

## One Piece 641

### Chapter 641: All Nations Gather, Wedding Approaches

Fish-Man Island.

The dreamlike underwater paradise was ablaze with celebration today. Every street was adorned with lanterns and flowing ribbons in all seven colors, while vibrant balloons danced in the currents above.

One by one, official ships from the various Member Nations of the world surfaced from the depths. Each was smoothly guided through the entrance to Fish-Man Island by Ryugu Palace guards riding sea beasts, before docking at the bustling port.

"It's so lively!!"

"This is the legendary Fish-Man Island?"

"King Neptune's wedding—looks like a lot of Member Nations were invited..."

"..."

Aboard the official ship of the Alabasta Kingdom, King Cobra looked around in awe at the island's unique seascape and vibrant culture.

With long black hair and dressed in desert-style royal robes, Cobra didn't radiate the usual authority of a ruler. Instead, he carried an easygoing and approachable air.

Brilliant coral reefs blanketed the seabed, while streams and fountains shimmered under the sunlight, reflecting dazzling colors. A faint rainbow arched across the distant sky.

Slender, graceful mermaid girls frolicked in the water like playful fish, casting shy, curious glances at the human visitors from the surface world.

"This really is paradise..."

Cobra stared at the lightly dressed mermaids, trembling with excitement, his eyes literally turning into hearts.

"Oh? Looks like you're quite fond of the scenery here..."

A soft, teasing voice drifted from behind him.

"Of course! These are beautiful meri—uh, I mean, Fish-Man Island!"

Cobra nearly blurted it out, but quickly caught himself, spinning around with a sheepish grin.

From the cabin emerged a graceful woman, moving with elegance. Her long, ocean-blue hair floated gently, and her sapphire eyes sparkled with quiet amusement.

If Daren had been here, he would've been shocked to see how much this woman resembled the future princess of Alabasta.

She was the current queen of the Alabasta Kingdom—Nefertari D. Titi.

"Why did you stop watching, dear? Look, some mermaid girls are waving at us..."

Nefertari D. Titi said with a faint, knowing smile.

Cobra shivered as a chill ran down his spine.

His expression shifted rapidly before he straightened up and declared with sudden solemnity,

"So what!?"

"To me, you are the most beautiful woman in the world!"

Seeing the murderous gleam in his beloved wife's eyes growing sharper, Cobra's face twitched.

Without warning, he turned and shouted in another direction,

"King Riku! Long time no see! What? A reunion? Of course, no problem!"

Before anyone could react, Cobra leapt from the ship with surprising agility and bolted toward Dressrosa's official vessel as if fleeing for his life.

Nefertari D. Titi watched her husband's retreating back and shook her head in exasperation.

She turned her gaze forward, staring off into the distance.

In the direction of Gyoncorde Plaza, a towering bronze statue could be seen standing proudly.

"Marine Headquarters Vice Admiral, 'King of the North Blue'—Rogers Daren..."

She narrowed her eyes, murmuring thoughtfully,

"So Neptune is putting all his chips on the Marines this time?"

...

Elsewhere, representatives and members from other Member Nations also caught sight of the statue at Gyoncorde Plaza.

Their expressions shifted, becoming complex.

Some sneered, others mocked, some remained silent, while a few fell deep into thought...

The relationship between Fish-Men and humans had always been tense, like fire and water. Even as Member Nations, it wasn't unusual for their representatives to be coldly turned away if they tried to visit the island on an ordinary day.

This rare chance to witness the wonders of this underwater paradise was purely thanks to King Neptune's wedding.

But now, it seemed that this grand celebration meant far more than just a royal union.

Right in the heart of Fish-Man Island's most symbolic site, Gyoncorde Plaza, stood the statue of a human—no less than one of the Marine Headquarters' most powerful figures today.

The political message behind this could not be clearer—and it was anything but simple.

"But... Neptune is so cunning and wise, I don't think he would resort to such tactics."

"Could it be the work of Queen Otohime?"

"That must be it..."

"It seems that Queen Otohime, who is highly respected on Fish-Man Island, is playing a very dangerous game..."

The representatives of the World Government Member Nations whispered among themselves, each with their own thoughts.

Of course, there were also those who didn't care much about it.

In a corner of the port of Fish-Man Island, on a Chinese-style ship decorated with antique furnishings, a burly figure was flipping through a guest list in his hand, and a surge of anger gradually rose within him.

"Garp! That bastard Garp is actually attending!"

This man was clad in a dark green cloak, his bulging muscles straining against his skin. As his anger grew, his black beard fluttered wildly in the wind.

The most striking feature was his head.

The forehead was flattened, as if the sharp skull had been forcefully crushed by some powerful external force, giving it an odd, sunken appearance.

Kano Country, 12th Leader of the Happs Navy... Chinjao the Drill!

A Great Pirate with a bounty of 542 million Belly!

"Damn Garp! This time, I'll settle all my old scores with you!"

Looking at the guest list in his hand, Chinjao's eyes turned red, the veins on his forehead bulged, and with his wild beard, he looked like a demon.

The terrifying killing intent kept surging out, as if it were real, scaring the guests who had come to attend the wedding to quickly hide far away.

"What kind of joke is this..."

"How could they even invite that bunch of thugs from the Happa Navy..."

"What bad luck!"

"..."

On the other side.

On a lavishly decorated merchant ship, a graceful figure slowly stepped onto the deck.

Her golden hair rippled in the wind like waves, and her slender white fishtail dress highlighted her graceful curves. Her long, white legs were clad in a pair of satin peep-toe high heels with red soles.

She held a parasol in her hand and squinted at the statue in Gyoncorde Plaza in the distance, her legs wrapped in her fishtail skirt twisting restlessly.

"I didn't expect that damn guy to come..."

Stussy bit her lip hard, as if remembering something shameful, her ears turning crimson.

"But in such a formal public setting, he probably won't do anything too outrageous... Yeah, that's probably right."

She reassured herself, exhaling a puff of smoke.

Lighting a cigarette, she walked toward the foreign dignitaries, her face adorned with a seductive smile, skillfully navigating the leering glances.

She was completely in her zone.

Chapter 642: I Think She Still Has Charm

"It's a warship!"

"The Marines are coming!"

"That dog-headed warship... it's the flagship of Marine 'hero' Garp!"

"I didn't expect him to be the Marine representative this time!"

"Wait! Is that... an ice sculpture on the deck?"

"..."

Just as the representatives of the World Government Member Nations were exchanging pleasantries near the port of Fish-Man Island, someone suddenly noticed something unusual and cried out in surprise.

The crowd reacted in various ways. Stussy, who had been gracefully mingling among them, froze mid-smile and subtly backed away.

A uniquely shaped warship approached, its protective coating slowly peeling away to reveal the figures standing on deck.

"Bwahahaha! What a lively scene!"

Even before the ship had fully docked, Garp's booming voice rang out unmistakably.

Wearing his iconic dog-head cap, he leapt from the bow of the ship and landed with a laugh, warmly greeting Cobra, King Riku, and other familiar royals.

On the deck, Tokikake leaned over the railing, eyes locked on the mermaid girls playing in the nearby waters, nearly drooling as his eyeballs looked ready to pop out.

His face turned bright red, saliva dripping, and his body trembled with excitement.

"Heaven! This is literally heaven on earth!"

Seeing him looking like a lust-crazed beast, Daren's mouth twitched and he quietly moved a few steps away.

He turned to the ice sculpture beside him and called out,

"Kuzan, stop sulking. We're here—snap out of it."

He gave the ice sculpture a light tap with his finger.

Cracks began to form on the surface of the frozen figure, spreading rapidly.

With a sharp series of "crackling" sounds, the realistic-looking ice sculpture shattered, and Kuzan emerged from the freezing mist.

"Finally, I'm here..."

Kuzan exhaled deeply, looking visibly drained.

Daren glanced at him, then casually shifted his gaze to Kuzan's crotch and asked with curiosity,

"You alright?"

According to Tokikake, those little blue pills were ridiculously strong—just one could keep you going all night.

And Kuzan, that hot-blooded fool, had popped nearly ten...

Kuzan blinked, then suddenly lit up with energy.

"Dahahaha! Daren, you really care about me as a friend! I'm touched!"

He struck a muscle-flexing pose and laughed loudly.

"I'm totally fine! I could duel you right now—huh? What's that!?"

His eyes caught something in the distance, and his passionate expression turned bright red.

Daren followed his line of sight.

A few bikini-clad mermaid girls were watching curiously, their glimmering tails swishing gently in the water, sending ripples across the surface.

He froze, then turned back to Kuzan—only to find him gone.

In his place stood a brand-new ice sculpture, just as lifelike as before.

Only one particular spot on the statue seemed... unnaturally swollen.

Offline again.

Daren: ...

Alright, those pills definitely work.

He rubbed his temples, already feeling a headache coming on.

"Hey, Daren, kid! Come over here—I'll introduce you to some old friends!"

Garp's voice echoed from nearby.

Daren shook his head and turned to answer.

As he stepped off the warship, all eyes at the port zeroed in on him, unable to look away.

Among the gathered leaders and dignitaries, there wasn't a single person who hadn't heard the name of the legendary Vice Admiral—Rogers Daren.

He had ruled the North Blue, destroyed the Flying Pirates, wiped out the Beasts Pirates' headquarters, launched a blitz on Totto Land, fought Roger, killed Shiki, and taken command of G5...

An unmatched list of ferocious accomplishments.

Combined with his striking appearance and distinctive aura, the man was cloaked in an air of legend.

And now, seeing him in the flesh—

That chiseled face that looked like it had been sculpted by the gods themselves, that wild and untamed charisma, that tall, powerful yet lean physique, all wrapped in a crisp Marine uniform...

The Vice Admiral, hands in his pockets and smiling as he approached, was like a walking aphrodisiac.

Several queens, noblewomen, princesses, and empresses in attendance felt their hearts race and their mouths go dry.

"This is the legendary Vice Admiral Daren, King of the North Blue. He really does have an extraordinary aura..."

Nefertari D. Titi, Queen of Alabasta, with her long royal blue hair, gazed at him, momentarily dazed, and couldn't help but exclaim.

Cobra, who had been sneaking glances at the beautiful mermaids, froze mid-smile. A sudden sense of danger welled up inside him as he locked eyes on Daren, his gaze filled with hostility.

"Come, Daren, this is Cobra, the king of the Alabasta Kingdom."

Garp, completely unaware of the tension, casually introduced them.

Daren offered a polite smile and extended his hand.

"It's a pleasure to meet you, Your Majesty Cobra."

Cobra narrowed his eyes, protectively shielding his wife behind him. He shook Daren's hand with a forced smile.

"Hmm, Vice Admiral Daren, you are truly a leader of the Marines. You have extraordinary charisma."

Daren smiled sincerely.

"King Cobra, you are too kind. I've long heard of your reputation. You ascended the throne at a young age, yet you govern with wisdom and strength. Your strategic prowess has brought peace and prosperity to Alabasta."

"Me?"

Cobra pointed at himself in confusion, briefly thrown off.

Daren nodded earnestly.

"Of course!"

"I've always admired you, King Cobra. And now that I've finally met you, I see that not only is your political talent unmatched, but your appearance is also remarkably dignified and impressive!"

"For a great and ancient desert kingdom like Alabasta, with millions of citizens, having a monarch like you... it's the greatest fortune of their lives!"

The moment he finished, everyone present was dumbfounded.

Even Garp was left speechless.

This guy... sure knows how to talk!

Cobra stood stunned, unable to respond for a beat.

A second later—

"Hey, you brat... speaking such truths!"

Cobra suddenly chuckled sheepishly, his face blooming like a flower.

"Wonderful! Garp-san, Vice Admiral Daren is clearly the brightest star in the Marines. Your judgment is spot-on!"

Everyone: ...

Basking in the praise, Cobra straightened up, puffing out his chest.

Garp then pointed to the queen standing behind Cobra.

"Daren, this is the Queen of Alabasta, Nefertari Titi."

Daren looked up and froze.

Isn't that Princess Vivi?

The woman before him carried herself with grace and elegance. She gave a refined curtsy and smiled gently.

Daren snapped back to his senses, realizing this must be Vivi's mother.

"Your Majesty is stunning and graceful... Judging by your appearance, you must be under twenty?"

He asked, feigning surprise.

"Giggle, giggle, Vice Admiral Daren, you're such a flatterer."

Nefertari Titi's eyes sparkled as she flushed slightly from the compliment, extending a well-manicured hand.

Cobra's eyelid twitched violently. He suddenly stepped forward and intercepted, grabbing Daren's hand before his wife could.

"Vice Admiral Daren, you're too kind." He beamed.

Daren: ...

This old guy, seriously?

Still smiling, Daren exchanged pleasantries.

Tokikake suddenly leaned in, lowering his voice.

"Hehehe, Daren."

"What is it?"

Daren asked casually while taking a drag from his cigarette.

"The Queen of Alabasta..."

Tokikake rubbed his hands together and chuckled,

"...I think she still has some serious charm."

Daren: ...

You really dare to say that.

He shot Tokikake a withering look, but just then, he seemed to sense something and scanned the crowd.

A graceful figure, like a startled deer, quickly ducked out of sight.

"What a coincidence..."

A curious smile tugged at Daren's lips.

Suddenly—

"Garp!! You damn bastard!!!"

A furious, hoarse roar erupted not far away, followed by a surge of dense black and red lightning.

Chapter 643: Daren, Go!

"Enemy attack!?"

"Who is it!?"

"Protect His Majesty!"

"Protect the king!"

The sudden commotion threw the entire scene into chaos.

Under the crushing pressure of overwhelming Conqueror's Haki, many of the Member Nation representatives turned pale, swaying on their feet, as if they might faint at any moment.

Guards from across the nations scrambled in panic, drawing their weapons with confusion and alarm.

They had come to Fish-Man Island to attend a royal wedding—who could have expected someone would dare to cause a scene here of all places?

Boom!

A deafening crack split the air as the ground trembled and dust shot skyward.

In the next instant, a massive figure soared high into the air—muscular, wild-haired, and bearded like a raging demon. His bloodshot eyes burned with hatred as they locked onto Garp in the crowd.

"Today, I'll have my revenge!!"

As soon as those words rang out, faces everywhere turned pale, and the crowd instinctively backed away.

"Chinjao the Drill!"

"The leader of the Happs Navy!"

"The leader of that violent gang!"

"Is he insane?! Picking a fight at a time like this!?"

Shock rippled through the gathering. Royal dignitaries and officials alike stared in disbelief.

"Bwahahaha! So it's you, Chinjao!"

Garp blinked in surprise, but the moment he recognized the man, he burst into laughter.

"It's been ages!"

Chinjao gritted his teeth.

"What do you mean 'been ages'! Don't act like we're old buddies!"

He jabbed a finger at his forehead, which was gradually darkening under a coating of Armament Haki, and growled,

"My head is like this because of you, you bastard!!"

Garp casually picked his nose and chuckled.

"Don't take it so hard. Honestly, you look even cooler now."

"...Your head used to look like a hammer anyway."

"You're the damn hammer!!"

Chinjao exploded in rage, unable to suppress the volcano of fury in his heart. His face twisted with wrath.

This bastard!

He had destroyed the one thing that mattered most!

And now he had the nerve to joke about it in front of everyone!

Back in the day, it was his uniquely pointed head that earned him the title "Chinjao the Drill." He had hidden a mountain of treasure in an iceberg that only his head could crack.

But years ago, in one devastating battle, that damned Garp flattened it.

Now, with his drill-head ruined, he could no longer access the treasure. It sat right in front of him—untouched and unreachable.

Chinjao had cursed Garp with every breath since that day.

"Die!!"

With a furious roar, his beard and hair whipped wildly as he shot into the sky, flipping in midair and aiming his hardened head downward.

Covered in glistening Armament Haki, his forehead turned a dense, steel-blue, gleaming with cold menace under the sunlight.

Then—

He accelerated.

He fell.

Under the force of gravity, Chinjao plummeted from above like a meteorite, his speed terrifying.

A fierce wind roared downward from the sky with him, and even the ground began to crack from the impending impact.

"Here it comes!"

"It's Chinjao the Drill! That legendary headbutt that can shatter icebergs!"

"Damn it! Is he trying to take all of us down with him?!"

Everyone's expressions changed drastically, panic spreading fast.

"Bwahahaha! I don't have time to play with you today. Daren, I'm leaving this to you!"

Garp laughed loudly as he picked his nose and, in a blink, ducked behind Daren.

Daren: ...

You old geezer—got yourself into this mess and now you want me to clean it up?

He grumbled to himself, but deep down he knew Garp had just handed him a golden opportunity.

Chinjao's rampage would definitely put others at risk.

If he could take Chinjao down here and now, protecting all these royal families and world leaders—it would be a massive political win.

And more importantly...

A wicked grin tugged at Daren's lips.

He was itching to test just how far his strength had grown since obtaining the power of the "Indestructible Body."

Before anyone could react, Daren's figure suddenly vanished from sight. Like a phantom, he reappeared—right where Garp had been.

Then—

"You little brat! You've got a death wish!!"

Chinjao the Drill roared as he plummeted like a meteor, his momentum only building.

Hasshoken Ogi: Kiryu Kirikugi, Open Chinjao!

BOOM!!

A thunderous explosion shook the entire plaza. A violent gale tore out in all directions from Chinjao's impact point, and within a hundred meters, the ground collapsed, torn open by massive cracks.

The earth surged like waves. The royals and political figures—who had already been escorted to a safe distance by the guards—watched in stunned horror, their jaws nearly hitting the floor.

Roaring shockwaves. Flying debris.

And in the middle of it all, facing an attack said to "shatter icebergs," the Marine Vice Admiral stood tall like a rock in a hurricane.

His black hair and white cloak whipped in the wind, his body glowing in the clash of Conqueror's Haki—

Unshaken.

Tokikake shrank back in shock.

Even Garp's eyes went wide.

Because right before them... Daren had taken the full brunt of Chinjao's attack with his forehead!

The two clashed head-to-head, unleashing bursts of black-and-red lightning.

"You brat!! How is your head this hard?!"

Chinjao's face twisted in disbelief.

Sure, Garp had once crushed his pointed skull, but that was Garp—

The Iron Fist of the Marines, known for his monstrous physical power and Haki.

But this kid?

This Vice Admiral had just tanked his Kiryu Kirikugi straight on—with his own skull?!

Was his head harder than the Ice Continent itself?!

Stussy, hiding among the crowd in the distance, turned deathly pale.

Watching the seemingly insane Vice Admiral still grinning under Chinjao's crushing pressure, she finally realized—

Back when she attacked Daren... he hadn't even been serious.

"That headbutt actually hurt a bit..."

Daren grinned, and before Chinjao could react, he moved like lightning, grabbing his opponent's arm.

Chinjao's eyes widened, pupils shrinking.

A tidal wave of unstoppable force surged from Daren's hand—

It felt like an entire iceberg had collapsed onto him.

"The arm of a giant..."

Daren sneered.

Crack. Crack.

His right arm bulged massively, muscles swelling like lava, straining against the seams of his uniform.

A searing breath escaped from his lips, turning into a cloud of white steam.

Then—

In front of a stunned audience—

The Marine Vice Admiral sank his stance, twisted his waist, and rotated his body...

He hoisted Chinjao the Drill into the air—

And slammed him straight into the ground!

BOOM!!

The earth screamed in protest as a thunderous shockwave erupted, dust clouds surging into the air.

Cracks ripped through the ground like black serpents, spreading in all directions.

Chapter 644: It's So Big and Hard!

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

"Did his arm just get bigger?"

"Is it muscle expansion? His strength has reached such an unbelievable level..."

"He looks just like a real giant warrior!"

The royal dignitaries stared in shock at the outrageous scene before them. Smoke and debris rolled across the ground like a coiling dragon, and a massive, gaping crater had formed in front of their eyes.

"That kid Daren is outrageous..."

Garp's eyes were wide as he watched the chaos unfold, his eyelids twitching uncontrollably.

Chinjao the Drill had been his long-time rival, and his strength was no joke—one of the top contenders on the seas. In his prime, his power had even come close to matching that of a Marine Admiral.

Even though Garp had dented his pointed head long ago, the sheer impact of that headbutt had been very real.

Garp figured that with Daren's current strength, he should be able to block it without issue—that's why he let him handle it.

But he hadn't expected Daren to go about it in such a crude and primal way!

Suddenly, a voice full of excitement burst out beside him. Kuzan had somehow thawed himself out of the ice and was now staring at the scene with a flushed, exhilarated expression.

"Amazing!! He really is my 'lifelong rival'!!"

Eyes blazing, he turned to Garp and asked eagerly:

"Garp-san, do you think I'm Daren's equal now?"

"No," Garp replied without hesitation.

Kuzan was momentarily stunned, but the joy on his face only deepened. He clenched his fists.

"This is so motivating!!"

"Not only did he get bigger, but he's really hard too!"

"That's what a real tough guy should be!!"

Tokikake, who had been cowering nearby, froze at Kuzan's words.

"He got bigger... and he's hard?"

Something clicked in his mind. His mouth slowly formed a shocked "O" shape.

"No way..."

His face flushed and then turned pale. Suddenly, he slapped himself hard, startling both Garp and Kuzan.

What's this guy on about now?

"Damn it!! No wonder he didn't want my medicine!!"

Tokikake howled in despair.

...

"Damn... you little brat, what the hell is going on..."

Chinjao groaned from the ground, barely conscious after being slammed down. Stars danced in his vision.

"I'm sorry, but Fish-Man Island isn't a place for you to cause trouble."

Daren straddled him, sitting squarely on Chinjao's chest. The overwhelming power of a giant bore down on him, almost knocking him out.

A cocky smile tugged at Daren's lips as he looked down at him.

"If this were any other day, you'd be losing at least an arm—if not your life."

"But today is King Neptune's wedding. On a day of joy like this for Fish-Man Island, it's best not to spill blood."

Chinjao's pupils shrank.

That look in this Marine brat's eyes... he wasn't bluffing!

"Vice Admiral Daren, please show mercy!"

Just then, a middle-aged man in traditional Chinese robes stumbled out from the crowd, gasping for breath as he shouted,

"Chinjao acted on impulse, he had no intention of defying the Marines!"

The king of Kano Country?

Daren cast a glance at him.

Before he could speak, the king of Kano Country bowed deeply and said sincerely,

"On behalf of Chinjao, and in the name of the King of Kano Country, I offer you my deepest apologies."

"For all the damage caused, Kano Country is willing to offer sufficient compensation."

His eyes were filled with urgency, cold sweat pouring down his face. He had no time to uphold his royal dignity.

Chinjao was the backbone of the Happs Navy, commanding Kano Country's military forces. He could not be allowed to fall here.

If Daren killed him now, the entire Kano Country would plunge into chaos—and might even be invaded by enemy nations taking advantage of the instability.

Daren's eyes glinted.

This king knew when to advance and when to retreat.

With Chinjao attacking Garp and disrupting the wedding at Ryugu Castle, as a Marine, Daren would've been fully justified in killing him on the spot.

But the King of Kano Country, a member of the World Government, had personally set aside his pride to apologize. That alone gave Daren more than enough face.

Far smarter than those arrogant, high-and-mighty royals from other allied nations.

"It's not my place to decide."

Daren suddenly smiled and turned to the other guests.

"I'm just a Vice Admiral. Chinjao the Drill's behavior earlier offended many of the distinguished guests here."

"If you're willing to forgive him, I've got no objections."

As soon as he said this, the eyes of the other royal dignitaries lit up.

They looked at Daren with admiration and approval.

What a tactful move!

Not only did he speak with grace, but he also handled the situation flawlessly—humbling himself and giving full respect to the royals present.

Cobra and King Riku exchanged a glance, both catching the look of appreciation in each other's eyes.

No wonder Rogers Daren's rise through the Marine ranks was like a rocket.

Setting aside his monstrous strength, just this ability to handle things so smoothly was enough to make him a political powerhouse, able to navigate complex diplomacy with ease.

Hearing this, the King of Kano Country immediately turned and bowed toward the other World Government delegates.

"Please forgive us. Kano Country is willing to offer a token of goodwill as a gesture of sincerity."

Seeing his earnestness, the others began to speak up one after another.

"You're too kind. Commander Chinjao acted out of impulse."

"Yeah, exactly..."

"No one got hurt anyway."

"Let's put this matter to rest. The important thing today is to celebrate King Neptune's wedding."

As fellow member nations of the World Government, no one wanted to blow this out of proportion. Political compromise was par for the course.

"We defer to your judgment."

Daren smiled modestly and turned his attention back to Chinjao lying on the ground.

"Still, while he may be spared the death penalty, some punishment is necessary."

He suddenly grinned.

"Don't move. Bear with it for a bit."

Chinjao blinked.

Before he could react, Daren grabbed his head with both hands.

Zzzzt...

Violent power and Haki surged together, black lightning crackling from the clash.

With a loud roar, Daren pressed down with both hands!

"AAAAAAHHHHHHH!!"

Chinjao's scream of agony echoed through the hall, making everyone's scalp tingle and sending chills down their spines.

But soon, they noticed something strange—and their expressions began to change.

Under Daren's "brutality," Chinjao's dented skull began to shift... and something sharp started to reform, sprouting before their very eyes like a drill spike!

Seconds later...

Daren released his grip, exhaled slowly, and stood up.

He clapped his hands with a cheerful smile.

"All done."

Chinjao gasped for breath, eyes fixed on Daren.

"What... what did you do...?"

He instinctively touched his head—only to feel a sharp, familiar point. He froze.

"This... this is..."

His hands began to tremble. His eyes reddened. Tears welled up.

"My drill... it's back!!!"

So... this Marine brat restored it!?

Suddenly realizing the truth, he jumped up, bowed deeply toward Daren's back, and said with a trembling voice,

"Daren... thank you! Thank you so much!!"

Daren waved it off.

"Just a small favor."

Everyone present let out a quiet sigh of relief, smiles spreading across their faces.

Chinjao got his head spike back—he was satisfied.

Kano Country regained a powerful asset—their king was satisfied.

The other royals were shown proper respect—they were satisfied.

Everyone was satisfied. A perfect ending.

"What a smooth operator..."

The thought echoed in everyone's mind.

They turned back toward the arrogant Vice Admiral—only to see he was already surrounded by a crowd of flirtatious women.

The kings, dignitaries, nobles, and merchant reps all twitched with suppressed rage.

Their wives, daughters, and concubines were now draping themselves around the handsome Marine like moths to a flame.

One elegant woman in a Western gown boldly reached out and touched Daren's firm, muscular chest. Her cheeks flushed, her heartbeat racing, but her eyes sparkled as she giggled seductively,

"Giggle... Vice Admiral Daren, you're so big and hard..."

The other ladies followed suit, emboldened by her lead, fawning over him and filling the air with perfume and laughter.

The faces of the kings and envoys turned as black as charcoal.

Garp: "Bwahahaha!"

Kuzan, eyes blazing: "So cool!"

Tokikake, seething: "You damn animals!!"

Hidden in the crowd, Stussy curled her lips in disdain—but deep down, she felt a strange pang of irritation.

Chapter 645: Vinsmoke's Little Princess

"Vice Admiral Daren, how do you even train? Your muscles are hard as rock..."

A princess from one of the Member Nations gently stroked Daren's abs, her cheeks flushed with admiration.

"Hey, look! My muscles are hard too!"

Tokikake suddenly sprang forward, eagerly flexing his biceps, even subtly using Tekkai to harden them.

The princess gave him a quick glance. Upon seeing his scruffy face, her expression instantly turned cold.

"Dead muscle."

She then smiled sweetly at Daren again.

Tokikake: ...

Dead muscle!? How is this dead muscle!? Can dead muscle hit this hard!?

He stood frozen, his face stiff as he screamed internally in frustration.

"So firm... not like me. My body's very soft, you know..."

A voluptuous queen in a Western court gown winked at Daren, sensually licking her lips and whispering seductively,

"I've been trained in dance since childhood—splits, flexibility, all the good stuff... I'm very skilled."

Tokikake trembled all over.

He shot forward again, gritting his teeth.

"I'm really into dance too!"

The queen gave him a side glance, then sneered coldly.

"Unfortunately, I'm not into ugly men."

Tokikake stood there as if struck by lightning, his face pale and expression lifeless.

Completely ignoring the intruding annoyance, the graceful queen stepped closer to Daren, leaning in until her breath brushed his ear.

"Vice Admiral Daren, would you like to give it a try?"

The moment she moved in, the other wives, ladies, and noble daughters surged forward, each flaunting their own special talents and charms.

"Vice Admiral Daren, I can tie a cherry stem into a knot without using my hands."

"Vice Admiral Daren, my family has a unique massage technique that'll ease all your tension."

"Vice Admiral Daren, I..."

A dazzling competition unfolded, each woman trying to outdo the next.

The male dignitaries present could only stare in stunned silence.

They were leaders and nobles from World Government nations—people who'd seen all sorts of spectacles.

But never anything like this.

Who would've thought that the same queens, princesses, and noblewomen—normally so proud and reserved—would suddenly become so bold and forward?

Garp was laughing so hard he pulled out a Den Den Mushi and started recording.

"Bwahaha! I'm definitely showing this to Sengoku later. He's gonna love it!"

"That rascal Daren really knows what he's doing—look at how he's instantly tightened relations between the Marines and all these nations. That's how diplomacy works!"

He beamed with pride.

"Exactly!"

Kuzan nodded vigorously, his eyes gleaming.

"This is seriously cool!"

But what neither of them noticed was the collective look of fury on the faces of the kings and royal representatives nearby—faces dark as soot, flushed red like pork liver, and faintly tinged with a not-so-imaginary green glow.

...

"This guy just doesn't know when to stop... He's surrounded by royalty and nobles from World Government member nations, and he's still shamelessly flirting?"

From afar, Stussy watched Daren laughing among the swarming women, her sneer growing colder by the second.

She glanced at the women with their flushed cheeks and overly affectionate eyes, practically dripping with desire, and scoffed in disgust.

"What a pack of shameless hussies... Their husbands and fathers are right here, and they're not the least bit embarrassed to act like this in public?"

Despite her insults, her voice carried a faint trace of clenched teeth.

Just then—

Buzz! Buzz! Buzz!!

A deep, piercing hum suddenly rang out from the distance.

A trumpet blared—grand, sharp, and full of foreboding. A wave of pressure rolled through the port, cutting the festive atmosphere short.

Everyone froze and turned toward the sound.

What they saw made their faces go pale with shock. Panic spread across the crowd.

"That..."

"That warship..."

"It looks more like a floating fortress..."

"Don't tell me..."

"Damn it!! Has Neptune lost his mind, inviting those war maniacs too!?"

Panic rippled through the crowd as anxious voices erupted one after another.

A massive, oppressive warship slowly emerged through the entrance tunnel of Fish-Man Island. As the membrane peeled away, it advanced toward the port with an overwhelming, murderous aura.

The ship was enormous, its base built like a fortified wall—thick, solid, pressing against the seawater so heavily that the entire inner channel groaned as if on the verge of collapse.

Atop the vessel stood a colossal, pitch-black military fortress. Rows of gaping cannons jutted out like the fangs of a beast, exuding a suffocating stench of steel and blood.

Lined across the deck were rows of soldiers, identical in appearance—emotionless, expressionless, and radiating a grim chill. This wasn't just a warship—it was a mobile war citadel!

Above the fortress, two flags flapped fiercely in the ocean breeze.

One bore the eagle cross of a royal standard. The other displayed a bold, black "66."

Their identity was unmistakable.

The Vinsmoke family!

Once the tyrants of the North Blue. The so-called "Army of Evil." A Member Nation of the World Government...

"It's Germa 66!"

Cobra's voice rang out, grave and steady, calling out a name that had long haunted nations and powers across the seas.

Germa 66 was unlike any other Member Nation.

It was a nation built entirely from military force—its will absolute and unified, its territory nonexistent. Instead, their warships served as mobile strongholds.

Their technological prowess was so advanced, they could traverse even the Red Line and engage in long-range warfare. They were one of the most powerful mercenary armies in the world.

Because of their mercenary nature, Germa 66 had fought in numerous regions across the seas, each time stunning the world with their devastating results. Many nations feared them, praying never to draw their attention.

And yet, such a harbinger of destruction had been invited by King Neptune to attend a wedding here—on Fish-Man Island!?

In an instant, unease swept the venue. Everyone tensed up, eyes flickering with anxiety.

"Clear the way!!"

A sharp command rang out.

Steel treads slammed down from the warship. Rows of black-suited soldiers marched off in perfect sync, each step echoing with killing intent as they stormed ashore.

They carried long spears and moved with military precision, their cold, lifeless faces showing no regard for the many high-ranking delegates nearby.

"Do they even have emotions?"

Kuzan scratched his head, staring at the sea of identical faces with curiosity.

Garp frowned.

"These are Germa 66's clone soldiers. Products of advanced cloning tech. Still... I didn't expect their discipline to be this terrifying."

Thud. Thud. Thud...

A series of heavy footsteps followed, slow and deliberate, as a powerful figure descended from the ship.

He was tall, commanding, and carried an air of unapproachable authority.

A gleaming metal helmet covered his head. Long, golden hair flowed down his back. His face was stern, with an angled black beard and a sharp chin dusted with a small mustache.

He wore the distinctive white robe of the Vinsmoke royal family, draped beneath a flowing orange cloak.

The commander of Germa 66. The head of the Vinsmoke family.

Vinsmoke Judge—nicknamed the "Garuda."

He radiated a heavy, blood-soaked aura. Just his presence was enough to make the royals and dignitaries feel the air thicken, their throats tightening as if gripped by invisible hands.

"My apologies. Just wrapped up a war. Running a bit late."

Vinsmoke Judge looked down at the solemn crowd, a cold smile curling at his lips.

As he spoke, a small girl with pink hair peeked out timidly from behind him, clinging to her father's leg as she curiously scanned the assembled guests.

Chapter 646: This Brother Is So Handsome

Just finished a war?

Everyone froze for a moment, then instinctively looked toward the Clone Soldiers and the warships of Germa 66. Only now did they finally notice—many of the soldiers still had traces of blood on their bodies and hands, and even the hull of the warship bore signs of recent battle.

Could it be...

A terrifying thought began to creep into their minds.

Suddenly—

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

The sound of Den Den Mushi calls echoed one after another throughout the venue.

The royals and dignitaries from various Member Nations quickly pulled out their Den Den Mushi. As they answered, their expressions changed dramatically—shock, then horror.

The message was clear:

"The Sicilian Empire in the West Blue, with a standing army of over fifty thousand... has been completely wiped out!"

They exchanged alarmed glances, the fear in their eyes unmistakable.

Although the Sicilian Empire wasn't a member of the World Government and was only a small-to-medium-sized nation, it was a nation of warriors. Even compared to Member Nations, its military power ranked comfortably in the upper-middle tier.

Yet such a militarily capable empire—with fifty thousand elite troops—had been annihilated in a single night!?

"Gulp..."

Many of the royals and representatives nervously swallowed, their throats bone-dry. Their eyes slowly shifted toward Vinsmoke Judge, as if looking at a walking nightmare. Instinctively, they stepped back.

Noticing their reaction, Vinsmoke Judge let out a scornful sneer.

This pathetic bunch of so-called Member Nation delegates—at the end of the day, they were nothing but cowards who bullied the weak and feared the strong. They were incapable of posing any real threat.

If not for the political complications of defying the World Government, he'd have already led the unstoppable Germa 66 to crush all their worthless kingdoms.

"Hehehe... Judge-san, it's been a while."

Just then, a casual voice with a hint of amusement rang out from the crowd.

Vinsmoke Judge frowned and followed the voice.

Out stepped a figure wearing a brown round hat, making his way forward at a leisurely pace.

"Sure, Germa 66 is famous and all, but showing up on Fish-Man Island still soaked in blood and acting all provocative at a wedding—don't you think that's a bit disrespectful to the Marines?"

Garp's eyes widened. His face twitched violently.

The man had both hands in his pockets, a toothpick in his mouth, and wore a pair of worn flip-flops on his hairy legs. He swaggered forward, raising a single finger to tilt up the brim of his hat—revealing a face he clearly thought was charming.

It was unmistakably... Tokikake!

The sudden move drew everyone's attention.

Many of the Member Nation representatives turned to look, surprised, and began whispering among themselves.

"Who is this guy?"

"Looks like a Rear Admiral from Marine Headquarters..."

"He seems pretty strong..."

"Just kind of rough-looking."

"Still, judging by his tone, he might have history with Vinsmoke Judge?"

"..."

Curious gazes locked on Tokikake, speculation spreading through the crowd.

Could it be that, aside from Garp and Daren, the Marines had sent another secret weapon?

With all eyes now on him, Tokikake could feel the cold sweat soaking his hands inside his pockets.

But his heart was pounding wildly. His body was trembling with excitement.

This was it!

Finally, this was his moment!

Everyone was watching him—Tokikake, the genius and heartthrob of Marine Headquarters!

If he could take down Vinsmoke Judge here and suppress that overwhelming presence...

He'd steal the spotlight from Daren!

And then—

That queen who could tie a cherry stem with her tongue,

That supple queen who could do full splits,

All those noble ladies and girls with all sorts of special talents and tongue tricks...

They would come running with stars in their eyes, begging for a chance to touch his glorious biceps!

"Marines?"

Vinsmoke Judge narrowed his eyes, a dangerous glint flickering in them.

Just then, the pink-haired little girl behind him suddenly pointed at Tokikake and exclaimed in surprise,

"Father, this old man is so ugly!"

Crack!

Tokikake froze.

He stared blankly at the innocent little girl, feeling as if the world around him had lost all color.

Everything turned black and white... then shattered like glass.

"Pfft!"

Garp couldn't help but laugh, but the moment he saw Tokikake's devastated face, he quickly slapped a hand over his mouth.

"So, who are you supposed to be?" Judge asked coldly.

His voice snapped Tokikake out of his soul-crushed stupor.

A wave of rage surged in his chest. Gritting his teeth, he growled,

"Don't tell me you've forgotten!?"

"Back in the North Blue, it was me who crushed your army and sent them running for their lives!"

Judge frowned again, examining the sleazy-looking man in front of him. After a moment, realization seemed to dawn.

"Oh, I remember now. You're that guy."

Tokikake grinned with satisfaction.

"Hahaha, I knew you'd—"

"You're the one I knocked out with a single shot."

Judge's cold smirk cut him off.

Tokikake froze mid-sentence.

His face slowly turned crimson.

Especially when he noticed the strange, almost pitying looks people were giving him—like he was a complete idiot—he wanted to dig a hole and vanish. His toes curled hard enough to crush the ground.

"Ah..."

A helpless sigh came from behind.

Tokikake felt a hand gently pat his shoulder. He turned around with a mournful look.

"Daren..."

"It's fine. You'll get used to it."

Daren shook his head with a soft chuckle.

Tokikake felt his heart ache even more.

Daren stepped forward with a calm smile and extended a hand.

"It's been a while, Judge-san."

Judge stared at the young Marine in front of him. It had indeed been a long time—he looked different now. His eyes flickered briefly with recognition.

After a moment, he took a deep breath and gave a stiff nod, shaking Daren's hand.

"Long time no see, Vice Admiral Daren."

He gestured toward the little girl beside him.

"This is my daughter, Reiju... I believe you've met her before."

Daren looked down at the pink-haired girl, crouched down, gently ruffled her hair, and smiled.

"Reiju-chan, do you remember me?"

"I held you once, right after you were born."

Reiju blinked at the young Marine before her, stunned for a moment. Then she suddenly turned and shouted,

"Father, this onii-san is so handsome!"

She rushed forward, throwing her arms around Daren's neck and planting a big kiss on his cheek. Her eyes sparkled as she asked sweetly,

"Daren-onii-san, can I marry you when I grow up?"

Vinsmoke Judge's face darkened instantly.

Tokikake's vision went black, and he collapsed onto the ground with a loud thud.

## Chapter 647: Then You'd Better Grow Up Fast

"Daren-onii-san, can I marry you when I grow up?"

The crowd around them burst into warm laughter, taking it as a child's innocent way of showing affection for a handsome big brother.

Everyone, that is, except Vinsmoke Judge—whose forehead veins twitched as his face darkened. He was clearly struggling to hold something back.

He hadn't forgotten.

He hadn't forgotten the humiliation, nor the title "King of the North Blue" that Rogers Daren had earned.

He, Vinsmoke Judge, the one burdened with the honor of the Vinsmoke family, the one who was supposed to revive Germa 66's glory, had been forced to bow his head before a mere Marine brat's dominance.

The mighty Germa 66—reduced over the past two years to the North Blue Navy fleet's biggest arms supplier.

To Judge, that was the ultimate disgrace.

These days, Germa 66 was waging wars all over the world under the guise of mercenary contracts, rapidly growing in strength. Outwardly, it looked like a quest for profit—but in truth, Judge was using those conflicts to train his troops.

His ambition had never changed.

To rule the North Blue.

Every battle was just preparation for the ultimate showdown—against Daren's powerful and mysterious Northern Fleet.

That fleet was the true enemy of Germa 66.

And the soldiers he had built through Lineage Factor modification—his very own children—were the weapons he intended to use to defeat Daren.

Only monsters can defeat monsters.

That was the lesson Judge had learned the day he suffered a crushing defeat at Daren's hands.

But now... now his daughter, Reiju, was showing affection for that same man!?

A faint milky scent drifted through the air as Daren laughed softly.

He scooped little Reiju into one arm, gently pinched her rosy cheeks, and smiled playfully.

"Of course you can—but that means you've gotta grow up fast, Reiju-chan. If you take too long, big brother Daren will be an old man."

"No, you won't!"

Reiju-chan hugged his neck tightly, her big eyes gleaming with innocent resolve.

"Even if you turn into an old man, you'll still be a handsome one!"

Nearby, Tokikake clutched his head in despair, looking utterly broken as he mumbled,

"You monster... You're even going after kids now..."

But thanks to the lighthearted exchange, the tension in the air eased considerably.

"Honored guests, thank you for your patience..."

A procession of turtle cars rolled up just then.

The Turtle Prime Minister of Ryugu Castle eagerly stepped down from one of the cars, wearing a wide, welcoming smile. He bowed deeply to the assembled guests.

"The wedding ceremony is about to begin. Please, esteemed guests, board the turtle cars to Ryugu Castle. His Majesty Neptune is already waiting for you."

...

The banquet hall of Ryugu Castle was adorned with lanterns and streamers, while balloons and ribbons twirled through the air in a dazzling display.

Beneath the shimmering crystal chandeliers, young and graceful mermaid singers sang softly, their melodious voices enchanting all who listened.

The wedding feast was set up as a buffet, with tables on either side of the hall laden with delicacies. Thanks to Fish-Man Island's unique location, the spread included rare deep-sea cuisine that was nearly impossible to find elsewhere.

A vivid red carpet stretched through the grand hall, leading to a circular platform at the far end.

"Pretty low-key..."

Daren ignored Vinsmoke Judge's murderous stare, holding little Reiju in one arm as he followed the Turtle Prime Minister's respectful lead into the hall.

He gave the setup a quick glance and formed a rough impression of Queen Otohime's taste—elegant, but unpretentious.

"Hey, Daren! This stuff is great!"

Kuzan's voice came from behind. Daren turned to see him grinning with excitement, holding a massive porcelain plate piled high with grilled meat and sashimi.

Daren's eye twitched. This guy really was just here for the food.

And it wasn't just him.

Behind Kuzan, Garp and Tokikake were just as bad, shoveling down food so fast that the poor servers were running ragged trying to keep up.

"..."

Daren sighed and shook his head. He picked up a small cake for Reiju and found a seat, quietly waiting for the ceremony to begin.

Less than two minutes later, the music softened.

The lights dimmed.

And from the raised platform, King Neptune—known as the "Great Knight"—appeared.

Then, with a flash—a spotlight pierced the darkness and lit up the grand entrance of the hall.

As elegant music swelled, the heavy doors creaked open, revealing a gentle figure in a snow-white wedding gown.

Her golden hair was styled into a graceful bun, and her deep blue eyes sparkled like the sea under the lights.

The tiara adorning her head added a regal touch, and the simplicity of her gown accentuated her slender frame. The long train behind her rippled along the red carpet like a flowing tail with each step she took.

"So beautiful..."

"They say Queen Otohime is stunning, and now that I've seen her in person—it's true..."

"She's got such a noble presence too..."

Whispers of genuine admiration spread through the crowd. Even the queens and noblewomen—normally the first to get jealous—wore kind smiles and offered warm glances of blessing toward the radiant bride.

"Queen Otohime's still got it, huh..."

Tokikake had somehow made his way to Daren's side, muttering through a mouth stuffed full of food.

Daren glanced at the huge plate of raw oysters in his hands and rolled his eyes.

Then Tokikake elbowed him and leaned in, lowering his voice with a lewd grin.

"Hey, Daren... Neptune and Otohime—they're pretty different in size, right? You think Queen Otohime can handle it?"

Daren was just about to fire back with a sarcastic jab—but then paused. As if something clicked in his mind, a knowing, amused smile curved at the corners of his lips.

"She'll be fine."

"Huh? And how would you know..."

Tokikake scoffed, but then caught the look on Daren's face—and froze.

A certain memory suddenly flashed through his mind, and his expression began to twist.

"I'm done eating!"

With a frustrated yell, Tokikake threw the oysters back onto his plate.

Daren smiled and narrowed his eyes.

...

"Now, we would like to invite someone incredibly important to Fish-Man Island to serve as witness to the marriage of King Neptune and Queen Otohime!"

From the stage, the Turtle Prime Minister's excited voice rang out.

"Please welcome Vice Admiral Rogers Daren from Marine Headquarters!"

Chapter 648: I'm in Your Care Now, Princess Otohime

As soon as the words were spoken, all the guests froze for a moment, their gazes turning in unison to Daren.

Daren's expression also showed surprise.

Me? The witness?

Are we... that close?

"Daren-san, this is the wish of His Majesty Neptune and Queen Otohime," the turtle prime minister said earnestly as he approached and lowered his voice beside Daren.

Daren looked over at Neptune and Otohime, puzzled.

Neptune nodded with a smile, while Otohime offered a gentle, sincere look.

"Daren-san, you once saved Fish-Man Island from the clutches of evil pirates. Having you as our witness would be our greatest honor."

Daren paused, remembering the bronze statue of himself in Gyoncorde Plaza. It all started to make sense.

"Bwahahaha! Go on, Daren!" Garp's loud laughter rang out from behind as he gave him a push. "Since King Neptune has invited you so graciously, don't turn him down!"

"Well then, I won't refuse." Daren smiled, stepping onto the red carpet under everyone's gaze and slowly making his way to the stage.

Looks like Fish-Man Island is really putting all its chips on this Marine...

But it makes sense. As one of the Marines' most high-profile figures, Rogers Daren has enormous influence.

And from what I've heard, he's also deeply trusted by the World Government...

If they can secure his support and protection, maybe many of the Fishmen's long-standing issues could finally be resolved...

Guests from all over the world whispered among themselves, their eyes flickering as they watched Daren.

He slowly ascended the platform, standing before Neptune and Otohime.

"My apologies, Vice Admiral Daren, I didn't inform you in advance," Neptune said with an embarrassed expression.

"It was my idea," Otohime added softly. "Ryugu Palace will do its best to compensate you afterwards."

Daren simply shook his head with a smile. "No worries. I'm here to celebrate with you both."

He understood their intentions well and didn't feel bothered. Instead, he felt a sense of sympathy for how hard it was for the Fishmen to survive in this vast ocean.

After all, as a king of a World Government member nation, Neptune should outrank a mere Vice Admiral like himself. Under normal circumstances, he wouldn't be remotely qualified to act as the witness at such a grand wedding.

This could only mean Neptune and Otohime were facing a difficult challenge—and hoped this wedding could earn them his support.

If that was the case, Daren was more than willing.

The Fishmen were a powerful force at sea, and he had long wanted to integrate them into his diving forces to coordinate with the aerial fleet.

Hearing Daren's response, Neptune and Otohime both looked visibly relieved and pleased.

Daren raised his head, and his deep, magnetic voice took on a solemn tone as he spoke:

"I, Rogers Daren, Vice Admiral of the Marine Headquarters, am honored to serve as the witness for this couple."

"Bride and groom, please take each other's hands and listen closely."

He turned to Neptune.

"Groom, in the name of love, do you vow to take the woman before you as your wife?"

"In joy or sorrow, in wealth or hardship, in health or illness... will you stay by her side for life, never abandoning her, cherishing her forever?"

Neptune gazed lovingly at Otohime and smiled.

"I do!"

Daren looked at Otohime with a smile.

"Bride, in the name of love, do you vow to take the man before you as your husband?"

"In joy or sorrow, in wealth or hardship, in health or illness... will you stay by his side for life, never abandoning him, cherishing him forever?"

Otohime smiled sweetly, her eyes misty, and nodded.

"I do!"

"Wonderful. Now, let's all give the happy couple a round of warm applause to celebrate their union and share this beautiful moment together!"

Daren was the first to clap.

Clap clap clap...

The crowd burst into smiles and applause as the music swelled once more.

With the ceremony complete, the lights brightened and the wedding party officially began.

Smiling guests naturally cleared a space as Neptune and Otohime stepped into their first dance as husband and wife.

Seeing this, the others soon paired up and joined in, filling the party with joy and celebration.

"Vice Admiral Daren, may I have this dance?"

At that moment, a queen in her elegant court gown walked over gracefully and gave Daren a playful wink.

"...So you can feel just how soft my body really is."

As soon as she spoke, the noblewomen, ladies, queens, and princesses who had been watching eagerly surged forward, their heated gazes locked on Daren.

A crowd of royals and dignitaries stood there stunned, their expressions slowly darkening.

"Of course, no problem... though, which lady should I dance with first?"

Daren said with a cheerful smile.

Swish!

The excited women instantly lined up.

Tokikake: ...

Even Daren was briefly stunned—he had clearly underestimated how desperate this crowd of women was.

"How about starting with me, Daren-san?"

A soft voice came from a figure in a snow-white wedding dress who walked over with a smile.

Daren looked at the elegant Queen Otohime in front of him and turned to the others with a grin.

"My apologies, lovely ladies, but Queen Otohime is the star of today's event. I'll have to accept her invitation first."

The others had no choice but to watch as Daren was led by Otohime to the center of the hall.

As gentle music began to play, Daren placed one hand in Queen Otohime's and the other lightly at her waist, stepping into the dance.

"Vice Admiral Daren really is popular..."

Otohime's hand rested gently on his shoulder. They maintained a proper, respectful distance—nothing suggestive.

It was customary in noble circles to dance together after the wedding ceremony, a normal part of upper-class socializing.

Her elegant face held a faint smile as she looked at Daren's flawless, handsome features and blinked playfully.

"...All the women here are completely enchanted by you. I doubt any of them will be able to sleep tonight..."

"Oh? Is that so?"

Daren chuckled without much concern.

"What about Queen Otohime?"

Otohime's smile faltered for a moment.

Her dance steps even paused slightly.

"Hahahaha, just kidding."

Daren winked mischievously.

"I'm in your care now, Princess Otohime—so you have to take responsibility for me."

#### Chapter 649: Scum with a Bottom Line

Hearing those seemingly suggestive words, Queen Otohime was briefly stunned. She lifted her gaze to meet the Vice Admiral's, catching the deeper meaning behind his look.

Realization dawned on her, and she responded sincerely,

"I truly apologize, Vice Admiral Daren."

"The Fishman tribe is in a dire situation. His Majesty Neptune and I had no choice but to resort to this plan."

"Fish-Man Island... needs Vice Admiral Daren's protection."

As she spoke the final words, a flicker of helplessness and concern passed through the clear light of Queen Otohime's eyes.

Daren, still dancing, let out a soft chuckle.

"Providing protection to Fish-Man Island is no problem for me. Besides, didn't you already build a statue of me in Gyoncorde Plaza?"

"And just now during the wedding, I served as the witness for you and King Neptune... I'm sure word of that will spread quickly across the seas. Soon enough, everyone will know that Rogers Daren stands behind Fish-Man Island as its guardian."

He'd seen through it immediately—both the statue and the role of witness were strategic moves by Fish-Man Island.

Neptune and Otohime wanted to leverage his reputation and status to deter the poachers and criminals eyeing the Fishmen. Daren suspected Neptune himself wasn't likely to have come up with such a political tactic...

Which meant this clever plan was probably the queen's doing.

In that case, in a way, he really had become "Queen Otohime's man."

"You've accomplished what you set out to do, haven't you?"

Daren said with a smile.

Queen Otohime bit her lip lightly and murmured,

"Tiger-san returned to Fish-Man Island a few days ago. He shared with us the pain of being captured and enslaved... and he also expressed his heartfelt gratitude to Vice Admiral Daren."

"In such an unstable world, the Fishman tribe needs powerful allies like Vice Admiral Daren..."

The music came to an end.

Their dance steps gradually stilled, her skirt flowing like a blooming flower.

"...Well then, Queen Otohime. A pleasure doing business with you."

A faint smile lingered on Daren's face.

He gently took Queen Otohime's delicate hand, placed a graceful kiss on the back like a knight, then handed her back to Neptune, who had been waiting eagerly nearby.

"Your Majesty Neptune, you have excellent taste," Daren said with a smile.

"Queen Otohime is sure to become the greatest and wisest queen in Fish-Man Island's history."

Neptune laughed heartily at the compliment.

"Vice Admiral Daren, you flatter us. In any case, we're truly honored that you joined us today."

"Please, enjoy the party as you like."

He gestured toward the cluster of noblewomen and royal ladies nearby who were practically glowing with anticipation.

"The guests can't wait to dance with you."

Daren let out a theatrical sigh.

"Well, what can I do? Caring for the people and maintaining diplomatic goodwill among nations is part of my duty as a Marine."

Neptune: ...

Otohime: ...

As Daren strode confidently toward the group of women, eyes glittering with excitement, both Neptune and Otohime quietly let out a sigh of relief.

"So... is he angry?"

Neptune leaned toward Otohime and asked in a low voice.

Otohime shook her head.

"He's more reasonable than I imagined. And surprisingly... he doesn't seem to match those rumors of being a lecherous scoundrel at all."

A flicker of puzzlement passed through her sapphire-blue eyes.

"The way he looked at me... it wasn't like other men, filled with blatant desire. His gaze was clear—with just a touch of appreciation. A pure admiration for beauty."

"His words were measured, and he never crossed any lines. He has a strong sense of propriety."

She gently touched her chest, her brows faintly furrowing as she murmured,

"Among the representatives of other Member Nations attending the wedding, quite a few harbor ugly thoughts, and some are clearly just here for the spectacle."

"But Daren-san... he seems to be genuinely offering his silent blessings for our wedding."

Neptune was momentarily dumbfounded.

If he didn't already know about Otohime's special Observation Haki—the kind that could listen to people's hearts—he would have thought she'd been completely taken in by Daren.

That war demon who nearly pierced Fish-Man Island with a cursed blade...

That so-called Marine scoundrel, rumored to have tangled with countless women...

Was he really such a decent man?

Words like that might suit Garp, but for someone known as "the biggest disgrace in Marine history," Neptune couldn't help but feel something was off.

Still... as long as he meant no harm to Otohime...

Neptune clasped her hand a little tighter, finally allowing himself to relax.

As if sensing her husband's thoughts, Otohime's lips curved into a beautiful smile. She gently rested her head on his chest and laughed softly.

"Vice Admiral Daren, that scum of the Marines, seems to have a bottom line after all."

Neptune glanced at the Vice Admiral, who was skillfully navigating his way through the crowd of mature queens and ladies. The corners of his mouth twitched.

"Are you sure?"

Queen Otohime laughed.

"Yes, he seems to only flirt with those who are already interested in him. Those wives and ladies who are loyal to their husbands and love—he doesn't take the initiative to get involved with them."

"What an interesting man..."

Neptune fell silent for a moment.

He looked from afar at the Vice Admiral surrounded by women and let out a breath.

This kind of life of a scoundrel is really...

I envy him so much.

...

"What a bunch of shameless women!!"

In a corner of the banquet hall, Stussy was cutting into the steak on her porcelain plate with so much force it looked like she might pierce the plate.

Her gritted teeth and murderous aura sent nearby guests—who had tried to strike up a conversation—scrambling backward, instinctively keeping their distance.

"Do they think this is love? Once that bastard's had his fill, he'll throw them away without a second thought!"

Stussy glared in Daren's direction with a cold smile, her lips curling in mockery.

"But what does it matter? Vice Admiral Daren is so handsome and sexy, with such a strong and perfect body... Even one night with him would be enough to savor for a lifetime, wouldn't it?"

Just then, a voice came from beside her.

Stussy turned and sneered.

"Then why don't you go?"

The young girl, dressed like a royal princess, blushed and shook her head.

"I-I'm not an adult yet. Otherwise, I... I'd go too."

She bit her lip and pointed in that direction.

"See that lady in the black evening gown? That's my mother."

"And the woman next to her in the red dress, the one almost fighting with her... That's my aunt—her younger sister."

Stussy: ...

You nobles really are a mess!

Before she could finish her internal rant, the princess from some kingdom beside her sighed regretfully.

"According to the butler, Mother and Aunt have already booked the most expensive hotel suite on Fish-Man Island... The other wives, ladies, and princesses did about the same."

"...All the hotels on Fish-Man Island are fully booked today."

Snap!

"I'm not eating anymore!"

Stussy suddenly stood up, her face pale, and stormed off in the direction of the restroom.

The little princess next to her jumped in surprise—

Because she had clearly seen that the knife and fork on Stussy's porcelain plate... had been twisted into a pretzel.

Chapter 650: I'm Just Trying to Keep the Peace

Women's restroom.

Bang!

The door was kicked open by a foot in peep-toe high heels.

"Damn it!!"

As soon as Stussy stepped inside, she gritted her teeth and cursed under her breath.

"He's just a disgusting, lecherous, shameless bastard!!"

"Why are those women throwing themselves at him like lunatics!?"

Her alluring face flushed and paled by turns, and for some reason, a nameless fury surged up from her chest, making her heaving bosom rise and fall violently.

Clacking loudly in her heels, Stussy marched to the sink. She suddenly turned on the faucet, scooped cold water in both hands, and slapped it onto her face.

Her heart screamed silently.

It was as if another voice echoed deep inside her mind, whispering over and over again:

Wake up, Stussy... This is a good thing.

So many women are clinging to him—he won't have the time or energy to bother you.

Isn't that what you wanted?

Once he finds a new toy, maybe he'll stop pestering you for good.

Isn't that what you've always wished for...

To be completely free of that bastard's attention?

...

Clatter...

Cool water streamed down her cheeks, dripping into the shell-shaped sink below.

Stussy stood motionless, staring at her wet, disheveled reflection in the mirror, gradually dazing out.

Yes, if that bastard really stopped bothering her, she might finally feel relieved.

Cutting ties with his control and harassment—that had been her goal all along.

But...

Her hand trembled slightly as she pressed it against her chest, her expression complicated.

Why did it feel so awful—watching him get swarmed by all those women, hearing that every hotel room on Fish-Man Island was booked?

Could it be... she'd developed some sort of feelings for that despicable bastard?

"That's impossible!"

Stussy suddenly clenched her teeth and shook her head hard.

She looked into the mirror at the figure that suddenly felt unfamiliar.

Almost involuntarily, she reached out and lightly lifted the hem of her skirt.

The lacy fabric slid up her smooth, pale thighs, revealing her pink knees... and the shameful mark on her upper leg.

As if recalling a certain memory, Stussy's face flushed crimson and her breathing quickened.

She bit her lip and suddenly rushed into one of the stalls.

Before long, a faint, drawn-out moan echoed softly within.

...

Banquet hall.

The wedding party was nearing its end.

"...Vice Admiral Daren, here's the room card for the private suite I reserved. I'll be waiting for you to come by for tea tonight."

A voluptuous noble lady silently slipped a card into Daren's hand, gave him a sultry wink, and lightly bit her red lips.

"My skills... are quite extraordinary."

She playfully twirled her brightly painted fingers, fluttering like a dragonfly's wings.

"I won't miss it, Lady Takayanagi,"

Daren replied with a smile.

"Daren, you rascal!"

Just then, Garp shuffled over with his stomach stuffed, grinning through his discomfort.

"King Neptune arranged a fine suite for each of us. It's getting late—let's spend the night here on Fish-Man Island and return to headquarters tomorrow."

"No problem, Vice Admiral Garp."

Daren nodded, then glanced at Kuzan, whose belly looked just as round.

He smiled.

"Where's Tokikake?"

Garp pointed in a certain direction.

Daren followed his gaze and saw Tokikake crouched in a shadowy corner, as if surrounded by falling snow. His back looked especially bleak and lonely.

"...What happened to him?"

Daren's mouth twitched.

Kuzan burst out laughing.

"At the party, he invited 38 queens, ladies, and princesses to dance... and got rejected 39 times."

Daren blinked.

"Didn't he only approach 38 people? How did he get rejected 39 times?"

Kuzan shrugged.

"Apparently one of them rejected him, walked away, then got mad thinking about it, came back to yell at him, and rejected him again."

Daren: "..."

Well then.

Shaking his head, he felt a bit sorry for Tokikake, so he walked over and called out.

"Tokikake, it's time to head back to the room and rest."

Hearing his voice, Tokikake slowly turned, tears streaming down his face.

"Daren... why... why don't they appreciate how handsome I am?"

Looking at Tokikake's tear-streaked face, Daren couldn't stop the corner of his eye from twitching.

...

Daren's hotel suite.

Daren pulled a thick stack of room cards from his coat and let them clatter onto the coffee table. He dropped onto the couch with a heavy sigh, crossed one leg over the other, lit a cigar, and exhaled a cloud of smoke, looking visibly drained.

Entertaining that many chattering women at the wedding had been an exhausting ordeal, both physically and mentally.

"What a bunch of hungry, crazy women..."

He rubbed his temples, but the hand holding the cigar paused midair.

A faint smirk tugged at the corner of his lips.

"How did you get in here?"

He looked up, amused, at the blonde woman who had appeared before him like a ghost.

Stussy stared at the smug Vice Admiral in front of her, her expression a mix of shame and frustration. She clenched her teeth hard.

"What exactly do you plan to do?"

She pointed at the mountain of room cards piled on the table.

Daren chuckled inwardly but simply shrugged.

"What I plan to do shouldn't really concern you, should it?"

"As a model Marine officer, maintaining close and in-depth relations with members of royal families and nobility from various nations is part of my duty."

"Also... aren't you forgetting how to address me?"

Stussy was so furious she looked like she was about to explode, her chest rising and falling with indignation.

This bastard... he could actually say such shameless things with a straight face?

Close and in-depth relations!?

"No!!"

She suddenly growled through gritted teeth.

But the moment the words left her mouth, she froze.

What right did she have to say no?

And yet, as the memory of what had happened earlier in the bathroom stall came back to her...

Stussy's expression grew increasingly conflicted, a blush slowly creeping across her face.

No matter what methods she tried, she couldn't recreate that addictive sensation from that day.

All she felt afterward was a bottomless emptiness.

Daren grinned.

"Why not?"

He grabbed a handful of room cards and made a move to stand up.

Unexpectedly, a pair of sleek black wings suddenly tore through Stussy's gown and extended from her back.

She had entered her vampire form.

Her entire aura shifted—now emanating a dangerous, seductive allure.

"If you go through with this, it will stir unrest among the royal families of the Member Nations!"

Stussy declared sharply.

"As a member of the World Government's top intelligence agency, I can't allow you to disrupt the political order!"

Daren: ...

Do you even believe that yourself?

"Alright, alright. Let's do this."

He began unbuttoning his uniform.

Stussy was stunned. Her cheeks flushed bright red, and her heart pounded uncontrollably.

"You, you..."

"Stop me. Or I'll go out and destroy world peace."

"O-okay..."

"And how should you be addressing me again?"

"..."

"If you don't say it, I'm stopping."

"Mas—no, I mean... M-master..."