

One Piece 741

Chapter 741: Volume 4 – Chapter 260: How Can One Rule the World?

North Blue, Philseque Island.

“They escaped, all of them...”

“How... how is this possible...”

“It was so easy...”

“Half of Mary Geoise has been destroyed...”

“...”

The Five Elders stared at the chaotic images projected by the Den Den Mushi in shock, their faces filled with disbelief as a tidal wave of emotion surged in their hearts.

They had never anticipated that Daren possessed such a powerful and elite air combat force—nor that he would choose the exact moment of their departure from the Holy Land to make such a bold and insane decision: to unleash the flying fleet upon Mary Geoise in a full-scale carpet bombing.

What enraged them the most was how utterly useless the Holy Land's defenses had proven to be. The so-called North Blue fleet overwhelmed them with a one-sided bombardment—then withdrew completely intact.

"It's such a pity we couldn't destroy Pangaea Castle."

Daren wiped the blood from the corner of his mouth and his face, then grinned, a wild gleam in his eyes.

"...And I didn't even get to see what you all meant by 'the World Government's 800 years of heritage.'"

Such blatant provocation made the Five Elders explode in fury.

"You're looking for death!"

"Daren, you brat!"

"How dare you!"

"You think you can escape?!"

“ ... ”

Their bodies swelled at once, rising like mountains as they transformed into monstrous and terrifying beasts, charging at the Marine Vice Admiral in unison.

Gyūki's spider legs stabbed forward, Houki's horns crashed down, Itsumade's breath scorched the air, Sandworm spewed venom, and Bakotsu exhaled freezing mist...

A deluge of attacks rained down on Daren, but he weaved through them with agile precision.

“Well then, let's end the game here for today.”

Four razor-sharp beams of light sliced across the ground with terrifying speed, instantly cutting the five massive beasts in half.

Seizing the brief window as the black smoke burned and their bodies began to regenerate, Daren—drenched in blood—let out a cold laugh and launched himself forward, propelled by a surge of magnetic force.

“Damn it!”

“Don't let him get away!”

“Marines... stop him!”

“...”

The monsters that the Five Elders had become roared up at the sky, their blood-red eyes the size of lanterns brimming with savage, murderous rage. As they struggled to rise, their massive bodies crushed the ground into clouds of dust and snow. Violent waves of energy exploded from them, kicking up terrifying shockwaves.

Trees shattered, the jungle crumbled, and the cloud sea recoiled from the blast.

The entire island shook and trembled under the might of the Five Elders’ fury.

“Mamamama! Looks like the show’s over. Didn’t get the Devil Fruit, but what a spectacle!”

Big Mom laughed heartily as she stood atop the frozen, broken battlefield. Flames wrapped around the Emperor Sword in her hand as she forced Sengoku back, then turned toward the Marine Vice Admiral streaking in low from the distance. Her eyes lit up with greed.

“Daren! What do you say—why not accept my offer?”

“Become my husband. With our strength combined, even the World Government wouldn’t be able to touch us!”

“I’ll even give you half of Totto Land’s vast territory!”

Before Daren could respond, Sengoku’s expression changed drastically.

“No!!”

He was about to speak again when the Five Elders’ furious roar echoed from afar:

“Sengoku... stop him!!”

Sengoku froze, staring at the approaching Vice Admiral. A flicker of hesitation passed through his eyes—but it was quickly buried beneath the resolve of a soldier obeying orders.

“Daren! You’ve committed an unforgivable crime!”

He roared, golden light erupting from his body as he transformed into a towering golden Buddha.

“In the name of the Marine Headquarters’ Admiral—I swear you won’t leave this island alive!”

As the words left his mouth, the golden Buddha shattered the ice beneath its feet and leapt into the air.

Zzzzzzz...

Black and red lightning surged across his body—Sengoku had unleashed his Conqueror’s Haki!

“I don’t believe I did anything wrong, Admiral Sengoku!”

Daren grinned wildly, and his own Conqueror’s Haki burst forth, dark and flowing like falling sakura petals, coating his arms.

The two charged at each other at blinding speed.

Both fists flew.

Boom!!

The impact of their clash detonated a colossal shockwave. Black and red lightning intertwined and tore through the sky, piercing the cloud sea.

The world was drained of color in an instant—only black and red remained, engulfing the heavens.

Waves of overwhelming force rippled out from the epicenter, ripping the earth, fracturing the ice, and spreading for kilometers in every direction.

“In your current state, you're no match for me!”

Sengoku roared, his eyes bloodshot.

“How would I know if I don't try?”

Blood poured from Daren's nose and mouth, but his gaze burned with a brightness and madness like never before.

“Besides... I'm really curious—how much of that ‘justice that rules the world’ do you even have left!?”

Those words struck Sengoku like a bolt of lightning.

Before he could respond,

Daren's eyes sharpened, and the Haki bursting from his body surged violently. Black and red lightning twisted and crackled through the air, and in that instant, his presence completely overpowered the Admiral standing before him.

"You've spent your life playing the Celestial Dragons' dog... and you dare speak of ruling the world!?"

The Vice Admiral's eyes flared red as he roared and hurled a fist downward.

"Blue Hole!"

Boom!

A punch with the force to shake the sea slammed straight into Sengoku's face, shattering one of his teeth and driving him brutally into the ground.

Boom!!

The Admiral crashed like a meteor, slamming into the earth as it erupted into waves of stone and dust, as if the land itself were a raging sea.

A massive crater tore open the ground, leaving every Marine watching from afar in stunned silence, unable to utter a word.

“Marines... Stop him!”

A monstrous black shape suddenly took flight. Itsumade, wreathed in black smoke, soared through the air as it gave stern orders, racing toward the battlefield.

“There’s no way out of this now, Daren...”

A streak of golden light shot into the sky.

Borsalino spread his arms wide, his body gleaming brilliantly with radiant light.

“You understand, right? I’m just following orders too.”

From above, he looked down at the panting Vice Admiral, muttering slowly as he tilted his head with a vacant expression.

Scorching, destructive golden light surged rapidly into the sky.

Chapter 742: Volume 4 – Chapter 261: I Will Keep You All Awake at Night

A dazzling golden light instantly lit up the sky.

“Yasakani no Magatama!”

Borsalino struck a pose. As his broad white cloak billowed behind him, countless golden light bullets, radiating searing heat, poured down like a torrential storm toward the blood-soaked figure of the Marine Vice Admiral.

“Hey, hey, hey... not holding back at all, are you?”

Daren grinned. A strange red glow surged in the depths of his eyes as his figure suddenly vanished into high-speed motion, turning into afterimages as he skillfully weaved through the barrage of light bullets.

The projectiles screamed past, bypassing Daren entirely and continuing toward Itsumade, who was flying toward them with wings spread wide.

“Damn it!”

Saint Mars let out a bloodshot roar. His massive beak opened and spewed out a sea of crimson flames, clashing with the incoming barrage in a thunderous explosion.

Even so, many of the light bullets pierced through and slammed into Itsumade's massive frame, exploding into chunks of scorched flesh and fire.

Itsumade howled in agony, his enormous body rolling across the ground.

Flames surged outward, and thick black smoke billowed into the sky.

"My bad, my bad. I was just a little careless, Mars-sama."

Borsalino raised his hands in mock surrender, a sheepish look on his face.

Daren smiled, just about to take a step forward, when a deep crimson light suddenly surged in from the side.

Crack!

The ground beside him split open, and a column of dark red magma erupted from the fissure.

Sakazuki emerged from the molten stream, his entire body radiating a frenzied fighting spirit. Bathed in magma, he thrust his arm forward like a rocket, launching a devastating punch at Daren.

“Inugami Guren!”

Daren's eyes narrowed. His Haki-clad fist shot forward without hesitation to meet the attack head-on.

Boom!

Their fists collided.

It was like a meteor striking the earth. A red and a black whirlwind exploded outward, clashing and devouring each other in a violent stalemate.

The ground convulsed with shockwaves. Sand and debris surged like a storm.

“So, you're going to stop me too, Sakazuki?”

Daren squinted, looking at the solemn man with lava dripping from his brow, and asked with a smile.

“At the very least, I can't let you leave so easily.”

Sakazuki's expression remained grim, his tone cold and sharp.

“That so? What a shame. I’ve got no interest in fighting you today.”

Daren shrugged. The instant a burst of Haki forced Sakazuki back, his figure suddenly shot into the air without warning.

Sakazuki’s gaze turned cold. He was about to use Geppo to pursue when a wave of freezing cold surged up from beneath his feet.

Looking down, he saw his legs had been covered in a sheet of white frost.

“Kuzan...”

Sakazuki turned to look back.

Kuzan knelt on one knee, a stream of frost curling from his mouth like a dragon. His expression twisted in reluctant frustration as he grit his teeth and muttered,

“Damn it! That bastard Daren dodged me!”

Sakazuki: “...”

He fell silent for a moment, then looked up toward the airborne Vice Admiral. Slowly, his clenched fists began to loosen.

“Daren, you brat! You’re not getting away!!”

Just then, a hoarse roar tore through the black smoke and flames.

Itsumade’s massive form burst out of the inferno, his colossal wings shaking the air as he surged toward Daren like a battering ram.

The sheer speed of his charge caused rings of white shockwaves to explode outward from the surrounding air.

“Tornado!”

The ground suddenly heaved.

A violent whirlwind rose from the earth, visible to the naked eye, twisting into a powerful tornado that instantly wrapped around Itsumade’s body, locking him in place.

Within the gale, Dragon's figure emerged, racing swiftly to Daren's side.

"Are you ready?"

As Dragon spoke, Kuma and Ivankov appeared silently beside him.

"Let's go."

Daren nodded with a smile.

Dragon chuckled and raised his hand, summoning a towering wall of wind. In an instant, the other Five Elders charging toward them were completely cut off.

The distorted, swirling wind wall was like an impassable gorge, separating Daren and the others from the Five Elders and the countless Marines. Both sides stared at each other across the divide.

"Even if you escape today, Daren, do you really think there'll be a place left in this sea for you to hide!?"

Topman Warcury snorted hot steam from his flaring nostrils, his eyes bloodshot with fury as he locked onto the Vice Admirals behind the wind wall and roared like rolling thunder.

The other Five Elders also glared with wrathful eyes, their enormous bodies radiating a suffocating killing intent.

“I never intended to run or hide.”

Daren smiled, flicking his fingers as sheets of metallic plates assembled beneath them, lifting Dragon and the others higher into the air.

“Starting today, the only ones who should be afraid... are the noble, mighty Celestial Dragons.”

As he floated ever higher, he looked down at the supreme authority of the World Government, a faint smile tugging at his lips.

“I’m someone who prefers peace and profit. As long as no one crosses the line, I usually try to avoid conflict.”

“But you left me no choice.”

“You desperately wanted to see me kneel before your arrogance and pride... and when I refused, you pushed me to rebel—just so you could have a justifiable excuse to eliminate me.”

“So let me just say this—congratulations.”

“You’ve succeeded.”

“From this day forward, I’ll become exactly what you wanted me to be: the most dangerous and terrifying enemy the World Government has ever faced.”

“I’ll stop at nothing to keep you all awake at night, to make the Celestial Dragons of the Holy Land fear for their lives, and to make the entire world tremble before the name of the North Blue Fleet.”

Saint Saturn sneered, his voice cold with disdain.

“And you really believe you’re capable of that? You still can’t do anything to us—even now.”

Daren smiled calmly.

“But I’ve already gotten the intel I came for, haven’t I?”

“Maybe next time, I’ll know how to deal with you.”

“And when that time comes, I just hope... you won’t panic.”

The Five Elders' pupils narrowed slightly.

Daren wasn't bluffing. That icy confidence in his eyes—he'd found something. Something real.

"So it's true... You actually do have a weakness."

Daren grinned wickedly.

He'd clearly noticed the shift in their expressions.

"You sly little brat!"

"Bastard!"

"Damn it!"

"..."

Realizing they had been tricked, the Five Elders erupted in fury.

Boom!!

The wind wall trembled under their blows, cracking and splintering as if the sky itself was about to collapse.

Daren laughed heartily, bowed deeply, and gave a graceful farewell.

“Well then, until next time, my esteemed Lords.”

With that—

Under the stunned and enraged stares of the Five Elders, Kuma patted Daren, Dragon, and Ivankov on the back one by one.

Then, as if they were never part of this world at all, their figures quietly vanished.

Chapter 743: Volume 4 – Chapter 262: Complete Defeat

Time seemed to slow at that moment, and the world fell into an eerie silence.

The Five Elders had already returned to their human forms.

They stood there in silence, faces shifting between rage and disbelief, staring at the spot where Daren and his group had vanished—as if struggling to accept the outcome. The suffocating killing intent radiating from their bodies was overwhelming.

Not far away, Sengoku climbed out of the crater. The surrounding Marines, seeing the grim and iron-faced expressions of the Five Elders, kept their heads low and dared not even breathe.

They were gone.

Just like that—gone.

The Five Elders couldn't believe it. A mission they were certain would be a guaranteed success had been unraveled so easily by that Marine brat!

Over 400 elite Celestial Dragons were killed during the so-called "hunting competition."

The ultimate prize— the overwhelmingly powerful Fuwa Fuwa no Mi—had been snatched by Daren.

The Five Elders had descended personally upon Philseque Island in the North Blue and even revealed their hidden “undying bodies.”

Even Mary Geoise, the Holy Land, had been half-destroyed. Over a thousand Celestial Dragons who resided in the Land of the Gods were reduced to ashes by the North Blue Fleet's bombardment...

And yet in the end, that bastard Daren still escaped!

The most terrifying part of all was—

Most of the World Government's trump cards had been exposed under Daren's probing, while they still knew next to nothing about that mysterious and powerful flying fleet.

Recalling that threatening, defiant grin on the Vice Admiral's face just moments before departure, and the chilling warning—

"I will make you all lose sleep..."

A heavy chill sank into the hearts of the Five Elders. Cold sweat seeped down their backs.

The enemy knew everything about them.

They knew nothing about the enemy.

The enemy possessed overwhelming strategic mobility—now vanished without a trace across the sea. Meanwhile, Mary Geoise, once thought unassailable atop the Red Line, had become an open target for aerial bombardment, completely without shelter.

This meant that—just as that brat Daren said—

From this day forward, the World Government would live beneath the looming shadow of the North Blue Fleet.

That elusive, unstoppable fleet would become a fearsome ghost, floating eternally above the World Government's "cross" of supreme power.

This battle...

The World Government had suffered a total defeat.

The Five Elders exchanged glances, and in each other's eyes, they saw a shared weight—unease and fear they could no longer hide.

Just then, two loud, mocking laughs echoed in the air.

“Wororororo! The show’s over... and you’ve lost all your dignity!”

“Mamamama! You arrogant worms thought it was in the bag—and got bitten by your own prey!”

Kaidou and Big Mom couldn’t help but cackle, their voices filled with unrestrained malice.

A massive shadow stretched across the ground. A graceful, voluptuous figure stepped onto a cloud-riding azure dragon and soared into the sky.

“Five Elders! You suffered a crushing defeat back at God Valley, and now the same ending on Philseque Island... The ‘authority’ of the World Government is downright laughable! Mamamama!!”

Big Mom’s sharp and flirtatious laughter pierced the air.

The Five Elders’ faces turned ashen.

“Big Mom, do you want us to descend upon Totto Land and sink Whole Cake Island into the sea?”

Topman Warcury's voice was as cold as a blade encased in ice.

“Mamamama... You lot have enough to worry about already, you decrepit old fossils!”

Big Mom laughed with scorn painted across her face.

“I’m guessing that from today on, you won’t even dare step outside Mary Geoise!”

“After all, who knows when that terrifying flying fleet might descend on the Red Line again?”

“Enjoy your fear. Savor it.”

With that, the savage azure dragon rode the clouds and carried Big Mom away, vanishing into the distant skies.

“Damn it!!”

Saint Saturn cursed under his breath. His face was twisted with fury, both hands gripping his ancient cane with force. Veins bulged and pulsed across his forehead like writhing worms.

The others didn’t look any better.

Humiliated.

After all the years they had ruled from the clouds above the world, never had they suffered a disgrace so deep.

Daren, that brat, was one thing.

After today, they were forced to recognize just how terrifying his strength and talent truly were—so far beyond this era it was absurd.

Just the concept and execution of that flying fleet alone proved that his thinking was visionary.

And then there was his power—enough that even the five of them together couldn't take him down.

A strange feeling flickered through their hearts.

Perhaps their decision had been too arrogant. Too hasty.

But they quickly shook their heads, forcing those doubts away.

It was too late now.

What mattered most was containing the damage.

Minimizing the fallout from pushing Daren into rebellion.

As for Big Mom and Kaidou...

For now, they weren't worth worrying about.

They could be left to Marine Headquarters to deal with.

"That little brat Daren..."

Saint Saturn spoke in a grim, icy tone.

But Saint Nusjuro shook his head and cut him off.

"Let's return and discuss this later."

As he spoke, Nusjuro cast a seemingly casual glance toward the Marine commanders standing not far away.

Saturn hesitated, then gave a slight nod and fell silent.

Seeing the Five Elders say nothing, Sengoku took a deep breath, stepped forward slowly, saluted, and cautiously asked,

“Elders, how should we proceed from the Marine side?”

“...In my humble opinion, Daren doesn’t seem to have any intention of defecting from the Marines. Perhaps... we could use that as a buffer to open negotiations?”

“Negotiations?”

Saturn’s brows arched sharply in disapproval, his gaze darkening as he turned to Sengoku.

“Sengoku, are you saying... that Rogers Daren, after killing so many Celestial Dragons, openly waging war against us, and even commanding a fleet that devastated most of Mary Geoise—that we should now lower ourselves and initiate peace talks with him!?”

His voice was filled with a biting, ruthless edge, and his eyes blazed with a harsh warning.

“To you, are we—the highest authority of the World Government—truly that insignificant?”

“Or do you believe the World Government’s 800 years of authority and legacy are so utterly worthless?”

Chapter 744: Volume 4 – Chapter 263: You... Are Afraid

“Sengoku! Watch your tone and remember your place!”

Saint Saturn and the other Five Elders were visibly heaving with rage, struggling to keep their fury in check.

Peace talks... That bastard Sengoku actually suggested negotiating with that damned brat Daren!

Does he even realize what he’s saying?

Peace talks?

Are we just going to forget about the hundreds of elite Celestial Dragons slaughtered on Philseque Island, or how the Holy Land Mariejois was nearly reduced to rubble!?

“As an Admiral of Marine Headquarters, your foremost duty is to uphold the dignity of the World Government—not to take the side of a traitor and criminal, making excuses for him or pleading for his right to live!”

Saint Saturn looked down on the Admiral before him and said coldly,

“If you had stopped that Navy brat earlier, he’d be dead by now, and we wouldn’t be dealing with this mess.”

Sengoku froze, staring at the Five Elders in disbelief, anger flaring up inside him.

You old fossils are the ones who caused this disaster, and now you expect me to clean up after you!?

The five of you, with your so-called 4,000 years of wisdom, couldn’t even stop Daren yourselves. If it weren’t for his Indestructible Body, he’d have been crushed long ago—and now you’re blaming me for not doing enough?

And you expect me to stop Daren? With what!?

Forget physique and strength—his Conqueror’s Haki already surpasses mine!

Suppressing his growing fury, Sengoku stiffened his tone.

“I have never once tried to shield or excuse Daren... I merely wish to remind you, my Lords, that provoking Daren without absolute certainty will bring consequences beyond imagination.”

“Rogers Daren once served under my command, so I know better than anyone how vengeful he can be... Corner him too hard, and it'll backfire.”

“And don't forget—Daren, as a former high-level decision-maker in the Navy, has been involved in numerous external operations. He knows our internal structure, our secrets, and even the World Government's military outposts like the back of his hand... With his strength, the might of his fleet, and that intelligence, he could easily wipe every one of those out.”

“Do any of you really want to wake up one day and find that, aside from Mary Geoise, every stronghold the World Government has across the seas has been completely obliterated?”

The Five Elders paused, their expressions flickering as they fell into silence.

Sengoku took a long breath.

Strangely, watching these arrogant old men—so high and mighty—left speechless gave him a strange sense of satisfaction, like gulping down an ice-cold Coke on a sweltering summer day. Every pore in his body felt like it was letting out a sigh of relief.

Of course, he knew that bringing up peace talks at a time like this, when the Five Elders were fuming, was far from ideal.

One wrong move, and his political career could go up in smoke.

But Sengoku had no choice.

He genuinely feared that, with their arrogance and pride, they might end up doing something truly irrational.

Daren's current power and influence had far surpassed anything Sengoku had anticipated.

No matter what, Sengoku didn't want to make an enemy out of such a terrifying opponent.

And the most frightening part—Daren knew the Navy inside and out.

Who knew what other cards he had up his sleeve?

Just as Sengoku was deep in thought, Saint Saturn spoke again.

His voice was raspy, yet held an unshakable finality.

“Sengoku, maybe your suggestion holds some logic—but you’ve forgotten one thing.”

The Five Elders raised their heads together, their eyes icy and full of disdain.

“We... do not negotiate under threat.”

Sengoku faltered for a moment, clenching his jaw as he tried to push his point—but Saint Saturn raised a hand and cut him off coldly.

“This discussion is over.”

“Your elite Marine units are to return immediately and secure Marineford.”

“No matter what it costs, you must keep Amatsuki Toki under control in Marineford!”

Sengoku trembled.

He stared at the five old men in front of him in disbelief, as if he couldn't believe what he was hearing.

They... actually intended to use Toki's life to threaten Daren!?

This was nothing short of... courting disaster!

Don't they realize that if they push Daren too far, he'll go completely berserk and plunge the entire world into chaos!?

...

At the same time...

Red Line, Mary Geoise.

The flames still roared across the land, and thick black smoke billowed into the sky.

The dim world was bathed in a crimson glow from the inferno, like a vision of hell on earth.

Thousands of Holy Land guards were rushing to carry out rescue operations, hauling in water to battle the blaze. Medical personnel darted back and forth, stretcher after stretcher carrying burned Celestial Dragons wailing in agony.

And yet, amid the chaos and panic, the law enforcement squads led by the God's Knights enforced an immediate curfew, launching intense patrols through every street of Mary Geoise.

"Seal the city walls! No one goes in or out!"

"Hand over all communication devices... Smash every Den Den Mushi!"

"This is a gag order! Everything you saw or experienced tonight—none of it happened, understood!? There was never any floating fleet above Mary Geoise. This entire disaster was simply caused by Fisher Tiger infiltrating the Holy Land and starting fires everywhere!"

With a loud slap, a law enforcement officer slammed a document in front of the civilians, his voice ice-cold as he issued the ultimatum.

The crowd—civilians, merchants, officials—stared at the document in stunned silence, too terrified to speak.

No flying fleet?

No city-leveling bombardment?

All of this... caused by one Fishman sneaking in and setting a few fires?

How could that be possible!?

Are they really trying to erase everything we've just lived through?

Trying to rewrite truth into lies?

But...

That invincible floating fleet—everyone saw it!

Still, under the weight of the World Government's oppressive rule and the cold, unblinking barrels of the law enforcement team's rifles, the people gave in. One by one, they handed over their communication tools and recording devices.

"Hey, what are you doing!? Put down that telegraph machine!"

Suddenly, a panicked shout rang out from the crowd.

Saint Figarland Garling's expression shifted, and in a flash, he moved.

Slick!

A flash of deadly steel split the air, nearly slicing the man dressed as a reporter clean in half.

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

Saint Figarland Garling strode over, Western sword still dripping with blood, and grabbed the dying man by the collar, eyes blazing with fury.

"Heh... You can't... bury the truth..."

"You... are afraid..."

Blood poured from the reporter's mouth as his life slipped away—but the grin on his face never faded.

"From today on... it won't just be the World Government looking down on this world! Hahahahaha!"

He burst into wild, unrestrained laughter.

Crack!

Saint Figarland Garling snapped his neck on the spot, then turned back with a grim, murderous glare.

A trembling law enforcement officer hurried over, holding the broken remains of a telegraph machine.

“S-Saint Figarland Garling-sama... The photos... The photos and the information... they’ve already been sent out...”

“We... we can’t stop it!”

Chapter 745: Volume 4 – Chapter 264: Big News! Big News!

Can’t be intercepted!?

Saint Figarland Garling felt the blood rush to his head, eyes bulging with bloodshot veins, his breathing sharp and ragged.

As the deputy commander of the God’s Knights and a firsthand witness to the air raid on Mary Geoise, he understood better than anyone what kind of terrifying upheaval would erupt across the world if the truth got out.

This wasn't just about a few hundred dead Celestial Dragons.

Sure, those fools who lived in the Land of the Gods were technically his kin—but Saint Figarland Garling couldn't care less about their pathetic lives.

What mattered to him was the dignity of the entire Celestial Dragon race, and the absolute authority of the World Government!

If the outside world learned the truth behind tonight's attack on Mary Geoise, the seas would explode in a storm unlike anything seen before.

Someone in this world actually dared to launch a full-scale, direct assault on the Celestial Dragons' sacred land—the very seat of the World Government!

Half of Mary Geoise lay in ruins. Thousands of Noble Celestial Dragons had died under the relentless barrage from the flying fleet... and the so-called strongest military force in the Holy Land hadn't even had the chance to lift a finger.

If that news spread, the supreme dominance the World Government had spent eight centuries constructing would be critically shaken.

If even the untouchable "gods" can bleed, if the unreachable becomes tangible, then the seeds of rebellion and defiance will be planted. They'll take root, grow, and ultimately swell into a world-shaking storm.

If the World Government isn't invincible—if this colossus towering over the world for 800 years isn't as hopelessly powerful as they thought—then why should anyone follow its rules or keep paying the Heavenly Tribute?

Under that kind of storm, even the very foundations of the World Government could begin to crack.

“Damn it!!”

Saint Figarland Garling cursed through clenched teeth, grabbing the law enforcement officer by the collar and yanking him forward, eyes blazing red with fury.

“Have you identified which newspaper he was from!?”

The officer trembled in fear under Garling's murderous glare, stammering,

“H-he was a reporter from the World Economic News Agency!”

“Their president is that damn troublemaker, Morgans!”

Saint Figarland Garling's tone turned cold and menacing.

“I don’t care what methods or resources you use. I’m authorizing you to involve the CP department if necessary... Just make sure every bit of information and data is erased!”

“Remember this—do it at any cost!”

A bead of cold sweat rolled down the officer’s forehead as he frantically nodded.

“Yes, Saint Figarland Garling-sama!”

...

At almost the same time...

In the New World, on a secluded island.

A uniquely designed ship sat quietly moored along the island’s edge. From its mast flew a flag bearing a microphone and seagull emblem, and the hull bore the words “World Economic News Agency.”

Countless seagulls swooped in from all directions, landing precisely on the ship's deck. Dressed in black suits, news agency staff moved quickly from the cabin, systematically retrieving letters and intel from the birds and scanning them swiftly.

Suddenly, a sharp gasp broke the calm.

The startled cry sent several messenger seagulls fluttering back into the sky in panic, their wings slicing through the air like a scattered net.

"What the hell is this!?"

"Mary Geoise—the Celestial Dragons' Holy Land—was bombed by a flying fleet!?"

"No way!"

A young staffer stared at the report, so shocked his jaw nearly hit the floor, eyes wide as saucers at the photos and text in his hands.

After a few ragged breaths, he snapped out of it and bolted from the cabin, panic etched across his face as he shouted,

"President Morgans! Something huge just happened!!"

Inside the bustling cabin, the clatter of typewriters and telegraph machines echoed nonstop.

The sudden cry jolted the bird-like man lounging on a leather sofa mid-cigar.

“Something huge?”

He looked bizarre—like a giant upright bird, with a sharp beak, tiny eyes, and white feathers covering his body. His wings resembled human arms.

Despite the outlandish appearance, his attire was sharply refined, like an old-school gentleman.

A black top hat with a red-and-white feather sat atop his head, paired with a light blue shirt, a yellow bowtie, red-and-white plaid trousers, and a flowing black cloak.

No one would guess that this eccentric figure was none other than the most powerful underworld media mogul alive—the president of the World Economic News Agency and the man who held the pulse of global public opinion in his hands... “Big News” Morgans.

“Let me see that!”

Morgans snatched the intel from his subordinate and flipped it open eagerly.

The moment his eyes scanned the contents, he froze as if struck by lightning.

He stood motionless, hollow-eyed, pupils trembling violently.

“President... are you okay?”

“What’s going on...?”

“Why isn’t he moving?”

“...”

Everyone in the newsroom stared blankly at their boss, utterly confused.

Then suddenly—

“Big news! This is BIG news!!”

Morgans burst out, face flushed with excitement, wings-for-hands trembling uncontrollably.

“Kwahahaha!! I’ve been waiting for this day!”

“Rogers Daren... the North Blue Fleet... flying warships... bombing Mary Geoise!”

“Kwahahaha!! You really went and did it... ‘King of the North Blue’!”

“You actually called the Five Elders’ bluff! Those five decrepit fossils must be losing their minds!”

“That means something insane must’ve happened on Philseque Island too!”

“Maybe Rogers Daren’s already declared war on the Five Elders!”

“...”

Morgans couldn’t stop talking, pacing back and forth, wildly gesturing, his eyes glowing with fiery enthusiasm.

“What kind of headline should I use for a scoop this massive?”

Click—

A chilling metallic snap echoed behind him. Morgans stiffened as he felt something cold and unyielding press against the back of his head.

“You’re not writing any headline.”

A raspy, menacing voice whispered behind him.

“President Morgans... I’m sorry. I can’t let you publish this story.”

The man in the war correspondent’s trench coat clicked off the safety on his pistol, finger tightening on the trigger.

“...This is an order from the World Government.”

Chapter 746: Volume 4 – Chapter 265: Kill Without Mercy!?

The entire cabin fell into dead silence.

Every staff member of the World Economic News Agency stared in shock, unable to believe what they were seeing.

A second later, angry shouts erupted.

“Weil, what the hell are you doing!?”

“That’s our president!”

“Don’t forget—it was President Morgans who saved your life when you were nearly frozen to death that winter!”

“How old were you back then? Wasn’t Morgans the one who took you in and raised you like a son?”

“Damn it! And now you’re pointing a gun at him!?”

“...”

The young man named Weil listened to their outrage in silence. He simply shook his head and spoke in a raspy voice.

“Destroy that intel, President Morgans.”

“You know better than anyone—if you dare publish this, the World Government will never let you go.”

Morgans slowly raised his hands, the scent of gunpowder from the barrel pressed to the back of his head lingering in the air. Then he laughed.

“Tell me something, Weil... Were you really just a homeless orphan?”

Weil was quiet for a moment before answering.

“Everyone in the CP organization is a homeless orphan.”

“Please, President Morgans... Just do as I say.”

Morgans slowly looked up, his gaze dazed as he stared out at the sky through the cabin window, then sighed.

“Weil, you know... Twelve years ago, I faced the exact same choice.”

Weil arched a brow.

“God Valley?”

“That’s right. God Valley.”

Morgans gave a faint smile.

“I once made a promise to a kid... to reveal the truth about what happened there. It would’ve been the biggest scoop of the century.”

“He was such a naive little brat... even if he looked as terrifying as a bear.”

“Twelve years passed. And I missed my chance.”

Weil asked coldly,

“You were threatened?”

“I was.”

Morgans chuckled lightly, a complicated emotion flickering in his eyes.

“The World Government came down hard on me back then. I had no choice but to give in.”

“They gave me a deal I couldn’t refuse.”

“I thought I’d never get another shot in this lifetime... but now, fate’s handed me a second chance—and I’m not letting it slip away again.”

As he spoke, Morgans slowly turned around to face him, even with the barrel still pointed at his head.

He smiled gently at the young man standing before him—the same boy he had pulled from a frozen alley fifteen years ago and raised into adulthood.

“Pull the trigger, if you really want to stop me.”

“But don’t expect me to back down willingly...”

Morgans’ smile softened.

“After all—I’m Big News Morgans.”

Silence returned.

Weil stood frozen, staring at the strange-looking man before him. His hand holding the pistol began to tremble.

His expression twisted with emotion.

Pity, coldness, frustration, anger, shock, confusion... an endless swirl of feelings tore across his face, until finally, it all collapsed into one thing—deep, overwhelming despair.

He suddenly gritted his teeth hard. A flash of grim determination sparked in his eyes.

To everyone’s shock and horror, Weil let out a beast-like growl, eyes bloodshot, and swung the gun toward his own temple.

He pulled the trigger.

Bang!

The shot rang out.

Weil's gun flew from his hand, knocked away in an instant.

He stood there, stunned, staring wide-eyed at the man now holding the weapon—

Morgans.

"My child, I didn't save you back then just so you could throw your life away now."

Morgans smiled as he patted his shoulder.

Weil trembled, then dropped to his knees with a heavy thud.

Morgans shook his head, blew away the white smoke from the gun's barrel with a grin, then turned to the gathered staff and issued his orders with solemnity.

"This place is no longer safe. Prepare to relocate—now."

"And also..."

He raised the intelligence documents and photos in his hand, spread his wings wide, and burst into laughter.

“Print all of it—get it on the front page of tomorrow’s paper. Run overnight editions... Make sure that by this time tomorrow, the entire world knows that the noble and sacred Celestial Dragon Holy Land, Mary Geoise, has been blown sky-high!”

“The headline will be... ‘The King of the North Blue, Rogers Daren, Officially Declares War on the World Government!—The First Battle of the World’s Strongest Fleet, the North Blue Fleet!’”

“The flying fleet has reappeared, and it may very well be the most powerful weapon of mass destruction in the world!”

“Kwahahahaha!!”

As Morgans laughed, the entire cabin straightened up. Every staff member stood tall, their chests puffed out.

“Yes, President!”

A series of deep rumblings echoed from the ship’s hull. A massive hot air balloon burst open from the ceiling, and the moment it was ignited, its immense buoyancy lifted the entire headquarters of the World Economic News Agency... into the sky!

...

The ship shook violently. Morgans looked out the window at the boundless blue sky and drifting clouds, a feeling of exhilaration and freedom swelling within him.

"President Morgans..."

A hoarse voice called out from behind.

Morgans paused and turned to see Weil still kneeling on the floor.

His eyes were locked on Morgans, throat trembling, eyes gradually reddening. In a raspy voice, he asked,

"Back then... what kind of threat were you under?"

Morgans fell silent for a long moment. Then he let out a faint, carefree smile.

"It doesn't matter... my child."

Weil felt as if he'd been struck by lightning.

...

Marine Headquarters, Marineford.

One after another, warships brimming with tension and might pulled into port. Even before the gangplanks fully dropped, Marine soldiers leapt from the decks, weapons in hand, moving swiftly and precisely toward a designated location.

Without a sound, the troops arrived in under ten minutes at the front of a traditional Japanese-style courtyard.

The buildings around it had collapsed, the ground scarred by battle—cracked, scorched, reduced to rubble like a war-torn wasteland.

Yet in the midst of this devastation, that one Japanese-style mansion remained perfectly intact, standing still and serene, untouched as if sealed off from the chaos around it.

It had been protected well.

But now—

As hundreds of Marines reached the scene, their hands trembled and their eyes reddened. Gritting their teeth, they raised their weapons.

Swish, swish, swish!

Dozens of black-muzzled rifles,

Blades gleaming in the sunlight,

Cold steel forged for war,

All of them—guns and sabers once wielded in brotherhood—

Now aimed at a group of all-too-familiar figures, battered and bloodied, standing before the mansion.

More precisely,

They were all aimed at the purple-haired old man standing at the very front of the group.

“By order of the Five Elders, the supreme authority of the World Government, this location is now under military lockdown!”

“All personnel—evacuate this mansion immediately, or else... you will be executed without mercy!!”

Chapter 747: Volume 4 – Chapter 266: Last Time I Was Away

“...Kill them all!”

As the Marine’s icy order fell like a cold ship’s anchor, silence engulfed the entire devastated block.

Tick.

Raindrops began to fall from the night sky, spreading across the ground, growing heavier with each passing second.

The rain poured steadily, like a vast curtain draping over the world.

Cold rifles, gleaming sabers, rows of tense Marine soldiers...

At that moment, the world felt like a grave where hearts were laid to rest.

“So what you're saying is... if I don't move, you'll kill me too?”

The purple-haired old man in a Marine coat finally spoke, his hoarse voice low and steady.

His head was bowed, icy rain streaming down his deeply wrinkled face, making his pallor even more striking.

A lit cigar clenched between his teeth glowed faintly red in the dark rain, burning stubbornly.

But his bloodshot eyes were filled with rising fury.

Under that fierce, unyielding gaze, the gathered Marines and officers all took a step back. Their expressions shifted uneasily, none daring to approach.

Just sitting there on the muddy ground, the old man's presence alone exuded a weight and resilience that felt insurmountable.

“Zephyr. Don't make this more difficult than it needs to be.”

A deep voice rose from the crowd.

The Marines instinctively parted to make way as Sengoku, wearing his Admiral's cloak, stepped forward with a grim look on his face.

"You know full well, as a Marine, you cannot defy the World Government's orders."

Sengoku stared down at the purple-haired figure seated in the mud, his tone cold and unyielding, though his eyes betrayed a complicated emotion.

"Orders, huh... Sengoku, you're still as rigid and timid as ever."

Zephyr slowly lifted his head and looked calmly at the comrade he had served beside for so many years. Then he suddenly let out a contemptuous snort.

"Just because the government gave the order... does that automatically make it right?"

Sengoku froze. Seeing that look of disdain in Zephyr's eyes, a surge of anger rose from his chest. He gritted his teeth and shouted,

"Zephyr! Get a grip! This isn't the time for childish outbursts!"

“Do you even know what that brat Daren did!?”

“He massacred hundreds of elite Celestial Dragons on Philseque Island! He nearly wiped out their entire younger generation!”

The moment those words were spoken, the students behind Zephyr were struck dumb, frozen in place like they’d been hit by lightning. It was as if their souls had been sucked right out of them.

“Even if it’s that bastard Daren... this is just too much...”

Tokikake muttered, dazed, unable to believe what he’d just heard.

Gion’s face went pale. She stumbled back two steps, barely able to stay on her feet.

Shuzo and the other cadets stood rooted to the spot, horror etched into their faces.

Not far off, Magellan, still wearing his gas mask, looked utterly confused. Though he didn’t fully understand the gravity of what Admiral Sengoku had just said, the looks on everyone’s faces made it painfully clear—this was serious.

In this vast sea, the Celestial Dragons were the supreme nobility of the world, possessing unmatched power, wealth, and status.

Anyone who dared to lay a hand on them—no matter their rank or background—would be dealt the harshest of punishments.

Even someone like Vice Admiral Garp's own son, Monkey D. Dragon—once one of the Marines' brightest stars—was forced to abandon the Navy and become a wanted fugitive after killing just one Celestial Dragon. He became one of the most dangerous criminals on the seas.

Dragon only killed one.

But Daren... slaughtered hundreds.

No one could begin to imagine how the World Government would retaliate.

And yet, Zephyr's tone remained utterly calm.

"That's why an event like the one on Philseque Island should never have happened in the first place."

"Besides, Sengoku, even if Daren really did slaughter hundreds of Celestial Dragons—so what?"

"Everything he did has nothing to do with the people living in this courtyard, does it?"

Sengoku's anger surged at Zephyr's stubbornness. He stepped forward and grabbed Zephyr by the collar, gritting his teeth.

"You know damn well—"

He froze mid-sentence.

Because as he lifted Zephyr's collar, his eyes caught sight of the bodies stacked in the corner behind him.

A CPD agent lay there—his head, chest, and abdomen had been completely obliterated by a brutal display of martial might. The sight was horrific.

But that wasn't what shocked Sengoku the most.

Zephyr's Marine coat slid from his shoulders and fell to the ground.

Underneath, a purple shirt.

And a sleeve—hollow and empty.

“Your... your arm...”

Sengoku’s pupils shrank. His face twisted with disbelief.

Drip.

Bright red blood fell from the stump of Zephyr’s severed arm, spreading through the puddles on the ground.

“It doesn’t matter. Just an arm.”

The unnatural calm on Zephyr’s face made Sengoku feel like he didn’t recognize him at all.

His pale lips parted with a faint smile.

“No matter what a Marine has done... his wife and child are innocent, aren’t they?”

Zephyr looked straight at Sengoku and asked the question quietly.

Sengoku's hand, still gripping Zephyr's collar, trembled—then fell still.

Rain splashed on his calloused hands and bounced off. He didn't move.

"Answer me, Sengoku!!"

Zephyr's eyes turned red with fury as he roared.

"Weren't his wife and child innocent!?"

The world fell silent.

The rain grew heavier.

The former Admiral's voice echoed through the storm, laced with grief and wrath, ringing endlessly in the downpour.

Sengoku pressed his lips tightly together. His hand slowly let go of Zephyr's collar.

“Zephyr... you know very well... it’s never that simple.”

His voice was hoarse.

Looking at Sengoku’s tense, storm-darkened expression, Zephyr suddenly let out a quiet laugh.

“No, Sengoku. It’s actually very simple.”

“You just made it too complicated.”

“You want to follow the World Government’s orders and take Toki. I want to protect her—and her child. That puts us on opposite sides from this moment on. See? It really is that simple.”

A stream of smoke curled from Zephyr’s mouth like a dragon. His purple hair whipped violently in the wind and rain.

Black lightning crackled around his remaining arm, intensifying with each pulse. Then it exploded—an overwhelming force like an abyss bursting forth, spreading in all directions.

“If you want to take Toki, then step over my corpse to do it.”

“Come on... my comrade.”

Black lightning surged, tinged with red, swirling like a storm.

“Last time, I wasn’t here...”

Zephyr’s aura climbed furiously, so intense that Sengoku and every Marine present went pale.

“But this time... it’s different!”

Chapter 748: Volume 4 – Chapter 267: Nothing Happened

Somewhere in the Grand Line.

Baltigo Island.

Snow drifted gently from the sky when suddenly, a series of sharp, sonic booms sliced through the air, growing louder as they approached.

Then—

One figure after another came plummeting from the sky like cannonballs, crashing into the snowy mountains at staggering speed.

Boom!

Boom!

Boom!

Boom!

Four thunderous impacts echoed through the mountains, dislodging thick layers of snow in cascading waves.

“Damn it, Kuma! I told you to ease up!”

Dragon’s head, sporting a fresh slipper-shaped imprint, popped out of the deep snow. He spat out a mouthful of slush, cursing loudly.

As he spoke, more heads began to emerge from the snow one after another, all covered in frost.

“Apologies. The distance was too great... It’s hard to control the power of the Nikyu Nikyu no Mi precisely.”

Bartholomew Kuma brushed the snow off his head, offering a sheepish smile.

Dragon shot him a glare, grumbled, and yanked himself out of the snow, collapsing into a large, sprawled-out X shape on the ground.

“Never thought I’d live to see it... The Five Elders, the highest authority in the World Government, actually possess immortal bodies.”

He let out a sigh, eyes distant and clouded.

Anyone who had witnessed the Five Elders' bizarre abilities would struggle not to feel despair.

“Well, at least we’re still breathing.”

Ivankov swayed side to side, his voice tinged with relief.

Dragon suddenly seemed to recall something and turned to glance at Daren nearby.

“Hey, Daren... You still alive over there?”

Daren pushed himself up with effort, managing to sit in the snow. His entire body was streaked with dried blood, and he looked absolutely wrecked.

He pulled a bloodstained cigar from his coat, lit it, and bit down hard.

“Not dead yet,” he rasped.

He took a slow drag, then began regulating his breathing to recover strength, all the while quietly surveying the surroundings.

A vast field of white greeted his eyes. The island was locked in year-round snowfall, a classic winter island like Philseque.

Remote. Desolate. Surrounded entirely by sea.

From his trained eye, he could faintly discern a web of reefs in the nearby currents.

With terrain like this, even the Marines would have trouble landing without insider intel. It was a natural fortress—easy to defend, hard to invade. And with the snowy mountains for cover, it offered excellent concealment for a military force.

“Not a bad base. Is this your Freedom Fighters' headquarters?”

Daren took another deep drag, the sharp, bitter smoke clearing his head just enough to jolt his sluggish mind.

At the mention, Dragon puffed out his chest proudly.

“Hahahaha, that’s right!”

“Well, Daren? I combed nearly the entire Grand Line before I found this hidden gem of an island!”

“Baltigo has the perfect winter island climate—remote, sparsely populated, and the constant snowstorm serves as a natural shield to mask troop movements. Surrounded by undercurrents to fend off intruders... With conditions like this, the Freedom Fighters will grow rapidly and become a force that shakes the world!”

He got more and more fired up as he spoke. Eventually, he sprang to his feet, arms spread wide, and laughed grandly.

“This island is destined to become a pivotal point in reshaping the world!”

Daren stroked the stubble on his chin and gave a nod.

“Good location. But... you guys are broke.”

“...”

Dragon’s face instantly fell.

Kuma scratched his head with a goofy grin.

Ivankov nodded emphatically in agreement.

“From the looks of it, there’s not a single military facility... No port, no docks, no shipyards, no weapon factories, no warships, no training grounds... All the basics a proper army needs—you’ve got none of it.”

Daren shook his head with a sigh.

“If you want the Freedom Fighters to field enough power to threaten the World Government, at your current pace, it'll take five to ten years—minimum.”

Faced with Daren's blunt critique, Dragon's face flushed red.

"Building an army isn't exactly easy, you know. And forming one powerful enough to challenge the World Government's rule—"

He cut himself off, trailing into awkward silence.

Because in that moment, he remembered the monstrous strength of Daren's flying fleet.

The North Blue Fleet.

Just thinking about how overwhelming it had been during the air raid on Mary Geoise was enough to make Dragon, leader of the Freedom Fighters, green with envy.

That bastard Daren had built that kind of fleet in secret—without saying a word!

And judging by the scale of destruction, the North Blue Fleet had already reached a level where it could go toe-to-toe with the World Government.

Dragon looked around at the barren excuse for a headquarters—just a handful of pitiful buildings scattered across the snowy landscape—and couldn't help feeling a surge of frustration.

“Kuma, Iva, I need your Devil Fruit powers again. Help me recover—quickly.”

Ignoring Dragon’s sulking, Daren turned to Kuma and Ivankov, feeling some of his strength slowly returning.

“Hey, hey, hey! If anyone needs treatment, it’s me! I’m injured too, you know!”

Dragon stepped forward indignantly.

Daren gave him a glance.

“I’ll provide three billion Belly as an investment for the basic infrastructure of the Freedom Fighters’ headquarters.”

Dragon froze.

Then—

“Kuma, Iva! What are you two standing around for!? Hurry up and treat Daren-san!”

He shot them an angry glare.

Kuma: "..."

Ivankov: "..."

Daren continued,

"Also, the North Blue Fleet will provide full technical support for your military structure, unit formation, and personnel training."

Dragon blinked.

Then his eyes went bloodshot, and he started roaring like a madman.

"Damn it! Use your powers already!"

"Kuma, extract all of Daren-san's fatigue and pain—go on, transfer it all to me! I can take it! Let me carry Daren-san's pain!"

“And you, Ivan! One finger’s worth of injection isn’t enough—use five, no, ten fingers at once! Daren-san’s got the Indestructible Body, he can handle it! What? You can’t? Too bad!”

Daren: “...”

Kuma: “...”

Ivankov: “...”

...

One minute later.

The Vice Admiral was gone.

The ground was splattered with blood, as if something unspeakably horrific had just occurred.

Kuma and Ivankov, pale and trembling, approached the figure standing amidst the crimson-stained snow.

They winced as they cautiously lowered their voices.

“Uh... Chief, are you alright?”

Dragon stood frozen in place, arms crossed, blood still dripping from his body.

“Did it... go through?”

He asked with trembling lips.

Kuma stayed silent for a second, then gave a small nod.

Dragon took a deep breath and forced a straight face.

“N-Nothing happened.”

Kuma and Ivankov were both visibly moved.

“You’ve really outdone yourself, boss.”

Kuma patted Dragon’s shoulder earnestly.

But with just that one pat—

Dragon convulsed violently as if struck by lightning.

“AAAAAAGHHHHHHHHHH!!!”

His anguished scream echoed across the entire Baltigo Island.

Chapter 749: Volume 4 – Chapter 268: I Hope You Don’t Do Anything Stupid, Sengoku

Speeding through the sky!

The sea of clouds and air blurred behind him at an astonishing pace as the wind, sharp as blades, lashed against his skin and face. Daren's eyes gradually turned cold and sharp.

The power of the Nikyu Nikyu no Mi was undeniably strong and bizarre—capable of “repelling” people for instantaneous short-range teleportation or even long-distance, cross-island travel. But it wasn’t without limitations.

If the destination wasn't precisely known in advance, recklessly using the ability could easily send someone off course, dropping them into the sea.

That was why, even though Dragon and the others had received the coordinates to Philseque Island directly from Daren, it had still taken them a long time to arrive. It wasn't because they were stalling, but because they had to make multiple short jumps instead of one long flight, ensuring a safe landing and avoiding the risk of falling into the ocean.

But if it was a place Kuma had personally visited, things were different—he could send someone directly and accurately to their “destination.”

Unfortunately, Kuma had never been to Marine Headquarters, Marineford. To be safe, Daren chose to return under his own power.

“Wait for me, Toki.”

He muttered softly, his fists tightening instinctively.

The injuries on his body hadn't completely healed, but most wounds had already been treated by Kuma and Ivankov. The bleeding had stopped, and the cuts had scabbed over.

While he was far from being at his peak and it might hinder him in a life-or-death fight, his mobility wasn't affected.

More importantly, Daren knew he didn't have much time left.

The North Blue Fleet's relentless bombardment of the World Government might make the Five Elders hesitate to leave Mary Geoise.

But the CP agents under the World Government were spread across every corner of the sea—and with Sengoku's blind loyalty to the regime, he was very likely to make a move on Toki.

Daren trusted that Zephyr-sensei would protect her.

But how things would unfold wasn't something even Zephyr-sensei could fully control.

"Don't do anything stupid, Sengoku."

The icy wind howled like knives, and silent killing intent spread.

The magnetic field around Daren's body grew increasingly violent, boiling with power.

The silhouette of the Marine Vice Admiral rocketed through the sky like a missile, bursting through the atmosphere in a flash of white shockwaves, tearing through the heavens.

...

Marine Headquarters, Marineford.

A massive wave of pressure erupted, black and red lightning intertwining with a hellish gale, scattering the torrential rain in all directions.

The shock was so great that every Marine present changed expression in an instant.

“What the hell...”

“Conqueror’s Haki!”

“No way!”

“Zephyr-sensei awakened Conqueror’s Haki at a moment like this!?”

“But at his age...”

“...”

All the Marines stood frozen in disbelief, staring at the former Admiral who was releasing his overwhelming aura without restraint. Instinctively, they raised their arms to shield their faces from the crushing force.

Even Sengoku was visibly shaken, taking a step back in sheer astonishment.

Unlike the others, he had long since awakened Conqueror's Haki himself and understood its nature better than most.

Conqueror's Haki—was the rarest form of Haki, impossible to attain through training. Simply put, it was a power only those born with the qualities of a king could wield.

Typically, those with the disposition of a king would awaken it during their youth, often triggered by intense emotion or external provocation.

If someone didn't awaken it during their prime, the chances of doing so would steadily drop over time—eventually nearing zero.

In all the years Sengoku had worked with Zephyr and fought side by side with him, he had never once sensed the presence of Conqueror's Haki in him.

Not even when Zephyr's wife and child were mercilessly slaughtered had he awakened it.

That's why Sengoku had always assumed Zephyr lacked the traits of a king.

And yet now...

Confronted by his former comrade, Zephyr had awakened Conqueror's Haki!

"This is what the awakening of Conqueror's Haki looks like!!"

At the back of the crowd, Kuzan stared at the commanding, purple-haired old man, his eyes blazing with admiration, fists clenched tight.

"...To protect the families of his students, he didn't hesitate to sever ties with his old comrades just to uphold his own sense of justice... Zephyr-sensei is seriously cool!"

A nearby Marine, face red with panic, tugged at Kuzan's nearly flailing arm and whispered frantically:

"Shh, shh, shh!! Vice Admiral Kuzan, please! Keep it down—don't get so excited... Admiral Sengoku might hear you!"

Not far away...

Sakazuki stood with arms crossed, his expression as cold and stern as always. But beneath the brim of his cap, his eyes lingered on the purple-haired figure, flashing with a complicated emotion he couldn't quite name.

"To think it's come to this... When Zephyr-sensei gets angry, he really is terrifying."

Beside him, Borsalino casually stroked the stubble on his chin with interest. It wasn't clear if he was talking to Sakazuki or just musing aloud.

"Sakazuki, you're not planning to step in, are you?"

Sakazuki replied flatly,

"I don't see any evil pirates."

Borsalino blinked, then narrowed his eyes and gave a quiet chuckle.

The world trembled as the storm grew fiercer.

"Zephyr, are you really going through with this?"

The cold rain pelted down as Sengoku's expression darkened further, his tone grave.

He hadn't expected Zephyr to go this far for Daren.

"Spare me the lectures, Sengoku,"

Zephyr said between breaths.

"Losing your wife and child is a blow that can break a man."

"No one understands that pain better than I do."

He suddenly clenched his lone fist, and crackling black lightning surged upward.

"You have no idea how many times I've dreamed of this moment!"

The words had barely fallen when—

With a furious roar, the purple-haired giant burst forward like a raging tiger, stomping down with such force the ground cracked beneath him. He tore through the pouring rain, launching himself straight at Sengoku!

“Come, Sengoku! Show me that ‘justice that reigns over the world’ of yours!!”

The air thickened with crushing pressure. Sengoku’s heart pounded violently, cold sweat dripping down his back.

As someone who had once fought alongside him, no one knew better than he did—when this man got serious, his power was truly terrifying.

The kind of power that could tear through an entire battlefield single-handedly.

“Don’t get cocky, Zephyr!!”

Sengoku roared as his body surged upward, radiating blinding golden light.

The golden Buddha form shimmered like a blazing sun, briefly illuminating the storm-darkened sky.

The two men charged, bloodshot eyes locked in mutual fury. In the split second their gazes met, they both saw it—pure, unshakable fighting spirit.

They swung their fists at the same time—

Boom!

Boom!

A black iron fist.

A golden Buddha punch.

They crossed paths...

And slammed into each other's faces at the exact same moment!

Chapter 750: Volume 4 – Chapter 269: A Hero Who Stands Tall

Baltigo.

“Hey, hey, hey! Can you two at least try to be a little more careful here...?”

Dragon looked down at himself, wrapped tightly in bandages like a rice dumpling, and groaned in exasperation.

Kuma scratched his head, a bit embarrassed.

“Sorry... I’m just too clumsy.”

He lifted a hand to wipe the sweat from his forehead, but suddenly staggered and collapsed to the ground, completely drained.

“Kuma, you okay?!”

Ivankov rushed over in alarm.

Kuma shook his head.

“I’m fine. Just overexerted myself a bit.”

Dragon glanced at him, falling silent.

In truth, it wasn't just Kuma. After the battle on Philseque Island, even he and Ivankov were running on empty.

Only a monster like Daren could recover so quickly and immediately set off again for Marine Headquarters.

As for his reason for going back, Dragon knew it all too well.

Daren's wife, Amatsuki Toki, was still trapped in Marineford.

"But why didn't Daren-san just order the floating fleet to go back and pick up his wife?" Kuma asked, puzzled.

Dragon let out a sigh.

"Knowing him, the only explanation is that the fleet has other critical duties."

"Besides, Daren is a very smart man. And smart men tend to be suspicious."

"Amatsuki Toki is far too important to him. He wouldn't entrust her rescue to anyone else—not even the fleet he personally raised."

“...But he still chose to trust Zephyr,” Ivankov suddenly said.

Dragon smiled.

“That’s right. He chose to trust Zephyr-sensei.”

“In fact, you could say... Zephyr-sensei is the only person in this sea whom he trusts unconditionally.”

“To be honest, I was surprised too. Daren’s personality is practically the opposite of Zephyr-sensei’s. And yet, he trusts him this much.”

The future leader of the Revolutionary Army slowly lifted his head, gazing at the snow drifting through the high, distant sky, a soft smile on his face.

“But the more I thought about it, the more it made sense.”

“What do you mean?” Kuma and Ivankov asked in unison.

Dragon paused, then said slowly,

“Black Arm Zephyr is a hero who stands tall and proud.”

“Even the worst scum show their highest respect and trust to a hero like that.” Discover more novels at Novel-Fire.net

...

Black lightning and golden light from the Buddha form clashed and twined through the battlefield as two towering figures collided again and again, unleashing shockwaves that tore through the air.

The ground beneath them cracked and shattered without pause. Deep fissures devoured the remains of crumbling buildings around them like an earthquake ripping through the city.

The nearby Marines watched in horror as the two men, having thrown all defense aside, battled with reckless abandon. None of them dared to breathe too loudly.

They couldn't believe it—two of the most revered Marine veterans were locked in a brutal fight under these circumstances!

“Zephyr! Step aside right now! I don't want to kill you with my own hands!”

Sengoku roared, his eyes bloodshot as the golden Buddha form unleashed a massive palm strike toward Zephyr.

Boom!!

A wave of golden force erupted like a hurricane, but was abruptly stopped by a violent whirlwind whipped up by Zephyr's lone arm.

"With your level? One hand is more than enough!"

Zephyr burst into laughter, his aura continuing to surge even higher.

Facing Zephyr's overwhelming momentum, Sengoku grit his teeth and charged in head-on.

But deep down, his heart sank.

Damn it...

Zephyr's Conqueror's Haki had only just awakened. And yet Sengoku was stunned to find his opponent's presence growing more dominant with every exchange—so much so that it was gradually starting to suppress his own.

Had he not seen it for himself, Sengoku would've never believed someone's aura could rise this fast.

It made no sense.

Boom!

They collided again. Elbows clashed, bursting the rain apart in a blinding wave.

"Zephyr, you know this isn't the time to be reckless!"

Sengoku's eyes burned with a mix of desperation and fury, his pupils rimmed with blood as he locked onto Zephyr and growled in a low voice.

"If you keep this up, I won't be able to protect you either!"

He quickly scanned the battlefield.

Led by Gion and Tokikake, the cadets were already locked in a fierce clash with Sengoku's forces. The fighting was intense, with both sides locked in a bitter struggle.

“The government isn’t going to let that brat Daren off the hook. He’s pushed things too far this time!”

Zephyr burst out laughing.

“Funny, I was thinking the same—except it's the government that Daren won’t let off easy!”

Then he launched another punch.

Stubborn old bastard!

Sengoku cursed him silently.

“Then don’t blame me for what happens next!”

Black lightning wrapped around their fists, and their admiral cloaks billowed in the wind.

They struck at the same time!

Boom!

Boom!

Their fists landed clean on each other's faces.

Both Sengoku and Zephyr were blasted back like cannonballs, slamming into the ground and carving out two massive craters.

Their faces visibly swelled, blood trickled from their mouths, and they gasped for breath.

Sengoku wiped the blood from his lips, eyes still locked on Zephyr, and raised a sharp military gesture.

Swish, swish, swish!

Hundreds of Marines raised their rifles at once, cold muzzles trained on Zephyr.

"So you've made your choice, huh? Even if it means dying, you'll stop me... Zephyr!"

Blood dripped steadily from Zephyr's severed arm. His body wavered, but his pale face lit up with a bold, unyielding smile.

“If I’ve made my choice, then I’ll see it through... That’s what a real man does.”

“And besides, Sengoku...”

He took a deep breath, forcing his injured body upright, eyes blazing red.

“I was the one who gave that child his name.”

Sengoku fell silent.

The rain kept falling, harsh and ceaseless, like it would never stop.

The two men stood across from each other, locked in silent confrontation.

All the surrounding Marines paused, unmoving in the storm, awaiting Sengoku’s order.

“...Then we have no choice, Zephyr.”

Sengoku's voice suddenly turned hoarse and heavy. His clenched fists trembled.

"A soldier's duty is to obey."

It wasn't just to convince Zephyr—it sounded like he was trying to convince himself, and the pained, conflicted Marines around him.

"To follow orders from the government without question... that's the core of our duty as Marines."

At those words, the soldiers and officers averted their gazes, their eyes red and teeth clenched hard.

The admiral's voice echoed out, colder than the storm itself.

"Former Admiral and current Chief Instructor of the Marine Academy, Zephyr... for refusing to obey government orders, I hereby issue a temporary arrest warrant in the name of the Marine Headquarters."

"Execute immediately!"

The moment the words dropped, it was as if lightning had struck the entire battlefield.

Gion staggered back, pale, murmuring, “No...”

One second...

Two...

Three...

Then the Marines began to move.

One after another, cold steel was drawn. Their sabers glinted under the freezing rain.

“We’re sorry, Zephyr-sensei.”

“It’s an order...”

“Please forgive us...”

“I’m sorry...”

Hands trembling, the Marines stepped forward, swords gripped tight, approaching the man they respected more than anyone else.

Their faces were a storm of emotions—pain, hesitation, guilt, anger, confusion—all bleeding together until it melted into numbness beneath the rain.

No matter how much their hearts screamed in resistance, their bodies moved on their own.

Because that obedience to the World Government's authority—the submission drilled into them through years of training—was etched into their very souls.

"Good."

Looking at the faces of the students he'd trained, twisted with anguish, Zephyr suddenly smiled with pride.

If they'd chosen their path, then they had to see it through.

Even if the one standing in their way was once their own teacher.

Zephyr grinned wide and clenched his lone fist.

“Come on, then!!”

With a burst of force, he dashed forward.

“Let me teach you one final lesson!”

The Marines gritted their teeth and charged.

Just as both sides were about to collide—

Boom!

A blinding flash of energy slammed into the earth like a lightning strike, sending a massive tremor through the battlefield.

A blast of dust and debris erupted, halting both sides in their tracks, their faces filled with shock.

They stared at the rising smoke ahead—and slowly, their eyes widened.

A black blade, its surface laced with violet flame patterns, was driven deep into the ground.

Like an unscalable wall, it stood between the two forces.

“What... is that?”

“That sword...”

“Enma!!”

Gasps spread through the Marines as panic swept over their ranks. They looked around frantically, searching for a familiar presence.

“Sorry, but today’s not a good day for lessons...”

A calm voice, tinged with amusement, echoed from high above Marineford.

“This final lesson will have to wait, Zephyr-sensei.”