

Multiverse 155

Chapter 155: What's So Special About Shikai?

Beneath the moonlit night, the fierce battle came to an end, allowing all the noise to settle.

An Adjuchas-class Menos Grande—its impact was undoubtedly massive. Even though it had already been purified, leaving not even a trace of Soul behind and disappearing completely, the destruction it caused still remained, leaving the land in ruins.

Broken walls and shattered rubble lay scattered in all directions, piled into a battlefield marked by the aftermath of war.

Having sheathed his Zanpakutō, Kaiser walked toward the others, who were still in a daze, and spoke with some annoyance.

"Alright, enough staring. If someone saw you like this, they'd think you had some weird fetish. Snap out of it already."

That single remark successfully woke the dazed group.

"Y-You're okay, right?"

Shūhei Hisagi was the first to snap back, hastily getting up and asking.

The others helped each other to their feet. Though they had no real injuries, they all looked utterly disheveled and beaten.

"Of course I'm fine." Kaiser looked them over. "What about you all? No problems, I hope?"

They shook their heads at first, then looked at Kaiser with complicated expressions.

"So... you're really this strong?"

Renji Abarai looked particularly conflicted.

"What kind of question is that? Am I not allowed to be strong?"

Kaiser looked at Renji with a half-smile.

"That's not a little strong! That's ridiculously strong!" Renji muttered as if complaining. "That was an Adjuchas-class Menos! Normal Seated Officers can't even handle one—only Lieutenants stand a chance, and sometimes even Captains are required to ensure they're taken down."

"And yet you just one-shot it!"

Saying that, Renji seemed to remember something. His gaze dropped to Kaiser's waist, eyeing his Zanpakutō.

"And your Zanpakutō—what's up with that shape?"

"That's not even an Asauchi, is it?"

"Don't tell me you already...?"

Renji's words caused Shūhei Hisagi, Izuru Kira, and Momo Hinamori to all look over.

They, too, were curious about Kaiser's Zanpakutō and had a certain guess in their hearts—one so unbelievable that they didn't dare voice it.

Yet the truth often hides behind what others think is impossible.

"You want to ask if I've already unlocked my Shikai, right?" Seeing their reactions, Kaiser knew he couldn't brush it off, so he simply gave a roundabout confirmation. "Since you've already guessed it, don't act so shocked."

"What, it's just Shikai."

"It's not like it's Bankai. What's there to be surprised about?"

Hearing this, not just Renji—even Shūhei Hisagi and Izuru Kira had the sudden urge to yell at him.

"Just Shikai"?

Do you hear yourself?

This is a power that not a single student—across all six years of Shin'ō Academy—has unlocked. Even regular Gotei 13 Squad Members haven't mastered it!

Anyone who achieves Shikai is usually eligible to become a Seated Officer—one of the higher ranks among them, too! And you—an Academy Student, a first-year at that—you've already attained Shikai? How is that not shocking?

Besides, wasn't it only a few days ago that the first-years received their Asauchi?

You've unlocked Shikai within a few days?

That's not shocking?!

But thinking about it more carefully... compared to the fact that Kaiser just one-shot an Adjuchas-class Menos, perhaps this really isn't that surprising.

After all, while many people have achieved Shikai, there probably aren't more than a handful of Shinigamis in the entire Soul Society who could kill an Adjuchas in a single blow.

Even Lieutenants wouldn't be able to do that. Not all Captains could either.

With that in mind, everyone's gaze toward Kaiser grew increasingly complicated.

"Alright, enough with those looks. If you keep staring, I'm going to start charging you," Kaiser rolled his eyes at them and changed the subject. "Don't forget, things aren't over yet."

Hearing that, the group was startled.

"S-Still not over?"

"But didn't you already kill that Adjuchas?"

Izuru Kira and Momo Hinamori asked in a panic.

"Yes, I did kill it. But who's to say it was the only Adjuchas-class Menos here?" Kaiser said. "Even if there was only one of them, what about the other Hollows?"

"There were quite a few of those giant Hollows just now. How can you be sure they all showed up here and not somewhere else?"

"And there are still a ton of students unaccounted for. No one knows where they've escaped to. If they run into one of those giant Hollows... they're as good as dead."

"So no, now's not the time to relax."

This calm and reasonable analysis caused everyone to sober up immediately—some wore grim expressions, others even broke out in cold sweat.

"I'll find a way to contact the Soul Society right away and have them send reinforcements as fast as possible." Shūhei Hisagi realized the gravity of the situation and could no longer stay still. He turned to Kaiser and said, "I know this might be an unreasonable request to make of a first-year student, but please go look for the other students and bring them back if you can."

Given that giant Hollows might still be roaming around, this request was indeed too much for a first-year.

But when that first-year could one-shot an Adjuchas, use Shunpo with ease, cast high-level Kidō casually, and unlock his Zanpakutō's Shikai in a few days—then it didn't sound so unreasonable anymore.

Right now, Kaiser was the only one with the ability to move freely in this dangerous battlefield.

"I..."

Kaiser nodded, about to say he was thinking the same thing, when he suddenly sensed something, and his tone cut off.

"Looks like I won't have to do anything."

He spoke those words, puzzling Shūhei Hisagi and the others.

Then a voice answered his words and revealed why.

"Let us handle this instead."

As this gentle voice entered everyone's ears, they suddenly noticed—two figures had appeared silently nearby.

"Y-You're...?!"

Shūhei Hisagi instantly recognized them, his expression turning to one of shock.

Renji, Izuru, and Momo were the same—when they saw who it was, their faces all changed.

"Apologies. We're late."

Wearing a white Haori, Sōsuke Aizen approached from the distance, with his Lieutenant Gin Ichimaru following behind. He smiled as he spoke.

"We may be late, but now that we're here, everything will be alright."

The Gotei 13's Division 5—specializing in rescue—had finally arrived.

"C-Captain Aizen!"

Shūhei Hisagi and the others cried out emotionally the moment they came to their senses.

"Gin, have our squad mobilize. Send two to guard the students here. Everyone else—search for survivors and casualties. Exterminate any Hollows that remain."

Sōsuke Aizen issued his orders to Gin Ichimaru.

"Yes, Captain Aizen."

Gin replied with a lazy tone, wearing an expression entirely unfitting for the occasion. He turned and walked off, sending two Division 5 Shinigamis to guard Hisagi's group.

Behind Aizen, more and more Division 5 members began to appear, spreading out across the training grounds under Gin's command.

Seeing this, Shūhei Hisagi and the others finally let go of their final worries.

With the sense of crisis and urgency gone, fatigue rushed in. Some staggered; some sat down on the ground immediately.

The Division 5 members quickly approached and began tending to them. Kaiser stepped back a few paces, watching in silence.

"You've done well, Kaiser-kun."

Sōsuke Aizen approached him, casting a gaze of praise.

"You were the one who protected them, right? Remarkable."

Hearing this, Kaiser looked deeply at the kind-faced Aizen.

"It wasn't that big a deal, was it?"

Kaiser responded with a deliberately ambiguous remark.

"No, it was a big deal. At least, for a first-year Academy student, it certainly is." Aizen shook his head slightly and casually glanced at the Zanpakutō at Kaiser's waist before smiling again. "Though I'd like to chat with you a bit more, the situation is still urgent. I need to move as well."

"Kaiser-kun, if you're interested... would you like to come with me?"

Aizen actually extended an invitation, treating Kaiser with special favor.

"No, thank you." Kaiser shook his head. "I won't disturb you, Captain Aizen. I'll stay here with the others."

Just as he finished speaking, before Aizen could reply, a Hollow's empty roar interrupted them.

"RROOOOAAAHHH...!"

A giant Hollow charged out from a blind spot, lunging straight at Kaiser.

Kaiser immediately reached for the Zanpakutō at his waist.

But before he could draw it—Aizen moved.

"Shatter, Kyōka Suigetsu."

The Division 5 Captain, cloaked in white, drew his Zanpakutō before Kaiser's eyes and softly spoke its name.

Crack!

Instantly, Aizen's blade released a sound like shattering glass as it unleashed its power.

In that moment, Kaiser saw something like mist... or perhaps flowing water.

When the mist and water dissipated, the giant Hollow had already collapsed—riddled with wounds, vanishing into dust.

"....."

Kaiser looked deeply at Sōsuke Aizen once more.

He said nothing.