

One Piece 751

Chapter 751: Volume 4 – Chapter 270: You've Gotten Stronger, You Little Brat

Drip... drip...

At some point, the rain began to ease.

The once chaotic battlefield fell into sudden silence the moment that figure appeared.

It might have been an illusion, but the Marines—who had only just gathered the nerve to raise their weapons against Zephyr under Sengoku's ruthless orders—seemed to crumble inside the instant they saw the Vice Admiral descend from the sky. They let out quiet sighs of relief, as if a weight had been lifted.

A subtle sense of gratitude spread through their hearts.

They gasped for breath like drowning men reaching the surface, their eyes fixed on the tall figure slowly landing before them, eyes filled with complicated emotion.

Because deep down, none of them could imagine what it would've meant to actually attack their former mentor today—how unbearable their lives would've become afterward.

In a way, Daren had saved them.

“Talk about perfect timing...”

Borsalino’s lips curled into a faintly amused smirk, his sunglasses hiding a teasing glint.

Kuzan’s fists clenched tight. His face flushed red with emotion as he looked at Daren, who had arrived just in time, his whole body trembling uncontrollably.

Sakazuki pressed his lips into a line, but the fists inside his black leather gloves quietly loosened.

“Daren...”

Sengoku stared fixedly at the figure ahead, his expression flickering.

Daren’s boots landed with a splash, crushing the rainwater pooled on the shattered ground.

Above Marineford, four gleaming Meito swords now hovered silently, their blades motionless but menacing—like scythes wielded by the Reaper himself, hanging ominously above every Marine’s head.

But the Vice Admiral didn’t spare so much as a glance at Sengoku or the thousands of Marines standing ready for combat.

Instead, he simply turned and looked at the purple-haired old man, who was panting heavily in the cold rain, white mist spilling from his mouth.

No one dared move.

Everyone here had witnessed the horror on Philseque Island. They had seen it with their own eyes—how this Marine monster had torn through the Five Elders, the highest authority in the World Government.

The entire world knew Rogers Daren never forgave or forgot.

They had tried to harm his wife and child—whether by duty or circumstance didn't matter. For that alone, Daren had a hundred reasons to kill them all.

So the scene shifted into something strange.

The battlefield was eerily silent. Not even the Marines dared to breathe too loudly.

Two figures—one old, one young—stood apart, facing each other from a distance.

“You’ve gotten stronger, you little brat.”

Zephyr looked Daren up and down, a proud smile slowly forming on his face.

Daren glanced at the stump where Zephyr's arm used to be, then at the blood-soaked shirt. He paused for a moment before replying quietly,

"But you've gotten weaker, old man."

Zephyr threw back his head and laughed heartily.

"It's just an arm. You should've seen my opponent... the bastard lost his head! Hahahaha!!"

That raspy but thunderous laughter cut through the storm like a blade. The calm and ease in his voice struck a chord in everyone's heart.

But Daren didn't smile.

He stood quietly in the rain, staring at the old man before him and asked,

"CPO, from the combat division?"

Zephyr shook his head, straightening his back with pride.

“Not just any CP0. It was the strongest shield of the Celestial Dragons—the very top tier of CP0.”

Daren was silent for a moment, then nodded.

“I’ll remember that.”

A small iron box appeared in his hand, and with casual ease, he tossed it to Zephyr.

The motion was relaxed, as if he were handing over a cigar.

But Sengoku’s expression changed instantly. His pupils shrank to pinpoints.

“What is that?”

Zephyr caught the box and frowned.

Daren answered flatly,

“During the World Noble Hunting Tournament on Philseque Island, over 500 elite Celestial Dragons hunted civilians to get this.”

“This was the tournament’s final prize... the Fuwa Fuwa no Mi.”

At those words, Zephyr froze.

The Fuwa Fuwa no Mi!?

The Devil Fruit that once belonged to Shiki the Golden Lion?

Before he could respond, Daren lifted a finger. A crackle of blue lightning surged over the box in Zephyr’s hands. The lid slowly opened.

Inside lay a golden, pineapple-shaped fruit, etched with swirling cloud patterns—its surface gleaming faintly in the rain.

In an instant, everyone on the field held their breath. Their eyes lit up with barely restrained heat.

The Fuwa Fuwa no Mi!

One of the most powerful Paramecia-type Devil Fruits in the world.

Its former wielder, Shiki the “Flying Pirate,” had nearly conquered the New World with its power. He even came close to sinking Marineford into the sea.

Even putting aside its legendary past, just the core ability—“floating”—made its value immeasurable.

Otherwise, the self-righteous Celestial Dragons would’ve never chosen it as the ultimate prize for their blood-soaked tournament.

Yet, even when faced with such a powerful and precious Devil Fruit, Zephyr gave it only a brief glance...

And then looked away.

He looked at Daren, his tone grave.

“Daren, given the situation... you need the power of the Fuwa Fuwa no Mi more than I do.”

The Fuwa Fuwa no Mi held immeasurable strategic value. Daren was about to face the most powerful and terrifying force in the world. With this Devil Fruit, the pressure on him might ease—if only slightly.

But Daren shook his head, voice steady and firm.

“No. I can’t entrust this Devil Fruit to anyone else.”

“You’re the only one I can trust with it... Please, Zephyr-sensei.”

Zephyr fell silent.

What he saw in Daren’s eyes was unshakable determination—beyond doubt or hesitation.

“I see. I understand now.”

He slowly exhaled, a heavy breath leaving his chest.

Then, a flicker of decisiveness sparked in his aged eyes as he reached out and grabbed the Devil Fruit from the box.

“No!”

Sengoku’s expression changed drastically.

“Stop him—!”

But before he could finish, four sharp beams of light tore through the air with terrifying force, blasting toward him.

Sengoku’s eyes twitched violently. In a flash, he transformed into his massive golden Buddha form, crossing his arms—now clad in Armament Haki—in front of his chest!

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!

The four Meito swords struck his arms like jet-powered missiles, slamming into him and launching his colossal frame hundreds of meters back.

As his eyes went wide and the Marines around him cried out in shock...

Zephyr shoved the Fuwa Fuwa no Mi into his mouth!

Shhk!

Juice burst from the corners of his lips. His expression stiffened instantly.

Fighting the urge to retch, he gritted his teeth and swallowed the fruit's flesh in one gulp.

The moment he did, a surge of heat erupted in his gut, rushing straight into his chest.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

His heart pounded violently, as if jolted by raw power.

Bulging veins began to crawl across his forehead, neck, and arms, pulsing with intensity.

Then...

Something unbelievable happened.

Under the stunned gaze of the Marines...

The gravel at Zephyr's feet began to tremble—then slowly, it started to lift off the ground.

Chapter 752: Volume 4 – Chapter 271: Let Me See Your Justice

Rumble...

A deep, low tremor spread from beneath their feet as gravel began to shudder and bounce, sending chills down the spines of every Marine present.

“So this is the power of the Fuwa Fuwa no Mi...”

Zephyr's eyes were now completely bloodshot. He pressed his lone arm to the ground, veins bulging across his forearm and the back of his hand as he panted heavily.

“...What an annoying power.”

Daren let out a quiet chuckle.

Everyone knew—men like Zephyr, legends from a bygone era—never held Devil Fruits in reverence. In fact, most of them viewed such powers with thinly veiled disdain.

To them, true strength came from Haki.

Flesh and bone clashing in life-or-death combat—that was the ultimate romance of a warrior.

Back in their time, even figures like Whitebeard or Shiki only used their Devil Fruit abilities to bolster their own raw strength or amplify the destructive force of their attacks. Between opponents of equal standing, battles still came down to fists, blades, and Haki.

Compared to the strange and flashy powers of Devil Fruits, the old guard trusted their fists and the steel in their hands far more.

The ground trembled beneath them. Unease grew in the eyes of the watching Marines.

From a collapsed military stronghold in the distance, Sengoku climbed to his feet, his eyes bloodshot as he stared at Daren and Zephyr.

“Daren, do you know something?”

Zephyr suddenly spoke.

He gasped for air, clearly still trying to adapt to the new, unfamiliar power coursing through his body. Slowly, he lifted his head to look at Daren.

“All these years... I’ve always regretted not being at God Valley.”

“I regret never getting the chance to fight a monster like Rocks, never standing alongside Garp to take down one of the greatest pirates in history... never becoming a true hero of the Marines.”

Daren’s eyes flicked to Zephyr’s missing arm. A flicker of sorrow passed through his gaze.

“I’m sorry... for dragging you into this.”

But Zephyr just smiled and shook his head.

“No. It doesn’t matter to me anymore.”

“Because I’ve finally realized—what lies behind the Marine hero’s title is far more brutal than I ever imagined.”

“Genocidal slaughter gave birth to those so-called heroes... And Marines like us were ordered to protect the very butchers who carried it out.”

“Daren... you did the right thing.”

He laughed freely.

“Those damn Celestial Dragons deserve to die!”

As if sensing something, Zephyr slowly turned his head to look at the mansion behind him—still intact, still untouched after all the chaos and bloodshed.

Deep inside the mansion, on the second-floor terrace, a graceful figure stepped out into view.

Her long, pale green hair flowed like a waterfall, dancing gently in the breeze.

Wearing a loose pink kimono, the gentle woman looked out across the battlefield. Her clear, bright eyes fell on the Marine Vice Admiral before her, full of quiet warmth and tenderness.

Amidst the howling wind and rain, she stood fragile yet unyielding, her smile as beautiful as falling cherry blossoms.

“Toki...”

Daren whispered.

Their eyes met.

Even through the storm, it felt as if nothing could cloud their gaze.

Zephyr watched them with a gentle smile. For a brief moment, his aged eyes seemed to drift into memory.

And somehow, just for that instant, the pain in his severed arm didn't seem quite so sharp.

"...At least this way, I won't have so many regrets, right?"

Zephyr muttered softly.

In his dazed eyes, it was as if he could see a scene that had visited him countless times in his dreams.

"Then... let's begin."

He smiled and exhaled, a flash of resolution glinting in his eyes as he clenched his lone fist.

Rumble...

The ground beneath him began to tremble even more violently.

But just then, a firm, knuckled hand suddenly rested on his arm.

“I told you, your final lesson isn’t today.”

Zephyr blinked, then looked up.

He met the calm, unwavering gaze of the Marine Vice Admiral.

“You’re the only one I can trust... Zephyr-sensei.”

“So please.”

“Take Toki away—first.”

Those words hit Zephyr like a bolt of lightning. His pupils shrank, his whole body trembling.

He stared wide-eyed at the young man before him—his most exceptional student—completely stunned.

“You damn brat... you’re not saying—”

His chapped lips moved, but he couldn’t bring himself to speak the thought out loud. The idea in his mind was too overwhelming, too unthinkable.

The rain had finally stopped.

But the world now felt darker than ever, a heavy gloom pressing over everything.

Zephyr looked at the quiet determination on Daren’s face. He was silent for a long moment—two full seconds—then opened his mouth, as if to protest.

But no words came.

He could only let out a long sigh and shake his head.

“You’re insane.”

With a sudden motion, he clenched his fist.

Crack!

The ground split beneath him.

Zephyr's eyes flared with intensity. The once-white cloak on his back, now soaked with dried blood, had turned pitch-black—silent, grim, and chilling.

Dust exploded outward. A huge section of land, including the traditional Japanese-style mansion behind him, rose into the air under the power of buoyancy and began to float skyward.

Seeing this, Sengoku's eyes nearly burst from their sockets as he roared,

“Stop him!!”

Dozens of Sengoku's personal guards leapt from their positions, launching a coordinated assault toward Zephyr using Soru.

And then—

BOOM!!

A monstrous surge of power erupted from Daren's body, shaking heaven and earth. It blasted outward like a gale from the depths of hell, sweeping across all of Marineford in an instant.

Black and red lightning crackled and intertwined, stretching across the sky in thick, jagged streaks.

Under the weight of this pressure, the countless seagull flags flying above Marineford shuddered and drooped, as if paralyzed with fear.

Even Sengoku's elite bodyguards, seasoned and strong, were overwhelmed. Their eyes lost focus—and with a dull thud, they dropped to one knee.

"To everyone here..."

The Vice Admiral slowly turned, blood staining his face, his eyes calm but sharp, filled with quiet menace. His voice was low and steady.

"We've known each other a long time. Maybe next time we meet, we'll be enemies locked in battle to the death."

"So today—let me see it."

Daren tilted his chin slightly and grinned.

“Let me see your justice.”

Sengoku stood frozen in place, his mind blank.

Not far away, Gion, Tokikake, Doberman, Yamakaji, and the others stared at Daren in stunned silence, as if looking at a complete lunatic.

“W-Wait... this has got to be a joke, right...?” Tokikake clutched his head, face pale with panic.

Gion’s lips parted slightly, her complexion ghostly.

“This is getting interesting...” Borsalino said, a gleam of amusement curling at the corners of his lips.

Sakazuki snapped his head up. Beneath the brim of his cap, his usually cold eyes now burned with an indescribable intensity.

Kuzan trembled with excitement, his eyes glowing, mumbling to himself over and over,

“...This is so damn cool!”

And around them, nearly every Marine officer and soldier present froze at first... then slowly began to grasp what was happening. Their expressions twisted into shock, awe, and rising disbelief.

They swallowed hard.

And when they looked at the Vice Admiral again...

Their eyes were filled with an unprecedented weight.

A solemnity.

And an uncontrollable—frenzy, admiration, and reverence.

In that moment, everyone finally understood.

A storm erupted in their hearts.

That man...was going to challenge the entire Marine Headquarters—alone.

Chapter 753: Volume 4 – Chapter 272: Willing to Follow Zephyr-sensei

Rumble...

The ground split apart with a deafening roar.

The entire Japanese-style mansion, along with a massive slab of rock beneath it, tore away from the earth like a colossal floating fortress.

What was left behind was a gaping crater—so wide and deep it looked as if a titan had ripped out a chunk of the land.

Chunks of soil peeled away from the base and tumbled down like rain, splashing against the ground and sending shockwaves outward.

“Zephyr, are you really going through with this!?”

Sengoku’s bloodshot eyes locked onto the rising structure and the purple-haired figure standing before it. His hoarse voice rang out in fury.

Zephyr, once an Admiral of the Marines, had earned unmatched prestige through decades of battle at sea.

The legendary title “Black Arm” had once stood shoulder to shoulder with his own and Garp’s.

And during his years off the front lines, Zephyr had trained a generation of elite officers—respected and loved throughout the Marines, especially by the younger ranks.

If someone so crucial to the foundation of the Marine institution were to publicly break away at a moment like this, it would trigger an immeasurable political storm.

With Zephyr’s influence, the unity of Marine Headquarters could crumble.

It could even lead to mass desertion.

The mere thought sent a chill down Sengoku’s spine.

To him, Zephyr’s departure posed a greater threat than even Daren’s.

He clenched his jaw and prepared to charge forward—but the four sharp Meito blades shot into his path, their tips gleaming coldly, completely blocking his way.

The threatening chill from the blades made Sengoku's arms ache just from the tension.

Damn it!

He cursed under his breath, then looked up and shouted in desperation.

"Zephyr! Are you really going to throw away everything you've built all these years!?"

"What happened to the justice you swore to uphold!?"

The floating mansion continued to rise as Zephyr clutched the wound on his severed arm with one hand. From high above, he looked down at his former comrade.

Their eyes met across the void.

"I haven't given up on my justice, Sengoku."

Zephyr's face was composed, his voice calm—carrying the clarity of a man who had seen through the world.

“I just realized... under the shadow cast by tyranny, the justice I upheld has become powerless and pale.”

“If I can’t even protect the people I care about—then what’s the point of justice?”

Sengoku was stunned.

He opened his mouth, searching for words.

But when he looked at Zephyr’s severed arm, saw the light of conviction in his eyes, and recalled the bitter tragedies that had marked his friend’s life—he found nothing to say.

“But you alone... what gives you the right to carry out justice?”

Sengoku tried again.

Before his words had even settled, figures launched themselves into the air from the ground, stepping on the sky with practiced ease using Geppo, landing behind Zephyr.

Shuzo, towering and muscular.

Dalmatian, marked by his spotted fur.

Yamakaji, with his square-jawed face and thick beard...

One after another, familiar faces appeared—each one bearing eyes filled with unwavering resolve.

Gion tightened her grip on the sword at her waist. After a moment of silence, it looked like she'd made her choice. She shifted her ankle slightly, ready to move.

But just as she was about to act, a slender hand suddenly rested on her arm.

Startled, Gion turned her head.

What she saw left her frozen in place.

"Tsuru..."

Vice Admiral Tsuru gazed at her deeply, then shook her head.

“Gion, this path isn’t meant for you.”

Meeting Tsuru’s calm yet stern eyes, Gion suddenly felt her heart tremble.

She bit her lower lip, glanced at the Vice Admiral’s back, and slowly broke into a bright smile.

“Tsuru nee-san, I’ve followed your teachings all these years, haven’t I?”

“But just this once... I’m going to be selfish.”

Her smile bloomed like a flower.

“I’m going to chase my own justice.”

As the words fell, Gion gently pushed Tsuru’s hand aside and leapt into the air with grace.

Tsuru watched her resolute figure rise, stunned into silence—but didn’t stop her.

Instead, a faint, knowing smile gradually surfaced on her weathered face.

You're not chasing justice...

You're chasing love.

Tsuru shook her head helplessly, then turned to glare at Tokikake, who was staring at her expectantly.

"Well, go on then! If you're going, go!"

Tokikake chuckled and quickly followed.

...

Above the floating stronghold, one figure after another appeared behind Zephyr, exuding a sharp, solemn aura. Their white cloaks rippled in the wind.

The rain had stopped completely.

Suddenly, the dim, heavy sky split open.

Golden beams of sunlight pierced the darkness and shone down on the floating city, scattering like glittering dust across the backs of those standing tall.

They looked up at the broad, one-armed figure before them with reverence, just like they had so many nights back in the academy.

With no hesitation, with no orders, they all dropped to one knee at once.

“We will follow Zephyr-sensei!”

The voices weren’t loud, but they rang through Marine Headquarters like a thunderclap.

Shaking everyone to their core.

Sengoku’s expression darkened instantly.

Sakazuki stared silently, his face blank.

Borsalino scratched his head with a sigh.

“Well, now even Zephyr-sensei is our enemy...”

Kuzan, trembling with emotion, was practically glowing.

“Let me go! I’m going too!!”

He struggled frantically, but several Vice Admirals and a dozen Marines held him back tightly, their faces dripping with sweat.

“Vice Admiral Kuzan! You can’t go!”

“These are Admiral Sengoku’s orders!”

“Please! Stay here!”

...

The sunlight grew brighter and brighter, dazzling and brilliant.

Bathed in that light, the floating fortress took on an aura that was both tragic and sacred.

In front of the mansion, only one figure remained standing—Zephyr, the purple-haired veteran.

Suddenly—

“Fire!!”

A cold, harsh voice rang out from the crowd.

Bang!

A gunshot cracked the air.

A bullet grazed Zephyr’s sleeve, vanishing into the sky.

Everyone froze, turning toward the sound in disbelief.

Vice Admiral Sakazuki stood holding a pistol, face stern, a wisp of smoke still curling from the muzzle.

Did he miss?

No. The Marine officers began to laugh quietly.

Sakazuki was a “monster” of precision—he had graduated top of his class in marksmanship.

From this distance, missing was impossible.

But he missed anyway.

Then—

One by one,

thousands of Marine officers and soldiers raised their weapons.

Aimed at the floating city.

And pulled their triggers.

Gunfire roared like a storm.

Now and then, golden laser blasts lanced into the sky.

But not a single shot hit.

Not one touched that lone figure.

Amid the barrage of bullets, the Marines fired freely—as if offering their highest salute

to the man who had given his life to the Marines and to justice.

And...a final farewell.

In the thunderous hail of gunfire, Sengoku stood frozen in place, his expression stiff, his mind blank.

Chapter 754: Volume 4 – Chapter 273: So, Who's Going First?

Sengoku never imagined things would take such a turn.

He stared at the floating town rising steadily into the sky, already beyond reach, and at the purple-haired figure standing at the very front, immovable like a stubborn reef.

Bullets rained down, yet every single one somehow missed, brushing past that lone figure with uncanny “precision.”

Sengoku's mind went blank.

His expression kept shifting—gritting his teeth one moment, sighing in resignation the next. His fists clenched, then loosened again.

Even he, the “Resourceful General,” had no idea what to do in this situation.

Could you say they hadn’t attacked?

They had opened fire.

They just missed.

Sengoku stared dazedly at the sky filled with “fireworks,” and for a brief moment, an indescribable emotion welled up inside him.

If he had walked away from the Marines like this today, would he have been met with the same “farewell” as Zephyr?

The answer was clear.

With a weary sigh, Sengoku muttered to himself,

“There’s only one Black Arm Zephyr in this sea.”

The gunfire and explosions gradually faded, then ceased altogether.

The floating land was soon swallowed by the sea of clouds, disappearing into the far-off horizon, engulfed by brilliant sunlight.

From the barrels of the Marines’ pistols, faint wisps of white smoke rose.

They lowered their weapons and turned to face the last remaining figure.

The young Vice Admiral stood bare-chested, his angular muscles exposed, covered in a patchwork of old and new scars. Under the sunlight, his figure radiated a brutal, unmatched kind of beauty.

For a moment, no one moved. They exchanged uneasy glances, frozen in place.

The air thickened.

Tension filled the scene, like a bowstring stretched to its very limit—ready to snap at any second.

At that moment, the Vice Admiral slowly reached into his pocket and pulled out a cigar.

“All the troublemakers are gone.”

He bit down on the bloodstained cigar and pulled out a lighter.

Click.

A flame flared to life.

He took a long, deep drag. His chest swelled as the cigar visibly burned down.

“Hoo...”

A stream of white smoke coiled out like a dragon, blurring the sharpness of his gaze.

“Well then...”

Daren’s calm eyes swept across the crowd, face by face. Most looked away instinctively, unable to meet his stare.

He let out a faint smile. His dry lips curled ever so slightly.

In that smile was a hint of unyielding madness, and a wild, almost hysterical... thirst for battle.

“—Who's going first?”

...

At the same time...

Red Line, Mary Geoise.

After half a day of intense firefighting and rescue efforts, the massive blaze that had engulfed most of the Holy Land was finally extinguished by the Guard Corps.

Even so, devastation stretched as far as the eye could see.

The once elegant blue-tiled, white-walled buildings now lay in ruins. Snow-white walls had been scorched black by the inferno, and amidst the wreckage were the mangled corpses of World Government officials, Holy Land guards, and even Celestial Dragons.

The ornate streetlamps and fountains that lined the streets were now charred and twisted. Thick plumes of black smoke rose from every corner of Mary Geoise, curling above the Red Line and lingering in the sky.

The once-arrogant nobles and officials now resembled ragged refugees, lined up in tatters, stepping over the burned remains of World Government flags as they were evacuated to safety under the escort of the Guard Corps.

Their expressions were vacant, faces pale. From time to time, they glanced nervously up at the sky, eyes brimming with fear, their bodies trembling uncontrollably.

As if something unspeakably terrifying still lurked high above.

Clad in a heavy Fleet Admiral's cloak, Kong strode solemnly through the smoldering ruins, heading toward Pangaea Castle.

The long hours spent directing operations and rushing from place to place had deepened the wear on his aged face, already weathered by years of hardship. His eyes were bloodshot, streaked with fine red lines.

As he passed through the shattered remains of buildings, Kong took in the extent of the devastation with grim clarity.

This catastrophic “fire” had destroyed nearly half of the Holy Land.

Even with all the power and wealth of the World Government, it would take at least one to two years to restore Mary Geoise to its former state.

But material losses were the least of their problems.

The loss of life was far worse.

At least a third of the World Government’s internal officials had perished in the chaos of the “fire” and “riots.” That alone would leave political and military operations across the next several years in disarray, if not outright paralysis.

And then there was the destruction of the Land of the Gods—the residential area of the Celestial Dragons—which had suffered staggering damage, reportedly due to the “special attention” of a certain fleet commander.

At least a quarter of the Celestial Dragons who lived there had died under the brutal bombardment of the North Blue fleet. More than half of them couldn't even be pieced together into whole corpses.

Many had been killed in their sleep, wiped out by aerial strikes from laser cannons and missiles launched by the flying fleet.

On top of that, Kong had just received news from the returning fleet commander about the battle at Philseque Island. The moment he read it, a bone-deep chill surged through him, cold sweat seeping from his palms.

It was a total defeat.

He could barely believe it.

The World Government—a monolithic regime that had ruled the seas for over eight centuries...

The Five Elders, those aloof beings who looked down on mankind like gods, their ages unfathomable...

Had been crushed. Utterly.

And the one who had brought this devastation?

A Vice Admiral barely in his twenties.

“That brat Daren... he’s stirred up way too much this time.”

Kong muttered under his breath, his expression still tinged with disbelief.

“I never thought... he’d grow this powerful, this fast. He even secretly built a sky fleet with strength beyond imagination in the North Blue.”

But beyond the shock, a trace of bitter helplessness surfaced in his heart.

Such a powerful and talented Marine, and yet—because of the arrogance of the Five Elders—he had been driven to stand on the opposite side of the Navy.

Thinking of the fierce battle currently raging at Marine Headquarters, Kong couldn’t help but quicken his pace.

Climbing the Celestial Stairway, flanked by grand stone statues on both sides, Kong ascended step by step under the icy stares of the CPO members—white-clad phantoms in human form—until he stood before the ancient fortress.

“Fleet Admiral Kong of Marine Headquarters, here to report to the Five Elders!”

He took a deep breath, forcing down the turmoil in his heart, and pushed open the doors to the conference hall.

The moment he entered, the scent of fresh tea washed over him.

Before him sat the five highest authorities of the World Government, casually gathered around a brazier, some standing, some seated, brewing tea and burning incense as if nothing had happened.

An inexplicable wave of anger surged in Kong's chest.

At a time like this...

And they're still calmly sipping tea?

“Esteemed Five Elders, we've just received the latest intelligence from Marineford.”

Clenching his fists to steady himself, Kong forced down his fury and said in a low, steady voice,

“Former Admiral Zephyr has obtained the Fuwa Fuwa no Mi from Daren and taken Amatsuki Toki along with several core personnel from Headquarters.”

“Sengoku and the senior officers currently at Marineford lack the aerial combat capabilities needed to intervene. And with Rogers Daren’s own power in the mix, they’ve been completely unable to stop Zephyr.”

“In my assessment, Zephyr’s ‘defection’ will deliver a severe blow to the morale and willpower of the Navy.”

“Right now, Sengoku and the core combat forces are locked in fierce battle with Rogers Daren.”

At that, Kong lifted his head and stared coldly at the still-relaxed Five Elders, his voice sharp and forceful.

“My lords, with the sheer power Rogers Daren commands, even if we mobilized every available unit at Marine Headquarters, I doubt we could bring him down... let alone the fact that the mysterious North Blue fleet has now vanished without a trace. They could strike the government with military force at any moment.”

“Given all this, I believe there is no longer any reason to prolong this war.”

“Continuing such endless conflict will only lead to needless losses.”

“I propose—”

His words were abruptly cut off by a hoarse, chilling voice.

“So, what you're saying is... we've already lost?”

Chapter 755: Volume 4 – Chapter 274: What the Hell Is 800 Years of Heritage?

Topman Warcury, holding a cup of hot tea, suddenly lifted his head. His gloomy gaze fell coldly on the Fleet Admiral before him.

Steam curled from the tea in his hand, drifting past his shadowed eyes, adding an eerie, unfathomable air to the room.

A quiet anger began to spread through the chamber.

Faced with the stare of Topman Warcury—the Five Elders' enforcer, the Warrior God of Justice—Kong fell silent.

He had always known the Five Elders were arrogant. But he hadn't expected them to be this arrogant.

This wasn't just personal bias anymore.

It was a cold, brutal reality.

Yes, my lords... you lost.

All five of you descended upon the North Blue and attacked together, yet not only did you fail to take that boy Daren down, you let him slaughter hundreds of elite Celestial Dragons and even steal the prize of the World Noble Hunting Tournament—the Fuwa Fuwa no Mi.

Your sacred Mary Geoise was blown to pieces by the North Blue fleet Daren had built. Countless so-called “gods” were buried beneath a rain of cannon fire.

And I warned you this might happen.

Rogers Daren is not the Zephyr of old.

Defiance is etched into his very bones. The more you try to crush him, the more violently he will strike back.

But your judgment—your reason—was blinded by your godlike arrogance.

And so, you made a catastrophically poor choice.

This was a complete... and undeniable defeat.

Kong looked at their proud, emotionless faces, and for a moment, he wanted to unload everything—his frustration, his fury, all of it.

But he didn't.

He couldn't.

After decades of service, after handling countless thorny crises for both the Navy and the World Government, Kong understood better than anyone just how the Five Elders operated.

So instead, he took a steadying breath and said in a calm, firm voice:

"My lords, that's not what I meant."

"But if this war continues, it will fracture the Navy itself. And once the world loses the Navy's support, we will descend into chaos."

“Kaidou of the Beasts, Whitebeard Edward Newgate, Big Mom Charlotte Linlin—these Yonkō are already circling the New World like wolves. And Gol D. Roger has now assembled every piece of the puzzle... he could reach the Final Island at any moment.”

“Continuing to fight Rogers Daren will only lead to pointless bloodshed.”

Kong believed every word he said. He was certain his reasoning was solid enough to sway them.

Their reckless attack on Daren’s wife and child had already driven Zephyr to “defect,” taking with him a formidable force.

If the World Government refused to back down and this conflict continued, the ones who’d suffer the most wouldn’t be the bureaucracies under their command, nor even Mary Geoise with the Five Elders now guarding it...

It would be the Navy.

As Fleet Admiral, Kong could not stand by and watch his forces splinter and collapse, or be slaughtered in a meaningless war.

“Pointless bloodshed...”

Saint Saturn let out a cold laugh.

“Kong, are you saying the hundreds of elite Celestial Dragons slaughtered by Rogers Daren—and the nobles turned to ash in the bombardment of the Holy Land—died for nothing?”

The veins on his hands bulged as he gripped his ancient cane. A terrifying red glow flickered in his eyes.

In that moment—

Kong felt the air around him freeze, solidify.

His brain throbbed with a rush of blood. His skull swelled as if on the verge of rupture.

Explosive Gaze!

“I’m just saying, if this keeps up, the Marines’ combat strength is going to suffer a massive collapse!”

Kong gritted his teeth, his bloodshot eyes bulging slightly from their sockets as he took a step forward.

“I already warned you about this, but you insisted on going your own way!”

At those words, the Five Elders' expressions darkened instantly.

A chilling killing intent spread through the room, suffocating the entire council hall in seconds.

“Watch your tone, Kong! Have you forgotten where you are?”

“And besides... why should we explain ourselves to you?”

“The Marines you speak of are nothing more than the public face of the World Government!”

“So what if there’s a gap in combat power? Humans are like vermin—no matter how many die, they’ll keep reproducing. The same goes for the Marines!”

“Perhaps what we’re facing now is a bump in the road, but in the grand flow of the World Government’s eight-hundred-year history, it doesn’t even amount to a ripple.”

Their voices struck one after another, cold and dismissive, each line steeped in disdain.

With every word, Kong’s face grew darker.

His broad, muscular chest heaved uncontrollably like a volcano on the brink of eruption, and his coarse hands clenched into tight fists.

Though the Five Elders sat still, their haughty expressions made it feel as if they were looking down from above on the Fleet Admiral before them.

They calmly sipped their fragrant tea, smiling as one of them added,

“Even someone like you could never truly comprehend the World Government’s eight hundred years of legacy—”

“What the hell kind of legacy is that?!”

Kong’s roar exploded without warning, cutting them off mid-sentence.

The Five Elders froze, their hands stopping mid-sip, staring in shock at the normally composed Fleet Admiral now consumed with fury. For a moment, none of them could react.

Did he just... insult us?

Before they could respond, Kong’s voice thundered through the hall again.

He had reached his limit.

“The Holy Land of the Celestial Dragons was almost leveled! If I hadn’t been holding the line at Pangaea Castle, this whole damn council hall would already be a pile of rubble!”

“It’s still chaos outside! Your ‘godly’ kin are out there screaming and crying like frightened animals!”

“Over seventy percent of the armories inside the Holy Land have been blown to bits! More than half the granaries were incinerated in the fires! Hospitals are packed beyond capacity! And riots have already broken out in several districts!”

“Five minutes ago, I was still frantically coordinating with government-designated merchant fleets across various nations to rush food and medical supplies here!”

“And on top of that, Morgans from the World Economic News Agency... looks like he’s already begun mass-printing the next issue. All the truths you tried to bury are about to be made public!”

“If you still have any so-called trump cards left, then show them! Stop sitting here sipping tea and talking nonsense!”

He let it all out in one breath, not stopping for even a second.

And when he was done, Kong felt his whole body tremble with relief.

His pores opened, his muscles relaxed—as if he’d just downed a cold beer under the blazing summer sun.

Refreshing didn’t even begin to describe it.

Chapter 756: Volume 4 – Chapter 275: Have You Ever Been Kicked at the Speed of Light, Daren?

That felt amazing.

In that moment, seeing the stunned, unsightly expressions on the faces of the Five Elders, Kong felt as if all the frustration and pent-up fury of these past days had been completely washed away.

In its place was a deep, indescribable sense of satisfaction and relief.

If not for the setting—and his own pride—he would’ve thrown his head back and let out a triumphant roar on the spot.

But what caught him completely off guard...

Was the sudden, almost imperceptible stirring of something long thought dormant—his Conqueror’s Haki.

It had been still for decades. Yet now, just as he had finally released everything that weighed on his chest, that once-slumbering power was beginning to stir again. Rising.

For a moment, he couldn't believe it.

At his age?

Even with rigorous maintenance and careful training, his combat ability had just barely remained at its prime.

But eighty years old was still eighty. His mind and body had already begun to decline.

And yet, his Conqueror's Haki—was it truly surging again?

It didn't make any sense.

Still, beyond the rush of exhilaration, a wave of unease quickly followed.

He suddenly realized—he had just yelled at the Five Elders.

Right here, in the heart of the World Government's stronghold... he had unleashed his temper on the highest ruling authority?

As conflicting emotions swirled in Kong's mind, the Five Elders said nothing.

The chamber fell into an eerie silence.

Then...

"Kong... You've grown bold."

Draped in a white samurai robe, Saint Nusjuro let out a dry laugh. His bony, withered hand slowly caressed the eerie black blade at his side, voice rasping like rusted steel.

"To think you'd dare speak to us like that."

Kong's eyelid twitched slightly.

Saint Saturn calmly took a sip of tea and said coolly,

“You truly are more capable than Sengoku. We were right to place our trust in you—naming you Commander-in-Chief of the entire World Government.”

The blond Saint Peter shook his head slightly.

“As for what you said just now, we’ll chalk it up to agitation. We won’t hold it against you.”

Saint Mars’s tone, however, was ice-cold.

“If it had been anyone else—uttering such reckless words and displaying such blatant disrespect—they’d already be a corpse.”

“For you, we’ll allow a single exception.”

Saint Warcury’s hoarse voice followed.

“But we don’t want to hear anything like that again. You’ve served the government long enough to understand... our patience has limits.”

“You are the only one we’re willing to show this much restraint toward.”

Kong was silent for a moment.

Looking into their eyes—each filled with danger—and at the faint, twisted black shadows stirring behind them, he drew a long breath and said hoarsely,

“Thank you, my lords.”

“But I still stand by my judgment. This war must end—and fast. If it continues, neither the Navy nor the Government will benefit in any way.”

As he spoke, he stepped forward abruptly, his posture unflinching, making it clear that unless the Five Elders agreed, he wouldn’t back down.

To his surprise, the Five Elders... all began to laugh.

“You're right, Kong.”

“This war does need to end.”

“Continuing to drag this out... it’s become dull for us as well.”

“We’ve already ordered the CP organizations and the Holy Land Guard to set sail. Judging by the time, they should be approaching the North Blue as we speak.”

“Also, a CP0-led unit has already departed from the G1 branch in the New World, preparing to dive directly into Fish-Man Island’s territory.”

At those words, Kong’s pupils shrank to pinpoints. A wave of icy dread surged from the soles of his feet straight up his spine, flooding his mind.

A chill ran through his entire body, his scalp tingling.

The Five Elders were about to launch a full-scale, destructive strike on the seas, islands, and territories linked to Daren?

This was blatant, unrestrained retaliation.

He stared at them, wide-eyed in disbelief, as cold smiles spread across their faces. He instinctively staggered two steps backward.

“But... my lords, even if Rogers Daren has committed unforgivable crimes, the nations, islands, and towns in the North Blue—the civilians there are innocent!”

Cold sweat broke across Kong’s body. He clenched his jaw.

“If the government’s forces launch indiscriminate attacks without cause, it will cause a catastrophic diplomatic fallout!”

Saint Saturn scoffed.

“Kong, you’re being far too cautious.”

“Most of the countries and islands in the North Blue aren’t even member nations. To the ones who are, these worthless regions don’t matter in the slightest.”

Kong’s body trembled as he forced out a protest.

“Then... what about Fish-Man Island?”

“They’re part of the World Government! On top of that, there's already tension between humans and the fishmen. If we strike them now—”

Saint Mars interrupted coldly.

“We have no intention of actually destroying Fish-Man Island.”

“As long as Ryugu Palace hands over Fisher Tiger, we’re willing to let the matter go.”

The moment those words fell, Kong understood everything.

His face drained of all color.

The Five Elders were mobilizing the full might of the World Government’s military to pressure Daren and the North Blue fleet into submission.

It was a cold, calculated move—undeniably effective.

But the thought of how many innocent lives could be caught in the crossfire... how many civilians might be slaughtered in the name of leverage...

Kong couldn't accept it.

This was not how a world-ruling government should act.

...

Marine Headquarters, Marineford.

Thick cigar smoke curled lazily in the air.

“Who's going first?”

A faint, devilish grin spread across the Vice Admiral's face.

The moment the words left his lips, every Marine present froze, their breath caught in their throats.

A streak of golden light flashed across the ground at blinding speed, rocketing straight toward the Vice Admiral in an instant.

That brilliant gold condensed into the shape of a white leather shoe, hanging in the air in a sharp, upside-down hook.

“Well then, I won't hold back.”

A tall figure formed midair. Borsalino stroked the stubble on his chin, grinning lazily.

“By the way, Daren... ever been kicked at the speed of light?”

Blazing golden light flared up.

That reverse-hook kick, wrapped in scorching energy, tore through the air—and came crashing down toward the Vice Admiral’s head.

Chapter 757: Volume 4 – Chapter 276: Clash of the Future Admirals!

A blinding golden light erupted, instantly blotting out everything from view.

“Borsalino!?”

His sudden attack caught everyone off guard. The entire room froze in disbelief.

Even Sengoku couldn’t hide his shock, his eyes widening in stunned disbelief.

With that bastard Daren provoking them so brazenly, Sengoku had expected someone to snap—Sakazuki, proud and aggressive, was the obvious candidate. Even that hot-blooded fool Kuzan seemed likely to strike.

But the first to move?

It was the laid-back, always-alooof Borsalino!

And in that split-second of stunned silence, Borsalino's kick, traveling at the speed of light, had already been unleashed!

A flash of eerie red light flickered in the Vice Admiral's eyes. Daren, who had long activated his Observation Haki, instantly locked onto the incoming attack.

His expression remained unchanged. The moment his body shifted forward, he raised his arm and blocked the strike.

His Haki-coated forearm clashed violently with Borsalino's shin, erupting with a thunderous shockwave.

Biu... BOOM!!

A golden laser beam suddenly fired from the tip of the white leather shoe, screaming into a distant building—and detonated with a deafening explosion.

Flames surged skyward. Thick black smoke rolled out in waves.

As the searing heat rippled through the air, Borsalino casually rubbed his chin and muttered with a sigh,

“Blocked, huh... Guy’s a damn monster.”

Clasping his hands together, a golden blade of light stretched from his palms.

Ama no Murakumo!

Gripping the glowing sword in one hand, Borsalino brought it down in a sharp, clean arc aimed straight at Daren’s face!

CLANG!!

Sparks burst violently in the air, illuminating Daren’s blood-streaked, wild expression.

A black Cursed Sword howled upward, locking against Borsalino’s golden blade with force.

“Aren’t you one of us monsters too?”

Daren smirked.

“I’m nowhere near as terrifying as you...”

Borsalino muttered.

Then—an abrupt gust tore the silence apart.

A fierce black claw, wreathed in crackling dark lightning, sliced through the air and lunged straight for Borsalino’s midsection.

Ryusoken—Dragon’s Claw!

“Dragon’s close-combat moves... such a pain.”

With a helpless sigh, Borsalino’s body split into countless golden photons and scattered in an instant, narrowly evading the brutal strike.

The particles soared high into the air. As they converged once more into a human form, Borsalino floated midair, forming a delicate hand sign, arms spread wide as his pristine white cape flared behind him.

Golden light flared.

A barrage of luminous energy bullets exploded from his body like a storm, flooding the skies and raining down toward the Vice Admiral below.

Yasakani no Magatama!

“Borsalino... same old tricks, huh? You never change.”

The blinding golden bombardment filled the sky, forcing Daren to squint as he muttered,

“Damn, that’s bright.”

He took a slow breath.

The cigar in his mouth flared, burning away in a flash.

With a heavy step forward, smoke poured from his nose and mouth, twisting in the air—like a massive dragon spiraling into form on the battlefield.

He raised his arm. Three fingers curled into claws.

Then came the release.

Like a dragon exhaling destruction, a titanic shockwave exploded outward, coated in black lightning and infused with overwhelming force.

“Dragon’s Breath!”

BOOM!!

The raw impact tore through the air, crashing head-on into the golden storm of light bullets above.

The sky erupted.

A massive explosion bloomed in midair, sending fireballs and heatwaves roaring in every direction.

And then—

Two massive figures—one cloaked in black, the other in gold—burst through the smoke and flame, colliding with a violent crash.

CLANG!!

BOOM!!

A black iron fist clashed with a golden blade of light, sparking brilliantly with every impact.

The earth quaked beneath them, like waves crashing in a storm. Shockwaves pulsed outward, sweeping away the fire and smoke in every direction.

“You don’t look even a little stressed, Daren.”

Feeling the monstrous power coming through Ama no Murakumo, Borsalino’s smile only grew more teasing.

Daren smiled.

“Same goes for you, Borsalino.”

In a flash, his hand shot out and seized Ama no Murakumo. His left foot pivoted sharply, twisting his body.

Then his right leg snapped forward like a whip, lashing out at Borsalino's head.

Coated in Armament Haki, the black military boot on his right foot radiated a sense of cold, unyielding force.

Bang!

Borsalino raised his arm to block. The impact shook his body violently—and in the next instant, he turned into a streak of golden light, blasted hundreds of meters away by Daren's kick. His beam-like form punched through more than a dozen buildings in a row.

Boom!

A distant military fortress exploded, sending tremors rippling through the ground.

Daren narrowed his eyes. Blue arcs of electricity crackled across his body. He was just about to press the advantage when he abruptly halted.

His hand suddenly shot upward.

Several sharp flashes of light whistled through the air. They sliced the incoming ice spear into glittering fragments, which scattered in the wind as harmless shards.

“Kuzan...”

Daren’s lips curled into an eager smile.

Crack—

A faint fracture echoed behind him.

Red gleam surged in his gaze, and a suffocating sense of danger surged up his spine.

Without hesitation, Daren spun around and launched a punch.

RIP!

The ground behind him shattered violently, bursting open to reveal a geyser of molten magma.

From within the blazing torrent leapt a fierce, shadowed figure—charging like a hellhound lunging at its prey. His swollen, contorted right arm drove forward with a deadly punch.

“Inugami Guren!”

Boom!!

Daren’s iron fist, wreathed in black lightning, clashed with the magma fist like a meteor crashing to Earth. The resulting shockwave was deafening.

Centered on the two men, the ground within a hundred meters collapsed several meters deep. Dust and debris blasted outward, forcing nearby Marines to stagger back, their faces filled with dread.

Cracks spidered out across the earth as crimson magma spewed forth, an infernal spectacle.

A raging storm of black and red surged from both men, violently splitting the air between them.

“I didn’t expect this fight to happen so soon, Daren.”

Beads of magma trickled down Sakazuki’s grim face as he stared coldly at his former adjutant.

Daren grinned.

“I was starting to think it was coming too late.”

Sakazuki’s brows furrowed, his eyes flashing.

So... you’d made up your mind to rebel against the World Government long ago?

No wonder you laid so many foundations in the North Blue—no wonder you built that unstoppable flying fleet.

Just then, a shadow flickered overhead.

“Dahahahaha! Daren! Let me show you what I’ve gained from my training!”

With a burst of laughter, Kuzan appeared midair, drawing back his right arm. A massive sphere of ice engulfed his fist.

“Ice Iron Fist!”

Chapter 758: Volume 4 – Chapter 277: Take Down Vice Admiral Daren!!

A bone-chilling cold pressure crashed down from above.

Daren's eyes lit up with battle fervor. As he stepped back, he didn't dodge—he struck.

“Genkotsu Meteor!”

His fist, wreathed in black lightning, collided head-on with the Ice Iron Fist, unleashing a massive shockwave.

Crack—crackle...

Fine fractures spread across Kuzan's frozen gauntlet, but instead of worry, his eyes gleamed with wild joy.

“Dahahaha! You actually managed to suppress this new technique of mine... Daren, you really are my greatest rival—”

Bang!

Before he could finish, Daren's boot slammed straight into his face, launching him hundreds of meters through the air.

Boom!

Kuzan crashed into an armory. Just as the stored ammunition was about to explode, a sheet of snow-white frost swept through the depot, instantly freezing everything in place.

“A weakness!”

Right then, a towering Giant Vice Admiral—already poised—saw his moment. The massive, fifteen-meter warrior stepped forward with a boom, raising his colossal battle axe and bringing it crashing down toward Daren.

Daren arched a brow and reached out with three clawed fingers.

Clang!

He caught the massive weapon cleanly in midair.

“Not bad strength,” the Vice Admiral muttered calmly. Veins bulged on the back of his hand.

Then—raw, overwhelming power surged forth.

The steel axe splintered like wood under Daren's crushing dragon claws.

The Giant Vice Admiral's pupils shrank. His face paled in alarm.

Before he could react, Daren had already seized his arm and yanked him forward with tremendous force!

The giant's face turned crimson as he realized, to his horror, he couldn't resist.

The next moment, the world spun.

A large, rough hand clamped over his face, gripped his skull—and slammed it into the ground with brutal force!

Boom!!

Rubble exploded outward. A massive crater opened up in the earth.

Blood streamed from the giant's nose and mouth. His teeth were shattered, his eyes dull and unfocused.

“You don’t find openings with your eyes,” Daren said coldly, standing over him. “You sense them through presence.”

“One hit...”

“He took down a Giant Vice Admiral in a single strike!”

“Just how strong is he!?”

“Vice Admiral Daren—no, Rogers Daren’s strength... he’s even stronger than before!”

“A monster among monsters!”

Around them, the Marines stared in stunned silence, unable to believe what they were witnessing.

It was overwhelming.

Borsalino, Sakazuki, Kuzan—three of the Marine Headquarters’ famed “monsters” had all attacked in turn, and yet none of them had managed to leave so much as a scratch on him. He had handled them all with ease.

Even the titanic Giant Vice Admiral, normally unstoppable on the battlefield, was nothing before Daren's might.

How were they supposed to fight that!?

"Damn it—open fire!!"

One of the headquarters Vice Admirals bellowed, his eyes bloodshot, and gave the order.

Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!

Hundreds of elite Marines immediately raised their rifles. Some shouldered rocket launchers, others manned mounted cannons—all unleashing a torrent of firepower at the Vice Admiral!

A storm of bullets engulfed him. But as the rounds struck his body, they ricocheted like pebbles against diamond, bouncing off and kicking up craters across the battlefield.

A rocket screamed through the air, trailing flame—slamming directly into Daren's face.

Boom!

Flames and smoke billowed high into the air.

But then, through the rising black smoke and fire, a figure emerged—cigar clenched between his teeth, not a scratch on him.

Vice Admiral Daren walked forward slowly, through bullets and explosions alike, as if on a peaceful stroll. His gaze was calm, his expression ironclad.

“You should know very well that guns and cannons won’t do a thing to me.”

The Marines’ hearts pounded wildly as anxiety filled their bloodshot eyes.

Watching the figure standing unharmed amid the sweeping bombardment, they felt a crushing pressure bearing down on them, making their scalps go numb.

Even Kaidou of the Beasts, hailed as “the strongest creature on land, sea, and air,” probably couldn’t have stood there this easily, right!?

After all, the firearms and cannons used by Marine Headquarters were the most advanced and powerful in all the seas—far beyond anything pirate crews or mafia syndicates could match.

Even though they already had a solid understanding of Daren's monstrous physique and had mentally prepared themselves... they never expected sheer physical durability to reach this level!

Especially on a battlefield of this scale, gunfire might be limited in power, but it's still the best way to suppress top-tier fighters and drain their stamina.

Even legendary Great Pirates like Shiki and Whitebeard, when facing Marine firepower, had to keep their Observation Haki and Armament Haki constantly active to evade or block bullets and cannon shells.

Because no matter how powerful they were, they were still flesh and blood.

If they bled out, had their hearts pierced by bullets, or were too badly injured... they would still die!

But for that demon-like man, even the Marines' firepower advantage meant nothing!

He didn't need to block, didn't need to dodge—he could just stand there, motionless, and the Marines' weapons wouldn't touch him!

That was the most hopeless part!

“Only attacks coated in Haki can pose a threat to me.”

Daren exhaled a puff of smoke.

“Then I won’t hold back, Daren!”

A raspy voice suddenly echoed from behind.

A twisted shadow rose, and wild, writhing hair gripped eight sharp military swords, casting a spider-like silhouette.

Rear Admiral Onigumo!

The eight swords, guided by his flowing hair, stabbed down swiftly and precisely!

Daren tilted his head slightly, dodging the strike, and then grabbed Onigumo’s hair with one massive hand, yanking him toward him.

“Your swordsmanship is as vicious as ever, Onigumo.”

Watching Onigumo fly toward him, face contorted in fear, Daren laughed.

“But if you don’t have the guts to face your opponent head-on, you’ll never get stronger.”

With that, he hurled Onigumo forward by the hair with full force!

Boom!

Onigumo’s head slammed into the ground, his legs twitching and dangling in the air.

Everyone gasped sharply.

That looked painful.

But just then—

A grim figure shot out from the ranks, the sword at his waist ringing as it was drawn!

“Coming in, Daren!”

Doberman shouted coldly, unleashing a textbook iaido slash!

A green sword wave split the earth—but it was caught and stopped barehanded by the Vice Admiral.

The moment the blade shattered, Daren rocketed forward like a cannonball, appearing right in front of Doberman in a flash.

He was so fast that Doberman froze for a split second, his pupils contracting.

Too close.

In that case, there was only one option...

Doberman clenched his teeth.

“Armament Haki... Tekkai!”

Boom!

Daren’s fist smashed square into his gut, and a shockwave of white air exploded out from Doberman’s back.

Doberman stood rigidly, unmoving, his eyes trembling uncontrollably.

Then—

His sword clattered to the ground as he slowly curled forward, clutching his stomach, dropping to one knee and retching violently.

“How many times have I told you? Tekkai is only good for bullying the weak.”

Daren sighed, visibly disappointed.

Doberman let out a garbled sound before rolling his eyes and collapsing on the spot.

For a moment, the entire battlefield fell silent.

Then—

A thunderous war cry erupted, loud enough to shake the sky.

“I’m going too!”

“Kill!!”

“Charge him!”

“Take down Vice Admiral Daren!!”

“...”

The Marines’ eyes burned red as they drew their swords with fervor and charged at Daren.

By now, they had all realized the truth—

This wasn’t a fight.

This was Daren, the special instructor appointed by Marine Headquarters, giving every single one of them their final lesson!

Chapter 759: Volume 4 – Chapter 278: I Can’t See Any Justice

“Go!”

“Let me go first!”

“Damn it, I was here first!”

“Let me take down Vice Admiral Daren!!”

The Marines surged forward in a frenzy, eyes blazing with fanatic excitement, their momentum suddenly skyrocketing.

Even in the face of that demon-god-like Marine, they charged ahead without hesitation.

Why hesitate now?

Rogers Daren was one of the strongest forces in the world today.

He effortlessly suppressed the three “monsters” of headquarters, clashed evenly with legends like Roger, Whitebeard, and Kaidou, and took down both Shiki the Golden Lion and the “World Destroyer” Byrnni World...

Many of the Marines here had personally witnessed his terrifying feat of tearing apart one of the Five Elders—the highest authority in the World Government!

Now, a powerhouse practically standing at the peak of the sea was personally stepping in to guide—no, fight them. Why would they hesitate?

From what they'd seen with the giant Vice Admiral, Rear Admiral Onigumo, and Rear Admiral Doberman earlier, Vice Admiral Daren was clearly holding back!

Even if they didn't gain anything from Daren's "guidance," at worst, they'd just get beaten up and still be able to report it as experience. So why not?

With that thought, every Marine's gaze burned with resolve as they charged all at once!

"Rankyaku!"

"Shigan!"

Two Commodores flanked Daren from both sides with their strongest attacks.

But just as they made their move, Daren reacted faster—grabbing their arms and legs in an instant, twisting his body, and hurling them both through the air.

“Your intent the moment you struck... was way too obvious!”

The two Commodores crashed into a nearby building like cannonballs, smashing it into rubble as dust exploded into the air.

Wincing in pain, they instinctively tried to crawl from the debris—only to lock eyes accidentally and freeze.

Their eyes met. They blinked.

Then, in perfect sync, both collapsed backward, shut their eyes, and “fainted.”

The other Marines watching lit up with realization.

They followed suit, charging at Daren one after another, unleashing their strongest techniques. And one by one, they were blown away after receiving his “guidance,” blood spurting from their mouths as they hit the ground, “gravely wounded,” unable to rise.

And so, a strange scene unfolded on the battlefield.

Marines rushed at Vice Admiral Daren like lunatics, only to be knocked flying in a single move.

From afar, it looked like Daren was untouchable, weaving effortlessly through a crowd that couldn't lay a finger on him.

"What in the world are these brats doing?!"

Sengoku's mouth twitched uncontrollably.

With his experience and judgment, how could he not see through this charade?

Sure, they couldn't do anything to Daren, but Daren clearly wasn't even going all out—was it really necessary to flop down and play dead?

And that damn Strawberry—did you really think I didn't see you lying there scratching your belly!?

As time passed, more and more "bodies" piled across the field, scattered in all directions, some even forming small mounds.

At this point, Sengoku couldn't hold back anymore.

If this went on, the entire Marine Headquarters would be wrecked by Daren!

How would the Marines ever show their faces again? Where would justice stand?

That thought sparked a flash of resolve in Sengoku's eyes as his body suddenly blazed with brilliant golden light.

Radiant golden Buddha light bathed the land, and the golden battle Buddha's form rose from the ground like a towering mountain.

"Daren! I can't let you keep going!"

Boom!

The earth beneath his feet crumbled under the sheer force of his leap.

The golden battle Buddha let out a thunderous roar, launching into the air before slamming a massive shockwave down at the Marine Vice Admiral!

"This is our Holy Land of Justice!!"

The roaring shockwave burst forth, shattering the very air like solid glass as it barreled toward the Vice Admiral.

Impact Wave!

“But Admiral Sengoku...”

A sharp glint flashed in Daren’s eyes. Armament Haki surged across his arms, black lightning crackling in dense arcs as he launched a fierce punch!

“In this so-called Holy Land of Justice, I see no justice at all!”

Blue Hole!

Boom!!

Fist and golden palm collided with crushing force, detonating a shockwave like a nuclear blast.

The ground within hundreds of meters buckled and collapsed, rock layers torn up by the raging winds. Marines caught off guard were flung through the air like scraps of cloth.

Rip!!

Black and red lightning flashed and fizzled beneath the clashing shockwaves.

Hellish gales shredded the sea of clouds, and a massive, jagged ravine split the sky.

“They’re evenly matched!”

“This is insane!”

“Vice Admiral Daren’s power... is he really going toe-to-toe with Admiral Sengoku?!”

“...”

The Marines staggered back under the violent shockwave, shielding their faces with their arms as they stared in disbelief at the two figures radiating an overwhelming aura.

Vice Admiral Daren’s short black hair whipped wildly in the wind as he grinned defiantly at the admiral before him.

“All I see is submission to tyranny, blind obedience to rules, and a complete disregard for justice!”

Sengoku’s eyes burned red as he roared back.

“At your age, you know nothing about what true justice means!”

“To maintain peace and stability in this world, sometimes justice must yield under extreme circumstances!”

Daren let out a cold laugh. A dark, ink-like blackness spread rapidly from the center of his forehead, engulfing his entire body.

Black-red lightning surged around him, his aura turning hellish and violent—like a demon loosed from the underworld.

Devil Form!

“That’s because your justice just isn’t strong enough, Admiral Sengoku!”

With a furious roar, Daren’s right arm suddenly swelled, sinewy muscles bulging like molten rock!

Giant's Strength!

He brought his fist crashing down!

“Devil Form: Giant Impact!”

Crack!

The deadlock shattered.

A massive black fist, brimming with inhuman, unstoppable power, smashed straight through the golden palm of the Battle Buddha—blasting it away!

Boom!

Sengoku's body was hurled like a cannonball into a distant military fortress, slamming into its central wall and blowing open a massive crater.

Daren stepped forward, just about to press the attack—but then, a piercing cold surged up through his legs.

In an instant, everything around him turned stark white.

The ground, the buildings, the crumbled ruins—everything was suddenly frozen over by a wave of bone-chilling frost.

Glittering ice crystals spiraled upward from his feet, rapidly climbing as if to entomb him in a frozen sculpture!

“You’ve gotten stronger, Kuzan.”

A slight smirk tugged at Daren’s lips as he turned toward a certain direction.

Kuzan knelt on one knee, one hand pressed to the ground, chest heaving.

“Ice Age!”

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As the ice crystals crept up his body, the chill pierced Daren to the bone, threatening to freeze his cells. His muscles stiffened rapidly, yet instead of panic, a delighted grin spread across his face.

“No matter what kind of Devil Fruit ability it is... overwhelming Haki can counter it.”

The Vice Admiral murmured as he clenched his fists tightly.

Zzzzzzt!

Black-red lightning suddenly burst from his body, twisting and crackling through the air, warping the space around him.

The advancing ice halted for a moment before a sharp cracking sound echoed out.

Crack!

Visible fractures spread across the frost coating his legs—then shattered completely.

Kuzan's eyes went wide, disbelief written all over his face.

He had known his Ice Age alone wouldn't be enough to take Daren down—but he hadn't expected Daren to break free so effortlessly!

That Haki...

“This is incredible!!”

Kuzan laughed with exhilaration, his gaze locked on Daren with blazing intensity.

Frost reformed over his fists like gauntlets as he shot forward once more.

But someone else was faster.

A flash of crimson light streaked across the frozen battlefield, radiating heat so intense it melted the ice in an instant, releasing a thick plume of steam.

“Meigo!”

A cold shout rang out.

A magma fist burst through the fog, blazing with destructive power, aimed straight for Daren’s head.

“Bring it on, Sakazuki!”

Daren, already anticipating the attack, let out a savage grin and threw a punch of his own.

Black and red fists collided in midair, unleashing a violent crimson shockwave.

Sakazuki grunted, stumbling back a few steps as blood trickled from the corner of his mouth.

Daren also staggered, his fist searing with pain.

He didn't need to look—he could already feel it. Sakazuki's magma had burned through his Haki and skin, leaving his hand scorched and mangled.

But the next instant—

Both men stomped the ground, steadying themselves, then lunged forward again like wild beasts!

Boom!

Another explosive clash of fists!

“Daren... I don't know what you're trying to prove by staying here and continuing to fight, but if we let this madness go on, it'll make the Marines look utterly powerless!”

Sakazuki's voice was cold, half of his body now molten magma, smoke pouring off him.

"I've been waiting for you all to stop holding back, Sakazuki."

Daren bared his teeth in a grin, his gaze burning even brighter despite his injuries.

"Oh? Then I guess I'll need to take this a little more seriously—can't have you thinking I'm easy prey..."

A lazy voice suddenly echoed from behind.

Countless golden photons coalesced into a human form as Borsalino appeared, gripping the Ama no Murakumo sword in one hand. He swung it mercilessly toward Daren's back!

Daren raised an eyebrow and kicked backward without even looking.

Clang!

His Haki-covered boot met the glowing blade head-on, triggering a thunderous shockwave.

“Two-on-one now?”

Daren narrowed his eyes, lips curling into a grin.

“Dahaha! Not just two—count me in too, Daren!”

Kuzan suddenly leapt into the air, his frost-coated fist slamming down with crushing force.

“You won’t block this!”

“Wanna bet...?”

The Vice Admiral sneered, then in a move that bordered on madness, flung his head backward to smash it directly into Kuzan’s incoming punch!

Bang!

The impact triggered a deep, resonant shockwave. Using the force of it, Daren rocketed backward—then whipped around and charged straight at Sakazuki, Borsalino, and Kuzan once more!

Lava roared, burning everything in its path.

Frost spread, bitter and biting.

Golden beams shot across the land, ripping through the battlefield.

Within a kilometer, the terrain turned into a living hell. Columns of magma surged skyward, icy pheasants soared through the air, and laser beams tore the sky apart. The battlefield became a forbidden zone, a death trap no one dared enter.

The Marines watched in horror as Daren moved through red, yellow, and blue, clashing with all three admirals, surrounded by a storm of black-red Haki.

Their hearts pounded in awe and disbelief.

With the naked eye, they couldn't even follow the battle—only flashes of different colors colliding midair, each impact echoing like thunder.

This wasn't anything like those earlier one-on-one fights.

Right now, Vice Admiral Daren was actually taking on a full assault from Marine Headquarters' three "monsters" alone!

With raw physical might, brutal combat instincts, and explosively agile speed, Daren's black, unyielding figure held its ground—and more.

Drip... drip... BOOM!!

A golden beam shot through the air—but was instantly crushed by Daren's dragon claw, wreathed in crackling black lightning.

Black smoke billowed from the claw, carrying the scorched scent of burned energy.

Borsalino appeared above the Vice Admiral in a flash, bringing his sword down in a sharp strike.

Clang!

Daren's dragon claw locked tightly around the light blade, sparks flying as they lit up Borsalino's teasing grin.

"So, Daren... what's your reason for staying behind to fight alone?"

“Wanna know?”

Daren grinned wide.

Borsalino, Sakazuki, and Kuzan all froze at once.

Zzzzzzt!!

Boom!

A vast and overwhelming surge of Haki exploded from Daren’s body, the sheer force blurring the forms of the three admirals.

“What the hell is that...” Sakazuki’s pupils shrank sharply.

“This is getting pretty scary...” Borsalino muttered with a resigned expression.

“Dahahaha! Your Haki... it got even stronger!” Kuzan’s eyes lit up in shock and excitement.

And it wasn’t just the three of them.

Around the battlefield, many Marine commanders who had awakened their Observation Haki—along with Sengoku, who had just leapt from the distant fortress wall—were all staring at Daren in stunned silence. His figure was now wrapped in a storm of crackling Haki, his aura surging higher and higher.

This wasn't just willpower.

It was a leap in Armament Haki.

“As I thought... only the three of you, with the strongest Logia-type Devil Fruit abilities, could push me this far!”

Daren let his Haki pour out freely, the gleam in his eyes impossible to hide.

He broke into wild, unrestrained laughter, completely ignoring the magma burns and laser wounds across his body.

So it was true!!

Under the pressure of the world's three most powerful Logia users, his Armament Haki—

After that fight on Philseque Island against the Five Elders, it had loosened again!

Armament Haki +0.217!

Current Armament Haki Strength: 79.378!