

## **Multiverse 163**

### Chapter 163: Captain of Division 3

Several minutes later, Kaiser and the Captains of the Gotei 13 returned one after another to the Division 1 barracks, once again gathering in the room where the meeting had first taken place.

Retsu Unohana had also returned. She informed everyone that although Kenpachi Zarakī had been seriously injured, she had already treated his wounds. He was currently resting in the Division 4 barracks.

Once Genryūsai Shigekuni Yamamoto confirmed Kenpachi Zarakī was fine, he no longer concerned himself with the matter. Instead, in front of all the Captains and Kaiser, he announced a decision.

"The Captains of the Gotei 13, myself included, should number thirteen. But as of now, one position remains vacant."

This statement immediately caused many Captains' expressions to change on the spot.

They already understood what Yamamoto intended to do.

"Since the incident decades ago, we have yet to find a suitable replacement for the Captain of Division 3."

Yamamoto looked at Kaiser and solemnly declared,

"You shall succeed as the Captain of Division 3, Kaiser."

The moment these words left his mouth, the room fell into an eerie silence.

"Succeed as a Captain?"

Even Kaiser was stunned. His face—which hadn't shown a trace of hesitation even while clashing with Kenpachi Zaraki—now bore clear astonishment.

A Captain—without a doubt, this represented the pinnacle of status, authority, and strength within the Gotei 13.

If Shinigamis were the upper class of Soul Society, then Captains were the upper class of the upper class. Even the Nobles residing in Seireitei wouldn't dare look down on a Captain—they had to show proper respect.

And now, Yamamoto intended to directly promote a Shin'ō Academy student who had only studied for half a year and had no official squad service into a Captain?

How was that anything less than letting Kaiser leap directly to the heavens?

"Captain Commander."

Suì-Fēng was the first to furrow her brows and speak up.

"Isn't this far too irregular?"

Normally, to serve as a Captain or Lieutenant of the Gotei 13, one had to possess a certain level of squad service experience.

Kenpachi Zaraki becoming a Captain by defeating the previous Kenpachi was a special case unique to Division 11.

The other twelve squads had no such exceptions. Without sufficient service experience, one generally could not directly become a Captain or Lieutenant.

Of course, that was only under normal circumstances—it wasn't impossible for exceptions to exist.

In cases where high-level combat strength in the Gotei 13 was severely lacking, or if a Shinigami of significant reputation had for some reason not joined earlier but was later recruited, such individuals could potentially be fast-tracked into Captaincy.

But the Gotei 13 was clearly not currently in a state of emergency. So to become a Captain now, one had to follow one of three paths:

First, pass the Captain's proficiency exam under the witness of three existing Captains, including the Captain Commander.

Second, be recommended by six Captains and gain the approval of at least three others from the remaining six.

Third, under the witness of two hundred squad members from the target squad, defeat the current Captain in combat.

This was the normal process for becoming a Captain—except for the Captain of Division 1, who also served as the Captain Commander and had to be appointed by Central 46. All other Captains followed these rules.

Even Kenpachi Zaraki had become Captain through the third method—he had just happened to be unaffiliated before then, not a member of the Gotei 13, which was what made his case unique.

Now Kaiser, who had only studied at Shin'ō Academy for half a year, was to directly become a Captain?

That was undoubtedly unprecedented.

However—

"Kaiser has already proven his strength. And he did so in front of nearly every Captain," said Yamamoto, his tone resolute. "He defeated the Captain of Division 11, the current Kenpachi, proving that he possesses the qualifications of a Captain-level Shinigami."

"Since that's the case, the rules can be simplified."

"Unless... do any of you believe he is not qualified to be a Captain?"

This rhetorical question left the Captains speechless.

Whether Kaiser was qualified to be a Captain? Of course, he was.

He had defeated the current Captain of Division 11—and with nearly every Captain present. That level of strength no longer required further proof.

And whether it was via the first or second method of appointment, it still required the approval of other Captains or the Captain Commander.

Kaiser had defeated an existing Captain in front of them all. Wasn't that recognition enough?

Although the third method technically required the presence of two hundred squad members, Kaiser had in truth fulfilled the essence of all three recognized paths to Captaincy.

As for whether a student who'd only studied at Shin'ō Academy for half a year could handle administrative duties?

Did anyone truly believe Kenpachi Zarakī was someone who sat behind a desk doing paperwork?

That man thought of nothing but combat and killing—when had he ever shown aptitude for such responsibilities?

Paperwork and logistics were typically handled by the Lieutenant or Seated Officers. Their very purpose was to support the Captain.

In other words, the only true prerequisite for becoming a Captain was strength. Everything else was secondary—there were always workarounds.

Strength alone could not be substituted or compromised. It was the essential quality of a Captain.

And Kaiser undeniably possessed it.

"And you?" Yamamoto looked toward Kaiser, seeing that no Captains had objected. "Do you have anything to say about this decision?"

Kaiser chuckled, then spoke.

"What could I possibly say? That it's my honor?"

Becoming a Captain in one step—that was something even Kaiser hadn't expected.

In his original plan, graduating and being promoted to Lieutenant by some Captain would have already been a strong start.

But now? He was being offered Captaincy directly. What complaint could he possibly have?

Kaiser could already imagine the brilliance this moment would add to his personal history.

Graduating from Shin'ō Academy in half a year—that alone broke records.

Being promoted to Captain immediately after graduation—another record-breaking feat.

Being granted Captain status without showing even Shikai—let alone Bankai—while rare, had precedent in Kenpachi Zaraki, and remained a shocking achievement.

And let's not forget—in this world, Kaiser had died at the age of seventeen. Even in the afterlife, it hadn't yet been a full year.

As someone whose total age across both lifetimes was not even eighteen, to become a Captain of the Gotei 13—this would go down in Soul Society's history.

Among the current Captains of the Gotei 13, who had not lived for centuries?

Even the students of Shin'ō Academy were commonly forty or fifty. It wasn't unusual to meet Shinigamis over a hundred years old in Seireitei.

Especially Yamamoto—his age dated back over two thousand years, more ancient and venerable than anyone.

Becoming a Captain at under eighteen?

It would be recorded in history and celebrated for millennia.

With achievements like these, how could Kaiser ever worry about his life being dull?

Each record, each milestone, was living proof of an extraordinary existence.

"Very good."

Yamamoto, seeing Kaiser had no objections, nodded with satisfaction.

"Your inauguration ceremony will be held one month from now."

And just like that, the matter was decided—and news of it began to spread rapidly.

The announcement that Kaiser would soon be appointed as the Captain of Division 3 was destined to cause a sensation across all of Soul Society.

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Outside the Division 1 barracks.

By the time Kaiser stepped out, the other Captains had already departed.

Some left without even greeting him. Others exchanged a few polite words with Kaiser before saying goodbye.

Among them, Sōsuke Aizen was the most enthusiastic. He continued walking beside Kaiser, maintaining his ever-gentle smile.

"Though I always knew you would eventually reach this point, I never imagined the day would come so quickly."

Aizen sounded both genuinely pleased and slightly emotional.

"It's all thanks to your support, Captain Aizen," Kaiser replied with a smile, as if he truly meant it. "Perhaps your support is what drew the Captain Commander's attention and led him to make this decision?"

There was a faint undertone in his words.

"No, this was all your own doing—it has nothing to do with me." Aizen, seemingly unaware of any implication, shook his head. "You proved your strength in front of all the Captains. That's the true reason you became a Captain."

"You even defeated that Kenpachi Zarakī. It seems your strength now surpasses mine."

"How humbling."

Hearing that, Kaiser couldn't help but mock him inwardly.

Beating Kenpachi Zaraki means I'm stronger than you?

You really do know how to play the harmless act.

No one knew better than Kaiser how deep Aizen's strength went, or how masterfully hidden it was. Anyone who believed these words at face value would suffer immensely later.

So, Kaiser turned to look directly at Aizen.

"Captain Aizen, you shouldn't sell yourself short," Kaiser said with a smile. "Why don't we have a match? See who's really stronger?"

Kaiser's words caused the atmosphere to stiffen.

He and Aizen locked eyes. After a moment, Aizen adjusted his glasses.

"Let's not. My skills really aren't worth flaunting in front of someone like you," Aizen said, feigning helplessness. "You've seen my Zanpakutō's release, haven't you?"

"My Zanpakutō is a water-type. Its ability uses mist and refracted water to confuse enemies, making them fight each other. It's not exactly powerful—it's just a diversion, hardly enough to fool a Captain-level Shinigami."

"You defeated Kenpachi Zaraki without even using Shikai. If it were me, I'd meet the same fate."

Clearly, Aizen was claiming inferiority.

"Is that so?" Kaiser wasn't surprised at all. He shrugged. "That's a shame."

It really was a shame.

If possible, Kaiser did want to test himself against Aizen.

Of course, he meant the real Aizen—the one who would fight with full strength—not the kind-faced Captain of Division 5 before him.

If he could get a few good cuts in, it would even the score for what happened during the field training.

"Well, there's always next time."

Aizen smiled faintly as he spoke—whether or not there was deeper meaning in his words, it was hard to tell.

"You're right."

Kaiser responded in kind—making the exchange feel all the more loaded with subtle implications.

At the corner of the path, they finally split—one heading toward Shin'ō Academy, the other toward the Division 5 barracks.

Aizen, still wearing his signature gentle smile, suddenly spoke again.

"Do you think he's starting to suspect me now, Gin?"

In response, the ever-smiling Gin Ichimaru, who had somehow appeared behind him, replied in his snake-like voice.

"I can't say for sure if he suspects you, Captain Aizen. But I can say for certain—he doesn't want to get too close to you. He definitely has his guard up."

Gin shared his thoughts plainly.

"He really isn't easy to fool, despite his youth," Aizen chuckled lightly, not at all surprised. "I originally planned to bring him into Division 5, to make him your replacement, my right hand. But it looks like that's no longer an option."

"He's going to be Captain of Division 3, Gin."

"I suppose you'll have to stay by my side a while longer."

Aizen had originally intended to elevate Gin Ichimaru into the Captain position for Division 3.

But with Kaiser now stepping into that role, that plan had naturally fallen through.

"I don't mind," Gin said casually, as if he truly didn't care. "It's my honor to remain at Captain Aizen's side."

Aizen smiled, said nothing more.

The two of them slowly walked toward the Division 5 barracks, vanishing down the end of the street.