

Multiverse 139

Chapter 139: Future Lieutenant

"Defeat me?"

Kaiser, who had just been sulking, immediately perked up with interest upon hearing Renji Abarai's words.

Forget him—even the surrounding onlookers looked at Renji Abarai in astonishment, all thinking this guy was way too confident, way too arrogant.

The guy over there had seventeen consecutive wins and wasn't even out of breath!

Defeat him?

You're dreaming!

While the crowd dismissed it with contempt, Kaiser wasn't thinking much of it.

He knew that Renji Abarai's future accomplishments weren't minor. Not long after graduation, he entered Division 11 and became one of its members.

And one should know, Division 11 was the combat squad among the Gotei 13, full of battle maniacs. Their Squad Members were generally stronger than those of the other twelve squads. Especially their Captain—Kenpachi Zarakī—who, like Kaiser, was born in District 80 of North Rukongai. His potential was terrifying. In terms of potential alone, he could be considered second only to the original protagonist, with limitless prospects.

That Renji Abarai could join Division 11 was enough to prove his combat ability. Not to mention, he later transferred to Division 6, became its Lieutenant, and eventually gained Captain-level strength, becoming one of the top individuals in Soul Society.

His poor performance in Kidō class was simply because he wasn't good at it.

But when it came to Kendō—it was a different story.

Barring any surprises, in terms of swordsmanship, Renji Abarai should be the strongest among this year's new students.

Unfortunately, as mentioned before—Kaiser was a cheat character.

"Here I come!"

Renji Abarai let out a loud shout, gripping the wooden sword in a middle stance, then suddenly charged at Kaiser.

His footwork was fast, and his raw strength wasn't bad. As his wooden sword slashed down, the whistling wind was so sharp it nearly tore the air, startling quite a few people.

"Clack!"

Kaiser didn't move from where he stood. Holding his wooden sword in one hand, he casually swung it, and with a crisp clash, he deflected Renji Abarai's heavy downward strike in one motion.

"I'm not done yet!"

Renji Abarai wasn't discouraged. With a low growl, he charged in again, swinging his sword in fierce gusts.

"Clack!" "Clack!" "Clack!" "Clack!"...

Crisp clashes rang out nonstop as the sounds of wooden swords striking each other echoed throughout the Kendō field.

Renji Abarai, with astonishing momentum, launched a relentless assault, swinging his sword with fierce energy from all angles, fast and furious, dazzling the eyes of the onlookers.

But in the face of this rapid and fierce barrage, Kaiser merely stood still, calmly waving his wooden sword with one hand, deflecting every strike with ease. Not a single blow penetrated his defense to touch his body.

"Damn it!"

Renji Abarai's strength was considerable, but his patience was clearly lacking. Seeing that his attacks had no effect, an anxious look appeared on his face. His swings grew faster, and his attacks more intense.

However, seeing this, Kaiser only shook his head.

"You lose your cool too easily."

Casually batting away a slash aimed at his forehead, Kaiser spoke slowly.

"Though your attacks are stronger now, once you're agitated, your blade becomes easier to read, your intent more obvious, and it also leads to excessive stamina consumption. That's not a good habit in battle."

As he spoke, Kaiser began to counterattack.

With one step forward, he closed the distance between him and Renji Abarai. His wooden sword sliced sharply through the air, striking Renji's downward swing mid-motion in a rising diagonal arc.

"Clack!"

A single, crisp clash echoed—not a series this time, but one loud and clear.

Renji Abarai's sword, stopped mid-swing, was forcefully knocked aside, nearly flying from his grip.

The force of the strike caused his body to lurch backward. His guard was completely broken—his sword flung high behind him, impossible to retrieve in time.

"Crap...!?"

Renji Abarai's face twisted in alarm.

Kaiser's sword, following the path of the reverse upward slash, came down again in a proper downward diagonal slash—hitting Renji Abarai squarely on the shoulder.

"Ugh!"

Renji Abarai immediately dropped into a crouch from the pain, and his wooden sword fell from his hand to the ground.

He instinctively raised his head, and what met his eyes was Kaiser, standing calmly before him, wooden sword pointed at him—its tip less than twenty centimeters from his face.

"Well fought."

Kaiser smiled faintly and said the same line he had already said seventeen times before.

"...I lost."

Renji Abarai stayed dazed for a long while before he finally bowed his head and, in a dispirited tone, admitted defeat.

The surrounding students finally exhaled and began murmuring.

"So he lost after all."

"That's eighteen straight wins now."

"Scared me—I thought he was really gonna win for a second."

"No way. Didn't you see how that super-genius didn't even move his feet and still blocked all his attacks?"

"Yeah, anyone with eyes could see that guy never stood a chance."

"But he's still strong though. No one else lasted more than ten seconds—he lasted almost a full minute."

"Wasn't he the one who did the worst in Kidō class? Didn't expect him to be this good at Kendō..."

"Yeah, turns out he wasn't weak—we're just dealing with a super-genius who's too damn strong."

The students whispered among themselves. Their gazes toward Renji Abarai were no longer dismissive, but held a measure of recognition.

Unfortunately, Renji Abarai didn't notice that. He remained buried in frustration.

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Shin'ō Academy, central courtyard.

After the afternoon Kendō class ended, Renji Abarai came here, found a corner, and started furiously swinging his sword at a tree.

"Clack!" "Clack!" "Clack!" "Clack!"...

The sound of a wooden sword slamming against the tree rang out continuously. Renji Abarai only swung harder and faster, peeling the bark off the trunk, sending wood chips flying.

"Damn it!"

With one final strike slamming into the now-bare trunk, Renji Abarai cursed aloud.

At that moment, a stern voice rang out behind him.

"What are you doing out here, you idiot Renji?!"

Hearing the voice, Renji Abarai snapped out of his thoughts and turned around.

There, a petite girl had appeared at some unknown point.

She had short black hair tied at the ends, with a fringe falling across her forehead. Her face had a doll-like look to it—round and young—but it was full of seriousness, wearing a stiff expression.

"...What are you doing here, Rukia?"

Renji Abarai asked with some annoyance.

"That's my line! Don't answer a question with a question!"

The girl named Rukia scowled, hands on her hips, her stern face full of displeasure.

If it were anyone else speaking to Renji Abarai like that, he'd have been irritated long ago.

But this girl was different.

Rukia—his childhood friend.

The two had known each other for many years, growing up together in District 78 of South Rukongai: Inuzuri—a place plagued by disorder. They were companions and family, living together to this day.

To seek a better life, they decided to come to Seireitei together, enroll at Shin'ō Academy, and become Shinigami.

So although they were both first-years at Shin'ō Academy, they were not just newly acquainted classmates—their bond was far deeper.

Now, facing Rukia's scolding, Renji Abarai didn't reply. He simply stayed silent.

"What's with you lately?" Rukia furrowed her brow further. "Don't tell me someone's been bullying you?"

"Me? Bullied?" Renji Abarai scoffed. "Those guys? Not a chance."

"Then why are you here sulking alone?" Rukia demanded. "You got into Class One—what's there to be unhappy about?"

Though they had enrolled together, due to differences in aptitude, Renji Abarai had been placed into the elite Class One, while Rukia had entered Class Two—they were separated.

Not that Rukia lacked talent. In fact, her Reiryoku was very high—possibly even higher than Renji's. But in combat talent, especially Kendō, Renji surpassed her. Rukia was considered lacking in swordsmanship talent, so she missed out on Class One and entered Class Two.

She herself was unhappy about it.

After all, she had always been the leader among their childhood friends. Renji had just been her follower. Now, her "little brother" had entered the elite class, while she hadn't—that was pretty embarrassing.

But Renji was her partner. Rukia still worried about him, even if she didn't show it directly. She could only ask in a roundabout way like this.

"...What's there to be happy about?"

Renji Abarai didn't seem to notice her concern. He replied sulkily.

"I sucked in Kidō class. Anyone in class did better than me. Then in Kendō class, I got my ass handed to me. What the hell's there to be happy about?"

Hearing that, Rukia was taken aback.

"You lost in Kendō class?" Rukia asked in surprise. "To who? Must've been strong."

"Who else?" Renji Abarai continued swinging at the tree, speaking as he struck. "That so-called super-genius."

Rukia froze again, eyes widening.

"Him?" Rukia exclaimed. "You actually fought him?"

"Yeah." Renji Abarai replied bitterly. "He's insanely strong. I couldn't even touch him."

Rukia fell silent.