

Multiverse 144

Chapter 144: Call My Name

"Asauchi is the unawakened form of a Zanpakutō, and also the prototype of all Zanpakutō."

"It is the shape a Zanpakutō takes before it fully forms, lacking its own name and the soul that belongs to it."

"Only when someone imprints their spirit and beliefs into it—molding it with the Shinigami's very soul—can an Asauchi be born into its own name and consciousness, thus becoming a unique Zanpakutō that belongs solely to that individual."

The First-Year Class 1 instructor stood before the class, introducing the pile of swords on the podium to the entire room.

"There are over six thousand squad members in the Gotei 13, including seated officers, Lieutenants, and even Captains. All of them received their Asauchi during their Academy years. Only after infusing them with their spirit and convictions over many years did they forge their own Zanpakutō."

"You may be newly enrolled freshmen, but as students in the Elite Class, you've already earned the qualification to receive your own Asauchi and begin cultivating your own Zanpakutō."

"These here are the Asauchi that will temporarily be loaned to you. Only once you graduate from Shin'ō Academy and join the Gotei 13 will they be formally granted to you."

"As for whether you can successfully shape it—transforming the Asauchi into a Zanpakutō with its own name, consciousness, form, state, and power—that will depend entirely on your own capabilities."

Seeing the eager and already somewhat restless gleam in the eyes of the students before him, the instructor gave a helpless smile, then said:

"Now then, starting from the first seat in the front row, come up one by one to receive your Asauchi."

As soon as the words were spoken, the student seated at the first spot in the front row immediately stood up and dashed toward the podium at near sprinting speed.

"Hurry and pick one."

Seeing the student glancing around indecisively, clearly unsure which sword to choose, the instructor urged him impatiently.

"All Asauchi start out exactly the same. There's no difference in appearance. Only once you learn their true name and achieve the first release will their size and shape vary based on the user's traits and personality."

"So there's no point agonizing over it. Just grab one and be done."

"At this point, they're all the same. There's nothing to 'carefully select.'"

Upon hearing this, the student grabbed one of the Asauchi and excitedly ran back to his seat to fiddle with it.

"Next, hurry and come up."

The instructor maintained order, calling each student up one after another to receive their own Asauchi.

Kaiser, seated in the last seat of the last row, was naturally the last to go up.

When he stepped onto the podium, only one Asauchi remained. The instructor handed it to him personally and gave him a look of encouragement.

Kaiser took the Asauchi back to his seat and examined it carefully.

Just as the instructor had said, at this initial stage, Asauchi had no name, no spirit, no abilities. It looked like an ordinary katana in standard size.

Kaiser himself possessed two Zanpakutō, but he felt the shape of this Asauchi more closely resembled Kirin Todo's Senbakiri.

He activated the unique golden markings inside his body, which began to flicker faintly.

Kaiser immediately noticed that this blade was different from Ryūjin Jakka and Hyōrinmaru, as well as from any of his other personal weapons. It was empty inside—like ordinary forged iron, nothing like a Shinigami's exclusive weapon.

The rest of the students didn't seem to notice anything. They were enthusiastically playing with their blades—some even whispering to the blades as if naming them.

"Alright, stop fooling around with those and listen up."

Seeing those students talking to their Asauchi like they were naming them, the instructor was exasperated.

"From now on, your task is to eat and sleep with your Asauchi—keep it with you at all times."

"Try to synchronize your thoughts with it, let it be constantly bathed in your Reiatsu, and absorb your spirit, beliefs, and convictions."

"If you maintain that without interruption, when the time is right, you'll hear a voice."

"That voice will tell you a name. If you can hear it clearly, then call it—that will be the name of your Zanpakutō."

"That's right. A Zanpakutō's name reveals itself. You don't get to make one up. Those of you muttering nonsense back there, pipe down—have some self-respect, will you?"

At those words, the students who had been whispering turned red-faced, while the others burst out laughing.

Only then did the teacher continue.

"When you learn your Zanpakutō's true name, you can release its true form and power by calling that name. We call this process Shikai, the first release—the first stage of awakening."

"Of course, if there's a first stage, there's a second stage. Beyond Shikai, a Zanpakutō has an even more advanced form and power. We call this Bankai."

"Bankai is the final release of a Zanpakutō. But that's far too distant for you. For now, just focus on achieving Shikai."

No sooner had the instructor finished speaking than someone raised their hand.

"Sensei," Renji Abarai asked eagerly, "when can we achieve Shikai?"

"You all?" The instructor chuckled. "You've got a long way to go!"

"Let me put it this way—Shin'ō Academy has six years. Right now, not a single student in any year has achieved Shikai."

"Don't forget—you're still just Academy students. Even once you graduate and join the Gotei 13, you'll just be ordinary squad members."

"Regular squad members in the Gotei 13 generally don't have Shikai. Those who do are typically seated officers."

In other words, once you succeed in achieving Shikai, you've left the ranks of ordinary members and stepped into the level of seated officers—people with standing in the Gotei 13.

"Th-that difficult?" Momo Hinamori exclaimed quietly.

"...That's just Shikai," Izuru Kira couldn't help adding. "Then what about Bankai? Isn't that even harder?"

Bankai?

The instructor could only laugh.

"Let me put it another way," the instructor said, arms crossed, speaking deliberately. "In every generation, among thousands of Shinigamis, fewer than twenty have ever achieved Bankai."

"Once a Shinigami achieves Bankai, their name is inscribed in the history of Soul Society and remembered forever."

"Shinigamis capable of Bankai generally become Captains. In fact, one of the core requirements to become a Captain is mastering Bankai."

"Now you understand, right?"

At those words, the entire class fell silent.

Thousands of Shinigamis in every era—and fewer than twenty with Bankai?

And achieving Bankai makes one a Captain?

Doesn't that mean unless you stand at the peak of Soul Society, you can never reach Bankai?

No—it's the other way around.

If you achieve Bankai, then you can stand at the peak of Soul Society.

The students were visibly shaken.

Even the normally fearless Renji Abarai.

"That's why I said," the instructor shrugged, seeing everyone stunned, "Bankai is far beyond your reach. Not just yours—even for the instructors here at Shin'ō Academy, it's out of reach."

"Even our Academy Headmaster hasn't attained Bankai. What chance do we have?"

"Let alone Bankai, even achieving Shikai is hard. I don't even know how many of you will ever get to have a true Zanpakutō of your own."

The entire class fell into silence.

As members of the elite Class 1, they'd always had pride in themselves—especially when compared to the lower classes, even bordering on arrogance.

But now the instructor was telling them that even as elites, most of them would still graduate as ordinary Shinigamis.

Even obtaining a Zanpakutō with a true name, power, and consciousness wasn't guaranteed.

Or rather, even if they could attain it, without the strength of a seated officer, they wouldn't be able to hear its name.

With that realization, many students' pride was crushed.

Renji Abarai gripped his Asauchi tightly, staring at it as he muttered under his breath.

"I will achieve Shikai—no matter what."

Not only Renji Abarai, but Izuru Kira and Momo Hinamori also shared the same thought.

Bankai was too far off—they dared not imagine it.

But Shikai—they absolutely had to reach it.

That was the resolve of anyone unwilling to live a mediocre life.

Only Kaiser seemed completely uninterested in what the instructor had said.

He merely held up his Asauchi and stared at it, the golden circuit patterns within his body flashing faster and faster.

At the same time, Kaiser began channeling his Reiatsu into the Asauchi, like striking a forge, pulsing in waves.

Gradually, Kaiser felt it.

He felt the Asauchi in his hands begin absorbing his Reiatsu—and even the essence of his soul.

The Authority accelerated this process, making it feel like the Asauchi was being reforged from scratch, slowly beginning to heat up.

Suddenly—

Hummm...

From Kaiser's Asauchi, a surge of flame-like Reitsu appeared.

It was golden—just like the Authority within his body.

Golden Reitsu flickered like firelight, dyeing the Asauchi in his hands with a golden hue.

"Call me..."

Then, Kaiser heard a faint voice.

"Call me..."

"Call me..."

"Call my name..."