

Multiverse 145

Chapter 145: King of Zanpakutō

When that faint, ethereal voice echoed in his ears, just like the time when he first obtained Ryūjin Jakka and Hyōrinmaru in the Fantasy Library, Kaiser saw a vision.

It was as though he had entered another world, appearing upon a vast land.

The land was not desolate—on the contrary, it was full of vitality. There were forests, oceans, a continuous chain of mountains, grasslands, and rivers. Aside from the absence of cities and people, it was nearly indistinguishable from the real world.

But in this world, swords were embedded everywhere.

Mountains were covered in swords, forests filled with swords, even the depths of the oceans and rivers were packed with swords of all kinds.

Here, swords were life—swords were the inhabitants of this world. Every sword seemed like a distinct individual, radiating a powerful sense of existence.

If anyone else had accidentally wandered into this place, they would certainly feel out of place—an anomaly in this realm.

But not Kaiser. To him, this place felt intimate. Staying here felt completely natural.

The Authority inside his body was burning hot, making him feel like he had come upon countless vassals, countless subordinates.

Unfortunately, the king of this place was not him, but rather a being born from within his own soul.

Kaiser wandered through this world, as if taking one step could span a thousand miles, quickly leaving behind all the surrounding scenery.

Before long, Kaiser arrived atop a towering mountain.

It was the greatest mountain in this world.

Its summit was the highest point of this entire realm.

With one step, Kaiser ascended to the mountaintop.

There, he saw a lofty altar.

The altar was ancient, exuding a timeworn aura.

Its structure resembled both a palace and a throne.

And atop that palace-throne floated a single sword.

The instant he saw that sword, Kaiser understood.

"That is the king of this world."

"That is the most noble, the most powerful being here."

"That... is my Zanpakutō."

This was the inner world of a Zanpakutō—his own inner world.

The sword before him was the Spirit of his Zanpakutō—its soul, the form it had taken.

The Zanpakutō Spirit of a Zanpakutō was not always a blade—sometimes it was humanoid, sometimes beast-like, in all forms imaginable.

But his Zanpakutō, even as a Zanpakutō Spirit, existed purely as a sword. It would never take any other form.

Because that was the form that best represented it. It was its symbol, its essence.

Just like how Ryūjin Jakka, as the oldest and strongest Fire-type Zanpakutō, had appeared to Kaiser as a sky full of flames when he encountered it. Just like how Hyōrinmaru, the strongest Ice/Snow-type Zanpakutō, had appeared as a dragon formed entirely of ice and snow.

His Zanpakutō was the king of all Zanpakutō.

Therefore, it would only ever be a sword—it had to be a sword.

"Call out..."

From the sword came a majestic will, like that of a monarch. The once vague voice now rang with utter clarity.

"My name—you are worthy to know it. You alone are worthy to know it."

This was a king acknowledging another king.

"My name is..."

Kaiser heard the name with unparalleled clarity—and in that instant, he understood everything about it.

Hummm...

Golden circuit lines flared across his body, and the world around him was overlaid in gold.

Forests, oceans, earth, mountains, grasslands, rivers... everything was etched with golden lines.

There was no need for Kaiser to invoke the Authority to establish ownership—his Authority and the Spirit of the Zanpakutō, born from his soul, had already resonated on their own. From the moment it was born, it had recognized Kaiser as its master, and become one with him.

"___"

Kaiser felt the world around him suddenly drift far away, his figure rising into the sky—higher and higher.

Eventually, Kaiser left that world and returned to the classroom of First-Year Class 1 at Shin'ō Academy.

At that moment, the students were still immersed in the sobering reality of how difficult Shikai and Bankai were. One by one, they sat in silence.

Kaiser looked around and noticed that not a single person had noticed the change in him.

Even though his Asauchi was clearly radiating golden Reiatsu, no one could sense it.

They were too weak. Their Reiatsu and ability to control it were far too lacking to detect the Reiatsu coming from Kaiser's blade.

Even the instructor at the podium seemed completely unaware.

"That's a relief..."

Kaiser relaxed, then turned his gaze back to the Zanpakutō in his hand.

He could now rightfully call it a Zanpakutō. It was no longer a nameless Asauchi.

Though Kaiser had yet to call out its name, its appearance had already changed. It no longer resembled an ordinary katana.

Its blade had become unnaturally straight. The tip had no curve—it was angled in a diagonal cut. The edge was extremely thin, flashing with a cold gleam, and looked razor-sharp.

Its guard was also different from other Zanpakutō—rather than a flat crossguard, it was vertically aligned in a "U" shape, with the blade extending straight from the top of the "U", giving it a seamless look.

The hilt, too, was unlike the cylindrical shape of most Zanpakutō. It was angular, a rectangular form, entirely silver-white with gold accents—exuding nobility.

The change, while not earth-shattering, was more than significant enough for any keen eye to tell that Kaiser's blade was no longer a nameless Asauchi—it had already undergone release, possessing its own form and dimensions as a true Zanpakutō.

Even the scabbard had changed to match the blade's exact size and shape. It too had become silver-white with golden trim. Not ostentatious, but certainly eye-catching.

"...If someone sees this, it'll be hard to keep hidden, won't it?"

Kaiser sighed in mild exasperation.

Luckily, no one had noticed the change yet, and Kaiser had no desire to draw attention. He quickly put the sword away.

Of course, he didn't store it in his body like his other exclusive weapons.

The instructor had just said that all Asauchi given to Academy students were loaned. Only those who graduated and joined the Gotei 13 would be formally granted their Asauchi and recognized as its true owner.

If one failed to graduate or didn't join the Gotei 13, the sword would be reclaimed.

In that situation, if Kaiser made his Zanpakutō disappear into his body, the instructor would definitely investigate.

Even if Kaiser could come up with an excuse, not carrying his Zanpakutō wouldn't be acceptable either.

After all, the instructor had specifically reminded them: from now on, they should keep their sword with them at all times—eating and sleeping with it, never separating, to better synchronize with it.

So, after some thought, Kaiser didn't store his Zanpakutō. Instead, he sheathed it and strapped it to his waist.

"If they find out, they find out. Being able to achieve Shikai isn't that big a deal."

He was already Captain-class in Spiritual Pressure. Would it make sense if he couldn't even attain Shikai?

Though achieving Shikai on the very day of receiving an Asauchi was certainly excessive in a school where not even sixth-years had done so, Kaiser had already broken thousand-year records since enrollment. Breaking the Shikai record too didn't seem like such a big deal.

As for Bankai...

That couldn't be exposed so casually.

Touching the hilt at his waist, feeling the immense power inside that could be released at any moment, Kaiser—who had fully mastered the blade upon claiming it—muttered:

"Achieving Bankai on the first day of receiving an Asauchi... if this gets out, I'll probably get dissected, huh?"

Looking around at his classmates, who were still fiddling with their Asauchi and swearing to master Shikai, Kaiser didn't feel out of place in the inner world—but did feel it here.

No one knew that among these first-year students—who hadn't even attained Shikai—there was already someone who could use Bankai.

Kaiser chuckled quietly, letting his Zanpakutō retreat into the shadows, hiding both merit and power.

At that moment, the instructor spoke again.

"Now that you've received your Zanpakutō, even if it's still an Asauchi, you're qualified to carry out the duties of a Shinigami."

"With that in mind, your next lesson will be on Konsō."

"Do you know what Konsō is?"

The instructor's words immediately drew the students' attention.

"I know!" Momo Hinamori raised her hand and answered, "Konsō is the ritual where we send the souls of the dead in the World of the Living to the Soul Society!"

"Exactly." The instructor nodded. "When humans in the World of the Living die, they become Plus souls. They're harmless—just souls who've lost their physical bodies. In all other ways, they're just like living humans."

"But if a Plus doesn't receive Konsō from a Shinigami and come to the Soul Society, they'll remain in the World of the Living, endlessly wandering."

"There are only two fates for such Pluses: they either become Hollows, or are devoured by Hollows."

Hollows, in other words, are malevolent spirits.

If a soul lingers too long in the World of the Living, its lingering desires will eventually corrupt its Soul, transforming it into a monster—a Hollow.

Hollows roam the world devouring the souls of others—especially those they once loved in life.

Some have lost all reason. Others retain a sliver of it, but still devour other souls, making them harmful entities.

The duty of a Shinigami is twofold: performing Konsō to send souls to the Soul Society, and purifying Hollows by slaying them.

Both tasks require a Zanpakutō.

Therefore, having received their Zanpakutō, the students present were now qualified to begin studying Konsō and even Hollow purification.

"Be ready—your training will be scheduled soon."

With that sentence as a closing remark, the class ended.