soru and Geppo. Two more were nearly torn apart by Rankyakus, and then Luffy was gone, charging into another group of Blue Gorillas. He ignored the guards and rats, but that was fine by Buggy and Clay.

But as much trouble as Buggy and Clay were having, Sanji and Zoro were the primary targets for the Blue Gorillas. Not that this actually served the prison guards very well. More than a dozen of the Blue Gorillas went down within seconds, bleeding profusely from cuts from Zoro as he charged to engage Sadi-chan and the three animal type Zoans along with Jinbei. Meanwhile, having seen Hannyabal directing the ambush, Sanji had charged forward without any protest for his captain's orders, his legs blazing with Diable Jambe, as he hammered Blue Gorillas and prison guards out of his way.

He found his first blow at Hannyabal blocked by the man's naginata, held up in front of him as a guard, then had to leap upwards to avoid a sweep from the end of the Naginata, before barely blocking a stab from the man. His foot intercepted it, and he glared at Hannyabal as foot and naginata pressed against one another.

“You! You’re the cause of all this, I...” Hannyabal’s naginata voice trailed off as he caught a glimpse of Luffy behind Sanji, dealing with several more Blugoris with what amounted to slaps on the side of the head, sending them flying. Luffy was still backing up Buggy and Clay, who were the hardest pressed, with Ace hanging off his back. However, it wasn’t Ace who Hannyabal was looking at, rather he was staring at Luffy.

Because unlike Magellan, he did a lot more than have the bare minimum background of their prisoners read out to him. He recognized Monkey D. Luffy, and suddenly knew how big this entire situation really was. “No! That, where did he, how did he...”

Then he was forced to concentrate on Sanji once more as Sanji disengaged his foot from Hannyabal’s naginata and flicked around into a roundhouse kick, forcing Hannyabal to block it with a Busoshoku encompassed hand.

His Busoshoku wasn’t all that good, though, and Hannyabal was sent stumbling. This did let him bring up his naginata to block the next follow-on strikes, and he thrust back with his naginata. Once more, the two of them found themselves in a lock for a second, foot to blade. “And I remember you too, you shitty devil. You’re one of the assholes who took the opportunity to get a few kicks in because I was doing a better job at flirting with Domino-chwan than any of you. Let’s see how good you are against someone who can fight back!”

OOOOOOO

“I know this fog is helping us right now, but I can’t be the only one who finds it a little too...”

“Freaky?” Usopp replied to Alvida’s question, nodding his massive head. He was still in his dinosaur form, of course, as he was the only thing that was keeping the ship moving in the Calm Belt. “It is that. First this fog comes at us from nowhere and now we can’t get out of it.”

“Exactly. And I could swear I thought he saw a sail over the horizon for just a moment before the fog closed in... Or something anyway,” Alvida grumbled.

“Maybe it’s something from the prison that’s creating it? But if so, that means were close. That can only be a good thing, right?” Usopp didn’t sound all that sure of himself, but at least he was trying. Given that he used to be an incredibly negative, cowardly fellow, the idea he was trying to keep up morale was somewhat amusing to Alvida.

Not that she was feeling all that positive about their plan, such as it was. “Maybe. It might help us if the marines there can’t look at our troop all that closely.”

Alvida turned her attention to the rest of her crew moving around the deck, resisting the urge to facepalm with difficulty. She’d forced them all to shower, shave and make themselves presentable, of but that just meant that they looked like particularly clean vagabonds currently

dressed up in Marine outfits for some reason. *And don't get me started on their salutes or attempts to stand at attention. Even the best of them act as if they're in some kind of play and overact everything.*

Still, they were well past the point where she could have called this off, or gone off on her own. A thought, which terrified her here in the Grand Line even more than the idea of attacking Impel Down, or *Calm Belt at the moment, but same idea. I'm here because the alternatives were even worse. What does that say about the hole that I've made for myself? I--*

Alvida's thoughts were interrupted by a hail from above, a shout of, "There's some kind of shape out there in the fog. I think it might be an island! HOLY FUCK it isn't just an Island its ships!"

At those words, lots of the other pirates moved to the front of the vessel, but Alvida shouted them back to their former positions, her heart pounding as she worried about the 'ships' segment of that statement. A moment later, their target loomed out of the fog. And true to what the lookout said, the first thing they saw were the sides of four gigantic battleships. Each of them were ultra-modern marine style battleships, with heavy, thick sides looming over the ship Alvida and the others had stolen. Above those sides, turrets could be seen on the main deck.

Her eyes wide in shock, Alvida was about to shout orders for them to start firing at the Marine vessels, but a hissed word from Usopp stopped her. "Wait! They're not firing. We should have been in their range for at least ten minutes by this point, maybe more. In fact, I don't see anyone aboard those ships."

That caused Alvida to stop, and Usopp pedaled the ship forward slower, his large legs moving unseen underneath them as the ship moved between two of the massive battleships. Soon after, behind the battleships more appeared from out of the fog. The four battleships turned out to be tied to a series of docks that were themselves on the outside of a wall like structure. The wall spread out in either direction, filling in the rest of the horizon as the ship moved steadily closer through the fog.

"L, let's just take it easy for now. I think those ships aren't manned right now. If we can get closer to the wharf, then we might be good."

For the next ten minutes, Usopp moved the ship closer, eventually pushing between two of the battleships, thankful there were enough space between for their ship to move into without scrapping along. Alvida sent three of the crew across to each ship and they quickly reported that there wasn't even a deck watch aboard.

As the ship nosed against the wharf, their luck finally ran out.

To their left out of sight of most of the pirates, a dozen marines were standing in a square, staring further left. One of them turned back to say something to a companion only for his eyes to widen. "Wh... Look! A ship!"

A marine bosun heard that, and shouted, "Halt, halt! About-face!" All around him, five blocks of ten marines each halted their advance towards the prison where they had hoped to help the jailers against the escaped prisoners. Normally even marines wouldn't be allowed into Impel Down, but Domino had made the decision to let them in as the battle in Wild Beast Hell began and she lost all communication and video from the floor.

More than half of the marines had already entered the prison by this point, along with Vice Admiral Mozambica.

Not that Usopp or Alvida could tell any of that at the present moment.

All they knew was that the marines didn't seem to be here in any numbers, and had been caught flat-footed. Usopp, being something of a tactician, recognized this instantly and changed his plans on the fly. "HA HA HA, time for shock and awe!" With that, he let loose a roar, kicked out of the hold, and leaped forward several hundred feet, clearing the aft of one of the battleships, he landed in the middle of the marines who had just begun to charge back towards them. "RAAAAAGHHH!!!"

"WahHH!!! Monster!" screamed many of them marines, although several others began to fire their rifles up at the massive dino. Alas for the marines, their bullets bounced off the thick hide of the dinosaur Zoan. Even a miniature cannonball from a bazooka bounced off Usopp's leg, barely making it move.

"Raaarrrrh! Fear the mighty king of lizards, LizarKing!" Usopp shouted, bringing his head down and around, battering aside Marines like bowling pins, lashing out with his feet and tiny forelimbs along with his bludgeoning tale. He didn't try to eat any of them though, that was a line Usopp wasn't willing to cross. Still, bodies flew in every direction, some out into the water, some to smack with bone breaking force into the outer wall of the prison or the sides of the battleships. One man even was flung entirely up and over the prison's wall.

"You heard the man. Let's get it stuck in!" Alvida leaped across from the prow of the ship onto the dock. Landing, she found herself facing the whistle blower and three other marines. Smiling, she flicked her hair back over her shoulder.

All the marines had been about to charge forward with cutlasses but paused, their eyes turning into hearts, and she gave them a wink, causing them to drop their weapons and grab at their chests shouting, "What a beauty!"

A few behind them were made of sterner stuff, and one man charged forward, shouting out, "Beauty or not, she's a pirate and we need to capture her!"

They found themselves charged in turn by the rest of the pirate crew who to a man bellowed, "You will never touch our lady! For Alvida-sama!"

Chortling quietly, Alvida let them take on the oncoming marines. This let her zero in on one of the officers who had grabbed a Den Den Mushi from his pocket. "You don't want to do that, darling!"

Unfortunately, the man ignored Alvida's beauty, something that caused her to grimace as it was becoming sadly too common in the Grand Line. He finished the conversation into the mic of the Den Den Mushi before dropping it and bringing around a large scimitar of all things. Alvida blocked it with her club, but the Marine pushed her back, ducking back and ordering another group of marines forward before ordering. "Unit five and ten, do not engage! Head towards battleships four and seven. We'll need the big guns to take out that Mythical Zoan!"

Above the tumult below, Perona hovered in the air, or rather a Negative Hollow that looked like Perona did. She had used her full immersion technique to take over one of her hollows just in case she needed more precise control or to react quicker. This way, Perona could also create more ghosts from the ghost she had taken over. It looked like they wouldn't need that just yet, and she quickly canceled the technique, returning to her normal body as the ghost dissipated.

Laid out on a bed of cushions in the bridge of the Everlasting Resolve, Perona opened her eyes, and quickly explained what was going on. "If I had to guess, I'd say that our timing was almost perfect. The Marines were all rushing into the prison, and caught completely flat-footed by the idiots. I don't think they could have had better luck."

"Or us. What do you think, should we just stay hidden out here in the fog and start calling Luffy to see if they're ready for a pickup?" Nami suggested from the doorway, where she had just stopped twirling her Clima-Control staff to keep creating more fog. "With his Kenbunshoku he'd be able to find us even if we keep hiding here."

Robin thought about it for a moment, then shook her head. "No. I think it's time that we... announce our presence. Laki, man the dial gun." The dial gun was the only one of their two main guns usable without Luffy around. "Nami, you direct Chopper at the tiller, I'll handle the guns and engine room with Eve. Perona, you're up in the crow's nest but be ready to send out your ghosts if we need to. We'll keep them a secret for now, but use them against any marine commodore rank or above."

With that, Robin began to cross her arms. Eyes began to appear all around them, followed by hands throughout the ship, in particular on the gun deck where the secondary weapons of the Everlasting Resolve had already been ready and loaded for trouble. "Our targets will be the battleships moored around Impel Down. I mean to sink every one of them."

As Nami's eyes widened in horror, Eve appeared for a moment, thrusting her hand into the air with a cackle. "Hell yes! Time to send those big battleship bastards to the bottom of the ocean!"

The first the other pirates and the marines knew of the Everlasting Resolve and the Straw Hat's presence was a blast of condensed air from the aft most gun turret smashing into the side of one of the battleships furthest away from the current fighting, which had yet to reach the actual large gate that led into the topmost layer of the prison. The blast slammed into the ship, shattering a portion of its aft portion, and sending one of the three gun turrets on the main deck flying through the air to crash into the towering prison complex beyond.

"There's more of them out there!?" came the cry, and then the Everlasting Resolve appeared out of the fog surrounding Impel Down.

Immediately Nami directed the ship to twist to one side, bringing its portside guns to bear on another one of the battleships, raking its port side. The secondary guns didn't do nearly as much damage as the primary had to the previous victim, but it shot up the side of the ship, shattering the secondary guns of the battleship, while Laki aimed and fired from the turret again. Instead of aiming for the aft of the ship this time though, the shift in position had allowed her to aim directly down the first ship's length. So she aimed directly above it and Nami watched as the blast of condensed air shattered all three of the first battleship's masts one after another with a single shot. "WOO! Nice shot Laki!"

At Nami's direction, the ship whipped around again, showing its ability to nearly turn on a dime thanks to the engine Franky had built and the number of Jet dials that were hidden under the water. Twisting around, the Everlasting Resolve came closer and once more brought its broadside to bear, this time from the other side of the vessel.

A third battleship was hammered in turn before the ship pulled back and away, making a complete turn as Robin and Eve worked on reloading the secondary weapons. "Laki, see if you can hit the ships along the waterline!" Nami ordered, getting into this fight now.

Laki fired again on the third battleship. This time she missed her target, unable to aim low enough this close. Instead, the shot crashed into the ship amidships. But it still did quite a bit of damage, breaking the turret there and a large portion of the side of the larger vessel. "Turn us away, give me more room to work with, I can't aim that low from this close."

A quick consultation followed, and Nami, with Chopper at the tiller twisted away moving further away from the helpless marine battleships. As they did a few large bombards on the outer wall of the prison began to fire at them, but Perona, without orders, sent her ghosts down, and that quickly ended as the marines there collapsed into negativity. A moment later, the Straw Hats' ship was far enough away that Laki could now target the enemy ships along the waterline. Two shots rang out, and a battleship began to sink, its sides shattered along the waterline and letting the hungry sea in.

One of the marines who had been ordered to head towards the ships that were further away from where the mythical Zoan had come ashore saw this, and began to take control of the marines around him. "Never mind the other ships! We need to move around to the other side of the prison, that side hadn't been attacked yet."

Moments later, they were able to move around the outer circumference of the prison. The wall quickly began to block the noise from the battle, and the marine officer, a mere sergeant, breathed a sigh of relief. "Alright. We'll choose one of the ships furthest from the action, and get it out into the ocean. All of us. We'll need the manpower to get a ship out away and moving under its own power here in the Calm Belt. If we can't, all our ships are sitting ducks!"

OOOOOOO

Unfortunately for Luffy's attempts to keep what was going on in Impel Down from getting out, the first thing Hannyabal had done had been to radio Domino and order her to call the Marineford and warn them that someone was attempting a breakout. Haoshoku was that big a deal that even at that point, long before events in the prison went completely to hell, that Hannyabal had known he had to call it in.

This report had been added to when Garp had destroyed the ceiling between Level Five and Level four. Since then, direct information had not yet made it back to Domino thanks to Luffy's efforts, but even that was worryingly telling. The Surveillance Mushi had died so quickly Domino and her people couldn't tell what was killing them, but they knew their spy cameras were being targeted. They had seen Jinbei and Fire Fist Ace moving with the two still-living Straw Hats. To say nothing about the horrendously large hole punched through from Freezing Hell.

Staring at the communications in front of him, which had just reported all this, Sengoku waited a few seconds to try to calm himself, before bringing his hand down in an almost gentle slap on top of the communications snail. Gentle that slap might have looked, but the blow was still enough to not only cause the snail to implode under his palm but for the table below it to collapse, causing the room's other occupants to pull their legs back. "Garp! Dammit! Only that fool has sufficient idiot strength to do something like that. And if he's working with these others to free Fire Fist..."

He glared down at the conference table that he had just turned into so much kindling, standing up and fastidiously wiping his hand off on the side of his chair as he began to pace. Such was his furious glower that the gathered individuals, highly ranked officers and Shichibukai, watched, saying nothing for a moment. Well, most of them anyway.

"That is a scary expression on your face Sengoku the Buddha. Not keeping with your enlightened self, I'd say," a taunting, and extremely disliked voice said from one side interrupting

Sengoku's thoughts. "It almost sounds as if something is not going according to your plan. How strange."

Turning in that direction, Sengoku glared at the warlord Doflamingo, his eyes flashing warningly behind his glasses. "You will be silent Doflamingo and let your betters think about the implications of this."

"Now, now, you may be my elder, but my better? Do you really think that? Why, I know a lot of people who might..."

That was as far as he got towards taunting Sengoku about Doflamingo's past, a past Sengoku knew all too well, before a blow to the side of the head sent him sprawling.

Doflamingo was not a small man, nor was he weak. The number of people who could lay him out with a single blow could be counted on one hand. But apparently, Sengoku had to be counted among the Four Yonko on this score.

He glared up at Sengoku, but paused, as one of the room's other occupants laid a hand on his shoulder. "Enough of your lip!" the currently demoted to Commodore Akainu growled before turning back to the Fleet Admiral. "Your orders? I recommend that I go ahead with one of our fast sloops and..."

"No. Even the fast sloop will not get you there in time," Sengoku said, turning away from Doflamingo and almost forgetting his existence for a moment as he thought things through quickly.

I suppose it really doesn't matter who is behind all this, although the timing probably implies that the last two Straw Hats are troublemakers just as much as their captain was, although considering the swordsman killed a Tenryubito I should have realized that. Perhaps they're trying to free Ace for some misguided last salute for their captain, found Garp and freed him as well? Regardless, we need to respond to this. A portion of the backup plan might be still viable, we still have our quisling in Whitebeard's fleet. But the ambush here is obviously useless now. The report might only say one ship is attacking at present, but I would wager that's a vanguard unit from Whitebeard. Perhaps some kind of submarine led to Impel Down somehow, a Vivre Card tied to one of the two Straw Hats? But how did they smuggle it inside?

Regardless, the rest of the Whitebeard fleet will be along shortly. Dammit!

Shaking off his momentary hesitation, Sengoku turned away from the window to address the others in the room. The other warlords were there. Doflamingo sat across from Blackbeard – who looked to be enjoying this just as much as the colorful Doflamingo had before Sengoku put him in his place. Between them was Hancock, whose sneer spoke eloquently of her willingness to be sitting here with the marines at all. And finally Mihawk, who was watching

events with his hawk like gaze, interest flashing in his yellow orbs sat directly across from Sengoku's former position.

The admirals, Kong, Tsuru and several of the stronger vice admirals, who would have been in charge of several aspects of the ambush that he had hoped to spring on the Whitebeard Pirates when the inevitably came to try and save Fire Fist Ace also sat there, waiting for orders as each dealt with the events at Impel Down in their own fashion. Anger, apathy and worry from the three logia types, fury and shock for the others.

"We will need to assume that instead of waiting for Ace to arrive here, Whitebeard has somehow figured out a way to discover Impel Down's location. I doubt that the ship that is attacking is a threat on its own. But combined with a freed Garp, these two other pirates and Jinbei will almost certainly overcome Magellan and the rest of the guard force."

Sengoku looked at Aokiji and Kizaru. "Akainu, Tsuru and I will organize the fleet and our disparate combat elements. Kizaru, leave immediately. Once you're on-site, call us and tell us what's going on there and if you need the full might of our fleet there. Aokiji, you head out as well. Grab Cat Man and order him to take as many of the vice admirals with him as he possibly can. I will send an order to the Gate Instructors and have them activate Deep Sea Stream, but even that won't get our ships to Impel Down fast enough unless we can send troops forward another way."

Cat Man was one of the giant admirals. Although a bit odd, he was one of their faster members, and Aokiji nodded, understanding the plan. He could freeze the ocean as he went on his bike, with the giant following behind him. One giant was about the same width as he could freeze from the ocean in a timely manner, although Cat Man would need to keep up with him or else the ice would crack underneath him. But the giant would no doubt be able to do so, and would be able to carry a lot of the other officers into the combat zone than any ship.

Even a sloop wouldn't be able to make the trip between Marineford and Impel Down in less than eight hours normally. But after a prisoner had escaped Impel Down nearly two decades ago, Dr. Vegapunk had been brought in to see what he could do to somehow speed up the journey from Marineford to Impel Down. With the Tarai Current, a manmade current controlled by the movement of the two Gates of Justice at Marineford and Enies Lobby, he had somehow been able to do so. If a few large rocks were removed and the Enies Lobby Gate closed, then the Current could be empowered to the point of nearly resembling a tsunami.

Yet even then, their fastest ships would still take two hours to get there at best. The battleships would need three hours at the least to make that same trip, or as a minimum to come close enough that the officers would be able to use Geppo or Soru to cross the remaining distance without tiring themselves out too much. Cat Man could run that distance without stopping in half an hour.

“Oh m̃y, oh m̃y, if Garp is really trying to esc̃ape, that is terr̃ifying,” Kizaru murmured, cocking his head to one side. “So scãry, I might not be able to stop him on my ow̃n.”

“You almost certainly won’t,” Sengoku admitted. “But you can at least keep him engaged, and maybe stop Ace from getting away on that ship. That’s your priority. Even Garp would be completely lost in the Calm Belt, and wouldn’t be able to Geppo his way out while carrying a prisoner. Sink that ship! Any attempt to escape Impel Down goes down with it.”

Kizaru nodded in his normal laconic manner, and a second later, was gone, zipping out the nearby window in a splash of yellow tinted light.

Touching his throat, Doflamingo pushed himself to his feet, glaring at the Fleet Admiral, but said nothing as he stalked towards the door. While he was incredibly arrogant, Doflamingo was anything but stupid. The mere fact that Sengoku had been able to get through the automatic defenses Doflamingo set up around himself with his Ito Ito no Mi was telling.

Doflamingo could also feel the gaze of Akainu on his back. *No way am I going to try and fight that man. No chance at all. He and Kizaru’s Devil Fruits are hard counters to mine.*

Instead, he simply added this latest effrontery to his very, **very** long list of such and vowed that the World Government as a whole would pay for it. *Just as they have ever since I became a pirate to toss my continued existence into the faces of those who tossed my family out of the Holy Land.*

Blackbeard chuckled and stood up, staring at Sengoku in amusement. “You know that fighting on the ocean will give the Whitebeard Pirates a lot of advantages. I should know, I was one of them after all. Your newest class of battleship might be able to stand toe to toe with anything below the Moby Dick, but how many of those do you have in comparison to how many ships he can field?”

“All that means is that there will be more of you pirates seeing Davy Jones in person shortly,” Sengoku answered firmly. “Whatever you might think, even fighting on the ocean will not swing the balance of power in Whitebeard’s favor. I guarantee it.”

Blackbeard’s chuckling faded, and he stared at Sengoku, looming slightly over the other man, being the tallest and widest person in the room. “You’d best keep that faith, that strength of will! Because against the age that is coming, that is all that might save you and the Marines.”

He boomed his particular laughter as he went out the door, and with a growl, Akainu stalked after the two Shichibukai.

Sengoku had to nod at that. *Say what you will about how he fucked up with the Water 7 debacle, Akainu’s instincts are good most of the time. There is something off-putting about*

*Teach, even if you set aside his talk about ages and will and so forth. Teach's power was undeniable, and the fact that he had been able to bring in Fire Fist Ace spoke of his power. The World Government had agreed to make him a Shichibukai for that act, but Sengoku could not get past the idea that the man was hiding something. Not just a tremendous ambition, but also a mind as well, a **will**. A topic Teach had just mentioned in his strange one-liner. *There is the title of D. to consider as well. Still, Akainu can be trusted to watch over them.**

Shaking that off, Sengoku continued to bark out orders, and the vice admirals in the room rushed out, meeting up with their fellows in various spaces around Marineford, along with the last two loyal... and oh that word stuck in Sengoku's craw when it came to this topic... Shichibukai. "You two... I do not think I need to keep a personal eye on you like Blackbeard or Doflamingo. Your ships will move with the main fleet, neither of them has the speed necessary to go with either of the first two groups, but you will be out near the flanks of our formation while we use the Tarai Current. When battle begins, you may act as you see fit."

Both simply nodded and left, as did the others. This left Sengoku alone there to stare out the window for a few moments to gather himself before he joined the fleet. "Garp. How did it come to this?"

The answer to that was obvious, even to him. But Sengoku refused to look at the series of choices that had caused Garp to break from the marines too closely. Instead, he turned aside, and left the room quickly. Nevertheless, he didn't go to join the efforts to get the fleet moving as fast as possible. Instead, he headed to his office and picked up a special Golden communication Mushi. Moments later, the other side picked up, and Sengoku growled out, "Get me the Gorosei. I have a report they need to hear immediately."

OOOOOOO

Elsewhere in Marineford, Princess Nefertari Vivi of Alabasta sat, staring down at a deck of cards then across at the man she was playing with, a winsome smile appearing on her face. "Well, are you going to call? Or fold?"

The man stared down at his own hand, his brows furrowed in consternation. He was a tall man, as, admittedly, most people in the room were in comparison to Nefertari, who was quite on the petite side. But this man was a little bit larger than most of the others as well, with broad shoulders, dark hair, dark eyes, and a short, well-trimmed beard. He looked dangerous and cold but somehow there was a friendly air about him. He also had a strangely simple sword at his side in comparison to the other two swordsmen in the room, both of whom wielded weapons of such quality even Vivi, no swordsman herself, could see their worth. The man, whose name was Issho moved ponderously at times, but there was a deceptive speed to his movements, a certain lightness to his footwork that spoke of intense training.

Almost as intense as the look he was giving his cards at the moment.

"Here, we have a strange dichotomy. My mind is saying one thing, my instincts another. Normally, those to work in tandem, but they are not on this point. I must choose. Are you bluffing, or are you not?" Issho mused, his dark eyes opening from their habitual slits to twinkle at Vivi.

Vivi continued to smile at him. "Wouldn't you like to know?"

"I rather think I would. I call," the man said, suddenly decisive, pushing all of his remaining pile of chips forward. The two other players at the table, slammed their cards down, and leaned back from the table. Issho had made the pot far too rich for their measly piles to compete with. Vivi matched, causing the man to widen his eyes, before he quickly flipped over his cards. "Two two-of-a-kind, seven and tens."

"Four of a kind, jacks," Vivi said simply, setting your own cards down.

"... So not a bluff at all. And I fell for your trap," the man said, shaking his head sadly as Vivi moved her hand and pushed the remainder of his pile into her own, signaling the end of the round of cards. "How did a princess become such a card shark?"

"Well, I **am** a princess, and politicians of all sorts need to have extremely good poker faces. As for my skill in cards?" Her smile turned from a smile of triumph to one of melancholy and memory. "Let us just say that I had a very good teacher."

"Hmm... and so my eyes deceived once more. Perhaps there is some truth to the ancient precept that to truly understand, one must look at the world with more than your eyes," Issho sighed, shaking his head once more. "There is so much evil in the world, but at least there is just as much good."

Sweatdropping at the older man's sudden descent into philosophical musings, Vivi looked away, taking in the room around them once more.

Vivi and her fellow card players were four of a group of seven individuals currently waiting in the small sitting room they had been assigned to upon their arrival in Marineford. All of them had been called in to help against Whitebeard. Vivi hadn't asked any of the others why they were there, but Issho seemed to have a strong sense of justice, while one or two of the others were, judging by their conversations, more interested in killing pirates than anything else.

They were certainly an eclectic bunch, and more than one of the men had leered at Vivi when she arrived, and two or three certainly acted like the sort of people a demure, innocent princess should never be around. Luckily, Vivi was not a demure princess, and it only took one example of her sand powers to quell any notion that, as one person put it, "She was there to keep them all company."

Vivi quickly divided the pile of chips into four, pushing them towards the players. Issho shook his head and tried to push his pile back, saying, "No, no. You won fair and square, Princess. While I applaud your largess, you should still keep the spoils of your victory."

"Not a bit of it," Vivi answered just as firmly. "We're just playing to pass the time, and I have no need of money or bad feelings when going into a battle."

The man paused at that, then nodded, slowly swept the tokens into his pouch, shaking his head. But before Issho could say anything, the door opened, and Tsuru strode in. "There's been a change of plans. Whitebeard seems to have stolen a march on us. He's attacking Impel Down, in what might be full force. We'll be readying the fleet to go meet him. Each of you will be assigned a different ship and vice admiral to work with. Head to the docks now, and you'll find a pink-haired brat there who'll direct you where to go."

Quickly the room's other occupants raced out, some of them eager for the fight, others simply eager to do something, and happy that they didn't have to wait another half a day before Ace's execution. But Vivi didn't, causing Issho to look at her. However, she simply waved him off, gesturing to Tsuru, and he nodded, before exiting the room, actually bowing respectfully to the well-known strategist as he went.

The older woman looked back at her, understanding the princess of Alabasta wanted to ask her a question. That didn't mean Tsuru had to be polite, especially not with everything going wrong right now. Still, Vivi was a princess from a country tied to the World Government, and although her tone was harsh, her words at least were polite as she spoke. "Do you plan to join them princess, or do you have a preference as to where you should serve in the coming fight?"

"Oh, I have no problem going where you tell me to. But I am still wondering something, and I think you are the only person that will give me a straight answer on it," Vivi said as she stood up, and crossed the room to stand in front of the a head larger older woman, cordially holding the door open for her after the last of the other fighters had left.

The act of courtesy brought Tsuru's mind to her previous tone, and she tried to soften her voice as she answered, walking out of the room beside the princess. "What's that?"

"Why this war. I can understand wanting to execute a pirate. I can understand wanting to take advantage of that execution even although I find it abhorrent. But why use Fire Fist Ace like this to pick a fight with Whitebeard of all people?" Vivi shook her head. "Like it or not, Whitebeard has been a force of stability. His very name protects islands from other pirates and from criminals of all sorts far better than any Shichibukai's presence or even the World Government Flag. So why?"

"Whitebeard might be strong, but that only mean's he one of the strongest pirates in the world," Tsuru shot back, more probing than anything. "Thus one of the greatest perils in the

world with his powers, both to justice and to peace. Do we need another reason than to remove one of the Yonko?"

"I would say so. Considering how many people are going to die today," Vivi answered shaking her head. "Whitebeard is old. Wait a few more years and his power might decline. Instead, you are forcing a confrontation. And now you can't even do that on your own terms. Even if you win, you're going to cause chaos and carnage the world over. How is that justice?"

Tsuru was in no mood to bandy words with this girl, or anything else. While Sengoku might have put a positive face on it, Blackbeard's comments about the battle on the ocean helping the Pirates more than the Marines was closer than she liked to think. Most pirate vessels were more heavily armed than the common kind of marine battleship, although not as much as the larger types.

But again, Vivi's position was such, and they were already on such narrow ground with her, Tsuru once more contained her desire to smack the girl down. "You said it yourself. Whitebeard is old, and will eventually fall. This way, the World Government can take credit for toppling the Strongest Man in the World. We will also be in a position to take advantage of his fall. The World Government will be stronger after this."

"My, that doesn't sound like justice, does it? More politics on a world-wide scale," Vivi snarked, shaking her head. "So that's all this is then, a power play? That is a tremendous risk."

That did it, Tsuru was done playing nice. "Do not speak to me of risk girl, I know the names of most of the marines who will be out there fighting and dying if this comes to a full battle. As for it being politics, don't be naïve! The Marines **are** justice because justice is what the World Government says it is."

"GIRL?!" Vivi reared up, glaring at the old woman now, tossing aside her previously polite attitude to glare up at the old woman with enough hauteur to make anyone shrink in fear. "I am a princess, Tsuru, and you will do well to remember that. And as for being naïve I am anything but! Or do you think a naïve girl would have infiltrated Baroque Works as I did, or made the deal you are currently hanging over my head and that of my nation to force me here to bolster your strength? You people, whose Shichibukai caused the trouble in my country to begin with?"

But Tsuru had withstood all her shrinking long ago, and although a part of her was telling her to be diplomatic, the rest of her, buoyed by worries about how badly this could all go, pushed on, ignoring the fact Vivi had several good points. "Exactly so. That deal is why you are here. Our reasons are plain, princess. You might not agree with them, you might not like the chaos it will cause elsewhere. I don't either. But this is the hand we've been dealt, both of us. You would do well to remember Nefertari that you are already under a cloud of suspicion, and you're being here is to help mitigate that cloud. After this, you will hear no more about any

strange connections that you might have made in your efforts to expunge Crocodile from your country. That is what the World Government and the Marines have chosen.”

Vivi scowled, shaking her head. “And so tyranny is given a cheerful face. How hilarious that you assume that is the same as actual justice. I would ask how you sleep at night, but given your age, I will refrain. Now if you’ll excuse me, suddenly I feel the need for fresh air.”

Tsuru stared after the younger her eyes narrowed again. *That is a very hard girl, far too bright and self-righteous for her own good. And if the initial reports that two of the Straw Hats might be the ones or trying to break ace out of prison are accurate... She might be a liability. Hmm... and Boa Hancock warned us that the cook and first mate of the Straw Hats might have escaped, but she should still be pissed that she, Kuma and Moria weren’t strong enough to make a clean sweep of a rookie crew of pirates between them, even if Moria tried to betray her that will stick in her craw. I think it’s time to kill two birds with one overly large stone. But better to have a bit of security just in case.*

With that, instead of heading back to her office to take over the logistics side of getting all the disparate portions of the fleet moving, Tsuru took a few detours.

Moments later, Boa Hancock glared at Tsuru so hard that she was in fact staring up at the sky, one finger pointed imperiously at the slightly taller far older woman and the two vice admirals who were there with her. One she recognized from Luffy’s description as Strawberry, a vice admiral who had been a part of the Buster Call that Luffy and Laki had broken up when it was launched against Water 7. The other had just been introduced to the Kuja Empress, and was named Lacroix.

“My ship is not a passenger ship, old woman! Give me one good reason why I should allow anyone aboard my ship, let alone two men!” Hancock snarled.

Tsuru snorted, “The fact, that you didn’t bring the Straw Hat’s ship like told you to do, so we could examine it? The fact that this is going to be a very quick trip? Or the fact that I am not giving you a damn choice, girl! Take your pick. Do not try me right now.”

“And that is another thing. At no point in our discussions was the use of my ship mentioned as part of this personal war you Marines have launched against Whitebeard. I will demand compensation for that and for any losses among my crew!” Hancock barked.

“Of course you will, and so will Doflamingo, no doubt. I wonder what else the two of you have in common,” Tsuru shot back, causing a wave of anger from the watching Amazons and shouts that she easily ignored. “I’ll add another 1,000,000 beli a piece for each of the passengers I’m lumping you with.”

“First of all, I only count two. Are you going to force a third man upon me?” Hancock sneered, still staring up at the sky and pointing dramatically at the ancient strategist. “Secondly,

it is all too likely all three of your so-called vice admirals will be whimpering puddles of goo by the time we arrive at Impel Down. After all, I am beautiful.”

Strawberry took this stoically, while Lacroix looked away with a blush on his face, causing Tsuru to smack her small cane on his calf, and glare up at him in anger. His face paled, and he twisted away to stare resolutely out to the ocean, causing her to huff in annoyance. *Blast it, if Momonga hadn't already been assigned to Cat Man, and the others I know won't fall for her beauty didn't already have commands of their own. But at least I can trust Strawberry to be strong enough to bring Vivi to heel if need be and to handle himself around Hancock.*

Tsuru glanced at Strawberry, who nodded his head. He would try to keep the other vice-admiral in line regardless of what blandishments Hancock tried.

Then she turned her attention back to the still glaring Pirate Empress as Hancock went on. “Thirdly, as a Shichibukai I have to answer the call of the World Government. It says nothing about working so closely with marines as to let three of them onto my ship!”

“Fine, if money isn't enough how about reasons then? We want to spread out our admirals throughout as many ships as possible. The Whitebeard Pirates also know your ship by sight, and won't expect vice admirals to be aboard. It can give you some extra combat power, and you're not so arrogant as to turn that down, are you? Or do you think you alone can protect your ship in a ship-to-ship melee?”

Hancock scowled at that but said nothing, and Tsuru knew she'd won that point. “And the third passenger will be a young woman, so you don't need to worry on that score.”

“Not Gion or that Captain that was with you when we met, is it? I don't know which would be worse. A woman who thinks herself as beautiful as I, or a woman who might think she is as strong as I despite that being patently impossible,” Hancock mused, calming down slightly.

Tsuru had actually thought about using her young protégé for this instead of Lacroix but had anticipated that she and Hancock would almost undoubtedly get along precisely like a house on fire. *The kind of fire that spreads and kills everything within the hundred mile radius.* And with all the upheaval that this sudden shift to an offensive action was causing, she didn't want any further issues. That was why she was here at all rather than young Coby, who had been turned into a blushing mess by a mere glimpse of Hancock as he was reading out people's positions to them in the fleet. *Still better than Helmeppo, who had to run for the nearest bathroom with a bleeding nose.*

Shaking that off, Tsuru answered Hancock. “No. Her name is Vivi, and she is one of the special combat assets that we brought in for this action.”

If anything, Boa Hancock's sneer became even more condescending, and good-looking too if the screams and cries of Hebihime-sama, and Hancock-sama from her crew were any indication. "Yes, you mentioned that, and the rumors abound about what caused..."

"I'm not here to indulge you either, girl. Honestly, what the fuck is with you youngsters thinking I'm just here for your damn curiosity!?"

Tsuru was unaware that Vivi had come close enough to hear her until she spoke. "If so, you would have served poorly in that regard, Tsuru. Then again, given how ancient you look, perhaps some leeway should be allowed."

Vivi was dressed in pantaloons and a tight fitting blouse, with some kind of thin bolo-like weapon at her side, and high, metal covered boots on her feet. Her hair was tied back, and she wore a grim expression on her face as she insulted Tsuru. Without another word she moved past the two vice admirals, smiling at them politely, if distantly, before saluting the taller woman staring down at them all like an angry goddess, affronted by the peons in front of her.

Still, Vivi didn't let that bother her. *I've faced worse sneers at each revelry, and after exchanging blows with Tsuru this is easy.* "Permission to come aboard?"

Hancock gestured towards the gangway, a bubble of pure amusement going through her. *My word, but Nami and Luffy are surely good at describing someone if this is whom I think it is. What serendipitous chance has brought along this I wonder?* "While I enjoyed your put down of that prune, I must ask your name, girl."

For her part, Vivi tried hard not to blush, realizing once more that she wasn't nearly as straight as she might've thought when she was younger. *God! She really is gorgeous. If I look half as good as that when I am her age, I will sacrifice a giant scorpion to my ancestors in thanks.*

"Nefertari Vivi of Alabasta, Pirate Empress," the young princess answered, staring up towards the other Royal. "As one royal to another, I promise not to get in the way. I will even keep to my cabin if that's what you want until we arrive in Impel Down. I understand that on a ship a captain outranks any royal."

Hancock raised an eyebrow, and then shrugged, gesturing the girl to come aboard. "Well, at least you have some manners. But you and these other two will be confined to my main deck as we go. Unless you wish to use the restroom, I suppose, in which case we can accommodate you. Since we are going to be in the Calm Belt riding the Tarai Current we won't run into any issues and it will be a very quick trip. I was just told it would take three hours? I wonder what strange wizardry has allowed that kind of speed..."

"For ships like yours, yes," Strawberry said, his soft voice at odds with his gruff appearance as he and Lacroix followed Vivi up the gangway, not answering Hancock's question.

“Good. I don’t want any of you aboard my ship for any longer,” Boa said, turning and moving to sit on her snake as it coiled around itself to make a makeshift throne. “Sail hands to the rigging. Sandersonia, cast us off. Marigold, stand by with the rowers.”

Tsuru watched the ship move off away from the docks, joining several others as they made their way towards the Gates of Justice, which would lead them to the Tarai Current and then to Impel Down. Already those doors had opened twice. The last time had let several sloops through to run ahead of the main fleet. Each was commanded by Commodores with orders to back up Cat Man and the rest who had already gone ahead. *You won’t have it all your own way Whitebeard. You are quite clever to somehow discover Impel Down’s location, but even with Garp throwing his weight into things, you won’t succeed! We will remove you and the Gura Gura no Mi, and one of the pillars of this pirate age will crumble, letting the marines grow into its place!*

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For her part, Gion had been told that Sanji and Zoro were making trouble in Impel Down. A part of her was not at all surprised by this, even if the fact that they were working together annoyed her to no end, given how they acted while aboard her ship. She was also furious that two of the prisoners she had captured and personally handed over to Impel Down had still been capable of causing so much trouble.

This was mitigated however by the fact that of the three bounty hunters who had helped take Sanji into custody, Skeleton Jack and Elizabeth were proving worth the effort of bringing them along. Now she stood on the forecastle of her ship, watching as Elizabeth ordered several of her Marines in bringing several crates aboard her ship. *Nets, I would never have thought of using nets on pirates, not en masse like Elizabeth’s doing at least.*

“Are you sure that the placement of those pintle mounts are good?” Gion asked aloud, turning to her bosun. “I don’t want them to interfere with the rigging if they fire.”

“So long as we have time to tie the sails down, we’ll be fine,” the man reported, saluting crisply. “Although hopefully we won’t need to use them. After all, only one ship of Whitebeard’s has been reported hasn’t it?”

“Perhaps. But remember, we might be facing Garp as well. And maybe Fire Fist Ace if Garp, Pirate Hunter, and Hell Cook have been able to free him.” Gion snorted, showing none of her concern about facing Garp, which she was truly having quite a bit of issue with. Gion knew him quite well, and honestly sympathized a lot with why he had broken away from the Marines in the World Government. But that was then, and this now, and taking down Whitebeard no matter how they did it, was surely worth any price. “We’ll need to harden ourselves against facing Garp. Tell the crew to remember that he’s no longer a hero of the marines. If he truly has decided to try and free Fire Fist from his just execution, he is far too gone to ever return to the fold.”

The man nodded grimly, and moved off to pass that word along to the other deck officers, and Gion turned back, looking towards the docks to await the order to cast off and join the rest of the fleet as it slowly made its way through the gates of justice, while Jack's music sang out around her, buoying her crew. Moving over to Elizabeth, who was helping a few of her other marines looking over one of the small cannons she had wanted to bring aboard. The small pintle mounted guns were practically useless against ships, but the efficacy of using them against airborne targets had never occurred to Gion or any other Marines before.

"Thank you for this. I swear, once your induction training is done, I'm going to ask for all three of you to join my crew," Gion said, patting Elizabeth companionably on the shoulder. "It would be good to have another few women around, although, speaking of, how is Ranko doing? I haven't seen her since we all left Impel Down."

"She is still quite dangerous to be around, she broke Jack's toe bones last night for trying to restring his violin in the room and then kicked him out so hard he nearly broke his skull," Elizabeth said regretfully. "I think the best thing we can do is just let her loose once were in combat, get everyone else out of her way. Just sort of point and say 'go, kill.'"

Gion snickered at that, nodding. Both Jack (Brook) and Elizabeth (Makino) had been kicked out of the room they shared with the redhead several times over the past few days, so that made perfect sense to her. The fact that several of the utensils that went with the food that had been delivered to the room had also been bent and used as weapons was further evidence of the redhaired young girl current attitude towards everyone and everything right now. "I remember the first time I had my period I was pretty much just as bad as Ranko seems to be, although I mellowed as the years went by. Still if you think that's best, we'll go with it."

At that point, Gion heard her voice being hailed by a nearby ship, and turned, marching to the edge and saluting crisply as she saw Akainu on the other ship's prow.

Moments later, the two bounty hunter entered the room they were assigned with Ranko who was of course, no longer present. Closing the door behind them, both of them breathed a little sigh of relief as they let their false identities fall away. "Why the guns, Makino? I realize that they probably won't bother Luffy overmuch, not with all that dodging practice he and the others have done, but even so."

"We needed an excuse to bring some extra bags of gunpowder aboard," Makino said, and began to pull several bags of said gunpowder out of her ki space, showing them to Brook before putting them back in. She had grabbed them from the storage locker when no one was looking in the tumult of their hasty departure. "They'll help us immensely when it comes time to change our colors and cause a distraction that will let us get away."

Brook winced a bit at that, but nodded. "I am not the only one who is feeling very bad about this, am I? I have fought marines numerous times before and always felt that marines

were somewhat like cats and dogs are supposed to be. But I've never rubbed elbows so to speak with the enemy as often as I have on the ship."

"I know. Gion's actually likable, as are most of the marines here. But we have a duty to the crew and to our mission. The marines being mostly good people obeying evil leaders is irrelevant. We won't try to deliberately kill any of the marines on this crew, but neither can we hold ourselves to nonlethal means."

Brook nodded grimly and the two turned their attention to Makino's plan.

OOOOOOO

Sadi-chan scowled as she found herself and her pets facing not Sanji, but the Knight of the Sea and Pirate Hunter. "Maaah, there goes any idea I had of using my body to turn your friend against you. That would've been delicious on many levels. Minotaurus, Minozebra, take on Jinbei, we'll be with you in a moment!"

With that, she lashed forward with her whip. Zoro instantly brought up his sword, thinking to cut the whip's tip away only to find himself staggering backward as his sword shattered under the impact of the whip. Now this was a regular sword, but even so, shattering the flick of a whip should've been impossible. "What the hell?"

Dropping the sword that he had been holding in his mouth into his now free hand, Zoro twisted around to bring up his blades to block a strike from the koala Zoan. This Zoan was using a massive cleaver, sharpened along one side but not the other. Built to size, there was a lot of weight and strength behind that blow, so much so that even Zoro was astonished and found himself flung back into the bars of one of the jail cells.

Ducking the next blow, the Koala Zoan's blade sliced through the bars where his head had been. Zoro noticed though that they didn't cut through as if the sword was supremely sharp. Rather, they cut through the metal because of how much strength was behind the blow. *Damn thing barely has an edge at all! But it's at least standing up to the bastard's strength, unlike the pathetic blades I've been using!*

Flicking both of his blades upward, Zoro shouted out, "Nigiri Toro!"

Minokoala blocked one of the strikes, but his sword was knocked out of position by the second, and the next second, Zoro's sword scored a deep cut on his front. A wound, which healed almost instantly as Zoro watched.

"Right, he's Awakened, fuck," Zoro grunted, dodging to the side as he sensed an attack incoming. He hadn't been involved in the ambush of the Rhino guy who had been following him, so seeing it this close was startling.

Sadi-chan's whip flicked in as she leaped onto a nearby roof, nearly catching Zoro on the backswing. And this time, Zoro was able to see that the whip, despite looking as if it was leather, wasn't. Instead, it was hundreds of tiny, tiny links in a metal chain painted to look as if it was leather. The tip, however, did not masquerade as leather, and was gleaming black with Busoshoku as it went past Zoro's head.

"Wait, how the heck is she making only the end of it gleam like..." Zoro cut himself often when Minokoala twisted around trying to bring his sword back to bear. Taking a page from his captain's book, Zoro dodged by stepping to one side then leaping up onto the blade. From there he flipped himself into the air as he brought his swords down and around in an attack. "72 Pound Cannon!"

His swords creaked and groaned, then began to disintegrate in Zoro's hands even as the massive air pressure attack flashed out, crashing into the koala. It hurled him back and through the side of one of the jail cells, but probably didn't do all that much damage considering how durable Awakened Zoans were.

Even as screams abounded from inside the jail cell, Zoro was able to turn his full attention on Sadi-chan, charging forward. Swords or no, he was certain he could beat her at least.

Grimacing, Sadi-chan used her whip, forcing Zoro to dodge, but not slowing his advance, instead using a parkour technique to run along the wall of another jail cell, then lash out with a punch towards Sadi-chan. Sadi-chan quickly whipped up her whip, coiling it around her arms as if they were bound together for a moment, whip and arm alike gleaming with Busoshoku. "S&M Shield!"

"And now, Twisting Barrage of Love!" Within the Busoshoku-clad whip, Sadi-chan's arms whirled wildly.

Zoro found his blow completely stopped, and then had to pull his arm back quickly as Sadi-chan's whip came undone from her arms, flicking up in a series of strikes at his body and arm. He was able to get some distance, but once more Sadi-chan's whip flashed in this time in an arc from the side. "Come darling, do you put have to play so hard to get? Would you like to see what it's like to be on the bottom? To feel the pleasure of pain?"

Shuddering, Zoro rolled to the side, just as Minokoala came back, attacking him from behind. But Zoro was saved by a blast of water from nearby shattering through several of the jail cells. Jinbei was fighting the two other Zoans nearby, the fight not effecting Zoro's thanks to the maze-like nature of the jail cells most of the time but this was a lucky moment.

Using this momentary break in Minokoala's attack, Zoro rolled away from another strike from Sadi-chan and then leaped upward, landing on a shattered bit of wall. Holding up his hands, he shouted, "Swords!"

Zippering through the battlefield with his brother on his shoulders, Luffy heard this from where he had just kicked Saldeath through the air as if he was a football. The youth had astonishingly been able to survive Luffy's first blow thanks to his Busoshoku, but it was very obvious that he had only recently started to use it, the technique breaking with two strikes from Luffy, even though didn't utilize Busoshoku himself. A final kick had sent the Chief Guard flying with a cry of shock, allowing Luffy to turn his attention to Zoro's shout.

He quickly divested three unconscious guards of their cutlasses, tossing them one at a time towards Zoro who we could barely see over the tumult of battle. *Damn, we really spread out when those rats and the Blue Gorillas charged us, didn't we?*

The three swords made a strange parabola in the air as they fell towards Zoro's current position, but he saw them coming, and jumped up, using Geppo to close the distance and get above Minokoala as it leaped up to the roof, bringing his sword around in a slash. The cut nicked off a piece of the roof directly above where Zoro had been, a second ago along with almost taking his foot off, but Zoro was still able to grab two of the swords in his hands. Twisting around, he grabbed the last one with his mouth, shouting, "Another three!" Right before he clamped his teeth down on top of it and finished his attack. "102 pound cannon!"

"Minokoala, use Fluffy Defense!" Sadi-chan shouted rolling behind Minokoala desperately. Minokoala obeyed, his entire body puffing up in a way that made him look even more like a koala than normal, albeit one fourteen feet tall, and quite fat on top of that. Indeed, it reminded Zoro for a moment of one of Chopper's forms.

It worked in the same way too, letting the Minokoala simply absorb Zoro's attack. Despite how powerful the whirling dervish of will and condensed air was, it only pushed the Zoan back several feet. But neither Minokoala nor Sadi-chan could take advantage of the brief moment where Zoro's swords disintegrated and he hadn't yet grabbed the next trio flung his way from Luffy out of the air.

Then he was on the attack once more, and Sadi-chan snarled as she rolled back out from behind Minokoala, her whip flicking out at knee height. "Minokoala, use Stunning Gaze!"

Minokoala shrank back to his normal body, except for his eyes, which remained wide and almost soulful, as they seem to stare into Zoro's soul. It was a gaze that almost fooled the observer into believing he was looking at a tiny, completely unassuming animal, one you could go up to and pet without any issue, the kind that you would cuddle and shower with affection.

That kind of attack would've worked on literally anyone else in Luffy's crew, including Luffy, who had a soft spot for certain animals. Any of the girls, even the hard-core tomboy Laki, would have succumbed instantly, while the boys would have been stunned into immobility. Even Chopper might have been convinced that he could make the other Zoan his friend.

But Zoro didn't, despite how well he tended to get along with animals. He stared back at Minokoala as he closed, then shook himself, and was able to dodge Minokoala follow-on attack, his swords up and thrusting forward. Though the strikes got through his opponent's defense, the points only very slightly stabbed into Minokoala's body, not even drawing any blood. He then dodged again, blocking the next series of attacks with his swords, grimacing as he could already feel them being notched by the strikes of the cleaver like blade in Minokoala's hands. "You are pure evil, woman! Getting him to do that kind of thing. And what is up with him just obeying your commands like this!?"

"Oh, you say the nicest things! I knew we were going to get along well." Sadi-chan laughed as her whip flicked out around one of Minokoala's strikes, catching Zoro on the shoulder with bone numbing force and sending him sideways, so that he was caught flat-footed by the next blow from Minokoala. A hasty Tekkai saved him, and instead, he was flung it back into a wall and into an empty jail cell beyond. "As for Minokoala obeying me, darling, he's **mine**! I trained him, I broke him and the others. All of them are my toys."

Rolling, Zoro kicked some of the rubble from the wall up and into Minokoala's face, and then grunted as he called on one of his own techniques, the gorilla strength technique. When next Minokoala's sword came at him, he blocked it with one of his blades holding it in check, as he pulled out one of his specialized styles. "Ichi Gorilla..." instantly his biceps and shoulders grew, almost abnormally powerful.

"Nigori-Zake!" With that, Zoro slashed up and around at Minokoala. His blades were covered with Busoshoku, and this time, Sadi-chan wasn't fast enough to order Minokoala to back off. Both blows caught the Zoan in the upper arm and wrist, slicing deep into his body nearly cutting his arm off at the shoulder, blood spurting out from the strikes and causing him to drop his blade as all ability to control his hand failed. Even so, both blades were halted by the bones within Minokoala's arm, causing Zoro's eyes to widen in disbelief.

Then he was flipping up and forward, bringing his last blade down in a cut. But Sadi-chan caught it with her whip, the tip of it catching Zoro's blade as it descended towards Minokoala's head. "No you don't! Minokoala, use Hair Needle!"

From the top of Minokoala's head, all of the tiny hairs started to solidify and then rocketed out towards Zoro's face and body, forcing him to use iron body again. This halted his own attack, and Sadi-chan followed up shouting, "Now! Minokoala, use Cling!"

Minokoala dropped his sword, and leaped upwards, grabbing at the bottom half of Zoro's body with both arms, ignoring his already healing wound. The grip crushed Zoro's legs and hips, the swordsman unable to get away, while Sadi-chan continued to shout orders. "Hammer Strike Combo, Minokoala! Don't let him go!"

With two of his swords having turned to dust once more and his last having been dropped from his mouth as Minokoala grabbed him, and forced him to gag, Zoro found his body

being slammed repeatedly into the ground as Minokoala tried to overcome his iron body.
“Tekkai!”

Between one blow and the next, Zoro switched from Tekkai seamlessly into Busoshoku. Minokoala raised him again, and Sadi-chan saw this. “Wait! Minokoala, let him go!”

Nevertheless, she was too late.

When Zoro’s punch landed, it had all of his strength behind it along with his Busoshoku, and finally an attack fully overcame Minokoala’s durability and burst Minokoala’s eye, causing the creature to stumble backwards and let loose the first sound it had made throughout the entire battle. “GuuuuOOOooooo!”

Minokoala released Zoro, both hands going up to his face. Zoro landed on his feet for a second, before jumping up to the nearby rooftop, shouting out for “More swords!” hoping Luffy heard him.

Luffy had just helped Clay and Buggy again, so he was spoiled for choice. Turning from where he had just killed a Blue Gorilla with punch to the back of its head, he swiftly flung a dozen of them towards where Zoro’s voice it come from, the swords arriving all around Zoro in a circle, tip first. *Kenbunshoku for the win, baby!*

“Nice! My delivery system is getting better with practice,” Zoro grunted, grabbing at the swords a loud, “I heard that!” echoing around the battlefield in response.

Grumbling, Luffy, who was carrying Ace on his shoulder now, turned his attention back to the enemies all around him, fists and feet flying almost automatically as he used Kenbunshoku to check on everything going on. Saldeath had yet to return from the distance Luffy had punted him. Jinbei was handling two of the Zoan guards slowly but surely, his own durability well up to facing them. Hannyabal was putting up a good fight against Sanji, but Luffy knew Sanji wanted to handle him on his own. Most of the animals had retreated or been beaten by this point, and Luffy’s depredations had winnowed down the majority of the Blue Gorillas by this point, the remainder concentrating on Jinbei for now for some reason. *Is it that they’re both blue? Weird.*

Zippering over to smash aside a manticore from trying to leap on Clay, Luffy was rapidly reminded of his current burden as behind him, his voice almost muffled by Luffy’s back, Ace groaned, “Oh God, I’m going to be sick. Geppo, *Blurg* Soru... *bluhhh* passenger...!”

Panicking Luffy reached up to toss Ace aside, uncaring of injuring him further. But a guard shooting at him and a Blue Gorilla charging at him caused Luffy to dodge instead. “You get sick on me, and I swear I am going to... Over the side man, over the side!”

Moments later Buggy, who had seen this series of events and was still cackling, was the target of some friendly fire in the form of a hurled stone. Only his ability to separate himself saved Buggy from a group of guards and a lone surviving giant rat.

Now armed once more, Zoro jumped down towards Sadi-chan, his Busoshoku fading away from his body but covered his swords once more. Sadi-chan's eyes widened in horror and she dodged to one side, her whip striking out as Zoro landed hoping to catch him off balance. It didn't, and she watched as one of his swords cut easily through her metallic whip, and the other sword was thrust towards her face. "Minokoala!"

Obeying her shriek Minokoala was there suddenly, blocking the blow with his own sword, which he had picked up, and Sadi-chan rolled backward, leaping to her feet and tossing her whip aside as she grabbed at a small cylinder at her side. Pulling it out, Sadi-chan enlarged it into a staff much like the one Nami used. Right up until Sadi-chan twisted the center most portion of the staff and both ends interrupted in small painful looking barbs. "Minokoala, use Greater Claw!"

Minokoala's shoulder and arm had entirely healed itself by this point, showing a speed that even Luffy would've found respectable. *I have to deal enough force to kill one of these things instantly to really put it down.*

Still, Zoro had been prepared to do that already, and now he backed away quickly, watching as the claws of the creature's offhand grew into the size of daggers, ready to rend and tear as it charged forwards once more. Zoro dodged to one side, watching as those claws bit deep into the wall behind him, then lashed out with his own swords, all of them covered in Haki once more. "Rengoku Oni Giri!"

Even as Zoro's blades cracked and fell to pieces, that technique carried him past the monster, the monster slashed nearly in half, and into Sadi-chan's face. She desperately tried to bring around her staff, which was glowing with Busoshoku.

Zoro's one remaining blade blocked it, and flung the blonde woman aside to crash bodily into one of the nearby jail cells.

Sadi-chan found herself inside the jail as the wall collapsed. Several of the prisoners inside stared at her for a few seconds before pouncing. "Woman! Oh My god, a woman!"

Beating off the prisoners who had never seen her before, she didn't work with weaklings, took Sadi-chan but a moment, yet that was long enough for Zoro to return to the circle of swords that Luffy had flung in his direction. Two Blue Gorillas tried to get in his way, but Zoro's one sword was enough to deal with them.

He grabbed two more up, and then pounced down from above, forcing Sadi-chan to dodge just as she exited the wrecked jail cell. His swords sunk deep into the floor, cutting the

stone in a circle as he pulled them out and attacked in one fluid motion. Sadi-chan was able to block his blows again, yet this time, her Busoshoku was completely overcome by his. Haki shaped into a cutting force met Haki shaped into extra armor and her staff was sliced into three pieces.

It slowed Zoro's strike enough that Sadi-chan was able to release her staff and flipped backwards and away, but Zoro didn't let her have any more time. The next second, the sword Zoro was holding in his mouth caught her high in the chest, cutting through her reinforced outfit and sending the sadist flying backward in a splash of blood and a scream had mixed pleasure and pain. "AHHHHNNNGHH!!!"

Staring at the woman as she fell to the floor and didn't move, Zoro slowly shook his head. "Well, at least she went out like she wanted..." Feeling a little dirty for some reason, Zoro turned away from Sadi-chan, looking back at the sliced-through Minokoala, who, although nearly cut in half by his previous attack, was still trying to push its upper body and lower body together to let it knit itself back together.

Zoro didn't let it have the opportunity though, and simply marched over, stabbing his sword deep into the back thing's skull and into its brain. "Well, that was fun."

"Ah, swordsman-san, are you done as well?"

Turning, Zoro watched Jinbei walk along a long furrow dug through stone floor, jail cell walls and people, judging from the blood splattered in places and the few bits of bodies Zoro could see behind him. Uncaring of that, Zoro merely nodded, jumping up to the circle of swords, grabbing the last group. "Yeah, I finished that blonde bimbo off and the Koala. Funny thing, she kept on shouting special attacks for the Zoan guy to do. Weird."

"Indeed? Strange, the two I faced had no special attacks. I think they took their training a bit too far. Awakened Zoans who still have all their faculties are much more dangerous than these berserkers," Jinbei said, shaking his head sadly, and Zoro nodded, understanding the other warrior's thoughts on that score. There was no honor in slaying a mindless enemy, only a sense of setting such a wretched creature free in the only way possible.

A second later, Buggy's head joined them, along with Luffy, coming in from another angle. Buggy looked much the worse for wear, his eye swollen shut and blood running down from his red nose, but Luffy smelled worse. Zoro and Jinbei both backed away hastily, and Luffy growled as he set Ace on the ground nearby. "Jinbei, you mind?"

"Certainly not." With that, Jinbei gathered water into his palm once more, only this time he just lightly tossed it at Luffy, who hit it with a tiny bolt of lightning, heating the water right before it hit him so as to not trigger the change. A moment later, some of the refuse from Ace's hurling was removed from Luffy's back. "Thanks. Sanji seems the only one still fighting, so let's..."

Luffy paused, smirking slightly and turning his head to shout, “You took your time Gramps, what, did you fall asleep mid fight again?”

“Oh shut up, brat! I stopped to eat,” Garp announced without a hint of shame as he landed nearby, having arrived in Wild Beast Hell a moment ago. “I was starving. The guards here don’t feed ya nearly enough. I ought to complain to someone.”

Snickering at that, Luffy pointed at a bit of blood on Garp’s chest and hands. “You got a bit of something right there Gramps.”

Garp looked down, and snorted a bit. “Meh, some of it’s Magellan. He was being a stubborn ass. As for the rest, well, a few of the prisoners on Blazing Hell tried their luck when I was getting some food.”

Even Ace goggled at that bit of stupidity and Luffy snorted before gesturing them to follow him as he led the way toward where Hannyabal and Sanji were still fighting it out. “And it’s your turn to carry Ace, Gramps.”

OOOOOOO

While Luffy was doing crowd control with Clay and Buggy, and admittedly doing most of the heavy lifting there, and Zoro faced off against the wily but somewhat over her head Sadi-chan, Sanji found himself in an almost even match with Hannyabal. He had thought that the guy would be something of a pushover but that was not the case.

The fight began with a wide-angle attack from Hannyabal’s double-bladed katana, shouting out, “Rankyaku Hell Storm!” This attack created several dozen attacks that flashed out in a series of waves at various angles, almost like Zoro’s Tatsu Maki. “Taste the fury of my Kessui! I will stop you here and become Chief Warden!”

Quickly retreating, Sanji flipped backwards onto his hands, whirling his legs in place. “Diable Jambe: Attendrisseur Virevoltant (Twirling Tenderizer)!”

The two attacks met, cancelling one another out, and both fighters broke off. Hannyabal instantly went for a thrust, going on the attack faster than Sanji could, although Sanji was able to flip to his feet fast enough to block. The thrust still hurled Sanji backward into one of the empty jail cell, and Hannyabal instantly moved to take advantage, only for Sanji to bounce back out with a shout of “Mutton Shot!”

Sanji’s flying form broke through Hannyabal’s attack, but he twirled to the side, dodging the mule kick and bringing his double-bladed naginata down. Sanji smacked the blow away with a Busoshoku clad hand, then was forced to dodge as the other end of Kessui stabbed down at him, Hannyabal redirecting his weapon and overcoming Sanji’s riposte with ease.

Rolling to one side, Sanji whirled into an attack, which finally got through, but Hannyabal tanked it with Tekkai, then twirled Kessui above his head before stabbing forward, the edge of his blade lined with Busoshoku. Leery of cutting Haki versus his own defensive style – something even Luffy was leery of testing without Chopper around – Sanji dodged, then dropped to his hands for a second, lashing out with a series of kicks towards Hannyabal's center of mass. "Côtelette!"

Hannyabal blocked those, and then the two of them were exchanging strike after strike, their styles noticeably different. Sanji bounced around the area, shifting from Geppo to brief uses of Soru and attacks with alarming rapidity, trying to keep from being pinned in place seeing how good Hannyabal was with his weapon.

But at range, Hannyabal proved he had the advantage with air pressure attacks, forcing Sanji to close. And while Hannyabal wasn't as good with Busoshoku as Sanji, he could call it up quickly through Kessui. He was also quite fast, although he did not seem able to use either Geppo or Soru. Indeed, his legs seemed to be a weak point, as he used no kicks at all, and while quick to dodge, wasn't as quick with his basic footwork.

The area around them was quickly smashed from the shockwave of their exchanges, including several guards caught in the area. Blue Gorilla, guards or animals were cut by razor thin air pressure attacks, tossed aside or broken by shockwaves. All the while Luffy zoomed around the area, slaughtering the weaker defenders with impunity.

"Poitrine!" Sanji shouted, getting another kick through Hannyabal's defenses. This time Hannyabal couldn't dodge or use his Tekkai, and was flung backward into the wall above the elevator, which cratered around him. But he got his feet behind him, letting him push off into his own whirling attack. "Hannya Carnival: Shonetsu Jigoku Guruma (Blazing Hell Wheel)!"

With that, the blades of Hannyabal's Kessui burst into flames from the air friction, the blades covered in Busoshoku under the blades. Normally this would have been enough to turn the tide, but Sanji laughed as he leaped forward, his kicks blocking Hannyabal's strikes. "You shitty devilman, you think a cook's afraid of fire!?"

"GRAAAHHHH!!!" Hannyabal roared, his strength battering Sanji's legs to the point that despite the fact they were clad in his unique brand of Busoshoku the chef had to wince in pain. "Skewering STRIKE!" One blow got through, and it was only Sanji's Busoshoku that saved him from being stabbed straight through. He grunted as he was flung back like a ball from a cannon to crash through a series of cages, smashing the people within them flat.

Nevertheless, Sanji was made of very stern stuff thanks to his training with Luffy. He rolled as the momentum of the strike faded, and a series of Soru moves dodged around the follow up Rankyaku strikes from his enemy. He was then in Hannyabal's face, a Gigot Shot upending Hannyabal in midair disrupting his Geppo. A blow to the chest was barely blocked by

a Busoshoku clad Kessui, but then it was Hanniyabal's turn to be hurled down into the ground, where he crashed into the ground, grunting at the impact.

The indent he made was about twenty feet across, upending several guards around him who had been fighting Clay. All of them fell to a series of kicks from Sanji and a second later Hanniyabal was forced entirely onto the defensive. A sweep from Kessui forced Sanji up into the air, but a stab was easily diverted, the still-flaming blades no match for Sanji's Busoshoku and sheer fearlessness when it came to fire.

At last, a blow to the head got through before Hanniyabal could use either Tekkai or Busoshoku. "Reception!"

The blow caught Hanniyabal behind his neck and hurled him forward into a nearby wall where a Mutton Shot caught him in the side of the head. That blow was blocked by Tekkai but Hanniyabal was off balance and shot sideways to crash into the open area in front of the elevator. A Rankyaku caught Sanji before he could push forward, and both of them faced one another across that opening, breathing deeply, glaring in hatred at one another. Neither were that wounded yet, but Sanji had taken a few whip strikes and hits as he traveled with Sadi-chan and during his time on the Fifth floor. Whereas Hanniyabal had taken the worst of this fight so far, and was looking decidedly ragged around the edges. It wasn't lost on Sanji either that he had stopped using Busoshoku on anything but Kessui's blades.

However, the fight had lasted long enough for Luffy, Clay and Buggy to deal with the majority of the rest of the defenders, and for Zoro and Jinbei to finish off Sadi-chan and the beasts. Now with Garp having reached Wild Beast Hell, the group came together once more, landing spread out on the floor and roofs of the very few jail cells near the elevator entrance that had survived thus far. Zoro had even had the time to strap several sword sheaths to his back carrying spare blades, not wanting to rely on Luffy any longer.

"Yo, Sanji, hurry it up man. We're kind of on a timetable here," Luffy quipped. Although his tone was joking, the glare he sent both combatants was not.

Hanniyabal glared at him, his ire up, and his pride driving him even in the face of Straw Hat Luffy, the Shichibukai-slaying rookie, the Knight of the Sea, and Garp the Fist. He began to twirl Kessui to either side, creating a twirling dervish as he stood to block the way into the elevator. "NO! I will not, Impel Down will not be defeated like this! For the good of the world, for our pride as the premier prison of the World Government, you will not pass!"

Staring at the man, Luffy had to admit to some sympathy. Standing against the odds come what may was something that resonated with him. But even so, Luffy was now very concerned about how long this was taking, and what reinforcements the WeeGee could send forward. "Ya got balls, my guy but this ain't a fight you can win."

Between one eye-blink and the next, Luffy disappeared, leaving a crackling afterimage in his place. Then he was next to Hannyabal, his arm turning into lightning, intercepting Hannyabal's body. Hannyabal tried to use his Busoshoku to defend himself, yet he had pushed himself too far against Sanji and couldn't pull up the will necessary. He could do nothing as Luffy's arm intersected his body. "Shock Touch."

"GAGAGAGAGAAAAAAA!!!" Hannyabal screamed, before slumping to the ground.

Staring down at the guy, Luffy shook his head. "Damn, he's tough. I thought that voltage would be enough to kill him but he's still breathing."

"Best to leave him that way then," Garp advised, landing next to Luffy and gesturing around them. "Like it or not, the majority of prisoners here deserve to stay right where they are. I was almost tempted to go down and kill all the prisoners on the sixth floor myself, but I ain't an executioner. That and even for me it'd take too long. No, best to leave enough of the guards alive they can regain order eventually after we leave."

"Whatever Old Man. Let's just..." Luffy was interrupted at that point by the whirling of the elevator, indicating it was coming down. "Huh. Sanji, since I ended your fight, would you do the honors?"

OOOOOOO

Inside the prison's elevator, Vice Admiral Mozambica cursed worriedly, shaking his head as he dropped the communication snail back into his pocket. *Dammit! And there's no way I'll be able to get back out there to do anything. But if we can get a handle on this riot, get the prisoners back into their cells and some order restored, then Magellan will be able to deal with that mythical beast, at the very least, wherever the hell he is. That second ship might be a little bit more difficult.* To the best of his knowledge, Magellan could not use Geppo and thus would have a problem to close with an enemy ship that simply kept its distance. Mozambica wouldn't, on the other hand.

He looked around at his men who had entered the elevator with him, fifteen of his finest sharpshooters, two of whom were armed with Seastone bullets. Seastone bullets were incredibly rare, as working with the material on that small scale was extremely difficult, and the bullets left residue in the muskets that made them unusable after only two shots regardless of the material of the rifle barrel. But the marines had them for emergencies in Marineford, Impel Down, and Mary Geoise, as well as one or two other bases. Considering everything going over

"You know the drill. Fire at any of the prisoners who seem to be using a Devil Fruit. Take them down hard. Hannyabal and the other guards are holding as best they can, but if Garp is really involved, none of them will be able to do more than slow him down. That leaves it up to me and Magellan. Take on the others and let us handle him."

Those were extremely good, well thought out orders. And they came apart at the moment the elevator opened on to Wild Beast Hell. A flashing series of Rankyaku style attacks came, causing the Vice Admiral to shout out "Watch out!" as he used Tekkai to take the blows, grunting under the impacts. *There were so fast I couldn't even use my Busoshoku!*

His men weren't so fortunate. Caught in the elevator, and with the vice admiral only able to protect so much of the entryway, several of the air pressure attacks went around him to catch his Marines. The strikes hurled them into one another or into the sides of the elevator, knocking several of them unconscious and smashing the weapons out of the hands of many more.

"Now would you look at that," a gravely spoken voice, and the Vice Admiral glared as pirate hunter Zoro snarled at him, while around him several other prisoners stood amidst the ruins of the prison guards. "If it isn't the asshole who tried to get in a good few kicks at me and the Love Cook. And since he's already had his bit of revenge, I call dibs."

The Vice Admiral's eyes widened in horror and shock as Straw Hat Luffy jumped down from one of the nearby prison cells, tossing aside a suicidal manticore as he did, his stammer interrupting whatever response Hell Cook might have made, his eyes wide with horror. "You, you can't be alive! You're dead! The Shichibukai, they..."

"Heh. I've always wanted to say this. The news of my demise was greatly exaggerated," Luffy quoted, grinning as he said it.

"I think you've got other things to worry about, Boya," Garp said, trooping around the side of one of the buildings, with the other escaped prisoners with him.

The Vice Admiral gaped at Garp, and then At Ace, on his shoulder, while Jinbei shook his head. "There is no way you can even think you could win this, marine. Even without me or Garp here you would be able to stand aside and live."

The Vice Admiral gulped, but still charged forwards, shouting out, "F, for absolute justice!"

Shaking his head, Luffy's Sorued forward, dodging around Mozambia into the elevator. "We're going on ahead, Zoro. You deal with him, and then meet us up on the surface." He smirked then continued, "I doubt even you can get this kind of direction wrong."

Sanji laughed, pointing at the doors into the elevator. "Hah! Now, lost child-kun, what you do in the big moving box is you push the up button and go to the first floor. Do you know your numbers?"

"SHUT UP, Love Cook!" Zoro shouted, taking the time to snarl back at his rival, as Mozambia had made the mistake of going for Garp of all people first. Garp just smashed the

Vice Admiral aside into and through one of the cages on this floor with a single punch, and joined the others in the elevator.

In the elevator, Garp joined his grandson with Ace on his shoulder, complaining now not only about the fact, he was being lugged around like a sack of rice but also the fact Garp smelled. "I mean seriously, you old fart, couldn't you figure out some way to clean up or at least hide the smell!? You reek!"

"Bah, you're no spring rose brat! You smell like someone threw up on you," Garp growled, actually smacking Ace on the ass, to the startled laughter of everyone else and a squawk of pure outrage from Ace. "Any more complaining, and I'll put you over my knee and paddle your ass like I had to do to you and Luffy when ya were younger."

"You, you only did that because we stole your food old man! Don't make it sound like you were punishing us for our benefit or some such shit!!!!" Ace exclaimed, Garp interrupting him by another smack on the ass. "You..."

Snorting, Luffy gestured upwards as the elevator began to ascend. "Better stop while you're ahead, bro. In fact, why don't you give him to me, Gramps. You lot go ahead. I'm going to head up, take out the communications room and see if I can find a key for Ace's handcuff. I think I've done a pretty good job of keeping any word of my presence at least from getting out, and I want to see if we can continue with that for just a little while longer. I'm hoping that they haven't called for help from Marineford, but I doubt we're going to be that lucky."

As Garp handed over Ace, Ace became serious, lightly swatting Luffy on his back, the only kind of thing he could do at present with how weak the Seastone cuff made him. "You might be able to get a call out from here. Best to tell the rest of the crew how things have gone, get them moving, you know?"

Nodding, Luffy pulled out the communications device in his pocket once more, talking into it and hoping that Robin would answer. He hadn't liked not being able to call her before this, and worried something had gone wrong somehow. *I know I sensed them with Kenbunshoku a few times on the trip from Enies Lobby but still...* "Robin, everyone, we're coming out. We picked up a few old friends, and two new allies. One of whom you will never guess the identity of in a million years."

Thankfully for both Luffy's heartrate, Robin replied almost instantly. "This is Robin. We read you. We're attacking the prison now, destroying the battleships mooring here. We've destroyed five, sunk them entirely. But one of them was able to pull away from the dock before we could finish it off. The Marines don't have enough troops aboard though to really fight the ship as well as they should. And I... Oh no."

"What 'oh no', 'oh no' is not something I want to hear right now Robin," Luffy growled as the elevator doors opened on the topmost floor of Impel Down.

"I think a marine admiral just arrived! Something flashed for a brief moment and now beams of light seem to be attacking a group of other pirates we were able to steer into attacking Impel Down! And us!" There was a loud crashing boom, and a shout of pain, before the communications gear and off.

Luffy stared down at the Den Den Mushi in his hand, scowling in anger, worry for Robin and the others overriding the questions he had about this other band of pirates or what else was going on.

"That would be Kizaru. He's the only one who could get here so quick. He's the Pika Pika no Mi user," Garp explained. He then grinned, holding up a fist. "Good. The only one I fought was Magellan, the rest of you were all freaking and fought everyone else down there. I need some screen time."

Luffy scowled, fighting his instincts for a moment, which were to go to help his crew of course. But after a split second, he was able to use Kenbunshoku to sense how his crew were doing. Nami was panicking, but only Laki felt like she was in pain at present. "Fine, you can have the wannabe flashlight."

After a second, Luffy realized this might be a good idea in the long term too. Against someone like a light user, and especially a marine admiral, Luffy might be forced to break out all of his tricks, including his own Devil Fruit. *And the long I can wait on that, and the larger target I can find for that reveal, the better*, "Buggy or Clay, can either of you direct me to the communications center? Garp, Sanji, Jinbei, get out there and help the crew. And gramps... you better not let that Aho hurt my crew anymore or you'll answer to me.

Jinbei nodded, while Garp grumbled about how his grandson shouldn't be giving him orders. And yet, he did head out towards the entryway to Impel Down rather than deeper into the logistics area, breaking down several doors and walls that were foolishly placed in his way as he did so.

Carrying Ace, Luffy used him to block the Surveillance Mushi from seeing who he was for a second as he turned away from Garp and the others. A brief use of Kenbunshoku and precise lightning strikes later, the corridor along the route he was going was devoid of security cameras, and Luffy made his way along quickly, smiling suddenly as he felt Garp facing off against Kizaru. *Well, that's one problem solved*. Still smiling, he decided to needle his brother a bit. "Pity you can't heal yourself like I can, or Gramps would be able to break those Seastone cuffs of yours."

"Oh shut up! I don't know anyone who can heal fast as you can, bar awakened Zoans or Marco. And he's a Phoenix mythical-type Zoan!" Ace grumbled in his ear. He was no longer being carried like a sack over his shoulder, but being given a piggyback by his little brother was almost as humiliating. "You're the only one of us three who're able to do that kind of thing, despite you trying train us when we were younger."

"Hey, I was able to teach Makino how to use ki space. And Sabo too... although why he always put it in his hat, I'll never know. Seems to me you're just whining because you can't do it," Luffy taunted. "Seems to me you just didn't try hard enough."

In actuality, Ace could use some measure of ki healing, and did also have a small weapons space. But he'd never trained with it as hard as Luffy had, reaching Busoshoku first of the three brothers. And he had left his training fall entirely by the wayside when he found his Devil Fruit, believing it and his Busoshoku were enough. So there was a real bite to Luffy's words as he finished speaking, and Ace had to just grimace and take it. He really had kind of rested on his laurels when it came to the strange tricks Luffy had figured out with Haki.

"How's Makino doing by the way? She honestly didn't seem all that much stronger from the last time I saw her back on Dawn Island when we met in Alabasta," Ace asked in a somewhat weak attempt to change the subject.

Still, considering what they were doing right now, Luffy let it go. Smacking his older brother over the head for being complacent could come later. "She's fine. I finally convinced her to start taking training seriously, and Makino's shown a marked improvement. I fear for Shanks when she catches up with him."

The two of them shared a chuckle at that, although Ace's was noticeably weaker than Luffy's, as his voice was in general thanks to his Seastone cuffs.

Luffy raced down the corridor, passing several doors marked with indicating they were barracks rooms, including one that had the door smashed off its hinges, and a large hole in the outer wall. "Wonder what happened there?" Luffy muttered, before shaking his head, and glancing sideways at his brother. "By the way, how did you get captured? I know the guy that you were going after it was made into a Shichibukai, and I figured he had something to do with it. But we couldn't figure out what actually happened."

Ace scoffed. "Bah, Blackbeard put up a fight, that's true but I was still within inches of ending him when I was blindsided. You know I've never had much skill with Kenbunshoku, anyway, I had Blackbeard down and was about to finish him off when Doflamingo suddenly appeared. I was already so battered by the fight against Blackbeard **and his crew**," Ace emphasized, trying to gain some of his big brother cred back, "that he was able to knock me out with a few kicks. Next thing I know, I'm trussed up in chains and Seastone handcuffs and being handed over to the guards here."

"Doflamingo, huh?" Luffy mused, thinking about that for a few moments before shrugging his shoulders. "Well, that's another name for my shit list."

"Oh hell no! If I see that string bastard, I'm going to take him out! I have just as much anger towards him as I do towards Blackbeard! They're both mine, hands off," Ace growled out.

That was the strongest Ace had spoken since the first few moments after their reunion down on the sixth floor, and Luffy was pleased to see it. He was even more pleased to see the door ahead of them marked with the sign 'Communications and Security Department'. He paused there, leaning Ace against the wall. "Wait here, hopefully I'll be right back with those keys."

Ace nodded, grimacing slightly at how much Luffy had been doing and was still doing just to get him out of a mess of his own making. Garp was admittedly a happy happenstance, but all of this had been done to save Ace, even Luffy's faking his own death and he knew it. He would never admit it aloud, but Ace was kind of in awe of what Luffy had been able to achieve, and vowed to take his own training more seriously from now on until he was in a position to pay Luffy back for all this.

As Ace was thinking that, Luffy had moved to the door, kicking it open lightly so that it only came off of its hinges and collapsed rather than was flung off with bone crushing force. On the other side, he found a central room with many other ones leading off of it. Several guards were pointing guns at him, having taken cover in the doorways to the other rooms this one led into or behind their chairs, although two of them were cowering away from the door. All of them gaped at Luffy, shock and horror going showing on their faces as it had Hannibal and Mozambique.

More importantly however, were the several Den Den Mushi around the room, and the fact that one of them, the woman Domino had raised a communication Mushi raised to her mouth as Luffy entered. "Repeat we are invaded! No sign of..."

That as far as she got, before a lightning blast from Luffy's finger streaked across. The strike turned the Den Den Mushi in her hands to charcoal almost instantly, causing her to yelp and release it quickly as it got too hot to handle.

Just as quickly though she grabbed up a gun, a pistol from her chair and held it out with both hands towards Luffy. Pushing through her own shock at Luffy's being there, as it was very evident she recognized him from his wanted poster, Domino stammered "M, Monkey D. Luffy! You're under arrest!"

"Really?" Luffy actually smiled, shaking his head slowly, buoyed further by the feeling of Kizaru getting smashed further away from the Resolve. "I hate to tell you guys and girl..." He paused as he saw that one of the other operators in the room was also a woman, and bowed politely towards her. "Sorry, girls. But I really doubt whatever is in those pistols of yours is going to matter much to me. But if you keep on pointing them at me, I'm going to assume you're ready to face the consequences."

As he spoke those words, Luffy's eyes became hard, and one hand slowly began to crackle with lightning. Seeing that, several of the operators dropped their guns, and

surrendered. But Domino and a few others were made of sterner stuff. "Who would ever surrender to a pirate!" she shouted and fired.

However, before she could even pull the trigger, Luffy had crossed the intervening distance in a Soru charge. Grabbing the gun, he pointing it up towards the ceiling, letting it go off to no effect as several more muskets went through his former position. A second later, he wrenched the pistol out of Domino's hand, and tossed it at one man who had just pulled out a dirk and made to charge him. The butt end of the pistol hit the man in the forehead, causing him to cart wheel in place for a second before slamming unconscious to the ground.

A finger flicked Domino in the forehead sending her back into her chair, and Luffy was then across the room next to the other three who had fired, grabbing their guns out of their hands and crushing them into a ball before dropping it at their feet.

"Anyone else?" Luffy asked, shaking his head. "Again, commendable bravery, and I can't really fault you for not wanting to surrender to pirates under normal circumstances. Especially pirates who have escaped from your little hotel-de-sade down below. Still, I'm not here to do anything to you. Your equipment on the other hand..."

He looked around the room, and quickly found the other Den Den Mushis, and began to thoroughly trash them all, including the one connected to the main switchboard, which was easily the largest Den Den Mushi he had ever seen. Regardless, Impel Down no longer had any way to communicate with the outside world, although given what Luffy was sensing with his Kenbunshoku, which could reach several miles out to sea, it was probably too late to do anything but keep Luffy's presence itself a secret.

Good. That'll give Hancock a chance to really screw with the Marines when she breaks off. And when I do go all out, it's going to be freaking magnificent!

By this point in the operation, Luffy was kind of getting tired of needing to hold back, and he also wanted to prove himself a bit. In Luffy's mind, he hadn't done as well against Hancock, Kuma, where Moria as he should have once he revealed his lightning powers. He hadn't really used large-scale attacks despite there being several times he should have, which was an area that the Goro Goro no Mi lent itself to, as Enel had shown. Since then, Luffy had practiced a few times with larger scale attacks and was eager to show off the fruits of his labor.

Domino sat in her chair watching all this in shock and dismay, fearing for when Luffy would turn her attention on her and her workers. None of whom had moved from where they had been hurled by Luffy's gentle taps moments before. Even the ones in the doorway to the other communications sectors simply cowered as he passed them by to destroy all the communication Mushi within those rooms too.

But to her astonishment when Luffy was finished, he moved over directly to her and asked politely, "I don't suppose I could convince you to tell me where you keep the keys for your Seastone handcuffs, could I?"

"Are you going to torture me if I don't tell you pirate!?" Domino practically snarled, trying to bluff it out, but now very, very fearful of what would happen to her.

"I'm not that kind of pirate. Or the other kind you're actually thinking of," Luffy answered, still treating Domino with kid gloves. *While I ain't Sanji, three are some lines I ain't about to cross, and hurting a woman outside of combat or training, especially one so much weaker than me just isn't going to happen.* Then too, Luffy wasn't the type to hurt people outside of a fight anyway. "I can probably find where they are with a map, and look, there's one right over there on the wall. All you'd be doing if you answered my question is just speeding things along a little. And the faster we leave, the faster you lot can start rebuilding," he wheedled.

Domino snorted harshly at that. After a breakout like this, the mystique of Impel Down was broken, and considering how she had no communication with any of the other floors except for Crimson Hell, she didn't even know what was left to rebuild. Indeed, the fact that she couldn't hear the shouts and happy, joyful screams of prisoners who had fought their way up to the surface somewhat surprised her. "But the more time I keep you here, the more time it gives the marines time to arrive in the strength to stop you. Even with Garp the Fist on your side you can't face the might of the entire marine fleet!"

"Watch me." Luffy snorted. "Now, are you going to actually tell me where the keys are, or do I have to search for them?" *Huh, I wonder, with my lightning-assisted Kenbunshoku, could I maybe tell if someone is lying? I can certainly make out her heartbeat... something to think about later.*

Domino clammed up at that, but Luffy shrugged, and just turned away. His Kenbunshoku still feeding him information, he made certain he had destroyed all the communications snails in the room, and then moved over to the map, looking at it closely. "... Don't tell me that there all the way down in Magellan's quarters. That would really piss me off."

Again Domino said nothing, watching the pirate carefully like one would a wild animal, not letting any of her smugness show. But again, Luffy didn't match her expectations of what a pirate would be like. Instead, he made a thorough search of the communications sector for any places the keys could have been hidden. When that didn't pan out, he sighed, grabbed Ace and, sticking his head in from the doorway sent a Luffy-style™ smirk at Domino. "Well, we'll be going now. Hope to never see you again at all that."

Then Luffy was gone, and zooming away quickly leaving a shocked, and now quite impotent, Domino behind.

Within moments, Luffy was back at the elevator. From there, he made his way down to Blazing Hell, frowning as he heard a loud clunk from directly below and a yelp. "Huh... wonder what that was."

Shrugging, Luffy set that thought aside and waited until the elevator opened on the fifth floor, where Magellan's office and quarters were. Stepping out, he found the entire floor still in revolt. Without Sadi-chan or the Beast Guards, the other guards were struggling to keep the prisoners in line despite the fact that the vast majority of them had been in cages when Garp had used his overdone attack on the floor.

A quick application of a new crowd control technique Luffy had thought of however finished that issue. Holding out his hand, Luffy gestured, and webs of lightning woven into being above him, looking for all the world like a fisherman's net, any arcs of lightning going from one end to the other.

It always amazes me that I'm able to mold lightning like this, to shape it as I want, not as nature should dictate. There are still some limitations, but still, Enel was able to make himself an entirely different body for goodness sake!

With a gesture, Luffy sent the lightning down towards the floor, catching everyone from one end of Blazing Hell to another in its web. "Sparkling Web!"

The web of lightning electrocuted everyone it touched, sending them into paralysis and then unconsciousness like someone hit by a taser. Admittedly, Luffy couldn't quite pull off the control needed to make it entirely nonlethal, but with both of these groups, he didn't care overmuch about collateral damage. He just didn't want to kill everyone.

Mindful of what had occurred earlier with his passenger, Luffy shifted Ace off of his back and into one hand, holding him like a grocery bag for a moment almost as he took to the air once more and Sorued forward. Judging by how green the back of Ace's neck was by the time they found Magellan's quarters, that was good thing, and Luffy left him behind to throw up anything else he had within his stomach as he entered Chief Warden Residence.

Magellan's quarters were a trio of rooms, a bedroom, office and bath. The office was large, with decent furniture but nothing to write home about, and a ton of paperwork waiting to be done. The bedroom similarly had a nice bed, but that was about it. There was no sitting room or simply a place to while away the time, and none of the rooms seemed very well lived-in. Or so Luffy thought until he stuck his head into the bathroom, whereupon he blinked in shock. "Good grief! This looks like it was taken straight out of a vampire's palace."

Everything was a dark color, but was really well made, dark woods furnished to a magnificent shine, dark tiles on the floor, magnificent bronze sconces holding little red lamps in places. The toilet was also huge, as befitting someone of Magellan's size, the seat and the back

of it lined with fur. Luffy could even see some kind of controls next to it, and had to fight him his curiosity as to what those controls were for.

And to his surprise, it turned out the bathroom was also the place where the keys to the Seastone handcuffs were kept. They lined a wall at the far end right next to a large bathtub, which seemed strangely utilitarian compared to the toilet.

Staring at them, Luffy was grateful that none were missing, and grabbed them all quickly, only to feel weakness hit him. "Fuck they're Seastone too." Hastily he dropped them before hopping into the shower, changing into his female form before taking the keys up once more.

Ace blinked as he saw his little sister coming towards him rather than his brother, until she held up distinctly greenish looking keys. Then his eyes widened. "You have got to be kidding me. Your Devil Fruit power doesn't carry over to your curse form? What the hell bro, that's not just broken as fuck, that's impossible!"

"Take it up with Ivankov. Hell, you can do that right away if you want, she's got her own little Okama Paradise hidden away from the fifth floor," Luffy quipped, kneeling next to her brother, and quickly going through the keys one after another. Seventh finally worked on them, and Ace and Luffy both watched as his Seastone handcuffs fell away.

Instantly, Ace felt better. Not one hundred percent by any stretch. He hadn't exactly been fed very well, and while his wounds from his fight with Blackbeard and his concussion from Doflamingo's tender mercies had been seen to, only the more serious injuries had actually healed, his own very rudimentary ki healing not up to the task of healing them all. But he could feel his body slowly recovering from the sustained contact to Seastone, and after a few seconds, he was able to stand on his own two feet and his hands slowly turned into fire as he began grinning wildly.

They turned back into flesh and bone and Ace grabbed Luffy in a hug, nearly causing Luffy's bones to groan as he put all his strength into it. "I don't know how I'm going to pay you back for this little brother but I will!"

"Don't get all maudlin on me now, bro!" Luffy grumbled, trying to push out his grip. "We're Monkeys, we don't do emotions."

Ace laughed, and released Luffy, shaking her head as Ace's body turned into fire for a moment losing any hint of his normal humanity. When he returned to a physical body, Ace was wearing his regular outfit, complete with hat.

Staring, Luffy shook her head. "You're going to have to teach me how to do that. I mean, I can get my clothes to come with me in my lightning form, and that includes my ki space, but still I can't just change my clothing like that."

"It took me a while, but I figured it out eventually," the older boy admitted, then gestured Luffy back inside Magellan's living quarters. "For now, I think you might want to change back into your male body. We'll probably need your firepower given how long this escape has taken."

Grimacing, Luffy nodded, and, buoyed by the knowledge Garp was out there helping her crew, headed back into Magellan's bathroom. Watching, Ace couldn't help himself. "And maybe take the opportunity to clean up a bit more? You stink. Whereas I was able to change my clothing and..." he laughed as a table flew at him from within Magellan's quarters and turned away, humming happily. "Now. Food."

OOOOOOO

Kizaru didn't truly like traveling long distances with his light-based powers. It was often very hard for him to figure out where to land as he could only travel in a straight line. Light could not bend by itself, after all. But Impel Down at least had a mirror array set up to let him travel there immediately. Calling ahead and getting it set up took fifteen minutes, but then it took barely any time at all for Kizaru to arrive.

The mirror array was set in the tallest building on the surface, a conical tower set in the center of Impel Down's visible area. Kizaru bounced off one mirror, then canceled his logia powers, in midair. Using Geppo, he hopped in place, looking down at the burning, smashed wreckage of more than half of the Marine ships stationed at Impel Down. He also saw the giant dinosaur tearing his way through the entryway, and slowly shook his head. "No~w, no~w, that won't do at a~ll. The Whitebeard Pirates shouldn't try to sne~ak in like this, they should come and me~et us at Marineford instead. Still, if the~y want to start the war here, I suppose I can oblige th~em."

With that and still hovering in the air thanks to Geppo, he pointed his fingers down towards the ship that had done most of the damage to the Marine vessels. "Bang, bang."

From his outstretched fingers came streaks of light, which flashed down impossibly fast, impossible to dodge, crashing into the conning tower and middlemost gun turret. The turret, which was made of metal, was burned straight through, the edges of the tiny hole smoking with the heat from Kizaru's laser-like attack. But the Adam wood of the conning tower surprisingly took the shot from Kizaru's other finger, burning very little, but not being seared straight through. Such was the toughness of Adam wood.

Grimacing, Nami reported what had happened to Robin in the bridge, where she was sitting in the captain's chair, her eyes closed as she concentrated on all of her Devil Fruit constructs scattered across the ship. Controlling that many arms was bad enough without needing to add using her eyes at the same time. "I don't know how many of those kind of strikes we can take, and I doubt that marine admiral is going to keep on using the same attack anyway. We need to retreat!"

Nodding, Robin barked out orders. "Perona, send some of your ghosts up at him! Chopper, hand over the tiller to Laki. Laki get in here, the turret's no defense against that kind of attack! Chopper, get ready to repel boarders if that marine comes down for some up close and personal combat."

"Fine, but I don't know what you expect me to do if he does!" Chopper grunted.

"Hold his attention while I go for a Busoshoku hold and then a kill," Robin replied simply. "If he holds still for just a moment while in my range, I might be able to kill him."

Somewhat flummoxed by the tiny amount of damage he'd done to the strange looking ship, Kizaru began to bombard the ship with the same kind of attack as before. Small bullet sized bolts of light hit the ship from stem to stern punching through the metal, searing through several of the secondary guns where they stuck out the side of the ship. They even perforated the main railgun, which was honestly useless without Luffy around.

Meanwhile, Laki exited the aft most turret, leaping away from it, and then using her skates to wildly dodge the incoming fire from the Admiral. Despite that, and the fact Kizaru was, as was usual for him, not taking this seriously, one of the shots took her in the shoulder, searing straight through and sending her crashing to the deck with a howl of agony. But small, almost ephemeral hands appeared, grabbing her and pulling her towards the hatch leading down into the deck.

"You okay, Laki?" Eve asked, her head pushing out from the wall.

"F, fine, I think, the, the light seared the wound closed. Ugh. I'll have Chopper check me out when this battle's done." Grimacing, Laki pushed herself to her feet, and made her way to the bridge. By the time she arrived, Laki had pushed aside the pain for the most part. She likened it to being hit by an impact dial and flame dial at the same time or one of Enel's attacks. Wounds she'd had before.

Above, Nami had moved from giving Chopper directions and quickly began to twirl her Clima-Control staff as fast as possible. Thankfully, the original fog she had made hadn't had time to dissipate, and with more cold balls floating around quickly came together.

"A sm~okescreen? No, a fo~g screen. Now that wo~n't do." Kizaru held up a hand, which turned to light for a moment as he thrust it forward. "Pheasant Strike."

A bird shaped creature of light appeared and zoomed forward, burning away the fog, and crashing into the stern of the pirate ship. Again, the Adam Wood absorbed the strike, but somehow this attack had even more heat and light pumped into it than the bird should have. A large fire began there, forcing more of Robin and Eve's attention away from everything but the bridge and the engine room.

There was a loud crash, and Kizaru turned his attention away from the pirate vessel for a moment to where the pirates had landed.

Kizaru was assuming they were all one crew. He hadn't read any reports about the Everlasting Resolve and so didn't recognize it. And through the smoke and fire of the destroyed Marine battleship he couldn't see the other captured ship that Usopp, Alvida and their crew had used to get here.

All Kizaru saw was the giant dinosaur had succeeded in smashing through the gates and was now charging forward towards the secondary gate into Impel Down proper. "Now that just won't do." Turning his attention in that direction, Kizaru zoomed down with Geppo, kicking the animal in the head at the speed of light.

Usopp cried out in agony as he was flung sideways, slamming into one of the wings of the prison complex that was visible above the waterline. He crashed through it, finding himself dazedly looking around at a series of beds and pinups featuring women dressed in various costumes, mostly uniforms. "Barracks..." he groaned, and then yelped as another kick caught him in the tail, sending him flying and over and over the battered building and to the other side of the island.

Ironically, he crashed directly into the ship he had arrived in, smashing into and nearly through the actual keel as well. He could feel the water beneath heave and a portion of his body was already getting wet from water coming in where the ship had begun to spring leaks.

Cursing, Usopp changed back into his normal body, only to nearly blackout as the pain of his wounds hit him far harder in his normal form than in his dinosaur body. He collapsed to his knees, then pushed himself upright quickly, as still more water began to appear along under his feet. It wasn't enough yet to make him start losing control of his body but it was close. "Come on, you are the great pirate Usopp, you can't die here, you are going to be the greatest sharpshooter in all five seas! Usopp Charge!"

With that, the long nose pirate quickly made his way up and onto the main deck and then on to the docks.

Above, Kizaru had already turned away. Flashing forward with all the speed of a beam of light, he landed in front of the group trying to charge into the prison, lashing out with a kick that sent a crucifix-sized shape of light into the charging pirates. The sight of one made his eyes widen in delight, but not enough to deter him from his next action. "M~y, m~y! I didn't think there were many attractive Pirates beyond Hancock. Su~ch a pity."

The light seared through several of the pirates cutting them in half. As laid back as he sounded, Kizaru was not pulling his punches. But the light attack slipped around Alvida, affected by her Sube Sube no Mi, the segment of the light which hit her directly seeming to have been absorbed by the woman. Much to her own surprise, given the way she flinched then reached

down to the area struck. The area there seemed far redder and seemed hot to the touch given how quickly she removed her hand, but that was all.

Kizaru blinked in surprise, and smiled. "Well, well. I suppose I'm happy about that, a pretty woman like yourself should not die like the rest of these dogs." With that, he zoomed forward, and lashed out with a kick, aiming for a portion of the area that still looked red to the touch. This worked, and Alvida found herself flung backward blood gushing from her mouth as something inside burst. Landing, the momentum of the blow almost rolled her into the ocean, but instead she stopped half-on, half-off the docks, her upper body dangling off of the edge as her body shut down from the pain. "There. That should keep you out of action."

Looking around, Kizaru lashed out with two other attacks, finishing off the still standing pirates, nearly slaughtering them to a man before looking over at the nearest Marine officer, who had been gang rushed by the pirates previously, Now the man pushed their bodies off him and stood up, saluting. "I can handle things here. I think you all should get into Impel Down and join the guards there. I want to know what is going on in there too."

While his clothing could travel with him, Kizaru could not carry anything else with him when he used his light-based powers to travel. A Den Den Mushi did not count as clothing to the Devil Fruit alas. So he had no idea what was going on inside the prison since preparations had begun for his arrival. Still, Kizaru knew that was more than enough time for Garp to break out if he really was trying to.

The Marine officer nodded, and hastily began to bark out orders as Kizaru once more took to the air, bouncing up and over the outer wall of the prison, leaving Alvida and the rest of the dead or dying Pirates to be collected by the marines after the fight ended. Once in the air he frowned, staring at the wall of fog that had begun to billow out around the prison once more, despite it being a bright sunny day.

"You can run, but you can't hide..." he muttered, before a ghost burst out of the fog in front of him. Kizaru gazed at it unconcerned until it passed through his body. A body that was made up of light particles for all it looked solid. Yet somehow the ghost affected him despite that, attacking his spirit.

Kizaru's eyes slumped still further, and he suddenly lost altitude. A few moments later, he thumped to the top of the outer wall of Impel Down. Laying on his side, Kizaru began to stare down at his hands as he crouched there. "I, I want to be a moonbeam. Light is far too bright for me..."

Out at sea, Perona's eyes widened as she saw this from one of her hollows, and she pumped her hands in the air. "Horohorohoro! Yes! Negative hollows for the win!" Hastily she conjured up still more, directing them to just keep on passing through Kizaru every few seconds, renewing the negative impact to his emotions. "I think I've got the logia user corralled!"

“Well done,” Robin said from the bridge, her voice tinny with distance and the communication leading up to the crow’s nest, a certain wistful tone entering her voice. “Pity we’re so far away I can’t take advantage of it. Keep it up. Eve, take over shooting the guns, I’ll concentrate on keeping the fires under control and rearming the secondaries. Nami, you can cancel the fog for now. Just be ready to use it again at a moment’s notice.”

“NO! Keep it up!” Perona suddenly bellowed into the intercom. “One of the other Marine officers is helping that Admiral now. He’s using that leg thing, the Rankyaku, and is dissipating my hollows before they can hit the Admiral again. He’s up again! And he looked pissed!”

Grumbling, Kizaru’s scowled and hopped into the air. *I was complacent, I didn’t think that kind of thing would be able to affect me so much. Some kind of mental devil fruit? Bizarre and worrisome. But now that I know it’s out there, I would wager Busoshoku can block it. And if they are physical enough for their forms to be dissipated by Rankyaku hits then my light strikes should go right through them.*

Once more faced with the wall of fog, Kizaru relied on larger than average light attacks, aiming randomly through the fog at where he could sense a few pirates thanks to his Kenbunshoku. He was rewarded with still more damage to their ship, and one cry of pain, a man’s cry of pain, he thought. But that was all he could make out through the fog, until behind and below his current position, there was a giant booming noise.

Turning back towards the entryway leading into the prison, Kizaru’s eyes widened.

Jinbei, the Knight of the Sea strode out, water already beginning to form into his palm as he glared at the surrounding Marines who had been making their way towards the entrance. He was flanked by Hell Cook Sanji, who was looking a little beaten around the edges. With him came two unknowns, although the appearance of one of them, blue hair with a big red nose, made Kizaru think for a moment about something Akainu had said. *Damn it, I forgot the main reason I was here, not to destroy that ship but to stop the prisoners from getting away!*

Before them however raced someone even fiercer, the sight of which nearly pushed every other thought else out of Kizaru’s head. Garp the Fist was free and working with the pirates who had just rampaged their way through Impel Down.

At the sight of the Hero of the Marines, every Marine there froze for a second, even Kizaru. And that was all that Garp needed to get into the air and bounce his way towards Kizaru, almost too fast for even the light user to track. Quickly he lashed out with a kick, before finding it blocked with an armor technique fist, before he had to dodge another Haki covered fists that would’ve smashed his head clean off. “Yo Borsalino, still taking life a little too easy?”

“Garp, I was un~til you arrived. This is going from bad to w~orse...” Kizaru answered, then began to flash around Garp, trying to use his greater speed to good advantage, but finding

Garp was able to keep up with him since Kizaru had to slow that speed down tremendously lest he just go haring off and away from the battlefield. *This is not going to be fun but I have to slow them down for the others.*

Kizaru estimated he'd been fighting for around thirty minutes, maybe as much as forty since arriving. That meant at best, he might have to hold the fort another fifteen before the first echelon of reinforcements arrived: Cat Man, his passengers and Aokiji. Aokiji could slide his bike along very fast, and Kizaru knew Cat Man was easily the best runner among the giant admirals. Combined they could do the impossible and travel faster than even a sloop in the souped up Tarai Current. Cat Man would be next to useless once he arrived, but they could do it.

Knowing that, for the first time in this fight and indeed in many years, Kizaru got serious as he turned and raced away, forcing Garp to work hard to keep up with him. As he went, Kizaru launched attacks at the other pirates, and began to duplicate himself full body light particle versions flashing out to attack the pirates. Dissipating quickly, they still struck so fast few could block them.

The name of the game is dodge! Kizaru thought, zipping to the side only to find Garp following like he too was moving at the speed of light, somehow using Kenbunshoku to sense Kizaru's actions before he actually thought them up. The two danced around one another as Kizaru's doubles continued their attack whenever he could launch them out. *No, not fun at all! But I have to hold the line!*

Luckily for Kizaru, two battleships were still fighting the pirates at this point. And divining what Kizaru was doing, they fell back to long-range bombardment, avoiding the arriving Shichibukai and the others for now. Their long-range bombardment didn't do anything to the pirate ship, but it kept them from leaving, forcing the pirate to concentrate on defense. *You had best hurry, Aokiji, because we won't be able to hold the line here for long!*

OOOOOOO

The fight with the Marine vice admiral was somewhat disappointing for Zoro after facing Sadi-chan. For one thing, Mozambica made the mistake of trying to get past Zoro to engage Garp. When they engaged, Zoro realized instantly that while Mozambica used a sword, it wasn't anything to write home about, just a regular sword. Within a few blows it shattered as Zoro's Busoshoku overcame Mozambica's, rattled as he was by being so easily dismissed by Garp, although Zoro's two blades also broke like so much kindling. *Damn it, I have to get better at controlling the amount of will I put into my swords. I should be able to hold the swords together for longer, but my will just overcomes their physical frames!*

Despite his swords falling apart, Zoro, who was ready for it, was able to land a kick that sent the other man slamming back into the walls into the elevator shaft. The blow burst the two doors inward, sending door and man into the far side of the elevator shaft.

There, the marine admiral barely had time to use his Geppo before Zoro was on him again, having drawn two more swords from sheaths across his back. "At least put up some kind of fight. Where's all that arrogance gone, huh?"

Desperately, Mozambica called up his Busoshoku, and the two of them slammed into one another in the elevator shaft. Both of them used Geppo and simply bouncing off the walls, to try to get around one another's defenses. The enclosed space though worked badly against Mozambica. Worse, without his sword, the Admiral was at a distinct disadvantage. Swiftly, his Busoshoku faded under the repeated hits from Zoro's blades, while Zoro's blades had to be replaced every ten minutes or so.

And then, Zoro's ears picked up the sound of something above them.

Before Mozambica could figure out what was coming, Zoro lashed out again, forcing the man back into one of the walls. "Later, fool."

With that, Zoro bounced back out of the elevator shaft, lashing out with a Rankyaku as he went. That last blow forced Mozambica to use Tekkai, and Zoro watched as he did so, only to look up in shock as the elevator came down on top of him. Mozambica tried to Soru forward, but another Rankyaku stopped his progress enough for the elevator to catch him in the back, pushing him downward. "Damn you, pirateEEEEEE!"

Zoro watched for a second, but Mozambica was trapped. The man tried to punch through the bottom of the elevator, which was the thump that Luffy heard, but his Busoshoku was gone, his willpower having been drained throughout the swift, brutal battle with Zoro. He couldn't overcome the metal of the elevator, and cried out in rage as he was pushed further down through the elevator shaft, not even able to use Geppo.

Zoro watched through the still open doors as the elevator went past, then shrugged his shoulders. "Well, that was... quick. And the elevator shaft is still there so..."

Even Zoro knew that he needed to go up to escape the prison, after all. He did so now, hopping into the elevator shaft once more and using Geppo to bounce his way upwards until he ran out of up and found himself facing another pair of doors. Slicing them open was easy enough, and then Zoro was back on solid ground. He grimaced though as both of his swords began to fall apart. *Dammit, and those were the last pair I had on me. So much for not needing the captain and his Haki space around.*

Zoro paused as the sounds of combat reached them, distant at the moment, but still audible. He tried to figure out which direction was coming from but failed. Sighing he looked around, the hallways in every direction, muttering, "So this is the way out? Or is that just what they want me to think? With how they move all the trees around on Freezing Hell, maybe they do the same thing with the walls here?"

Then he looks down at his one remaining sword and sighed. *Then again, I can't be so quick to use this sword until I have replacements on hand. Guess I've only got one choice then.*

With that, he marched resolutely down the way that Luffy had moments before. Ignoring the signs as lies, he finally found a barracks that had a hole in the wall, and he grinned cheerfully to himself, throwing one fist into the air. *Hah! That works. Despite them trying to turn me around again and again. Although, I wonder what caused the hole.*

Soon, he was outside, and looking around, saw several bodies lying to one side, nearly hidden by the bulk of the building he'd just left to his right. Moving in that direction, he was gratified to see several swords lying about, and grabbed them up, before staring up as a series of sonic booms went off high above him. In the air, he spotted Garp fighting someone else, someone tall with long legs. All around the guy versions of the man appeared made of yellow light, which flashed out of sight in one direction as Zoro watched.

Seeing the outer wall, Zoro made for it, leaping up onto one of the battlements, taking in the scene in a few seconds. Battleships burned or were showing only their masts above the water along the wharfs. Out to see two other ships were firing at the Everlasting Resolve from long-range. Both of them were battered, lost masts and large portions of their hulls visibly missing even from here. One was also burning, but the other was still in the fight. Above the Resolve, he could see Chopper, Sanji, Jinbei and Laki along with several hundred ghosts bouncing around the vessel, defending it from cannonballs. And to Zoro's intense surprise, there looked to be a few marine officers attacking them.

From where he stood, Zoro could not see it, but the marine's efforts had prevailed. Mad Cat had ruptured something inside keeping up with Aokiji, but he had done it, he had gotten two handfuls of normal-sized officers within range to close with their own Soru. None alone were a threat to the Shichibukai or the others out there, but combined they were serving to hold them in place. *And Ace and Luffy aren't even out here yet!* "Fuck. There goes any hope of getting out of here clean."

Zoro then thought about what he just said, and guffawed, shaking his head. "Yeah, that was never going to happen, was it?" With that he hopped through the air, and began to make his way towards the ship. While ice began to appear on the horizon...

OOOOOOO

Thankfully, it didn't take more than five minutes before Luffy and Ace came out of the prison complex side by side.

The few marines still conscious in the area had been coming together slowly, keeping out of the battle of the titans above them, while hoping to head in and help the guards to keep the other prisoners in line. But now they all stopped and stared, faces whitening in horror at the

sight of Fire Fist Ace free. Few of them recognized Luffy, but his presence next to Ace added still more horror to the moment to those who had seen his bounty poster.

Standing there, Luffy took in what was happening with his Kenbunshoku in an instant, spending more time sifting through the information than he did to sense it all in the first place. "Okay, we have... Kizaru fighting Gramps up above us. They seem to be moving away from the rest of the fight. I think it's Kizaru who's doing that, but whatever he's out of the fight for now. One... damn that guy almost literally killed himself, I can feel how much pain that giant guy is in... anyway, we've got a dozen or so marine officers fighting it out with my crew and Jinbei. And just over the horizon..." he paused then, being in such a way that his teeth gleamed for a moment, like a predator looking at a particularly delicious meal, "we have someone out there I've met before. Aokiji. If Blackbeard and Doflamingo are yours, then that guy is mine."

"How about you go and check on your ship and your girlfriend." Ace snickered, before cracking his knuckles, then stretching his arms above his head. "Heh, who would have thought you'd be the first to have a steady relationship. And while you're doing that, I can reintroduce myself to the Marines. I have a lot of pent up aggression to get out."

Luffy nodded absentmindedly, and went back to analyzing what his Kenbunshoku was saying as the two of them hopped into the air and made their way towards the ship, with Ace using his own flying fire form to keep up as he couldn't use Geppo all that well. Zoro had already reached it, and was doing what he could to beat off the number of vice admirals that were attacking the vessel. Jinbei, Sanji and Chopper were also already there, battling it out in the air above the ship, along with Perona's ghosts, which were doing a great job of evening the odds along with Jinbei's hit and run tactics from underneath the ocean. Luffy watched in fascination as Jinbei did something that created a giant tornado of water as he jumped out of the water near his ship, the water cascading everywhere and slamming three vice admirals away, putting them in the perfect position for the secondary guns to open up on them. It didn't do much damage but it forced them to use Busoshoku and scatter further.

However, as Luffy and Ace approached, the vice admirals saw them coming, or perhaps sensed them with their own Kenbunshoku. While Luffy knew that a Kenbunshoku user could somehow swamp another's in hand-to-hand combat, at this range he had little idea how to do it, even if his devil fruit powers gave him a home-field advantage.

Regardless, they all retreated towards the dying giant who, like Aokiji had been making for the prison. They had obviously hoped to bypass the ship entirely and deal with the escaping prisoners, but had obviously changed targets before this. Now they regrouped in the face of the threat of Ace and his companion, although Luffy doubted that any of them could recognize him from so far away or through their own Kenbunshoku.

Sanji and the others soon saw Ace and Luffy coming and whooped in delight. Luffy raised his hand, acknowledging their voices and as he came close enough for those on the ship

to see him, a mouth appeared a hand appeared on one's shoulder, startling Ace to let out a yelp.

A mouth appeared on the palm of that hand, which leaned in, kissing Luffy on the cheek. "Good to have you back, Captain~," Robin said, her tone somehow an alloy of seriousness and coquettishness. "We've been dealing with the various vice admirals and commodores for about fifteen minutes by the clock, and the ship is not exactly doing well right now."

"Start to retreat away from Aokiji and the rest. Have Nami pick a direction and let's go. Even if we have to come back through the Calm Belt somewhere else to get back on the Grand Line somewhere, it's better than staying here," Luffy ordered as he landed and made his way into the bridge with Ace staying by the doorway for a moment and the rest of his crew dropping down onto the main deck. "And if Aokiji comes after us... well, I would like to remake his acquaintance."

Before Luffy could head down to take over the engine room, he paused, staring out past Aokiji, his Kenbunshoku reaching out much further than anyone else's. Much further indeed than anyone in even a crow's nest could see. For the first time, Luffy pushed his range out to the max without hitting anything that blocked it and he did not like what he sensed.

"Belay that Nami." He looked over at Nami, who looked almost as happy as Robin was at his presence, flashing both of them a smile. He could sense that Chopper was down in the hold wounded, but was already making his way up to the bridge. As was Laki, both in terms of being wounded and making her way up the conning tower to the bridge.

Yet there was no time for anything else right now. "Make for the prison, and then around it. We have incoming, and they're coming at us from a kind of crescent shape to try and box us in."

Nami's eyes narrowed at that, and she too looked out the bridge's viewports. "They must have a lot of coal-powered ships then. The Tarai Current isn't what I'd call narrow, but it isn't big enough to allow ships to create a crescent shape around us like what you're describing."

"I don't know about that, but I do know what I'm sensing. A **lot** of incoming opponents," Luffy said grimly, shaking his head.

As the Everlasting Resolve obeyed Luffy's orders, Ace, denied easier targets after the marines retreated, had been keeping an eye on Aokiji and the man he recognized as Kizaru. Kizaru and Ace had tangled once, and Ace hadn't enjoyed the experience, although he had walked away from it. Their powers were pretty much literally unable to do anything about one another, so it came down to fighting ability and Haki. *Now in that fight, my money will always be on Gramps. If Kizaru doesn't just bounce away from him with his light powers, he's neutralized for now.*

Aokiji on the other hand could do something to Ace with his powers, snuffing out his flame given enough time and effort. Ace could hold his own there if at full health. But at the moment, he had more trust with his Busoshoku against Aokiji than Kizaru. Although that was based on rumor rather than having actually tangled with the other admiral before.

“Hey, Luffy, you might want to look at this.”

Aokiji had not been idle, while Luffy was giving out orders and having a very small reunion with his girlfriend. After summoning the other marines back to his position he had retreated at an angle away from the Everlasting Resolve, creating a kind of triangle between his current position, the Straw Hat’s ship and Impel Down. Now ice began to grow out from what had previously been simply a moving platform. The coldness of the ice also grew exponentially as Aokiji began to create what amounted to a large artificial iceberg, the ice reaching down into the water and spreading out then rising. This also froze everything within, including several dozen sea kings and the iceberg quickly spread towards the Everlasting Resolve.

“You know, it wouldn’t be fair to just let him get away with creating some kind of frozen tundra all around us like that,” Luffy answered. “So you can say hello, or I can introduce those assholes to my main gun. Them or the other assholes out there past the horizon.”

From the hatch leading further down into the ship, Chopper asked innocently, “The main gun turret has a hole in it, doesn’t that matter?”

Luffy raised an eyebrow, and disappeared from the bridge for a second, reappearing next to the most forward gun turret. Laying a hand on the metal by the series of tiny holes that Kizaru’s sniping had caused, Luffy pulsed lightning out into the metal. The metal that made up the gun turret began to heat up, and under his direction, the heat went where he willed it, repairing the damage. And then Luffy was back, the gun turret quickly cooling behind him. “No.”

Ace snorted. “Show off!”

With that, Ace bounded out of the bridge, bouncing up into the air through Geppo for a moment until he was well above the ship. Raising his hands above his head, Ace created a massive fireball, larger than the Everlasting Resolve, before sending it streaking down towards the ice that was rapidly reaching for the Straw Hats ship. This was quickly followed by several more tossed at the already dying giant and the other vice admirals, who scattered.

While the other vice admirals around him were forced to deal with the strange emotion affecting ghosts that they had been dealing with since the battle began, Aokiji grimaced, using ice to defend himself and them from the fireballs. He watched as Jinbei blasted out from the ocean once more, shattering it in several places with his fish man karate or joining the other criminals on the ship he recognized as belonging to the Straw Hats. *Which makes sense, given*

that their Captain still seems to be alive. “The reports said that Straw Hat Luffy was dead, that Hancock finished him off. So either Hancock lied, or...”

At this point, Luffy had reached the main engine room, and lights in the bridge lit up, as the engine, which had been running on coal power, began to run on electricity. The difference was profound, and Eve whooped, appearing in the center of the bridge next to Robin, cackling and dancing in place. “Oh hell yes! That is the juice! It feels so much different in comparison to coal power!”

Nami was about to reply on the until a large hand pulled open the door, and she flinched a bit at seeing a fishman into the bridge, although she regained some of her poise as he bowed towards the four people already within. “Permission to enter the bridge?”

“Permission granted, Knight of the Sea,” Robin answered formally with a faint smile. “It is nice to finally meet you.”

“Nico Robin?” Jinbei’s eyes widened, but he smiled back politely even as he made way for Sanji and Zoro to enter the bridge. “I see that the posters do not do you justice.”

“I wouldn’t say that in front of the captain, he might be the jealous sort,” Laki said as she rushed past the large blue-scaled individual, shaking her head at the site of another fish person, only the third she had ever seen. “The Blue Sea is really a strange place.”

She raced out onto the bridge, the words of Nami following her out. “So says the girl with angel wings who comes from a flying island!”

As Laki went, she saw Ace continually sending out giant fireballs towards the ice that was still closing with them. The ice was melting quickly, and the ice user was now concentrating almost totally on defense, but the sight of the two elements at war with one another mesmerized Laki. Within five minutes, the ship had made enough distance that they were almost equidistant to Impel Down from where the ice users still stood unmoving and only then did she get shocked out of her stupor.

Eve’s head appeared on the turret ahead of her, scowling in irritation. “OY, get a move on Laki! I want to fire this bad boy!”

Chuckling at the bloodthirsty ship spirit and also castigating herself for getting lost like that, Laki clambered into the gun turret, and reported in with the intercom that she was ready.

“About damn time!” Perona’s voice cut in over the captain’s. “I’m seeing sails out there. Lots of them!”

“Perona, use the sextant up there, give us some coordinates on those sails. The main gun can shoot further than the horizon by a long margin before losing its momentum. Line up a

shot on one of those distant ships and let's say hello, Laki," Luffy ordered. "We'll make them spread out with a few dozen shots at long-range, and then while the rest of you start to retreat, I will go say hello to Aokiji. I don't want to leave without giving that guy a punch or four hundred."

"Aye, Aye, Captain," both women responded, even as Nami began to argue with Luffy's plan to say hi.

There was a deep thrumming noise as Laki lined up the railgun on Perona's direction. She had randomly picked one near the edge of the Tarai Current, assuming that the ship, which was belching steam, was a more viable target than a sailing ship if they wanted to escape through the Calm Belt. "Locked on!"

All around her, the railgun began to buzz and hum with energy and a little marker nearby began to rise. When it hit green, she matched the firing buttons, and a cannonball about half the size of a normal one suddenly flashed out from the railgun at insane speeds. "FZZZARK!*"

The Cannonball zoomed across the intervening distance, faster than most of the vice admirals and certainly all of the lesser officers could see, and then it crashed directly into one of the Marine battleships, coring it from prow to aft. Wood, metal, or flesh, it didn't matter to that weapon, and it had hit so fast that even Sengoku, aboard his flagship the Divine Wind could barely track it. "What, what was that!?" shouted one of the officers nearby.

"A secret weapon of some kind. But it can only hit one ship at a time. Order the fleet to spread out further. All officers to take to the air and close!" Sengoku ordered, grim-faced but grateful the troops, which had been sent ahead, had done their job. "And someone get me a report on what that was, dammit! I want to know who we are dealing with here."

Only two people aboard the marine fleet recognized that attack. Skeleton Jack looked at Elizabeth, who nodded minutely. And as she moved to help with the guns, Skeleton Jack joined the group heading below to bring out more bags of gunpowder.

Unfortunately for Sengoku, things were about to go from bad, to a hell of a lot worse.

High, high above the battle developing below, floated the Moby Dick flagship of the Whitebeard pirates. And not just the Moby Dick. No, every single ship of the Whitebeard pirates or their allies floated there, a massive flock of ships, floating through the air thanks to the power of Shiki the Golden Lion, one of the most notorious pirates of the Gol D. Roger era. Once, he had been a rival to both Whitebeard and Gol, only to eventually lose to Gol in such a way that the Marines had been able to capture him. Ten years after that, Shiki become the first person to ever escape from Impel Down.

It'd taken him some time to recover from that, and Shiki had not been too happy when Whitebeard showed up out of nowhere, showing that his secret plans for a comeback hadn't been secret enough. But now, looking at the chaos already going on below, and that strange extremely sleek, fast ship, the Flying Pirate laughed. "Shihahaha! Well now, this is one hell of a show!"

"Gurararara! That damn brat did it! He got into Impel Down and got my son Ace free! And it looks as if rumors are right about Garp turning on the Marines too. Pity, I would've liked to fight both him and Sengoku, but I suppose one out of two won't be too bad. Gurararara!" Whitebeard stood next to Shiki at the prow of his ship, his massive Bisento in one hand, a wild grin on his face.

"I think ladies and gentlemen," he shouted in a voice that practically didn't need the Den Den Mushi that one of his officers was holding out towards him to be heard throughout the fleet. "That our cousins the Straw Hats have done their bit. But they seem to be a little bit over their heads now. Let's say we even up the odds, shall we?"

There was a roar from several thousand pirate throats as he said that. And controlled by Shiki, the entire fleet began to descend towards the rapidly dispersing Marine fleet.

Down below, Sengoku had sent everything forward he could. Given that both Kizaru and Aokiji had been stymied, it was clear that Ace, Jinbei and Garp were free, to say nothing of the odd ship or the other pirates with them. Now, Akainu and every officer who could use Geppo over any distances were in the air and moving forward. Even the Pacifistas and the K9Ms went forward. There was no time for secrecy now, he had to bring more power to a point before the enemy ship could get away.

In actuality, the Everlasting Resolve could have left the entire marine fleet eating her bow waves. But they did still have to at least pick up Brook, Makino and Zoro's swords. And Luffy knew that he had been recognized, which probably meant that Hancock would be forced to fight her way out if the marines began looking for scapegoats. As they always did.

But faster than Sengoku would have believed possible, the pirates fired that horrible gun again.

This time, he had been ready for it, and had been able to intercept whatever it was with an air pressure attack. But the impact of that had blasted the mainmast's and rigging of dozens of ships apart, including his own flagship. If not for the Tarai Current they would have been becalmed in the Calm Belt. Thankfully, the overpowered current was still carrying them forward.

It was clearly evident that they needed to close with that ship, and Ace was doing a good job of keeping Aokiji and the officers with him already from doing so. Regardless though,

the main strategy remained the same, spread out, come at the strange ship from as many angles as possible and destroy it and all those aboard.

Something about the shape of that ship was bothering Sengoku, something about it had been in a report he'd read once. But he couldn't bring it to mind, as furious as he was at current circumstances.

One officer had however, once they closed enough to actually do so. Aboard her own flagship, Tsuru had now begun to work things out in full. Orders were quickly barked and she turned her ship towards the Kuja pirates, ready to demand some answers. While nearby, Gion's ship was rapidly being suborned from within.

Back aboard the Everlasting Resolve, Luffy had just left the engine room again, turning over the engine once more to coal power. The enemy fleet was so slow they had a good chance of getting away so long as Aokiji couldn't capture them in his ice. Now was the time to reintroduce himself to that particular admiral up close and personal, while they waited for Makino and Laki to make their getaway. After that, they would have to see, as the mass of incoming Geppo using officers was a threat but Luffy knew they could run rings around the enemy ships at least.

He explained all this in a rush to Robin and Nami on the bridge, but before he stepped out of the bridge, he blinked, and stared directly above them. "Okay... That is entering with style I have to admit."

Sengoku remained aboard his flagship, barking out orders to each ship and spreading out the formation of both officers and ships equally, while sending a group of K9Ms and Pacifistas rushing them into a position on the other side of the main body of the fleet. He however looked up, as something above them and obscured the sun, only for his eyes to widen behind his wire-rimmed glasses, and a golden hue start to appear on his skin as he began to grow in automatic response to the shock of what he was seeing. "No, no, no! Inconceivable! They, they cannot have worked together, not Whitebeard and Shiki!?"

Eyes aboard practically every marine vessel turned up upwards, as shadows and then these silhouettes of ships appeared, rapidly descending towards the ocean. Shrieks and shouts from the captains went out, and ships began to dodge every which way, trying to get out from under the descending vessels. Several of them failed, and pirate vessel and Marine ship met, one falling directly on top of another. Others landed nearby, and pirates leapt across on ropes or through the air onto marine vessels. Still others landed within firing distance and dozens of individual battles began scattered across the ocean around Impel Down.

But the Moby Dick simply landed with a splash that sent water hundreds of feet into the air directly in front of the Divine Wind, blocking its way forward. Its guns fired to either side, destroying two more Marine battleships, the officers aboard having joined those going forward towards the original pirate vessel carrying that deadly gun. Both of those vessels began to sink,

riddled near the waterline, with dying Marines trying their damndest to keep their ships afloat or abandoning ship as best they could.

Standing on the prow of his ship, Whitebeard ignored the tumult all around them, laughing as he pointed his Bisento across at Sengoku, who glared back at the Yonko with fury. “Yo, little Buddha. You didn't think that I would miss this dance, did you? Gurararara!”

End Chapter

And here we have the end of the escape from Impel Down arc, and the beginning of the War of the Best. I think considering that this whole arc is just going to be one **gigantic freaking battle** that it will be broken up into smaller chapters like in this one, simply because there will be so much going on scattered across the ocean that I will have to write out.

That is also why I didn't go into detail about the fight between the two Zoans and Jinbei. I honestly couldn't see a way for the two of them, as mindlessly brutish as they are, to really fight Jinbei on an even footing. As for Mozambika, well, I suppose you could say he might've gotten a concussion from Garp before he started to trade blows with Zoro, LOL. I just don't think all the vice admirals are created equal, as mentioned before.

Not that the heroes will have this next arc all their own way folks, don't ever think that. Nope. Sengoku has some surprises ready to go, and given that the battle's happening on the ocean, nothing is going to be simple in this battle.

Since this has been updated in September, it won't be on the poll for October, but will return for November. If you wanted to win, you know what to do, and I hope you all will join me again for the next chapter, when lightning strikes the Blue Sea...