

## **Multiverse 147**

### Chapter 147: That's What You Call Lacking Emotional Intelligence

Shin'ō Academy, corner of the academy wall.

Atop the wide outer wall, spacious enough to be considered a small clearing, there now stood a single traditional-style door.

It stood there as if a door had been detached from somewhere and placed here to bask in the sun. There were no buildings in front of or behind it, yet it remained upright in the howling wind, utterly unmoving.

The students of First-Year Class 1 had each brought their Asauchi and gathered here before this door.

By the time Kaiser arrived, the class had mostly assembled, and in front of the door stood three unfamiliar faces quietly waiting for Class 1 to fully gather.

"Hey! Kai! Over here!"

Renji Abarai had seemingly arrived quite early. Upon seeing Kaiser, he immediately waved at him.

Beside Renji was the figure of Izuru Kira.

Kaiser smiled, resting his hand on the hilt of his Zanpakutō at his waist, subtly covering the handle to avoid letting others see too clearly. Only then did he walk over to Renji and Izuru.

"You guys got here pretty early."

Kaiser said that to the two of them.

"You're just late," Renji snorted. "Everyone's almost here and you just arrived. Any later and you'd be late."

"I'm not late though, am I?" Kaiser replied nonchalantly. "Whether you get here early or not, it's just standing around waiting. Arriving just in time is the perfect timing."

"That's true," Izuru said with a gracious smile. "We did get here too early and ended up waiting for almost half an hour."

"You hear that, Abarai?" Kaiser tilted his chin at Renji. "That's emotional intelligence. Look how nicely he puts things. Now look at you—your words are hard to listen to. No wonder your childhood friend is still just your childhood friend. If it were someone else, they'd already have kids by now."

"W-What the hell are you even talking about?!" Renji jumped up in flustered panic, shouting angrily, "Rukia and I are just friends! Comrades! It's not what you think!"

"...That panicked denial right there? That's what you call lacking emotional intelligence." Kaiser gave Renji a speechless look and sighed. "I advise you to be more honest. Otherwise, if one day your childhood friend runs off to the World of the Living and starts batting eyes at some human punk, don't blame me for not warning you."

"R-Rukia would never do something like that!" Renji's face turned green and red in turns. Furious, he snapped, "Also, why'd you say it so specifically?! It's like you actually saw that future already..."

...Because I did already see that future, you dumbass.

Kaiser silently muttered in his heart.

"Ahaha..."

Izuru Kira laughed awkwardly on the side, unsure how to chime in.

No helping it. Aside from Renji—this big dummy who regularly throws himself at the top genius of the Academy like a brick wall—there really wasn't anyone else who could talk to Kaiser so casually and unfiltered.

Although Renji used to brood over constantly losing to Kaiser, after failing so many times, the hot-headed brute genuinely came to respect him from the heart.

That was why he could talk like this, without any reserve.

Izuru couldn't do that.

Kaiser was just too dazzling. As someone gloomy and reserved, even getting close was pressure-inducing.

As Kaiser and Renji bickered, the departure time drew closer and closer.

Soon, the three people standing before the door finally stirred.

"First-years, quiet down for a moment and listen to me."

The one at the front stepped forward and addressed all of Class 1.

"First, allow me to introduce myself. I am a sixth-year—Shūhei Hisagi."

With those words, quite a few students stirred in astonishment.

"That's the Shūhei Hisagi?!"

Izuru was also surprised.

"What? You know him?" Renji asked in confusion.

"Of course," Izuru nodded without hesitation. "When it comes to sixth-years, Shūhei Hisagi is the one who got promoted into the Gotei 13 before even graduating. He's a super rookie—tons of seniors in the Gotei 13 are optimistic about him. He's a big name here in the Academy."

Then Izuru seemed to recall something, and glanced at Kaiser—who was watching Hisagi with interest—before whispering to Renji:

"Of course, the most famous person in the Academy is Kai-san. But before he enrolled, the top spot belonged to Senior Hisagi."

Renji didn't look too pleased hearing that.

"Shouldn't I be the one right behind Kai in terms of fame?"

Izuru's mouth twitched.

You?

Sure, you're known...

At least all of Year One knows there's a red-haired guy in Class 1 who challenges the school's super-genius all the time, and loses every time, losing so much he's nearly lost his pants.

Kaiser had no idea Izuru was roasting Renji in his heart. He just looked at the stern-faced Shūhei Hisagi and inwardly sighed.

"Another future Lieutenant. This generation of Shin'ō Academy students really is bursting with talent."

The Gotei 13 only had thirteen Captains and roughly that many Lieutenants. In an entire century, they might not even produce one new Lieutenant-class individual. But in this generation, they were popping up in batches—no wonder Sōsuke Aizen had his eye on this class.

While Kaiser was thinking this, Hisagi began his explanation.

"For this training, you will be traveling to the World of the Living for Konsō practice and Hollow combat exercises. We will be the ones leading you."

"Some of our sixth-year students have already gone ahead to scout out suitable locations in the World of the Living for your practice."

"We'll be departing shortly. If you have any questions, ask now."

As soon as he said that, Renji—completely lacking awareness—shot his hand up.

"Excuse me, Senior, but why are sixth-years leading the practice instead of the instructors?"

...And that's what I mean by lacking emotional intelligence.

Kaiser couldn't help but roast him in his head.

Fortunately, Shūhei Hisagi was a responsible senior and wasn't upset by Renji's poorly timed question.

"The instructors will be observing from within Soul Society, along with members of the Shinigami Research and Development Institute. There are two reasons why they aren't leading this training: one is to train your independence so you don't rely on teachers too much in real combat; the other is to train our ability to lead."

Hisagi explained patiently.

"We sixth-years were assigned this task as part of our own curriculum."

"In the future, when we join the Gotei 13, we'll need not only strong combat ability but also solid teamwork. If we become Seated Officers, we'll have to support our superiors and lead our subordinates."

"So learning how to lead and work as a team is part of our coursework too. Consider this part of our own practicum. Understand?"

Hisagi's tone and explanation even managed to satisfy a troublemaker like Renji, who nodded and fell quiet.

"You can rest assured during training. If any situation arises that we sixth-years can't handle, we'll immediately contact Soul Society. The response team will deploy right away."

Hisagi scanned the crowd, his eyes pausing on Kaiser for a moment before he made the announcement.

"No more questions, right? If not, then get ready to depart!"

With that, Hisagi turned and whispered a few things to his two sixth-year teammates, then turned to face the door.

"\_\_\_\_\_"

The door then opened slowly, as if possessing a will of its own, revealing the space beyond to everyone.

But what appeared inside the door wasn't the scenery on the other side—it was a vast white void.

At the end of the space was another door. Beyond that door was yet another door. Eventually, it led to a pitch-black space.

"Everyone stay behind me and do not fall behind!" Hisagi shouted to the first-years. "Getting lost in the Dangai is no joke—stay sharp!"

The Dangai was the space that connected the Soul Society and the World of the Living.

It was a corridor-like dimension, separated from space and time, floating in the void known as the Garganta. It was filled with danger—if you got lost, you could be stuck there forever with no way back.

After issuing the warning, Hisagi released a small black butterfly.

It was a Hell Butterfly, a creature that traveled between the World of the Living and Soul Society—only Shinigamis could control them. They played key roles in guiding Shinigamis, relaying information, and receiving emergency messages from the Communication Technology Research Division.

Whenever Shinigamis went to or returned from the World of the Living, it was always under the guidance of a Hell Butterfly—a crucial tool for safe passage between realms.

"Let's go!"

Hisagi gave the order, and along with his teammates, followed the Hell Butterfly into the door.

"Move out!"

"Let's go!"

The first-years immediately began calling to each other and charged into the door after them.

Kaiser was among them. As the door grew closer and closer, his eyes shimmered faintly.

"If something does go wrong during this exercise..."

Then he'd have no choice but to go all-out for once...