

One Piece 591

Chapter 591 - 591: Volume 4 – Chapter 110: The Celestial Dragons and the Celestial Dragons

T-The Marines!?

Fisher Tiger stared blankly upward, momentarily unable to process what he was seeing.

The young man before him had sword-like eyebrows and starry eyes, his gaze distant and profound, as if it concealed an entire night sky. Yet when he narrowed his eyes, a chilling sharpness flashed within them, like a ferocious tiger ready to pounce.

But at this moment, with the sunlight spilling across his casually smiling face, he gave off an inexplicable sense of trust and security.

This man...

"You're the 'King of the North Blue,' the 'Legend Slayer,' the 'Monster of the Marines' Young Generation'... Rogers Daren of Marine Headquarters!"

Fisher Tiger, completely forgetting the blood streaked across his face, widened his eyes and shouted in disbelief.

As a world-renowned adventurer and traveler, he had visited many countries and had seen a lot—he recognized Daren at a glance.

But what followed was an overwhelming shock and confusion.

The "monster" of Marine Headquarters, the rising star of the Marines, Rogers Daren... had just killed members of CP0, the World Government's top intelligence agency!

If he hadn't witnessed it himself, Fisher Tiger wouldn't have believed such a thing was possible.

Was he insane!?

To attack his own superiors...

Was he betraying the Marines?

Fisher Tiger's gaze kept darting between Daren and the headless bodies of the two CP0 agents, his voice trembling.

"You, you, you..."

Hearing this string of titles, Daren looked a little awkward... That was seriously embarrassing.

"Relax, Tiger-san. Maybe stand up first so we can talk properly?"

Daren waved his hand lightly, smiling.

Only then did Fisher Tiger realize he was still kneeling before Daren. Flustered, he scrambled to his feet, his rugged face flushing red—though on his bright red skin, it wasn't too noticeable.

"Vice Admiral Daren... how could you..."

Before he could finish, a chilling voice suddenly drifted in from above.

Fisher Tiger looked up, stunned to see a figure cloaked in a pink feather coat soaring through the clouds.

Like a wild flamingo, Doflamingo, with his short blond hair, descended gracefully, hands in pockets and strutting arrogantly.

"Fufufufufu, Godfather, is this the one you're interested in?"

"His aura's not bad... but after all, he's still just a slave."

Doflamingo let out a bizarre laugh, his sunglasses hiding a casual glance at the bloody tattoo emblazoned across Fisher Tiger's chest.

The tattoo had long since healed but was deeply burned into his flesh like the hoof of a soaring dragon—shocking and painful to see.

Fisher Tiger gritted his teeth, glaring back, humiliation flashing in his eyes.

The "Hoof of the Soaring Dragon."

It was the mark that the Celestial Dragons branded onto their personal slaves.

It symbolized ownership by the world's nobles—a brand that condemned its bearer to forever be seen as an inferior human being.

Daren glanced at Doflamingo.

"It doesn't matter."

Doflamingo just smiled and said nothing.

Fisher Tiger stared at this strange duo, his mind spinning.

One was a Marine Vice Admiral famous across the seas.

The other... was clearly a lawless pirate.

No matter how he looked at it, he couldn't figure out how these two could be standing together.

And that pirate had just called Daren "Godfather"!?

Still, compared to the shock of Daren killing CPO, these questions seemed trivial.

"Well then, Tiger-san... you're free now."

Daren stepped aside, smiling as he gestured outward.

"The sea is waiting for you."

Fisher Tiger froze, a flicker of disbelief flashing in his eyes.

This guy... was really letting him go?

He hesitated, then suddenly slammed back down onto his knees with a loud thud, pressing his forehead to the ground and roaring from the bottom of his throat,

"Vice Admiral Daren, please save my comrades!"

...

In the heart of the jungle on a deserted island...

Inside the lavishly decorated palace, hysterical screams and the sound of things being smashed echoed relentlessly.

"Damn it! It's already been three minutes!"

"Why isn't there any result yet?!"

"You worthless pieces of trash... what the hell are you good for!?"

Saint Phepros, eyes bloodshot and face twisted with rage, hurled the wine glass in his hand at one of the CPD agents kneeling before him. The glass exploded, showering the agent's head with wine and shards.

The agent lowered his head, motionless, though under his mask, a faint trace of disgust flickered across his eyes.

"Ahhh!"

"What's happening to me?!"

"My body... it's not listening..."

"Stay away from me! What are you doing?!"

"I don't know..."

While Saint Phepros was still frantically venting his anger, a chorus of terrified screams suddenly erupted from outside the palace, quickly followed by wails, roars, and the sounds of chaos.

"What now?!"

Saint Phepros' eye twitched, thick veins bulging across his forehead. He pulled out his pistol and stormed outside in a rage.

He was disciplining his dogs, and those outside dared to cause a commotion!?

Did they think this was some filthy marketplace from the underworld!?

Furious, he flung aside the palace curtain and stormed out.

But the moment he looked outside, his pupils shrank sharply.

The stench of blood hit him like a slap in the face, thick and nauseating.

Across the clearing, hundreds of guards and attendants had lost their minds and were slaughtering each other!

Fear and confusion twisted their faces, their movements stiff and unnatural. Even as they screamed in terror, they stabbed and slashed at their comrades without the slightest hesitation.

Realizing something was terribly wrong, three CPO agents rushed out from inside the palace. Their expressions changed drastically at the scene before them, but they quickly moved to shield Saint Phepros.

"Stay back, my lord!"

"Please retreat! We're under attack!"

But Saint Phepros didn't seem to hear them. He stood there, dazed, staring blankly up at the sky.

Above them, countless white threads rained down like falling stars, embedding themselves into the distant edges of the island, weaving a massive white Torikago that sealed the entire island within it.

Saint Phepros staggered back two steps, then suddenly whipped his head around, his bloodshot eyes fixed on the depths of the jungle.

There...

A blond figure wearing a pink feather coat, sharp-toed shoes clicking arrogantly against the ground, strolled forward with a casual, unrestrained gait, a twisted smile spreading across his face.

"Fufufufufu... It's been a long time, Uncle Saint Phepros."

"All these years, and you still love putting on your delightful little comedies."

Saint Phepros' pupils contracted into fine pinpricks, and he shrieked,

"It's you!"

Chapter 592 - 592: Volume 4 – Chapter 111: I Wouldn't Dare Kill You...

"It's you, you filthy bastard!"

"This is all your doing!"

Saint Phepros shrieked, his finger trembling as he pointed at Doflamingo, his chest heaving with rage, his breathing ragged.

Even though years had passed, he still recognized him.

The brat from the Donquixote family!

He could never forget that scene—this wild little monster stepping into Mary Geoise, holding the bloody severed head of his own father, Homing, that foolish traitor.

Yes, he remembered it vividly.

A son killing his father, such a classic, brilliant tragedy... the most perfect drama imaginable!

"Fufufufufu... Don't say it like that, Uncle Saint Phepros. Aren't we both of noble Celestial Dragon blood?"

At the insult "bastard," a murderous glint flashed under Doflamingo's sunglasses. His fingers curled like claws, subtly twitching.

"No! You were expelled from the Holy Land, stripped of your title as a World Noble!"

Saint Phepros suddenly laughed with contempt.

"A mongrel like you has no right to call me uncle!"

Doflamingo's gaze turned icy. As veins bulged on his forehead, he swung his hand viciously.

A sharp snap tore through the air, sending a chill straight down Saint Phepros' spine.

Clang!

A ghostly figure instantly appeared in front of Saint Phepros, crossing his arms over his chest, both arms hardened with Armament Haki, catching three nearly invisible threads.

Sparks flew as the threads and arms ground against each other.

The gust of force made Saint Phepros stagger two steps back, glaring at the sudden change with fear and disbelief.

"You dare attack me?!"

"You're dead!! Even the Five Elders won't be able to save you!!"

The cold touch of death brushed against his skin, and cold sweat broke out down his back as he screamed hysterically.

"Kill him!!"

"Doflamigo!! You're finished!!"

The instant he gave the order, two CP0 agents vanished like wraiths.

When they reappeared, they were already behind Doflamigo.

One raised his foot, the other aimed his hand.

Both attacks swirled with a dark, spiraling Armament Haki, exuding a terrifying killing intent!

Saint Phepros had spoken—there was no hesitation. No matter who this blond brat was, anyone who dared lay a hand on a Celestial Dragon had only one fate:

Immediate execution!

"Rankyaku!"

"Shigan!"

They moved with cold precision, the deadly efficiency of CP0 on full display.

Yet Doflamigo didn't even flinch.

Instead, a mocking smile tugged at his lips.

"I can't let you kill my dear godson, now can I..."

A lazy, chilling voice suddenly cut through the air.

The faces of the two CPD agents changed drastically, their pupils shrinking to pinpoints.

The voice had come from between them!

So fast!

When!?

It felt as if a monstrous predator had locked onto them, making the hairs on their necks stand up.

Both forced themselves to twist mid-air, immediately redirecting their sharp attacks toward the newcomer.

Clang!!

Clang!!

Sparks erupted, and two clear, sickening cracks followed.

A foot that could split a warship,

Fingers sharp enough to pierce steel—

Both struck something harder than diamond.

Their lower leg and index finger bent grotesquely, snapping under the force!

Agonizing pain shot through their bodies, their bloodshot eyes filling with horror beneath their masks.

They stared at the young man's unharmed face—still wearing that lazy, mocking smile—as a tidal wave of disbelief crashed over them.

This... how was this even possible?!

"I thought I'd get a chance to play with the legendary 'strongest shield of the Celestial Dragons.' What a shame."

With his black hair fluttering slightly, Daren stood motionless behind Doflamingo. His eyes flicked once, then he grinned.

Under the terrified gazes of the two CP0 agents, his hands shot out like lightning, and his thick fingers clamped down on their heads.

Then... he squeezed.

Bang!

Bang!

The heads of the two CP0 agents—whose strength rivaled that of an average Vice Admiral—exploded under Daren's grip.

Blood and brain matter burst into the air, but the violent Haki emanating from the Vice Admiral kept every drop from touching him.

Fountains of blood gushed from their necks as the headless bodies collapsed to the ground with heavy thuds. Daren turned slowly, offering a calm, faint smile to the Celestial Dragon who was pale as a ghost.

"Vice Admiral Rogers Daren of Marine Headquarters, at your service, Saint Phepros."

For a moment, the entire front of the palace seemed to freeze in time.

Everyone—including the Celestial Dragons—stared in horror at the bloody, brutal scene before them, their guts twisting in fear.

Powerful CP0 agents... elite assassins of the World Government's highest intelligence agency...

In this man's hands, they were as fragile as helpless chicks.

A simple squeeze, and their skulls shattered.

"You, you, you... Rogers Daren!?"

It took several seconds before Saint Phepros snapped out of it, shrieking in disbelief.

"What do you think you're doing!?"

He stumbled backward, falling clumsily to the ground. Staring up at the Vice Admiral's smiling, murderous face, his eyes filled with terror.

"I'm a Celestial Dragon!"

"If you kill me... the Government won't spare you!"

"All your power, your fame, your status... everything you have will be destroyed by your foolishness!!"

At this point, Saint Phepros fully realized it.

Rogers Daren—this man had come to kill him!

But why?

Why!?

Why was he targeting him!?

He remembered clearly that this Marine brat had once been entrusted by the Five Elders themselves to investigate the incident of Celestial Dragons being killed in the North Blue—

Wait!

A horrifying thought struck Saint Phepros as he stared at the smiling Marine in terror.

Could it be... Saint Xildes...

"No, no, no, you're misunderstanding something."

Daren waved his hand casually, pulled out a cigar, lit it, and smiled helplessly.

"Saint Phepros-sama, I wouldn't dare kill you. After all, I'm just an ordinary Marine."

He found a rock nearby, sat down lazily, and propped his chin up with one hand, wearing the expression of someone ready to enjoy a good show.

"The life of a Celestial Dragon... should be taken by another Celestial Dragon. That's fair, isn't it?"

Saint Phepros looked as if he'd been struck by lightning.

"Yes, it's very fair, Godfather."

Doflamingo licked his dry lips, the corners of his mouth curling into a crazed smile.

He shifted his gaze toward Saint Phepros, a ferocious grin twisting his features.

"Now then... let's have a little family reunion, Uncle Saint Phepros."

His fingers bent, slowly and deliberately.

Invisible threads spread from behind him, coated with Armament Haki, flashing brilliantly under the blazing sunlight.

Chapter 593 - 593: Volume 4 – Chapter 112: Den Den Mushi... Connected!?

"You... you're insane..."

Saint Phepros looked at the maniacally grinning Doflamingo, then at the Vice Admiral casually sitting not far away, smiling as if enjoying a show. His heart trembled violently, disbelief written all over his face.

"How dare you lay hands on a Celestial Dragon..."

"Stop them!"

He suddenly shrieked, scrambling and stumbling back into the palace.

"You're dead!"

Saint Phepros' eyes burned with madness. Gasping for air, his flushed face twisted in rage.

Inside the palace, there was a Den Den Mushi that could directly contact Mary Geoise. As long as he dialed the signal, the Holy Land would immediately know he was in danger.

Once the "strongest shield of the Celestial Dragons" arrived, he would tear these two reckless bastards to pieces and make them suffer a fate worse than death!

At the moment he moved, the last remaining CP0 agent also sprang into action without hesitation.

With a single hand, he drew a sharp longsword from his waist and unleashed a powerful horizontal slash. A silver-white wave of sword energy tore through the ground, shooting straight toward Doflamingo.

"Fufufufu... so you're a swordsman."

Doflamingo grinned, licking his lips. He crossed his arms, and threads wrapped in Armament Haki wove quickly into a massive black net in front of him.

Clang!

The black net, like a beast's gaping maw, caught the blade's energy, causing a violent blast to erupt between them.

Dust exploded into the air. Beneath the CP0 agent's mask, his pupil contracted sharply.

Through the swirling haze, the flamboyant figure of Doflamingo charged forward, laughing wildly as the pink feathers of his coat whipped in the wind.

"Fufufufufu... it's been ages since I met such a decent opponent!"

Threads gathered and intertwined rapidly in his hands. Enveloped in Armament Haki, they lashed out fiercely!

A gigantic orange-red whip, stretching hundreds of meters, came crashing down like a falling meteor, tearing apart everything in its path before slamming into the CP0 agent.

"Overheat!"

Boom...

Pushed back by the force of Overheat, the CP0 agent crashed deep into the jungle, setting off plumes of dust and smoke as countless massive trees fell one after another.

"This is fun! This is too much fun!!"

Doflamingo howled with laughter, pursuing relentlessly, his whole body trembling with excitement.

"Fufufufufufu!!"

The two figures clashed wildly in the jungle. Sword light and thread strikes collided madly, sending shockwaves of sharp energy everywhere.

Wherever they fought, towering trees were sliced apart and collapsed with groaning creaks.

It was as if two terrifying beasts were battling, shaking the very earth.

Daren activated his Observation Haki, calmly watching the intense battle, nodding with satisfaction.

Doflamingo truly deserved the title of "chosen one" among villains. His rate of growth was staggering.

Though still not comparable to monsters like Kuzan, he was far beyond the likes of Yamakaji and the others.

Especially under Daren's training and pushing, Doflamingo had grown far beyond his original trajectory, covering his weaknesses in close-quarters combat and melee.

If he continued on this path, in time, this godson of his might even reach the threshold of the true elites—no longer the man who, in the original storyline, broke out in a cold sweat at the mere mention of Kaidou.

As for that Celestial Dragon...

Daren, cigar between his lips, turned his head casually. Exhaling a puff of smoke, he glanced toward the palace.

Inside, Saint Phepros stumbled frantically, finally reaching the Den Den Mushi. Gasping heavily, he grabbed it with trembling hands.

"Hahahaha!"

He suddenly burst into a savage laugh, whipping his head around. Through the fluttering curtains, his twisted face locked eyes with the Marine Vice Admiral standing outside the palace, a surge of brutality distorting his features.

"Rogers Daren! You ignorant little Marine brat! You'll pay dearly for your stupidity, arrogance, and foolishness!"

"If I'm not mistaken, that Celestial Dragon incident in the North Blue... Saint Xildes, that fool, was killed by you, wasn't he!?"

"You killed a Celestial Dragon—there's no place for you left in these seas!"

"Now, the moment I make this call, Pangaea Castle will immediately know what's happening here!"

"All the status, fame, and power you struggled so hard to obtain... will be wiped out! Hahahaha!"

Gripping the Den Den Mushi like it was a lifesaving treasure, the Celestial Dragon grew arrogant again, letting out a shrill, eerie laugh.

"Come on, if you don't want to lose everything, I can make you an offer."

"Kneel down like a lapdog and bark for me... If you satisfy me, I might just spare your pathetic life!"

Despite his words, a flash of violent killing intent gleamed in his eyes.

This damn brat had ruined everything for him, disgraced him utterly... He had to make him beg like a dog!

"Sorry, noble Saint Phepros-sama, but my Marine codename isn't something like 'dog'..."

Daren scratched his head with a slightly annoyed look.

"If you're gonna call the Den Den Mushi, I suggest you hurry up... Otherwise, Doflamingo will be back soon."

"Once he's finished dealing with CP0, I won't be able to stop him from slaughtering you."

He raised both hands with a helpless shrug.

"After all, I'm just an ordinary Marine. How could I interfere with the decisions of a Celestial Dragon?"

"You're begging to die!!"

Seeing that irritating, playful smile on Daren's face, Saint Phepros finally lost all control over his seething rage, his facial muscles twitching violently.

"Then just you wait!!"

He raised his hand and slammed it down on the red emergency button of the Den Den Mushi.

One second.

Two seconds.

Three seconds.

Saint Phepros' expression slowly froze.

No response?

But in the next instant—

"Buru buru... Buru buru..."

The Den Den Mushi suddenly started vibrating, letting out the call tone.

Saint Phepros' eyes lit up.

"Hahahaha! The signal's connected! You're dead—!"

Just as he turned his head, the scene before him made the triumphant smile freeze on his face.

Like a rooster suddenly strangled by the neck, his flushed face turned deathly pale.

Sitting calmly there, the Marine Vice Admiral wore a smirk as he casually pulled a military Den Den Mushi from his pocket.

It too was vibrating and making the "buru buru" sound.

Then...

Under the horrified gaze of Saint Phepros...

The Marine Vice Admiral answered the call.

"Buru."

Both Den Den Mushi fell silent at the same time.

"Moshi moshi?"

The Vice Admiral said casually, and from his Den Den Mushi, the voice transmitted through to the other side...

Saint Phepros turned his head stiffly, staring in disbelief at the Den Den Mushi in his hand.

"Moshi moshi?"

A familiar, playful, mocking voice slowly came through.

"...This is Rogers Daren. Greetings, noble Saint Phepros-sama."

Two overlapping voices echoed one after the other in front of the empty palace, lingering eerily in the air.

Saint Phepros stood there as if struck by lightning.

Chapter 594 - 594: Volume 4 – Chapter 113: This is a Small Attempt

"...I am Rogers Daren, Saint Phepros-sama. Greetings."

The Den Den Mushi in his hand transmitted the Vice Admiral's voice, carrying a faint smile, but to Saint Phepros, it sounded like a devil's whisper—eerie and terrifying.

Clack...

The Den Den Mushi slipped from his hand and hit the ground. Saint Phepros collapsed onto the floor, his face deathly pale, staring at Daren with a look of indescribable horror, as if he had seen a ghost.

"You, you, you... this, this... how is this possible..."

"This emergency button... it's supposed to connect to Pangaea Castle's signal..."

He had never encountered anything like this before.

"Moshi moshi? Saint Phepros-sama, this is Vice Admiral Rogers Daren from Marine Headquarters. Is there some trouble on your end?"

Daren blew a smoke ring with a smile, feigning confusion as he spoke into the Den Den Mushi in his hand.

At the same time, the Den Den Mushi on the ground echoed the exact same voice.

"No! Stop talking!!"

Saint Phepros' entire body trembled as he shrieked in terror.

"Well, Saint Phepros-sama, it seems you're quite shaken..."

"Please rest assured, I will rush to your location immediately. Protecting the life and dignity of the great Celestial Dragons is the Marines' sacred duty."

Daren ended the call with a serious expression.

Gaga.

Then he turned to Saint Phepros with a smile.

"Saint Phepros-sama, your humble servant has arrived. Is there anything I can assist you with?"

"No!!"

Saint Phepros clutched his head, his eyes bulging, teetering on the edge of madness.

Why...

Why did the signal he dialed connect to this guy's private Den Den Mushi?

Why...

Why did this guy target him!?

His mind felt like a mushy mess, his body trembling even harder, as a yellowish-white liquid slowly seeped out from between his legs.

"Godfather, you're really going to scare Uncle Saint Phepros to death..."

At that moment, Doflamingo stepped out of the jungle, wearing a twisted grin.

His face was smeared with blood, his eyes filled with savage brutality. A deep, bone-revealing gash on his chest bled profusely, soaking his white shirt red.

Dragging behind him was the corpse of a CPO agent, so mangled it was barely recognizable. Doflamingo held the body by the ankle, hauling it along like a dead dog.

"But..."

Doflamingo glanced at the pale and broken Saint Phepros, a mocking smile playing on his lips.

"I think I'm starting to appreciate the beauty of theater. Watching someone fall from heaven to hell in an instant... that impact, that transformation—it really does feel like being in total control..."

"That feeling..."

Doflamingo's expression turned crazed. He threw back his head, his fingers twitching uncontrollably as he let out a wild, manic laugh.

"It's just like being a god!!"

Before the words even fully fell, Saint Phepros' body suddenly stiffened.

Slick!

A sudden chill swept across his arm. Staring in stunned disbelief, his frozen pupils caught the sight of a blood-stained arm flying through the air.

Saint Phepros stood there dumbly and lowered his gaze.

His left arm was gone—only a clean, smooth cut remained, exposing bone and torn flesh, while blood gushed out in a torrential spray.

"Ahhhhh!!"

The delayed agony finally surged through him. Saint Phepros clutched his severed arm and thrashed on the ground, howling in unbearable pain.

"My hand!"

"...My arm!"

Doflamigo tilted his head with a grin.

"Just an arm, Uncle Saint Phepros. Does it really hurt that much?"

"Is it worse than the humiliation I endured—the contempt, the curses, the mockery—when you cast me out of Mary Geoise back then?"

He flicked his fingers again.

Slick!

Blood sprayed as another severed leg was sent flying through the air before thudding to the ground.

Saint Phepros let out an even more piercing scream. Now missing both an arm and a leg, he rolled frantically across the dirt, his body convulsing, eyes rolling back.

After decades of pampered luxury, he had never suffered so much as a scratch—let alone wounds this gruesome.

"I remember it clearly... how you once spat the word 'bastard' at me."

Under Doflamigo's sunglasses, blood vessels crawled like cracks across his eyes. With another flick of his fingers—

Two razor-thin, near-invisible threads cut through the air.

Slick!

Slick!

Saint Phepros' remaining arm and leg were severed cleanly!

"Ahhhhhhhhh!!!"

The heart-wrenching torment finally broke him. His eyes bulged, tears and snot streamed down his face as he sobbed and wailed uncontrollably, his body twitching in a pool of blood.

"What an ugly sight... I liked you better when you still had that defiant look, Uncle Saint Phepros."

Doflamingo raised his hand coldly to finish it, but a firm hand suddenly stopped him.

"Wait."

Daren shook his head.

Doflamingo paused, irritation flashing across his eyes, but followed Daren's gaze toward the jungle.

There, a tall, blood-red figure stood frozen.

"Let him handle it. This is a small attempt."

Daren said calmly, meeting Doflamingo's wild stare.

Doflamingo hesitated, then took a deep breath and silently stepped back.

"I'm sorry, Tiger-san. When we arrived... your comrades had already..."

"I know."

Fisher Tiger's voice was hoarse as he forced himself to move forward.

He stumbled past the bodies of familiar faces, their lifeless smiles forever frozen, and his strong hands trembled uncontrollably.

Daren nodded.

"So, this Celestial Dragon is yours."

With that, he turned and started walking toward the coast.

Doflamingo cast a meaningful glance at Fisher Tiger, a sly grin tugging at his lips, before following Daren.

Soon, the clearing—now a hellish scene—was left with only two figures.

The towering, blood-red-skinned fishman stepped toward the wailing Celestial Dragon.

"You... you filthy mongrel..."

"So... so that's how it is..."

"They died... trying to save you..."

Saint Phepros stared at Fisher Tiger with hollow, lifeless eyes, then slowly burst into mad laughter.

"Hahahaha..."

Expressionless, Fisher Tiger reached out and seized the Celestial Dragon by the throat, lifting the mutilated man high into the air.

Scarlet blood dripped endlessly from above.

"Cough... heh... hahahaha!"

"What a shame... all those commoners died here... just to save you."

The Celestial Dragon coughed weakly, feeling the grip on his neck tighten. His face twisted grotesquely as he cackled louder.

"Hahahaha!"

"Shut up," Fisher Tiger said coldly, a glimmer of life returning to his eyes.

"Hahahaha! They're all dead!" The Celestial Dragon's nose and mouth bled, but he kept laughing maniacally.

"Shut up!" Fisher Tiger's eyes widened in fury.

"Hahahaha! Only you survived!"

"I said shut up!!"

"Hahahaha—"

Crack!

The sharp snap of bones echoed through the silent jungle.

...

At the same time, Daren, who had walked several hundred meters away, suddenly stopped.

A faint smile played at the corner of his lips.

"Just as I thought..."

He turned around.

In the distance, a massive flock of birds shot into the sky in fright.

A tremendous, overwhelming pressure swept across the land, stirring the clouds above into a raging storm.

A look of stunned surprise flashed across Doflamingo's face.

"Conqueror's Haki... it awakened?"

Chapter 595 - 595: Volume 4 – Chapter 114: Become My Shichibukai

"How is this possible..."

Feeling the overwhelming aura, no weaker than his own, Doflamingo's heart gave a slight jolt. A flash of astonishment flickered deep behind his sunglasses.

A lowly slave, once trampled, insulted, and tortured... actually possessed the "qualities of a king"?

For a moment, Doflamingo struggled to accept it.

"Doffy, in your opinion, what is the true cause of awakening Conqueror's Haki?"

At that moment, Daren suddenly spoke.

He slowly took out a cigar, clamped it between his teeth, lit it, and stood calmly against the expanding wave of pressure, unmoved like an unshakable cliff.

Doflamingo paused, then reflexively answered,

"Talent...?"

"No..." Daren shook his head and smiled. "Talent certainly plays a part, but that's something I'll need to verify with further experiments."

The Vice Admiral's indifferent voice, mingled with drifting smoke, echoed through the raging winds of the dense forest, sending an unsettling chill through the air.

"But in my view, it's an unwavering will that truly determines the awakening of Conqueror's Haki."

"An unwavering... will?" Doflamingo muttered, half-understanding.

"Yes. The courage to defy overwhelming power, even if it means being shattered into pieces... the fearlessness to stand tall even knowing that the person before you is the most noble and powerful in the world."

Daren's gaze grew thoughtful as he glanced at Doflamingo.

"Or when, pushed into absolute desperation, emotions are driven to the extreme, forcing the strength hidden within the heart to erupt."

Doflamingo froze.

Those words instinctively pulled him back to the moment he himself had awakened Conqueror's Haki—

Blazing fires, towering walls, the jeers, the assaults, the whips, the blood...

Pain, rage, roars—and the unyielding will to destroy everything.

"Of course," Daren continued with a faint smile, "without the innate quality to begin with, no amount of suffering or oppression would allow one to rise up and resist."

Doflamingo fell into a deep silence.

If Daren's theory ever spread beyond this place, it would surely cause a massive upheaval.

But what was truly terrifying... was that he treated the lives of the Celestial Dragons as mere experimental material.

So that's why you chose Fisher Tiger?

Because you knew... he had that kind of quality.

"How do you feel, Tiger-san?"

Just then, Daren turned, smiling toward a certain direction.

Doflamingo quickly snapped out of his thoughts and followed his gaze.

A tall fishman, covered in scars, slowly emerged from the jungle. His eyes showed no visible emotion, and blood still dripped steadily from his right hand.

Bathed in crimson and illuminated by the scattered jungle light, Fisher Tiger seemed almost ablaze—like a blood-red sun.

"I... killed a Celestial Dragon."

Fisher Tiger's eyes trembled slightly as he looked up at the Marine Vice Admiral and spoke in a hoarse voice.

"Yes, you killed a Celestial Dragon."

Daren nodded. "How does it feel?"

Fisher Tiger lowered his head, staring at his wide, bloodstained palm. His expression was clouded with confusion and doubt.

"It feels... strange."

"I should be afraid... After all, they are the noblest beings in this world. But I don't feel any fear."

"Daren-san, should I be afraid?"

Daren smiled meaningfully.

"Tiger-san, that's not a question you should ask me."

"Then who should I ask?"

"You should ask your own heart."

"My heart..."

Fisher Tiger murmured.

"My heart tells me..."

He raised his hand and pressed it against his chest, covered in scars from countless torments. Some wounds had long since healed, some had scabbed over, but many were still bleeding fresh. More precisely...

His hand pressed against the brand of the "Hoof of the Soaring Dragon" burned into his chest.

"...It feels exhilarating."

A strange, stiff smile tugged at his thick lips.

"An exhilaration I've never felt before."

"The moment I killed that Celestial Dragon, it felt like every muscle, every cell in my body, was cheering and screaming."

"I even had a ridiculous thought... that the blood of 'gods' is also red."

Daren chuckled lightly.

"Yes, the blood of gods is red too."

As the words fell, Fisher Tiger's pupils contracted sharply, as if realizing something. He locked his gaze tightly on the Marine Vice Admiral before him.

Daren continued casually.

"They're no different from ordinary people."

"...Or rather, they were never truly 'gods' at all—just people who seized enormous power and elevated status."

"Ordinary people..."

Fisher Tiger clenched his fists tightly.

"So, Daren-san... why did you go to such great lengths to save me?"

He wasn't naive.

Rogers Daren was one of the most prominent figures in the Marines today, known not just for his shining accolades, but also for his notorious reputation as the "scum of the Marines."

Such a man, one who held immense influence, who was ruthless, who thirsted for power, would not go to all this trouble without a reason. It could only be that he wanted him as a subordinate.

Now that the conversation had reached the heart of the matter, Daren didn't bother with pretense.

"Tiger-san, it's actually very simple."

"A little over a month ago, I visited Fish-Man Island and had a friendly discussion with King Neptune."

"Shyarly-chan received a new prophecy: a new era is about to arrive, and Fish-Man Island may soon face an unprecedented disaster."

"The five million residents of Fish-Man Island will need a leader... more precisely, they need you to stand up."

"Me?"

Fisher Tiger gave a bitter shake of his head.

"Daren-san, I'm just a lowly fishman from Fish-Man Street."

"Besides, now that I've stained myself with Celestial Dragon blood... going back will only bring disaster to them."

Daren smiled calmly.

"No one will ever know what happened here."

"And even if they did, no one would suspect you."

A flicker of hope sparked in Fisher Tiger's eyes.

If anyone else had said it, he wouldn't have believed a word.

But coming from the man standing before him...

He took a deep breath and looked solemnly at the Marine Vice Admiral.

"Daren-san, what do you need me to do?"

Daren smiled, satisfied.

He exhaled a thin stream of smoke like a dragon coiling into the sky.

"Fisher Tiger, become one of my Shichibukai."

Chapter 596 - 596: Volume 4 – Chapter 115: Who Will Clean Up the Mess?

A deserted island.

The white Torikago that had once covered the entire island had vanished, and warm sunlight poured from the clear blue sky.

The waves rhythmically crashed against the shore's rocks, spraying white foam into the air.

"Daren-san, I will do my best to fulfill my promise to you."

Fisher Tiger had already bandaged his wounds simply. His expression was calm as he spoke to the Vice Admiral standing before him.

"Mm, I'll leave it to you, Tiger-san."

Daren answered lightly.

"I know this won't be easy for you. After all, it crosses a line you once held firm."

Fisher Tiger shook his head, a strange emotion flickering in his eyes.

"Things like bottom lines... ever since I killed that Celestial Dragon, they've stopped existing."

"Do you regret it?"

Daren suddenly asked.

"From today on, your life will part ways with the freedom you once enjoyed."

Fisher Tiger froze at the words.

He instinctively looked back toward the jungle, where he had come from. Images of those who had laughed bravely as they marched to their deaths flashed through his mind. He pressed his lips into a thin line and clenched his fists.

"No. Someone must pay for their deaths."

"And besides... there are still things far more meaningful waiting for me to do, aren't there?"

He gazed out at the distant sea, his expression deep.

Doflamingo frowned slightly, a thought flashing through his mind.

If he wasn't mistaken, Fisher Tiger was looking toward the Red Line.

Could it be...

Daren nodded, then shook his head.

"You'll make it one day, but not yet. Acting on impulse won't solve anything. What you need is even greater strength."

He extended his hand and smiled.

"Safe travels."

Fisher Tiger grasped Daren's hand, a smile rising on his face.

"Thank you, Daren-san."

"Honestly, I still don't know what you're aiming for or what plans you're weaving. But if it weren't for you, I'd already be dead."

He spoke solemnly.

"Thank you... for giving me the chance to kill him."

After speaking, Fisher Tiger took a step back, bowed deeply to Daren, then turned and leapt into the sea.

The blood-streaked figure hit the water and, like a fish regaining its freedom, tore through the waves at an astonishing speed and vanished in the blink of an eye.

...

"What a convenient ability..."

Daren activated his Observation Haki, carefully sensing Fisher Tiger's receding presence.

The fishmen were the children of the sea. Their natural bloodline granted them underwater survival and combat abilities unimaginable to humans.

A powerhouse like Fisher Tiger could exert more than twice his strength in the sea compared to on land!

From today onward, unless he was surrounded on land or in some other rare circumstance, there would be no one left across these seas who could kill Fisher Tiger.

At least, Daren was certain that even if he mobilized the entire North Blue flying fleet, if Fisher Tiger stayed submerged and refused to surface, there was nothing he could do.

...

"Godfather, how should we deal with the mess here?"

At that moment, DoFlamingo, who had remained silent, spoke up.

"You went through all this trouble, even killed a Celestial Dragon... Was it really worth it?"

Daren narrowed his eyes, turned to glare at DoFlamingo, and his tone abruptly turned cold.

"Are you questioning my judgment, Doffy?"

The moment those words fell, DoFlamingo's pupils shrank.

He felt his breath catch suddenly, as though an invisible hand had gripped his throat, choking the air from him.

Tendrils of black-and-red lightning danced around Daren, twisting and surging.

The intense, crushing pressure distorted the very air around them.

This was... Conqueror's Haki powerful enough to impact matter!

DoFlamingo's heart seized with terror.

In the face of Daren's unleashed aura, it felt as if countless razor-sharp blades were pressed against his vital points, and every pore on his body stood on end.

Even the Conqueror's Haki within him instinctively recoiled, refusing to stir.

How long had it been?

He had thought that after his brutal battles and experience in the New World, with his strength steadily rising, even if he still fell short of Daren, the gap between them wouldn't be too vast.

But now, faced with this overwhelming disparity, Doflamingo realized the bitter truth:

Daren's sheer pressure crushed and shattered the pride he had built from his growing strength, leaving not even a trace behind.

"I... I dare not."

Doflamingo struggled to withstand the overwhelming pressure, his face pale and his teeth clenched tightly.

Daren narrowed his eyes and looked at his protégé, then suddenly smiled after a few seconds.

"That's good."

The suffocating pressure receded like a tide, disappearing in an instant, and everything around them returned to calm, as if the terrifying scene just now had been nothing but an illusion.

Doflamingo's nerves instantly relaxed, and he gasped for air, looking at Daren as if he were a terrifying ghost.

"Did you send the message?"

Daren lit another cigar and asked casually.

Doflamingo nervously swallowed and lowered his head, saying,

"Yes, but... anyone can see that it's fake news."

Daren smiled slightly and said,

"That doesn't matter. Someone will believe it."

Doflamingo was skeptical, but he didn't dare to show it.

Would anyone really believe it?

This desolate island hid the Poneglyphs...

No one with half a brain would believe that.

Just as he was wondering, the Vice Admiral next to him suddenly smiled and said,

"Look, someone's coming."

Doflamingo was startled, and a red glint flashed in his eyes, as if he had sensed something. His expression suddenly changed.

"That aura... Could it be..."

His body gradually grew cold and stiff, and he turned his head in disbelief.

In the distance, a magnificent pirate ship was breaking through the waves at great speed.

A golden beard like waves, a skull emblem on the pirate flag, and a strange straw hat!

Doflamingo's heart trembled violently, and every muscle in his body tensed like a string. He felt a suffocating aura coming from the pirate ship, and his heart was stirred by a huge wave.

"Roger... The pirate crew!?"

His fingers twisted nervously, and invisible threads spread out silently, connecting to the clouds in the sky, ready to retreat at any moment.

But just then,

BOOM!

A terrifying aura, like a god or a prison, suddenly exploded from beside him and radiated out from the coast.

The sky and earth changed color, the ground shook, and strong winds and huge waves rose from the sea!

Doflamingo turned his head in shock and looked at the sky-high fighting spirit rising in Daren's eyes. An unbelievable and absurd thought surged in his heart.

Chapter 597 - 597: Volume 4 – Chapter 116: Hey, Is the Ship Fixed?

One minute ago.

On the Oro Jackson.

"Captain Roger! This information is obviously fake!"

Buggy jumped up and down on the deck, his head separated from his body, circling around Roger, who was picking his nose, looking frantic, with a large bump on his head.

"If there really was a Poneglyph on this desert island, we wouldn't have had to suffer so much in Totto Land!"

Hearing Buggy's words, the other members of Roger's pirate crew couldn't help but recall their experiences in Totto Land, and the corners of their mouths twitched slightly.

Ever since they entered Totto Land, they had been harassed by all kinds of soul monsters.

The soul monsters created by Big Mom, that madwoman, were like an endless tide, impossible to eliminate, chasing them across the vast ocean.

What was most terrifying was that these soul monsters were everywhere, seeming to exist in every corner. Every one of their movements was under surveillance, leaving them with no place to hide, forced to flee desperately.

After finally breaking into the Totto Land headquarters on Whole Cake Island, the exhausted crew fought a fierce battle with the Big Mom Pirates, nearly destroying half of Whole Cake Island.

Buggy took advantage of the chaos to steal the Road Poneglyph from inside Cake Castle.

After successfully obtaining it, they naturally retreated.

However, the Poneglyph had been stolen, and the crazy woman Big Mom went berserk, using the power of the Soru Soru no Mi to give the sea a soul... creating a terrifying tsunami that was enough to destroy an island.

In the end, it was only with the help of the Oro Jackson's air cannon that they managed to escape.

Unexpectedly, just as they escaped from Totto Land, Captain Roger got news of the Poneglyph from somewhere and insisted on coming to this deserted island!

But it was obviously fake!

If there really was a Poneglyph on that deserted island in the distance, Big Mom and Kaidou would have taken it long ago!

"Wahahaha, Buggy, there are four Road Poneglyphs in total, and we need to get all of them to obtain the coordinates of the final island."

Roger laughed dismissively.

"But... but what if this is fake news!?"

Buggy was so anxious that he was about to cry, clutching his head in despair.

"What if this is fake news released by the Marines... They may have already set up traps, waiting for us to fall into them!"

Roger was taken aback by what he heard, and immediately frowned, rubbing his two nose hairs with one hand and saying suspiciously,

"You mean, there's a possibility that the Marines are ambushing us on that island?"

"Yes!"

Buggy was so excited that his face turned red. Captain Roger had finally listened to his opinion!

"That's indeed a problem..."

Roger muttered, then suddenly remembered something, and his eyes lit up.

"Buggy, you mean... Garp might be there too?"

Buggy's expression suddenly froze.

He twitched the corner of his mouth, but before he could say anything, Roger stood up suddenly and laughed with a fiery look in his eyes.

"Then I have to go even more! Last time on Fish-Man Island, because the pirate ship was damaged, I didn't get to have a good fight with Garp!"

"..."

The members of Roger's pirate crew immediately covered their faces.

"It's over..."

Buggy turned away with a mournful expression and silently shed tears.

"Forget it, Buggy,"

Shanks shook his head helplessly, walked over, patted Buggy on the shoulder, and comforted him,

"If it's Garp, it's not a big deal. Let the captain fight to his heart's content..."

He looked relatively relaxed. After all, Garp was their old rival. He smiled slightly and said,

"As long as we don't run into that Marine—"

Boom!

Before he could finish, a terrifying aura enveloped the area, bringing with it a sense of oppression as powerful as a prison, spreading from the island approaching from ahead.

Black and red lightning bolts visible to the naked eye continuously flashed in the sky, changing the color of the heavens and earth, shattering the clouds, and causing huge waves to rise from the sea.

The Oro Jackson rocked violently, and the others seemed to sense something, their expressions changing drastically.

Shanks and Buggy's faces turned pale.

It wasn't just because the impact of the Conqueror's Haki made them weak and almost unable to stand.

It was more because they recognized this suffocating aura!

"It's all your fault, Shanks!"

Buggy's eyes were bloodshot as he grabbed Shanks by the collar. Shanks had already covered his mouth, staring at the domineering figure on the island with fear and shock in his eyes.

"Daren, you brat!"

Roger stamped his foot on the bow of the ship, his eyes bursting with endless rage and fighting spirit, his red captain's coat fluttering wildly in the stormy Haki.

"It's you!"

Rayleigh, Gaban, and the others also turned pale, no longer relaxed as they had been, their gazes wary as they locked onto the figure of the Vice Admiral. A heavy gloom settled over their hearts.

They hadn't forgotten the bitter defeat they had suffered at the hands of this cunning Marine brat on Fish-Man Island!

Even after so much time had passed, the shadow of that black giant sword, which had nearly cleaved the Oro Jackson in two, still haunted them.

Just a single graze had dealt the Oro Jackson the worst damage it had ever suffered, and they had to sell off almost all their belongings and treasures just to scrape together enough money for repairs.

It was because of that incident that they had been forced to survive on Sea Kings for a week straight, to the point where just seeing a Sea King now made them want to vomit.

"Hey, Roger... Looks like your ship is repaired."

On the coast of the deserted island, the Vice Admiral grinned.

His figure slowly rose into the air under Doflamingo's stunned gaze.

The unrestrained release of Haki sent his short black hair and white cape whipping in the air, and his deep, dark eyes carried a fierce arrogance that looked down on the world.

"Kill me, and the Poneglyph on this island is yours."

He spread his arms wide, strands of blue lightning crackling and weaving between his fingers.

Then, every member of Roger's pirate crew suddenly felt a chill race down their spines, like invisible blades pressed against their backs.

One, two, three, four—

Four chilling auras, each sharp enough to split the seas, slowly emerged behind the airborne Vice Admiral.

Their blades pointed downward, hanging vertically in a line.

Meito, Kogarashi!

Meito, Oto!

Meito, Ame no Habakiri!

Meito, Enma!

Blades that any ordinary warrior would boast of possessing now bowed in submission under the black-haired Marine's fierce Haki.

They gleamed coldly, like the fangs of a terrifying beast ready to devour its prey.

The sword tips slowly lifted... aiming straight at the Oro Jackson rushing toward the island!

In an instant...

The pupils of everyone aboard Roger's pirate crew shrank to pinpricks, and every hair on their bodies stood on end.

Chapter 598 - 598: Volume 4 – Chapter 117: Don't Move, Rayleigh

Four rare, razor-sharp Meito swords exuded a terrifying aura as they locked onto the pirate ship.

Electricity danced across their surfaces, their tails vibrating and humming as they entered a charged state, ready to pierce the air at any moment and shred the Oro Jackson into countless fragments.

"Those four swords!"

"Damn it!"

"That bastard's not pulling that move again, is he?!"

"How insidious!"

"..."

The members of Roger's pirate crew swallowed hard, instinctively tightening their grips on their weapons. Their muscles tensed to the limit, and no one dared make a single reckless move.

Although Roger's pirate crew was a force of elites whose overall strength far surpassed other pirate groups, facing those four menacing Meito swords left most of them feeling far from confident.

Under the magnetic propulsion of that Marine brat, even without being coated in Armament Haki, the sheer speed alone gave those four swords a terrifying killing power.

Besides Roger, Rayleigh, and Gaban—the three pillars of the crew—no one else dared claim they could fully block a sudden strike from those blades!

A suffocating sense of deathly oppression slowly spread out, enveloping the entire sea.

Everyone aboard Roger's pirate ship felt as if a fishbone was stuck in their throats, their skin burning with pain as if scraped by razor-sharp sword aura.

The Oro Jackson gradually slowed, eventually coming to a full stop.

Doflamingo stared, dumbfounded, unable to believe his eyes.

The situation... was actually deadlocked!

That guy Daren... no, his godfather... had single-handedly forced Roger's pirate ship to a halt and even made them too fearful to act!

"Doffy..."

Suddenly, Doflamingo heard Daren's cold voice.

"When the battle starts, I need you to do something."

The Vice Admiral's indifferent tone sent a chill through Doflamingo's heart as he looked up.

Meeting his gaze were a pair of domineering, cold eyes.

"Y-Yes, sir,"

Doflamingo gritted his teeth and replied, enduring the oppressive weight of the Haki pressing down on him.

A cruel smile curled at Daren's lips as he issued an undeniable command.

"Scopper Gaban. He's the opponent I've chosen for you."

Doflamingo froze, his pupils shrinking sharply under his sunglasses.

He stared at his godfather in shock, almost thinking he'd misheard.

Daren... actually wanted him to fight Scopper Gaban!?

Scopper Gaban—one of Roger's original members, the third strongest in the entire crew!

A powerhouse said to be on par with Rayleigh, the "Dark King" himself!

Sending him against Scopper Gaban... wasn't that the same as sending him to his death!?

Could this be punishment for daring to question him earlier?

Doflamingo's eyes reddened beneath his sunglasses, his fists clenching tightly. Gritting his teeth, he spoke with thinly veiled resentment.

"Godfather, are you sending me to die?"

Daren replied expressionlessly,

"If I really intended to send you to your death, your opponent wouldn't be Scopper Gaban. It would be Rayleigh, the 'Dark King.'"

Doflamingo was stunned.

"As the godson of Rogers Daren, if you don't even have the courage to face the third-ranked member of Roger's pirate crew... then you might as well just die."

After spitting out those words with a cold smile, Daren turned his gaze away from Doflamingo and back out to sea.

Opportunities had to be seized through one's own efforts.

Though Doflamingo's strength had grown rapidly, he lacked true experience against top-tier opponents.

Without the crucible of life-and-death battles, he could never even glimpse the threshold of becoming a top-ranked fighter!

Doflamingo stared at the tall, imposing back of the Marine Vice Admiral, his expression shifting constantly between ferocity and inner turmoil.

"Wahahaha! You said it, Daren! The Poneglyph is mine!"

At that moment, Roger finally couldn't hold back any longer and unleashed his Conqueror's Haki.

An even more powerful storm of Haki spread out, and the two god-like and demon-like auras collided in the air, creating even more violent thunder and lightning.

With one step on the bow, Roger shot out like a cannonball, and the moment his Meito Ace was drawn from its sheath, it dragged behind it a trail of black and red thunderbolts.

The sound was deafening, and he looked like a mad demon.

"Daren!"

Daren laughed ferociously and charged forward without hesitation!

He had not yet mastered the Conqueror's Haki, but the Haki released from his body was like lightning surrounding him, and a dark blackness spread from his brow, instantly covering his entire body.

Devil Form!

At this point, there was no retreat!

He was about to see, after more than a month of training, how far he was from the top fighting power in the world!

Boom!

The two collided in midair like shooting stars hitting the earth, their fists and swords clashing and sending out waves of air that radiated for several kilometers.

The sea beneath their feet was crushed and moaned, and the sky let out a mournful cry. At the point of collision between the two, a bottomless groove appeared.

Hiss!

A stream of blood spurted from Daren's fist, and with his defense broken, Roger's expression was clearly taken aback for a moment.

This feeling... and the depth of the wound... Something's wrong!

"Your physique has gotten stronger again?!"

He stared wide-eyed and let out a strange cry.

Daren grinned, splattering blood on his face, adding a touch of ferocity to his appearance, his eyes visibly turning red.

"What do you think?"

Seeing this, everyone in Roger's pirate crew was instantly shocked.

This Marine... Compared to the last time on Fish-Man Island, his physical defense had clearly become stronger!

This was unbelievable!

"No, what happened on Fish-Man Island cannot happen again..."

Rayleigh's eyes narrowed to slits, and a thought suddenly flashed through his mind.

This Marine brat's strength had improved so quickly, it was terrifying... If he did the same thing he did on Fish-Man Island and used his battle with Roger to improve his strength, then Roger's pirate crew would be doomed!

This kid wasn't a serious Marine like Garp, and he had super high-speed flying abilities!

It would be fine if their strength was enough to crush him, but if his strength rose to the same level as Roger's, they would never be able to rest easy again!

With that in mind, Rayleigh and Gaban exchanged glances and made a decision in an instant.

Even if they risked being labeled as cowards for fighting one against many, they had to kill this Marine here and not let him continue to grow stronger!

Stomp!

Stomp!

At almost the same time, Rayleigh and Gaban took action, leaping forward one after the other.

But just then...

Buzz, buzz, buzz!

A sharp explosion suddenly rang out and approached at a terrifying speed.

Shanks, who was arguing with Buggy, trembled all over, feeling as if his body was enveloped by a heavy aura of death in that instant, becoming stiff, covered in cold sweat, and unable to move.

His mind went blank, and in his dazed pupils, a flash of a sword approached him at an infinite speed.

I'm... going to die...

Countless images flashed through Shanks' mind.

Clang!

Sparks flew everywhere.

A blond figure suddenly appeared like a ghost, swinging his sword with both hands and blocking the howling Meito Kogarashi!

"Rayleigh-san!?" Shanks' eyes lit up again and he shouted in surprise.

Boom!

The tremendous impact caused Rayleigh's face to change, and the entire pirate ship was shot by Kogarashi and pushed ten meters across the sea!

The deck shook and cracks continued to appear.

The crew members fell in all directions and were terrified to see that all of this was caused by just one sword!

"Everyone... retreat!"

Rayleigh, who was forced to turn back, gritted his teeth and a drop of cold sweat slid down his forehead.

He was also filled with fear.

If he hadn't reacted in time, Shanks would have been pierced by that sword!

However, that wasn't the end of it, because he also saw that the other three swords that should have been hanging over the coast had disappeared.

Including the slowly retreating "Kogarashi," the four Meito swords...one in front, one behind, one on the left, and one on the right, formed a deadly cross, with their tips locked onto the center of the Oro Jackson.

"We... are surrounded by four swords."

Buggy said with a trembling voice, his face filled with fear.

The others also had their eyelids twitching and their spines tingling.

At that moment, the indifferent voice of the Marine came from the sky.

"Don't move, Rayleigh."

"Or else..."

Daren, who was wrestling with Roger, looked down at Roger's pirate crew below and smiled cruelly:

"They're all going to die."

Chapter 599 - 599: Volume 4 – Chapter 118: Do You Know How I Spent This Month?

The undisguised threat sent a chill down the hearts of everyone on the Oro Jackson, as if they had been thrown into an ice cellar.

Looking at the four Meito swords locked onto them from four directions, they felt all hope of survival being completely sealed off.

With their backs against each other, their expressions turned extremely grim, and none dared to make a move.

The sharp Meito swords emitted a biting, solemn aura, stirring strong winds that stung their skin.

If they hadn't seen it with their own eyes, they would never have believed that Roger's pirate crew, rulers of the seas, could actually be surrounded by four swords!

Shanks gulped hard, looking toward the Marine fighting with Captain Roger, whose body was already beginning to show wounds.

The fear in his eyes deepened.

"Damn it!"

Rayleigh gritted his teeth, sensing the eagerness of the four deadly weapons to strike, his heart sinking lower and lower.

This Marine brat Daren... he was too cunning!

How could he use such despicable, shameless methods to restrict their movements!

But what made Rayleigh feel even more powerless was that he truly had no way to break through Daren's trap.

Gaban had already made it ashore, and if even he left the pirate ship, under the threat of those four swords, not only would the crew be doomed, but even the Oro Jackson itself might be destroyed by the Marine.

Rayleigh tightened his grip on his sword, bloodshot veins gradually spreading across his eyes.

This was the most humiliating moment since he and Roger had set sail...

...

"Daren, you bastard! How could your physique have become even stronger!?"

Roger's incredulous roar echoed through the sky.

Taking advantage of Daren's momentary distraction, he swung his sword heavily, slamming Daren into the ground.

Boom!

In an instant, black-and-red sword energy exploded violently, stirring a tidal wave of dust into the air.

A crack hundreds of meters long tore through the ground, extending deep into the jungle and bringing countless trees crashing down.

The earth shook and rumbled.

Barely a second later, the figure of the Vice Admiral, wild and frenzied, shot out of the crack once again.

He stomped hard on the ground, the exaggerated force booming like muffled thunder.

His entire body, wrapped in rolling shockwaves, burst forward in a blink.

"Do you know how I spent this month!?"

"A month!"

Daren roared with bloodshot eyes, appearing above Roger in an instant.

His three pitch-black dragon claws erupted with boiling airwaves, unleashing a ruthless and overwhelming force!

Ryusoken: Dragon's Breath!

Roger stepped forward, gritting his teeth as he slashed upward with all his might.

"I don't want to know!"

Clang!

Boom!!

First came the sharp clash of metal on metal, then a roaring shockwave erupted outward from their clash, like a nuclear explosion.

A vast storm swept across the land, tearing the earth apart, surging seawater inland.

Countless trees and boulders were uprooted and swept into the air, churning like a sea.

Dragon claws and sword clashed violently, as the two combatants, eyes bloodshot, stared fiercely at each other, lightning seeming to crackle between their gazes.

Daren's chest and arms were soaked in blood, and a deep wound exposing bone slashed across his torso.

Yet his eyes burned fiercely with searing bloodlust.

He was getting closer!

Closer and closer!

After more than a month of relentless diarrhea and endless treatment in darkness...

He was finally getting closer to Roger, one of the strongest powers in the world!

Compared to their battle on Fish-Man Island, the pressure and injuries he now bore from Roger's Kamusari were clearly lighter!

He had also made clear improvements in endurance and recovery!

If, a month ago, he could barely last a day in a clean one-on-one against Roger before being defeated...

Now, he could fight for two full days!

Having drawn this encouraging conclusion, Daren's eyes burned even hotter.

His heart pounded like a raging engine, his blood boiling in his veins!

He stepped forward, threw punches, raised elbows, kneed his opponent, lashed out with whirling kicks...

All of his mastered close-combat techniques burst forth, overwhelming Roger's Conqueror's Haki-coated blade with sheer brute strength.

He completely abandoned defense and transformed into a beast of pure offense!

Blood splattered from his body as wounds multiplied, but the Vice Admiral's grin only grew more frenzied.

This was the feeling he wanted!

The sheer, unrestrained exhilaration of battling the world's strongest pirate head-on!

"This kid is crazy..."

Rayleigh watched from afar, feeling increasingly uneasy, a chill running down his spine.

Roger, caught up in the fight, probably hadn't noticed—and even if he had, with his reckless nature, he wouldn't have cared.

But as an outsider, Rayleigh could see it all clearly.

Roger's pirate crew had clashed with this Marine several times in less than two years.

From their first encounter in the first half of the Grand Line, where Roger casually slashed and nearly killed him on the spot;

To their brief meeting at the Battle of Edd War;

Then their clash at Fish-Man Island; and now, the scene unfolding before him...

With every collision and confrontation, this Marine showed strength far greater than the last.

From the cautious, calculating, and careful opponent at the start, to the probing and sparring at Fish-Man Island, to now, standing on equal footing and fighting fiercely, without restraint...

The transformation and growth of this Marine were truly chilling.

He... had gone from carefully testing Roger, to now enjoying the thrill of battling him—and it had taken him less than two years!

An unprecedented monster!

"I can't let you do as you please!"

At that moment, Gaban finally landed onshore.

With a leap, he appeared beside Daren, black lightning crackling from the giant axes in his hands.

Daren didn't even glance at him.

After taking a direct blow from Roger, he charged forward like a collapsing cliff, slamming toward Roger!

Boom!

The air exploded with a dull roar, and Roger felt as if he had been struck by a falling mountain, a salty taste rising in his mouth.

"Die!"

Murderous intent flashed in Gaban's eyes. How dare this guy ignore him!?

Fury surged within him, and he swung his axes down with all his might!

Clang!

Sparks flew wildly.

Several black threads slowly emerged from the void, firmly blocking Gaban's axes.

Gaban turned his head, only to see a blond young man at the other end of the threads, both hands taut, bloodshot eyes glaring fiercely, veins bulging across the backs of his hands—barely holding on.

"Sorry, your opponent... is me."

Doflamingo stuck out his tongue and licked his dry lips.

Despite the heavy pressure Gaban exuded, an eerie and twisted smile crept onto the corner of his mouth.

Chapter 600 - 600: Volume 4 – Chapter 119: Why Did He Try to Kill Me?

"This little brat..."

Gaban frowned as his two giant axes clashed with the black silk threads, sending sparks scattering in every direction.

In the instant he was distracted, Daren and Roger had already crashed into the jungle, locked in fierce combat, toppling countless trees and kicking up great clouds of dust.

Just as Gaban was about to pursue them, a flash of red glinted deep in his pupils, and his head suddenly tilted to the side without warning.

Shhh!

A bundle of sharp threads, wrapped in Haki, sliced through several strands of his hair and carved a long, narrow gash over a hundred meters into the ground.

"Didn't I tell you? I'm your opponent."

A hoarse, defiant voice sounded from behind him.

"You're asking for death, young man."

Gaban's anger flared.

He slowly turned, narrowing his eyes to glare at the blond kid in the pink feather coat standing not far away.

The giant axes in his hands, once again coated in Armament Haki, crackled with black lightning.

"You should know very well you're no match for me."

Doflamingo panted lightly, a sickly blush creeping across his face.

"Fufufufu, of course I know that."

He stared at Roger's third-in-command, his smile twisted and deranged.

"But compared to that, I'm sure of one thing: if I don't stop you here... he'll definitely kill me, right?"

Gaban froze at his words, his gaze flickering.

A hint of pity surfaced in his eyes as he looked at Doflamingo.

Could it be... that his fear of that man, or perhaps his desperate yearning for his recognition, outweighed even his fear of death?

What a pitiful little brat.

But...

"You have your convictions, and I have mine."

Gaban lowered his stance slightly.

As he stomped down hard, the earth behind him exploded into a cloud of dirt as he launched forward like a fierce tiger.

"Then don't blame me for being merciless!"

"Fufufufu!"

Doflamingo laughed wildly.

His figure soared upward like a flamingo, retreating while pulling back his hand—then swung forcefully!

"Overheat!"

In the skies above the deserted island, a massive orange-red whip burst out with explosive force.

The moment he unleashed his attack, Doflamingo was momentarily stunned to realize—his spirit seemed to have shifted subtly, as if strengthening...

...

On the sea.

On the deck of the Oro Jackson, everyone stood ready, struggling to deal with the relentless flashes of sword light cutting through the air.

"Ahhhh! We're all gonna die here!"

Buggy clutched his head and wailed, trembling all over as blades whistled past him.

"Damn it!"

Rayleigh cut down the whistling Oto with a single slash, breathing heavily.

As the battle between the four fighters on the island escalated, the four swords—once merely a "warning"—had now launched a full-on assault!

His expression grew heavier as he looked up, a bead of cold sweat sliding down his forehead.

Four intertwining sword lights, moving at speeds too fast for the naked eye to track, continuously targeted the Oro Jackson and its crew.

The angles of the attacks were sharp and unpredictable, and every strike came with rolling shockwaves, slicing the air into rippling circles.

Their speed had clearly surpassed the speed of sound!

From a distance, it looked like the entire ship was engulfed in a storm of swords.

The ship trembled and rocked violently, as if it could capsize at any moment under the relentless assault.

Even someone as powerful as Rayleigh found himself stretched thin, forced to move at high speed again and again to protect the others.

The ceaseless, storm-like attacks made it impossible to relax for even a second.

After all, the Meito swords were overwhelmingly focused on the pirate ship—and on the weaker crew members.

Most of all, their attacks seemed aimed at Shanks!

What the hell was going on?

Come to think of it, during their first encounter with Daren, that brat had tried to kill Shanks and Buggy.

Could there really be some grudge between Shanks and that Marine?

But... it didn't make sense...

Rayleigh took a deep breath, cutting down two more streaks of sword light, when suddenly his face changed.

A strange black light accelerated out from the chaotic sea of swords—heading straight for Shanks!

Damn it... I'm too late!

Shanks seemed to sense death closing in.

His face turned deathly pale, his body stiffening once again.

His pupils trembled violently as he screamed internally:

My body... move!

The black light raced closer and closer!

"Ahhhhh!"

Shanks suddenly roared.

Boom!

It was as if something had shattered, and a powerful aura suddenly burst forth from his body.

Rayleigh's eyes widened.

The others also looked shocked.

Conqueror's Haki... awakened!

With his Conqueror's Haki awakened, Shanks finally suppressed the fear in his heart and regained control of his body.

However, at this moment, the black light was already closing in!

It was too late...

A look of confusion appeared on his face.

He gritted his teeth, suddenly reached out, grabbed a figure beside him, and threw him forward!

"Ahhhhhh! Shanks, you bastard!!"

Buggy screamed and struggled madly.

The black light flashed by, and his head was instantly separated from his body.

His flying head, furious, floated in front of the gasping Shanks and roared through gritted teeth:

"Are you trying to kill me!?"

"I'm not done with you yet!"

Shanks smiled wanly.

But before they could react, the black light suddenly turned and struck again!

"No!"

"Save Shanks!"

"Damn it!"

"..."

The other crew members, including Rayleigh, cried out in shock, their expressions changing drastically.

But this time, no one could make it in time.

The speed of the black light had increased tenfold!

Shanks could only watch helplessly as the fierce black beam shot toward him at a speed that tore through the air.

A deep despair surfaced in his eyes.

He still couldn't understand—why did that Marine want to kill him?

But just then...

A rough hand suddenly reached out from behind him.

Armament Haki, flowing like water, instantly enveloped the black beam as the hand opened wide and seized it with force!

Boom!!

The figure was slammed backward by the terrifying impact, sliding ten meters across the deck, the wooden clogs on his feet grinding into fragments.

What is this...

Everyone stared, wide-eyed.

"Oden-san!?"

Shanks cried out in surprise.

Drip...

Drip...

Drops of vivid red blood fell from Kozuki Oden's one-armed hand onto the deck.

Blood trickled from the corners of his mouth, his hair was disheveled, his samurai uniform stained with dirt, and the strong stench of alcohol clung to him.

He looked every bit a worn-down, wandering samurai.

At this moment, Kozuki Oden, his eyes dull and lifeless, gripped the trembling blade in his hand tightly.

On his numb, shadowed face, a hint of deep sorrow and complexity appeared as he hoarsely whispered:

"Enma..."