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Chapter 10: Chapter 46-50

Chapter 46: The Strong Teams of Each Academy

Above the Student Council Office, a massive floating screen expanded in front of everyone, drawing their eyes toward it.

Displayed on the screen was a tournament bracket—structured like a grand castle, arranged in a tiered, ascending format.

On this list, the names of teams from different academies appeared one by one, filling the chart.

This was the official Phoenix Festa tournament schedule.

"Wow... There are so many participants...!"

Kirin Toudou couldn't help but gasp at the sheer number of names densely packed across the screen.

Right on cue, Claudia Enfield's voice rang out.

"The total number of participants for this year's Phoenix Festa is 512, forming 256 teams."

"The Tournament Operations Committee has divided them into groups. After the opening ceremony, battles will take place across different stages spread throughout the city."

During the Festa, Asterisk's various battle arenas would be fully utilized for the competition.

Among them, eleven major and mid-sized arenas across Asterisk, including the Sirius Dome, would serve as battle stages for the tournament.

The grouping and scheduling of matches were determined by the Operations Committee, a body composed of members selected from the Integrated Enterprise Foundation, which backed each academy.

To maximize excitement and viewership, the committee deliberately spread out the strongest competitors in the early stages.

This prevented high-profile battles from occurring too soon, ensuring that potential climactic showdowns in the later rounds wouldn't be lost due to strong contenders eliminating each other too early.

Thus, when Kaiser and the others located their names on the tournament bracket, they weren't surprised to see that their first-round opponents were all relatively unknown figures.

Of course, "unknown" was only in their eyes.

The Phoenix Festa was a world-class event featuring competitors from all six academies. Anyone who dared to enter was already confident in their strength.

At the very least, most were officially ranked students within their respective academies.

To ordinary students, these contenders were not weak at all.

But to Kaiser, Ayato, Julis, and Kirin—these names were insignificant.

As a result, everyone looked at the bracket with ease, their expressions completely relaxed.

"Judging from these matchups, it looks like we won't be running into each other early on."

Ayato Amagiri commented with a lighthearted smile.

"Well, obviously."

Julis-Alexia von Riessfeld responded, unsurprised.

Even students from the same academy were intentionally separated in the early rounds.

While it wasn't impossible for teammates to meet, the chances were extremely low.

Besides, their team in particular was a special case.

Julis herself was Rank Five, and while Ayato wasn't in the rankings, the Operations Committee was well aware that he was a Four-Colored Magic Sword user.

That alone ensured that their team would be classified as a high-ranking threat.

There was no way they would be matched early on against another team consisting of two Rank Ones—Kaiser and Kirin, who were top championship contenders.

Claudia continued her explanation.

"The Phoenix Festa lasts for approximately two weeks."

"The first week consists of the preliminary rounds, which will determine the Top 32 teams."

"As you can see, the matchups have already been arranged. All you need to do is follow the bracket and win your matches."

"Unless something unexpected happens, all of you should advance through preliminaries with no issues."

"Once the Top 32 have been decided, the tournament will move into the main event in the second week."

"At that point, a new tournament bracket will be created through randomized draws, and teams will compete in the following format:"

Top 32 → Top 16

Top 16 → Top 8

Top 8 → Semifinals

Semifinals → Championship Match

"For our academy to earn ranking points, we need at least one team to make it past the preliminary rounds and reach the Top 32."

The ranking points Claudia referred to were part of the overall score calculation for the Asterisk academies.

Only competitors who made it to the official rounds contributed points to their academy's total score.

The higher the final placement, the more points they earned for their academy.

Essentially—

The better Kaiser and the others performed, the higher Seidoukan's overall ranking would be.

"Our academy's poor performance in the past few Festas has been... less than ideal."

Claudia sighed.

"Honestly, this Phoenix Festa is the most critical event for our academy's overall standing this season."

"It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that our success—or failure—rests entirely on your performance."

"As I'm sure you all know, different academies excel in specific Festas."

Saint Gallardworth Academy dominates the Gryps Festa (team battles).

Le Wolfe Black Institute dominates the Lindwurm Festa (solo battles).

Both academies have repeatedly crushed the competition in their respective tournaments.

And this season...

It was already confirmed that:

The Gryps Festa would include Saint Gallardworth's previous championship team.

The Lindwurm Festa would feature Le Wolfe's two-time reigning champion.

Essentially, they were openly declaring that they would be taking the trophies again.

For the other academies, winning those two Festas was nearly impossible.

In other words—

The Phoenix Festa was their best shot at securing victory.

And coincidentally...

Seidoukan Academy had historically been the most successful in the Phoenix Festa.

However, their recent struggles in the Festa had contributed to their declining performance in the overall rankings.

For Seidoukan to redeem itself, winning this Phoenix Festa was absolutely essential.

Claudia then expanded multiple floating screens displaying the most dangerous teams in the tournament.

"And here are the strongest teams from the other academies—the ones most likely to pose a challenge to you."

She swiped her hand, sending the data to everyone's screens.

"Fortunately, this Phoenix Festa doesn't feature any other Rank Ones."

"In fact, there are very few competitors ranked in the Top Five."

"But even so, these teams will still be major threats."

Kaiser and the others began scanning the lists.

Kaiser was the first to finish.

He nodded internally.

The names were exactly as he remembered from the original story.

Strongest Teams of the Phoenix Festa:

Saint Gallardworth Academy:

Rank 11 – Doroteo Lemus

Rank 12 – Elliot Forster

Jie Long Seventh Institute:

Rank 9 – Li Shenyun

Rank 10 – Li Shenhua

Queenvale Academy for Girls:

Rank 7 – Sandra Segur

Rank 47 – Nina Achenwall

"Their rankings aren't as high, but they're still powerful."

As Claudia continued listing the strongest teams from Le Wolfe Black Institute and Allekant Academy—

Kaiser, Ayato, and Julis all narrowed their eyes.

Chapter 47: "Gravisheath"

"What's wrong?"

Claudia Enfield immediately noticed the subtle changes in Kaiser, Julis, and Ayato's expressions and asked.

Kaiser remained silent.

Instead, it was Julis who spoke first.

"What's the situation with Allekant?"

Her voice carried clear displeasure.

Beside her, Ayato was just as serious—his brows furrowed deeply.

Claudia immediately understood.

As Seidoukan Academy's student council president, she was far from a mere figurehead.

She had long since investigated the incidents involving Ayato and Julis before they became partners—how they had been ambushed multiple times and dragged into a conspiracy.

And the truth behind those incidents...

It all traced back to Allekant Academy.

In other words, Ayato and Julis had a personal grudge against Allekant.

Thus, Claudia provided the information she had gathered.

"From what I know, Allekant does not have any particularly strong or noteworthy participants in this Phoenix Festa."

"Forget Page One-ranked competitors—even their ranked students are few and far between."

Claudia paused slightly before continuing.

"However, this year's Phoenix Festa may include some... special adjustments."

That statement instantly caught everyone's attention.

"Special adjustments?"

Kirin tilted her head, puzzled.

"This isn't unusual," Claudia explained.

"Since the Festa is a global event, its primary purpose is to attract worldwide attention."

"As such, the Tournament Operations Committee frequently implements new measures to increase the event's appeal."

"Because of this, every Festa often features changes in rules or special adjustments."

"If these changes improve the event, they become permanent regulations."

"If they prove problematic, they are simply discarded."

Clearly, Claudia had received insider information but wasn't at liberty to fully disclose it.

"This year, Allekant is expected to be the biggest beneficiary of such adjustments."

"Even if they don't have many high-ranking participants, you shouldn't take them lightly."

Upon hearing this, Ayato and Julis fell into contemplative silence.

"...What about Le Wolfe?"

Kirin hesitantly asked.

"Are there any notable participants from their side?"

"Of course."

Claudia nodded.

"In fact, aside from Allekant, the biggest threat in this year's Phoenix Festa will be from Le Wolfe Black Institute."

She enlarged one of the floating screens.

The next moment, a profile appeared before everyone's eyes.

The image displayed a fierce-looking woman with an intimidating, almost gangster-like presence—resembling a yakuza boss more than a student.

"Irene Urzaiz."

"Rank Three of Le Wolfe Black Institute."

"Known as the Vampire Princess of Carnage."

"In this Phoenix Festa, she is the highest-ranked competitor—aside from Kaiser."

Claudia's voice echoed through the room.

"She is the wielder of the Orga Lux—"

"Gravisheath."

"While her ranking is lower than Kaiser's, if she were in Seidoukan, she would easily be a contender for Rank One."

Her words made everyone's expressions turn serious.

At this point, even Ayato, despite being relatively new to Asterisk, had developed a decent understanding of the six academies and their power structures.

Thus, everyone present understood—

Among the six schools, Seidoukan Academy's overall strength was the weakest.

Comparing the Six Academies

Seidoukan Academy was still stronger than Queenvale Academy for Girls, as Queenvale's structure and philosophy inherently limited the number of strong fighters.

Seidoukan was comparable to Allekant, since Allekant focused more on research and technology, producing students with superior equipment but less natural combat talent.

However, against Saint Gallardworth, Jie Long Seventh Institute, or Le Wolfe Black Institute—Seidoukan was simply outmatched.

And the reason for that...

Was the nature of those three academies themselves.

Saint Gallardworth Academy

The only noble academy among the six.

Operated under strict knightly codes and discipline.

Strongly emphasized swordsmanship as the true path to strength.

Produced some of the greatest swordsmen in Asterisk.

Jie Long Seventh Institute

The largest of the six academies.

The only academy that had an elementary division—believing that combat training must start from childhood.

Martial prowess was deeply ingrained in its culture.

Developed Star Senjutsu, a technique that enhanced Mana control across all students.

Le Wolfe Black Institute

The most violent and battle-hungry academy.

Encouraged a "survival of the fittest" mentality.

Students excelled in duels, thriving in personal combat.

However, also the most chaotic school, riddled with rule violations and criminal elements.

Many of Asterisk's criminals had ties to Le Wolfe.

It was no surprise that these three academies consistently dominated past Festas.

And now, Irene Urzaiz stood among them—Rank Three of Le Wolfe Black Institute.

"Gravisheath" – The Cursed Orga Lux

"Gravisheath..."

Julis murmured.

"That's the Orga Lux that's appeared in past Festas before, isn't it?"

"Yes," Claudia confirmed.

"It's one of the more infamous Orga Luxes."

"What makes it special is its extremely high compatibility with almost any user."

"Because of this, many different fighters have wielded it over the years."

"And thanks to its overwhelming power, it has become one of the most well-known Orga Luxes in Festa history."

"However..."

Claudia's gaze drifted toward Kaiser.

For a brief moment, a subtle smile formed on her lips.

"As powerful as it is, Gravisheath comes with a heavy price."

"Few people have ever been able to fully control it."

"If the Vampire Princess of Carnage can wield its power to its fullest extent..."

"She will undoubtedly be one of the greatest threats in this tournament."

The screen also displayed Irene Urzaiz's partner—

A non-ranked student.

Her younger sister, Priscilla Urzaiz.

A girl described as gentle and harmless.

Despite having such a weak partner, Claudia still considered Irene the biggest threat from Le Wolfe.

That alone was proof of how dangerous she truly was.

Everyone's faces grew tense.

Everyone except...

Kaiser.

From start to finish, he remained silent.

Staring at the screen, his golden eyes flickered.

"If I remember correctly..."

"This woman was sent by that fat bastard from Le Wolfe specifically to counter Ser-Veresta's user..."

In the original story, Irene Urzaiz was deliberately placed in the Phoenix Festa for one reason—

To defeat Ayato Amagiri.

So now...

Who was her target this time?

"I should find out soon."

As Kaiser contemplated this, Claudia finally finished briefing them on the strongest competitors from the other academies.

"I'll send you all the detailed information later."

"This is all I can do for you now. The rest... is up to your own efforts."

Everyone nodded in acknowledgment.

....

A few days later, Seidoukan Academy's summer vacation began.

But in Asterisk—

The city grew livelier than ever.

Tourists flooded the streets.

The atmosphere burned with excitement.

And quietly, unnoticed—

The Phoenix Festa began.

Chapter 48: "Phoenix Festa"

On this day, the entire city of Asterisk transformed into the stage for a grand festival.

"Boom—! Boom—! Boom—! Boom—!"

Fireworks exploded in the sky, scattering countless colorful streamers and confetti across the streets.

Everywhere—from major avenues to small alleys—was decorated with vibrant banners and promotional posters. With the excited cheers of the crowd ringing in the air, the entire city was caught up in the festive atmosphere.

Tourists flocked to Asterisk from all over the world.

Some came to watch the battles of the Phoenix Festa, while others took advantage of the event to sightsee and celebrate.

As a result, the streets were packed, with a never-ending flow of people and vehicles creating a bustling scene.

In particular, the Central District and the Commercial District were overcrowded, to the point where people were practically shoulder to shoulder.

To manage the situation, the city issued temporary regulations:

No vehicles were allowed in the main streets of the Central and Commercial Districts.

Student duels were strictly prohibited in public areas for the duration of the Festa—violators would face severe punishment.

At the heart of the Central District, in Asterisk's largest and most prestigious battle stage—

The Sirius Dome.

The Opening Ceremony of the Phoenix Festa was in full swing.

"Wow... It's so huge! And so many people...!"

Beside Kaiser, Kirin Toudou was completely overwhelmed by the sight before her.

The petite girl shrank against Kaiser's side, clinging to him like a frightened little bird.

"It really is massive..."

Kaiser glanced at Kirin, noting how she had curled herself up into a ball from nervousness.

And in doing so...

Her upper body, pressed tightly against itself, created a rather... noticeable effect.

"...Sigh"

The corners of Kaiser's lips twitched slightly, and he quickly averted his gaze, turning to observe his surroundings instead.

The Sirius Dome was enormous.

Not only could it easily accommodate all 512 competitors, allowing them to stand in perfect formation for the ceremony—

But it also had a spectator capacity of nearly 100,000 people.

In fact—

Kaiser had to tilt his head back just to catch a glimpse of the spectators in the upper levels.

And if someone were to look down from the top row of the arena, they probably wouldn't even be able to see him.

At this moment, the stands were completely packed, with no empty seats in sight.

Yet, despite the massive crowd—

There was no deafening noise.

Because at the very front of the stage, standing behind a podium, was a man delivering a speech.

"I am Madiath Mesa, Chairman of the Tournament Operations Committee."

The voice was clear and steady, echoing throughout the arena.

The speaker was a man in his mid-thirties with a sharp, rugged appearance and a relaxed demeanor.

His tone carried an air of confidence and authority, yet at the same time, he gave off an easygoing aura—almost as if he were too carefree for his position.

But no one dared to underestimate him.

The Tournament Operations Committee was responsible for managing all aspects of the Festa.

As its Chairman, Madiath Mesa was the highest-ranking official of the Phoenix Festa.

And anyone who could hold this position was undoubtedly a high-ranking executive within the Integrated Enterprise Foundation.

In terms of authority and influence—

He ranked far above Toudou Kouichirou.

"...So that's Madiath Mesa?"

Kaiser studied him carefully.

From the moment Madiath began speaking, Kaiser could feel a faint but undeniable sense of pressure radiating from the man.

For the briefest moment, he had even detected a powerful surge of Prana.

This confirmed one thing—

Madiath Mesa was not just another bureaucrat.

Unlike Toudou Kouichirou, who was merely a political figure, this man was a genuine warrior—one who could rival active Festa competitors.

Of course, that wasn't what caught Kaiser's attention the most.

"Hm?"

Suddenly—

Kaiser narrowed his eyes.

For a fleeting moment, Madiath Mesa's gaze flickered toward him.

It lasted for barely a second—so brief that most would dismiss it as a coincidence or imagination.

But Kaiser had been watching closely.

He knew he wasn't mistaken.

"So... I've caught his attention too?"

He muttered to himself, so softly that even Kirin didn't hear him.

After Madiath finished his speech, several other figures took the stage.

Among them were various high-ranking officials, including—

The Mayor of Asterisk.

Their speeches were long-winded and tedious—so much so that even Kirin began nodding off, nearly falling asleep on Kaiser.

The endless, dull formalities continued all the way until noon before finally concluding.

And then—

A broadcast echoed across the dome.

"All competitors scheduled for matches today—please proceed to your designated battlefields within the allotted time."

Upon hearing this—

Many competitors immediately left the stage.

Since the Phoenix Festa preliminaries would be held across eleven different arenas, only those competing at the Sirius Dome remained.

"Our match is being held here, huh?"

Walking down one of the corridors within the venue, Kirin Toudou stayed close to Kaiser, clutching her tournament schedule as she double-checked their assignment.

Seeing the confirmation, she let out a small sigh of relief.

It wasn't surprising.

During the Festa, the entire city was overcrowded, and traveling to another arena meant getting caught in the chaos of the festival crowds.

For someone as shy as Kirin, that was not ideal.

Not to mention—

Every time she stepped onto the streets, there were always some people who couldn't resist trying to approach her.

If not for the strict no-fighting rule during the Festa, Kaiser would have done more than just stop them.

He would have broken their hands.

Given all this, it was understandable that Kirin preferred to avoid the streets.

Luckily, their match had been classified as a main event, meaning they had been assigned to the Sirius Dome—the central stage of the tournament.

"Having our match on Day One... Should we consider that good luck or bad luck?"

Kaiser chuckled as he looked at his relieved partner.

The first week of the Phoenix Festa consisted of preliminary rounds, with a total of three rounds.

Round 1 lasted four days—eliminating half of the 256 teams.

Round 2 lasted two days—reducing the count to 64 teams.

Round 3 took one day, cutting it down to the Top 32.

Since their first match was on the very first day, they would have at least three days of rest before their next battle.

"Once today's match is over, we'll have plenty of time to recover."

Kaiser smiled.

"If you don't want to go out, we can just train at the academy."

"Ah... Thank you, Kaise-senpai..."

Kirin bowed her head shyly.

Seeing her adorable reaction, Kaiser felt an impulse.

And before he could stop himself—

He reached out—

And patted her head.

"Ah...!"

Kirin let out a tiny gasp, her cheeks turning bright red.

...But she didn't resist.

At that moment, Kaiser had only one thought—

"What's the big deal about headpats?"

"Is this really why all the protagonists do it?"

"I get it now."

....

"L Block – First Round, Match Two: Please proceed to the waiting area."

The announcement snapped them out of the moment.

"That's us, Senpai."

Kirin confirmed.

"That was fast."

Kaiser grinned.

"Alright then—let's make this quick."

"Yes, Senpai!"

Kirin's eyes sparkled with determination.

Chapter 49: Be Glad This Is Just a Match

"OOOOOOOOOOOOH——!"

As Kaiser and Kirin Toudou stepped through the contestant tunnel onto the largest dueling stage in all of Asterisk, they were immediately greeted by an overwhelming roar of applause.

This was unlike any official ranking battle. The deafening cheers felt as though they could shatter the entire Sirius Dome, erupting in tandem with the dazzling stage lights, creating an awe-inspiring spectacle.

Even Kaiser was momentarily taken aback by the sheer magnitude of the audience's enthusiasm. Gazing at the massive display floating above the stage, which reflected his own image, he finally felt the weight of standing upon the most prestigious battleground in the world.

He understood—starting from this moment, his face would be etched into the memories of spectators worldwide. Even those who weren't present in the arena would be watching him live from various parts of the globe.

Including... those with ulterior motives.

"Dear audience! Thank you for your patience!"

At that moment, the voices of the live commentators echoed throughout the venue.

During the Festa, all matches were broadcast live with professional commentators providing real-time analysis. In the Sirius Dome's commentary booth, two female announcers were passionately delivering their opening remarks.

"Please turn your attention to the left side of the stage, where we have Seidoukan Academy's current Rank One, Kaiser, alongside the former Rank One, Kirin Toudou!"

"Kaiser is the only Rank One participating in this year's Phoenix Festa! According to reliable sources, he was an unknown student just three months ago, only making his first appearance in Seidoukan Academy's official ranking battles at that time. And in his debut, he skyrocketed to Rank Thirteen! The following month, he defeated the former Rank One and claimed the top spot, his meteoric rise nothing short of astonishing!"

"Indeed! Without a doubt, he's an undeniably powerful fighter! And let's not forget—he's also the wielder of the Orga Lux, Ser-Veresta!"

"The legendary Four-Colored Magic Swords! In terms of fame, it's one of the most renowned Orga Lux in Asterisk!"

"Each of the Four-Colored Magic Swords is infamous for being incredibly difficult to control. Before Kaiser, the only known wielder of one in Asterisk was the current Rank One of Saint Gallardworth Academy, the so-called *Holy Knight*—an unparalleled swordsman at the peak of mastery."

"The last known user of Ser-Veresta appeared over a decade ago!"

"Not only that, but Kaiser himself is remarkably adept at wielding the magic sword. Based on the widely circulated footage of his duels, his control over it is extraordinary—so much so that he's even earned the nickname *Blazing Star Swordsman*, a title widely recognized by fans everywhere!"

"And his partner is none other than Seidoukan's former Rank One, the prodigy who ascended to the top at the age of only thirteen—Kirin Toudou! She claimed Rank One within a mere month of enrolling!"

"A duo consisting of two Rank Ones—this is an unprecedented, absolutely formidable team!"

"That's right! Their support online is overwhelmingly high, and they're already considered one of the strongest contenders for the Phoenix Festa championship!"

"A powerhouse team with overwhelming popularity! Just what kind of spectacular performance will they bring to us today?"

"I can't wait to find out!"

The commentators expertly fanned the flames of excitement, sending the stadium into an even greater frenzy. The already thunderous cheers somehow managed to intensify, pushing the atmosphere to its absolute peak.

"...I thought I was prepared for this, but I clearly underestimated it."

Kaiser could feel his heartbeat quickening.

Not from nervousness. Not from anxiety.

It was exhilaration—his blood was boiling in excitement.

Amidst this electrifying atmosphere, Kaiser turned to Kirin beside him.

"Are you alright, Kirin?"

Despite the overwhelming crowd, he didn't forget to check on his partner, who was naturally shy.

"Yes." Kirin tightened her grip on the hilt of her sword, her expression cold and composed. "I'm fine."

The moment she gripped her blade, she transformed into a fully-fledged warrior. Kaiser realized his concern had been unnecessary.

Satisfied, he shifted his gaze forward—toward their opponents.

Their challengers had also stepped onto the stage.

It was a pair of large, burly men.

Dressed in black uniforms, they starkly contrasted with Kaiser and Kirin, who wore white. Their faces were rough and intimidating, their dyed hair in vivid colors—one sporting a sea-urchin-like purple buzz cut, the other with a mohawk. It was obvious at a glance that they were thugs.

Kaiser had already seen the tournament bracket and knew that these two were students from Le Wolfe Black Institute. Both were university-level students ranked Twenty-Fifth and Twenty-Ninth in their academy.

Though not members of Page One, they had still climbed into the top thirty of the notoriously cutthroat Le Wolfe Black Institute. If placed in Seidoukan, they would likely rival Arkadi Fankenn in strength.

Yet, despite facing two Rank Ones, they showed no fear. Instead, they glared at Kaiser and Kirin with vicious expressions.

"Rank One? Just a couple of damn brats."

"Stealing our spotlight like this—time to teach them a lesson."

"Little kids should stick to playing house at school."

"The girl's mine. I'll crush her little—"

Kaiser caught snippets of their conversation, and the smile on his face vanished.

"...Kaise-senpai?"

Noticing the shift in his demeanor, Kirin called out in confusion.

"It's nothing." Kaiser replied emotionlessly. "The one with the purple buzz cut is mine. You take the mohawk."

The one Kaiser chose was the one whose eyes had been fixated on Kirin's chest.

"Don't hold back."

Kaiser drew his pitch-black Activator.

"Understood!"

Kirin wasn't sure what had gotten into him, but she followed his instructions without question.

"And now, let the second round begin!"

The commentator's voice rang out just as the school badges on all four competitors' chests lit up.

"Phoenix Festa, L Block, First Round, Second Match—begin!"

A mechanical voice boomed through the stadium speakers.

The battle had officially begun.

"Die!"

The two Le Wolfe Black Institute students roared in unison, summoning their Lux weapons and charging forward.

"You're mine!"

The purple-haired thug wielded a machete-like Lux and sprinted straight toward Kirin, a menacing grin on his face.

But just as he reached her—

Kaiser suddenly stepped in.

"Vmm!"

His black Activator came to life, its pristine white blade forming amidst a crimson glow, emitting a deep, resonant hum.

"There it is! The Orga Lux—Ser-Veresta!"

The commentator's exclamation was lost to Kaiser, who had already tuned everything else out.

He gazed at his opponent indifferently.

Then, before the purple-haired thug could react—

"Boom!"

A wave of searing heat erupted from Ser-Veresta, slamming into him like a sudden inferno.

"Aaaghhhhh—!"

With a bloodcurdling scream, the thug was sent flying. His body tumbled through the air like a ragdoll, thick smoke rising from his scorched skin.

"You... you bastard—!"

Charred and twitching, the thug struggled to rise.

"Boom!"

Another blast of heat struck him.

"Aaaaaaaaghhhhh—!"

He was sent sprawling once more, his clothes reduced to tattered rags by the intense flames.

"M-My hair...!"

The thug scrambled to his feet, clutching his head in horror.

His once-purple buzz cut had been completely burned off, leaving behind a scorched, blackened mess.

Expressionless, Kaiser approached him, Ser-Veresta humming ominously in his hand.

"Be glad this is just a match."

His voice was calm.

"Otherwise, I wouldn't have just burned the hair on top."

The thug froze.

A chilling sensation shot through his lower body.

For the first time in his life—

He felt truly terrified.

Chapter 50: Wole-Zain

"Shhh!"

With the terrified, knee-clenching reaction of "Black Charcoal Head," Kaiser casually swung his sword, slashing across the school badge on the thug's chest. A scorching, crimson fissure instantly formed on the badge.

"It's over."

At the same time, Kirin Toudou also concluded her battle.

While Kaiser intercepted the purple-haired thug, Kirin had already drawn her sword against the mohawked one.

She hadn't needed to use *Renzuru*—in fact, she didn't even need to. A few effortless slashes from her blade were enough to overwhelm her opponent, easily driving him into a corner.

Recalling Kaiser's instructions, Kirin struck him across the face with the back of her blade. Blood spurted from his mouth as several teeth went flying.

"Crack...!"

A moment later, Kirin's sword traced across his badge, shattering it completely.

"Ding!"

A loud chime immediately rang throughout the stage.

"Match over."

"Winners: Kaiser & Kirin Toudou."

The mechanical voice announced the results clearly.

"OOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOHHHHHHH——!"

The entire Sirius Dome erupted, sending forth an earth-shaking wave of cheers.

"They won! They won with complete ease!"

"The match didn't even last ten seconds, and Kaiser and Kirin Toudou have already secured victory!"

"So strong! Absolutely overwhelming! As expected of Seidoukan Academy's two consecutive Rank Ones! That was a completely one-sided match!"

"It looks like the rumors on the internet weren't exaggerated at all! With a team like this, they're definitely championship contenders!"

The live commentators' excitement spilled over, their voices blending with the roaring crowd. Instead of cooling down after such a quick battle, the atmosphere only grew even more frenzied. The commotion was so intense that even passersby outside the Sirius Dome were drawn in.

However, those who had been watching this match with special interest—particularly those paying attention to Kaiser—wore much graver expressions.

The effortless way he had conjured a wave of heat with a single swing of his sword left them no choice but to acknowledge the truth.

"He can wield Ser-Veresta's power like that...?"

"That's unheard of..."

"So the rumors are true—his compatibility with Ser-Veresta is abnormally high."

"I've never seen anyone use a magic sword like this... This guy is definitely someone to keep an eye on."

"...We need to make our move soon."

Countless thoughts surfaced in their minds. Some were filled with curiosity, some burned with fighting spirit, but others... carried malicious intent.

After today's performance, Kaiser had undeniably entered the radar of many different factions. They recognized his talent, his potential, and the threat he posed.

Particularly those competing in the Phoenix Festa—there was no doubt that they now saw him as one of the biggest obstacles on their path to victory.

What kind of repercussions would this have?

Perhaps only fate could tell.

But Kaiser wasn't concerned about any of that.

"We won, Senpai!"

Kirin ran up to him, her face glowing with joy.

Kaiser smiled.

At this moment, he only wanted to savor the joy of victory.

Even if this was just the beginning...

Sirius Dome – Contestant Lounge

Unlike the Comprehensive Arena at Seidoukan Academy, the Sirius Dome was far larger in scale. As a result, not just the top-ranked students, but *all* competitors who had matches here were provided their own private lounge to use at their leisure.

Kaiser and Kirin had returned to theirs and were casually chatting.

"Ayato-senpai and Julis-senpai's match is today too, isn't it?" Kirin asked.

She was completely relaxed now, showing none of the nervousness or shyness she once had when alone with Kaiser.

After spending over a month together, she had grown accustomed to his presence. At first, she had felt anxious, flustered—but now, being with him was entirely natural. So much so that she could reveal a carefree, unguarded smile in his presence.

"They're in C Block, first round, third match. Different bracket from ours, but their match is right after ours."

Kaiser pulled up the tournament schedule and tapped on the names of Ayato Amagiri and Julis-Alexia von Riessfeld.

A floating window expanded, just in time for their match to begin.

Kaiser's attention was immediately drawn to the screen.

And for good reason.

At that very moment, Ayato Amagiri was stepping forward, while Julis stood behind him with a smile.

That usual relaxed expression still hung on his face, but his eyes... they were sharper than usual.

And in his hand—he held an *Activator*.

Like the Activator of Ser-Veresta, this one had a pitch-black hilt.

But unlike Ser-Veresta, whose core was crimson, this one had a different color.

A color entirely distinct from the green hue of ordinary *Manadyte*.

A color that told everyone *this was an Urm-Manadyte*.

Without a doubt—this was the Activator of an **Orga Lux**.

"Vmm!"

As the Urm-Manadyte within it emitted its unique radiance, digital grids appeared around the Activator in Ayato's hand.

The grids rapidly assembled, forming an intricate crossguard, while an immense surge of *Mana* materialized into a blade.

A brilliant **azure blade**—radiant like an emerald, shimmering with an entrancing glow.

"Vmm!"

At that instant, Ser-Veresta trembled at Kaiser's waist, reacting violently.

"This is..."

Kirin, who had unknowingly leaned closer to Kaiser, widened her eyes at the sight.

"Wole-Zain."

Kaiser spoke its name.

Wole-Zain—one of the Four-Colored Magic Swords, created in the same era as Ser-Veresta, and equally legendary.

In the original story, while the other three swords had either been openly used or secretly wielded, **Wole-Zain** had never once appeared.

Throughout Asterisk's history, never before had *all four* magic swords been wielded simultaneously—not even in the later events of the original timeline.

But now, because Kaiser had obtained Ser-Veresta, fate had shifted.

By some twist of destiny, **Ayato Amagiri** had become the wielder of **Wole-Zain**, bringing into the world an Orga Lux that had never appeared before.

"...So now, all Four-Colored Magic Swords exist in the same era."

Kaiser murmured, feeling the uncanny weight of fate's hand.

"Ayato-senpai is making his move!"

Kirin's voice snapped him from his thoughts, pulling his gaze back to the screen.

And then—

" *『With my Hidden Secret Sword, I shatter the celestial prison, unleashing the might of the tiger!』* "

Before the eyes of thousands, amidst the deafening cheers of the crowd, Ayato raised **Wole-Zain**, chanting its invocation.

In an instant, countless chains of *Mana* manifested around him, binding his body. At their source, glowing purple magic circles spun in the air.

"Boom!"

Ayato's *Prana* exploded outward, shattering the magic circles and obliterating the chains restraining him.

At that moment—the sheer magnitude of Ayato's *Prana* sent a shiver through the arena.

Although Kaiser and Kirin couldn't *feel* his energy through the broadcast, they could see the breathtaking spectacle—the *dazzling explosion of Prana, star-like motes of light swirling and surging skyward in a pillar of brilliance.*

"Ayato-senpai's Prana..."

Even with only a glimpse, Kirin instantly understood how vast his energy reserves were.

Her expression stiffened in shock.

Kaiser, on the other hand, wasn't surprised at all.

Ayato's Prana had always been among the highest in Asterisk—one of the few who could rival the very strongest.

And now—

Kaiser watched intently as Ayato vanished in a streak of emerald light.

By the time he reappeared, his opponents' badges were already shattered.
