

One Piece 351

Chapter 351 - 351: Volume 2 – Chapter 253: Graduation Exam

The wind scattered the smoke, and dust swirled through the air.

"Isn't this a fair deal, Zephyr?"

Big Mom, her long lashes framing a pair of amused eyes, giggled as she watched the former Marine Admiral panting in the distance.

"I don't want Daren's life. I just want him as my husband."

"Otherwise, you know better than anyone—if this keeps up, those four little Marine brats of yours will be slaughtered by Shiki."

"And let's be honest... Facing both me and Kaidou at the same time, you're just about at your limit, aren't you?"

She sounded supremely confident, her words laced with a strange allure that tugged at the mind.

Big Mom had no real interest in destroying Marine Headquarters. She'd only agreed to Shiki's proposal to team up because she wanted to take Daren.

What she hadn't expected was for her simple plan to be completely derailed—by Zephyr, a former Admiral.

And worse, the strength he displayed was more troublesome than she'd anticipated.

Sure, she and Kaidou would win if the fight dragged on. But it wouldn't be easy.

And if Zephyr landed a fatal counterattack before going down... she couldn't be certain that Shiki wouldn't seize the moment to turn on her.

They were once crewmates on the Rocks Pirates, supposedly "comrades" on the same ship. But who could say what kind of trust or camaraderie really existed between them?

If they had truly trusted each other, the Rocks Pirates wouldn't have fallen at God Valley.

A hot wind howled across the ravaged battlefield.

Big Mom waited, smiling.

Kaidou's expression twisted. His grip on the kanabō tightened, then loosened. Tightened again. Killing intent poured off him in waves.

But just then, Zephyr stopped panting.

His cigar had burned out long ago. He calmly pulled out another one, lit it, and placed it between his lips.

"No... what you don't understand—"

A faint smile crept across his face. Zephyr slowly raised his head and removed his cracked sunglasses, revealing a pair of eyes—weathered, but still blazing with fire.

Black Armament Haki surged once again over his arms, flowing like water.

"Monsters are called monsters... because every single one of them possesses talent and resolve that rivals yours."

He took a deep breath and stood tall. His dark-coated arms stretched wide, and the large Marine cloak behind him flared up with the sudden rise of his aura.

"Sakazuki..."

He stepped forward.

Boom!!

In the distance, a pillar of blood-red magma exploded skyward, as if answering his call.

Zephyr stepped forward again.

"Borsalino..."

A flash of golden light tore across the battlefield.

"Kuzan..."

A wave of frost crept across the land, glittering with jagged ice crystals.

With every step he took, Zephyr called a name.

And with every name, his voice grew firmer, his eyes sharper—brimming with unshakable trust.

"And Daren."

At that moment, a lone figure rose slowly from the battlefield.

His black hair fluttered in the wind. His aura burned wild and unyielding.

Zephyr's pace quickened into a sprint. He charged straight toward Big Mom and Kaidou!

Each step thundered, blasting deep craters into the ground beneath him. His momentum climbed with every stride.

He was just one man—but the force he carried felt like a legion.

"The young ones they call 'monsters'... and the new generation that fights on in the name of justice..."

Zephyr let out a booming laugh, the corner of his mouth curling into a fierce, proud grin as he bit down on his cigar.

"They were never flowers grown in a greenhouse!"

Through his Observation Haki, vivid scenes flashed through his mind—

Gion cleaving a soul monster in two with a single slash.

Tokikake dismantling his enemies with raw force.

Yamakaji wreathed in fire.

Onigumo stalking like a shadow.

Doberman attacking with unrelenting force.

Dalmatian executing flawless technique...

One by one, those young, bloodstained figures were charging forward—like the warriors before them.

Fearless, blade in hand, defending the land beneath their feet and the homes behind them.

"Every one of them is fighting. They are the future of the Marines!"

Zephyr laughed heartily.

"As their instructor... I've never once doubted their strength!"

Veins of blood quickly spread around his eyes as he grinned fiercely and growled,

"Justice... leaves no room for compromise or negotiation!!"

"I was planning to give them a proper graduation mission at sea, but it looks like I can skip that now..."

In a flash, he roared forward, charging straight at Big Mom and Kaidou. His Black Arm Haki-clad fists blasted out like cannonballs, tearing through the air and erupting into rings of purple-black shockwaves.

"This war... is their graduation exam!!"

Boom!!

A towering pillar of dust and wind exploded into the sky.

...

A quake like a landslide rumbled from the distance. The ground beneath their feet trembled.

Daren straightened up, frowning as he instinctively glanced toward Zephyr-sensei.

So the final battle was starting.

At 44, Zephyr-sensei was still at his physical and combat peak. With his formidable Armament Haki, holding off Big Mom and Kaidou for a while shouldn't be an issue.

After all, Kaidou at this point was still under 30, still climbing in power, far from the peak Yonkō he'd one day become.

"Don't just stand there. That old man's not going down easy."

A deep, hoarse voice came from Daren's left.

Sakazuki stepped slowly from the pillar of magma, his cold gaze locked on the airborne Shiki. His entire arm was bubbling, magma roiling around it.

"That bastard's our opponent."

His words cut through the air like cold nails, laced with murderous intent.

"Looks like this time... we really have to go all out."

To the right, Kuzan—half his body encased in solid ice—exhaled a breath of frost that shimmered in the air.

Gone was the usual aloofness in his eyes, replaced by something colder than the ice itself.

"Well... he is a legendary Great Pirate."

A slow, casual voice came from behind.

Borsalino's trademark smirk remained on his face, but there was an unmissable chill beneath it.

"He actually broke my calf... That's pretty terrifying."

The lower leg of his white suit was soaked in blood.

Seeing the serious expressions on all three of them, Daren blinked.

Then he smiled.

So... they're all serious now.

"Well then..."

He lifted his head and flashed a vicious grin at the Golden Lion hovering in the air. His eyes glinted with wrath.

"Congratulations, Shiki... you've officially pissed off all four of us."

Arcs of blue lightning began to crackle across the surface of the Marine Commodore's body.

"Now... Round two."

Chapter 352 - 352: Volume 2 – Chapter 254: Breaking the Shackles

Hearing Daren's words, Shiki's lips curled into a mocking grin, ready to fire back with a sneer.

But in the very next second, his brows furrowed.

It was their eyes.

The eyes of those four Marine brats... had changed.

Suddenly—

"ICE BALL!!"

Kuzan was the first to act, raising his hand and launching several snow-white ice pillars straight at Shiki.

A blast of frigid air surged forward. A flash of red flickered in Shiki's pupils as his Observation Haki instantly pinpointed the pillars' trajectory.

"Jihahahaha! That trick's useless against me!"

With a tilt of his body, the ice pillars whistled past his clothes, missing by a hair.

But then, the smirk on his face abruptly froze.

With a sharp command from Kuzan, the pillars that had brushed by exploded into a storm of glittering ice crystals.

The shards rapidly dissolved into an overwhelming cold mist that spread like wildfire. The air around them visibly froze, layering over Shiki's body and clothes, creeping outward without pause.

A biting chill pierced through his skin, infiltrating every pore, slowing the flow of his blood.

Shiki scowled, and a swirling surge of Armament Haki burst from within him, rapidly dispelling the freezing air invading his muscles.

At that moment, a beam of golden light suddenly shot into the sky.

The dim horizon was flooded with a blinding brilliance, as if night had turned to day in an instant.

High above, Borsalino spread his arms, fingers poised in an orchid shape, his body bathed entirely in golden light!

"Yasakani no Magatama!"

With his voice still hanging in the air, countless blazing light bullets, radiating scorching destructive power, rained down like a torrent from the heavens.

Shiki raised an eyebrow and soared like a flying lion, weaving through the storm of light bullets at breakneck speed.

Then, dozens of fixed heavy cannons on the ground suddenly shifted, swiveling their barrels toward his flight path and unleashing a furious barrage.

Above, a downpour of light bullets. Ahead, a wall of cannon fire. Every escape route was completely sealed off.

Shiki gritted his teeth, his body halting mid-air. With a fierce swing of his twin swords, he unleashed a volley of sharp, golden slashes.

"Shishi: Senjindani!"

Swish!!

BOOM!!

Dozens of sword beams shot out with a roar, tearing everything in their path to pieces. The devastating cutting force carved out a vacuum, crashing into the barrage of bullets and cannon shells, igniting massive explosions.

Flames surged into the sky. The residual force of the slashes swept across the battlefield, silently slicing through the ground and nearby structures.

"Jihahahahaha!! I thought you had something new up your sleeves, but it's just the same old tricks!"

Shiki's figure flickered in and out of the smoke and flames, grinning wildly.

"If this is all you've got, there won't be a second round!!"

The words had barely left his mouth when—

A figure wreathed in magma burst through the black smoke, appearing in front of Shiki with staggering speed.

Sakazuki!

Boiling red magma surged from his right arm, expanding in an instant like a volcano on the brink of eruption!

Seeing Sakazuki, a sly glint flashed in Shiki's feral eyes.

These four Marine brats were no pushovers. If he didn't take them down quickly, once that bastard Sengoku showed up, he wouldn't stand a chance.

Zzzzt... zzzzt...

Black and red lightning crackled around Shiki's body once more, wrapping tightly around his dual blades.

"Jihahahahaha!! You've got a death wish!"

He brought one blade crashing down!

A strike wreathed in Conqueror's Haki!

Sakazuki, facing the full brunt of the slash, felt as if the world before him was fracturing and collapsing inch by inch. Space itself seemed to twist and shatter like a broken mirror.

No doubt—if he took that hit head-on, he'd be seriously injured... maybe even killed!

But even as the Meito came crashing down, Sakazuki's expression beneath the brim of his cap didn't change at all.

His gaze remained ice-cold, as if he didn't even see the incoming strike.

Shiki's pupils shrank.

A wave of unease surged in his heart.

The sword fell—

Then came a bizarre sight.

The instant the Meito sliced through the air, it was as if an invisible barrier appeared in the void. The air visibly warped as if being torn apart.

An eerie, indescribable force suddenly clamped down on his blade. Shiki felt the strength of his swing cut in half in an instant!

Faint blue arcs of electricity sparked along Oto's blade.

What the hell...

His eyes widened.

In the corner of his vision, he spotted the Marine Commodore on the ground.

The man stood with arms raised, lightning sparking between his fingers. Blood trickled from his nostrils and mouth as he clenched his teeth tight.

He had clearly pushed his Devil Fruit powers to the limit...

Even overdrawing his physical strength!

Super Overload: Magnetic Control!!

Hiss!!

At last, the blade struck!

Blood gushed as the sword, wrapped in black-red lightning, pierced into Sakazuki's chest, cutting through magma and flesh, slicing straight to the bone.

Sakazuki's face turned pale in a flash.

But in his cold eyes, a wild gleam flared to life. A savage grin curled at the corners of his mouth.

The punch he had been holding back—erupted with thunderous speed...

Like a volcanic explosion!

"Hellhound!"

A roar of magma burst forth, aimed straight at Shiki's head!

His pupils shrank to pinpoints.

From the sheer force behind the strike, he could feel the shadow of death looming.

But more than that—through his Observation Haki, he sensed something terrifying. The aura of the Marine brat in front of him had broken through some kind of limit... stepping into an entirely new realm!

"Not that easy!"

The power of the Fuwa Fuwa no Mi erupted. Shiki's body yanked backward in an instant.

Hiss!!

The fist of magma from the Magu Magu no Mi grazed his chest, narrowly missing his neck by inches! The searing magma burned through his skin and flesh, leaving a scorched, mangled wound across his torso.

"AAARRRGH! Damn you, magma brat!!"

Shiki howled in agony, his eyes bloodshot and wild. With a twist of his arm, he reversed his grip on his sword—his other Meito, Kogarashi, crackled to life with black-red lightning, ready to cleave Sakazuki in two.

"Now!!!"

Sakazuki's roar was cold and devilish.

At that moment, a streak of golden light split the air.

Borsalino suddenly appeared behind Shiki, both hands gripping the Ama no Murakumo, slashing straight at his lower back!

Their sword swings mirrored each other, nearly identical in speed and timing.

"Still think I was too slow this time?"

Borsalino grinned, his voice faint and mocking.

Chapter 353 - 353: Volume 2 – Chapter 255: Chibaku Tensei?

Feeling the scorching heat closing in on his back, Shiki instinctively clenched his teeth.

This yellow brat... had really gotten faster!

A shocking thought suddenly flashed through his mind—

Could it be... this cunning little Marine had broken through as well!?

There was no time to think. In that split-second of crisis, Shiki had to make a choice.

If he followed through with his strike, he could seriously wound or even kill the magma brat—but he'd also be run through by that sly yellow bastard right behind him!

Without hesitation, he made his decision.

His reverse slash abruptly changed course, locking blades with Borsalino's Ama no Murakumo.

"So, you hesitated..."

A faint, amused smile tugged at Borsalino's lips.

Shiki froze.

And then—blinding golden light exploded across his vision.

A dazzling radiance burst from Borsalino's body, momentarily blinding him. Tears streamed uncontrollably from Shiki's bloodshot eyes.

"AAARRRGHH! You bastards!!"

Temporarily robbed of his sight, Shiki let out a furious roar as his long golden mane whipped wildly in all directions.

A terrifying burst of Conqueror's Haki exploded from his body, overwhelming everything in its path and engulfing all of Marineford.

The air howled like a storm from hell. Black and red lightning tore through the sky, constantly crackling into existence before vanishing again.

The ground heaved like a tsunami had struck—crumbling in layers, massive fissures ripping open across the earth as if leading into the abyss.

Sakazuki and Borsalino, the closest to him, grunted under the crushing pressure of the Haki. Their bodies trembled violently, flickering with signs of elementalization as they were forced to retreat and put distance between themselves and Shiki.

Daren stood firm on the fractured ground, panting heavily. He raised an arm to shield himself from the surging shockwave, his eyes flashing with rare intensity.

Shiki really was one of the greatest monsters on the seas.

Whether it was swordsmanship, Haki, physical prowess, or adaptability in battle, he was near flawless.

Sight was one of humanity's most relied-upon senses.

Even well-trained fighters proficient in Observation Haki instinctively depended on their vision to guide their attacks.

To be suddenly blinded—especially in the heat of a deadly battle—would be enough to shake even the steeliest of wills, triggering panic and hesitation.

But not Shiki.

Even in that perilous moment, robbed of sight, he relied on his years of battlefield instincts and physical reflexes to unleash a fresh burst of Haki, successfully forcing back both Sakazuki and Borsalino.

"But... the tide has turned."

A faint grin crept onto Daren's lips as his gaze shifted forward.

He saw Kuzan drop from the sky, landing on one knee. Without hesitation, Kuzan raised a hand and slammed it into the ground, eyes cold and unreadable.

"Ice Age."

Whoosh—

In utter silence, the world ahead turned a blinding white.

If seen from above, one would witness a wave of frost radiating out from Kuzan at incredible speed, blanketing the battlefield.

Flames, debris, crumbling fortresses—even bullets and cannon shells fired from afar—were frozen in an instant.

Everything in sight became solid ice.

The swirling ice crystals surged upward, clashing with Shiki's raging Conqueror's Haki, spiraling around him—then surged inward all at once, instantly encasing his body in a frozen grip!

"Freeze him!!!"

Bloodshot veins crept across Kuzan's eyes.

Blood spilled from his mouth, nostrils, eyes, even his ears. The veins on his forehead and the backs of his hands bulged violently—he had clearly pushed his Devil Fruit power to its absolute limit!

Ice crystals bloomed around Shiki, layer upon layer wrapping his body, climbing higher and higher until they formed a towering iceberg over a hundred meters tall.

Within the glistening ice, Shiki's furious and defiant figure remained clearly visible—like a lifelike statue carved from frost.

"Did it work?"

"What a monstrous technique!"

"He really is one of HQ's monsters!"

"..."

Marines in the distance could only stare, stunned, murmuring in disbelief.

But before the words even settled, a sharp cracking sound echoed from within the massive iceberg.

Crack!

Hairline fractures spread across the surface, quickly branching outward in a web of lines. In mere seconds, they covered the entire structure.

Black and red arcs of lightning burst from the cracks. Kuzan, his arms turned to pillars of ice, felt his vision blur. He could already sense his limit—Shiki was on the verge of breaking out through sheer force of Haki.

Gritting his teeth, he roared,

"Daren!!!"

But there was no need to call—Daren was already moving!

He straightened his back, eyes wide open, arms thrown out to his sides.

Visible blue arcs of electricity surged across his body, expanding into an invisible magnetic field that spread outward in waves.

Rumble...

In that instant, all of Marineford seemed to tremble under a strange, overwhelming force.

"Rise!!"

Blood streamed from Daren's eyes. Crimson dripped from the corners of his mouth as he cried out.

The magnetic field surged into chaos.

Under the stunned, disbelieving gazes of everyone—

Turrets launched into the air.

Heavy metal cannons tore free from their foundations.

Steel bars ripped from the earth and shattered ruins.

Broken blades and shattered swords from across the battlefield...

Countless metal objects were wrenched from their places, hurtling skyward, drawn by the magnetic force.

From a distance, it looked like a black swarm of locusts blotting out the sky—rushing toward the figure within the iceberg at blinding speed.

One piece. Two. Three. Four...

They slammed together, twisted, compacted, reshaped...

And slowly, they began to rise.

In the dead silence that followed, an enormous sphere formed—assembled from countless pieces of warped metal.

Thirty meters wide, the giant sphere hovered in the air like a small black moon.

The sight was terrifying.

"Magnetic Prison..."

Blood covering his face, Daren whispered hoarsely.

He raised one arm and clenched it into a fist toward the floating orb.

In an instant, the surface of the sphere crackled with blue lightning.

Thousands of metallic components compressed violently again under the force of the magnetic field...

The dents and gaps on its surface sealed tight.

"—Annihilation!"

A sharp crackling echoed from deep within.

And from between the seams of the sphere...

A faint trickle of blinding red leaked out, dripping down.

Chapter 354 - 354: Volume 2 – Chapter 256: This Is Your Real Hell

The battlefield fell into utter silence.

Not a single sound.

Even the Marines locked in combat with the soul monsters froze at once, eyes wide with shock as they stared up at the massive black sphere in the sky, which was steadily oozing blood. Their faces were filled with disbelief.

Blood continued seeping from the tiny cracks webbing the sphere's surface, quickly staining it a deep, dark red. The sight was beyond terrifying.

"Did it work?"

"That attack was insane... there's no way anything survived that."

"Even his bones must've been crushed to dust..."

And it wasn't just them.

Far off in the distance, Big Mom and Kaidou—who had been working together to suppress Zephyr—also paused, stunned. A wave of shock rippled through their hearts.

Those Navy brats... they really managed to go head-to-head with Shiki!?

But then—

Thud... thud... thud...

Heavy footsteps echoed across the ruins. In the eyes of everyone whose pupils were drawn tight with tension, a blood-soaked figure suddenly launched upward from the ground.

A deep wound, slashed clean to the bone, stretched across his chest. Blood poured freely, staining his uniform crimson. The Justice cloak at his back billowed, soaked in iron and blood.

A single blood-red rose bloomed over his heart, swaying with the wind and smoke—a grim, chilling beauty.

Sakazuki!

"Go to hell, Shiki the Golden Lion!!"

His roar was sharp, like a demon's curse. Murderous intent exploded from his eyes, and in a blink, his entire right arm swelled with black smoke. A blazing magma fist surged forth, ready to incinerate everything!

A volcanic eruption unleashed in full force!

Blazing red magma shot up like a massive fireball, driving straight through the "blood moon" suspended in midair!

Sakazuki didn't need to confirm whether Daren's technique had finished the job.

He'd burn it all to ashes—just to be sure!

"Great Eruption!!"

His fist came crashing down!

A crimson shockwave burst forth, distorting the air around it under its intense heat.

But just then—black and red lightning suddenly ripped through the sphere, shattering the compressed mass of metal into countless fragments that scattered across the sky.

Two Meito swords, each wrapped in Haki, slashed upward with brutal force. They tore through the metallic debris like twin thunderbolts, meeting Sakazuki's magma fist head-on!

BOOM!!

The magma punch and the twin blades collided in midair. Waves of violent force exploded outward, spreading in all directions from their clash.

The shattered ground rose in layers, rippling like a storm-tossed sea.

Only now did everyone finally get a clear look at Shiki's condition!

His skin was torn in multiple places, blood dripping freely. His expression was twisted in pain and rage, eyes wild with fury like a beast from hell.

Black and red lightning crackled around his body. His Haki still surged, overwhelming—but through Observation Haki, it was clear.

His aura had dropped by at least half.

He was seriously wounded.

"You damn brats... You actually pushed me this far!!"

Shiki's voice was filled with hatred and cold fury. Blood vessels lined his eyes like spiderwebs.

"I swear—I won't let a single one of you—"

Biu!

A golden laser beam suddenly pierced his abdomen, tearing straight through his body and blasting into the distant sea, sending water geysering into the sky.

Shiki froze, his entire body locking up as blood gushed from his mouth.

He whipped his head around, eyes blazing with fury—locking onto Borsalino.

The latter sat slumped on the ground, leaning against a wall. He gave a weak, lopsided grin, his index finger still raised.

"I'm really sorry... I'm too exhausted to move. This was the only option left..."

"Damn it!!!"

With a pained roar, Shiki surged forward. His twin swords, wreathed in Conqueror's Haki, came crashing down in a ferocious arc!

Swish!

Like a blood-red whip slashing from the heavens, a colossal black-and-red blade light tore through the air, stretching a hundred meters—driving Sakazuki's entire body straight into the ground!

BOOM!!

The blade cleaved half the military port in two, the earth shuddered violently, and dozens of buildings collapsed in a chain reaction, sending up clouds of dust and debris.

But after delivering that devastating blow, Shiki's face turned pale. He stumbled back several steps, blood pouring uncontrollably from his mouth.

After taking so many brutal hits—and with Borsalino's laser having pierced through his abdomen—he could feel his body failing fast.

"How... could this be..."

His vision blurred. Blood clouded his eyes. He doubled over, coughing violently.

Yet even then, his glare locked onto Daren, who stood swaying in the center of the ruined battlefield.

Daren's face was ghostly pale, clearly at his limit. A bowstring pulled to its breaking point.

"It's all your fault..."

Shiki inhaled deeply, eyes flashing with icy resolve.

"I have to kill you... right now!!"

"Shiki!!!!"

Just then, an explosive roar thundered across the sea.

Shiki froze mid-motion.

The force of that voice jolted the Marines back to their senses—they turned toward the ocean.

A massive warship was tearing across the water at full speed, crashing through waves like a force of nature.

All its cannons, supplies—even sections of the railings—had been stripped away. The engines roared at full throttle, pushed to the max for speed alone!

At the bow stood a towering figure radiating golden light, his furious gaze locked onto the ruins of Marineford. Black and red lightning crackled faintly around him.

Admiral Sengoku, the Buddha of the Marine Headquarters!

Behind him stood two eerie figures, silent and still. Dressed in pale silk robes and wearing strange white masks.

Members of CP0—the World Government's top intelligence agency.

"You're not going anywhere!"

Sengoku's voice roared across the sea as he unleashed his full presence without restraint.

Shiki's pupils contracted. His mind raced.

In his current state, if Sengoku got close...

No. Sengoku couldn't fly.

He could still escape anytime he wanted!

But just as that thought surfaced, Shiki's gaze landed on Daren.

The Marine Commodore stood firm, his lips curling into the faintest, mocking smirk.

For some reason...

Seeing that smirk sent a jolt of unease through Shiki's chest.

Could it be... that brat still had something left up his sleeve?

No. Even if he did—it wouldn't matter!

He still had three top-tier forces on his side!

Kaidou and Linlin were both near full strength. Even if things got messy—

Wait...

Where were they?

A chill crept down his spine. Shiki turned his head—and what he saw nearly made his eyes explode from their sockets.

With Sengoku and CP0's arrival, Kaidou and Big Mom, who had been fiercely battling Zephyr, suddenly pulled away without hesitation. Kaidou soared skyward in dragon form, and Linlin rode off on thunderclouds...

They were retreating. Without a word.

"Those two damn cowards!!"

Shiki nearly shattered his own teeth in fury.

Too late...

The realization struck hard.

With a bitter snarl, he shot up into the sky.

If that's how it is...

From high above, covered in blood, Shiki gazed down on the devastated Marineford below.

With Big Mom's retreat, her soul monsters had lost control—one by one, they crumbled into piles of lifeless steel and stone as their souls vanished.

Down on the smoke-choked ground, Marines stood battered and bloodied, propping themselves up on their blades as they gasped for breath.

One by one, they rose again.

Daren. Kuzan. Borsalino. And Sakazuki, climbing from a split in the ground...

The four of them stood at the front of the Marine lines, bloodied but unyielding, shoulder to shoulder, eyes blazing as they glared back at Shiki.

Their gazes clashed in the air. Sparks flew in the silence.

A cruel, mocking grin curled on Shiki's lips.

"You naive little Marines... You think this means you've won?"

The moment the words left his mouth, Sengoku's expression shifted sharply—he sensed something.

"Jihahahahaha!!!"

Shiki threw his head back in manic laughter.

"Open your eyes and look!!"

He raised one hand and swung it down with force.

"This... is your true... hell!!"

As his voice rang out, a low rumble echoed from behind the thick clouds.

"No way..."

The Marines froze.

Then their eyes went wide in horror, as if staring at something out of a nightmare.

A massive, pitch-black shadow slowly spread from behind the clouds.

And then—

Whoosh!!

The cloud sea split apart, layer by layer, rolling back like retreating tides.

A towering shadow blotted out the sky, casting darkness over half of Marineford.

Terror surged across the battlefield like a virus.

It was...

An island.

...

(40 Chapters Ahead)

p@treon com / PinkSnake

Chapter 355 - 355: Volume 2 – Chapter 257: A Moth Against a Windmill

The world fell into absolute silence.

No one moved. No one breathed. Horror gripped every face.

Rumble...

The low, oppressive roar in the air grew louder—heavier—until it was deafening.

"This... this can't be happening..."

"It's not real..."

"A... an island?"

"A floating island..."

"Can we... really survive this?"

"This is power... enough to destroy the world..."

A massive shadow loomed over most of Marineford, blotting out the entire sky. The overwhelming darkness crept downward, suffocating every inch of light and hope.

Tens of thousands of Marines at headquarters stared blankly upward, watching as the enormous island began its slow, inevitable descent. Their bodies trembled involuntarily.

Clang!

The sound of a sword dropping to the ground echoed—then another, and another.

One by one, swords slipped from numb fingers. Faces turned ashen, eyes filled with unspeakable fear.

They stood frozen amid the ruins, their gazes empty, unmoving—like soulless puppets in a rising storm.

Some collapsed to their knees. A young female Marine let out a sob and broke down in tears.

It was an island.

If it fell... Marineford would be annihilated. Leveled. Smashed into the sea.

Against power like this—"power to destroy the world"—resistance and retreat alike had lost all meaning.

...

Farther away, in the civilian evacuation zone, the terror spread just as deeply.

People stared at the apocalyptic vision in the sky, legs shaking, breath caught in their throats.

They gave up running.

Children cried.

Lovers held each other tight.

Families clung together in desperate silence, hugging like it was the last thing they'd ever do.

"Shiki! You damn lunatic!!"

Sengoku looked up, eyes burning with rage, his voice roaring through the chaos.

"Jihahahaha!! Sengoku! This is my gift to you!!"

Up above, Shiki cackled like a madman. His blood-soaked face was twisted with a deranged lust for destruction.

Glaring down at the short-haired Marine Commodore, he bared his teeth in a mocking, twisted smile.

"Daren, you little brat!! You see this!?"

"You destroyed my flying fleet... and now I'll sink your entire Marine headquarters into the sea!!"

"Jihahahaha!! Just stand there—watch helplessly as everything you know is wiped out in an instant!!"

RUMBLE...

As Shiki released his hold on the floating island using the power of the Fuwa Fuwa no Mi, gravity took over.

The island began to fall.

Faster.

Louder.

The roar in the sky sharpened, rising to a piercing shriek—like thunder tearing the heavens apart.

From the ground, one could clearly see rings of compressed air radiating from the island's base. Then... a red glow began to shine from beneath it.

It was friction. Heat. The island igniting the sky as it plummeted.

A violent shockwave blasted downward, flattening the earth below. Cracks began to spider across the ground.

The storm winds screamed across every corner of Marineford, whipping the white Justice cloaks of the Marines into a frenzy.

And yet, everyone stood still.

Like statues.

As if they had already accepted the end.

Just then—

"What are you all doing!?"

A cold, hoarse shout suddenly rang out, cutting through the silence.

Everyone paused. Sakazuki was slowly rising to his feet, one hand braced against a crumbling wall.

He wiped the blood from the corner of his mouth. His eyes, unflinching and sharp, locked onto the island falling from the sky.

"Waiting to die isn't the Marine way."

With that icy declaration, he took a deep breath.

Thump, thump...

Thick black smoke began to pour from his arms again, and blazing red magma surged forth with a roar.

Standing tall and proud, Sakazuki drew back his fists. In the stunned silence of those around him, he struck—again and again—his fists a storm of fury!

Boom! Boom! Boom!!

Like a relentless barrage of rocket fire, massive fireballs of magma blasted into the air. The sky turned a deep crimson, the glow reflecting off Sakazuki's unyielding figure like a monument of stone and flame.

"Ryusei Kazan!!"

Countless balls of magma crashed against the underside of the island, erupting in wave after wave of explosions. Blazing heat surged outward, chunks of stone and scorched earth rained into the sea below, hissing as they hit the water.

The island's descent... slowed—just a little.

"It's working!"

"Everyone attack!"

"Damn it—move! If we don't, we're really going to die here!!"

A spark reignited in the Marines' eyes.

"FIRE!!"

Sengoku's furious roar cut through the chaos.

The Marines jolted, then forced their exhausted bodies to rise. One after another, they rushed into action.

Some raced up to the gun platforms, dragging out heavy artillery from the armory. Cannons roared to life, thundering wildly toward the sky as they fired on the falling island.

There weren't enough cannons to go around. The rest lifted rifles, shooting desperately whether it would help or not.

Marine officers skilled in Rokushiki and swordsmanship launched long-range techniques—Rankyaku and flying slashes—doing whatever they could to hinder the island's fall.

The sky was filled with explosions. The island's underside erupted in flashes as rocks were blasted away. But compared to the island's massive size... it was nothing.

"Damn it! It's not enough!!"

Tokikake gasped for breath as he kicked out a Rankyaku. The slash burst against the underside of the island, but from below, it looked like nothing more than dust—like tossing a pebble into an endless ocean.

Despair crept back into the eyes of the Marine commanders.

"Don't give up!!"

Yamakaji unleashed one flaming slash after another, sweat pouring down his face, pale and trembling, his strength nearly spent.

Gion's Meito flashed gold as she slashed again, her face ghostly white with exhaustion. Her hands were torn, her arms shaking, but she didn't stop.

...

Everyone gave everything they had, unleashing every ounce of strength in a futile attempt to stop the falling island.

But their attacks could only slow its descent slightly. The island's collapse was inevitable.

Against the might of this catastrophe, their resistance was like a mantis trying to stop a speeding cart.

Not even thirty seconds passed before several collapsed, utterly drained.

They had already given their all in the battle before this. Most of them were already running on fumes, their bodies pushed well past the limit.

"Jihahahaha! It's useless!! No human force can stand against a disaster like this!!"

High above, Shiki howled with laughter, sneering at the Marines' desperate, naive struggle below.

Chapter 356 - 356: Volume 2 – Chapter 258: The Sword That Pierced the Island

The explosive roar from the island scraping against the air grew louder and louder, almost enough to rupture eardrums.

The air's crushing pressure spread outward, and even the ground of Marine Headquarters began to show signs of splitting apart.

The howling wind was mournful and violent.

Everyone continued their assault with everything they had, teeth clenched tight. Cannon blasts and waves of sword qi crashed down like a torrential storm onto the base of the island.

But the harder they fought, the deeper the despair grew in their eyes. The light in their pupils was beginning to fade.

The island was simply too massive. Even with everyone working together, they could only shatter the outermost layer of rock at its base—nowhere near enough to stop its descent.

What was truly terrifying wasn't just the impact to come, but the speed of the fall. Because of its sheer size, it wasn't plummeting like a meteorite; it was descending with an ominous slowness, like the calm before a devastating storm.

That unbearable, suffocating pressure—knowing death was inevitable, yet powerless to stop it—was what truly tore at the human will.

A silent wave of despair slowly spread across the land of Marineford.

"Damn it... I haven't even made it to Admiral yet... I can't... die here..."

Kuzan gritted his teeth, struggling to get up off the ground, only to stumble and fall to one knee again, blood trickling from the corner of his mouth.

He had always been the one who rose through the ranks the fastest, much faster than Sakazuki and the others. But his stamina and physical resilience couldn't match theirs. And earlier in battle, he had forcibly unleashed "Ice Age," a technique he hadn't yet fully mastered...

Now, with the weight of that attack and his serious injuries, his body had already reached its limit. He was on the verge of collapse.

Elsewhere, Sengoku had already taken the form of a towering golden Buddha.

His massive golden palm carried immense force as it unleashed shockwaves again and again into the air.

Each blast ripped through the sky and carved out craters over a hundred meters wide at the island's base. But the distance blunted much of his attack's power, weakening it by more than half.

Even Sengoku, one of the Marine Headquarters' top Admirals, couldn't help but feel a deep helplessness, visible in his bloodshot eyes.

His Devil Fruit power had never been suited for wide-range attacks.

The Mythical Zoan type could grant all sorts of unbelievable abilities, but at the end of the day, it was still a Zoan—it existed to boost close-combat prowess.

Up close and personal was where Sengoku thrived. But against an opponent like Shiki, using such underhanded and large-scale tactics, he was powerless.

"So... looks like this time, we're all gonna die here, huh..."

Amid the rubble of a collapsed building, Borsalino leaned back with a lazy grin, totally unbothered by decorum.

He glanced over at Sakazuki, who was still firing off magma fists. The latter's complexion had gone pale, blood dripping from his mouth. Borsalino gave a small chuckle and shake of his head, then turned to look at Daren.

"So... got any bright ideas?"

Daren had been silent ever since the floating island appeared. At those words, he paused.

Then, after a beat of silence, he let out a laugh.

"You don't seem too worried, Borsalino."

Borsalino shrugged, relaxed as ever, and smirked.

"Sure, Shiki's move is terrifying and all... but I'm the flashy guy, remember? I'm not dying that easily."

Daren chuckled under his breath.

"Yeah... you're not dying."

Above, the thunderous noise grew louder still. The sky looked like it was being torn apart. Wild winds raged across the land.

"With your ability, you could leave anytime. You're not dying either."

Borsalino gave him a knowing look.

Daren went quiet again.

His uniform was soaked in blood and in tatters. His face was streaked with dirt and crimson, and his body looked like it could collapse at any second.

With trembling hands, he pulled a crumpled cigarette pack from inside his coat, took one out, placed it between his lips, and lit it.

The acrid smoke hit his throat hard, making his windpipe and lungs burn with every breath.

Without realizing it, Daren's Observation Haki had already spread outward.

Images flickered through his mind like snapshots.

He saw civilians kneeling in pools of blood, screaming and sobbing.

He saw familiar faces struggling to keep fighting, refusing to fall.

He saw the bloodshot eyes of Admiral Sengoku and Zephyr-sensei.

He saw Tokikake, Yamakaji, Onigumo...

He saw Amatsuki Toki standing in the crowd, hands clasped, eyes reddened, looking his way.

...

"Daren! If you have any ideas, use them now!"

At that moment, Sengoku's loud shout suddenly interrupted Daren's wandering thoughts.

He stared at the figure of the Commodore with bloodshot eyes, his frosty gaze filled with a hint of supplication.

Faced with such a desperate situation, Sengoku racked his brains but couldn't think of a way out.

Although it sounded ridiculous, for some reason, Sengoku felt that if it were that brat Daren, he would definitely have a way out!

Countless missions in the past had proven this!

Sengoku's words instantly caught the attention of the others.

The Marines turned their heads in unison, their eyes focused on the Commodore.

"Jihahaha! Don't be ridiculous!"

Shiki naturally heard Sengoku's voice and couldn't help but laugh sarcastically:

"This is the power to destroy the world! No one can fight it!"

"Just accept reality! Marineford... will sink into the sea today!"

His face was filled with a twisted, maniacal smile.

There was nothing in this world more intoxicating than the scene before his eyes.

ust thinking about that scene made Shiki tremble with excitement.

"As for that brat Daren... He's probably having a hard time even standing, right?"

He stared at Daren with a mocking look on his face, the blood from his arms dripping onto his twin swords.

"If he really had a way, he would have used it long ago, Jihahaha!"

Shiki's words fell like a thunderbolt, striking all the Marines as if they had been struck by lightning.

They stared blankly at the figure of the Commodore, their hands gradually slowing down and finally stopping their attacks.

Could it be... there really was no way out?

Would all of us die here today?

"Hoo..."

However, just at that moment, Daren suddenly exhaled a long stream of smoke from his mouth like a dragon.

In the strong wind filled with the smell of gunpowder and blood, he suddenly smiled.

"I haven't moved because I wanted to recover some of my strength."

Upon hearing this, the Marines were stunned.

Shiki was also taken aback.

Daren turned his head to look at Borsalino and asked with a smile,

"So, is that experiment... complete?"

A look of interest flashed across Borsalino's sunglasses.

"It should be almost done."

"Very good."

Daren looked up at the Great Pirate in the sky, his expression calm beyond everyone's expectations, his calm eyes hiding a fierce and passionate madness.

"Enma."

He raised his hand.

Suddenly—

A fierce and demonic black light burst out from the ground in the distance and instantly appeared in front of Daren at an unimaginable speed.

The three-bladed sword had a cold black body and was engraved with purple-black flame patterns.

A murderous and bloody smell instantly spread.

Without Daren making a move, the sharp Meito slowly shifted, pointing the tip of the blade at the huge island falling from the sky.

"Hm?"

Shiki narrowed his eyes and couldn't help but sneer:

"So you tried to recover your strength so you could use your metal manipulation to pierce this island with that sword? Jihahaha, how foolish!"

He had seen Daren use a similar move before.

That move was indeed powerful, but it was far from enough to completely destroy this island!

Daren didn't say anything.

He stood in the ruins amidst the strong winds and flying debris, his blood-stained cloak of justice fluttering behind him.

Boom!

The magnetic field instantly erupted and boiled, and Enma suddenly shot out from where he stood, breaking the sound barrier in an instant and exploding into circles of white air waves.

Like a flash of fierce black light, this world-famous Cursed Sword... shot into the sky!

"Jihahaha! Impossible! Such power is impossible..."

Shiki's ferocious laughter stopped abruptly.

It was as if he sensed something, his expression suddenly changed, and his pupils contracted tightly.

Sengoku and Zephyr also froze in their tracks.

At this moment, the indifferent voice of the Commodore echoed across the battlefield.

"It is undeniable that you do possess the strength to destroy the world, Shiki."

A fierce smile appeared on Daren's lips.

"Therefore..."

"Only the strength to destroy the world can fight you."

He clenched his fists tightly and his eyes narrowed.

"Shoot it, Enma!"

As soon as he finished speaking...

Under the incredulous gaze of countless Marines, and with Shiki staring in amazement, Enma shot into the sky... Its size instantly increased dozens of times!

Enma, which was originally nearly two meters long, instantly grew larger and longer... turning into a giant sword about five meters wide and a hundred meters long!

Even more unbelievable was that under the boost of this magical power, Enma's speed also skyrocketed from several times the speed of sound to dozens of times the speed of sound!

"More-More Fiftyfold Slash: Island Collapse!"

Under the shocked and horrified gaze of everyone, Enma, transformed into a giant sword, frictioned with the air at high speed, creating astonishing sparks, like a fiery blade wielded by an invisible god, tearing through the atmosphere...

It suddenly pierced through the floating island that had fallen from the sky!

Chapter 357 - 357: Volume 2 – Chapter 259: The Golden Age (End of Volume 2)

Whoosh!!

A hundred-meter-long flaming giant sword tore straight through the island without resistance, its tip erupting from the top in an explosion of rock and debris.

A sinister black aura swirled around the massive blade of Enma, merging with the flames to give rise to eerie black-purple ghostfire.

A raging storm of sword energy roared from the tip, blasting through the dense clouds overhead and scattering them in all directions.

The massive island's descent was suddenly halted by the strike, as if frozen in mid-air.

Shiki's twisted grin froze on his face. Blood vessels instantly filled the whites of his eyes, his eyeballs nearly bulging out of their sockets.

That strike... it nearly pierced the heavens!

For a moment, even time itself seemed to stop.

On the ground in Marineford, hundreds of thousands of civilians and Marines stood stunned, their faces frozen in disbelief. None could trust their eyes—none could accept what they had just witnessed.

That enormous floating island that had blotted out the sky... had been pierced clean through by a single sword?

From afar, that towering purple-black sword looked like a pillar propping up the heavens, guarding this sacred bastion of justice!

Such a scene would be etched into their memories forever—unforgettable, indelible.

"What... is that...?"

Zephyr stared blankly at the massive blade, then turned instinctively toward Sengoku.

But Sengoku looked just as stunned. It was clear he had no idea what had just happened.

He knew Daren possessed a Cursed Sword from Wano Country.

Sengoku had assumed it was a gift from the mysterious woman Amatsuki Toki and hadn't given it much thought. To him, it seemed like a waste for someone like Daren, who didn't even practice swordsmanship, to wield such a weapon.

Even if it was a Cursed Sword, it was still just a rare type of weapon.

It was a lifeless object—so how could it suddenly unleash something so bizarre?

Wait a second!

Sengoku suddenly recalled something.

Not long ago, Borsalino's Science and Technology Department had mentioned a breakthrough they'd made, supposedly based on research from Dr. Vegapunk, the scientist said to be "500 years ahead of his time."

Borsalino had dutifully reported the matter to Sengoku, stating that Vegapunk had finally cracked the conditions for transferring Devil Fruit powers and had developed a new technology.

—To let inanimate objects eat a Devil Fruit, and gain its power!

At the time, Sengoku had scoffed at the idea.

"What a load of crap technology..." Those had been his exact words.

Of course, his reaction may have had something to do with his personal bias—he'd always thought Borsalino was full of nonsense.

Let a lifeless object eat a Devil Fruit?

What kind of joke was that!?

Devil Fruits were incredibly rare—even the Navy had very few.

If you had a powerful Devil Fruit, wouldn't it make more sense to give it to a person?

After all, humans could grow stronger and continuously develop the fruit's power over time.

But now...

As he stared at the giant Cursed Sword impaling the island, Sengoku felt the corner of his mouth twitch.

The answer was right in front of him.

...

"What kind of power is this!?"

"Is it Commodore Daren's Devil Fruit ability?"

"No, it's not!"

"It looks like it's the sword's power!"

"How can that be!?"

The Marines quickly snapped out of their shock, staring at Daren in disbelief.

"That sword... it actually grew bigger..."

Kuzan's eyes lit up as he looked at Enma piercing the heavens. Turning his head with stars in his eyes, he exclaimed,

"Daren... this is seriously awesome!!"

Even Sakazuki looked stunned.

Daren gave a faint smile, his face visibly weakening.

At last, it had worked.

He'd found the perfect vessel for the Moa Moa no Mi—Enma.

Ideally, the Moa Moa no Mi should've gone to someone strong, but in the short term, Daren hadn't found a suitable candidate.

He already possessed the Jiki Jiki no Mi, so eating a second Devil Fruit was out of the question.

Then, not long ago, Borsalino had come to him with an intriguing piece of news—Vegapunk had cracked the secret of Devil Fruit transfer conditions.

And with that, a bold—no, outright insane—idea had flashed through Daren's mind: Let Enma eat the Moa Moa no Mi!

Just like how Spandam's sword had consumed the Zou Zou no Mi in the original story, if Enma ate the Moa Moa no Mi, it would gain the ability to massively increase its size and speed.

The best part?

It didn't require any additional stamina from Daren.

He just needed to use a bit of energy to launch Enma via magnetism at supersonic speed.

Then, thanks to the Moa Moa no Mi's power, Enma would instantly multiply in size and velocity dozens of times over—capable of destroying a town, or even piercing an entire island in one strike!

Maybe... this was the true potential of the Moa Moa no Mi.

"Now then... time to finish this."

Daren grinned at Shiki.

"Sorry, but in the end, you lost."

Whoosh—

Blue lightning crackled across Enma's enormous blade.

Then—

In Shiki's widening, nearly-bursting eyes, it was as if an invisible god had swung the blade of the apocalypse—and brought it down with devastating force!

Crack—crack!

Riiip!!

The chilling sound of the island tearing apart echoed across all of Marineford.

With a thunderous boom, the infamous cursed blade split the floating island in two, slicing through even the dense sea of clouds above.

The island split straight down the middle. As it fell, it continued breaking apart, scattering into countless fragments that rained down into the ocean on either side of Marineford.

Amid the deafening tremors, a massive column of seawater shot into the sky, triggering a tsunami over a hundred meters high.

It surged outward, overwhelming the naval port and artillery positions—until Kuzan, having recovered just in time, froze it solid.

Chunks of the island, like miniature meteors, plummeted toward Marineford's ground. Trails of crimson flame followed in their wake like a meteor shower.

Buildings were pulverized.

Flames erupted across the city.

Fire spread everywhere.

But compared to the apocalyptic destruction of the entire island's fall, it all seemed insignificant.

After unleashing its power, Enma swiftly shrank back down and flew to Daren's side.

Shiki clenched his teeth, glaring furiously at the Marine Commodore standing his ground, eyes locked with his.

But just as he gripped his twin blades and prepared to strike—

Whoosh, whoosh, whoosh, whoosh!

Several figures appeared in front of Daren almost simultaneously, forming a tight formation around him like stars encircling the moon.

Sakazuki, Kuzan, Borsalino, Sengoku, Zephyr...

Shiki's movement froze.

Blood spilled from the corner of Daren's mouth, and he sneered contemptuously at him.

"What's the matter? Do you need me to give you a ride?"

As soon as he finished speaking, Enma at his side turned again, its tip pointing straight at Shiki.

Shiki's pupils shrank slightly.

"Hmph!"

He sheathed his twin swords, then suddenly let out an eerie laugh.

"That's enough fun for today... Daren, our score isn't settled yet!!"

"Jihahahaha!!"

He burst into laughter, shot into the sky, and quickly vanished behind the clouds.

Seeing Shiki retreat, Sengoku and the others quietly let out a sigh of relief.

The wind howled. Flames spread across the battlefield.

Fragments of the shattered island streaked across the sky like brilliant meteors.

A golden streak of dawn slowly emerged from the sky Enma had cleaved, like the fingers of a giant reaching down toward the earth.

The warm sunlight spilled like golden sand across the devastated land, the collapsed buildings, and the ruins of military fortifications. It shone on the wounded bodies of every Marine.

They clenched their fists, hearts swelling with emotion.

"We... protected our home."

Someone murmured.

The sunlight grew brighter.

Dawn had come.

The darkness had faded.

Faces young and battle-worn bathed in sunlight. Though exhausted and in pain, they couldn't help but smile at one another.

Kuzan, Tokikake, Gion, Yamakaji, Onigumo, Doberman, Dalmatian, Strawberry... one by one, they supported themselves and turned to look at that tall, commanding figure.

In the center of the crowd, the Commodore stood, smiling at them.

Dazzling.

Swish!!

Kuzan, his face red with excitement, could no longer hold back. He suddenly raised his hand and saluted the figure.

Next came Yamakaji.

The third.

The fourth.

...

Marine after Marine, without needing a single order, saluted the distant figure.

"Tch, he hogged all the spotlight!" Tokikake grumbled, wiping the blood from the corner of his mouth. Under Gion's fierce glare, he shrank his head and raised his hand in salute.

"What a touching scene..." Borsalino said with a smile.

Sakazuki was silent for a moment, then also lifted his hand in salute.

Zephyr and Sengoku exchanged a look. Smiles of pride and relief crossed their faces. They took two steps back and saluted together.

At that moment, no one in Marine Headquarters had their arms lowered.

Except for one.

He stood atop the ruins, blood-soaked, a spent cigarette clamped between his teeth. Yet he looked as if he were bathed in a thousand rays of sunlight.

...

In the Sea Circle Calendar year 1493, the legendary Great Pirate known as the "Flying Pirate," Shiki the Golden Lion, launched an assault on Marine Headquarters Marineford.

With his flying fleet annihilated, he allied with the Great Pirates Kaidou of the Beasts and Charlotte Linlin in a campaign of revenge against the Marines.

With world-ending power, Shiki nearly succeeded in sinking all of Marineford into the sea.

The battle shocked the world, leaving most of Marineford in ruins.

It's worth noting that, in the absence of legendary Marine powerhouses, the young generation trained by the former Admiral Zephyr, known as "Black Arm," played a pivotal role in the battle.

Their unyielding will and immense strength shone like stars in this era—brilliant and captivating like gold.

Among this field of dazzling lights, the brightest of them all was none other than the "King of the North Blue"—Rogers Daren.

Following this battle, the strength of the younger generation rose rapidly, becoming the pillar of justice for the world to come.

Later historians would refer to this group of Marines, driven by an unshakable "Golden Will," as...

"The Golden Generation"!

— World Economic News Agency, President Morgans.

Chapter 358 - 358: Volume 3 – Chapter 1: A World on the Verge of Rebellion

Shiki's outrageous assault on Marine Headquarters in Marineford quickly spread across the seas, thanks to those eager to spread the news.

The revelation exploded like a super-powered bomb, turning the world upside down. Countless people were stunned, and a massive wave of unrest swept the oceans.

Joining forces with Kaidou of the Beasts and Big Mom Charlotte Linlin, he brazenly stormed into Marine Headquarters... and even after destroying most of Marineford and nearly sinking the entire base, he still escaped unscathed.

The overwhelming strength and defiance of Shiki the Golden Lion—the so-called "Flying Pirate"—left yet another deep impression on the world.

This battle allowed the world to once again witness the terror of the legendary pirate Shiki firsthand.

His alliance with Big Mom and Kaidou especially sent a chill down the spines of many from the older generation, suddenly recalling a battle from long ago... The name "Rocks," long buried in history, returned as a haunting shadow hanging over countless nations and powers.

Riding the fame gained from this operation, Shiki launched a large-scale expansion across the New World, rallying forces under his banner.

Countless pirates came flocking to him, kneeling and swearing allegiance to the man who now stood as the strongest pirate at sea.

As a result, the number of subordinates under the Flying Pirates soared in a short span of time.

And the flying fleet that had once been annihilated by Commodore Rogers Daren of Marine Headquarters now showed signs of being reformed.

...

At the same time—somewhere in the New World, aboard the Whitebeard Pirates' flagship, the Moby Dick.

"Oyaji! Something's happened! There's big news from Marine Headquarters!"

Clutching a freshly dropped newspaper from a news bird, Marco leapt down from the mast with a serious expression, beads of cold sweat forming on his brow.

"That lunatic Shiki... he actually teamed up with Kaidou and Big Mom and invaded Marine Headquarters!!"

The moment he spoke, everyone on deck froze, their faces flashing with disbelief.

They had known Shiki planned to attack Marine Headquarters.

Not long ago, Shiki had even come aboard the Moby Dick, trying to recruit Oyaji to join him in his assault on Marineford.

What they hadn't expected was that, even after being refused, Shiki didn't abandon his insane plan. Instead, he secretly allied with Kaidou and Big Mom—and launched the attack anyway!

"Shiki..."

Seated in the main seat, Whitebeard's expression darkened as he heard this. He waved off the maid who was massaging him and extended a large hand to take the paper from Marco.

His eyes, overflowing with unshakable spirit, scanned the front page. His expression shifted slightly, pupils narrowing.

That day's image of Shiki—brimming with ambition—flashed in his mind, casting a shadow over his mood.

Shiki... are you trying to revive the era of Rocks...?

Gloom clouded Whitebeard's gaze. The thought struck him like lightning.

"Let me see! I wanna see!"

Just then, a one-armed figure came bounding over, craning his neck toward the newspaper—it was Kozuki Oden.

Ever since his brief encounter with Shiki, who was also a dual-wielding swordsman, Oden had felt a strong pull of curiosity and the urge to challenge him.

From that day forward, in the eyes of Marco and the others, Kozuki Oden had returned to the vibrant man he was when he first left Wano Country—no longer drowning in alcohol or lost in despair.

Every day, he threw himself into training, refining his swordsmanship, constantly seeking out stronger opponents. That fierce spirit had reignited within him.

Marco and the rest were heartened by his change.

Naturally, none of them wanted to see a comrade stuck in a haze of gloom.

Oden stared at the newspaper, eyes gleaming.

"He nearly sank the whole island into the sea... That's insane... huh?"

Suddenly, his expression shifted.

Everyone followed his gaze—and fell silent.

It was a photograph.

In the image: Marine Headquarters in ruins. A massive island loomed overhead, falling rapidly from the sky toward Marineford like a doomsday meteor.

Amidst the shattered landscape stood a single man—the now world-renowned Marine Commodore—arms outstretched, gaze fierce and unyielding.

A gigantic flaming Cursed Sword burst from the ground, piercing through the island's core and into the sky itself...

Its blade energy was so intense, it felt like it might leap straight out of the paper.

"Enma..."

Kozuki Oden murmured, his expression shifting as he clearly recognized the familiar blade.

"He actually... tamed Enma..."

He stumbled back two steps, his eyes full of disbelief.

As Enma's former master, Kozuki Oden could tell its condition at a glance.

The demonic flames burning along the blade... that was a sign—one that only appeared after the sword had been completely subdued.

It meant that the Marine had fully left his imprint on the blade.

Enma had accepted that Marine... as its true master.

Even if he reclaimed Enma now, he'd have to start over from scratch to tame it again before he could wield it properly.

That thought left a hollow feeling in Oden's chest. A deep, indescribable bitterness spread across his face.

But... could he really take Enma back from that man?

The question surfaced in his mind, unbidden.

As he stared at the photo of the colossal sword piercing the sky, the light in his eyes slowly faded.

He quietly set down the newspaper, turned without a word, and walked toward the stern.

His back, all at once, seemed stooped and desolate.

"Oden—"

Marco opened his mouth, about to speak, but a large hand gently patted his shoulder.

He turned around to see Oyaji silently shaking his head.

"Let him be... Some things we just can't help with."

Whitebeard gazed at Kozuki Oden's retreating figure, eyes filled with complex emotion, and let out a long sigh.

Everyone pressed their lips together and fell into silence.

They knew Oyaji was right.

Some walls could only be climbed alone.

No one else could help.

Even if they went mad, charged into Marineford, killed that Marine, and took Enma back—it would all be meaningless.

If Oden wanted to move past this, he had to do it himself.

Whitebeard shifted his gaze away from Oden and looked back at the newspaper.

His expression grew heavier by the second.

"This sea... is about to plunge into chaos."

Chapter 359 - 359: Volume 3 – Chapter 2: The Last Voyage

At the same time.

The Grand Line.

A deserted island.

A pirate ship with a red-painted hull was anchored along the shore, its mast bearing a Jolly Roger with a wave-shaped beard.

The Oro Jackson.

"Wahahahaha! Shiki, you really pulled off something incredible!!"

Laughter boomed along the coast as Roger threw his head back and laughed, a newspaper clutched in his hand.

Bonfires crackled, and smoke drifted into the sky.

The Roger Pirates sat around the flames, drinking and enjoying grilled meat, chatting animatedly.

"They actually attacked Marineford..."

"Even we've never done something like that."

"Captain, why don't we give it a shot too? Sounds like fun..."

"Who knows, we might all get wiped out, hahahaha..."

Their banter was light, their mood unexpectedly relaxed. It was as if the moment their captain gave the word, they'd gladly charge in without hesitation.

"Hey, hey, hey, you lot... that's Marine Headquarters we're talking about..."

Rayleigh frowned, watching the eager crew with exasperation.

Tch!

Suddenly, Douglas Bullet tore the newspaper in his hand to shreds. He ripped a golden-brown piece of meat from the spit and bit down hard, chewing furiously.

"Damn it!! That bastard Daren's gotten that strong?!"

The crew burst out laughing.

"Bullet, looks like your old cellmate's outpaced you..."

"No worries, you're still young..."

"Wait, wasn't that Daren guy only around twenty too?"

"Hahahahaha..."

Bullet's face turned bright red from all the teasing.

He swallowed the meat in one gulp, then stood abruptly and locked eyes with Roger, his fighting spirit burning.

"Captain!! I challenge you!!"

As soon as the words left his mouth, an overwhelming surge of aura erupted from Bullet's powerful frame, like a raging tidal wave that swept across the entire island.

The sky darkened, the ocean stirred violently, and gales whipped up waves along the shore.

Had Daren been here, he would've instantly noticed—Bullet's Haki was clearly stronger than it had been on Coin Island!

"Here we go!"

"Hahaha, this is gonna be good!"

"Now that's what I call entertainment..."

"..."

The rest of the crew perked up immediately, excited grins spreading across their faces.

They'd egged Bullet on with their teasing just to spice up their meal, after all.

"Not again..."

Shanks and Buggy's expressions dropped.

They exchanged a knowing look and quickly ducked behind a massive rock.

Rayleigh sighed, covering his face as he looked at Bullet, whose fighting spirit was blazing.

In the next moment—

Bullet launched his attack.

As he kicked off the ground, the island trembled.

A massive crater burst open beneath his feet as his body shot forward like a fired cannonball, aiming straight for Roger.

"Wahahaha, well done!"

A strange red glint flashed deep in Roger's eyes.

With a metallic clang, his legendary Meito was drawn!

Rip!!

Massive black-and-red lightning bolts suddenly exploded from the sky, tearing open the heavens.

Everyone winced, instinctively shielding their faces as they grimaced.

Then they saw it...

Bullet was sent flying back at double the speed he'd charged in, crashing through over a dozen towering trees before slamming into a distant mountainside like a cannonball.

A gaping crater burst open in the rock face where he hit.

After sending Bullet flying with a single slash, Roger casually sheathed his Meito, turned to Rayleigh, and grinned.

"Rayleigh, now that Shiki has made his move, it's about time we began our own journey, don't you think?"

Seeing Roger's carefree smile, a shadow briefly passed through Rayleigh's heart.

But he returned the smile and nodded.

"Yes."

"Wahahaha, great!!"

With Rayleigh's approval, Roger beamed like a child basking in praise.

He raised his arms and waved them in the air, eyes brimming with boundless longing for freedom and dreams.

"Everyone, let's set sail!!"

He looked up and out at the vast, endless blue sea.

Far in the distance, the silhouette of a bustling town atop an island could just be seen.

The starting point of the East Blue... Loguetown!

The Roger Pirates erupted into cheers and celebration.

As Roger and the others shouted, sang, and danced like overjoyed children, Rayleigh lifted a jug of strong liquor and took a sip—

but the once-smooth flavor now tasted bitter as ash.

A trace of sorrow flickered deep in his eyes.

Rayleigh looked at Roger's back and sighed quietly, a whisper only he could hear:

"Roger... this is our last voyage, isn't it?"

...

One day later.

Marine Headquarters, Marineford.

A massive warship slowly entered the enormous oval military port.

Its hull was covered with countless sword slashes—shocking to behold, enough to make anyone's scalp tingle.

"We're here!"

On the ruined docks, Sengoku stood at the forefront, leading hundreds of elite Marines who had been waiting.

As the anchor dropped, a powerful and imposing figure stepped out from the cabin and emerged at the warship's bow.

"Fleet Admiral Kong!!"

Sengoku and the Marines stiffened, snapping into sharp salutes.

Fleet Admiral Kong returned the gesture with a nod.

He wasn't wearing a shirt—just a wide admiral's cloak draped over his shoulders.

His bare torso was wrapped in bloodstained bandages, and his lips were slightly pale, giving him a weakened appearance.

But in his aged eyes burned the same sharp and imposing intensity as ever.

Kong swept his gaze quickly across the ravaged Marine Headquarters.

Countless buildings and military fortifications had collapsed into ruins. Smoke still billowed from many places in the distance.

He frowned deeply.

Even though he'd heard Sengoku's report through the Den Den Mushi, seeing the devastation firsthand left him stunned by the sheer scale and brutality of the destruction.

"Damn that Shiki!"

Kong gritted his teeth, fists clenching.

"This really is a devastating loss..."

A raspy, mocking voice suddenly came from behind.

The voice was rough, like scraping steel—or the cry of a night owl.

A thin, blood-streaked figure strolled leisurely up beside Kong.

The moment they saw him, Sengoku and the surrounding Marines turned pale.

Whoosh!!

Hundreds of rifles snapped up in unison, all aimed directly at the scarlet figure.

Killing intent filled the air in an instant.

The tension exploded like a drawn bowstring ready to snap!

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The moment was thick with murderous intent, and the cool sea breeze turned razor sharp.

Every Marine on the military port raised their muskets, eyes locked on the blood-streaked, emaciated figure. They stood at full alert, as if facing down a deadly threat.

A drop of cold sweat slid down their foreheads and traced their cheeks, their hot breath hanging in the air as pale mist.

Sengoku raised a hand with a firm gesture—stand down. His expression was just as grave.

No wonder they were this tense.

The man before them was one of the strongest pirates on the seas.

Next to the towering and muscular Kong, this man looked slender—almost frail.

His white hair was braided into two neat plaits that hung over his shoulders. He wore a plum-red shirt and blood-red trousers, with black leather shoes trimmed in gold.

A flowing crimson cloak hung from his back, giving him a mysterious and chilling aura.

His eyebrows were a vivid red, and a faintly mocking, devilish smile curled at his lips.

He was a pirate so powerful he was said to rival both Whitebeard and Roger on his own—

The man known as "Red the Aloof," the "Red Count"... Patrick Redfield!

But Redfield now stood with his clothes tattered and streaked with blood. Faint traces of dark, purplish blood stained the corners of his mouth—a clear sign of a recent and grueling battle.

Yet, he stood calmly beside Kong, eyeing the Marines with mild amusement as they snapped into action.

"What a professional army," he remarked.

He placed a hand over his chest and gave a flawless aristocratic bow toward the Marines.

With an elegant smile, he said,

"Elite forces of Marine Headquarters, it's a pleasure to meet you."

Only then did everyone notice—his wrists were bound in heavy Seastone cuffs.

The cold, rigid metal clinked lightly with his every movement.

A prisoner, and yet he carried himself with utter composure and poise.

Redfield turned his smile toward Sengoku.

"Sengoku. Long time no see."

Sengoku narrowed his eyes. His voice was cold.

"Don't worry. After today, we won't be seeing each other again."

"Redfield, you'll be sent to the deepest depths of Impel Down. That's where you'll spend the rest of your days."

Redfield let out a casual chuckle.

"That's fine. I quite enjoyed this battle."

Kong frowned.

Redfield smiled again and added,

"It would've been even better without a certain busybody interfering."

Right on cue, an annoyed voice echoed from the ship's cabin.

"Oh? So you're not satisfied?"

Garp strolled out casually, picking his nose.

Redfield turned and glanced at him with a smirk that oozed sarcasm.

That smug look made Garp explode.

"What the hell is that look, you bastard?! Hey! Old man Kong! Take off his Seastone cuffs! I'm gonna let him taste my Iron Fist today!"

Fists clenched, Garp charged forward, face flushed with fury.

The nearby Marines rushed in to stop him, grabbing onto his arms and legs, drenched in sweat.

"Vice Admiral Garp, please calm down!"

"Don't lose your temper, sir!"

"We went through hell to capture him!"

"Don't let him provoke you like that..."

Kong rubbed his temple in frustration.

He waved his hand and ordered,

"Take the prisoner below. Lock him up."

The Marines immediately mobilized, surrounding the area with disciplined precision.

Their warship had sustained severe damage in the earlier battle and couldn't sail any further.

By regulation, the transfer of high-risk prisoners was to be handled by Impel Down.

Especially for someone like "Red the Aloof," who posed an extreme security risk, strict procedures were in place.

Impel Down's massive escort vessel was equipped with a vast array of restraints and containment systems—more than enough to ensure a secure transfer.

The boarding ramp slowly extended from the warship.

Under the watchful aim of dozens of raised muskets, Redfield maintained his refined smile as he stepped off the ruined deck.

His casual glances at the surroundings made it hard to believe he was a defeated criminal.

If anything, he looked like a tourist, taking a leisurely stroll through this so-called "Holy Land of Justice."

"Right, Kong."

Redfield suddenly paused mid-step.

The moment he stopped, the surrounding Marines tensed up, fingers instinctively tightening around their rifle triggers.

He turned and looked toward Kong, who stood on the warship with arms crossed, and gave a slight smile.

"Although I know this is a bit much to ask, if possible, I'd like to meet that young Marine named Daren. Would that be allowed?"

Before Kong could respond, Sengoku spoke up first, his tone cold.

"Since you know it's an unreasonable request, you shouldn't have made it in the first place."

Redfield shrugged.

"Can't hurt to try."

His eyes drifted meaningfully toward a section of Marine Headquarters.

That was where the military hospital was located.

"A rising star of the new generation... A young man who managed to humble Golden Lion, Roger, and Whitebeard. I'm quite interested in him."

A flicker of shadow crossed Sengoku's eyes.

"Take him away."

He gave the order.

Several Marines stepped forward and took hold of Redfield's shoulders and arms.

"Redfield..."

Just then, Kong—who had remained silent until now—finally spoke.

His deep gaze was fixed on the slim, mysterious figure of Red the Aloof.

"So... this time, did you choose to team up with Shiki?"

Shiki's attack on Marineford had coincided exactly with his and Garp's departure to capture Redfield. Kong found it hard to believe that was mere coincidence.

Redfield was silent for a moment, then slowly shook his head.

"Kong, we've known each other for many years. With how well you know me, you shouldn't even have to ask that."

He lifted his head, staring out into the endless sky.

Then, he smiled faintly.

"I just don't want to play anymore."

A memory suddenly surfaced in his mind.

That earth-shaking battle months ago...

Roger's wild, booming laughter...

That overwhelming, almost divine presence...

All the pride he'd ever carried—crushed in an instant by a single slash so fearsome it could send gods and demons fleeing.

An absolute, total defeat.

"This era doesn't belong to me."

With those words, before Kong could reply, the defeated Red Count, Redfield, walked away—head held high—toward the temporary prison at Marine Headquarters.

His silhouette, solitary yet proud, didn't resemble a man headed for eternal captivity...