

One Piece 451

Chapter 451 - 451: Volume 3 – Chapter 94: Something's Wrong with His Brain

As she spoke, Staff Officer Tsuru reached out and pointed to three areas on the sand table.

"Based on the Roger Pirates' current heading, there are three standard sea routes ahead. After analyzing the latest intel, it's highly likely that Roger will choose one of these two."

She gestured toward the first two paths.

"The first route leads to the Kingdom of Dressrosa. The second... heads toward Totto Land, the territory under the Big Mom Pirates."

"We're currently caught in a dilemma between these two routes."

Tsuru looked up at Daren.

"Dressrosa is a renowned economic powerhouse in the New World—flourishing and wealthy. Roger's crew may choose to resupply there."

"But on the other hand, Totto Land, under Big Mom's command, could also very well be one of Roger's intended stops."

Daren nodded in agreement.

"Staff Officer Tsuru makes a solid point. But why did you look at me so strangely when you mentioned Big Mom?"

"And not just you—everyone else here did too..."

He sighed, exasperated.

"For the last time, I'm not close with that crazy old hag."

Everyone averted their gaze.

Daren: ...

He exhaled, then pointed to the third route.

"Why haven't any of you considered this path?"

Everyone turned to where Daren was pointing.

On the sea chart constructed from the sand table, it marked a vast, dark expanse of ocean—deep and nearly pitch black.

"The Edd War Sea?"

Kong raised an eyebrow.

"Daren... do you know something?"

There was a subtle but unmistakable certainty in Daren's voice, and Kong had picked up on it.

The room fell silent as all eyes turned toward Daren once more.

The Edd War Sea was infamous for its treacherous currents and constant, unpredictable extreme weather. It was a notoriously dangerous place.

Even a fully equipped Marine fleet would hesitate to enter without thorough preparation. Because of this, the generals had immediately dismissed the third route as a viable option.

After all, if the Marines—with sturdy warships and firepower—could be crushed in those waters, what hope did a pirate crew have?

In fact, had anyone else proposed this idea—any Vice Admiral other than Daren—it would've been laughed off immediately.

But this was Rogers Daren.

A man known for miracles. A man whose battle record and achievements couldn't be ignored.

Yes, his reputation was infamous. His methods often brutal. But when it came to war and tactics, Rogers Daren was never careless.

"I don't know anything," Daren said, shaking his head.

"I just have a hunch. Roger's not the type to take the predictable route."

The room fell into brief silence.

Even Kong, usually calm and reserved, had a thoughtful glint in his eye.

"Totto Land, Dressrosa... they both make sense," Daren continued.

"But don't forget—Roger's goal isn't to beat the other Yonkō, or amass treasure. He's not like the usual pirates."

He tapped his temple.

"He's got a few screws loose."

Everyone: "..."

It sounded absurd... yet strangely convincing.

Sengoku finally broke the silence.

"So you're saying all this is just speculation, Daren."

"Relying solely on a gut feeling to decide such a crucial military move, without solid analysis or data—that's not wise."

Daren smiled.

"I get it, Admiral Sengoku. My judgment isn't based on rational calculations or objective logic. But Roger isn't a rational or logical man. He does whatever he wants, whenever he wants."

"That's exactly why I'm convinced he'll take the one route no one expects the Marines to anticipate."

"If you're still not convinced, Admiral, we can run a little test."

"Oh?" Sengoku looked intrigued. "What kind of test?"

It wasn't that he was trying to refute Daren's theory. As one of the Navy's top strategists, Sengoku simply preferred to make decisions grounded in facts and solid intel.

Objectively speaking, between Dressrosa and Totto Land, both were far more likely destinations than the hazardous Edd War Sea.

Daren's smile deepened with a touch of mystery.

Under the room's watchful eyes, he reached into his coat and pulled out a military-issue Den Den Mushi, dialing a number.

"Buru buru..."

As the Den Den Mushi rang, Daren sat down without hurry, lit a cigar, and smiled.

"As everyone knows, the Marines and pirates stand on opposite sides by nature—irreconcilable enemies."

"There are many powerful pirates in the world, but Roger is undoubtedly the brightest among them."

"Likewise, among us Marines, where stars abound, the one who stands above all without question... is Vice Admiral Garp."

"Of all the people who've clashed with Roger, Vice Admiral Garp has fought him the most—so naturally, he knows him best."

Hearing that, the officers around the room couldn't help nodding in agreement.

Daren was pleased with their reaction.

Just then, the Den Den Mushi connected.

Garp's gruff, impatient voice boomed through.

"Oi! This is Garp! Daren, what do you want? I'm busy getting ready to sail!"

Daren chuckled.

"Apologies, Vice Admiral Garp... I just have a quick question."

"Then spit it out already! Quit yapping—Kuzan, you damn brat! Stop sneaking my donuts!!"

Garp started barking in the background.

Everyone: ...

Daren wiped the sweat off his forehead, somewhat exasperated.

"Vice Admiral Garp, you mentioned earlier that you were heading out to arrest Roger... Do you happen to know his exact location?"

"How the hell would I know that? Didn't Sengoku say there were three possible routes? Just listen to him—he's the brainy one. Me, I'm good with my fists."

Garp's reply was as blunt as ever.

Daren pressed further, "Then which route are you planning to take to confront Roger?"

"Edd War Sea, obviously!" Garp blurted without hesitation.

"Oh? And why is that?"

"Damn, why do you ask so much, kid? I don't know! Just got a gut feeling he'll be there... Anyway, if I keep talking, my donuts'll be gone. Kuzan, you bastard!! I knew I shouldn't have let you on my ship!!!"

"Gacha!"

The call cut off.

Silence filled the room.

Daren looked up, slowly sweeping his gaze across the room with a smile.

"Well, gentlemen... did you hear that?"

Sengoku's mouth twitched uncontrollably.

Right... they really are both insane.

Chapter 452 - 452: Volume 3 – Chapter 95: The Commander Is...

"So... does anyone still have questions?"

Daren exhaled a long trail of smoke, relaxed and composed.

The other generals glanced at one another, then exchanged faint, wry smiles. None spoke up. Their silent consensus confirmed Daren's judgment.

If there was anything in this world that resembled fate, then no one would doubt the strange bond between Garp and Roger.

These two lifelong rivals had been intertwined since the legendary Battle of God Valley... If even Vice Admiral Garp couldn't guess Roger's next move, then no one could.

Yes, the logic might sound absurd—completely irrational, even.

But everyone knew Roger had never been a pirate who followed conventional logic.

Just like Garp had never been a Marine who could be measured by it either.

And so, all eyes turned to Admiral Sengoku.

Sengoku: ...

He cast a sidelong glance at Daren, the corner of his mouth twitching ever so slightly.

This damn kid... you're making me, the so-called "Resourceful General," look like a fool...

"Ahem... Vice Admiral Daren's assessment is, indeed, quite persuasive," Sengoku said, clearing his throat, his expression calm and unreadable.

"To be honest, I initially reached a similar conclusion—but I was sidetracked after weighing other rational and objective factors."

The room paused for a beat.

Then, sincere admiration filled the air as the Marine officers chimed in.

"As expected of Admiral Sengoku—truly insightful!"

"No doubt! Admiral Sengoku is worthy of the title 'Resourceful General'!"

"That Vice Admiral Daren's thoughts align with Admiral Sengoku's... Such talent at a young age—impressive!"

"..."

Watching them heap praises left and right, Staff Officer Tsuru turned her head away, suppressing a sigh.

Daren just smiled, unconcerned.

He didn't care for vanity or empty titles. As long as the high command reached a unified decision, that was good enough for him.

"Well then... it's settled."

Kong slowly rose from his seat. His large hands pressed against the desk as his massive frame leaned forward, exuding overwhelming authority.

"Headquarters' elite forces will mobilize immediately!"

"Admiral Sengoku will lead the operation..."

His tone sharpened with finality.

"Vice Admiral Borsalino!"

"Present." Borsalino stood up, wearing his usual carefree grin.

"Vice Admiral Sakazuki!"

"Here!" Sakazuki responded coldly, a sharp intensity in his eyes.

"And... Vice Admiral Rogers Daren!"

Daren stood from his chair and offered a crisp salute with a smile.

Kong nodded, lifting his chin. His overwhelming aura surged, and the great Fleet Admiral's cloak billowed behind him without wind.

"You four will each lead a force—ten warships, ten thousand elite soldiers from Marine Headquarters. Head to the Edd War Sea and wait for the right moment..."

Bang!

He slammed his fist down on the desk with a thunderous thud.

"—to take down the Flying Pirates and the Roger Pirates!"

Whoosh!!

All the officers present rose to their feet in unison, saluting with solemn resolve.

"Yes, Fleet Admiral Kong!!"

"Fleet Admiral Kong, may I ask—who will serve as the mission's field commander?"

Borsalino suddenly raised a hand with a casual smile.

"Since we're lying in wait for the right moment to strike, we'll need a temporary commander to coordinate, won't we?"

"Hm. Indeed."

Kong nodded in agreement, then glanced instinctively toward Sengoku.

Noticing Kong's gaze—and the others following it—Sengoku straightened up with pride, his chest puffing out as a confident smile touched his lips.

At that moment, his heart brimmed with certainty.

There was no need for debate.

He was the Navy's sole active Admiral and one of the most powerful assets of the World Government.

And with the title of "Resourceful General," battlefield command was his specialty.

"Let Vice Admiral Daren take command."

"Rest assured, Fleet Admiral Kong! I will shoulder this mission with—eh?"

Sengoku's proud smile froze in place.

His face twitched, and he quickly forced a correction.

"I mean... I'll make sure to supervise Vice Admiral Daren's execution of the plan!"

Kong glanced at him, paused for a moment, then gave a simple nod.

"Then I'll leave it to you, Sengoku."

Sengoku forced a tight smile.

"For justice."

Kong nodded, then turned his attention to Daren, his expression steady but filled with weight.

"Vice Admiral Daren, will this responsibility be too much for you?"

Daren's lips curled into a confident grin.

"I've been waiting for this day a long time, Fleet Admiral Kong."

At those words, Sengoku's heart gave a faint jolt.

Kong simply gave Daren a long, penetrating look.

...

At the same time.

In the New World.

Rain poured in sheets. Winds howled like beasts.

The Oro Jackson sailed through a violently churning sea. Towering waves tossed the pirate ship into the air and back down again. The creaking of the deck and mast echoed in protest under the strain.

"Captain Roger! Is that the junction of the three sea routes ahead? Which way do we go?"

Shanks' young face was pale from the cold rain, his teeth chattering as he shouted up at the bow.

"What do you mean, which way? Dressrosa, obviously!"

Buggy clung to the mast for dear life, his wiry frame swaying dangerously as he shouted, terrified.

"One path leads to Totto Land—that's Big Mom's territory! Going in there is suicide!"

"The other path leads to sunny, rich Dressrosa. We land there and boom—we're swimming in money!"

At the mention of money, Buggy perked up noticeably. Even the panic on his face seemed to ease.

The rest of the crew turned to the figure at the bow, cloaked in a red captain's coat.

"Dressrosa and Totto Land, huh?"

Roger wiped the rain from his face and chuckled.

"Charlotte Linlin's turf? Nah. That crazy old hag's not worth our time."

"As for Dressrosa..."

He absently tugged at his signature mustache, then suddenly seemed to remember something. He pointed toward a dark, storm-wrapped stretch of ocean ahead and asked with curiosity:

"That there... is the third route, right?"

Before anyone else could reply, Buggy leapt up in alarm.

"No way!!

Captain Roger! That's the Edd War Sea ahead!"

"That's one of the most dangerous places in the New World! They say out of every ten pirate crews that enter, not even one makes it through!"

"It's way too dangerous—mmph!"

Shanks slapped a hand over Buggy's mouth, eyes wide with panic.

But it was already too late.

Roger's eyes had lit up with burning excitement at Buggy's "introduction."

"The most dangerous sea?"

"One-in-ten survival rate?"

"Wahahahahaha!! Now that sounds amazing!!"

"I've decided!"

Roger stepped boldly to the front of the ship, drew his sword with a flourish, and pointed it straight at the storm-shrouded sea ahead.

"We're taking that route!"

Buggy looked like he'd just been struck by lightning, his eyes practically bulging from his head.

Shanks buried his face in his hands.

"You shouldn't have said anything, Buggy..."

The rest of the crew could only sigh.

Our captain... really is insane.

Chapter 453 - 453: Volume 3 – Chapter 96: Deep Sea

All around them stretched an endless black void.

"So this is the deep sea..."

At the bow of the warship, Daren rubbed the stubble on his chin with interest, taking in the scene ahead.

The warships were encased in a transparent coating, and ten ships moved in a quiet, steady formation toward their destination.

All that greeted the eye was pitch blackness. Only when the warships' searchlights occasionally swept across the waters could one glimpse the ocean floor, reefs, and brilliantly colored coral deep below.

It was deathly silent. The kind of silence that made your scalp tingle.

From time to time, strange, low cries echoed from the darkness, accompanied by the faint outlines of massive black shapes drifting in the distance—both eerie and chilling.

In these lightless depths, anyone with claustrophobia would've passed out by now.

"Heh, Daren, you've never used a coated ship to dive this deep before, have you?"

At some point, Sengoku had walked over to the Vice Admiral and asked with a smile.

Daren shook his head and replied with a slight smile,

"No, I haven't, Admiral Sengoku."

"Ever since I left the North Blue, you've been aware of all my missions—never had the chance."

"And back when I was stationed in the North Blue, there was never a need for something this elaborate."

"In that sea, we preferred to settle things with brute force."

"Hahahaha! In that case, this will be a whole new experience for you..."

Sengoku laughed proudly.

"Even though coating technology is pretty advanced now, there are still plenty of risks. The water pressure in the deep sea is no joke."

"Only our Marine Headquarters has developed a coating this flawless."

As he spoke, he pressed his hand against the transparent membrane in front of them, leaving behind an exaggerated handprint.

"See that? Even at this depth—ten thousand meters down—it's compressed like this and still hasn't ruptured."

"This is something pirate coatings could never match."

By the time he finished, Sengoku's braided beard practically curled with pride.

"I see..."

Daren nodded as if having a sudden realization.

"But why are we diving into the deep sea with coated ships in the first place?"

Sengoku chuckled, clearly pleased with himself.

"You're still too young, Daren..."

He clasped his hands behind his back and began explaining.

"Shiki might be arrogant and reckless, but he's also incredibly cautious and calculating."

"If our fleet of ten warships crossed the Red Line openly into the New World, it wouldn't take long for the many powers there to notice us."

"A large-scale Marine movement into the New World is bound to draw the attention of countless pirates and dark forces—and news like that would definitely reach Shiki."

"If that happens, he'll be ready. And that could easily cause this mission to fail before it even starts."

"Mhm..."

Daren nodded thoughtfully.

"You're indeed far-sighted, Admiral Sengoku. I respect that."

Sengoku gave him a glance and continued.

"But you're the commander of this mission, so I won't interfere too much."

"Daren, if it were up to you, how would you get into the New World without being detected?"

Daren smiled.

"I'd fly."

Sengoku: ...

He grit his teeth.

"You can fly—but the fleet can't!"

Daren nodded, then shook his head.

"It's actually possible. If Headquarters provides enough funding, we can refit the ships—make them lighter and reinforce them with metal."

"My power is limited, sure, but I can still make ten ships fly long-distance."

Sengoku clenched his fists.

His chest began to heave rapidly. Veins bulged on his forehead as he gritted his teeth and growled:

"Now that the headquarters is short of military funds, where are we supposed to find extra budget to rebuild warships!?"

"I see..."

Daren put on another look of sudden realization and sighed helplessly.

"Then there's no way."

"But Admiral Sengoku, has there ever been a time when our headquarters wasn't short on military funds?"

Sengoku: ...

His old face flushed red, then turned green, and finally purple.

His lips trembled, but in the end, he couldn't bring himself to argue. Instead, he abruptly turned his head and roared in another direction:

"Borsalino! You bastard!! What the hell are you doing still lying on that beach chair sunbathing at a time like this!?"

"This is the deep sea! Where would you even find the sun!?"

In the distance, Borsalino lowered the glass of watermelon juice in his hand, raised both arms in surrender, and responded with a look of innocence:

"I'm not sunbathing, Admiral Sengoku."

"I just wanted to lie down for a while."

Sengoku: ...

He clutched his chest and walked off into the cabin with a tragic expression.

Daren couldn't help but chuckle.

Once Sengoku had gone inside and he was sure no one else was around, he slowly took out a military Den Den Mushi and dialed a certain signal.

"Is that guy here yet?"

As the signal connected, Daren asked with a smile.

A low chuckle came from the other end of the Den Den Mushi.

"Yeah, he came."

"But you're really stingy, Daren."

Daren shrugged.

"His imagination is limited. That's not my fault."

The deep voice paused for a moment, then asked seriously:

"Do you have confidence this time?"

Daren's eyes locked onto the ink-black abyss ahead. A cold smile played on his lips.

"They've brought the fight to our doorstep. If we don't strike back, that'd just be pathetic."

"In the battle of Marineford, if that meteorite had veered just a bit more, it might've crushed Toki."

There was a moment of silence before the voice spoke again:

"Getting revenge and never letting go—that's definitely your style."

"If you've already made your move, then I have nothing left to hold back either."

"...I'll be waiting for your message in the North Blue."

"Good."

Daren hung up the Den Den Mushi.

He put it away and lifted his gaze.

He could clearly feel the warship beneath his feet beginning to ascend.

The sea surface was getting closer and closer.

Until a trace of wind and rain appeared in his field of view, completely obscuring the madness and resolve in his eyes.

"The Battle of Edd War?"

"This time, the protagonists won't be the two of you."

Chapter 454 - 454: Volume 3 – Chapter 97: The Legendary Battle

The Edd War Sea.

Strong winds swept the sea, waves surged violently, and torrential rain poured from the sky.

"Ahhhhhhh!! How is this even possible!?"

"We're surrounded!!"

On the Oro Jackson, Buggy's red nose had gone pale with fear. He clung to a pillar in terror, screaming at the terrifying scene before him.

The Roger Pirates' ship was tossed about in the rough, stormy sea.

Under the howling wind and pouring rain, the waters to the front, back, and sides—and even the sky overhead—were densely packed with pirate ships. They floated like buoys, covering the ocean in an overwhelming display.

Flags bearing the Flying Lion insignia flapped wildly in the storm, unleashing an indescribable pressure and an immense surge of pressure.

"What are you so scared of, Buggy?"

Nearby, Shanks, wearing his straw hat, grabbed the mast with one hand and teased:

"You can't die from getting cut anymore anyway."

"Damn it!!"

Buggy's hands flew off his body and grabbed Shanks by the collar, eyes blazing with fury as he shouted:

"I still have tons of weaknesses, you bastard!!"

"You idiot! If it weren't for you, I wouldn't be unable to swim!!"

Shanks just grinned in response.

Damn it!!

Buggy trembled with rage, but there was no time to argue. He rolled and scrambled over to Rayleigh, wailing:

"Rayleigh-san!! Please talk some sense into Captain Roger!!"

"That's Shiki out there!! We're completely surrounded!!"

"In a naval battle, that bastard's unbeatable!!"

Rayleigh chuckled dismissively and replied with a hint of helplessness:

"Buggy, you know what Roger's like. The more you panic, the more excited he gets..."

"Besides—"

He patted the railing of the ship.

"Even if it's a sea battle, we've got to trust in the Oro Jackson that Tom built for us."

Buggy froze as if struck by lightning.

His face twisted like he'd just swallowed something foul.

He instinctively looked to the other crew members for support, but saw that they were already standing tall in the wind and rain, drawing their swords with fierce smiles and eager eyes.

He broke down instantly.

"It's over... It's really over this time..."

Buggy collapsed on the deck, clutching his head in despair.

"Everyone's gone insane..."

"That monster Bullet had the right idea. I should've left the ship with him when I had the chance..."

The others paid no attention to Buggy's cries.

One after another, they drew their weapons, steadied their breathing, and gazed at the massive pirate fleet spread across sea and sky—grinning, filled with fighting spirit.

This was Captain Roger's—no, their—final journey!

Whether it was the sea of Edd War or the Flying Pirates under Shiki's command... nothing would make them back down!

"Shiki, huh?"

Heavy footsteps echoed from behind.

Clad in a blood-red captain's coat, Roger stepped forward, steady and calm, passing his crewmates one by one until he reached the bow.

The downpour soaked his clothes completely, streams of water running from his coat and splashing across the deck.

Bang!

Roger stomped down on the bow, raised his head proudly, and locked eyes with the pirate fleet that loomed like a shadow across the sky.

It was a terrifying, awe-inspiring sight.

In the rain and wind, the sea and sky swarmed with pirate ships, like a ravenous wolf pack encircling a wounded tiger—ready to strike.

Black cannons on the pirate ships glinted ominously, the stench of gunpowder thick in the air. Pirates adjusted their angles, aiming their barrels squarely at the Oro Jackson.

The Flying Pirates grinned viciously, their eyes fixed on the Roger Pirates like they were already corpses.

"Roger!!"

At that moment, a sharp, defiant laugh rang out from the thunderous storm clouds above.

A figure suddenly soared into view, golden hair as long as his legs whipping through the air like a lion's mane.

A lit cigar clenched between his teeth, arms crossed over his chest, he looked down at the Roger Pirates with a wild grin and a fierce gleam in his eyes.

"Jihahahahaha!! I've been waiting a long time for you!!"

As he laughed, an overwhelming aura erupted from his seemingly thin frame, transforming into a tangible storm that rippled through the clouds and cut through the rain like a blade.

Captain of the Flying Pirates. Overlord of the New World...

The Flying Pirate—Shiki the Golden Lion!

"What a terrifying presence... It's like I can't breathe..."

Buggy trembled as the crushing pressure bore down on him, face pale.

"That guy's a monster! Captain Roger!! Are we really not going to run!?"

Roger grinned.

"Shiki, long time no see."

He pointed casually at the murderous fleet before them.

"So this is how you're welcoming me?"

Shiki sneered.

"Cut the crap, Roger... You know damn well why I'm here!!"

Roger scratched his head with a puzzled look.

"Honestly, I have no idea."

Shiki: ...

He ground his teeth.

"The Ancient Weapon!!"

"You've got clues about one, don't you!?"

At those words, the entire Roger crew froze.

Buggy's expression changed drastically, a wave of dread washing over him.

Roger's eyes widened in genuine shock.

"Even you know I've got clues about the Ancient Weapon!?"

Buggy: ...

Tears streamed down his face instantly.

Rayleigh and the others clutched their faces in agony.

He... admitted it!?

Shiki was momentarily stunned.

He'd planned to force Roger to spill the truth—but the guy just confessed the moment he asked!?

This wasn't how it was supposed to go at all.

It took him several seconds to recover before a maniacal laugh burst out of him.

"Jihahahahaha!!!"

"Perfect!! I thought you'd play dumb!"

"In that case, let's join forces!!!"

Shiki's eyes burned as he stared Roger down, grinning fiercely.

"We had our share of grudges when we were younger—but let's put all that behind us!"

"With your knowledge of a world-ending Ancient Weapon, and the massive power and influence I command..."

He raised his right hand high, clenching it into a tight fist.

"—We can rule the world!!!"

"No Marine, no self-righteous World Government, will stand a chance against us—they'll crawl at our feet!!!"

"Be my right hand, Roger!!!"

...

Boom!!

A flash of pale lightning tore through the pitch-black storm, lighting up the churning sea for a brief moment—and revealing the faint outlines of ten warships.

The ships were arranged in a defensive formation, using the storm as cover. Hidden perfectly several nautical miles away from the two pirate fleets, they waited in silence.

A slightly shady air lingered among them.

"It's about to begin."

On the flagship, Daren stood at the bow, rain cloak draped over his shoulders, chewing on a cigar. He gazed across the distant waves, a trail of smoke curling from his lips.

Unlike his composed demeanor, Sengoku—clutching a spyglass beside him—was visibly distressed.

"Shiki and Roger... are teaming up!?"

Chapter 455 - 455: Volume 3 – Chapter 98: Shiki vs. Roger

Listening to Shiki's laughter echo through the wind and rain, Sengoku's forehead was already dripping with cold sweat.

Shiki—the madman whose ambition spanned all four seas—had just proposed forming an alliance with Roger!?

The mere thought of the two most troublesome enemies the Marines had ever faced joining forces made Sengoku break out in a nervous chill.

What was even more terrifying... was that Roger actually seemed to have clues about the Ancient Weapons!

How was that even possible!?

Others might not know the truth, but how could Sengoku not?

That rumor—"Roger has information on the Ancient Weapons"—was nothing more than a smokescreen spread by the Marines from the start!

Yet now, to Sengoku's shock, the false intel Daren had cunningly released... had somehow turned out to be real!?

What the hell!?

Sengoku suddenly turned his head, eyes locking onto the Vice Admiral beside him.

"Daren, did you know from the beginning that Roger really had clues about the Ancient Weapons!?"

Daren looked completely innocent.

"How could that be, Admiral Sengoku... If even someone like you didn't know such a secret, how could I possibly know?"

"I was just making a random statement. Who'd have thought it'd turn out to be true?"

Sengoku studied Daren's expression, suspicious and searching, but ultimately found nothing out of place.

He hesitated, then gradually accepted the explanation.

After all, how could Daren possibly have known something like that?

Still...

"Daren, when are you going to give the order to attack?"

Sengoku clenched his fists, his impatience and anxiety written all over his face.

"We absolutely cannot let them continue this negotiation. If Roger really agrees to Shiki's offer—"

"Relax, Admiral Sengoku."

Daren shook his head, cutting him off with a calm smile tugging at his lips.

"With Roger's personality, there's no way he'd accept an invitation from Shiki."

Sengoku was momentarily stunned by the confidence in his voice.

"You sure about that?"

"How do you know Roger won't agree...?"

You're not that idiot Garp.

Daren just smiled and said nothing.

"Let's wait a bit longer. There's no rush, Admiral Sengoku."

"They're going to fight..."

A flicker of something sure and unreadable flashed in the Vice Admiral's eyes.

"They definitely will."

Somehow, Daren's confidence had a calming effect. Sengoku found himself feeling a little more at ease—though disbelief still lingered on his face.

...

"Rule the world, huh..."

Rain slammed violently against Roger's hair, face, and coat, crackling loudly in the storm.

Staring at the dozens of pirate ships slowly closing in on the Oro Jackson, he gave a slight shake of the head. A mocking smile tugged at the corner of his lips.

"You really haven't changed at all, Shiki... still the same as always."

Then, all at once, he looked up!

His jet-black hair whipped up, flinging raindrops into the air. With eyes blazing, he faced the storm head-on and laughed boldly.

"Rule, you say!?"

"Wahahahaha, Shiki!! I have zero interest in ruling anything!!"

"If I can't do what I want... what's the point of being a pirate!?"

"Your offer... I refuse!"

Shiki's expression instantly darkened, and raw killing intent radiated from his body.

His features twisted with rage as fury surged up from his chest.

"So you're saying... you want me to send you to the bottom of the sea right here and now?"

Slowly, he drew the twin swords at his waist.

Rain traced down the flawless blades, gathering at the tips and glinting with a sharp, icy sheen.

Though Roger had once halted the Rocks Pirates at the Battle of God Valley and clashed with Shiki many times since, the Golden Lion held complex feelings toward him.

On one hand, he respected Roger's overwhelming strength. On the other, their history was full of bitter conflict.

This time, offering an alliance wasn't just about strategy—it came from a sense of mutual recognition.

Of course, there were also practical reasons.

Roger's power was nothing short of monstrous.

Even someone as arrogant as Shiki had to admit it.

Even here, in a sea battle where he held every advantage, Shiki wasn't entirely confident he could take Roger down.

That's why he proposed a partnership.

But he never expected this damn fool would reject him without a second thought.

"No..."

Roger burst out laughing.

With a sharp metallic clang, he unsheathed the long sword at his waist and pointed it straight at the airborne Golden Lion.

The aura surging from him rose like a towering mountain, climbing ever higher with no end in sight.

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

The words had barely left his mouth when—

A flash of red burst from the pupils of both Roger and Shiki.

Zzzzzzt!!!!!!

Rip!

A surge of lightning, black and red, erupted like a storm of shadowed flame from both their bodies, twisting through the rain in phantom arcs.

Their overwhelming auras crashed together with explosive force, forming a storm of pure energy that spiraled in plain sight.

The heavens changed color.

The world was drowned in black and blood red.

Winds howled. Cloud seas tore apart.

The Roger Pirates instinctively braced themselves, raising arms to shield their faces as they staggered two steps back.

Buggy and Shanks went pale and collapsed to their knees on the deck.

On the Flying Pirates' side, crew members dropped like dominos—eyes rolling back as they fainted from sheer pressure.

The sea roared as the clash of willpower sent violent tremors through the world.

This was... the highest-level collision of Conqueror's Haki!

"Wahahahaha! Come on, Shiki!!"

Boom!

Roger stomped the bow of the ship, laughing madly.

Drenched in his blood-red captain's coat, he launched himself into the air like a war god possessed, gripping his unassuming sword in both hands.

Zzzzzzz!

Black and red lightning surged wildly from the blade, making it look as if Roger was dragging a bolt of thunder straight into battle!

"You're digging your own grave!!"

Shiki roared, springing back before diving at blinding speed!

The same black-red lightning wrapped around his twin Meito swords—Oto and Kogarashi—turning them into the deadly fangs of a rampaging lion.

With swords crossed before him, black-red waves spiraled around his body as the Flying Lion shot forward.

The two legends charged, unstoppable, crashing toward each other with terrifying force!

"Bring it on, Shiki!!"

"Die, Roger!!"

"Shiki!!"

"Roger!!"

"Shiki!!"

"Roger!!"

BOOM!!!

In the next instant—

Like a meteor smashing into the earth, two of the world's mightiest pirates—each a living legend—collided high in the sky!

Time seemed to stop.

Then, a titanic shockwave exploded outward, unleashing towering waves tens of meters high that surged across the sea.

The sky collapsed. The ocean split open.

...

Even several nautical miles away, the shockwave hit with crushing force, rocking the Marine fleet violently and shaking the formation apart.

"You were right, Daren!!"

Sengoku clung tightly to the railing, eyes bloodshot with urgency as he shouted,

"They've started fighting!! Give the order—attack now!!"

Chapter 456 - 456: Volume 3 – Chapter 99: Shiki Must Die

Sengoku's uncharacteristic anxiety made Daren frown. He couldn't help but speak up.

"Admiral Sengoku, with your wisdom, you should know that Shiki and Roger are in the middle of a brutal clash. Ordering an attack now isn't the right move."

There was a flash of confusion and doubt in Daren's gaze as he looked at Sengoku.

Even though this was still early in the timeline and Sengoku was merely a headquarters Admiral—not yet the brilliant, commanding Fleet Admiral he would become—he still shouldn't have been reacting like this.

His composure and insight, though not yet at their peak like during the Summit War, were still far above average.

And yet, his reaction now was... almost desperate.

"Of course I know this isn't the optimal moment for a full-scale assault."

Sengoku gritted his teeth, face twisted in hesitation.

"Tactically speaking, the ideal plan would be to wait until those two pirate crews tear each other apart. Then we sweep in and clean up the rest."

"But Daren, that's only the best-case scenario. The most convenient outcome."

A heavy, brooding weight settled in Sengoku's eyes.

"What's far more likely... is that they'll detect us. The longer we delay, the greater that chance becomes."

"Daren..."

He turned to the Vice Admiral, his voice full of worry.

"We can't afford to wait any longer. Marine Headquarters cannot take that risk."

Daren paused in surprise.

Then, as he caught the bloodshot lines around Sengoku's eyes, it hit him.

Political pressure.

Shiki's rampages around the world had dragged Marine Headquarters into a storm of criticism.

Whether it was the Member Nations, the non-Member Nations, or even the World Government, all of them had likely been applying immense pressure on the Marines—especially on Sengoku, who was personally in charge of bringing Shiki to justice.

Sengoku, buckling under that relentless weight, clearly hadn't been sleeping. It showed.

Shiki was cautious, unpredictable, and ridiculously hard to catch.

Thanks to his Devil Fruit powers, he could slip through government and Marine intel networks with ease, concealing his whereabouts without a trace.

That was why the Marines had been so helpless in dealing with him.

And in this current standoff, the longer they waited, the more likely Shiki would realize something was off—possibly retreating before the Marines even had time to react.

So to Sengoku, even if now wasn't the ideal time, he couldn't afford to gamble on the perfect scenario.

They had to strike while they still had the chance, even if it meant clashing with two of the most legendary pirate crews alive.

No wonder...

Understanding dawned on Daren, and he sighed quietly.

This was his oversight.

He'd focused too much on maximizing tactical gain and victory, and forgotten about the larger strategic picture.

But that wasn't entirely his fault.

He wasn't the one burdened with that responsibility.

"Admiral Sengoku, I understand. I admit your opinion carries weight."

Daren lit a fresh cigar, his tone calm.

Sengoku's eyes brightened, only for Daren to immediately follow with—

"But I refuse."

Sengoku: ...

That damned brat!

Only the confident, unwavering voice of the Vice Admiral could be heard echoing steadily in the wind and rain.

"I'm just a Vice Admiral. I'm not an Admiral, and definitely not the Fleet Admiral."

"Bearing the weight of political pressure is your job, Admiral Sengoku—not mine."

"I have only one duty."

Daren's eyes locked onto the distant sea, now stained with smoke and blood. From that direction came the cries of the dying and the roar of cannon fire.

Corpses churned in the waves. Pirate ships were torn apart and swallowed by the sea...

An earth-shattering war unlike anything the world had seen was unfolding just beyond the horizon.

Daren exhaled a long stream of smoke like a dragon, a cold smile curling on his lips.

"—To lead the Marines to ultimate victory in this war!"

Sengoku's pupils shrank.

Ultimate victory!?

This brat... he's way too confident!

He's waiting so calmly...

What exactly is he waiting for?

Or... does he still have a hidden card he hasn't played yet?

But the Marine Headquarters has already committed nearly all of its elite forces.

Fleet Admiral Kong must remain at Marineford to defend it and protect Mary Geoise.

Zephyr isn't participating in active duty—he's staying at the training camp to prepare for the next generation of recruits.

In other words, the Marines have already deployed nearly all of their top combat power.

There's no way Daren could be hiding another trump card!

"Wait!"

Sengoku's pupils suddenly contracted.

"You... you're planning to kill Shiki directly!?"

Daren gave him a sidelong glance, eyes full of mock confusion.

"Isn't that what you were thinking too?"

Sengoku froze, then muttered thoughtfully,

"Shiki's powers are incredibly difficult to deal with. If he senses true danger, that bastard won't hesitate to abandon his fleet and flee."

"I discussed this with Fleet Admiral Kong in private. Considering that possibility, the real aim of this operation is to wipe out the Flying Pirates' active forces."

"And aside from that, our top priority is to take down Roger's crew!"

After all, Roger's crew can't fly.

But Shiki can.

The difficulty of eliminating them isn't even close.

So that's what it is...

A mocking grin tugged at the corner of Daren's lips.

"Well, that's really unfortunate."

He understood now.

Shiki himself was just too difficult to eliminate—but his fleet wasn't.

And the moment they destroyed Shiki's flying fleet, just like before, the Marines would have something solid to report to the World Government and the Member Nations.

Politics.

Always, it's this damn politics.

"We clearly have different priorities, Admiral Sengoku."

A cold glint sparked in Daren's eyes, and a murderous aura burst out.

"To me, Roger can wait."

"But... Shiki must die."

Sengoku's heart gave a violent jolt.

He stared at Daren in shock.

In the Vice Admiral's eyes, there was no righteous fury, no thrill at punishing evil, no sense of duty—none of that.

There was only pure, unfiltered hatred.

From the moment he started spreading false intel, to the careful orchestration of this battle... Daren had never been after Roger, or even Shiki's fleet.

All of it—was to kill Shiki.

This kid... really knows how to hold a grudge.

A sudden chill ran down Sengoku's spine.

Better make sure Daren never puts me on his list... I'd never sleep again.

That thought crept into his head.

"Then what are you waiting for?"

Watching the chaos unfold on the distant battlefield—Roger and Shiki now clashing midair, one red, one gold, shaking the heavens with each blow—Sengoku couldn't hold back the question.

"The point isn't how long we wait," Daren said with a faint, cryptic smile.

"It's what we're waiting for."

"Trust me, Admiral Sengoku."

His eyes were sharp and unyielding.

"Justice will prevail."

...

"Kill them!!"

"Take them all down!!"

"Once we kill Roger, the Flying Pirates will rule the world!!"

"Hahahahaha!!"

The pirates' vicious laughter echoed through the storm, merging with the thunder of cannons and the clash of blades.

Now that Roger and Shiki had officially locked into battle, the Flying Pirates had launched their full assault.

Cannons roared relentlessly, spitting fire as a wave of shells tore through the rain, forming a net of death that hurtled toward the Oro Jackson.

"Protect the Oro Jackson!"

Rayleigh's eyes sharpened as he gave the command, his voice steady and firm.

He leapt from the deck without hesitation.

A flash of silver—the long sword in his hand slid free with a hiss, slicing through the storm in a dazzling arc of moonlight.

Swish! Swish! Swish!

One after another, over a dozen gleaming silver slashes tore through the sky, cleaving dozens of cannonballs clean in half—each one erupting in a flash of flame and shrapnel.

Chapter 457 - 457: Volume 3 – Chapter 100: Waiting for the Wind

Flames lit up the sky, thick black smoke rolled across the air, and waves of heat surged from above.

Under the shock of the explosions, the Oro Jackson rocked violently, as if it might capsize at any moment.

"Damn it! Their firepower is insane!"

Gaban, ignoring the rain splashing across his face, swung both of his silver axes in unison, cleaving several cannonballs heading for the mast into shrapnel.

The rest of the Roger Pirates unleashed their own techniques, intercepting every shell that posed a threat to the ship.

Boom—boom—boom...

Cannonballs exploded all around the Oro Jackson, sending towering plumes of water into the air and making the ship groan and creak under the strain.

"We're finished... This kind of bombardment...!"

Buggy screamed, shaking like a leaf with snot flying from his nose.

But for all his shouting, his hands didn't slow in the slightest.

No one knew where he'd pulled them from, but throwing knives flew from both hands like a windmill—accurately hitting and detonating multiple shells mid-air.

"Buggy, quit screaming! You're too damn loud!"

Shanks, his face pale, panted heavily for breath.

A sharp buzzing approached from behind. In a flash, he drew a half-meter-long pocket blade and swung it back with force!

Shhk!

The black cannonball split in two, whistling past either side of his body before plunging into the sea.

Boom!

A blast of flame shot up behind him. Shanks gasped, but his eyes remained steady, his grip on the sword firm.

If Daren had been there, he would've noticed at a glance—

Both Buggy and Shanks had grown significantly since the first time he saw them.

Especially Shanks, with that straw hat—just from that one slash, he had clearly reached the level of steel-slicing!

And he was only twelve.

Twelve years old and already on the verge of entering the realm of a true swordsman... That kind of talent was one-of-a-kind in the world.

Rayleigh glanced at the noisy Buggy and the calm, composed Shanks, a flicker of satisfaction in his eyes.

They'd grown up.

And that was good.

At the very least, once this final voyage came to an end, those two brats would be ready to set sail on their own.

As the thought crossed his mind, Rayleigh struck again.

A hurricane of sword energy spiraled into the sky, sweeping up the cannonballs falling from above and detonating them mid-air—birthing a roaring firestorm.

"This just won't end..."

Crocus gripped a harpoon, his expression grim. Rain had drenched and disheveled his signature floral crown, leaving him looking soaked and worn.

"That damn Shiki—he's not even fighting us directly!"

Everyone's hearts sank at his words.

Looking around at the storm-lashed sea and sky—

Dozens of pirate ships flying the skull flag of the Flying Pirates had them completely surrounded.

But none of them were rushing in recklessly. Instead, they leveraged their superior firepower, pinning the Roger Pirates down through sheer pressure.

That constant barrage drained their stamina bit by bit, leaving them scrambling just to stay afloat.

Under the unrelenting bombardment, even the legendary Oro Jackson now looked like a fragile dinghy caught in a tempest—one big hit away from going under.

"We can't hold out like this."

Rayleigh glanced toward the sky where Roger and Shiki clashed in a flurry of red and gold, then made his decision in an instant.

Wiping the rain from his face, he gritted his teeth.

"We're charging through!"

As soon as the words left his mouth, the helmsman sprang into action.

The sails unfurled, and despite the downpour, the Oro Jackson suddenly accelerated!

Straight ahead—through the curtain of rain and fire—was the dense blockade of Shiki's pirate fleet.

And they rammed toward it without hesitation!

"I'll clear the way!"

Rayleigh appeared at the bow in a flash. With eyes locked forward, he unleashed a powerful slash!

Shhh!

Sword energy burst forth like a silver crescent, cutting through the storm with a deafening howl.

The sea ahead split open with a massive rift stretching hundreds of meters.

A ten-meter-high pirate ship jolted—then split clean down the middle, erupting in a fiery explosion before vanishing beneath the waves!

Cries of pain echoed across the battlefield as Flying Pirates leapt from their burning vessel, splashing into the ocean like falling dumplings.

Seizing the chaos, the Oro Jackson surged forward like an icebreaker, crashing directly into the heart of Shiki's blockade!

"Kill!!!"

A thunderous war cry exploded across the sea.

Countless ropes were flung down from the air, landing on the deck of the Oro Jackson. Members of the Flying Pirates climbed up with savage grins, shouting as they scrambled aboard.

"They're coming!!!"

Roger's crew locked eyes with the incoming enemy, battle intent blazing in every gaze. They drew their blades with a breath of resolve...

And charged in without hesitation!

This was their final voyage—there was no turning back now.

The boarding battle...

Had begun!

...

"Daren, it's time to act."

On the flagship, Sakazuki suddenly landed with a heavy thud, his cold gaze locked on Daren.

"The boarding battle is underway. If we move in now, maybe not Shiki, but we can definitely corner Roger's crew!"

Even someone as normally composed as Sakazuki was running out of patience.

His tone carried a stern edge of reprimand.

Sengoku, too, looked at Daren with anxious urgency.

With both pirate crews locked in close combat, this was the perfect time to surround them and seize overwhelming results.

"No, not yet."

Daren studied the battlefield, his brow furrowed, fists unconsciously clenched tight.

"Damn it!"

Sengoku cursed inwardly.

But all he could do was wait—Daren was the one in command of this operation.

"Then tell us—what the hell are you waiting for!?"

Black smoke began to rise from Sakazuki's body, his tone dark and menacing.

Daren let out a sigh and turned to him.

"Sakazuki, we worked together in the North Blue for a long time. You should know the kind of person I am."

"I'll just ask you one question."

He stared at Sakazuki.

"Do you trust me?"

Sakazuki went silent.

He clenched his fists again, but the black smoke slowly faded from around him.

"I hope you don't regret this decision, Daren."

Daren smiled faintly.

"Don't worry. Everything is in place."

He turned back to the distant battlefield.

At this moment...

Roger's pirate crew was completely surrounded.

While every one of them was a powerhouse on the sea, their numbers couldn't compare to Shiki's fleet.

Dozens of warships. Tens of thousands of men.

Even if they just relied on brute force, they could grind Roger's crew down by sheer numbers.

Especially in an environment like this—stormy, chaotic—if the Flying Pirates were willing to throw lives away just to overwhelm them, it was only a matter of time before Roger's side fell.

After all, they also had to protect the Oro Jackson.

Most of them weren't Devil Fruit users, but in such waters, losing the ship meant certain death.

"Get ready..."

Sengoku and Sakazuki froze.

Behind them, Borsalino, lying there with his watermelon juice, let out a sly smile, a glint flashing behind his sunglasses.

"What exactly are you preparing for? What are you waiting for?"

Sengoku couldn't help but ask again.

Daren chuckled.

"Waiting for the wind to rise."

The wind...?

Sengoku paused, his brows knotting tightly.

Then suddenly—he understood.

His face changed slightly as a thought too outrageous to be believed surged into his mind.

A commanding voice rang out across the deck, layered with steely determination, slicing through the storm around them.

"I've prepared a special gift for Shiki."

A twisted grin crept across Daren's face.

"A gift he'll never forget."

He paused, grinning even wider.

"Mm."

He spread his arms wide, feeling the currents of wind and rain dancing around him.

"The wind is rising."

Turning back with a playful smile, Daren winked at Sengoku and the others.

"Ready yourselves, everyone."

Sengoku and Sakazuki's pupils shrank to pinpoints. They whipped around in unison, staring into the distance.

As if struck by lightning, their eyes locked onto something—something too impossible to believe.

Far out at sea, a tiny boat had appeared, drifting alone.

Two figures stood silently aboard it.

Each cloaked in dark green robes that obscured their faces and bodies.

Mysterious. Ominous.

Crack!

A pale bolt of lightning ripped from the clouds, tearing open the dark sky.

In that flash of light, one of the figures turned slightly—just enough to reveal a fierce, commanding profile, marked by a strange, blood-red tattoo.

"That's...!"

Sengoku's heart thundered.

Sakazuki's eyes widened.

Borsalino grinned eerily.

On the boat, the taller figure raised both hands slowly.

And then—

A howling gale surged across the sea, whipping up mountainous waves.

A twisted, emerald-green storm rose with a shrieking roar from the pouring rain, utterly unnatural and fearsome in appearance.

It expanded. Twisted. Amplified. Climbed.

Until it became a towering cyclone that bridged sea and sky, ripping through the heavens with unstoppable force.

A storm had come.

At the bow of the warship, Daren lit a cigar, a smile curling at the corners of his lips.

"The real show... begins now."

This was the storm...of destiny.

Chapter 458 - 458: Volume 3 – Chapter 101: Sea Battle — I'm Invincible... What?

Dragon!!

Even though his face was hidden beneath a wide, dark green hood, there was no mistaking him. Dragon had grown up in the Marines—and with his one-of-a-kind Devil Fruit ability on the open sea...

Sengoku and Sakazuki recognized him instantly!

They reacted at once, turning sharply to glare at Daren.

That guy Daren... he was still in contact with the "traitor" Dragon!?

"Hey, hey, hey, don't look at me like that..."

Daren shrugged casually, flashing a small smile.

"The Marines are in desperate need of a victory right now, aren't they?"

Sengoku and Sakazuki fell silent at his words.

It was true.

The Marines were under immense political pressure. They couldn't afford to lose this battle!

And the fact was undeniable—

In a sea battle, Dragon's Devil Fruit ability could easily be considered among the most powerful out there!

Back then, when Fleet Admiral Kong entrusted the Logia-type Kaze Kaze no Mi to Dragon, it was with the intention of grooming him as a future Fleet Admiral—someone who could cover the Marines' weakness in naval combat!

Fleet Admiral Kong had hoped Dragon would one day wield the power of the Kaze Kaze no Mi to stand against the likes of Shiki and Whitebeard on the battlefield!

"So... this is your trump card, Daren?"

Sengoku stared at him, his expression grim, voice low and serious.

"Trump card?"

Daren chuckled.

"Maybe. But it doesn't really matter anymore."

"Dragon showing up here might have nothing to do with me. Maybe he's just trying to help the Marines get through this mess. Maybe he's repaying the Marines for raising him by using his Devil Fruit ability."

"Who can say?"

Sengoku rolled his eyes at the kid's words, but he didn't press the issue any further.

Keeping secret contact with a "traitor" and "criminal" like Dragon was clearly a violation of military discipline. Under normal circumstances, it'd warrant severe punishment—maybe even stripping Daren of his military status.

But right now, Sengoku didn't have the luxury to worry about that.

Without a doubt, Dragon's support... was a massive advantage.

"Then... prepare to attack, Admiral Sengoku."

Daren said flatly.

...

Thirty seconds earlier.

"Jihahahaha!! Roger!! Soon... your crew won't be able to hold out much longer!"

Shiki let out a twisted laugh. His eyes gleamed with a strange red light, and both blades—wrapped in black and crimson lightning—came slashing down like twin arcs of destruction!

Clang!!

Roger met the strike head-on, parrying it with brute force.

Rain streamed down his face, but his eyes shone bright and fierce.

"Impossible!! These are the comrades who've come this far with me!"

He laughed loudly, brushing the rain from his face with a sweep of his hand.

Then, with lightning surging along the length of his blade, he slashed upward from below—like he was going to cleave the sky in half!

A strike so overwhelming even demons would flee!

"Kamusari!!"

Shiki's pupils shrank as he faced the attack.

In their reflection, Roger's sword gleamed so brightly it swallowed the entire field of vision. A wave of dread crashed over him like nothing he'd ever felt before.

He couldn't block it!

Even now, after all these years, he vividly remembered... that arrogant lunatic Rocks—he was wounded by this very slash when he underestimated Roger's strength, and only then was he taken down by Garp!

Every pore on Shiki's body stood on end. A strange red glow surged in the depths of his eyes. Like a hawk, he twisted his body in midair and veered to the side.

The blood-red slash grazed past him, slicing off a tuft of his golden hair.

Seizing the moment, Shiki drifted rapidly backward. Hovering high above, he stared down at Roger, who had begun to fall, a cruel, feral grin spreading across his face.

"Since you refuse to submit... I have no choice but to sink all your crew into the sea!!"

As soon as the words left his mouth, Oto and Kogarashi swung through the air simultaneously!

There was no slash.

Instead, the sea suddenly erupted with towering waves.

The surging water rose like endless shadows on the turbulent surface.

Boom...

The sea let out a deafening roar as massive waves surged layer upon layer, instantly gathering into a colossal lion-shaped mass of seawater that blotted out the sky. With its jaws wide open, it roared and lunged toward the Oro Jackson!

Shishi Odoshi: Chimaki!!

Onboard the Oro Jackson, the faces of Roger's crew changed dramatically. Their hearts pounded with alarm.

An attack of this scale—especially in the vastness of the open sea—left them with no escape!

A despair they had never known before welled up in their eyes.

Not even Garp had ever pushed them into such a hopeless situation!

Worse yet, against a tsunami of this magnitude, the "high-speed explosion" device loaded on the Oro Jackson was completely useless!

"This madman!!"

Roger's eyes filled with blood as he stared fiercely at the incoming tsunami, his grip tightening on his longsword.

This wasn't just about the Oro Jackson anymore. At least twenty of the Flying Pirates' ships surrounding them had been caught in the radius of the attack!

That bastard Shiki didn't care about his subordinates' lives at all!

"Jihahahaha!!"

"Roger!! You see it now, don't you!?"

Shiki laughed wildly, his eyes gleaming with madness. It was as if he could already see the Roger Pirates being swallowed by the sea.

Although he had clashed with Roger many times before, this was the first time he had truly cornered him like this!

As for the tens of thousands of unfortunate souls aboard those other ships, Shiki simply disregarded them.

Subordinates? They meant nothing to him.

With enough strength and power, he could always get more!

Even though he hadn't gotten any clues about the ancient weapon from Roger this time, he believed that with time, he'd find them eventually.

If he could eliminate Roger now, he could dominate the seas!

With that thought, his ambition ignited—burning in his eyes like a blazing inferno.

"This is my true strength!! Jihahahaha!!"

"I am invincible in sea battles... What is that!?"

Shiki's maniacal laughter stopped abruptly.

As if sensing something, his pupils narrowed into sharp pinpoints as he stared hard at the scene ahead.

The despairing Roger Pirates froze.

Then, their expressions turned from shock to sheer horror.

"What... is that!?"

Rayleigh muttered, his face grim.

"A... a natural disaster!!!"

Buggy screamed, his face pale, body trembling, eyes bulging out of his head.

And it wasn't just them.

Across the sea and aboard the dozens of floating pirate ships in the sky, countless pirates gasped in unison. Their faces drained of color as they stared at the unfolding spectacle in dread.

They were witnessing something they would never forget for the rest of their lives.

A storm.

An unprecedented storm, infused with unimaginable natural power... had crashed into the giant tsunami Shiki had summoned with his Devil Fruit—and destroyed it in an instant!

Then, all that seawater surged back, rolling in reverse.

A roaring tornado ripped through everything in its path with unstoppable force!

This was... a true natural disaster!

Chapter 459 - 459: Volume 3 – Chapter 102: This Is Your Grand Funeral

"What is this...?"

"Impossible!"

"A sea storm of this magnitude!"

"I've never seen anything like it!"

...

The members of the Roger Pirates stared at the terrifying scene in front of them, stunned and horrified, unable to believe their eyes.

They were different from other pirate crews sailing these seas.

Legendary Yonkō like Whitebeard and Big Mom, who stood on equal footing with Roger, either ruled their own territories or controlled entire regions of the sea. They didn't drift aimlessly from one end of the ocean to the other.

But the Roger Pirates were different.

Because of their idiot captain's dream, they traveled across every sea, visited every nation, every town... even plunged into terrifying and dangerous places that others wouldn't dare approach—just to take in the scenery and beauty of the world.

And yet, even with all their experiences, even after braving countless perilous lands, they had never seen anything as overwhelming as this.

Wind. A gale like no other!

A rare storm, carrying monstrous waves and torrential rain, roared across the sea, swirling, surging, and spiraling into the sky!

The sea—mysterious and deadly.

To a pirate, a storm at sea was the most hopeless natural disaster of all!

Torrential rain, explosive winds, pillars of water surging upward... water tornadoes began appearing one after another, stretching from sea to sky.

The deadliest forces of nature twisted and merged in that moment, forming a calamity of pure destruction.

As far as the eye could see, the storm covered the entire sky. Dozens of massive tornadic columns swept toward them, as if heaven and earth were collapsing together.

Amid the terrified stares of all those present, several Flying Pirates' warships stationed at the edge of the battlefield were devoured in an instant.

The moment they made contact with the tornadoes, the ships were violently shredded into splinters by the crushing force.

Ship wreckage and debris, broken masts and hulls, and mangled pirate corpses were all hurled skyward by the howling winds.

Thousands of pirates couldn't even react. Not a single scream escaped them before they were torn apart, becoming fountains of blood that dyed the tornadoes a dark, hellish red.

"Damn it!! What the hell is going on!?"

The Oro Jackson shuddered violently beneath their feet as the storm hammered it relentlessly, groaning like it might split apart at any second.

Every propulsion system onboard had failed. The sails had been ripped to shreds. The hurricanes swirling back and forth had trapped the ships on the sea and in the sky alike, as if they'd fallen into a quagmire of wind with no way out.

"This can't be real!!"

Shiki floated high above, feeling the crushing weight of the sudden storm bearing down on him. A sinking feeling twisted in his chest, and his eyelids twitched uncontrollably.

He could feel it—his control over the Flying Pirates' airborne fleet was slipping away.

The power of this sea storm... it was simply too massive. Not even someone as strong as him could match the force of nature itself!

"Why is this happening... My navigator... That bastard... Didn't he say the weather around the Edd War Sea was complicated but still within controllable limits!?"

Watching the dozens of tornadoes crash forward like collapsing city walls—faster and faster—tearing through and engulfing his fleet, Shiki's crimson eyes looked ready to burst.

Rip!

A series of thunderous explosions echoed from above.

In the midst of the downpour and violent winds, pale flashes of lightning crackled across the sky, born from the chaos of the storm.

"Ahhhh!!"

"Shiki-sama!! Help us!!"

"Boss Shiki!!"

...

Short, terrified screams rang out as two of the floating pirate ships were shredded to pieces by the storm.

Fragments of shattered hulls and broken debris rained down, mixed with torn limbs and lifeless bodies.

The chaotic climate of Edd War and the raging weather had only fueled the storm's fury, pushing it to new extremes—wild and utterly out of control!

"We must retreat..."

Shiki's face was deathly pale as the thought instinctively surfaced in his mind.

Caught in the grip of the storm, he could no longer control the fleet's flight.

Dozens of hurricane-force twisters were now within striking distance. If they lingered any longer, not only would the entire fleet be wiped out—he himself might not make it out alive!

The Fuwa Fuwa no Mi's greatest weakness... was storms!

Shiki could already feel it—the ability to stay afloat was beginning to slip from him.

"Damn it!!"

He cursed through gritted teeth, just as he was about to pull back—

"Wahahahaha!! Shiki!!!"

"I'm back!!"

A blood-red figure burst through the downpour like a madman, dragging a long blade crackling with black and red lightning... charging in again!

"You idiot!!"

Shiki's pupils contracted violently as he roared,

"I'm not in the mood to mess around with you, Roger!!"

Clang!!

His twin swords clashed hard against Roger's descending blade, unleashing a thunderous shockwave that rippled outward.

Sparks flew in every direction, illuminating Roger's carefree grin and Shiki's dark, furious expression.

"I'm not dying here with you!!"

Shiki bellowed in fury. The storm was closing in fast, his anxiety mounting, cold sweat soaking his back.

But Roger's fighting spirit surged. He let out a bold, hearty laugh.

"We're not getting out anyway, so why not fight to the end right here!?"

You might not escape—But I will!!

Shiki was about to explode from rage.

Unleashing everything he had, his swords—wrapped in lightning—came crashing down!

"Zanpa!!"

Clang!!

A deafening boom rang out. With no footing in midair, Roger's body was sent flying backward.

Shiki didn't even glance back.

Because behind him—

A massive shadow was rising.

The storm... was nearly upon him!

He had to get out now!!

Shiki screamed inwardly and pushed his Devil Fruit power to the limit, trying to lift himself away from the roaring tempest.

But the storm's force bound him down, resisting his rise. It was like a massive vortex trying to pull him into its core.

"Get the hell away from me!!"

He roared, veins bulging, grinding his teeth. Blood began streaming from his nostrils.

Forcing the power of the Fuwa Fuwa no Mi to its limit, his body began to break free from the storm's grip.

He was rising!

He could make it!

He could escape!!

Shiki's eyes suddenly lit up with hope. He burst into wild laughter.

"Jihahahaha! Roger!! I'm getting out of here first!"

"Too bad I couldn't sink you with my own hands."

"But the result won't change!"

"Your journey... ends here!"

"Be buried in this place! Isn't this once-in-a-lifetime storm the perfect grand funeral for you!?"

"Jihahahahaha!!"

His arrogant, manic laughter echoed across the skies.

...

But at that moment—

"Shoot him down... Enma."

A voice, cold and cutting like a demon's whisper, suddenly rang out from several miles away.

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The voice carried an eerie, penetrating clarity, slicing through the chaos like a blade and reaching everyone's ears even amidst the earth-shattering storm.

The moment it rang out, Shiki's entire body jolted with shock. His pupils shrank to pinpoints.

That voice—familiar, cursed!

Could it be...?

A terrible premonition surged from the deepest recesses of his mind.

Suddenly—

Shhh!

A streak of sharp black light tore through the storm like an arrow, ripping through the torrential rain and screaming winds with unimaginable speed. It pierced the thick wall of the storm itself... and came shrieking toward him!

That sword!!

Shiki recognized it instantly. That eerie, wicked flash of black light—

The cursed blade, Enma!

It howled through the sky, cutting a temporary "vacuum" path in the middle of the storm's fury.

From that fleeting tunnel, Shiki finally spotted something strange out on the distant sea—

Warships!!

Shadows of battleships flickered through the wind and rain. On the lead ship... Shiki caught sight of a tall figure at the bow, smoking a cigar.

He was grinning straight at him.

Damn it!!

This was... a Marine ambush!!

How the hell did they know he was here!?

How long had they been lying in wait!?

Just how many troops were hiding out there!?

A barrage of questions overwhelmed Shiki's thoughts, leaving his mind momentarily blank.

Buzz!

Enma tore through the air and closed the distance in an instant!

In Shiki's tightening pupils, the black blade rapidly grew larger, heading straight for him with terrifying speed!

A chill shot down his spine. Gritting his teeth, he crossed his dual swords to block.

Clang!

A thunderous clang erupted as Enma, coated in Armament Haki, was deflected with brute force!

The sheer impact of the strike made Shiki's body jolt—he was knocked slightly off balance from the force alone.

Then—

His eyes went wide. His pupils dilated. Blood vessels burst across the whites of his eyes, painting them crimson.

A wave of disbelief and terror surged across his face.

Because of Roger's earlier assault—

Because of Daren's blade—

That split-second delay...

From behind, a terrifying suction force suddenly surged forth. The raging storm howled and ripped the fabric from his back, slicing at his skin like blades.

"No!!!"

Shiki's voice was barely a whisper, trembling with denial.

BOOM!!

The roaring, apocalyptic storm swallowed him whole.

"AAAAAAGGGGHHHH!!!"

Trapped in the maelstrom, unable to resist, Shiki screamed in agony as he felt his body being torn apart, piece by piece.

Just for a moment, he thought he saw a dark shape flying toward him...

Then everything went black.

A searing pain pierced his forehead—

And he lost consciousness completely.

...

"It actually worked!!"

On the surging waves, every Marine aboard the fleet's warships stared in stunned silence at the monstrous storm in the distance. A cold chill crept down their spines.

Sengoku swallowed hard, a bead of sweat trailing down his forehead.

A storm of this scale—one akin to a natural disaster—was truly terrifying. It felt as though even the sea and sky couldn't bear its force, roaring as if the world itself was coming undone.

"That kid Dragon... he's gotten so much stronger..."

The thought flashed across Sengoku's mind like lightning.

"Dragon has vanished."

Beside him, Sakazuki spoke grimly.

Sengoku snapped to attention and quickly turned toward the small boat.

But across the vast ocean, the waves still roared—and that little boat had long since capsized, shattered into pieces by the raging sea.

The one responsible for conjuring this overwhelming storm had vanished without a trace.

Gone?

Just like that?

So fast!

What kind of ability was that?

Teleportation?

Or was it the man standing next to Dragon?

"How terrifying... to create such a devastating natural disaster..."

Borsalino had, at some point, strolled over from his lounge chair. He smiled leisurely, rubbing the stubble on his chin, gazing at the storm in the distance with a meaningful look.

"Even our Marine fleet... wouldn't stand a chance against a storm like that."

At his words, Sakazuki's expression grew even darker, as though storm clouds were hanging from his face.

Sengoku's pupils narrowed slightly. His heart twisted with complex emotions.

While the storm wasn't entirely Dragon's doing—the treacherous, chaotic climate of the Edd War Sea had massively amplified his Devil Fruit's effects—it was still undeniable.

The kid's control over naval warfare was terrifying.

And now that such a genius, armed with what could only be described as "invincible" large-scale sea battle prowess, had left the Marines and become a wanted man...

Just the thought made Sengoku's mind swirl.

What if...

What if one day, they really had to go to war with Dragon...

He didn't even dare to imagine that future.

No. Now wasn't the time to think about that!

Sengoku shook his head, banishing the thoughts from his mind. His expression hardened again as he focused sharply on Daren.

"Daren. When do we launch the attack?"

"Wait a little longer..."

Daren exhaled slowly, a plume of smoke curling from his mouth like a dragon, a savage grin tugging at his lips.

"We have to wait for the storm to pass before launching the assault. If we get caught up in it, even Marine warships wouldn't survive something on this scale."

He cast a glance toward the spot where Dragon had disappeared, then looked away.

Kuma's ability sure is convenient...

With Kuma supporting him—and Dragon's own overwhelming command of the Kaze Kaze no Mi in naval warfare—there were hardly any opponents on the seas who could truly threaten him now.

Add in Daren's own "backing," and given enough time, the army Dragon would raise could become a force capable of shaking the entire world.

The thought burned in Daren's mind.

Just then, a streak of black light returned from the void, hovering silently beside him. In the flickering lightning, its blade gleamed coldly with a hunger for blood.

Enma.

...

The storm in the distance began to fade, rolling away across the ocean.

By Daren's estimate, a sea storm of that magnitude would stretch for hundreds of nautical miles before it fully dissipated—possibly taking out an island or two in its wake.

But that wasn't his concern.

He raised his gaze, eyes narrowing as he surveyed the battlefield.

After the storm had passed, the sea remained rough and violent.

The entire ocean looked as though it had been crushed beneath a god's wrath—shattered pirate ships drifted like grave markers, and mangled bodies bobbed like broken buoys in the waves.

"It's time to clean house."

Daren chuckled coldly. His sharp eyes locked onto a staggering figure struggling to stand among the wreckage of a pirate ship.

He raised his right hand.

Fingers spread wide.

At that signal, over ten thousand elite Marines across the ten warships jolted to attention, standing tall as they drew their blades.

The Vice Admiral clenched his fist—

A command to attack!

"All troops... advance!!"

The moment the words rang out, war drums thundered across the sea!

The covers over the warships dropped away. Towering white sails rose all at once.

The bold black kanji for "Justice" unfurled across the ten vessels lined side by side, radiating a chilling and righteous intensity!

"Charge!!!"

Sengoku, unable to hold back any longer, drew the sword at his waist and leapt to the bow, eyes blazing red as he roared—

"For Justice!!"

The killing intent surged skyward.