

One Piece 561

Chapter 561 - 561: Volume 4 – Chapter 80: Listen Carefully, No One Is Allowed to Interfere!

Conqueror's Haki +1.04!

Conqueror's Haki: 76.889!

It moved!

It finally moved!

Feeling the surge in his spirit, Daren burst out laughing uncontrollably, his eyes flashing with wild, burning light.

Ever since Kaidou-sensei had "instructed" him back in Wano, his strength had been locked in a dead halt.

He still clearly remembered that after his fierce battle with Bullet, he had thoroughly assessed the state of his body.

At that time, his "stats" were roughly as follows:

Physique: 92.112 (Indestructible Body)

Strength: 83.291 (Giant's Strength)

Speed: 83.833 (Soru's Godspeed)

Devil Fruit Ability Development: 85.894 (Island-Wide Coverage)

Armament Haki: 72.715 (Internal Destruction, Devil Form)

Observation Haki: 75.121 (Magnetic Field Induction)

Conqueror's Haki: 75.577

Daren remembered that even after that intense battle with Bullet, his attributes had barely changed, especially his physique, which had only improved by less than 0.2 points.

Since then, even facing the likes of Gecko Moria or Mihawk hadn't brought any noticeable growth!

In the end, their strength simply wasn't enough to put real pressure on him!

But now...

Facing Gol D. Roger, the future Pirate King and one of the mightiest pirates alive, a single clash had completely shattered the shackles on his Conqueror's Haki, granting him a massive 1.04 boost!

With progress this visible, how could Daren care about the injuries littering his body?

It was so worth it!

This was a 1.04 increase!

It might seem minor, but if it were someone weak like Gecko Moria, Daren didn't even know how many times he'd have to crush him with Conqueror's Haki to achieve the same growth!

More importantly, after just one clash, Daren could clearly feel an unprecedented focus and sharpness in himself, likely driven by the tremendous pressure Roger had exerted.

His will, body, and combat instincts... were gradually merging and sublimating. His Observation Haki, too, had risen thanks to this perfect unity of spirit and flesh.

Observation Haki +0.86!

This was the first improvement in his Observation Haki since his "lesson" with Charlotte Katakuri had ended!

"Yes! This is it!!"

Blood poured from his arms onto the ground. Daren wiped the blood off the corner of his mouth with a hand, laughing wildly.

His black hair danced, and his bloodstained white cloak billowed madly behind him.

An even more violent aura, fused with his Armament Haki, erupted and turned into a dark red storm visible to the naked eye, cracking the ground and nearby buildings under its oppressive weight.

The Marine Vice Admiral threw his arms wide and laughed maniacally, his hands slowly clenching into fists. Red lightning crackled around his fingers and forearms, popping and hissing with violent energy.

"As expected, it's only fun when I fight a true monster like you... Roger!!"

Seeing Daren laughing like a madman, everyone in Roger's crew was visibly shaken, eyes wide, mouths agape.

"He's insane, completely insane..."

"Doesn't he feel pain?"

"He's clearly seriously injured..."

"This monster..."

Buggy and Shanks, especially, were shivering all over.

Faced with the overwhelming madness and demonic pressure pouring from the Marine Vice Admiral, cold sweat drenched their foreheads, and their lips turned pale, the terror from their first meeting flashing vividly back into their minds.

Rayleigh and Gaban, meanwhile, wore grim expressions. They exchanged glances, and in each other's eyes, they saw the same deep gravity.

Because they had clearly realized...

Despite his serious injuries, the Marine brat's aura wasn't weakening—it was growing even stronger!

He was rapidly adapting to the pressure of fighting Roger.

And now, with his willpower condensed to an extreme, his Armament Haki had begun to manifest red lightning—a phenomenon that only appeared when one reached a supreme level of mastery over their own Haki!

"This is trouble..."

Rayleigh pressed his lips into a thin line and instinctively narrowed his eyes.

"Wahahaha!! You've got some real skill, kid!"

Roger, however, seemed completely unconcerned by Daren's transformation—or maybe he noticed and just didn't care.

Holding the Supreme Grade blade "Ace," wreathed in black and red lightning, he looked at Daren with a gaze full of admiration and approval, laughing heartily.

"It's been a long time since I've felt like this..."

He suddenly turned his head and shouted toward Rayleigh and the others,

"Listen up—no one is allowed to interfere!"

Without even waiting for a reply, Roger turned back to Daren, battle spirit blazing in his eyes, and said loudly,

"Daren, you little brat, let's have a real, no-holds-barred fight!"

Daren took a step forward, palms pressing into the cracked ground, his body leaning forward like a restless beast. His eyes gleamed crimson like lightning as he grinned.

"Wouldn't have it any other way!"

Boom!

With explosive force from all four limbs, the ground under his feet shattered as he shot forward like a wild beast unleashed.

"Wahahahaha!!!"

Roger roared with laughter and rushed to meet him, sword in one hand!

The two charged at each other once more—and collided with a thunderous crash!

...

At the same time.

Marine Headquarters, Marineford.

Admiral's Office.

Sengoku was in an excellent mood, preparing to enjoy a pleasant afternoon tea.

On the tea table, a pot of steaming hot tea was ready, and next to it, a porcelain plate held a pile of freshly baked, fragrant senbei crackers, filling the office with their rich aroma.

Recently, the Marines' development had been impressive. Led by Daren and the other monstrous youths of the "Golden Generation," new blood had steadily taken up important posts, becoming the backbone of the organization. Both morale and combat strength had seen a substantial leap.

In the past, with so few capable officers, Sengoku had been forced to personally oversee everything. After all, commanding Garp was practically impossible.

But now, with strong, reliable forces at his command—and after repeatedly suppressing the Great Pirates of the New World—Daren had even taken down Shiki, achieving the greatest feat since the Battle of God Valley!

Naturally, Sengoku's own star had risen... A promotion to Fleet Admiral was only a matter of time.

Though there had been the incident with Shichibukai candidates being hunted down, Sengoku, while outwardly complying with the government's strict orders to investigate, inwardly didn't take it too seriously.

Those candidates were pirates, after all. If they died, they died. Why waste concern?

Besides, if they were killed, didn't it just prove they were too weak to fulfill the role of Shichibukai?

Of course, government orders still had to be carried out.

When faced with that thorny issue, the first person Sengoku thought of was Daren.

Resourceful, powerful, and sharp enough to handle any problem... Daren was the perfect choice.

And Daren hadn't let him down.

Ever since Daren took action, there hadn't been a single similar incident.

"Everything's going smoothly. We'll have to speed up the process of promoting that kid Daren to Admiral candidate..."

Sengoku mused cheerfully as he sat on the sofa, pouring himself a cup of tea.

Bang!

Suddenly, the door to the office burst open.

A messenger stumbled inside, panic written all over his face.

"Admiral Sengoku, something terrible has happened!"

Sengoku shot him a disgruntled look and said calmly, trying to project authority,

"Calm down. With me here, there's no problem that can't be handled."

The messenger took a deep breath and forced himself to steady, though his voice still trembled,

"Vice Admiral Daren is locked in a fierce battle with pirates on Fish-Man Island!"

"Hm?"

Sengoku raised an eyebrow, a little puzzled, but still picked up his teacup with composure, smiling slightly.

"And what's the issue?"

"Fish-Man Island may be politically sensitive, but I trust that kid Daren can handle it."

"They're just pirates..."

He took a leisurely sip of his hot tea.

"It's Roger's pirate crew!"

Pffft!!

Sengoku sprayed tea everywhere, jolting to his feet as he stared wide-eyed at the messenger.

"What!?"

Chapter 562 - 562: Volume 4 – Chapter 81: Pull Up Your Pants, Don't Let Them Fall Again

"What did you say!?"

Sengoku's face twisted in shock. He couldn't believe his ears.

How did that brat Daren end up on Fish-Man Island?

No, that wasn't even the main point.

The real question was, why was he fighting Roger there!?

With his current strength, how could he possibly be a match for Roger!?

Sengoku's mind spun wildly. He didn't even bother wiping the tea from his mouth as his expression shifted back and forth.

He knew better than anyone just how powerful Roger was.

Even if he teamed up with Garp, he couldn't guarantee victory.

Especially at their level—true top-tier forces—there was rarely much difference in power. Unless some special ability suppression or an environmental advantage was involved, it was almost impossible to determine a winner quickly.

In the past, when Garp had managed to corner Roger's crew, it was mostly thanks to overwhelming Marine firepower.

Daren may have firmly stepped into Admiral-level strength now,

but against a "legendary" and "dominant" figure like Roger...

he still had a gap to bridge.

"No..."

Sengoku suddenly took a deep breath, forcing himself to calm down, and muttered to himself,

"If it's just Roger alone, even if Daren can't win, he should at least be able to retreat easily... With that monster-like physique of his, Roger wouldn't be able to kill him quickly."

"Yeah... that should be right..."

At that moment, the messenger swallowed nervously and added,

"According to intel... the entire Roger Pirates are on Fish-Man Island."

Sengoku: ...

"Why didn't you say that earlier!?"

His eyes bulged with rage as he grabbed the messenger by the collar, spraying spit everywhere.

The poor messenger looked like he was about to cry.

Wasn't it you who just said, "Stay calm, old man's here, nothing's unsolvable" ...?

He trembled and said,

"They've already started fighting. The exact situation is still unclear..."

Sengoku grunted, letting him go, and strode toward his desk with a dark look, snatching up the military Den Den Mushi and shoving it into the messenger's hands.

"Get me Garp! Now!"

The messenger hesitated and whispered,

"But Admiral Sengoku, Vice Admiral Garp is... on vacation?"

Sengoku's anger surged again. He slammed the desk and roared,

"I don't care if he's on vacation or not!!"

The messenger shivered and hurriedly dialed.

After a few rings—the call connected.

"Bwahahaha! Sengoku, you have time to call me for a chat?"

Garp's loud voice came through the Den Den Mushi.

"Oh, and by the way, I didn't steal the senbei from your office!"

No wonder the whole box of senbei had mysteriously been reduced to half!

Sengoku ground his molars furiously, but now wasn't the time to settle scores.

He said in a deep voice,

"Garp, your vacation's over."

"Daren's locked in a fierce battle with pirates on Fish-Man Island. You're vacationing nearby, right? Head over immediately and back him up!"

On the other end, lying lazily on a beach chair under the sun, Garp laughed casually,

"Daren's plenty strong now. No need for me to butt in. I finally got a few days off..."

"His opponent is Roger."

There was a brief moment of silence on the Den Den Mushi.

Then came the sound of a beach chair flipping over and a glass shattering.

"You tell that brat Daren to hang on! I'm already on my way!!"

Garp's panicked roar echoed through the line.

Sengoku: ...

...

Near the entrance to Fish-Man Island.

The area within a thousand meters had already been reduced to rubble and scorched earth.

Powerful shockwaves, mixed with black and red lightning, burst densely in the air, radiating outward.

Everyone, including Roger's pirate crew, had retreated to a distance, watching in horror as the two figures clashed amidst the ruins, their hearts filled with overwhelming shock.

Black-red sword beams, thunder-wrapped fists—the two were completely consumed by battle rage.

Each collision was like meteors colliding, erupting with earth-shattering force.

Above Fish-Man Island, the sea of clouds was blasted apart and gathered again,

and even the massive bubble membrane enveloping the island showed visible ripples under the impact of the hellish storm, making Neptune and the other Fish-Men tremble with fear.

"Wahahaha!! This is awesome! Besides Garp and Newgate, I didn't think there'd be anyone else who could fight me like this!"

In midair, Roger laughed heartily, his eyes glowing red.

His eyes and nose were swollen and purple, blood trickling from the corner of his mouth.

But he didn't care at all, completely lost in the thrill of battle.

As he spoke, he slashed out with a sword wrapped in Haki, fast as lightning.

The blood-red blade cleaved the charging Vice Admiral straight from midair into the ground, sending a towering cloud of dust skyward.

A second later, a blood-soaked figure shot out of the smoky crater.

At this point, Daren was covered in countless slash wounds, blood gushing out, his body looking like it had been dragged through a vat of dye.

But the madness in his eyes only grew stronger, and the grin at the corner of his mouth couldn't be suppressed.

He could even hear it—the sound of his body growing stronger with every impact!

Conqueror's Haki +0.76!

Conqueror's Haki +0.89!

Conqueror's Haki +0.87!

Conqueror's Haki +0.92!

...

The strength of his Conqueror's Haki was climbing at an unprecedented speed!

At this rate, he would soon break through the 80-point threshold!

And based on past experience, any stat that broke through 80 points would unlock a new "entry" bonus—something Daren was eagerly anticipating.

"Don't back out now, Roger! You promised a one-on-one fight!"

Daren grinned fiercely, his hands forming into three-fingered dragon claws in midair, the ferocity of his Armament Haki erupting into red lightning as he thrust toward Roger's throat.

"Pull up your pants, don't let them fall again!"

"Ryusoken!"

Roger swept his longsword upward, blocking the strike head-on. Sparks flew violently as he laughed loudly:

"Wahahaha, don't worry!"

"This fight is just between the two of us!"

"And this time, I switched to a plastic belt buckle!"

The two clashed and instantly separated, feet pounding the ground as they charged at each other once more.

The skies darkened.

In the distance, Rayleigh, Gaban, and the others heard Roger's words and couldn't help twitching the corners of their mouths, their faces full of black lines.

Only their idiot of a captain would fall for such an obvious taunt!

"Captain Rayleigh! Shouldn't we go together? Let's kill that Marine here!"

At that moment, Buggy ran over, his face red with anxiety.

He was terrified.

How long had it been?

That terrifying Marine had already grown strong enough to fight Captain Roger head-on.

Although he was being suppressed, even Roger would need quite some time to defeat him in his devil form.

If they couldn't kill him now and let him escape...

Buggy shivered all over.

He hadn't forgotten—that Marine wanted to kill both him and Shanks!

Chapter 563 - 563: Volume 4 – Chapter 82: Real Impact!

When Buggy thought about how he and Shanks... well, mainly himself... had almost been killed by that sinister Marine, his teeth itched with anger and cold sweat poured down his back.

Other Marines always targeted their captains. What did the Roger Pirates have to do with him, Buggy?

Look at Garp — for ten years, he only went after Roger, never bothering the rest of the crew. The rest of them could just stand aside and watch the show.

But that insidious Marine, after failing to beat Roger, actually had the nerve to go after him and Shanks, two mere apprentices!

What kind of Marine does that!?

Even pirates have to follow some kind of code!

And now, finally, a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity had arrived — to kill that Marine once and for all!

Fish-Man Island was isolated, buried 10,000 meters beneath the deep sea. Even if that Marine had rare flight abilities, so what?

He was still a Devil Fruit user — cursed by the sea, with no real way to escape this place.

As long as all the Roger Pirates charged together, they could absolutely kill him before Marine reinforcements arrived.

However, when Buggy shouted, the others in the crew remained unmoved, looking at him like, "You want to go? Go ahead."

Buggy: ...

Rayleigh smiled bitterly, patted Buggy's shoulder, but said nothing.

Roger was completely lost in the fight now, blood boiling — nobody could stop him.

Those who were weak would be crushed just trying to survive between those two monsters,

and those strong enough to interfere knew better than to get involved.

Rayleigh and the others understood Roger's personality too well — once he got serious, nothing and no one could pull him back.

Even if they tried to help, Roger himself would be the first to object.

Exchanging a glance, Rayleigh and Gaban could only sigh helplessly.

This battle wouldn't be decided easily.

Although Roger, with his strength at the very peak of the seas, could suppress Daren, the Marine brat's physique was simply too monstrous.

He had trained an "Indestructible Body," which could reduce most of the damage even from Armament Haki's Internal Destruction attacks, not to mention the added defense of his "Devil Form."

With the combination and amplification of both, that Marine brat's raw physical toughness might already surpass Big Mom's "iron balloon" body — and maybe even Kaidou's.

The only area where he might fall slightly short compared to Kaidou was in recovery ability.

After all, Kaidou, the "strongest creature on land, sea, and air," was a Zoan-type user with monstrous durability and regeneration, whereas Daren was a Paramecia-type.

Even so, it would be nearly impossible for Roger to finish Daren quickly.

Wait!

Rayleigh suddenly realized something...

Why was Daren here on Fish-Man Island?

And with his past behavior — so cunning, so decisive, so cautious — how could he dare to attack the Roger Pirates alone?

Rayleigh's brow furrowed deeply.

A heavy sense of unease welled up inside him.

Fish-Man Island sat at the throat of the New World, 10,000 meters under the Red Line.

Surrounded by the crushing depths, it was paradise for Fish-Men, but a deathtrap for humans.

Buggy's words weren't wrong.

Fish-Man Island was indeed a perfect place... to trap an enemy.

But that enemy didn't have to be Daren.

It could just as easily be them — the Roger Pirates.

Rayleigh's eyes widened, his heart pounding.

Fish-Man Island wasn't far from Marine G1 Branch or even Marine Headquarters.

Reinforcements could reach them within a few hours.

And with Daren's deep scheming... who knew how many forces he had already stationed nearby?

What if —instead of them killing Daren, it was Daren who was stalling them?

By then, once the main Marine forces arrived and locked down Fish-Man Island, Roger's crew would have no way out!

Rayleigh narrowed his eyes, staring at the Vice Admiral who was repeatedly cut down by Roger yet kept laughing maniacally, charging forward again and again.

The feeling of unease in his chest grew heavier by the second.

This had to be it...

That brat was deliberately using Roger's combative nature against him, dragging him into a one-on-one fight, even willing to suffer heavy injuries just to buy time!

He was waiting for reinforcements from Marine Headquarters!

Otherwise, why would he grin so wildly, the more injured he became?

If he just wanted a good fight, why not go after someone else?

Whitebeard, Kaidou, Big Mom... all were excellent targets.

Why pick them — Roger's Pirates?

It had to be that!

Damn it!

They had almost fallen right into his trap!

The more Rayleigh thought about it, the more wrong it felt — his palms were already starting to sweat.

"Everyone, get ready. We're retreating."

Rayleigh suddenly spoke in a cold, sharp tone.

As soon as the words left his mouth...

"I'll go prepare the ship," Gaban said, his expression tightening. He immediately understood Rayleigh's intention.

Without the slightest hesitation, he turned and sprinted toward the inner harbor of Fish-Man Island, disappearing from sight after a few quick steps.

They had gotten the information they needed — there was no reason to stay any longer.

Seeing Rayleigh and Gaban's reaction, the others quickly caught on and began packing up without a second thought.

Only Buggy stood there, confused, anxiously blurting out,

"Retreat? But we clearly have the advantage!"

Shanks grabbed Buggy's red nose, gritting his teeth in frustration.

"Wake up! Why do you think Daren's attacking us so recklessly? The Marine Headquarters fleet might already be on its way!"

Buggy froze for a second, then immediately took off running after Gaban, his legs spinning like windmill blades.

"Gaban-san, wait for me!"

Everyone: ...

Just as the Roger Pirates were feeling restless, a sudden, overwhelming aura surged from the distance, causing the ground to tremble beneath their feet!

What is that...

Rayleigh and the others all turned their heads in disbelief.

On the torn and barren ground...

The blood-soaked Vice Admiral of the Marines slowly rose from a massive crater, blood streaming from his arms.

The blood covering his face made his already fierce and handsome features look even more savage.

An uncontrollable wave of aura erupted from his body, and faint strands of black and red lightning seemed to flicker and crackle through the air.

Crack!

Crack!

Under the horrified gazes of the countless soldiers of Ryugu Castle—

Cracks began to spread inch by inch across the ground, the walls of nearby buildings, and the surfaces of coral reefs, creeping outward as the earth itself seemed to groan under the sheer pressure.

"His Conqueror's Haki... it's affecting matter!"

Shanks swallowed hard, his face turning pale, and muttered under his breath.

Conqueror's Haki: 80.715 (Affects Matter)!

Chapter 564 - 564: Volume 4 – Chapter 83: So Garp is Coming?

Shanks could hardly believe his eyes.

In the distance, the entire environment and sky had changed dramatically.

A dark red cyclone, clearly visible to the naked eye, turned into rippling waves of air, constantly erupting from the Marine's body. The surrounding buildings and ground cracked under the pressure.

Debris bounced across the ground, and many of Fish-Man Island's fountains and inland rivers were churned up by the violent blasts.

This was... Conqueror's Haki so powerful that it physically affected the world around it!

The shocking scene was deeply imprinted on young Shanks' heart.

Staring at that terrifying figure, like a demon god, a crazy thought suddenly flashed through his mind:

"Can I... really grow to be that strong?"

Nearby, Kozuki Oden, who was still receiving treatment, sat there with a horrified expression, his gaze gradually turning blank.

A deep, crushing sense of helplessness rose in his heart.

The feeling of defeat flowed from his clenched fists and the blood dripping from where his nails had pierced his skin.

That guy... he's gotten even stronger.

But me...

He looked down at his only remaining arm, his vision dyed red by the blood dripping from it.

Can I... really defeat him again?

The faint light of hope seemed to vanish in an instant.

Rayleigh and the others widened their eyes, their faces changing dramatically.

"Advanced Conqueror's Haki!"

There was no mistake!

With their experience, they could tell at a glance—the Marine brat's Conqueror's Haki had reached the level of Advanced Conqueror's Haki!

Just by raising his aura, he could fully unleash his Haki, essentially keeping it active at all times.

The clearest sign of Advanced Conqueror's Haki was its ability to physically affect the surroundings, even shaking ships... Just brushing past it could knock seasoned warriors to the ground.

"How is this possible... He's getting stronger the more he fights?"

Crocus was so shocked he unconsciously adjusted his glasses.

As the ship's doctor aboard Roger's pirate crew, being personally invited by Roger and Rayleigh spoke volumes about his medical skills and insight—the best across the seas.

With his keen eyes, Crocus could easily tell that Daren's physical condition was terrible... Those kinds of brutal injuries would have killed an ordinary person long ago.

Yet this monster was still jumping around as if nothing happened... That alone would've been understandable!

After all, he had a physique comparable to the "strongest creature on land, sea, and air."

But getting stronger mid-battle... that was just absurd!

"He's adapting to the pressure Roger is putting on him..."

Crocus said in a low, grave voice, an indescribable fear hidden in his tone.

At his words, the rest of Roger's crew stiffened, their pupils contracting and a chill running down their spines.

Because they understood exactly what he meant.

It's an instinct for living beings to become stronger.

At its core, it's about "adapting" to external pressure.

For example, creatures living long-term in extreme cold evolve stronger resistance and store more fat to survive.

In hot environments, creatures develop more sweat glands to release excess heat.

Human evolution is no different—it's the process of continuously adapting to external pressure.

This is also the fundamental principle behind training and growth.

Constantly applying proper external pressure helps the body adapt and grow stronger—

Like gradually increasing weights when training strength, or extending exercise duration when training endurance, or increasing impact force when toughening the body...

As for determining whether the pressure applied is "appropriate"?

That's the difference between a great teacher and a mediocre one.

A great teacher knows how to apply just the right amount of pressure.

A bad one either goes too soft or too hard, leading to failure or even death.

So then, was Roger some kind of legendary "great teacher"?

Hell no!

It was just that the Marine brat was using his monstrous physique to survive the insane pressure Roger was throwing at him!

That's the benefit of an incredibly tough body.

If he were weak, a single blow or slash would've ended him—how would he have "adapted" to anything?

"So... if they keep fighting, that Marine will keep getting stronger... maybe even..."

Fish-Man Sunbell said, his voice a little stiff.

He hadn't even realized that the hand gripping his trident was starting to tremble slightly.

The others were also shaken, falling silent in an instant.

Sunbell didn't finish his sentence, but they all understood what he meant.

That Marine—even if not today—would one day grow strong enough to stand alongside their captain!

"We can't let them keep fighting..."

Rayleigh thought grimly as he watched the Vice Admiral roar again, fighting more fiercely with every injury.

...

"Wahahaha! Your aura has grown stronger! This is exhilarating!"

Feeling Daren's ever-rising aura, Roger laughed joyfully instead of being alarmed, the fighting spirit in his eyes growing more intense, like a raging flame, constantly rising.

Daren's figure was like a blood-stained black beast, suddenly appearing above Roger, his three-fingered dragon claws tearing through the air with a shrill sound, and he laughed fiercely as he plunged down!

"This is all thanks to you!"

Boom!

The dragon claws and the long sword collided heavily, exploding into an earth-shattering shockwave.

Just as the two were locked in a stalemate, Roger's expression suddenly changed.

A figure with golden hair swooped down parallel to the ground and rushed forward, appearing behind the Vice Admiral of the Marines in the blink of an eye and slashing down with a sword!

Ssshh!

Caught off guard, Daren's back was torn open, exposing the bone, and blood spurted out profusely.

His face turned pale, and he fell from midair to the ground, exploding into a huge crater!

"Rayleigh, what are you doing!?" Roger shouted angrily.

"Roger, shut up! Can't you see? That kid is using you to practice!" Rayleigh said through gritted teeth.

"So what! I'm having fun fighting!" Roger didn't back down.

Hearing this, Rayleigh was so angry that he almost gritted his teeth to pieces.

This idiot!

"Anyway, we have to go! We've got the information, and the Marines could arrive at any moment!" Rayleigh said urgently.

"The Marines!?" Roger frowned.

Seeing his reaction, Rayleigh finally breathed a sigh of relief. It seemed that this guy still had some brains after all.

"So Garp is coming?"

Roger seemed to have thought of something, and his eyes lit up, eager to try.

Rayleigh's vision went black: ...

The Roger Pirates: ...

Buzz...

At that moment, a low voice suddenly came from the inner harbor of Fish-Man Island in the distance.

"Let's go!"

Rayleigh's eyes narrowed, and he unceremoniously wrapped his arm around Roger's neck, grabbed his collar, and rushed toward the direction of the voice.

It was Gaban's signal that everything was ready and they could set sail at any moment.

The rest of Roger's pirate crew also took off running.

They were all well-versed in running away from the Marines.

Chapter 565 - 565: Volume 4 – Chapter 84: The Sword in the Sky Above Fish-Man Island

The Roger Pirates fled quickly, showing that this wasn't their first time making such a hasty escape.

In the blink of an eye, the Oro Jackson had already raised its sails and sped out of the inner sea of Fish-Man Island.

Along the way, the Roger Pirates' crew jumped onto the deck, greeting each other with loud laughter.

"Everyone! We're setting sail again!"

Roger grinned, rubbing the bruises and wounds on his face, and waved his Meito sword with a loud laugh.

"Roar!"

Everyone cheered in unison, immersed in joy.

"You think you can escape like this? Are you being too optimistic?"

Just then, a cold, hoarse voice came from far behind them, causing the smiles on their faces to freeze.

"Speed up!"

Rayleigh's expression changed slightly, urging the helmsman to increase speed.

Everyone turned their heads toward the voice, their expressions suddenly becoming serious. Some couldn't help but cry out in surprise.

"How can he still stand?"

All they could see was a tall, straight figure swaying in the thick smoke.

In the desolate and mottled ruins, a tall and straight figure stood up unsteadily in the thick smoke.

His body was covered in blood and crisscrossing scars, looking like a devil from hell.

The black aura representing the Devil Form gradually faded from his body, revealing a Vice Admiral of the Marines, who was panting heavily.

"That really hurt... You really are 'Dark King' Rayleigh."

A burning pain pierced Daren's back, causing him to frown and turn even paler.

Rayleigh's strength had long since reached the Yonkō level, almost on par with Roger.

Such a sneak attack, and at a moment when he and Roger were locked in a bloody battle, was completely unforeseeable.

If it weren't for his "Indestructible Body" and his devil form, that single slash wrapped in Conqueror's Haki would have easily cut him in two.

With this thought in mind, Daren raised his eyes and glanced casually at Roger's pirate crew as they sailed away. Suddenly, he curled his lips and revealed his bloodstained white teeth... a ferocious smile!

"Damn it... Fire! Fire the cannons!"

Seeing Daren's vicious glare, the Roger Pirates on the deck felt their hearts race, and for some reason, a bone-chilling coldness crept into their hearts. Buggy turned pale and couldn't help but let out a scream.

That murderous gaze was like being stared at by a ghost, sending shivers down their spines!

At that moment, every one of them remembered one thing.

"King of the North Blue" Rogers Daren... was a guy who never forgave anyone!

The Oro Jackson was suddenly filled with the sound of cannons, and one after another, black cannonballs whistled through the air, falling like a rainstorm on the Vice Admiral.

Boom!

The cannonballs exploded one after another on the Vice Admiral's body and around him, and the ground was suddenly filled with raging flames and rolling black smoke.

Amidst the swaying sea of fire and black smoke, the demonic figure remained motionless.

With their view blocked, the members of Roger's pirate crew could only vaguely see the distorted figure slowly make a move.

He raised his right hand.

Rayleigh's pupils contracted as if he had thought of something. His eyes were bloodshot, and he subconsciously grabbed the hilt of the sword at his waist and shouted coldly,

"His slash is coming!"

When he finished speaking, the Roger Pirates were taken aback.

A slash?

What slash?

Wait... It couldn't be...

Their expressions immediately changed.

Kozuki Oden, who was seriously injured and unable to move, could only be carried onto the deck, his eyes bloodshot.

"Go, Oto."

A cold voice came from the raging flames.

Whoosh!

In the next moment, it was as if cherry blossoms were flying through the air, like a dream.

The sea of flames was cut open, the thick smoke was cut open, the air was cut open, the earth and all obstacles such as buildings in the flight path were cut in an instant.

Everything was cut!

Dragging the electromagnetic propulsion force wave, the Meito sword crossed a distance of thousands of meters in an instant with unstoppable speed.

"Let me do it!"

A dashing figure suddenly appeared at the bow of the ship, with black hair tied into a handsome high ponytail and a headscarf wrapped around his head.

He held a pair of cold, gleaming battle axes in each hand, crossed them, and charged head-on at the Meito with a fierce expression!

Boom!

A dull roar echoed, and Gaban's entire body was thrown back as if he had been hit head-on by a Buster Call warship traveling at full speed. His eyelids fluttered wildly as his body slid back a full ten meters.

The powerful impact spread out, and everyone felt the ship rock violently beneath their feet, making it difficult to stand.

At that moment, they finally saw what Gaban was blocking!

A sword!

It was the legendary Great Pirate, Shiki the Golden Lion's sword!

Shanks and Buggy both gasped in unison.

That Marine was clearly too badly injured to move, yet he still possessed such terrifying offensive capabilities!

A drop of cold sweat slid down Gaban's forehead. He pursed his lips uneasily, feeling his hands go numb.

"He's the third-ranked member of Roger's pirate crew, after all..."

Before the others had time to rejoice, that ghostly voice rang out again.

"Then, what about the second sword?"

Swish!

The fierce sword light tore through the air again, and everything in its path seemed to be severed and withered!

One of Shiki's Meito swords... Kogarashi!

"Damn it!"

Rayleigh cursed under his breath and drew his sword to meet it.

This Marine brat was just too troublesome.

His attacks were complex and varied, and his physique was nearly indestructible... He couldn't imagine anyone on this sea who could take him down one-on-one.

But he had no choice but to act.

Anyone could see it—the insidious Marine brat wasn't aiming for the people on their ship, but for the Oro Jackson itself!

The silver-white long sword clanged as it left its sheath, trailing black and red lightning, and struck the speeding sword light with pinpoint precision.

Clang!

Sparks exploded as Kogarashi was knocked flying by Rayleigh's sword.

Landing with a slight gasp, Rayleigh gritted his teeth and urged,

"Use that. Don't drag this out!"

Everyone froze.

It was the first time they'd ever seen the normally calm and composed First Mate Rayleigh look so tense and uneasy.

But the next second, they understood why.

At some unknown point, a heavy, cold, suffocating killing intent had engulfed them all.

The very air around them seemed to freeze and stop flowing.

Roger's pirate crew instinctively froze in place, their faces draining of color as if their blood had been sucked away.

"Hey, hey, hey... it can't be..."

Shanks swallowed hard, his face pale, stiffly raising his head.

"This lunatic! We're all gonna die here!"

Buggy grabbed his head in panic, screaming in terror.

One after another, the rest of Roger's crew noticed it too.

Their expressions turned to horror as they slowly looked up—only to feel as if they had plunged into a frozen abyss.

Reflected in their tightly contracted pupils—a colossal, pitch-black sword with flickering purple flame patterns hovered high above Fish-Man Island.

The tip of the sword pointed straight at them.

It was like the legendary Damocles' sword, symbolizing judgment and the boundary between life and death.

"Shoot them..."

Kozuki Oden's face turned ashen in an instant.

"...Enma."

Chapter 566 - 566: Volume 4 – Chapter 85: My Sword...

At that moment, the entire Fish-Man Island fell into a dead silence.

The sea of clouds suddenly parted.

A black cursed sword hung high in the sky, its diameter as large as a mid-sized ship, its length stretching endlessly into the heavens.

The sharp, menacing tip pointed straight down, aimed directly at the Oro Jackson.

Even though it hovered motionless in the sky, a boundless sense of dread radiated from it, casting an overwhelming terror over everyone below.

"This... this..."

Neptune, King of Ryugu Castle, raised his head in horror, staring at the unbelievable sight, his heart seemingly stopping.

And it wasn't just him.

Across the entire Fish-Man Island, millions of Fish-Men were plunged into unimaginable panic.

They recognized it...

Everyone recognized it!

It was the cursed blade that had once pierced through Shiki's floating island at Marineford, the Marine Headquarters!

"It's over..."

Neptune swallowed hard, fear gripping him as his hands trembled uncontrollably around the golden trident.

What if... What if this cursed sword really struck down...

A terrifying image flashed through his mind.

The entire Fish-Man Island would be pierced straight through!

The protective bubble membrane would shatter, seawater would flood in... and it would be a massacre!

"Shoot them, Enma."

A cold, emotionless voice, like a divine pronouncement of final judgment, echoed down.

Sizzle, sizzle...

Streams of blue arcs of electricity, visible to the naked eye, coiled and danced along Enma's massive blade.

A heavy rumble sounded, and the cursed sword, propelled by a violent, almost boiling magnetic field, hurtled toward the Oro Jackson at an astonishing speed...

It fell madly!

At such a terrifying velocity, friction with the air ignited a bright red glow, quickly flaring into visible blazing flames.

A sword strike like a blow from the gods!

A sword strike that brought absolute despair!

"Wahahahaha! Daren, you actually managed to unleash such a powerful move!"

At that moment, a hearty, unrestrained laugh rang out from the Oro Jackson.

Boom!

A surging crimson storm burst forth from that figure, with streams of black and red Raitei intertwining and spreading, forming a web that blotted out the sky.

Amid the fierce Haki storm, a crimson figure leaped from the deck like a ghostly god.

His burning, focused gaze locked onto the giant sword falling from the sky, his face filled with unyielding resolve and determination!

Gripping a long sword surging with black and red lightning in both hands, he bit down hard, laughing boldly as he slashed upward!

Compared to the descending Enma, Roger's figure seemed pitifully small, like a moth rushing into flames from afar.

Yet in the eyes of everyone, the brilliant, overwhelming force bursting from Roger at that moment seemed to overshadow even that colossal blade of judgment, dazzling them all!

In the next instant, Roger, sword in hand, collided head-on with the black giant sword.

Boom!

A massive shockwave exploded outward in rippling waves, sweeping across every corner of Fish-Man Island, sending sand and debris flying.

Everyone was thrown to the ground, their faces frozen in terror.

The momentum of Enma's fall suddenly stalled.

"I've got it!"

Roger gripped his sword with both hands and laughed loudly.

But in the next instant, his expression froze.

"No, I didn't hold it!"

An overwhelming force, far beyond what a human could resist, surged from Enma's massive blade, like a crashing tidal wave, slamming into Roger's small figure and forcing him backward.

However, Roger's interception caused Enma's trajectory to shift slightly, and its force weakened by more than half.

The cursed sword, which would have pierced straight through the Oro Jackson, instead scraped past the ship's hull, tearing huge chunks of wood and decking apart. The coating shook violently, on the verge of shattering, leaving the Roger Pirates in horror.

"Now!"

Rayleigh roared, his eyes bloodshot.

"It's coming!"

Gaban shouted.

Everyone immediately grabbed hold of whatever they could on the deck, clinging tightly.

A massive cannon barrel extended from the stern... Blinding white light gathered and surged.

A rope suddenly flew high across the deck, neatly looping around Roger's neck and tightening before he could react!

Boom!

The air cannon fired, launching the Oro Jackson upward at high speed. The ship blasted through the shattered gate of Fish-Man Island and plunged into the deep sea beyond.

At the same time, Enma's giant blade crashed into the ground behind them, causing another earth-shattering tremor, with dust and debris billowing out.

...

Deep sea.

The stunningly beautiful Fish-Man Island quickly shrank into the distance behind them, while before them stretched a dark and endless abyss.

The ship gradually stabilized as it sailed deeper into the sea.

"Wahahahaha! We made it again!"

Roger dropped onto the deck, tore the rope from his neck, and laughed heartily.

The rush of dancing between life and death filled him with excitement, reminding him vividly that he was still alive!

The others were gasping for breath, sprawling on the deck with no care for appearance, looking every bit like survivors of a disaster.

It had been too close...

Thinking back to the terrifying sword strike earlier, a shadow of helplessness and dread crossed their faces again.

If Captain Roger hadn't stepped in at the critical moment to deflect that cursed sword, the Oro Jackson would have been shattered instantly.

Without their ship, they would have been stranded on Fish-Man Island.

And when the Marines arrived, there would have been no escape.

"I never want to meet that Marine again... He's even scarier than Garp!"

Buggy crouched on the deck, clutching his head with trembling hands, his whole body shaking, terror written all over his face.

Facing other enemies was one thing, but against that Marine... every attack was meant to kill!

There was no holding back at all!

Next to him, Shanks pressed his cracked lips tightly together, remaining silent.

"Oden, what's wrong?"

Rayleigh suddenly sensed something amiss and turned to look at Kozuki Oden.

Everyone froze.

They saw Kozuki Oden, gravely injured, slumped on the deck, his face deathly pale and his eyes filled with anguish.

His fists were clenched tightly.

"My sword... Ame no Habakiri..."

Everyone was stunned.

They saw it clearly—Oden's sword sheath was empty.

Could it have been lost in the chaos just now...

But before they could offer any words of comfort, Roger, Rayleigh, and Gaban's expressions shifted sharply, a glint of scarlet flashing deep in their pupils.

They turned simultaneously.

In the deep sea ahead on the left, a beam of intense searchlight suddenly pierced the darkness.

Moments later, a coated dog-headed warship broke through the swirling currents and shadows with a fierce momentum.

Standing proudly on the warship's bow, arms crossed, cape fluttering, was a towering figure radiating a deep, ferocious aura.

"Bwahahaha! Roger! I finally caught you!"

The hero of the Marines... "Iron Fist" Garp!

Chapter 567 - 567: Volume 4 – Chapter 86: You Are Our Benefactor on Fish-Man Island!

"It's Garp!"

"Ahhhhh! We're so unlucky!"

Seeing the dog-headed warship and the burly figure standing at the bow, Buggy's face instantly turned pale. Clutching his head, he screamed frantically.

"What's wrong, Buggy? Didn't you just say you'd rather face Garp than that Marine?"

Shanks, standing beside him, couldn't help but tease.

"Damn it! Shanks, shut up!"

Buggy grabbed Shanks' face with both hands, gritting his teeth.

"I was just comparing! Comparing, do you understand!?"

Shanks just laughed.

Seeing this, the others also burst into laughter, their expressions much more relaxed than when they were back on Fish-Man Island.

They had to admit, although Garp's overwhelming strength far surpassed Daren's, for some reason, Daren had left them with an even stronger sense of pressure.

That Marine's relentless, ruthless fighting style had given them the same terror they once felt when facing Shiki the Golden Lion during the Battle of Edd War.

By comparison, Garp, despite being stronger, was at least a familiar enemy. Facing him felt a little less overwhelming.

"Bwahahaha! Roger! This time, I want to see where you run!"

Garp's loud laughter echoed across the deep sea.

On the warship's deck, Marines were busy under the strain, sweating profusely as they loaded rows of cannonballs onto a conveyor belt, delivering them to Garp's side.

"Come and taste my cannon fire!"

Garp casually grabbed a black cannonball, grinned at Roger, took a deep breath, stepped forward, and hurled it out with immense force!

Despite the immense water pressure of the deep sea, which should have reduced the warship's firepower, under Garp's throw, the cannonball shot forward like a torpedo, violently breaking through the sea toward the Oro Jackson.

Whoosh!

A sudden flash of sword qi split the cannonball in half, causing it to explode amidst the swirling currents.

Boom...

A deep, muffled roar echoed, the sound distorted underwater.

"I'm not in the mood to play with you today, Garp!"

Roger laughed loudly, gripping his long sword.

As Garp continuously hurled cannonballs at them like rapid artillery fire, the Roger Pirates moved swiftly to counterattack.

The two sides fought back and forth, looking so familiar with each other's moves it was as if they had rehearsed it countless times before.

Explosions rocked the deep sea, stirring the currents into an even thicker, murkier swirl.

The Oro Jackson quickly ascended, tearing through the waves as it sailed into the distance, the dog-headed warship clinging closely behind... before both gradually vanished into the pitch-black deep sea.

...

Fish-Man Island.

Ryugu Palace.

The statue of the Sea God still lay collapsed in the banquet hall, and next to the huge, weathered crater, the banquet table was filled with newly prepared, exquisite dishes.

The royal chefs of Ryugu Palace bustled in and out, drenched in sweat, continually bringing freshly made food to the table, not daring to even lift their heads.

At the head of the hall, led by King Neptune, the high officials of Ryugu Castle watched nervously as the Marine Vice Admiral devoured food in large mouthfuls, their faces fixed with anxious smiles, barely daring to breathe.

The Vice Admiral's horrific wounds had finally stopped bleeding. Apart from a few particularly severe injuries that had been simply bandaged, the rest of his battered body remained exposed to the air, looking brutally savage.

Plate after plate of food was shoved into his mouth without the slightest pretense of manners, eating like a ravenous beast.

Half-human-sized bowls and plates quickly piled into small mountains beside him.

Yet the Vice Admiral showed no sign of stopping. Even after consuming enough food for dozens—if not hundreds—of people, his stomach showed no hint of being full.

Only after a full half hour, after the entire Ryugu Palace kitchen staff had nearly collapsed from exhaustion, did Daren finally put down his fork and pick up a clean napkin to wipe his mouth.

"Um... Vice Admiral Daren, have you had enough to eat?"

Neptune no longer had a trace of the dignity or nobility expected of the Fish-Man Island royal family. He looked nervously at the Marine Vice Admiral, forcing a dry smile.

"Well, I'm about half full."

Daren cast him an indifferent glance.

Ever since his physique had grown stronger, his appetite and craving for food had also become increasingly exaggerated.

Especially after a major battle, the consumption of physical strength was enormous—he could easily eat the amount meant for a hundred people by himself.

Although his injuries weren't too serious, the final blow had nearly drained his stamina completely.

That was why he hadn't chased after Roger's pirate crew when they fled.

He had already secured what he came for, and rashly pursuing them would only risk provoking trouble for himself.

He pulled out a cigar and bit it between his teeth.

Before he could even reach for his lighter, a turtle-like minister from Ryugu Palace scurried over, beaming obsequiously as he hurried to light Daren's cigar.

"Allow me to assist you, Vice Admiral Daren..."

The turtle prime minister bowed deeply, cold sweat soaking the shell on his back.

The Marine standing before him was nothing like the others—he was a complete madman!

When it came to fighting, he didn't care whether Fish-Man Island was a Member Nation of the World Government, nor did he care about royal status... If he decided to kill, he would do so without hesitation!

Most importantly, he truly had the authority to act.

Ryugu Palace was guilty of "harboring" a great pirate and his crew... With such a charge pinned on them, not even the World Government would step in to protect them!

This Marine could wipe Ryugu Palace off the map without facing any consequences.

Daren narrowed his eyes slightly as he watched the trembling minister lighting his cigar, speaking indifferently,

"No need to be so nervous. If I really wanted to act, none of you would survive."

Neptune's face instantly darkened.

The turtle prime minister shuddered even harder but forced an even wider, more respectful smile.

"Yes, yes, of course, thank you for your hard work."

"You have no idea how long we at Ryugu Palace have been waiting for your arrival. We've long heard of your legendary name... If you hadn't come to Fish-Man Island in time to drive away Roger's pirate crew—those wicked pirates—we wouldn't have known what to do!"

"As you know, Roger's pirate crew is terrifyingly strong. We at Ryugu Palace have been under enormous pressure... We wanted to resist, but lacked the strength."

"It's not that we were unwilling to fight back against Roger's pirate crew, but there are too many innocent civilians on Fish-Man Island. For their safety, we could only pretend to cooperate and beg for peace..."

"Therefore, your arrival here, helping our Fish-Man tribe to drive away Roger's pirate crew, is the greatest favor not just to Ryugu Palace, but to Fish-Man Island and the entire Fish-Man race!"

Chapter 568 - 568: Volume 4 – Chapter 87: You Are the Real Hero

The turtle prime minister grew more and more excited as he spoke, his face flushing red with emotion.

"If you hadn't arrived in time, we wouldn't have known what to do..."

"Damn Roger's pirate crew! Those evil bastards even threatened us with force!"

He waved his turtle-like hands angrily.

"But Fish-Man Island is a Member Nation of the World Government! We have always been loyal to the government and the Marines—how could we possibly bow to their threats... It's just that our strength was too lacking, so in the end, we had no choice but to put on an act."

"Your arrival is truly a blessing for us!"

Listening to the turtle prime minister's shameless twisting of the facts, Neptune and the other ministers of Ryugu Palace couldn't help but avert their gazes, the corners of their mouths twitching slightly.

"So that's the truth... It seems I misunderstood all of you."

Daren watched the turtle prime minister's performance with great interest, smiling as he casually blew out a smoke ring.

He had to admit, this guy was quite the talent.

"You can't really be blamed. After all, you were just fulfilling your duties, taking your responsibilities seriously... We can all understand that. After all, who in this vast sea doesn't know that you, Vice Admiral Daren, the 'King of the North Blue,' are the Marine most devoted to justice and the sworn enemy of evil?"

Noticing that Daren's tone had softened a bit, the turtle prime minister twirled his moustache, bent deeply at the waist, and smiled even more broadly.

He was terrified that this fearsome Marine might cling to the matter of "harboring Roger's pirate crew" and refuse to let it go... A situation like that could spiral out of control fast. Once it escalated to a political level, the consequences would be catastrophic.

After all, humans and the World Government had never truly trusted the Fish-Man race. Their relationship was already as tense as water and fire. If Daren insisted on pursuing this "crime," Fish-Man Island would be finished.

Hearing the turtle prime minister's flattering words—so earnest it almost sounded like he was stating facts—Daren nearly believed it himself, if not for his own clear self-awareness.

"Sounds like you know me pretty well," he said with a half-smile.

The turtle prime minister exclaimed excitedly,

"Of course! Everyone across the seas says His Majesty, the King of Ryugu Palace, is the 'knight' who protects Fish-Man Island, but among the five million residents of Fish-Man Island, who doesn't know that the Marines are our true shield?"

Neptune: ...

The turtle prime minister pretended not to notice Neptune's face growing darker and continued with a bright smile,

"Vice Admiral Daren, you, the greatest friend of the Fish-Man race, are the true hero!"

"This time, you saved Fish-Man Island from the evil and cruel Roger Pirates. We truly don't know how to thank you enough... Ryugu Palace has prepared a small gift for you. Please don't find it too meager."

With that, he clapped his hands.

Soon after, a squad of Ryugu Palace soldiers stumbled in, panting heavily as they carried large chests into the hall. With heavy thuds, they set them down on the floor, and brilliant piles of gold and silver treasures spilled out, clattering across the ground.

The dazzling light from the treasure instantly overwhelmed the glow of the night pearls illuminating the banquet hall, creating a scene of breathtaking splendor.

Seeing the mountains of treasure, many ministers and guards stared wide-eyed, utterly speechless.

This turtle really knows how to handle things...

Daren smiled in satisfaction.

With his current status and influence, a mere treasure trove worth a few billion Belly was hardly enough to move him.

But the money wasn't the point.

What mattered was Ryugu Palace's attitude.

And he liked this kind of attitude very much.

Very sensible. Very tactful.

"Vice Admiral Daren, if you need anything else, please feel free to let us know."

The turtle prime minister smiled as he spoke, frantically signaling to Neptune.

Neptune quickly caught on and laughed dryly, "That's right, Vice Admiral Daren."

"Although Fish-Man Island isn't as wealthy as many other nations, we still have some interesting treasures. The gates of Ryugu Palace's vault are always open for you."

Daren smiled and waved his hand.

"I appreciate the thought... Since Fish-Man Island abides by the law and stands opposed to evil pirates, naturally, I won't make things difficult for you."

"Peace between the Fish-Man tribe and humans hasn't come easily. As a Marine, it's my duty to contribute my humble efforts to maintaining that peace."

"As long as Fish-Man Island doesn't collude with pirates, I'll have no trouble explaining things to my superiors. Otherwise, things could get... complicated. After all, I'm not a violent man, you understand?"

As he finished, the Vice Admiral let out a long, helpless sigh, putting on the appearance of someone reluctantly burdened by duty.

Neptune: ...

The ministers: ...

The turtle prime minister's mouth twitched uncontrollably.

He thought he was already shameless enough, but he hadn't expected that someone in the Marines could be even worse. He couldn't help but feel a deep sense of admiration.

"Of course, of course, we understand. It's hard for everyone. We completely understand."

The turtle prime minister nodded with a smile, then turned his head and barked commands arrogantly at the soldiers.

"What are you standing around for?"

"Hurry up and pack the gifts properly! Contact the merchant convoy... Hmm, Vice Admiral Daren didn't bring a warship this time, so just send everything straight to Marineford—no, send it to the North Blue!"

After issuing his stern orders, the turtle prime minister once again turned back to Daren, bowing deeply with a sycophantic smile.

"I've made the arrangements. Please don't refuse, Vice Admiral Daren. It's just a small token of our gratitude from the people of Fish-Man Island."

As he spoke, he waved again, urging the soldiers to move quickly with the treasure.

...This guy really knows how to handle things...

Daren muttered inwardly but didn't refuse.

He was already used to this sort of thing back in the North Blue... If he didn't accept the "gifts," Neptune probably wouldn't be able to sleep peacefully ever again.

Seeing Daren's lack of objection, all the ministers of Ryugu Palace finally let out a collective sigh of relief.

They weren't afraid of giving money; they were afraid Daren wouldn't accept it.

Even if he only accepted a token amount, it would mean the matter had been glossed over.

Such was the reality of power.

"Ahem... Vice Admiral Daren, since this was all a misunderstanding, why don't you put that sword away?"

Neptune swam over, swinging his huge tail, cautiously testing the waters.

As he spoke, he discreetly glanced toward the entrance of Fish-Man Island.

In front of the shattered gate, on the ruined ground... the towering black Cursed Sword was still deeply embedded, stretching straight up into the clouds with no end in sight.

Even from afar, it radiated an overwhelming, chilling killing intent, like a massive iron wall formed from dried blood, sending shivers through everyone who saw it.

"Ah, right, look at me, I completely forgot. My apologies."

Daren patted his forehead with a deliberately exaggerated look of surprise.

Everyone: ...

Chapter 569 - 569: Volume 4 – Chapter 88: Appraising Ame no Habakiri

You didn't forget!

You did it on purpose!

But none of them dared say it out loud. Facing a monster like Daren, someone ridiculously powerful and utterly reckless, reasoning was pointless.

The situation left them no choice.

The massive Cursed Sword, standing over a hundred meters tall, loomed like a skyscraper of thirty or forty stories in the modern world. Just standing at its base and looking up made them feel like insignificant ants.

Not to mention, every single one of them knew the power that sword carried.

Even without Daren swinging it himself, just one blow from that sword would bring unimaginable destruction to Fish-Man Island.

The Vice Admiral casually raised his hand. Blue arcs of electricity flickered in his palm as the distant giant sword let out a deafening roar.

Violent tremors rippled outward, making the ground and nearby buildings visibly shudder.

Under everyone's horrified gaze, the enormous sword rapidly shrank back to its normal size, then turned into a sharp flash of black light and flew straight toward Daren.

Clang!

The banquet hall of Ryugu Castle was instantly filled with a chilling coldness.

Enma hovered quietly in front of Daren, and following it were three more streaks of light, silently floating in the air.

Closer to Daren's left were Shiki's two swords, Oto and Kogarashi.

Closer to Daren's right was Enma... and a "new face."

This sword was sharp and silver-white, with a streamlined beauty that came from being finely crafted. The pommel was three-pronged, and the blade had a pattern resembling flowing clouds.

Displayed side by side with Enma, one white and one black, they formed a striking contrast.

Strangely, as this sword approached, Daren noticed Enma trembling slightly, releasing a soft chant of joy.

It was as if long-separated lovers had been reunited, or old friends meeting again after years apart, their presence resonating with each other.

Looking at this sword, Daren smiled with satisfaction.

Unlike Enma's "rebellious," "demonic," and "sinister" aura, this sword radiated a sense of gentleness and calmness—yet it lost none of its razor-sharp edge.

That sharpness was its sole, absolute trait.

Unlike Enma, which could extract Haki and transform it into demonic energy, this sword's entire existence was devoted to ultimate sharpness—ripping apart any defense with ease.

It was one of the 21 Great Grade Blades, forged by a master craftsman of Wano Country, standing alongside Enma—one said to destroy even hell...

This was the Meito known as Ame no Habakiri, the blade said to cut even the heavens.

Daren extended his hand and lightly touched the hilt of Ame no Habakiri, wanting to feel its delicate texture.

Surprisingly, unlike Enma's initial fierce resistance, Ame no Habakiri only struggled briefly before gradually calming down, quietly accepting him.

Daren paused, glancing at Enma with a slightly odd expression.

He then began to slowly infuse his Haki into Ame no Habakiri.

A gentle flow of Haki trickled out from his arm, like cherry blossoms swirling or a stream meandering through rocks...

To avoid provoking an overreaction, he infused it with extreme gentleness, like soothing a new lover.

Bit by bit, under the infusion of Daren's Armament Haki—now at a strength of 73—Ame no Habakiri began to tremble, its blade quivering slightly.

The more Haki he poured in, the more violently it trembled.

Daren narrowed his eyes.

It feels different...

If Enma had been like a giant whale devouring greedily, then Ame no Habakiri was like a vast, gentle sea, embracing and sharpening his Haki.

Under its influence, his Haki seemed to grow ever keener.

The destructive force of his internal damage technique would surely become even more terrifying with this sword.

The trembling became more pronounced, more intense...

As if reaching a breaking point, Daren suddenly let out a sharp shout and fiercely increased the Haki infusion.

In the next moment—

Ame no Habakiri erupted with a piercing, high-pitched hum, and a terrifyingly sharp aura exploded outward from it, sending a chill down the spines of everyone in Ryugu Castle and making the hairs on their entire bodies stand on end.

They stared in amazement at the Meito, which seemed to be emitting a joyful hum.

Just from its natural aura, they felt the sensation of being locked onto—an inescapable sense of impending death, as if they could be sliced clean in half at any moment.

Huff...

Daren lightly exhaled and withdrew his Haki.

The suffocating sharpness that blanketed Ryugu Castle instantly disappeared.

Neptune and the others simultaneously let out a huge sigh of relief, their bodies drenched in cold sweat.

"Hmm, both are fine swords."

Daren looked at the pair of Meito, Enma and Ame no Habakiri, in front of him, a small smile tugging at the corner of his mouth.

The characteristics and grade of these two swords were clearly superior to Shiki's "Oto" and "Kogarashi."

Of course, that didn't mean Oto and Kogarashi were bad.

It only showed that even among the 21 Great Grade Blades, more energy and effort had been poured into the forging of Enma and Ame no Habakiri.

As for a sword's true power, it depended largely on the skill of its wielder.

Never mind Oto and Kogarashi—if it were Shiki, he could probably butcher Kozuki Oden with any two standard-issue Marine sabers as easily as slicing melons.

Kozuki Oden had never been able to fully draw out the potential of those two blades; in his hands, it was simply a waste.

Even so, feeling the vastly different auras of the two Meito, Daren couldn't help but admire the craftsmanship of Tenguyama Hitetsu.

Wano Country truly lived up to its reputation—its bizarre and intricate techniques were impressive.

Despite coming from the same land, the characteristics of these two swords were like night and day.

Daren scratched at the prickly stubble on his chin.

If he had to put it in human terms, Enma was like a ravenous black-stockinged temptress, always eager to drain her master dry at any time.

Ame no Habakiri, on the other hand, was like a warm and gentle neighborly aunt, broad-minded and tolerant of all your flaws, a little ditzy and quietly accepting.

Both were good people—no, good swords.

After admiring his newest acquisition, Daren felt his mood lift quite a bit.

"But you, little brat, staring at me like that isn't very polite, is it?"

He turned his head and caught sight of a tiny figure.

A slightly chubby face with pale skin, short black hair covering half of it, a hood pulled up over her head...

She cradled her cheeks in her hands, staring at Daren with the seriousness of a little adult, while a small shark tail twitched restlessly behind her.

Chapter 570 - 570: Volume 4 – Chapter 89 Shyarly's Fortune-Telling: You're Dead!

"Where did this little brat come from?"

Daren frowned, his tone somewhat dissatisfied.

For some reason, he sensed an unsettling and strange aura from the pale-skinned little mermaid in front of him. It was as if some of his secrets had been exposed by her royal blue eyes.

He didn't like this feeling.

Noticing Daren's frown, Neptune was startled and hurriedly explained,

"Vice Admiral Daren, this is our famous fortune teller from Fish-Man Island, her name is Shyarly... Shyarly-chan, don't look at Vice Admiral Daren like that, he is our most honored guest on Fish-Man Island."

He gritted his teeth, swam forward, and half-blocked Shyarly with his body.

Shyarly?

Daren was slightly taken aback. He narrowed his eyes and looked at the cute little mermaid in front of him. For a moment, he couldn't connect her with the cold and mysterious female fortune teller of the future. The difference in their appearance and temperament was too great.

One was a little girl, while the other was a mature and cold older woman.

"You're a fortune teller?"

Daren put away his four swords, took a step forward, and squatted down in front of little Shyarly.

Unexpectedly, little Shyarly did not show any fear despite her age when she saw Daren approaching. Instead, she nodded and said seriously in a babyish voice,

"That's right."

She also looked at the powerful Vice Admiral of the Marines in front of her and suddenly said something that made Daren's expression change slightly.

"I can't see through you. Your fate is strange. It seems that you don't exist in the past of this world."

This sentence was extremely vague, and Neptune and the others were completely confused.

But Daren's heart was stirred.

This little brat... Something's wrong!

She actually saw through his biggest secret!

"Doesn't exist in the past of this world..." Others might not understand what this sentence meant, but Daren understood it clearly.

Isn't that what a transmigrator is?

"Oh? What does that mean?"

Daren suppressed his emotions and asked with a smile.

Shyarly shook her head, her small, white face wrinkled as if she was stuck on a difficult problem, and she bit her finger and said,

"I don't know, but one thing is certain, you are very strange."

"I've never had this feeling before... It's as if your destiny is shrouded in a fog, and I can't see it clearly."

"Even with that weird old man with a beard made of nose hair, I could see something... I divined that he was about to die, but before he died, he would sit on the throne of the king... and usher in a new era."

Hearing this, Neptune and the other ministers of Ryugu Castle's faces changed dramatically.

The turtle prime minister was so scared that he turned pale and hurriedly explained,

"That... children are just talking nonsense, Vice Admiral Daren, please don't take it seriously."

They had finally managed to "dispel" Daren's suspicions, but now little Shyarly had brought up the topic again, making them sweat profusely.

Didn't her words prove that Roger's pirate crew was "at home" on Fish-Man Island, and that even the most famous fortune teller on Fish-Man Island had told their fortunes?

Fortunately, the Vice Admiral of the Marines didn't seem to mind, and just looked at the little Fish-Man with interest and smiled:

"What else?"

Shyarly shook her head again:

"I can't see anything else. Fortune-telling isn't all-powerful... But," she raised her little head and looked at Daren with her mysterious blue eyes:

"Can I tell you your fortune, Marine-san?"

"Absolutely not!!"

Before Daren could say anything, Neptune, the turtle prime minister, and the others cried out in alarm.

Are you kidding?

They all knew what Shyarly's "fortune-telling" results were. The gates of Fish-Man Island would be broken, the Great Pirate Roger would die, and the world would fall into a new era of turmoil...

Without exception, these were all "bad" news!

What if Shyarly predicted something bad from this fierce god and made him unhappy? Then it would be Fish-Man Island that would suffer!

Fortune-telling has always been a dangerous profession.

You might be able to swindle some money from the weak, but if you encounter someone unreasonable, they might kill you without a second thought if they're unhappy.

However, faced with the excited Neptune and the others, Daren just glanced at them indifferently and silenced them all.

"What's wrong? Do you think something bad will happen to me in the future?"

"Of course not!"

The turtle prime minister's face changed, and he immediately smiled apologetically:

"How could that be? Vice Admiral Daren is so powerful, and his influence and status are at their peak. No matter what difficulties you encounter, they will be no problem for you."

Daren ignored this guy and looked at the little mermaid again, smiling slightly:

"Okay, come and tell my fortune."

In his previous life, he had been a firm materialist, scoffing at fortune-telling and divination. But after experiencing something as unbelievable as transmigration, he couldn't help but start believing in certain things.

And even if he didn't believe it, there was no harm in listening.

A smile appeared on Shyarly's small face.

She took out the crystal ball again, which had a shallow crack on it. With a serious look on her face, she placed the crystal ball in front of her, stretched out her small hand, gently held it, and slowly closed her eyes.

Soon, Daren noticed something strange.

He didn't know if it was a mistake, but he seemed to feel a faint, strange aura gradually appearing in the empty space around him, imperceptible and uncatchable.

"It seems that this is indeed related to some kind of mysticism..."

This thought flashed through Daren's mind.

However, this was understandable. After all, in this world, even souls existed and could be clearly manifested.

The entire banquet hall fell silent.

It was so quiet that even a pin dropping could be heard. One could even hear Neptune and the others breathing nervously.

Suddenly—

Shyarly's expression changed, and she opened her eyes wide.

An indescribable fear welled up in her eyes, causing her to tremble all over and her face to turn pale.

Crack!

The crack on the crystal ball suddenly spread and extended, endless scarlet filling the entire sphere, then it exploded into pieces!

"This... how is this possible!?"

A trace of blood seeped from the corner of Shyarly's mouth, and she stared at Daren in fear, her body subconsciously shrinking back.

"What did you see?"

Daren frowned and asked.

Shyarly was no longer calm and composed, but like a frightened rabbit, her voice was incoherent.

"You, you... that era... it was you..."

"Fate... has changed..."

"So... it was you!"

"You... you're dead..."

Before she could finish, blood gushed from Shyarly's mouth and nose, and then her eyes rolled back, and she lost consciousness and fainted.

Daren: ???

"Did she say I'm dead?"

He turned to Neptune and the others and smiled in a friendly and peaceful manner.

Neptune and the others were pale and knelt on the ground with their hearts pounding.

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