

One Piece 191

Chapter 191 - 191: Volume 2 – Chapter 93: I Have a Plan

The soft, seductive music drifted through the air like a gentle breeze, lulling the senses.

The lights shimmered on the geisha's red lips, while the folding screen behind them, painted with ukiyo-e art, framed a scene of desire and indulgence.

Suddenly—

The music stopped.

Bang. Bang. Bang...

The dancers on stage collapsed one after another.

Zephyr's eyes instantly sharpened.

Borsalino smirked.

"Hm? Why'd it stop?"

Sengoku blinked open his groggy eyes, the smell of alcohol heavy on his breath as he grumbled in annoyance.

Inside the lavish private room, aside from the three of them, all the dancers and geisha had fallen to the floor, unconscious.

Zephyr snapped irritably,

"Wake up!!"

Just as he spoke, the door to the room slowly creaked open, and a figure in a white suit stepped inside.

The man wore a black mask that completely concealed his face.

He leaned lightly on an ornate cane and bowed gracefully to the trio, smiling politely.

"Honored Marine gentlemen, this is for you."

"Who are you?" Zephyr narrowed his eyes, his voice sharp and wary.

The man shrugged, still smiling.

"Just a nobody. But inside this envelope is the intel you're looking for."

He pulled an envelope from inside his coat and handed it to Zephyr with both hands.

Someone from the underworld, huh... To have figured out who we are so fast?

That thought flashed through Zephyr's mind as he cautiously accepted the envelope and began to open it.

"A sheet of paper?"

He stared at the crumpled slip inside, confused. It was completely blank—no words, no markings.

"That's a Vivre Card,"

Sengoku said, now fully alert, his tone heavy.

Vivre Card?

Zephyr blinked, then spread out his hand, laying the piece of paper flat in his palm.

What happened next was uncanny—

In the still, windless room, the crumpled paper began to tremble faintly in Zephyr's hand and shift toward a specific direction.

It was a Vivre Card—no doubt about it.

"Whose Vivre Card is this?"

Sengoku fixed his gaze on the masked man, a sharp gleam flashing behind his black-rimmed glasses.

The man shook his head.

"Apologies, Admiral Sengoku. I don't know."

"But what I can tell you is that the person this Vivre Card belongs to has entered the Beasts Pirates' base of operations."

"As for whether you trust that information... that's for you to decide."

With that, he turned and began to leave, cane tapping softly against the floor.

Borsalino watched the man's retreating figure, a slight smirk on his lips as he raised a glowing fingertip, golden light beginning to gather.

"No. He's just a messenger."

Sengoku reached out and stopped him, shaking his head.

"Sengoku... can we trust this?"

Zephyr frowned, staring at the Vivre Card twitching in his palm.

Sengoku paused for a few seconds, then exhaled slowly.

"The direction matches Wano... and if I recall..."

He murmured,

"That brat Daren has ties to the underworld, doesn't he?"

...

"So you're saying the other half of the Vivre Card is already in the hands of Admiral Sengoku and the others?"

In the damp, foul-smelling prison, Daren tucked away the Vivre Card and said coolly to Senor.

"That should be the case, Daren-sama."

Senor nodded.

"Also, on my way here, I picked up some intel about the Beasts Pirates."

He paused, recalling the details.

"For reasons unknown, Kaidou and King have both left the island."

The moment those words landed, Daren and Bullet's eyes lit up.

Kaidou and King are gone?

Which means... at this very moment, the only high-level combatant on the island is that fat guy in suspenders—Queen the Plague!?

As the realization struck, the two exchanged a glance. The fire burning in each other's eyes was unmistakable.

An opportunity!

Over the past few days, aside from maintaining intense, disciplined training, they had been seriously thinking through escape plans.

The prison's defenses, while tight, didn't include top-tier fighters.

But breaking out was only the first hurdle. The real danger came after.

With their current strength, they stood no chance against the monster that is Kaidou—especially not with King and Queen at his side.

But if it was just Queen alone...

They could pull it off!

"The Seastone shackle key,"

Daren said suddenly, eyes fixed on the cuffs around his wrists.

Bullet nodded in agreement.

"Yeah, if we're going to escape, the first step is getting that key."

Without the effects of Seastone weighing them down, the two of them together could easily tear through the island's defenses—especially if Queen was the only one left.

Seeing the shift in their expressions, Senor asked anxiously,

"But Daren-sama, wouldn't it be safer to wait for reinforcements from Marine Headquarters?"

"No. There's no telling when Kaidou might come back."

Daren shook his head.

"The longer we wait, the bigger the risk."

If Kaidou suddenly changed his mind and decided to kill them both, they'd be out of options.

The Marines were only a contingency.

"Exactly. I say we act now," Bullet added, a bit too eagerly.

Daren glanced at him, amused.

This guy's probably thinking if the Marines really do show up, he won't have a shot at escaping.

He might still stand a chance against Kaidou. But against Garp, Sengoku, and Zephyr? Even Whitebeard would be in deep trouble facing that lineup.

"I understand."

Senor took a deep breath.

"Daren-sama, give the word—what should I do?"

"I've already mapped out the troop deployment on the island. Queen's lab is to the northwest of the prison, surrounded by a massive weapons factory. It's about a minute's walk from here."

Bullet looked to Daren, his tone serious.

"The key to the Seastone shackles is on Queen himself—he carries it with him at all times."

Daren fell silent, his mind shifting gears.

A lab...

A weapons factory...

Furnaces, chimneys...

The prison...

The Seastone shackle key...

As he rubbed his temple, deep in thought, both Senor and Bullet remained silent, not daring to interrupt.

Senor had heard plenty about Daren's brilliance.

As for Bullet... well, planning wasn't exactly his strong suit.

"I've got a plan, more or less."

A moment later, Daren looked up, locking eyes with Senor.

"But Senor—this plan depends on you. It's going to be dangerous."

Senor grinned.

"Leave it to me."

Chapter 192 - 192: Volume 2 – Chapter 94: Bloodstained Overalls

"Hehehe... looks like you're both still in pretty good shape."

"So, still holding out?"

In the damp, stinking prison, "The Plague" Queen was up to his usual routine—tormenting the two prisoners.

He looked down at Daren and Bullet, who were collapsed on the floor, panting like wild beasts, and let out a smug, twisted laugh.

"If you'd just submit, all of this would be over."

"Of course, I'd rather you didn't. It's not every day I get test subjects this perfect."

Queen puffed on his cigar with satisfaction, blowing out ring after ring of smoke while casually glancing at the vitals monitor beside him.

"Is that all you've got?"

Daren snarled through ragged breaths, forcing a grin despite the pain.

The searing agony made it hard to breathe. His flushed, burning skin was lined with bulging veins, twitching with every violent thump of his heart.

"Tch. Still running your mouth, huh?"

Queen squinted, unimpressed.

"Once I finish setting up my newest lab gear, I'll have viruses with even higher purity. By then, you won't even be able to beg for mercy."

"Bastard!!"

With bloodshot eyes and burning fury, Daren forced himself upright and threw a punch at Queen's fat, smug face.

Queen effortlessly caught his arm and sneered.

"Seastone's got you feeling weak, huh? That punch was pathetic."

He drove his fist into Daren's gut.

Daren's body folded instantly, like a boiled shrimp, and blood burst from his mouth in a spray.

The blood splattered across Queen's face and overalls, staining them bright red.

Queen: ...

"You little shit!! You dare spray blood on my face!?"

Queen froze for a second before exploding in rage.

He was just about to roll up his sleeves and give them a proper beating—when he noticed the two of them lying on the ground, limp and barely conscious, like half-dead dogs.

"Tch! I'll deal with you after I clean this mess up!"

The fat man in suspenders growled, slamming the cell door shut and stomping off in a fury.

Silence returned to the prison.

...

A minute later,

Daren and Bullet slowly pushed themselves up from the filthy, stinking floor.

"You, man... if you weren't a Marine, you could make a killing as an actor."

Bullet, pale and breathless, shot a sideways glance at the dark-haired Marine and muttered with a trace of admiration.

Even with his improved physique and resistance, that fat bastard's viruses still put him through hell.

Every injection was a fresh round of torment—unrelenting, and just as agonizing as the last.

Daren wiped the blood from the corner of his mouth and grinned.

"Who says good acting disqualifies you from being a Marine?"

He panted slightly, raised an eyebrow, and added with a teasing tone,

"There are plenty in the Marines better at pretending than I am."

Bullet scoffed.

"That fat bastard's going to be completely played by you. You bastard..."

The memory of the underhanded move that cost him an arm during their fight flashed through his mind. His jaw clenched tight.

"...You've got a twisted mind."

"Thanks."

"Damn it! That wasn't a compliment!!"

Bullet growled, voice rising with frustration.

"You really know how to piss people off!"

Daren chuckled and leaned back against the damp wall. He tilted his head up, his gaze distant.

"Bullet, we're breaking out soon. Once we're out... have you thought about what you'll do?"

The warm yellow light of a dim oil lamp cast flickering shadows across the wall, outlining the young Marine's profile.

Bullet shot Daren a puzzled look. The irritation faded from his face.

He went quiet for a few seconds, then slowly grinned, teeth bared.

"To be the strongest."

"Not exactly an easy goal,"

Daren said, amused.

Bullet snorted.

"You wouldn't get it. You've got your straight path—climb the ladder, become an Admiral."

"Just don't go getting soft, Daren."

"Because if we meet again and you've lost your edge, I'll twist your head clean off."

Daren narrowed his eyes and laughed.

"Right back at you."

Just then, a low voice came from the wall between them.

"Daren-sama."

Ripples spread across the crumbling stone as Senor's figure emerged from the water-like surface.

"The preparations are complete. How's it going on your end?"

Daren replied calmly,

"Everything's going according to plan."

Senor nodded.

"Then I'll make my move."

"Wait."

As Senor was about to dissolve back into the wall, Daren suddenly called out.

Senor turned back patiently.

"Do you have any other orders, Daren-sama?"

Daren shook his head, then asked,

"Got a cigarette?"

Senor blinked, then fumbled through his suit before pulling out a crumpled pack. He opened it.

"Only one left."

He handed both the cigarette and lighter to Daren.

"That's enough."

Daren took the last cigarette and gently placed it in Senor's mouth.

Senor froze, unsure how to respond.

Click.

Daren lit the cigarette.

Then, he tucked the pack and lighter back into Senor's jacket and took a step back.

"I'm a Marine. So I'll do it the Marine way."

He smiled, then raised his hand.

A crisp, precise salute.

The Seastone shackles on his wrists clinked loudly with the motion.

Senor's eyes widened. His lips parted slightly, the cigarette still clinging to his lower lip.

"Go on. When we're out of here, let's share a smoke together."

Daren lowered his arm and smiled.

Senor finally came back to his senses.

He took a deep drag, nodded hard, then dove headfirst into the wall of rippling water.

"...Yes, Daren-sama."

...

On the mainland of Brown Island.

Northwest of the prison.

Inside a ten-meter-tall facility, every room was packed with experimental equipment.

"Those damn brats! Got my clothes all dirty!!"

Queen cursed as he stormed into his quarters, struggling to peel his massive frame out of the tight overalls. He wrapped himself in a towel and turned on the hot water in the bathroom.

He walked over to his wardrobe and opened it.

Inside, it was filled with rows of identical, pristine overalls.

Queen pulled one out, humming as he hung it up. After a pause, he reached into the blood-soaked ones he'd just removed and pulled out a ring of keys, hanging them on the same hook.

Still humming, he strutted into the shower.

The sound of running water echoed out as steam quickly fogged the glass door. Inside, the blurry, jiggling silhouette of the oversized man could be seen dancing and singing to himself.

Chapter 193 - 193: Volume 2 – Chapter 95: Life-or-Death Rush

Inside the roaring shower, upbeat, high-energy music suddenly blared through the steam-filled room.

Behind the fogged-up glass door, Queen's rotund silhouette swayed to the rhythm with surprising enthusiasm.

He grabbed the showerhead like a microphone and began singing in a deep, dramatic voice:

"Zelo zelo zelo zelo..."

"If I lost weight... I'd be way more popular..."

"But I'm the kind who doesn't lose weight on purpose... FUNK!!"

"Round as I look, it's all muscle underneath!!"

His jiggling shadow flailed its arms wildly as the music built up in excitement.

"I'm the type who sings and dances... FUNK!!"

"Are you feeling it!?"

But just as Queen was immersed in his own musical performance—

BOOM!!!

A thunderous explosion erupted in the distance. The entire lab trembled violently, and the shockwave blasted the glass windows into shards.

"WHAT THE HELL!?"

Startled, Queen yanked open the glass door and stuck his dripping head out.

A Beasts Pirates crewman, wearing a horned helmet, came running in, panic-stricken and shaking.

"Queen-sama!! The furnace at Armory No. 3 in Area A just exploded!!"

"What!?"

Queen's eyes bulged. He yanked a towel off the rack to wrap around his lower half and waddled over to the shattered window, his massive frame bouncing with every step.

What he saw outside made his jaw hit the floor.

One of the distant armories was engulfed in flames. A towering inferno raged skyward, sending thick black smoke spiraling into a massive mushroom cloud. The colossal smokestacks—dozens of meters high—were toppling and crumbling under the force of the explosion.

The area around the facility was pure chaos. All around, members of the Beasts Pirates and laborers had turned into human torches, wailing in agony as they flailed and burned.

"What the hell happened!? You idiots!!"

Queen grabbed the panicked pirate by the collar, eyes bloodshot, gritting his teeth.

"Why does this crap always happen when I'm around!? If Kaidou-sama comes back to this, he's gonna kill me!!"

The crewman trembled, face pale.

"I-I don't know... someone threw explosives into one of the furnaces! People are already trying to put out the fire!"

"Shit!!"

Queen saw reinforcements rushing toward the blaze from all directions—riding beast-driven chariots that kicked up clouds of dust.

He clenched his jaw.

"I've gotta go."

There were only eight armories in total across the base, split between Areas A, B, and C.

They were the Beasts Pirates' main economic pillar—Kaidou's hard-earned legacy.

If this fire spread to the other armories, Queen was sure he'd lose his head—literally.

No time to think. He grabbed a pair of overalls and tried to shove himself into them on the spot.

But he was too round.

After a minute of frantic struggling, he still couldn't squeeze in. His face flushed red with panic and frustration.

"You idiot! What are you standing around for? Get over here and help!"

Queen snapped at the subordinate staring blankly beside him.

"Y-Yes, Queen-sama!"

The pirate rushed over and, sweating profusely, finally managed to squeeze Queen into his overalls.

"Move it!"

Queen yanked the straps into place, hastily lit a cigar, and bolted from the lab without another word.

"If this triggers a chain reaction and spreads to the other armories, I'm done for!!"

He cursed as he ran.

The pirate shivered and scrambled to catch up. With someone as petty and ruthless as Queen, if things went south, none of his underlings would walk away unscathed.

RUMBLE!!

A burst of steam shot from the beast-powered war chariot as the engine roared to life, ramping up to full throttle.

It tore across the ground like an unchained beast, kicking up thick plumes of dust and leaving deep tire tracks behind as it sped toward the explosion site.

...

Inside the lab, the showerhead continued to spray hot water.

Dense steam had filled the room.

Suddenly, ripples shimmered across the wall.

Senor emerged from it, gasping for breath, face pale.

He glanced toward the direction Queen had vanished, where massive fire pillars shot into the sky—erupting from the detonation site like blazing fireworks.

"Daren-sama's plan... worked."

Senor steadied his breathing.

Explosives were everywhere on this island. After all, this was the Beasts Pirates' main base and one of the largest arms hubs in the underworld.

As someone born into a mafia family, Senor only needed to make a few subtle modifications to the explosives to create a timed detonation.

Leveling an entire building required a significant amount of firepower.

But to blow up a furnace in an armory? All it took was a single spark.

And with one major explosion, Queen was guaranteed to rush to the scene.

Which meant...

Senor's gaze quickly landed on a ring of keys hanging on the wall hook.

The key to the Seastone shackles!

That was the target.

"Daren-sama was spot on. A scientist like Queen would never tolerate having blood all over himself—he'd definitely take off the key while showering."

"And once the explosion hit, it'd draw his full attention. There's a good chance he'd forget the keys entirely and run straight for the scene."

"And with his focus split like that, even his Observation Haki wouldn't pick up on me sneaking in..."

Senor muttered, admiration for the Marine deepening once more.

He grabbed the keyring with one hand.

"All right... this is it. The final life-or-death sprint."

With a sharp glint in his eyes, Senor dove headfirst into the liquefied ground and began swimming toward the prison at top speed!

If he were sprinting on land, it would take about a minute to reach the prison from the lab.

But using the power of the Sui Sui no Mi, his swimming speed was somewhat slower.

"Two minutes..."

Senor clenched his teeth.

He had to get the shackle key to Daren before that oversized bastard Queen realized what had happened!

Chapter 194 - 194: Volume 2 – Chapter 96: The Long-Lost Sunlight

Prison.

A thunderous rumble echoed through the air, and the flame of the oil lamp on the wall suddenly flickered violently. Dust and debris rained down from the walls, as if the entire prison was trembling.

"It's starting."

Bullet, who had been leaning against the wall with his eyes closed, suddenly opened them. A twisted, eager grin crept across his face. His eyes glowed faintly red, like a beast awakening in the dark.

"Looks like you pulled it off."

He glanced at Daren.

Daren slowly opened his eyes as well, a cold gleam flashing in their depths.

"Not yet—but it's time to move."

As he spoke, he rose to his feet, stretching his limbs and joints with a series of loud cracks, like beans popping in a hot pan.

"Move? Weren't we waiting for that guy to come back with the key?"

Bullet was caught off guard and asked, frowning, "That's not the plan."

Daren stared intently at the rusted prison bars ahead and said calmly, "We're going to meet him halfway."

He turned to Bullet with a slight smile.

"You in?"

Bullet scoffed.

"Who the hell do you think you're talking to?"

With that, both of them stepped up to the bars, shoulder to shoulder, reaching out at the same time.

They pulled with brute force!

"AAHHH!!"

Both let out beastlike roars, bloodshot eyes filled with savage intensity. Their muscles swelled massively, veins bulging like writhing centipedes.

Bang!

Bang!

Cracks spiderwebbed across the floor beneath them, unable to bear the force they unleashed.

"OPEN, DAMN YOU!!!"

Bullet bellowed.

Daren roared alongside him, eyes blazing.

Clang... clang...

If anyone had been watching, they'd have witnessed a chilling sight—two Devil Fruit users, shackled in Seastone cuffs, tearing at solid metal bars with their bare hands and warping them out of shape!

Without the suppression of Seastone, the strength of Daren and Bullet wouldn't just bend the bars—they could punch straight through the mountain walls themselves.

But even now, weakened as they were, their bodies had grown stronger. And after weeks of building resistance to Seastone's effects, their combined might was enough to crush the prison's defenses.

They hadn't done this before simply because there had been no point.

As long as the Seastone shackles remained, even if they escaped the cell, Queen would catch up with them in no time. It would've been a pointless risk.

Worse still, a failed breakout would've tipped off the Beasts Pirates, tightening surveillance and reinforcing the cells.

But now... there was no need to wait any longer!

Crack! Crack!

The bars twisted violently, tearing open a hole just wide enough for a person to squeeze through.

And just then—

Bang!

Hearing the noise, members of the Beasts Pirates burst through the prison doors and charged in.

But as they stepped inside, what they saw froze them in place—two pairs of glowing red eyes glaring at them from the darkness.

The prisoners were already crouching, stepping through the gap in the bars, grinning with murderous intent.

The pirates went pale in an instant.

"They—they've escaped..."

"The cage... they tore it apart..."

"How is this... even possible..."

...

Before they could react—

Daren and Bullet exploded into the group like tigers unleashed from a cage!

In the dark, flickering prison, candlelight danced wildly as blood sprayed through the air.

Roars and screams echoed together, limbs flying, shadows twisting in a bloody storm of violence.

In less than ten seconds, silence fell.

The firelight died.

Only the sound of blood dripping echoed in the pitch-black stillness, where two murderous eyes still glowed.

...

"Something's happened..."

At the prison's main gate, Snoke—wearing a horned helmet—stood tense, gripping his battle axe tightly as the anguished wails from deep within the prison echoed toward him.

At 25, Snook was no weakling—he'd already become one of the "Shinuchi" of the Beasts Pirates.

Well, technically, there were only three Shinuchi left for now. Two had already rushed to the arsenal to handle the fire, leaving him—the weakest of the three—behind.

Still, he firmly believed that one day he'd rise to become a true All-Star, just like Queen-sama.

"You've got this, Snoke... you can do this..."

"Even if those two really broke out, after being locked up so long and tortured by Queen-sama's viruses, their bodies must be completely worn down. How strong could they possibly be now?"

"This is your shot, Snoke... Stop their escape, and when the chaos settles, you'll earn Kaidou-sama's reward. Maybe even a spot as an All-Star."

Snoke kept murmuring to himself, trying to drown out the screams still echoing from below. At some point, a cold sweat had formed on his forehead.

Then suddenly, everything went silent.

"The screaming... stopped?"

Swallowing hard, Snoke stared unblinking at the gate ahead. His hands trembled slightly around the axe.

BOOM!!

The steel gate was kicked open and sent flying.

A blood-soaked hand reached out from the darkness, grabbing the doorframe. The clinking Seastone shackles on the wrist were dripping thick blood.

Seastone shackles!?

Snoke's pupils shrank. Then a twisted grin spread across his pale face.

"Hahahaha!! You're still wearing Seastone shackles!? How the hell are you supposed to beat me!?"

He didn't hesitate for a second—he charged in, axe raised high.

He knew firsthand how devastating Seastone's suppression was for Devil Fruit users. He'd felt it himself once.

I can win!

This time, I'll finally make a name for myself!

Eyes burning with ambition, his body suddenly sprouted a dense layer of gray scales. In a flash, he transformed into a towering, bipedal lizard.

A Zoan-type, lizard form!

His long tongue flicked wildly as he charged the figure emerging from the dark passage, swinging his axe down with full force.

"Too slow."

A cold voice rang out.

CLANG!!

The axe missed and slammed into the doorframe, carving out a huge gash.

He dodged!?

"No way!!"

Rubble flew as Snoke let out a furious roar, trying to launch a desperate counterattack.

But the bloodstained hand suddenly reached out toward him.

It grabbed the lizard's head. At the touch of the Seastone shackles, Snoke let out a weak cry, instantly reverting from his hybrid form back to human.

Then...

That hand, brimming with raw power, shoved his roar back down his throat—and slammed his head into the wall.

BOOM!!

Stone shattered, blood splattered.

The hand holding Snoke's head dragged downward across the wall, gouging out a long, bloody trench.

With a dull thud, Snoke—the weakest of the Shinuchi—collapsed to the ground, his face a mangled mess. Dead beyond any doubt.

Only then did a wild, unrestrained young face emerge from the shadows of the passage.

"If they're not in the way, Seastone shackles make damn good weapons against Devil Fruit users,"

Daren said quietly, glancing at the blood-soaked shackles.

His entire body was drenched in blood—whether his own or someone else's, it was impossible to tell.

Bullet stepped out behind him, just as soaked in blood.

He looked down at the brutally disfigured corpse and chuckled coldly.

"Brutal as hell... Not very Marine-like of you. You sure you don't want to ditch all that and come be a free pirate with me, Daren?"

Daren said nothing—just flicked the blood off his hands.

Bathed in blazing sunlight, the distant arsenal burned with towering flames as it collapsed.

Thick black smoke filled the sky.

He tilted his head back and smiled.

"The long-lost... sunlight."

Chapter 195 - 195: Volume 2 – Chapter 97: You Damned Thief!

"Kill!"

"They're getting away!!"

"Damn it! Take them down!!"

"They're still wearing Seastone shackles! Their power's been weakened!"

"Get them!!"

...

Malice and furious roars surged from every direction like a rising tide. Members of the Beasts Pirates, seeing Daren and Bullet break out of prison, charged in from all sides with weapons drawn, shouting as they surrounded them.

There were so many of them that dust was kicked up from the brown earth, forming thick clouds that made the scene from afar look like a churning, unstoppable tide.

Within seconds, the pirates had closed in, forming a massive encirclement that cut off every possible escape route for Daren and Bullet.

"Never thought I'd be teaming up with a Marine one day."

Bullet cracked his knuckles, his aura flaring higher and higher. A murderous scarlet gleam burned in his eyes, and his messy golden hair whipped wildly in the gusting wind.

Daren shifted into an attack stance. The Seastone shackles clinked noisily as he let out a cold, defiant laugh.

"Just don't slow me down."

With the pirates closing in like a flood, the two stood back to back, wild grins flashing in their eyes—arrogant and unrestrained.

One second.

Two seconds.

As the pirates rushed up, raising kanabō and other weapons high overhead, grinning viciously just before they swung—

"Let's go!!"

Their gazes sharpened, and with a simultaneous roar, they burst into action.

Daren slipped to the side in a swift sidestep, narrowly avoiding a massive sword crashing down from above. As the attacking pirate's face twisted in fear, Daren lashed out with one hand.

The chain of his Seastone shackles whipped forward with a metallic rattle, wrapping around the pirate's neck. Daren let out a savage laugh.

"Beasts, huh? Let me show you what a real beast looks like!"

He yanked hard with both hands!

The chain snapped taut with terrifying strength, and the pirate's face went deathly pale.

Slash!

The pirate's head flew into the air, and scalding blood sprayed from his neck like a fountain, drenching the black-haired Marine in crimson.

At that moment—

Several weapons of all shapes and sizes came crashing down on Daren.

Clang! Clang! Clang!

Instead of the sound of blades sinking into flesh, what rang out was the unmistakable clash of metal.

The pirates froze, eyes wide in disbelief at the sight before them.

A hammer smashed into Daren's head, but all it did was tilt it slightly.

Blades that struck his back snapped with a loud crack, their broken fragments flying through the air.

Two kanabō locked against his neck didn't even budge.

"Monster..."

"That's... 'The Man of Steel'..."

"The exact same physique as Kaidou-sama!!"

"How is this possible!?"

The pirates were frozen in terror, despair flashing in their eyes.

At that moment, Daren suddenly grinned.

"All done? Then it's my turn."

As soon as the words left his mouth, he charged headfirst into the stunned, panicked group of pirates.

Elbow strikes, chokeholds, knee slams, punches, sweeping kicks, throat jabs... The most refined close-quarters combat skills on the seas—fusing orthodox Marine techniques with brutal battlefield killing arts—erupted with terrifying power!

Attack!

Attack!

Attack!

Daren didn't bother defending or dodging. The pirates' attacks all landed on him, but none had any effect. Nothing could slow him down.

Bullets bounced off his body like pebbles.

Some Beasts Pirates even hauled out a portable grenade launcher and blasted him directly—but it only made him stagger slightly. Moments later, he burst back through the smoke and flames like a demon.

In contrast, Daren's own attacks were simple and clean.

Yet no pirate could last even a single exchange against him.

One blow crushed their hearts, tore their limbs, or twisted their heads clean off.

Wherever the black-haired Marine passed, it was a rain of blood and a trail of corpses.

The pirates nearby, rushing up to reinforce the encirclement, were visibly shaken.

"Hey, hey, hey—are you guys just tickling him or what?"

Bullet muttered with a hint of annoyance as he watched.

As he spoke, he dodged a battle axe swinging in from the left, grabbed a pirate's head with one hand, and slammed it into the ground.

Boom!!

The earth burst open, scattering debris everywhere.

Compared to Daren's reckless, defense-free assault, Bullet fought with more control.

Though he too had trained his body to superhuman levels, his raw durability wasn't nearly as monstrous as Daren's. And missing an arm in this kind of melee was no small disadvantage.

Even so, his offense was brutal.

He darted through the crowd with deadly speed, sending pirates flying left and right, limbs flailing and blood spraying.

No exaggerated Haki blasts.

No earth-splitting, mountain-crushing power.

Just pure hand-to-hand slaughter.

Every part of his body became a lethal weapon, driven by the human instinct to kill pushed to its limit.

In that moment,

Daren and Bullet were drenched in blood, laughing maniacally as they fought.

As if only this kind of madness could remind them...

They were truly alive.

...

Far from the prison—

Faster!!

Faster!!

Senor, submerged underground, had bloodshot eyes as he frantically propelled himself forward through the earth, carving a long trench in his wake.

To avoid losing it mid-operation, he hadn't stashed the Seastone shackle key in his pocket. Instead, he clenched it tightly between his teeth.

He didn't choose to "deep dive." That would've increased stealth, sure—but the deeper underground he went, the greater the pressure, and the slower his speed. His body wouldn't last.

Faster!!

The prison near the mountainside was already in sight. Senor could just barely make out two lone figures surrounded by a sea of pirates.

Daren-sama and Bullet!

They'd broken free!?

He froze for a second, then gritted his teeth.

Seeing that no one had blocked his way along the route, and that the prison was swarming with Beasts Pirates—

He instantly understood. Daren-sama was risking his life to buy time... for him.

But just then—

"You damned thief!! You dare steal my key!?"

A furious roar exploded behind him. The sheer volume hit like a shockwave, sweeping forward in a suffocating tide.

"You're dead!!"

RUMBLE—

Heavy footsteps thundered from behind, drawing closer at terrifying speed. Senor instinctively turned to look, and what he saw made his blood run cold. His pupils shrank to pinpoints.

A massive figure in black-and-white overalls was barreling toward him, roaring like a wild beast. Each stomp cracked the ground, sending up clouds of dust.

It charged like an unstoppable war machine.

Ancient Zoan-type Ryu Ryu no Mi, Model: Brachiosaurus.

Beasts Pirates All-Star...

"The Plague" Queen!!

He's caught up!!

Chapter 196 - 196: Volume 2 – Chapter 98: The Final Race Against Time

Boom, boom, boom...

Thick, pillar-like limbs pounded the earth in a frenzy, sending up clouds of gravel and dust. The massive Brachiosaurus, chewing on a cigar, had bloodshot eyes and white steam billowing from its nostrils.

The heavy armor on its arms gleamed under the blinding sun. Rows of machine guns extended from its mechanical shoulders, constantly adjusting their aim, targeting the small "mouse" darting rapidly across the ground.

Queen was furious.

He had never been this furious in his entire life.

That damned rat had the audacity to blow up the arsenal's furnace and sneak into his lab to steal the key to the Seastone shackles!

Did that mean—he saw all of my, Queen-sama's beautiful body!?

"You're dead! No one can save you! I, Queen, guarantee it!!"

The Brachiosaurus roared in rage as the machine guns on its mechanical shoulders erupted in a blaze of fire.

Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!

A torrential storm of bullets screamed through the air, chasing after Senor, peppering the ground with craters as sand and dirt flew everywhere.

Feeling the murderous intent closing in behind him, Senor felt a chill run down his spine and immediately dove headfirst into the ground.

Rat-a-tat-tat!

A shower of sand burst into the air.

"Where do you think you can run, little rat!?"

Queen sneered, activating his Observation Haki. Within seconds, he locked onto Senor's underground position.

Click—

Mechanical components within his body shifted, and from a dark cavity, a missile launcher emerged. A small red missile glinted ominously in the sunlight.

"Die!!"

Brachio Launcher!

The missile ignited with a crimson tail flame, breaking the sound barrier as it tore into the ground with terrifying speed.

BOOM!!

A massive explosion rocked the area, sending a mushroom cloud towering into the sky.

A scorching blast of wind kicked up a wave of yellow sand, and fire spread outward in surging waves.

In an instant, all pirates within a hundred meters lost their hearing. They stared, dumbfounded, at the terrifying scene of destruction.

"Did it hit?"

"Of course! Queen-sama's missiles can blow up an entire warship without breaking a sweat!"

"That guy's definitely dead!!"

...

The members of the Beasts Pirates stared in shock at the smoke-filled area—then their pupils shrank, and their expressions twisted in horror.

"What!?"

Queen gasped in disbelief, his eyes bulging from their sockets.

Swish!!

A figure wreathed in thick black smoke suddenly shot out of the raging flames—like a tiger leaping from a canyon, or a swordfish bursting high from the ocean—surrounded by a trail of earth and dust.

His expensive suit had been shredded by the explosion, and his back was covered in severe burns, bloody and raw, a sight that made the scalp crawl.

But his expression remained cold, as if he felt no pain at all. His posture was graceful, like a whale breaking through the ocean's surface beneath the sunlight.

Shattered sunglasses reflected the blazing firelight.

Standing before the overwhelming bulk of the Brachiosaurus, he looked pitifully small—like a rat. Yet he exuded an unshakable calm and resolve!

Senor, like an elite diver, extended his arms straight ahead, body arching into a perfect curve midair.

With practiced precision, he dove back into the ground, using the shockwave of the explosion to propel himself forward!

"Dove underground in an instant? But you're barely holding on. How much longer can you last!?"

Queen quickly snapped back, grinning savagely.

He glanced toward the prison and spotted Daren and Bullet making a push in his direction—it was obvious they were trying to regroup with that damned rat.

He couldn't let that key to the Seastone shackles fall into their hands!

"No way I'm letting you get away with this!"

The Brachiosaurus roared, suddenly lifting his thick, towering neck high into the air and opening his jaws wide.

A destructive aura swirled as golden light began to gather madly in his mouth...

"This..."

Senor's pupils contracted sharply beneath his shattered sunglasses.

An overwhelming sense of death loomed over him. Gritting his teeth, he dove back into the earth once more!

Just then—

"Black Coffee Beam!"

Roar!!

A dark yellow laser beam erupted from the Brachiosaurus's mouth, piercing the ground where Senor had just disappeared.

The earth rippled like waves, scorched and melted by the extreme heat before being flung upward in a scorching storm.

Fierce flames spread uncontrollably, twisting the air and rising high into the sky.

A violent shockwave exploded outward from the blast's center, sending countless Beasts Pirates flying.

Amid the raging storm, a charred, gaping crater came into view.

Senor's battered, blood-soaked body slowly floated up from the pit like a corpse rising from dark waters.

He hung there, suspended in the air, drenched in blood.

Behind the ruins of his sunglasses, Senor struggled to lift his heavy eyelids.

Through blood-blurred vision, he saw the silhouette of that black-haired Marine nearly swallowed up by the swarm of pirates.

"Just... a little... more..."

His bloodied hand shakily lifted into the air, clutching a ring of keys tightly.

Less than a hundred meters...

"Daren-sama... I'm... so... sorry..."

Seeing this, Queen burst into wild laughter.

"Wahahaha!! You're done for now, you damned thief!"

"Let the handsome Queen-sama finish you off!!"

The Brachiosaurus's thick, pillar-like limbs suddenly slammed down.

Boom!!

The ground caved in beneath him, and with the terrifying strength of the Ancient Zoan, the massive body of the Brachiosaurus launched into the sky.

Ten meters.

Twenty meters.

Thirty.

Fifty meters into the air!

"Bullet!! Now's the time!!"

At that moment, surrounded by a frenzied mob of pirates, Daren's bloodshot eyes flared as he let out a furious roar.

He swept several pirates aside with a powerful roundhouse kick and leapt into the air.

Bullet grinned and reached out a massive hand, grabbing Daren by the right foot.

"Kahaha!! Don't you dare die!!"

He drew in a deep breath, muscles bulging like molten rock as he assumed a throwing stance.

High above, Queen's pupils shrank—he realized what was coming.

But from his altitude, there was no stopping it in time. All he could do was curse in a panic.

"No!! Stop them!! You useless idiots!!"

The pirates froze, barely reacting before it was too late.

"Go!!"

Bullet lunged forward, eyes wild, his arm rippling with strength.

Like hurling a cannonball, he launched Daren with all his might!

Boom!!

The explosive force tore the air apart, creating a visible white shockwave.

Daren shot forward like a missile, barreling through dozens of pirates and speeding straight toward Senor!

"Damn it!!"

Queen roared, veins bulging in his eyes.

"Then I'll wipe you all out!!"

With those words, the colossal Brachiosaurus began plummeting headfirst under the pull of gravity!

Like a meteor falling from the sky, his target...was Senor.

...

In that instant, everyone on the battlefield froze. They held their breath, eyes locked on the imminent collision.

The Brachiosaurus plummeted like a meteor.

The Marine flew low like a shell tearing across the battlefield.

Time seemed to slow to a crawl.

Closer.

Senor struggled to raise the key.

Closer.

Daren reached out, desperate to grab it.

Even closer.

The Brachiosaurus fell at such speed that golden lightning crackled around him.

In that moment, the faces of all three twisted in the roaring wind.

So close...

Almost there!

Clack!

Daren snatched the key.

Senor smiled in relief and closed his eyes.

"Die!!"

Queen's eyes bulged as he crashed headfirst into the ground!

BOOOOM!!!

A thunderous explosion echoed across the land.

The ground shook violently!

Chapter 197 - 197: Volume 2 – Chapter 99: Over-the-Shoulder Throw

"Brachio Bomber!!"

The massive Brachiosaurus dropped headfirst from the sky like a mortar round, crashing down at full force!

"Wahaha!! You're dead for sure... huh?"

Queen's vicious laughter cut off abruptly.

At that moment, a distinct clink echoed across the battlefield—the sound of Seastone shackles hitting the ground.

BOOM!!

A deafening explosion erupted, temporarily deafening everyone present. The shockwave blasted past the threshold of human hearing, and golden arcs of lightning seemed to shimmer through the air.

Centered on the Brachiosaurus's impact point, a storm of destruction swept across a hundred-meter radius. The earth rumbled like a heartbeat, splitting apart with jagged cracks.

Torrents of dirt surged like tidal waves. Loose stones were shattered into dust midair.

Blinding light swelled outward.

But on the faces of every member of the Beasts Pirates, horror and disbelief began to creep in. Their pupils quivered violently, as if they couldn't comprehend what they were seeing in the distance.

A grin tugged at the corner of Bullet's mouth.

The fierce wind rushed against Senor's face, forcing him to open his eyes once more.

What he saw left him frozen in place.

Amid the raging storm...

A tall, powerfully built, black-haired Marine stood firm on the ground, his feet embedded like anchors. His hair whipped wildly in the wind.

His eyes burned with raw intensity and defiance, and his forehead was coated in black Armament Haki...

He was stopping the Brachiosaurus's mountain-shattering blow—head-on!

"He... he stopped it..."

"He blocked Queen-sama's Brachio Bomber... with his head..."

"Not a scratch..."

"How is that even possible...?"

"A monster...?"

...

The Beasts Pirates were rooted to the spot, eyes wide, stunned by the sheer absurdity of what they were witnessing. A chill climbed up their spines from the soles of their feet, making their scalps crawl.

That was an ancient Brachiosaurus!

Its size and weight rivaled that of a small merchant ship. Dropping from dozens of meters in the air, it could flatten a hill—let alone a human body.

Yet that man had stood his ground, not taking a single step back, and blocked Queen-sama's full-force strike!

Sure, the Marine was unusually tall and built, but compared to the Brachiosaurus, the difference was still overwhelming.

Rumble...

Explosive shockwaves rippled outward. Under Queen's crushing weight, the earth beneath Daren's feet buckled and crumbled layer by layer.

But he lifted his head, blood trickling from the corner of his mouth—and suddenly, he grinned.

"Hey, hey... you overalls-wearing fatass, that really hurt..."

Queen's pupils shrank.

Before he could react, a flash of madness sparked in the Commodore's eyes. Daren suddenly lunged forward with both hands.

His muscular arms locked tightly around the Brachiosaurus's thick neck, veins bulging, muscles swelling like steel cables wrapped around bone.

"Now... it's my turn!!!"

Daren roared, eyes wild. He stepped forward, dropped his hips, and surged with power!

Under Queen's stunned gaze...

Under the frozen stares of every pirate...

Daren clamped down on the Brachiosaurus's head. His legs exploded with force, and his back snapped upward like a coiled spring!

The mountain-sized beast was actually hoisted into the air—

And then came a devastating over-the-shoulder throw!!

BOOM!!

Queen's massive body slammed into the ground with thunderous force. Shards of stone exploded into the air.

His mind went blank in an instant. His pupils lost focus as blood trickled from his mouth.

Everyone felt the tremor beneath their feet. The ground rocked violently.

Rip... rip...

Jagged, pitch-black cracks spread out from the point of impact. The earth within ten meters caved in at once, forming a massive, terrifying crater.

"Ssshhh!!"

The pirates all gasped in unison, jaws practically hitting the ground at the sheer impact of the scene before them.

"How... how is this possible!? Your strength! Your body! Your defense!"

Queen howled in disbelief, eyes bulging as his massive body rolled through the pit, kicking up thick clouds of dust.

Stars danced before his eyes as he staggered, trying to get up. Dizzy and reeling, he stared at Daren, voice cracked with shock.

"What the hell did you do!?"

Daren let out a cold sneer. The instant he stepped forward, his right leg swung high above his head.

His boot was coated in a dense layer of Armament Haki, radiating a chilling, metallic sheen.

He'd gained the upper hand—there was no way he'd waste the chance to strike!

His eyes sharpened.

His military boot came crashing down on Queen's head like a falling axe.

"Thanks to you!"

Boom! Boom! Boom!!

The sheer speed and explosive force of the kick ripped through the air, bursting into a visible white shockwave.

Daren's strength, power, and physique had long surpassed human limits.

And after enduring "special training" during his confinement, every aspect of his physical stats had skyrocketed. Compared to before his last mission, his combat power had surged by at least thirty percent!

Sensing the kick's monstrous force, Queen's pupils shrank, his eyelids twitching.

He clenched his teeth, fighting through the intense dizziness.

BOOM!!

The kick landed!

Rip!!

The ground groaned under the force, unable to bear it. A shockwave of rubble exploded outward.

A deep trench split from where the boot struck, carving a path dozens of meters long before it finally stopped.

Dust surged like a dragon, swirling and roaring across the battlefield.

Daren frowned and looked ahead—ten meters away.

The air was thick with smoke and dust. Queen's silhouette flickered within, panting heavily.

His form had shifted again. The Brachiosaurus's forelimbs had reverted to hands, and he now stood upright.

His mechanical arm twisted outward in a spiral, taking the shape of a massive claw.

In his right hand, he wielded an enormous cleaver.

His long, muscular orange-yellow tail had also transformed—now mechanical and rotating like a jagged saw blade.

Hybrid form!

"So he switched from full beast to hybrid form in an instant to dodge it?"

Daren's eyes glinted coldly.

He hadn't expected this fat guy in overalls to have such burst speed and power—completely at odds with his size.

"Hey! Daren! Quit playing around and get over here! Hurry up and unlock these damn shackles!"

From behind, surrounded by a swarm of pirates, Bullet bellowed through clenched teeth.

Chapter 198 - 198: Volume 2 – Chapter 100: What a Blast from the Past

"Huh? Unlocking your Seastone shackles... Are you sure about this?"

"You're a pirate, I'm a Marine—we're supposed to be enemies..."

Hearing Bullet's roar, Daren glanced back with a grin and shot him a wink.

Bullet: ???

His face flushed bright red, nearly coughing up blood.

That bastard!! Aren't we supposed to be allies right now!?

Seeing Bullet's expression like he had just swallowed something vile, Daren couldn't help but laugh. He grabbed Senor off the ground with one hand, and in the next instant, vanished from sight.

His speed was pushed to the limit—like a black phantom, he dove straight into the crowd.

"Stop him! You morons!"

Queen, still dizzy and disoriented, shouted in panic.

But the pirates surrounding Bullet didn't even get a chance to react. All they saw was a blur before a crushing force slammed into them.

It felt like getting hit by a high-speed train. Blood burst from their mouths as they were sent flying like broken kites.

A moment later, Daren reappeared beside Bullet like a ghost and handed him the keys.

Rolling his eyes in annoyance, Bullet grabbed the key with his teeth and shoved it into the lock on the shackles.

Click.

The Seastone cuffs slipped off his arm and fell to the ground.

"Kahaha... KAHAAAAHA... KAHAAAAHA!!!"

Soaked in blood, Bullet slowly stood up, raising his lone arm. He opened his hand and covered his face, throwing his head back in wild, maniacal laughter.

"Finally... finally... my strength is back!!!"

Boom!!

A powerful, deep aura exploded from his body, sending his blood-streaked golden hair flying wildly in the wind.

It surged outward like a roaring tidal wave, instantly sweeping across the world before him.

Gales howled, thunder cracked across the sky, and lightning flickered through the air like dancing serpents.

The pirates attempting to move in all froze mid-action. Their limbs stiffened as if trapped in molasses, faces instantly going pale.

One by one, they dropped to one knee, gasping in agony.

The weaker ones didn't even last that long—their eyes rolled back as they collapsed, unconscious.

Daren watched with narrowed eyes as countless thoughts raced through his mind.

Right now, the Beasts Pirates were only a mid-level force in the New World, nowhere near the scale they would reach in the original timeline.

Aside from Kaidou as captain, the crew's only real combat power lay in the two All-Stars—King of the Conflagration and Queen of the Plague. Below them were three Shinuchi, cobbled together with difficulty.

As for how reliable those "Shinuchi" were, just look at that lizard man guarding the prison earlier.

At this point in time, the Tobiroppo haven't even appeared yet, let alone figures like the Gifters or the Numbers.

Which meant that right now, the Beasts Pirates were sorely lacking in mid-tier combat strength!

No wonder Kaidou was so desperate to recruit the two of them.

...

Just then, Queen's hoarse voice rang out through the swirling wind and dust.

His massive body stepped forward from the storm, one heavy step at a time. His mechanical arm spun continuously, metal clamps clicking with a sharp, menacing rhythm.

"It's Conqueror's Haki... No wonder Kaidou-sama went through so much trouble to recruit you."

Feeling that wild, domineering aura slam into him, Queen's expression grew serious.

"But this is as far as you go."

"Unforgivable... You bastards didn't just play the great genius Queen, you also turned our base completely upside down..."

His bloodshot eyes locked onto Daren and the others, steam puffing from his nostrils. He was so furious he nearly ground his teeth to dust.

"Unforgivable!!"

"I'm going to wipe you all out!!"

The moment he finished, Queen's eyes flared with a crimson glow.

"Sparking Queen!!"

Biubiubiu!

Countless red energy beams exploded through the air like a violent storm, raining down on Daren and his group.

This is... Germa 66's technology!

"Kahahaha! Leave this to me!"

Bullet let out a crazed laugh, stepping forward and slamming a hand into the ground.

"Combine!"

Rumble...

The ground suddenly sprang to life. Under Bullet's control, a massive stone shield rose instantly, forming a solid barrier in front of them.

Boom boom boom boom!

The red energy blasts pounded the shield, scattering chunks of rock everywhere.

The massive shield shattered again and again but rapidly reformed under the power of the Gasha Gasha no Mi.

Waves of heat blasted through the air as crimson flames roared, thick black smoke billowing in every direction.

Then—

A huge figure burst through the smoke and leapt into the air.

Queen, his black-and-white overalls nearly torn apart, roared and brought down a massive blade straight toward Daren's head!

"WAHAHAHA! DIE—eh?!"

Clang!!

The blade snapped clean in two.

The broken tip spun through the air and stabbed into the ground nearby.

Queen: ...

Daren: ???

Bullet: ???

"No way! Your physical defense—how can it possibly be this tough?!"

Queen's bloodshot eyes widened in disbelief, veins bulging as he screamed.

He clenched his fists, covering them in Armament Haki.

With a roar, he swung both fists like twin cyclones, unleashing a barrage of shadowy punches.

"Bry Pan!!"

Daren sneered and charged straight in—without hesitation!

Fist clashed against fist!

Bang bang bang bang!!

Each impact echoed like a torrential rain of thunderous blows.

Every punch from the two triggered shockwaves that spread outward, making it impossible for the surrounding pirates to get close.

The ground beneath their feet kept cracking open as shards of stone flew into the air.

As Queen's attacks failed to make a dent, he grew increasingly panicked.

This damned Marine—just in terms of raw physical strength, he was already on par with Queen's hybrid human-beast form. And his durability? Even tougher!

I'm in my Brachiosaurus form, an Ancient Zoan!!

Is this guy even human!?

If that's the case...

Bang!

Their fists collided again and locked into a stalemate.

At that instant, Queen's head suddenly detached from his body and launched forward. His jaws, filled with sharp teeth, clamped down hard on Daren's shoulder.

"Now you're finished! Taste Queen-sama's electric shock!!"

A sinister gleam flashed in Queen's eyes as a wicked grin spread across his face.

"Henry Queen!!"

Zzzzzzz!!!

High-voltage electricity burst from his modified mouth, glowing with intense blue light.

The searing current instantly engulfed Daren, whipping through his skin, muscles, and organs. Smoke poured from his body.

"Wahahaha! How does that feel? You can't possibly—"

Queen's voice cracked mid-sentence, stunned.

"—What!?"

Daren stood there like nothing had happened, calmly blowing out a ring of black smoke.

"Germa's tech, huh... Really takes me back."

He smiled coldly. Then his eyes turned sharp, and he grabbed Queen's head with one hand.

He drove it straight into the ground—

Boom!!

A pillar of dust exploded ten meters into the air.

Queen's head was buried deep in the earth, his eyes spinning and blood gushing from his mouth.

His Brachiosaurus body, still above ground, spasmed uncontrollably from the overwhelming pain.

Chapter 199 - 199: Volume 2 – Chapter 101: Shouldn't I Have Let Him Finish?

Daren was well-acquainted with the technology of Germa 66.

Back in the North Blue, he had used his own body to test the power of their military weapons.

Electric shocks, flames, heavy blows, rocket bombardments...

To ordinary people, these were devastating and deadly weapons—but for Daren, they were just a normal part of training.

Though Queen claimed to have mastered Germa 66's military tech as well, his real specialty wasn't weapons development.

He excelled in mechanical body modification and the artificial synthesis of lethal infectious viruses.

"Damn it... why aren't my attacks doing anything to you..."

Queen's head was buried in a deep crater in the ground as he gasped for breath, bloodshot eyes locked on Daren in disbelief.

"I'm the one with a Zoan-type!!"

Boom!!

As soon as the words left his mouth, Queen's brachiosaurus-like neck suddenly snapped back, pulling his massive body into a high-speed spiral charge straight at Daren and Bullet.

His enormous body whipped up a violent gust of wind.

Bullet let out a wicked grin.

"Let me handle this!!"

A fierce battle hunger lit up in his eyes as he immediately activated the power of the Gasha Gasha no Mi.

Dirt, gravel, and scraps of steel surged up from the ground like living creatures, wrapping around him and forming a massive three-meter-long arm at the stump of his missing limb.

Swish!!

Armament Haki, dark purple and cold as steel, coated the giant arm.

His golden hair thrashed in the wind as Bullet bared his teeth and roared,

"You fat bastard... I've had it with you!!"

He launched his punch.

"Fusion: Ultimate Faust!!"

Boom!!

The heavy punch, like a mortar round, landed squarely on Queen's belly.

Haki and brute force exploded together, and the round stomach under his black-and-white suspenders rippled like waves.

Bang!!

Queen's body bent like a cooked shrimp under the impact, a burst of white air erupting from his back.

His face turned pale in an instant. Blood poured from his mouth and nose as he let out a howl of agony, his body rolling wildly across the ground, kicking up thick clouds of dust.

But he couldn't be bothered with that—his pupils suddenly contracted to tiny points.

In their reflection—

A military boot wrapped in Armament Haki was already raised, crashing down toward his head!

"Damn it!! There's no way I'm losing to the two of you!!"

Queen roared, a strange red glow quickly building in his eyes.

Biubiubiu!!

Beams of red light burst forth like a downpour, exploding on impact.

Rumble rumble rumble...

Scarlet flames blazed and roared as thick black smoke surged out.

In the next instant—Daren and Bullet shot out of the smoke, landing steadily on the ground.

They blew out the lingering flames on their bodies, gently laid the heavily injured Senor behind them, and narrowed their eyes toward Queen, who was rising again within the smoke.

"What a stubborn bastard... Even with me injured and nowhere near my full strength, that little reptile still managed to get back up after taking my strongest punch."

Bullet clicked his tongue in grudging admiration. As he spoke, cracks began forming in his rock arm until large chunks peeled off, shrinking it to the size of a normal arm.

The rough, stone fingers flexed and moved—a prosthetic limb forged with the Gasha Gasha no Mi, perfectly filling the void left by his severed arm.

Daren gave him a look and said with a teasing smile,

"Can you use it? If not, I could whip up a metal arm for you."

Bullet's mouth twitched. Remembering the bitter lesson he'd learned when they first met, he snapped,

"Keep that junk for yourself. I hate metal."

He clenched the newly formed "arm," feeling the strength flowing through it, and said slowly,

"It's a bit awkward to use, but once I coat it in Haki, it should do the job."

Daren chuckled, then turned his gaze back toward Queen, who was still swaying in the smoke. His expression gradually turned cold and focused.

"That guy's a Zoan-type Devil Fruit user. His physique, defense, and regeneration are insane. He's not going down that easily."

"Finish him off and get ready to retreat, Bullet."

Bullet was silent for a moment, reluctantly tightening his fists.

"Alright."

He was a man who always settled scores. Sure, that fat guy in suspenders had given him a serious power boost, but the pain of being imprisoned and injected with viruses wasn't something Bullet could just forgive.

Still, this was the Beasts Pirates' main base. Kaidou and King could return at any moment. If they stalled too long, their escape plan would fall apart.

"Retreat!?"

Just then, Queen's hoarse voice came out from the thick smoke.

Bang!

He took a step forward, and the ground trembled beneath his massive frame.

His enormous body blasted the smoke away with a gust of air.

There stood the upright Brachiosaurus, panting, eyes bloodshot and locked on his test subjects. With rage boiling over, he let out a furious roar—

"You think you can just escape!?"

His voice boomed like a shockwave, shaking the whole island.

"You destroyed an arsenal, killed so many of our crew, turned our base into a mess... No matter what, I'm going to grind you into paste and slaughter you all!"

Queen, now in his hybrid form, suddenly dropped to all fours, crouching low like a predator ready to pounce.

Click... click...

His blood-covered mouth full of razor-sharp teeth slowly opened wide.

His metal mechanical arm unfolded abruptly, a cannon barrel emerging from the steel clamp.

The segmented metal tail swayed, then snapped into position—its tip also transforming into a cannon muzzle.

Mouth, arm, tail... all began to glow with an oppressive dark yellow light.

Dazzling light particles swirled around, and the crushing sense of destruction spreading through the air made everyone's spine go cold.

"It's that move!!"

"He's using his mechanical arms and tail too!!"

"Those three are done for!!"

"Other than Kaidou-sama, no one can stop this attack from Queen-sama!!"

"..."

From a distance, the Beasts Pirates who were lying low and watching the fight erupted in shocked cries and cheers.

But none of them noticed the strange look on the Marine's face as he stared at Queen's display.

Bullet's mouth twitched. He glanced at Daren and took two silent steps back.

"Wahahahaha!!"

"Be vaporized under the firepower of genius Queen, you fools!!"

"Escape?"

Queen burst into wild laughter, completely unhinged.

"Don't be ridiculous!!!"

"I am—"

The three streams of dark yellow energy converged to their peak.

"'The Plague' Que—eh!?"

A faint arc of blue electricity flashed through the air, and suddenly, the cannon barrels on his modified arms and tail twitched and clamped shut erratically.

Queen: ???

His face froze. The triumphant grin stiffened into a stunned expression.

BOOM!!!

In the next instant, fire engulfed him and everything within a hundred meters.

A massive explosion erupted on the spot, transforming into a towering fireball that roared into the sky!

Daren slowly lowered his finger, scratched his head a little sheepishly, and said,

"Maybe I should've let him finish?"

Bullet: "..."

The stunned pirates watching from afar: "..."

Chapter 200 - 200: Volume 2 – Chapter 102: Same Old Story

A towering blaze surged into the sky, spreading across the land like a fireball that blotted out the sun.

The searing heat scorched the cracked, crumbling ground, filling the air with sharp pops and crackles. The pirates watching from a distance panicked and dropped to the ground, overwhelmed by the wave of heat.

The flickering flames cast a stark reflection on their pale, frozen faces—faces twisted with fear.

"Aaaaargh!!"

In the midst of the inferno, Queen's massive body thrashed violently, rolling on the ground and letting out a blood-curdling scream.

"Now's the chance!!"

Bullet's eyes gleamed with murderous red intent.

Queen was badly injured—if he struck now, he could very likely finish him off in one blow. It would be the perfect release for all the rage and humiliation he'd endured.

He took a deep breath, tensing his legs to leap—

Only to feel a hand grab his shoulder.

"No, Bullet. We're leaving."

Bullet paused, surprised, and turned his head.

He saw faint blue arcs of electricity crackling between Daren's fingertips.

As an invisible magnetic field expanded, countless weapons and firearms from the fallen pirates scattered across the battlefield suddenly shot into the air.

In midair, they twisted, melted, and reassembled—until they merged into a sleek silver ark, hovering before the two of them.

Daren tossed the unconscious Senor onto the ark with one hand. Just as he was about to step aboard—

A furious roar thundered from the distant sky.

"Daren!! Bullet!! You bastards! How dare you—"

The voice boomed like a storm, shaking the heavens as violent winds and flashes of lightning exploded in every direction.

Bullet's expression darkened. His pupils shrank.

That voice... Kaidou!!

He's back!!

Bullet instinctively looked up.

In the distance, an enormous black shadow slithered through the clouds, growing larger by the second.

Thunder and wind raged around it, weaving together in wild bursts of flickering light.

"A dragon?!"

"It's Kaidou-sama!!"

"Yes! Kaidou-sama's returned!"

"Those two are finished now!"

"..."

The distant members of the Beasts Pirates, who had been watching in despair, suddenly lit up with excitement as they witnessed the change in the sky.

Then—

A sharp screech ripped through the air from behind the clouds, like a blade slicing through the heavens.

"Kaifu!!"

Before the looming shadow even arrived, massive dark green wind blades tore through the clouds, sweeping down toward Daren and Bullet like a storm ready to consume everything.

"He's here!!"

Daren's eyes narrowed. He raised his arm without hesitation.

Countless metal shards flew up and reformed into a dome-shaped steel shield in front of them. A layer of jet-black Armament Haki instantly coated its surface, wrapping around the two of them.

Daren didn't dare take Kaidou's "Kaifu" lightly—it was strong enough to slice through city walls and tear the ground apart. He immediately reinforced the metal shield with Haki.

Clang! Clang! Clang! Clang!!

The wind blades crashed down like a torrential storm, slamming into the shield, sparking violently and carving deep, jagged cuts.

Crackle...

The number of cuts and fractures multiplied rapidly—until, with the final wind blade, the shield shattered into a flurry of metallic shards.

Amid the falling fragments, a massive dragon's head, the size of a mountain, finally emerged from the thick, oppressive sea of clouds.

When Kaidou saw the devastation of his stronghold and the countless corpses littering the battlefield, his vertical pupils instantly flushed with blood.

Uncontainable fury boiled within them as his gaze locked onto Daren and Bullet below.

"Unforgivable!!"

The massive dragon let out a deafening roar and suddenly opened its gaping, fang-filled jaws, drawing in a deep breath.

Its belly swelled in an instant as blistering flames visibly swirled in its throat, forming a terrifying fireball.

"Damn it! That move again!"

Bullet's pupils narrowed sharply.

That bastard Kaidou had used this very attack to throw everything into chaos last time—giving him the chance to capture both Daren and himself alive.

"But... that trick won't work twice!"

He suddenly grinned, dark Armament Haki wrapping around his arms like invisible armor.

"Bullet, Kaidou's mine. Watch the rear!"

A calm voice rang out—it was the Marine Commodore.

Bullet was momentarily stunned. He scanned the smoke-filled sky and quickly spotted a shadow breaking away from behind the massive dragon, swooping around the smoke to attack from the flank.

Twin black wings, long and narrow, burst into crimson flames midair as the figure glided down at incredible speed.

The second-in-command of the Beasts Pirates, the All-Star "The Conflagration" King!!

Ancient Zoan-type Ryu Ryu no Mi, Model: Pteranodon!

The Pteranodon suddenly pulled its head back like a tightly drawn bowstring, poised to strike.

Its target—The silver ark behind them, which Daren and Bullet had been guarding with their lives.

A pincer attack!

"Daren, you bastard! I'm not one of your subordinates! Why should I take orders from you?!"

Bullet growled in protest, teeth clenched. But even as he shouted, his body instinctively obeyed the Commodore's command.

He stepped forward, and in an instant, the ground beneath him surged—stone, sand, and steel wrapped around his body, rising to form a towering ten-meter-tall giant.

"Fusion!"

The imposing giant raised its massive arms and hurled them toward the Pteranodon in the sky.

The sheer force tore through the air, sending white shockwaves rippling outward.

At the same moment, Bullet heard a sharp sound behind him—

Flick!

A coin shot into the air with a metallic hum.

Wind whipped through the battlefield as Daren stood tall, his black hair tousled, eyes sharp as the spinning coin locked onto the flaming maw of the dragon.

In that hellish landscape, debris flying, the scene seemed to freeze.

Daren and the fusion giant formed by Bullet stood back-to-back, ready to face their foes head-on.

The next second—

BOOM!!

A pillar of red-hot flame shot from the dragon's mouth.

A searing blue electromagnetic cannon blast erupted from Daren's hand.

The Pteranodon launched a golden laser-like shockwave.

And the battle-hardened giant roared, hurling a fist like a meteor—

All colliding midair in a cataclysmic clash!

"Bolo Breath!"

"Magnetic Overload: Railgun!"

"Tempuraudon!"

"Medium Bullet: Super Cannon!!"

For a moment, the world fell into complete silence.

Then—

BOOM!!

BOOM!!

Two colossal explosions detonated in the sky, and the overwhelming shockwaves rippled outward with unstoppable force.

The Beasts Pirates had no time to react—everything was suddenly swallowed by a blinding white light as their bodies were hurled through the air.

The island groaned under the pressure, as if struck by a massive earthquake. The ground shook violently.

Endless, gaping cracks split the earth. The ground surged like waves, and near the coast, the sea rose in towering tsunamis tens of meters high.

It was as if the world itself was falling apart.