

Multiverse 164

Chapter 164: Return and Early Graduation

Division 4 Barracks, General Relief Station.

This was the designated facility for treating the wounded from other squads.

The overall environment of Division 4's barracks was exceptionally pleasant, and the General Relief Station was designed with patients' mental well-being in mind. It felt more like a retreat than a hospital, providing a relaxing and comfortable atmosphere to aid recovery.

Don't think of this as unnecessary—on the contrary, Division 4's treatment philosophy placed great emphasis on the state of a patient's mind and spirit.

This was because a Shinigami's Reiatsu could recover through rest and treatment. When the body was fully healed, the process of Reiatsu recovery became smoother—and vice versa.

If a Shinigami's Reiatsu recovered well, it could aid the body's healing. After all, Reiatsu was the density of the Soul itself—the stronger the Reiatsu, the greater the vitality. And because Reiatsu could surge during spiritual exertion, near-death moments, or heightened emotion, maintaining a positive mental state was undoubtedly beneficial for Reiatsu recovery, and therefore for physical healing.

Based on this principle, Division 4's healing process typically began with replenishing Reiatsu, followed by repairing physical trauma—at least, that was how Division 4 operated.

In light of that, it was no wonder Division 4's environment was so idyllic—among all the squads, it was one of the finest. The General Relief Station even used an open design, allowing patients to enjoy scenic views outside at any time.

On this particular day, Renji Abarai, Izuru Kira, and Momo Hinamori were granted permission to leave the hospital.

"After examination, there are no abnormalities in your conditions. Although there were signs that your Soul had been destabilized due to exposure to powerful Hollow forces, after several days of adjustment, your Soul have stabilized,"

A Division 4 member carrying a medical bag checked a medical chart while addressing the three Academy students.

"Congratulations. You may now leave the General Relief Station and return to the Academy."

Hearing this, Renji, Kira, and Hinamori, as if they had already been informed, bowed solemnly to the Division 4 member.

"Thank you for taking care of us these past few days."

"We really appreciate it."

"Thank you very much."

Their politeness brought a smile to the Division 4 member's face.

"No need to be so formal—it's our duty. Anyone who comes here for treatment will be our responsibility. We'll make sure they recover completely before sending them off."

He spoke with genuine emotion.

"To be honest, you all just had really bad luck. Still first-years, and you had to go through something that intense. Especially you three—coming face to face with an Adjuchas-level Hollow. Your Soul nearly destabilized completely. It really was a calamity you didn't deserve."

Adjuchas-class Hollows were the kind that could trouble even Lieutenants. Some even required the full effort of Captains to defeat. To encounter such a Hollow as students—before even becoming official squad members—was a catastrophe. Even if the target wasn't them specifically.

It must be remembered: when the Reiatsu gap between individuals was too great, those with weaker Reiatsu could die instantly, unable to withstand the spiritual pressure—scattered and destroyed.

The Reiatsu of an Adjuchas-class Hollow was already enough to kill students on the spot. Even though that one had hidden its Reiatsu, the residual pressure during combat was still terrifying for Academy students.

That was why the Soul of the three had become unstable, necessitating days of recovery under Division 4's care.

Others who had been injured were already treated and discharged.

In contrast, Renji and the others—despite having no visible injuries—had to stay longer than the wounded, which could definitely be seen as unlucky.

But the three of them, having been through what they had, didn't think that way.

"Just being alive already feels lucky. A little hospital stay is nothing."

Izuru Kira gave a wry smile, prompting Renji and Hinamori to nod.

"True. To survive an encounter with an Adjuchas-class Hollow—that's already incredibly lucky. Can't ask for more," the Division 4 member praised with a grin. "It's good you think that way. I was worried this experience might leave you with psychological trauma."

"Come to think of it, to have your Soul destabilized but not collapse entirely under that kind of pressure—it proves you're all exceptional."

"I believe you'll go far. So... how about joining Division 4 after graduation?"

Renji and Hinamori merely smiled at that, but Kira looked a little tempted—he seemed to seriously consider it.

"Oh, and that upperclassman of yours—the one recruited early by the Gotei 13—he left yesterday. He asked me to pass along a message: Don't overthink it. Just do what you're capable of, and someday, you'll meet again in the Gotei 13."

After relaying the message, the Division 4 member left, allowing Renji and the others to depart the General Relief Station as well.

On the way out, they passed a room surrounded by quite a few Shinigamis—most of them seemed to be from Division 11, which caught Renji's attention.

Unfortunately, he couldn't gather any details—only that an important member of Division 11 was being treated there, which was why so many had come to visit.

Several minutes later, the three left the Division 4 barracks and stepped outside.

"Finally out," Renji stretched and grumbled. "Didn't even get injured, but had to be hospitalized. I'm starting to rust."

"I wonder how the others are doing," Hinamori asked worriedly. "Did everyone make it back safely?"

"...I heard there were some casualties this time," Kira said heavily. "Not just sixth-years—even first-years."

At that, their mood sank.

Recalling the events from a few days ago still felt like a nightmare.

It was supposed to be just a routine field exercise, with Simulated Hollows for training—yet so many massive Hollows had appeared that even official Shinigamis couldn't handle them, not to mention an Adjuchas-class Hollow showed up. If that wasn't a nightmare, what was?

"If Kai-kun hadn't saved us, we probably would've..."

Kira didn't finish the sentence, but Renji and Hinamori understood what he meant.

Especially Hinamori—she thought of the massive Hollow that had descended from the sky, and her face went pale.

If that person hadn't appeared in time... what would've become of her?

She couldn't even imagine surviving that giant limb raised and swinging down.

That figure who arrived in that moment didn't just save her life—it saved her soul.

Hinamori felt she might never forget that silhouette.

"...I wonder how Kai-san's doing now."

When she came back to her senses, she realized she'd said it aloud.

Thankfully, the two beside her didn't notice her strange expression.

"What could be wrong with him?" Renji curled his lip. "He was in the spotlight this time. Took down an Adjuchas-class Hollow in a single blow. That story must've already spread through the Academy—he's probably being hailed as a hero."

He didn't sound jealous—just a little envious.

"Damn, I want to be that strong too."

Renji kicked a nearby stone.

"Forget it, Renji," Kira said with a note of self-pity. "Kai-kun's a genius—a genius among geniuses. He's not from our world. Just being able to see his back is already impressive. There's no way we can catch up to that kind of strength."

Those words didn't dampen Renji's spirit, but they did cause Hinamori's gaze to dim.

Just being able to see his back... is already impressive?

It really might be true.

"I don't care!" Renji snorted. "He might be strong, but he still struggled with me in swordsmanship class. He totally held back on purpose—just to toy with me. I'm gonna get my revenge!"

"...Struggled? You've always been the one getting thrashed," Kira retorted.

"Shut up!" Renji glared. "I'm going to settle things with him—right now!"

With that, he stomped off toward the Academy.

"W-Wait for us!"

Hinamori and Kira were startled and hurried after him, the three of them heading back to the Academy.

However, when they arrived, they found the Academy decorated like a festival—banners everywhere, festive and bright, as if a celebration was underway.

"What's going on?"

"Looks like they're celebrating something?"

"Didn't we just have a major incident? What's the Academy thinking?"

The three stood in confusion, exchanging glances.

"Renji!"

A slightly frantic voice called out, catching Renji's attention.

He looked over and saw a carrot-headed girl running toward him.

"Rukia!"

Renji brightened and rushed over.

Then... he saw her leap into the air—like a rocket missile—heading straight for him.

"Bam!"

The carrot-headed rocket hit him square in the gut.

"Gwah!"

Renji's eyes bulged as he was sent flying, rolling on the ground.

"You idiot!"

Rukia landed steadily, eyes teary with emotion, clearly having hurt herself with the headbutt.

But she didn't care—she immediately began to berate him.

"I thought you weren't coming back! That you died out there, you idiot!"

She yelled furiously.

"Ow ow ow..." Renji clutched his stomach and stood, wincing. "Did you have to hit me that hard? You think your skull's made of iron?"

"It was just a bit of punishment, dumb Renji!" Rukia snapped. "You came back to Soul Society and even got admitted to Division 4—but you didn't send a single letter!"

"I didn't even know how to find you to visit! Do you know how worried I was?!"

"Idiot! Fool!"

Rukia was angrier than ever—but Renji didn't argue this time.

"Sorry, Rukia."

Renji apologized sincerely, finally calming her anger.

"You look fine now, thank goodness. I was worried for nothing," Rukia sighed. "I'm glad you made it back safely. Don't scare me like that again."

"Yeah, don't worry. Never again."

Renji looked more subdued than ever—Kira and Hinamori stared, almost not recognizing him.

Feeling awkward under their gaze, Renji quickly changed the subject.

"By the way, Rukia—what's going on here?" Renji pointed at the decorated Academy. "Is this to welcome us back safely?"

That's all he could think of.

But Rukia replied,

"Of course not. It's to celebrate the graduation of the most outstanding genius in Academy history."

Her words stunned the three.

"Who?"

"Who's graduating?"

Kira and Hinamori both looked shocked.

"What? You didn't know?"

Rukia looked surprised, then delivered the news that left them speechless.

"Kaiser from your class is graduating. He'll be appointed Captain of Division 3 in one month."