

One Piece 81

Chapter 81: Taking Command

At some point, the cabin of the warship had fallen silent. Even Borsalino stopped picking at his nails, looking up with interest, a playful smirk tugging at his lips.

This guy Daren... he just directly asked the Marine Headquarters admiral for command?

"You want command of this mission, Daren?"

Sengoku raised an eyebrow, his expression stern.

"Yes, Admiral Sengoku."

Daren's voice held no hesitation—firm and resolute.

"I have full confidence."

"The situation in the North Blue is complicated. I know the waters around the target island inside and out—the shipping routes, the nearby towns, troop deployments, everything."

"I was the one who arranged this deal through intermediaries. I have every reason to lead the operation myself."

"And more importantly, since the North Blue Fleet will serve as the main force in this mission to eliminate Byrnni World and the World Pirates, placing them under my command will ensure they perform at their best."

Daren knew there was no room for retreat here.

Having spent years in the North Blue, he understood one truth well—power and status aren't granted; you fight for them.

Make the right request at the right time... Sometimes, the best way to earn your superior's respect is to challenge their authority.

Sengoku's deep-set eyes gleamed slightly at Daren's words.

"Daren, do you understand Byrnni World's true strength?"

He suddenly changed the question.

"Yes, Admiral Sengoku. I'm well aware."

"Byrnni World is a pirate on par with Roger and Whitebeard. His strength is not to be underestimated. But this is a war—and the outcome of a war isn't decided by strength alone."

Sengoku paused in thought, then asked again.

"Are you also aware that if your command leads to mission failure, the consequences will be severe? It could ruin your political future in the Marines."

"I understand completely, Admiral. If the mission fails, I'll accept any punishment from Headquarters."

That response made the glint in Sengoku's eyes grow even brighter.

He turned slightly, looking at Borsalino.

"Rear Admiral Borsalino, what's your take?"

Borsalino stroked the stubble on his chin, pretending to think deeply. Then, in his usual lazy drawl, he replied:

"Hmm... I don't see any harm in letting Captain Daren give it a shot."

"His performance as North Blue Admiral has been excellent—both in administration and battlefield command..."

That final sentence was enough to dispel the last of Sengoku's hesitation.

If it were anyone else, Sengoku would never consider handing over command of such a crucial mission against Byrnndi World.

But Daren was different.

His record and service history spoke for themselves. Even though he hadn't gone through the formal officer training program, his tactical mind and leadership had consistently stood out in the Marines.

Most of all, Daren had guts.

Offering to lead the main force of the fleet into battle against Byrnndi World—that kind of boldness wasn't something every officer possessed.

"Very well. I'll grant you temporary command of this mission."

After a moment's thought, Sengoku gave his decision.

"But remember—the battlefield can change in an instant. If anything unpredictable happens, I'll take back control immediately and command the operation myself."

"No problem, Admiral Sengoku."

...

On the other end of the line, Daren stood at the bow of a warship, the cloak of justice billowing behind him in the wind. His half-lidded eyes carried a faint smile.

He slowly put away the military Den Den Mushi and turned his gaze toward the harbor.

One by one, warships sailed steadily in from the waters beyond the 321st Branch, forming an arrowhead formation exactly as he had ordered.

On the docks, heavily armed Marines were loading crates of supplies onto the ships with steely focus.

Every soldier moved with quiet discipline—checking artillery, polishing the barrels, preparing the fleet for deployment.

"Sengoku really said yes?"

A shocked voice sounded behind him. Daren turned to see Tokikake's face frozen in disbelief.

"He actually gave you command? For a mission as important as taking down Byrnndi World!?"

Daren chuckled, lit a cigar, and winked.

"Headquarters knows how to recognize talent."

"Damn it! Why not me!?"

Tokikake growled through gritted teeth.

For some reason, seeing Daren bask in the spotlight stung more than taking a punch to the gut.

This was Byrnndi World!

A legendary pirate with a bounty of 400 million Berry!

Over the years, countless Marine heavyweights—former Admiral Black Arm Zephyr, Admiral Sengoku, Vice Admiral Garp—had tried to take him down.

Now, with Byrndi World trapped in the North Blue and the Grand Line sealed off, they finally had a chance to finish the job.

And the one in charge... was Daren!?

"Daren, are you sure you want to lead this operation? Byrndi World isn't like the usual North Blue pirates."

Gion's voice was calm but laced with concern.

Daren gave her a sideways glance and grinned.

"No need to worry about me. I'm a scumbag and a rogue. What's that saying again? Ah, right—'villains always live the longest.'"

Gion bit her lip, fuming.

"I'm not worried about you! I'm worried your poor judgment will get the North Blue Fleet wiped out by Byrndi World's world-ending power!"

"...And worse, undo all the hard work Admiral Sengoku has put in!"

Daren shrugged.

"Who knows?"

"This is Byrndi World we're talking about. No matter who's in charge, there's a chance the mission could fail."

"Of course, if you're confident, Gion... I'll gladly hand the command over to you. How about it?"

Gion pressed her lips together and fell silent.

The North Blue Fleet wouldn't follow her orders.

And the truth was, when it came to the World Pirates, even she had no confidence.

The Moa Moa no Mi... its power was enough to make anyone despair.

That kind of force wasn't something strategy or formations could solve.

She glanced sideways at Daren's profile.

He was staring calmly at the sea, a faint, relaxed smile on his lips.

Could it be... he actually had a plan to deal with Byrnndi World?

Gion couldn't help but feel a growing curiosity.

Chapter 82: The Fangs of the North Blue Fleet

Daren had no time to bother with whatever schemes Tokikake and Gion were cooking up in their heads.

Standing at the bow of the warship, he squinted out across the harbor, taking in the sight of one warship after another, fully prepped and ready to go. From his vantage point, he could clearly see the countless North Blue Marines stationed across the decks.

He spoke with confidence, but no one understood the strength of Byrnndi World better than Daren himself.

He had to stay sharp. One misstep, and this mission could cost him his life.

"Daren, all the warships for the mission have been fully outfitted."

Momonga's steady voice came from behind. Wearing his officer's cap, his face was heavier than Daren had ever seen it.

Daren nodded with a smile.

"Good work."

Momonga looked at Daren's broad back. After a moment's hesitation, he couldn't hold back anymore.

"Time was tight, but we made it. The ten medium-sized warships assigned to this mission have all undergone the Germa 66 upgrades. Their keels were reinforced with large amounts of lightweight metal."

"But Daren... I still don't understand why you spent so much to modify the ships."

"You know the cost of modifying one ship could easily cover building a brand-new one of the same size."

Warships were outrageously expensive.

Though the North Blue Fleet used medium-class vessels—not nearly as large as the Marine Headquarters' main warships, let alone on par with Buster Call-class ships—each still cost over 50 million Berry.

Normally, the more ships you could field under the same budget, the better. That way, you could form a proper fleet combat group and establish firepower superiority.

Daren chuckled.

"It's not about quantity. You'll understand why I did it soon enough."

He paused, then asked,

"How's Doffy's side looking?"

Momonga replied after a moment of thought.

"According to intel from the Donquixote Family, there's been no change to the time or place of the deal. So far, the World Pirates haven't made any major moves. The trade's going ahead as planned."

Daren clenched his fists.

"What about the warships' armaments?"

Momonga responded seriously,

"Each warship is equipped with ten heavy cannons, and the hulls have been fitted with compact ballistic missiles from Germa... As for the crew, beyond standard sabers and long rifles, the North Blue Fleet's elites are armed with electroshock guns, portable artillery, flamethrowers, and other Germa tech."

Daren gave a satisfied grin.

"Perfect. Let's move out, then."

"Hey, Daren! Are we really gonna make it in time? The target island is—"

Tokikake came rushing over, panting, waving a crumpled nautical chart in his hands, flailing around in a panic.

"—more than three hours away," Gion said quietly, right behind him.

Seeing the worry on their faces, Daren raised his hand and smiled.

With that gesture, a series of sharp, urgent bugle calls rang out from the warship's lookout tower, spreading rapidly through the fleet.

That hand signal...

Tokikake, Gion, and Momonga all froze.

They turned their heads just in time to see Marines on each ship rapidly furling the sails on the masts.

"Ready? Hang on tight."

Daren exhaled a thick puff of smoke and said calmly.

Before anyone could react, dazzling arcs of purple electricity sparked between the fingers of the Marine Captain. In the next instant, a strange, invisible magnetic field erupted from his body.

Boom!

A deep rumble echoed from the hull beneath their feet. Tokikake and the others staggered as a powerful centrifugal force suddenly gripped the warship.

"No way..."

Tokikake's eyes widened in disbelief.

Momonga's expression shifted—he realized something too.

"We'll make it."

The Marine Captain raised his head, his voice brimming with vigor. A raging magnetic field poured from his body, whipping his wide white cloak into a frenzy.

He turned, grinned at them, and said,

"Oh, right. I forgot to mention..."

A sharp light and blazing ambition lit up his deep eyes.

"I never said the North Blue Fleet's power is limited to the sea."

With that, he clenched his fist.

Rumble—!!

Another wave of deep vibrations surged through the hull. The deck beneath their feet shook violently, and a massive whirlpool erupted on the ocean's surface.

In the stunned gaze of Tokikake, Gion, Momonga, and countless North Blue Marines, the world around them seemed to begin sinking.

No—it wasn't the world that was sinking.

The warship they were on... was rising!

Boom!!

Pillars of water and towering waves exploded upward from the naval port.

Ten warships—forming the North Blue Fleet—rose from the churning sea, wrapped in a violent magnetic field, and rocketed into the sky at a breathtaking speed!

"AAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHH!!!"

Tokikake's scream echoed from the main battleship's deck.

The accelerating warship sent gales ripping across his face, twisting it beyond recognition. He was frozen with an exaggerated, slack-jawed expression, his mind blank.

They were flying!

This fleet Daren built wasn't some ordinary naval force!

Gion gripped the railing tightly, staring at the thick sea of clouds ahead. Though her face was still pale with shock, a flush of exhilaration slowly spread across her cheeks.

A flying naval fleet... the strategic implications were unimaginable!

Unmatched mobility. Near-perfect stealth. Free from the sea's constraints. Capable of surprise aerial assaults...

She could already picture the dumbfounded look on Sengoku's face when he saw this fleet in action.

Next to her, Momonga gave a helpless, bitter smile.

Now he understood.

This was Daren's true purpose.

His Devil Fruit power.

With the Jiki Jiki no Mi, he could use magnetic force to levitate the metal-reinforced warships, launching them into the sky like cannonballs!

"Everyone!"

As the Marines around them stared in awe at the sky receding behind them, Daren's voice rang out.

At once, he had their full attention.

There he stood at the bow, straight and unyielding like a battle lance, facing the wind.

A fearless, determined smile tugged at his lips.

"Our goal is simple."

"To bring down the legendary pirate... Byrnni World!"

Silence fell across the sky.

Then—

"Kill!!!"

The roar burst forth like thunder, shaking the clouds and echoing across the heavens.

Back at the naval port...

Thousands of Marines stationed at Branch 321 watched in awe and frenzy as the fleet ascended into the clouds. As rain from the sea showered down, they all raised their hands in a solemn salute.

Each of them knew—whatever happened in today's battle—the North Blue Fleet's fangs had already left their mark.

Chapter 83: Byojack's Concerns

The sky hung heavy and gray.

Snowflakes danced wildly, blanketing the world in thick frosting. Everything the eye could see was pale and washed out.

Five pirate ships flew Jolly Rogers as they cruised just off the coast of the island. Their decks were packed with grinning, savage-looking pirates.

"Captain World!! Once this deal goes through, we'll finally restock our weapons, right?"

"Hahahahaha! Of course! That punk Doflamingo wouldn't dare defy the captain!"

"I heard the Donquixote Family controls the entire underground arms smuggling network in North Blue... I bet the goods they bring this time will be top-shelf."

"Shahahaha! When we're done, the Marines, the World Government—they'll all be reduced to ashes under the firepower of the World Pirates!"

"..."

The pirates of the World Pirates turned their eyes toward Byrnni World, standing at the bow with arms crossed. In their gazes burned fanatical admiration for his towering, broad-shouldered figure.

That was their captain.

The legendary pirate known as the "World Destroyer"!

A man who once stood shoulder to shoulder with Whitebeard and Roger—someone who made even the World Government and Marine Headquarters tremble in fear!

"Barorororo! Damn right! I'm Byrnni World—anything that stands in my way will be crushed!"

Byrnni World laughed heartily, then turned to his brother Byjack, perched on his shoulder.

"Right, brother?"

Byjack, pale and sickly with an IV dangling from his arm, looked at his overbearing, carefree younger brother. A trace of worry flickered in his eyes, but he forced a smile and nodded.

"Yes, brother."

Byrnni World burst out laughing again, snow piling up on the horns of his metal helmet.

He squinted over the deck, taking in the ambitious faces of his crew. The grin on his face only grew more arrogant, more defiant.

He didn't know why exactly, but the Marines and World Government had doubled his bounty from 200 million to 400 million Berry. Still, Sengoku's move had been a massive favor.

Out at sea, a rising bounty meant increased Marine pressure—but it also boosted notoriety.

The higher the bounty, the more infamous you became. And that meant more pirates, hungry for a name, would come flocking to your flag.

In just the last half month, within the North Blue alone, the number of pirates under his command had skyrocketed from a few hundred to several thousand.

His fleet had grown from one ship to five.

And this was just the North Blue!

If he returned to the Grand Line—or even the New World—countless more would join him. The World Pirates would rise to become one of the strongest pirate crews on the seas!

Byrnni World had long envied the kind of flying pirate fleet commanded by Shiki the Golden Lion.

"What a glorious age this is..."

He sneered as he muttered to himself.

Then he glanced toward a distant island and gave the order to his crew.

"Prepare to land."

Through the whirling snow, the outline of the island came into view—pure white, like a ghost town, faintly visible beneath the overcast sky.

That uninhabited island was the agreed meeting point for the trade.

"Yes, Captain World!"

The pirates responded excitedly, itching to move.

Ever since joining the World Pirates, they'd been starved for arms. This deal was something they'd been eagerly awaiting.

The sailors got to work, spinning the rudder, hauling the ropes, and adjusting the sails.

Guided by the wind, the five ships altered course and left sweeping trails across the sea as they approached the island.

"Wait..."

Just as the pirate ships neared the shore, Byojack suddenly spoke.

Perched on Byrnni World's shoulder, his gray brows furrowed deeply as he studied the narrow, pocket-shaped coastline ahead.

The five ships were squeezing tightly into the harbor—so packed it looked cramped and dangerous.

A biting wind whipped across his face, making him shudder uncontrollably.

The cold made him cough violently, face flushing red from the strain.

"Cough... cough... World, just to be safe, I don't think we should dock all the ships at once."

"The coastline's too narrow. If the Marines show up now, we wouldn't even have a chance to run."

"Oh?"

Byrnni World gave his brother a look, clearly dismissive of the concern.

Ever since his bounty had been raised, Byojack had been in a constant state of worry—careful to a fault.

Unless absolutely necessary, they never docked. Every ship was thoroughly searched, all Den Den Mushi and communication devices confiscated.

It had gotten to the point where Byrnni World couldn't help wondering if his brother's illness was making him overly cautious.

This was North Blue, not the Grand Line.

Even if that bastard Sengoku showed up, he had nothing to fear.

Still, thinking of how his brother had taken care of him when they were young—and seeing how much weaker he'd gotten—Byrnni World didn't argue. He kept smiling.

"If it's your suggestion, then..."

He pointed to one of the ships.

"You lot—don't dock. Patrol the island's coastline and wait for my signal."

He pulled a Den Den Mushi from his coat and tossed it to a pirate on that ship.

The pirates aboard that vessel immediately let out disappointed groans. Their faces fell.

Pirates weren't known for discipline.

They didn't go to sea chasing dreams or freedom—there was no "One Piece" yet, no era of great pirates.

They became pirates for plunder, wealth, fame, and power.

Even within the same crew, fights over spoils—sometimes to the death—weren't uncommon.

Byrnni World himself often stood by and watched, laughing. To him, the weak had no right to follow him.

Now that a fresh cache of arms was inbound, it was first come, first served.

Their ship wasn't landing. The other four were. Which meant those four would divvy up the Donquixote Family's weapons first—and they'd be lucky to get leftovers.

And if anything was left, it'd be the worst of the lot.

Still, Byrnni World's authority was absolute. No one dared speak up. They could only curse their bad luck under their breath.

Chapter 84: The Original Dream

The target island lay several nautical miles away.

A warship floated on the choppy sea.

"Reporting to Admiral Sengoku, Byrnni World has landed on the target island and is heading toward the designated location."

The lookout on the observation deck lowered his binoculars, turned, and saluted Sengoku, who stood on deck with his arms crossed.

"Well, can you see how many people are with him?"

Sengoku was also observing the distant island through binoculars. His eyebrows were tightly furrowed, like someone had drawn over them in ink.

The warship was still a good distance from the island. Even with the Marine Headquarters' most precise binoculars, he could barely make out a string of black dots moving slowly through the snowstorm.

Byrnni World was, after all, one of the top fighters on the seas. To avoid detection by his Observation Haki, Sengoku had to keep the ship at a safe distance.

Though honestly, the real threat he posed to the Marines and the World Government came more from his Devil Fruit power than sheer combat strength.

"We can't confirm the exact number, but most of the pirates seem to be stationed on the four ships anchored offshore."

"Four?"

Sengoku narrowed his eyes behind his black-framed glasses.

"According to intel, hasn't the World Pirates expanded to five ships after all their recent recruitment?"

"Yes, Admiral Sengoku," the messenger replied, "but for some reason, one of the ships hasn't docked. We've lost visual contact with it."

"Heh, cautious guy..."

Borsalino, lazily picking at his nails nearby, chimed in without even looking up.

Sengoku ignored the slacker and frowned even deeper, his expression growing more serious.

"Could it be Byojack's doing?"

Byojack, Byrnni World's older brother and First Mate of the World Pirates, was frail and sickly, with no combat ability whatsoever. But he possessed a cunning and caution far beyond that of the average pirate.

As the crew's strategist and core member, he was the brain behind the World Pirates—his intellect perfectly complementing Byrnni World's overwhelming strength, forming a dangerous combination.

In past pursuit operations, it was always Byojack's clever schemes that had allowed Byrnni World to escape, leaving the Marines empty-handed.

"Admiral Sengoku, we've confirmed the target is on the island. When do we move?"

A bodyguard approached quickly, speaking in a hushed tone.

Sengoku glanced at the ever-relaxed Borsalino, then paused before replying quietly,

"Wait a little longer..."

He pulled a military Den Den Mushi from inside his coat, eyes falling on the sleeping creature.

"...We move on Captain Daren's signal."

...

On the deserted island, snow drifted from the gloomy sky.

Byrnni World trudged through the snow with hundreds of pirates following behind, their steps sinking deep into the cold, icy terrain.

His breath turned into white mist in the freezing air. Sitting on his shoulder, Byojack instinctively pulled his sheepskin coat tighter around himself.

It was deathly silent all the way. Ahead stretched nothing but endless white plains and snow-covered mountains.

"World... I've got a bad feeling about this."

Byojack shivered as he looked out over the desolate snowfields.

"Hahahaha! Brother, you're overthinking it. Once we get the weapons, we'll leave this island right away... and after that, the world's ours to explore!"

Byrnni World grinned as he tried to reassure him, his eyes blazing with ambition like fire.

"No, that's not what I meant."

Byojack shook his head. His already pale face looked even paler in the cold.

"We've moved too fast. Ever since we set sail, it's been nothing but killing and war.

Our bounties keep rising for no clear reason, and Sengoku's been chasing us relentlessly...

More and more people are joining the World Pirates, but the number of subordinates has grown far beyond what our officers can control."

"And..."

He paused, eyes filled with a complicated emotion as he looked at his brother.

"You've changed, World."

"You've become bolder... more reckless. You treat human lives like ants. You're tearing through anything that stands in your way..."

If we keep going like this, it's only a matter of time before we face consequences we can't predict."

Byrnndi World suddenly came to a halt.

The pirates behind him instinctively stopped too, confused by their captain's sudden pause.

Snowflakes drifted down like stars, settling on his helmet, shoulders, and body. The grin on his face was gone.

"Brother... what are you trying to say?"

Byrnndi World's voice was low and quiet.

"Have you forgotten our dream? Wasn't traveling the world your dream from the start?"

"No, World, I haven't forgotten,"

Byojack said, shaking his head, his dim eyes full of uncertainty.

"Even now, I still want to sail across the world, to see all the different sights out there, and to find true freedom out on the endless sea."

"The one who's forgotten that dream... is you."

"When was the last time we stopped at an island we'd never been to, laughed freely, and just enjoyed ourselves?"

"You don't even remember, do you?"

"What you're enjoying now... it's not traveling. It's not adventure. It's killing. It's destruction."

"As your power grew—especially after you got that Devil Fruit—you changed. It's like you became a completely different person."

"Your hunger for destruction keeps growing. Your ambition is out of control.

You're destroying everything in your way... World Government ships, Marine fleets, even innocent civilians and towns—everything is getting swallowed up by your rage."

"—They forced me to!!"

Byrnni World suddenly roared, cutting his brother off.

Veins bulged on his forehead, his face twisted in fury, fists clenched tight.

"If I didn't do this, how could we ever chase our dream?!"

Traveling the world isn't some slogan—we need money, we need power!

The only way to make those who want to eliminate us think twice... is to destroy, to plunder, to raze it all!"

"I have the power of the Moa Moa no Mi! Why shouldn't I be the king of the seas?!"

"Just stay behind me and watch, brother..."

"I'll crush anyone who dares stand in our way.

Whether it's the Marines or the World Government... they'll all bow at my feet—before Byrnni World!"

He finished with a wild, fearless grin, then strode forward without looking back.

Byojack sat quietly on his shoulder, eyes fixed on his brother's profile, sighing to himself.

Chapter 85: It Was Me

Snowflakes drifted down.

After Byrnni World and his crew passed through a snow-covered forest, the view suddenly opened up.

On a vast, white plain, a dozen figures dressed in black mafia suits stood watchfully, a stack of wooden crates piled behind them.

A mocking sneer tugged at Byrnni World's lips.

"Where's that brat Doflamingo? What, for a deal this important, he doesn't even have the guts to show up himself?"

"The so-called King of the Underworld in the North Blue... tch! He's just a rat hiding in a sewer! What a joke."

The members of the Donquixote Family turned pale with anger, but none dared speak in the face of Byrnni World's taunts.

"Doflamingo-sama is occupied with pressing matters and couldn't make it," one of the mafia men said with a slight bow.

Byrnni World glanced at him.

"So? Everything I asked for—is it all here?"

The mafia leader raised a hand, and the others immediately sprang into action.

One large crate after another was brought forward and pried open with a loud clank of iron rods.

"Enough arms to equip 3,000 men, all top-grade."

Byrnndi World let out a cold snort and waved a hand.

The World Pirates, already flushed with excitement, couldn't hold back anymore—they rushed forward and pulled out weapons from the crates packed with straw.

"Hahahaha! Captain World! This is top-quality gear!"

"Even some World Government member nations don't have this kind of firepower!"

"..."

The pirates were all grinning wildly, handling the firearms with barely contained excitement.

Satisfied, Byrnndi World asked again,

"And the most important item?"

The mafia leader replied gravely,

"It's ready as well."

He turned and walked toward the edge of the snowy forest. Bending down, he felt around for a moment—then, as if grabbing something, he gave it a hard tug.

Shhh!

A huge sheet of snow was ripped away, revealing a terrifying object beneath the canvas as snowflakes flew into the air.

A gleaming black cannon barrel came into view—over three meters wide and more than eight meters long. Its surface was smooth and cold, and the gaping muzzle gave off a strong scent of gunpowder.

The carriage, fitted with two massive disc-shaped wheels, held the enormous cannon upright in the snowy field. It looked like a hulking, misshapen beast of black steel—menacing and impossible to ignore.

The moment Byrnni World saw the cannon, his eyes lit up with a fierce gleam.

Whoosh!

His figure vanished, and in the blink of an eye, he appeared beside the cannon like a ghost.

He reached out and gently ran his hand across the monstrous weapon. A twisted look of exhilaration gradually crept across his face.

"The shells?"

"Right over here."

The mafia man walked to the side and pulled back another snow-covered tarp, revealing ammunition crates beneath it.

"This cannon is unlike anything ever built. It took an enormous amount of resources to construct. Its range easily exceeds three nautical miles. Paired with these special shells, it can sink a large warship with ease."

Byrndi World grinned.

"I don't trust your evaluations. When it comes to weapons, I'd rather test them myself."

With that, he opened a crate, effortlessly hoisted a black shell over two meters in diameter, and loaded it into the cannon's gaping maw.

The burning fuse snaked in the wind, its sparks lighting up Byrndi World's face, which was twisted in wild ambition.

The next moment—

BOOM!!

A thunderous blast tore through the air. Snow clinging to trees within a hundred meters was shaken loose by the roar.

The black shell shot through the sky in a wide arc, slamming hard into a distant snow-capped peak.

RUMBLE!!!

The ground trembled with a deep, resonant quake. Flames surged skyward from the mountain's summit as avalanches of snow and rocks tumbled down in waves.

Everyone stared in stunned silence at the destruction—the mountaintop was collapsing, nearly flattened—and couldn't help but gasp.

"Hahahahahaha!!! That's it!! That's the feeling!!"

Flames danced in the sky, thick smoke billowing upward, casting light and shadow over Byrndi World's face as he laughed maniacally.

Byojack stood frozen, eyes wide with shock at the cannon's horrifying power. His mind went blank.

His brother hadn't even used his Devil Fruit powers just now!

That meant... this absurd power came solely from the cannon itself!

He couldn't imagine it—if this level of firepower was enhanced a hundredfold by Byrndi World's Moa Moa no Mi...

Could it really wipe out a town? No—an island... or even flatten Marine Headquarters in one strike?

For a moment, Byojack doubted his own thoughts.

"Good. That brat Doflamingo didn't let me down. I'm very satisfied."

Byrndi World gave the black cannon barrel a gentle pat.

"The Donquixote Family's reputation in the underworld is well known across the North Blue," the mafia man said with a bow.

"Mm, but we've only tested this big cannon. The rest of the weapons haven't been tested yet..."

Byrndi World's mouth curled into a grin.

The mafia man froze.

Bang bang bang bang!!

Suddenly, a burst of rapid gunfire rang out.

The mafia man's eyes went wide in shock.

Not far away, all his comrades had collapsed onto the snow, their bodies riddled with bullet holes. Blood seeped from beneath them, staining the white ground red.

The World Pirates grinned cruelly, smoke curling from the muzzles of their brand-new guns.

"You dare—!"

Bang!

The mafia man's head jerked to the side as a crimson flower of blood burst from his forehead.

He collapsed heavily to the ground, his dimming eyes locked onto Byrndi World, blood gurgling from his mouth.

"Doflamigo-sama... no... Daren-sama... will never... forgive you..."

Byrndi World slowly lowered his smoking flintlock and strolled up to the fallen man, looking down on him with a mocking smirk.

"I know that brat Doflamigo... but who's this Daren?"

He clicked his tongue with amusement—then suddenly frowned.

Vrrrrrrmmm!!

A sharp, shrill noise tore through the air from afar, rapidly closing in at terrifying speed!

Something was slicing through the atmosphere with incredible force.

Byrnndi World's eyes sharpened, a strange red gleam flickering in his pupils.

Without looking, he spun on his heel and thrust his rough palm out with force.

BOOM!!

A violent gust exploded outward, snow spiraling into the air. Byrnndi World's body was pushed back a meter, carving a deep groove into the ground. His gray cloak billowed wildly behind him.

Hovering in the air, he had caught a streamlined metal skateboard in mid-flight, its tail whipping from the momentum.

He squinted.

"That's me."

A low voice suddenly came from behind him...

Chapter 86: Welcome to My Territory

Byrnndi World slowly turned around. A tall, imposing figure came into view.

His short black hair stirred slightly in the snow. The sharp lines of his suit gave off a wild, violent aura, while a wide snow-white cloak flapped furiously in the wind behind him.

"Marines..."

Byrndi World narrowed his eyes, his expression darkening.

With a twist of his hand, the metal streamline skateboard bent and warped like twisted rope. At the same time, he gently lifted Byojack from his shoulder and set him down.

Byojack hobbled away on his crutches.

Swish!

The hundreds of pirates nearby paused for a moment, then broke into cruel grins as they raised their brand-new weapons. One by one, their hollow muzzles locked onto the Marine Captain.

"Daren... I think I've heard that name before..."

Byrndi World squinted at the black-haired Marine in front of him, and a mocking sneer slowly crept across his face.

"Hmph, I remember now."

"A big shot in the North Blue, huh? Rumor has it even the World Government Member Nations around here have to show you some respect... Rogers Daren, Supreme Commander of the North Blue Marines."

"If I'm not mistaken, that'd be you, wouldn't it, kid?"

Daren didn't respond. He simply glanced down at the lifeless mafia member on the ground. The man's eyes were wide and vacant—completely devoid of life.

"That's not how business is done," he said suddenly.

"What was that?"

Byrndi World blinked, confusion creasing his face.

"There are rules in the North Blue. And rules in business. I also don't like having guns pointed at me."

The Marine Captain's voice was flat as he looked at the corpse, his tone calm and cold.

The moment the words left his mouth...

Clack, clack, clack...

Dozens of pirates' eyes widened in horror as the guns in their hands suddenly flew away, as if yanked by invisible force, too hot to hold.

The weapons spun through the air with terrifying speed, barrels swiveling midair. In the blink of an eye, they aimed not outward—but back at their former owners.

And then... they fired.

Bang bang bang bang!!

Gunfire erupted.

The sound of bullets tearing through flesh echoed without pause. The snow-covered ground exploded with craters, and red blood sprayed like blooming flowers on the convulsing bodies of the pirates, staining the air with mist.

Byrndi World's pupils shrank.

When the gunfire stopped, hundreds of mangled corpses hit the ground in heavy thuds. The pristine white snow was now soaked in deep red.

Hundreds of smoking guns hovered midair.

Then slowly... they turned.

One by one, their muzzles swung toward Byrnndi World.

"Well, now it's fair."

Daren slowly looked up.

"Metal manipulation, huh?"

Byrnndi World narrowed his eyes, then let out a contemptuous laugh.

"Arrogant little Marine brat. Think a Devil Fruit makes you my equal—"

He didn't finish the sentence.

The mangled skateboard at his feet suddenly squirmed like a living thing. Silver-white liquid metal coiled and twisted upward, tightly binding around Byrnndi World's legs.

His expression changed slightly.

Daren gave a faint flick of his finger.

A faint blue arc of electricity flickered in the air.

The hovering weapons flared again—hot tongues of flame shooting out wildly.

A storm of bullets turned into a metallic hurricane, swallowing Byrnndi World whole in a barrage of deadly force.

"Does that even work?"

Byrnndi World sneered. A layer of invisible black armor with a metallic sheen rapidly spread across his body.

Clang! Clang! Clang!

Bullet after bullet struck him, bouncing off harmlessly like pebbles hitting steel. Not a single mark was left. The impact pelted the snow with shallow craters.

As he stood in the firestorm, Byrnndi World's face twisted into a furious, mocking grin.

"Marine brat, you've got no idea what the real terror of this sea looks like."

"The North Blue's a small pond. You've never even set foot on the Grand Line... Just a frog at the bottom of a well!"

With a roar, he stomped the ground. His legs, coated in Armament Haki, exploded with strength.

The ground groaned beneath him, cracking audibly.

The metal bindings twisted and stretched—until he finally tore free with brute force.

But Daren's expression didn't change.

"No. You're the one who doesn't understand the true terror of the North Blue."

He suddenly smiled.

Byrнди World froze.

That smile tugging at the Marine Captain's lips filled him with unease. An ominous premonition surged in his chest.

He instinctively pushed his Observation Haki to the limit—and his face instantly changed.

Daren raised his arm and swung it with enough force to whistle like thunder.

Swish!

Snow in the sky suddenly scattered, then reversed course—spiraling upward under some strange, invisible force.

Byrнди World instinctively looked up.

Far off, hidden beneath a tree, Byojack looked up too. The blood drained from his face, leaving him pale.

"What... is that..."

One...

Two...

Three...

...

One warship after another broke through the clouds like icebreakers.

Ten Marine warships lined up in perfect formation, looming above in the sky.

From the bow and sides, pitch-black cannon muzzles jutted out, staring down coldly at the island below like brutal beasts of war baring their fangs.

"Times have changed, Byrnndi World."

Daren spoke softly.

In Byrnndi World's shrinking pupils—and in Byojack's horrified gaze—

Daren raised his hand, fingers spread wide, and gave a commanding gesture.

He clenched it into a fist.

BOOOOM!!

A deafening roar thundered from the sky. Orange-red flames gushed from the cannon barrels, and a storm of shells rained down from above—like a net of death and destruction.

Their target—was the four pirate ships docked at the harbor, belonging to the World Pirates.

The next second—

Explosions erupted in waves across the port. The narrow dock turned into a string of fiery blasts as each pirate ship detonated in sequence.

Red flames soared into the air, sweeping across land, shoreline, and sea, licking the sky with howling wings of fire.

Shockwaves rippled outward, flinging dirt, debris, and waves into the air.

Faint screams of dying pirates echoed from the inferno.

Thick black smoke billowed skyward, coiling and churning.

The flames painted the sky a deep crimson—nearly blood red.

With his back to the blazing fire, the Marine Captain stood tall. His billowing white cloak reflected the blood-red light.

Rogers Daren, the Admiral of the North Blue, spread his arms wide as pillars of fire surged behind him.

With an arrogant smirk, he looked down at the legendary pirate before him.

"Welcome to the North Blue."

"Welcome to... my territory."

Chapter 87: Daren Must Not Get Into Trouble

"Admiral Sengoku!! What is that!?"

"Someone suddenly appeared on the island! He's fighting the World Pirates!"

"In an instant! In just one moment... aside from Byrнди World, hundreds of pirates on the island were wiped out!!"

Out at sea, several nautical miles from the target island, a Marine soldier standing on the observation deck and monitoring the island through a telescope suddenly shouted in excitement:

"It's Captain Daren!! He's appeared on the island!!"

"In a flash, he took down hundreds of Byrнди World's men!!"

"—What!?"

Sengoku's face twisted in shock as he hurriedly snatched the telescope from his adjutant, scanning the area quickly.

But right then...

Borsalino, who had been casually picking at his nails, suddenly looked up with a faint smile.

"No need to look. They're here."

Sengoku froze for a moment, then instinctively activated his Observation Haki.

Sensing something unusual, his pupils shrank into pinpoints as his gaze shot toward the cloud layers above the island.

And then—every Marine on the warship widened their eyes, mouths agape, minds blank as if witnessing something beyond belief.

From the distant sky, one naval warship after another pierced through the clouds, gliding in formation at high altitude as if unaffected by wind or gravity.

Massive, pitch-black cannons extended from the ships.

A moment of silence passed...

Then—fire erupted!!

A storm of firepower engulfed the island's harbor, scouring it like a tidal wave. Crimson explosions bloomed across the landscape, followed by a raging sea of flames.

Tremors rumbled across the ocean, and towering waves churned visibly near the island.

"The four pirate ships of the World Pirates... all... all destroyed..."

In the dead silence, someone on deck finally swallowed hard and muttered hoarsely.

As the silence broke, cheers erupted across the warship.

"Those are our Navy ships!"

"That's right! The flag of justice, the seagull emblem!!"

"But where did this fleet come from!?"

"A flying Navy fleet!?"

"We haven't received any reinforcements from Headquarters..."

"Wait a minute! We're in the North Blue!!"

"Could it be..."

The Marines started murmuring among themselves, then suddenly realized something and turned their eyes in unison to their Admiral.

"Well done!!!"

Sengoku suddenly punched the air with excitement, his Justice cloak billowing behind him.

His eyes burned with desire as he stared at the fleet lined up in the sky, heart pounding wildly.

A flying Navy fleet!

That brat Daren... he's been hiding this the whole time!!

Sengoku couldn't help but grin with satisfaction.

As a Marine Admiral and the most "strategic" man in the Justice camp, Sengoku knew better than anyone the immense strategic value of an airborne fleet.

Take their old nemesis, Shiki the Golden Lion—he used the power of the Fuwa Fuwa no Mi to lift his pirate fleet into the sky. His movements were elusive, his strikes unpredictable. Even when outnumbered, he could retreat with ease.

With his overwhelming combat strength, Shiki became virtually untouchable.

Thanks to that power, Shiki even surpassed Roger and Whitebeard in notoriety, becoming the Marine's most dreaded enemy.

The Marines had been powerless against him, forced into a purely defensive posture.

But now... things were different!

If they could harness that brat Daren's abilities...

Maybe—just maybe—they could forge an invincible "flying fleet" of their own!

A fleet of justice that could traverse the New World without restriction, reaching every corner of the globe unhindered by sea currents or trade routes, executing swift, strategic strikes to bring down evil!

The thought made Sengoku's blood boil with excitement.

He even momentarily overlooked the terrifying, excessive firepower that the North Blue Fleet carried.

"Admiral Sengoku, shouldn't we act now?"

Borsalino asked with a laid-back smile.

Sengoku snapped out of his thoughts and suddenly realized—this was the signal to attack!

"All units, attack!! Full speed ahead!!"

He raised his hand and gave the command, his expression turning serious.

As soon as the order was given, the Marines sprang into action, raising the sails and pushing the engines to full throttle.

"And Borsalino—what are you still doing!? Go assist immediately!"

Sengoku suddenly turned and shouted angrily at Borsalino, who was still leisurely straightening his suit.

"If anything happens to Daren, I'll hold you personally responsible!"

With four pirate ships sunk in an instant, Byrnni World was cornered with nowhere to run.

What kind of desperate counterattack would a trapped beast unleash?

Right now, Daren was the only one on that island!

Borsalino raised both hands as if surrendering and muttered under his breath:

"Yes, yes... if I hadn't reminded you, you would've been too excited to even give the attack order..."

With that, his figure scattered into golden photons and shot off toward the distant island.

Watching the golden light speed away, Sengoku broke out in a cold sweat. He clenched his fists so tightly that the veins bulged on the backs of his hands.

No matter what... Daren must not be harmed!

...

"You little Marine brat, you're asking for death!!"

A furious roar thundered through the air.

Byrnni World's eyes burned red, blood vessels densely covering the whites of his eyes.

Seeing the coastline erupting in flames, he immediately realized—he'd been completely surrounded by the Marines!

Four pirate ships, thousands of subordinates—all obliterated in an instant by the North Blue Fleet's overwhelming firepower.

And this brat in front of him was just a Captain—no way he could take him down alone.

Which meant... that bastard Sengoku had to be nearby!

And his escape route... was gone!

No—

Suddenly, Byrnni World remembered something. A twisted smile crept across his face.

"Daren, you brat... you think you've cut off all my exits?"

He pulled out a Den Den Mushi from inside his coat.

"Hahahahaha!! Bet you didn't expect this—I've still got one ship left!!"

He dialed the call.

One second. Two seconds. Three seconds...

No response.

Byrndi World froze.

"Looks like your Den Den Mushi signal's not too good..."

The Marine Captain said with a smirk.

Chapter 88: Still Able to Fight

"The Den Den Mushi signal... it's being jammed..."

Not far off, under the shadow of the trees, Byojack stared at the slumbering Den Den Mushi in Byrndi World's hand, a storm raging in his heart.

"World! That Marine brat's ability isn't just manipulating metal! He's controlling magnetic fields! He's directly jamming the Den Den Mushi signal!"

Gritting his teeth, Byojack shouted hoarsely, ignoring how the cold air scraped against his throat.

Right after yelling, he bent over in a violent coughing fit, even spitting up blood-tinged phlegm.

But his eyes were filled with sheer, unnameable terror.

If his hunch was right... this was a trap that had been set long ago.

Doflamingo's weapons... the time and place of the deal... the magnetic field interference... four pirate ships taken out instantly... all escape routes cut off...

That could only mean one thing: they were about to be hit by a full-force assault from the Marine top brass!

The thought sent fear flooding through Byojack's mind. Gasping for breath, he dropped to his knees with a thud, his body trembling from oxygen deprivation.

...

"Damn Marine brat!!"

Byrnndi World roared, eyes bloodshot and locked on Daren, his gaze seething with fury and killing intent.

He had finally realized it too.

"You're the one who's finished, Byrnndi World."

Daren raised his hand. The metal binding Byrnndi World's legs suddenly "reactivated," stretching into long, sharp spikes that shot toward his body.

Clang! Clang! Clang!

The metal spikes collided with Byrnndi World's body, which was coated in Armament Haki, spraying sparks with each hit.

"I've told you already—this kind of trick doesn't work on me!!"

Byrnndi World bellowed.

"More More Tenfold Speed!"

Boom!

The ground beneath his feet exploded, cracking apart in all directions.

The explosive force, coupled with a second surge of Armament Haki, allowed him to rip free of the metal restraints.

Bang!!

He stomped hard, sending rubble flying into the air, suspended in midair by the blast.

He spread his large, rough hands and slammed the debris forward, launching them at Daren.

"More More Tenfold Shotgun!"

The flying stones suddenly accelerated, their speed multiplying tenfold mid-flight. The resulting force gave them the deadly impact of a shotgun blast.

Daren smirked.

Ping! Ping! Ping!

The shrapnel-like stones slammed into his body but bounced off harmlessly.

Byrnni World's pupils shrank.

This Marine brat's physical durability... was off the charts!

But before he could react, a barrage of cannon fire echoed from the horizon.

Dozens of heavy cannons from ten warships roared in unison, spitting orange-red flames into the sky in synchronized volleys.

Shells rained down like a storm, forming a deadly net of smoke and flame that closed in on Byrnndi World.

"More More Tenfold Speed!"

Byrnndi World vanished on the spot.

As the bombardment poured down, his silhouette danced through the air like a phantom, weaving and darting effortlessly through the dense rain of shells.

He had mastered Soru and Geppo of the Rokushiki to perfection!

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Explosions erupted across the battlefield as shells struck the ground, igniting roaring flames.

"Hahahahaha!! Speed is power! Out here on the sea, nobody can keep up with me!!"

Byrnndi World laughed wildly, dodging another shell with a blur.

"Is that so?"

Daren sneered.

He opened his hands and clawed the air with spread fingers—then yanked hard, as if grabbing something invisible!

Byrnndi World froze in confusion—then suddenly realized, the cannonballs, which should've been falling in smooth arcs, had veered off course midair.

Boom!!

One shell curved sharply and exploded right in front of him.

Then another.

Then another.

A third, a fourth...

Shell after shell twisted in midair, as if guided by invisible hands, defying the laws of physics as they rained down on Byrnndi World in a savage storm.

Blazing fire and choking black smoke filled the sky, painting it red. The surging heat rolled across the battlefield, and the rising temperature quickly melted the snow on the ground.

Suddenly—

Whoosh!!

A thunderous sonic boom split the air.

Wreathed in smoke, his skin scorched, Byrnndi World appeared behind Daren like a ghost.

"More More Fiftyfold Speed!"

Daren's pupils shrank to needlepoints.

So fast!!

"Brat—depending on tricks like yours, you'll never understand the true terror of this sea!"

"Die!!"

With bloodshot eyes, Byrnni World swung a fist at the back of Daren's head!

At fifty times speed, the punch shattered the air, producing a violent white shockwave.

This brat hadn't awakened Observation Haki—he couldn't possibly react in time!!

But what happened next left Byrnni World utterly stunned.

The Marine, who had his back turned, suddenly twisted around. The metal wrapped around his arm warped and expanded, forming a high-density shield in front of him.

He... predicted the attack!?

Impossible!!

A mountain-crushing punch landed.

Crack!!

The metal shield twisted, then shattered completely.

Byrnni World's fist crashed into Daren's crossed arms.

BOOM!!

A massive shockwave exploded outward in rings.

Crack-crack-crack...

Blood sprayed from Daren's arms as bones cracked loudly.

Bang!!

The next second, Daren was blasted away like a cannonball, tumbling through the air for over a hundred meters before crashing into the ground, carving a long, blood-soaked trench through the snow.

Drip... drip...

Thick blood dripped from his mangled arms. Gritting his teeth, Daren pushed himself back to his feet. His arms throbbed with searing pain, and blood trickled from the corner of his mouth.

That punch from Byrnndi World had fractured the bones in his forearms.

If not for the metal shield's cushioning and his inhuman physical conditioning, his arms would've been shattered completely by the force of that Armament Haki.

"Haki really is the greatest power on this sea..."

Daren wiped the blood from his mouth and glanced down at his hands.

Blood still gushed from the torn wounds—his left forearm was a mess of flesh and gore, with twitching veins visible beneath. A large chunk of muscle was gone from the back of his right hand, leaving bone exposed to the air.

And yet... he grinned fiercely.

"But... I can still fight!"

Chapter 89: Pushing the Limits

In this vast sea, whether or not one has mastered Haki is the clearest line between the strong and the weak.

Armament Haki can greatly enhance both the user's defense and offensive power. It's also the only method besides Seastone that allows someone to counter Logia-type Devil Fruit users.

Observation Haki, on the other hand, grants the user an acute sense of aura, allowing them to predict an opponent's movements and attacks with incredible precision.

With his strength, Daren was undoubtedly "invincible" in the North Blue!

But out here, on the boundless ocean, without having mastered Haki, he still appeared helpless and powerless in the face of a legendary pirate like Byrnni World.

Even if his physical body and Devil Fruit abilities had reached an inhuman level.

Daren staggered to his feet, his body low and tense like a crouching leopard ready to spring. Pain shot through his arms, but his eyes were clearer than ever.

Thick smoke rose in the distance, and from it, a black boot slowly stepped out.

Daren's eyes followed upward to see Byrnni World's burly figure emerge from the smoke.

His body was scorched with burns. Even full-body Armament Haki hardening couldn't completely shield him from the North Blue Fleet's fierce bombardment.

"Marine brat... You feel it, don't you? The gap between us!!"

Byrnni World's eyes were wild as he stared at the distant Marine Captain, breathing heavily with a vicious tone.

He had never been this angry in his entire life.

He was Byrnni World—the World Destroyer!

A pirate who stood alongside Whitebeard and Roger!

And now, he'd been tripped up in some backwater corner of the North Blue!?

Absurd. Laughable. Unforgivable!

"Don't think you've won just yet. Even if that bastard Sengoku's on his way to back you up, I've got plenty of time to kill you first and bail after I reconnect the Den Den Mushi."

"Then come and try. You're running out of time."

Daren grinned, his gaze defiant.

"You're dead meat!"

Boom!!

Within a ten-meter radius, the ground suddenly collapsed a full meter, and countless piles of snow blasted upward from the shockwave.

Byrnndi World vanished in an instant.

Too fast to track!

"More More: 50x Speed!"

The world fell silent.

Daren's senses sharpened to the extreme, faint arcs of purple electricity dancing between his fingers.

An invisible, eerie magnetic field radiated from his body, enveloping an area over a hundred meters wide.

The falling snow seemed to slow in midair.

Inside his mind, the magnetic fluctuations of every living being within range appeared with crystal clarity.

Then—

A flicker of blue light flashed in his deep eyes.

Got him!

Above!

The instant that thought formed, a sharp gust exploded overhead.

A boot cloaked in black Armament Haki came crashing down like a steel battle axe splitting stone—

Daren shifted sideways just in time, the boot grazing past his hair before slamming into the ground.

BOOM!!

A thunderous roar echoed out. Dust and snow erupted like a raging dragon.

A massive fissure, stretching hundreds of meters, tore from the impact point all the way into the distant jungle. Trees on both sides collapsed inward, swallowed by the rupture.

Debris scattered. Byrnndi World's pupils shrank.

This Marine brat... predicted my move again!?

That wasn't luck!

As he froze for a split second, the Marine Captain had already closed the distance.

In a flash, the space between the two similarly-built men vanished.

Daren slammed a hand onto Byrnndi World's face, a wicked grin tugging at his lips.

"Let's test how tough you really are."

And then—

He drove the pirate's head into the ground!

Crack!!

BOOM!!

A massive crater, dozens of meters wide, instantly formed, its surface covered in dense fractures.

Fierce wind howled, whipping the Marine Captain's bloodstained white cloak like a battle flag. His figure stood tall and ferocious.

"Did it work?"

Buried deep in the crater, Byrnndi World stared up at Daren with mockery in his eyes. His body was wrapped in armor-like Armament Haki.

He grabbed Daren's arm with one hand and swung him to the side like a whip!

Bang!

Daren slammed into the ground, the impact rumbling through the earth.

Blood spilled from his lips, salty and warm, yet the smile on his face only grew more crazed.

With a swift roll, he sprang up and unleashed a sideways kick at Byrnndi World's neck just as the pirate was getting up.

Bang!

A shockwave burst out. Byrnndi World's body staggered, his vision blurring from the blow to the neck.

Even with Armament Haki's defense, he couldn't fully absorb the monstrous force behind Daren's attacks.

A sudden wave of fury surged in him. Byrndi World lunged forward, slamming his fist into Daren's abdomen.

Bang!

The moment his punch landed, Daren's whip-like leg struck his nose.

Blow after blow, the two exchanged vicious attacks. Each clash left trails of blood spraying from the Marine Captain's body.

Fists collided. Muscles clashed. The snow around them churned and flew with their fierce combat.

It was brutal.

"You damn lunatic!!"

Byrndi World suddenly roared, glaring at the Marine brat whose blood-covered face only added to the madness.

Despite not having mastered Haki, Daren endured with his bizarre perception and monstrous physical strength, holding out against the pirate's relentless assault!

"Hahaha!! Come on!! Let's keep going!!"

Blood flew as another punch sent Daren sliding back several meters, his face smeared with red.

But he was laughing.

It felt amazing!

Facing Byrnni World's overwhelming power, he felt like he'd reached the peak of his life!

That feeling of dancing on the edge of life and death...

The raw sensation of fist meeting flesh...

The pain, the salty blood in his mouth and nose...

It was like a seductive lover, stirring his primal instinct for battle, provoking the savage thrill buried deep in his soul...

That real, intense, unmistakable feeling of being alive!

Pushing the limits!

A powerful urge surged within him.

He wanted to know—

Without Haki, just how far could he go against a pirate like Byrnni World?

Even if it was just one more minute—

No—just one more second—

That would still be breaking his limits!

Chapter 90: Just for a Drop of Blood?

Yes—break through the limit!

Because at this very moment, Daren could feel it clearly: the power, speed, and physical endurance that had long stagnated were now rising at a rate unlike anything he had ever experienced!

Physique: 62.251 (+0.08, +0.05, +0.06...)

Strength: 59.311 (+0.05, +0.04, +0.03...)

Speed: 61.623 (+0.04, +0.06, +0.03...)

And the most significant change—was in his speed!

After breaking past the 60-point mark, his speed and burst capabilities had undergone a qualitative leap. He could now move short distances at high speed with startling precision.

If this continues, within mere minutes, Daren could learn the Navy's Rokushiki technique, Soru, just from the stat boost and his clash with Byrnni World!

With that in mind, Daren began simulating and replicating Byrnni World's power technique in his head once more.

Boosted by his magnetic field perception, he could vividly visualize every contraction of muscle, every shift in movement, every flow of breath whenever Byrnni World performed Soru.

"Die, you little Marine brat! Don't think you can stall for time!"

Byrnni World roared in fury, his figure vanishing with a sharp "whoosh" before reappearing above Daren, driving a thunderous kick down toward the Marine Captain's head like a falling mountain!

The force of the kick howled through the air, exploding with ear-piercing sonic booms.

Daren's eyes snapped open.

Whoosh!

The snow beneath him erupted violently.

A flicker of disbelief flashed deep within Byrnndi World's pupils.

Boom!!

His foot crashed down, smoke and snow roaring like dragons, the ground groaning beneath the pressure.

But the Marine brat—was gone.

Shockwaves surged through Byrnndi World's mind.

Soru!

That Marine brat... just used Soru!!

How...?

"Impossible!!"

Byrnndi World shouted in disbelief.

After their earlier exchange, he had a solid grasp of Daren's strength—the so-called North Blue Admiral.

An inhumanly powerful body, extraordinary reflexes and perception, and that strange magnetic control...

It was impressive, yes—but still far from enough to challenge a great pirate like himself.

If not for Daren's monstrous endurance, he'd already be dead by now.

But now...

In less than two minutes, he had learned Soru—one of the Navy's Six Powers—just by watching!?

No...

Byrnni World shook his head, face darkening.

He looked at the black-haired Marine, who reappeared dozens of meters away, gasping for breath and bleeding—yet his physique, speed, strength, and reactions were all visibly improving under Byrnni World's Observation Haki!

Byrnni World gritted his teeth, fists clenched tight.

This reckless brat... is using him as a training dummy!

"You think you know who you're dealing with?!"

Fury flooded his bloodshot eyes. Byrnni World exploded forward, moving even faster than before, appearing in front of Daren in a flash.

"More More—100x Speed!!"

"Die, you little Marine!!"

His Armament Haki-coated fist turned pitch-black, its hardness absolute. The punch radiated explosive power so intense it distorted the very air around it.

Daren's pupils shrank.

Too fast!

It was more than ten times faster than Soru!

The punch was ferocious—unyielding, overwhelming, terrifying.

No way to dodge!

Even with magnetic field perception tracking Byrndi World's movements, the explosive power from that speed exceeded Daren's current reaction limit.

This... was the scent of death.

If that's the case...

Daren gritted his teeth and grinned viciously, completely ignoring the incoming punch to his chest. He swung his own fist straight forward!

In an instant, they closed the distance.

Like two roaring tigers, they lunged at each other—fists like fangs, ready to shred their prey.

Boom!

Bang!

Their fists collided simultaneously.

Crack—!

Daren's chest caved in with a gut-wrenching crunch. The pain was excruciating, forcing a sharp gasp from him as blood gushed from his mouth, turning his face deathly pale.

But his punch had also connected—slamming into Byrnndi World's cheek and leaving a bruised, bleeding mark at the corner of his mouth.

Boom!

A second explosion of Armament Haki burst forth. Daren's body was launched like a cannonball, sent hurtling hundreds of meters before crashing into a distant, snow-covered mountain.

A dull rumble echoed through the peaks. Avalanches of snow fell like crashing waterfalls, sending pale waves rising hundreds of meters into the sky.

"All that effort... almost lost your life... just for a drop of blood?"

Byrnndi World stepped toward the collapsing mountain, wiping the blood from his mouth as he looked down at the smear on his thumb and sneered.

Within the shattered rock, Daren lay in a massive crater, blood streaming from his mouth and nose.

"For me... that's more than enough."

The Marine Captain's uniform was in tatters, his shredded muscles rippling like liquid as blood continued to pour from his face.

Yet his eyes blazed with fierce, unyielding spirit—his expression radiating savage joy and defiance.

"The legendary pirate, the 'World Destroyer' Byrnni World... wounded by a brat who doesn't even have Haki... Hahahahaha!!"

Daren laughed loudly, revealing blood-stained teeth.

Byrnni World heard the taunt but didn't flare up—instead, he went quiet for a moment.

"I've got to admit it, Daren... I've never met a lunatic like you on these seas."

He looked at the battered young Marine, for the first time showing a trace of seriousness and recognition in his expression.

"Given time, you'll definitely rise to the top of this ocean."

"But unfortunately..."

Byrnni World's body shot forward like a cannonball, racing straight toward Daren.

"Today—you die by my hand!"

His Haki-clad fist expanded rapidly in Daren's view, but Daren remained calm, his grin unchanged.

"That's not a sure thing. The fastest speed on this sea... belongs to us Marines."

Suddenly—

A golden beam of light tore through the air at a speed beyond comprehension.

Countless photons converged in front of Daren into a foot clad in white leather shoes—blocking Byrnni World's punch head-on.

Boom!!

A powerful shockwave exploded outward, whipping up a billowing cloak of justice.

"That was scary... you almost killed our Captain Daren..."

Glowing light particles continued to gather—from the foot, up the leg, the waist, the neck... until finally, a face appeared behind a pair of comically oversized sunglasses.

Borsalino smiled lazily as he turned to Daren.

"If you died here, Admiral Sengoku would definitely give me hell."

Daren shrugged and grinned.

"Even someone moving at the speed of light shows up late, huh... Rear Admiral Borsalino."