

## Multiverse 143

### Chapter 143: "Asauchi"

Shin'ō Academy, outside the main gate.

At this time, Sōsuke Aizen had completed his inspection and was walking out with his Lieutenant, bidding farewell to the crowd of Shin'ō Academy students who had been following behind.

As the two made their way back toward the Fifth Division's barracks, they finally left all the chatter behind and entered a state of solitude.

Only then did the always-smiling Lieutenant walking behind Aizen break the silence.

"You're just leaving like that, Captain Aizen?"

His deeply meaningful question did not cause Sōsuke Aizen to stop walking.

"What, is there something else you want to do, Gin?" Aizen chuckled without turning his head. "If so, you can go back—after all, that place was your alma mater, wasn't it?"

"Well, I did graduate from Shin'ō Academy, but I only stayed there for a year. I don't really have any attachments to the place," Ichimaru Gin said, hands spread. "I mean, are we really heading back just like this?"

"You came all the way just to see that little genius, Captain, and now you've only exchanged a few words with him and done nothing more?"

"At the very least, shouldn't you have shown him your Zanpakutō? That would make it easier to control him, right?"

Ichimaru Gin asked three questions in a row, but still, Sōsuke Aizen didn't stop walking.

"If we're too obvious, people will grow suspicious, Gin," Aizen said, perhaps answering Gin's question, or perhaps simply speaking to himself. "Though still young, a genius is a genius. It seems his excellence isn't limited to his Spiritual Pressure—his temperament is exceptional too."

"Even though I tried to guide him subtly with my words several times, he never let down his guard against someone he was meeting for the first time. Perhaps that's to be expected of someone from the Zarakī District."

"As I thought—he doesn't easily trust others."

"That's true," Ichimaru Gin said, recalling the boy's demeanor, and whether his tone was one of praise or mockery was unclear. "Just a first-year student newly enrolled in Shin'ō Academy, and yet he could face Captain Aizen so calmly, so composed... definitely not someone to underestimate."

"He's already caught the Captain Commander's attention, and many within Seireitei are watching him as well. So it's best we don't act rashly." Aizen continued walking forward, still smiling. "We'll leave it at that for now. Next time, I'll make sure to prepare a proper gift."

"Ha, so Captain Aizen's taken a liking to him after all." Ichimaru Gin wore a predictable smile, sly and cunning. "Only seventeen when he died, and he's only been in Soul Society for less than half a year, yet he's already a Second-Class Spiritual. That's some terrifying talent."

"If he continues to grow, he might become a figure who rivals even you or the Captain Commander, huh?"

"Really wouldn't want to face someone like that as an enemy."

He spoke with a tone of mock fear, but the ever-smiling expression on his face made it clear he was just acting—it couldn't have been more fake.

"He's a Shinigami in the end. Even if he reaches his full potential, so what?" Aizen pushed up his black-rimmed glasses, their lenses catching the light and concealing his eyes. "Unless one surpasses the very existence known as 'Shinigami,' then they will forever remain a prisoner of this false world. Whether it's me or Genryūsai Shigekuni Yamamoto—we've already proven this."

"Well, that's a shame. I really would've liked to see what kind of future that genius has," Ichimaru Gin said noncommittally. "Captain Aizen, are you planning to test him with a gift? Need me to do anything?"

"I already told you, Gin, this much is enough for now." Aizen replied at a leisurely pace. "Too many people are watching him right now. It's not the time to act."

"Wait until he leaves Shin'ō Academy—or even Soul Society—before we proceed."

"This batch of new students is quite interesting. Though none of them are as outrageous as him, there are still a few with decent potential. With proper guidance, they could rise to considerable positions in the Gotei 13 in the future."

"When they all leave Soul Society together, I'll send them the gifts I've prepared."

As he said this, Aizen still wore his gentle smile, but it gave off an inexplicable, bone-chilling feeling.

Of course, Ichimaru Gin's ever-smiling face was equally unsettling.

"Well, since Captain has already made up his mind, I'll stop meddling and go back to doing my job as Lieutenant."

At those words, Aizen neither confirmed nor denied, but he did say this:

"Before long, I'll recommend you for promotion to Captain."

Even so, Ichimaru Gin's expression didn't change in the slightest.

That look—it was as if a Captaincy, something revered by all others, was no more than something easily within reach for him.

Aizen continued.

"The Sixth Squad Captain is also due to be replaced. Gin, you can ascend along with him."

To Aizen's arrangement, Ichimaru Gin responded only with a smile, expressing neither agreement nor objection.

It didn't seem like Aizen was seeking Gin's consent anyway. After finishing his arrangements, he looked up toward the sky.

"Now then... I wonder if you'll bring me amusement and surprise?"

As if speaking to someone not present, Sōsuke Aizen revealed a thought-provoking expression.

"Let me see what your potential is, Kaiser-kun..."

...

Sōsuke Aizen's inspection didn't remain a topic of discussion for long at Shin'ō Academy.

Because he often came to Shin'ō Academy for inspections and lectures, this wasn't all that unusual.

By the next day, no one was really talking about it anymore—aside from a few girls whispering about how gentle and handsome he was, saying they absolutely wanted to join the Fifth Division after graduation.

As for Kaiser, though he knew better than anyone what Aizen's true nature was, it was still far from the start of the original plot. He himself was merely a newly enrolled first-year student at Shin'ō Academy. With no real entanglement with Sōsuke Aizen for now, he soon forgot the encounter and returned to his own routine.

Daily lectures, Shunpo and Kidō training, casual strolls around campus, and the occasional Hakuda session—Kaiser's days remained peaceful and fulfilling, completely unaffected by Aizen's presence.

In this manner, several months passed, and at last, Kaiser welcomed something he'd been eagerly awaiting.

...

That day, all classes for First-Year Class 1 were temporarily canceled.

All students in the elite class were ordered to gather in the classroom. No absences or requests for leave were permitted—leaving the students looking at one another in confusion.

"Did something happen?"

"Why are all classes suddenly canceled?"

"There was supposed to be a swordsmanship class today... and I love that one..."

"Haha, I'm actually glad. We had Shunpo class this afternoon, and I still haven't even gotten the hang of it. If I went, the teacher would definitely yell at me!"

"Same here. Shunpo is really hard. I think it's even harder than Kidō."

"What can you do? Even in our class, barely anyone can successfully use Shunpo. I heard even among Gotei 13 members, many can't use it proficiently."

"Seriously? It's that hard?"

"Actually, we're not doing too bad. I heard some other classes haven't even officially started Shunpo training. The teachers said there's no point teaching them yet since they wouldn't get it anyway."

"Then I guess we're doing pretty well. At least we've got a few people who managed to pull off Shunpo."

"Too bad it's only occasional success. No one can use it proficiently yet."

The students chatted idly, quickly setting aside their initial confusion as they gossiped about the other classes.

The truth was, the other classes were far behind Class 1 in terms of progress. And the gap only widened over time. Even Class 2 lagged far behind Class 1—let alone those further down the line.

Many of the other classes hadn't even begun Shunpo lessons, and their Kidō training was also way behind. Only swordsmanship and Hakuda were more or less on the same pace.

As for other lessons—such as Konsō and actual combat training—those hadn't even started for Class 1, let alone for the others.

Under such circumstances, Class 1's atmosphere was rather relaxed—not too tense or pressured. Many students wore a laid-back look on their faces.

"Haa~~~"

Kaiser didn't join any of the conversations. He sat alone in the corner of the classroom, yawning lazily.

"Clack!"

Just then, the classroom door swung open.

The Class 1 homeroom teacher entered from outside, carrying a heavy load, drawing held breaths from the students.

"W-What is...?!"

Led by Renji Abarai, many students lit up the moment they saw the teacher, their faces showing excitement.

Even Kaiser stopped mid-yawn, the corner of his mouth curving upward.

The teacher brought the large bundle to the front podium.

Clatter clatter—!

He set the items down, the sound of clashing metal ringing out.

Looking closely—it was a pile of swords, all sheathed.

Not wooden swords—real ones.

"Sensei!"

Renji Abarai couldn't help but stand up and shout excitedly toward the instructor.

"T-This is...?!"

The others reacted similarly, visibly thrilled.

Seeing this, the teacher smiled.

"Looks like you've already guessed what this is."

As he arranged the swords in front of him, he finally said the words everyone was dying to hear.

"That's right—these are Zanpakutō."

"More precisely, they're Asauchi—the unshaped forms of Zanpakutō."