

Chapter 49

6th of April Impel Down

Mister 3 wanted to cry. The iron chains chafed his wrists, their cold bite a constant reminder of his helplessness. The boss would come to help him, right? He had to believe it. After all, he had not betrayed his true identity to the Marines... Yet, a gnawing doubt festered within him, a creeping dread that whispered abandonment. He had witnessed firsthand the fate of those who tried to defy or betray the boss. Miss Merry Christmas—her death had been a grim spectacle, a warning etched in blood. Mister 3 knew better than to speak of the boss to the marines; silence was his only shield. Still, it offered little comfort as he was led before Judge Baskerville, the monstrous magistrate whose three faces echoed a grim chorus of judgment and condemnation : GUILTY!

Now, he stood at the gates of Impel Down, the infamous prison whose name alone conjured images of despair and torment. The massive iron gates, encrusted with salt and barnacles, creaked open with a sound that seemed to herald doom. The prison ship that had carried him here rocked gently against the dock, a stark contrast to the turbulent emotions within him. The intake area was a chamber of cold stone. The air was thick with the stench of sweat, blood, and something far more sinister—fear. Well, urine. His belongings were stripped away, cataloged by grim-faced jailers who moved with mechanical efficiency. A Den Den Mushi recorded his image, its unblinking eye capturing the look of desperation that marred his usually composed features.

“State your name and crimes,” droned a guard, his voice devoid of empathy.

“Mister 3... for being a Baroque Works agent, piracy, and loan sharking without paying a cut to the World Government,” he replied, his voice barely more than a whisper.

“Level Two,” the guard announced, his words sealing Mister 3’s fate.

The initial interrogation was a brutal affair. Questions were barked at him, each one a dagger aimed at his already frayed nerves. He answered mechanically, each response met with a fresh wave of physical and psychological torment. By the end of it, he was a quivering mess, his body and mind teetering on the brink of collapse. Why were they interrogating him after his trial? It was unfair! Unfair!

From there, he was dragged into a sterile, cold room where the air smelled of antiseptic. Rough hands stripped him of his clothes, the fabric tearing as it was yanked away. He was left shivering and exposed under the harsh, fluorescent lights. The guards handed him a coarse, ill-fitting prison uniform that scratched at his skin. But the worst was yet to come.

"We've a problem with heating the water, so we'll have to do it with the good ol' method", a guard say.

Mister 3 was forcibly restrained on a metal table, the cold surface pressing against his back. He struggled, but the bonds held firm. A masked figure approached, wielding instruments that gleamed ominously in the light. The procedure was clinical and excruciating. The pain of forced sterilization seared through him, every nerve screaming in agony.

Descending, they reached the second floor, Wild Beast Hell. Here, the air was thick with the growls and roars of ferocious creatures. Manticores, sphinxes, and other grotesque beasts prowled the area, their eyes gleaming with savage hunger. Mister 3 was shoved past them, the beasts' eyes following him, promising a swift and brutal end if he dared stray.

Finally, he was brought to his new home: a cell. The door clanged shut with finality, and he started crying again. He drew his knees to his chest, wrapping his arms around them in a futile attempt to find some semblance of comfort. The boss would come, he told himself. He had to believe it. But as the hours dragged on and the reality of his situation sank in, hope began to feel like a distant memory, swallowed by the darkness of Impel Down.

He knew perfectly well the Boss would not come.

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Moria had been waiting, shrouded in the shadows of Mister 3 - he had swapped with the Shadow Servant he had put in him when they first met about two hours ago. The silence was broken only by the occasional distant scream or the clink of chains. He couldn't afford a single mistake. He counted down the seconds in his mind, each one stretching into an eternity as he prepared for his escape plan. If things went awry, he needed to teleport out of there immediately. Once the countdown for his Shadow Exchange was finished, he moved.

He emerged from the shadows, a gaunt, two-meter specter enveloped in an all-encompassing black ensemble that swallowed light itself. His attire, a labyrinth of pitch-black leather and fabric, clung to his skeletal frame. His face was completely obscured by a gas mask, its lenses reflecting the dim light with an insect-like gleam. The mask's respirator emitted a rhythmic, mechanical hiss with each breath. Around his waist hung a bizarre contraption of leather and metal, and a strange silver ring glinted at his index.

With silent precision, Moria moved through the shadowy crevices of the cell, slipping into the shadow of the wall. He began his perilous passage through Impel Down, navigating the labyrinthine corridors and avoiding detection by the monstrous guardians. The Basilisk, a massive serpent with scales as dark as night, hissed softly, sensing a disturbance but unable to pinpoint it. The Sphinx sniffed the air, its eyes narrowing suspiciously, before talking about food. But Moria was a master of the shadows, and he slipped past them like a wraith. His heart pounded with each silent step. The tension gnawed at him, a constant reminder of the stakes. One wrong move, one moment of carelessness, and he would be at the mercy of fucking Magellan himself - he was strong enough to take him. But not discreetly - and the World Government would know he had betrayed them. And he was not ready to take on an admiral.

Arriving at the third level, Moria faced a new challenge. Starvation Hell was bathed in relentless, searing light. The prisoners here were emaciated, too weak to move, their eyes sunken and hollow. Shadows were scarce. He already had to rely on the contraption at his belt. It was a device designed by Caesar, capable of looping the Den Den Mushi surveillance feed for about thirty seconds. Moria activated it and sprinted, his legs a blur as he raced through the exposed desert. He made a pause of about five seconds to fix some extremely potent explosive charges. His gas mask filtered out the stench of decay and hopelessness, allowing him to reach the fourth level just as the device's effect wore off.

Blazing Hell greeted him with an inferno of heat and fire. The air shimmered with intense heat, burning his skin even through his protective clothing. Here, the prisoners labored under the watchful eyes of awakened Zoans, their monstrous forms imposing and relentless. Moria paused, his eyes narrowing as he considered the potential of these creatures. Perhaps he could absorb some of them later, but now was not the time. The heat was unbearable, and he gritted his teeth against the pain, the very air scorching his lungs, even through his mask. The World Government's cruelty was palpable, and he felt a surge of hatred. One day, he vowed, he would destroy this place - and them. It was an insult to Freedom!

Why... Why was he so attached to Freedom? He shrugged - he had to focus.

Finally, he reached the fifth level. Freezing Hell—a stark contrast to the previous inferno—was a realm of ice and snow, where the temperature plummeted and froze the very breath in his lungs. The cold gnawed at his flesh, urging him to move swiftly to avoid becoming a frostbitten statue. Prisoners huddled in tattered rags, their bodies marked by frostbite, as ice crystals adorned every surface. Moria moved like a wraith, his breath visible in the frigid air, navigating the icy terrain with the practiced ease of one accustomed to shadows. Each step brought him closer to his goal.

Spotting a narrow crack in the floor, Moria dissolved into an ethereal wisp of shadow, slipping through the crevice with spectral grace. On the other side, he reconstituted, expecting more bitter cold. Instead, warmth and vibrant colors assaulted his senses, accompanied by a cacophony of laughter and music. The stark contrast to the icy hell he had just traversed was almost surreal, leaving him momentarily stunned, his eyes widening in genuine surprise. Around him, Okamas were immersed in a party. Streamers and confetti floated through the perfumed air. Moria's gaze roamed the scene, absorbing the details.

What. The. Fuck.

Before him was wild celebration, a party filled with life and energy. The Okamas, dressed in bright silks and glittering sequins, danced with carefree joy, their bodies moving together in happy chaos. Laughter and cheerful shouts mixed with the clinking of glasses filled with colorful drinks. Every corner buzzed with excitement—people hugging, fabrics rustling, and the sheer joy of freedom from the gloom above. And amidst them...

[Emporio Ivankov]

Class : Revolutionary
Job(s) : Commander of the G Army, Okama King,
Dourikis : 5 985
Fate : A
Potential : S

[Inazuma]

Class : Revolutionary
Job: Deputy Commander of the G Army
Dourikis : 2 745
Fate : B
Potential : A

It...It did not make any sense. Was...Was the mythical level 5.5. real? Moria shook his head. It would not change any of his plans. Resolute, he moved silently through another crack in the stone, his breath echoing softly against the damp walls as he descended into the sixth level.

Eternal Hell was aptly named. The air itself seemed to seethe with malice, heavy with the weight of countless atrocities. This lowest level of Impel Down held those whose crimes were so vile, so devastating, that their very existence was a threat to the world. Dim light flickered from sporadic torches, casting grotesque shadows that danced menacingly on the walls. The cells were more akin to tombs, each one a reminder of the World Government's grip on history. The prisoners here had been erased, their names struck from all records, leaving behind only whispers and legends. Even the guards tread lightly when they deigned to come here, wary of the dormant wrath that simmered within these forsaken souls.

Moria's eyes widened as he beheld the infamous figures imprisoned here. He had to stifle a giggle. Amazing. What a harvest it was going to be. He was going to progress so much. His gaze flickered over each notorious inmate in turn. Shiki the Golden Lion, his wild mane a riot of tangled gold, glared in front of him with eyes that burned with rebellion. Catarina Devon, the Crescent Moon Hunter, with her feral grin and eyes like dark pits of madness, turned to him, as if she had heard something. Sanjuan Wolf, the colossal behemoth, seemed barely contained within his reinforced cell. Vasco Shot, a visage of unrestrained hedonism, leered through the bars. Avalo Pizarro, the Corrupt King, smirked with an air of dangerous cunning.

[Shiki the Golden Lion]

Class: Pirate
Job: Captain of the Golden Lion Pirates
Fruit : Fuwa Fuwa no Mi

Dourikis: 11,523
Fate: S
Potential: SS

[Shiryu of the Rain]

Class: Assassin and Swordsman
Job: Former Impel Down Jailer

Dourikis: 10,287

Fate: S

Potential: SS

[Catarina Devon]

Class: Pirate

Job: Crescent Moon Hunter

Dourikis: 8,634

Fate: A

Potential: S

[Sanjuan Wolf]

Class: Pirate

Job: Colossal Battleship,

Dourikis: 9,811

Fate: A

Potential: SS

[Vasco Shot]

Class: Pirate

Job: Heavy Drinker

Dourikis: 7,459

Fate: A

Potential: S

[Avalo Pizarro]

Class: Pirate

Job: Corrupt King

Dourikis: 7,943

Fate: A

Potential: S

The strongest one without a Fruit was Shire of the Rain. Perfect. And finally, he saw him. Gol. D. Ace. The son of Pirate King Gol. D. Roger.

[Gol. D. Ace]

Class: Pirate

Job: Commander of the 2nd Division of the Whitebeard Pirates

Fruit : Mera Mera no Mi

Dourikis: 12,748

Fate: SSS

Potential: SS

"I can feel you...", Shiryu of the Rain, standing as still as a predatory statue, smirked. Moria heard one of the other prisoner cackle, while all the other one opened their eyes.

Fuck. He had to move quickly. It was risky, but if he could do it, the reward would be a jackpot.