

Multiverse 172

Chapter 172: Is This Really Okay?

Division 6, Barracks.

This was an elegant and pristine building.

It had three floors in total, with one side facing the street. From the street, one could clearly see the windows of the rooms facing the road, and the interior layout was also plainly visible. Each floor's rooms were nearly square in structure, the window frames made of wood, and the outer wall facing the street was upright, with no balconies or decorative embellishments.

As the barracks of Division 6, which was associated with nobility, the building was neither flashy nor grand, yet its style was unique—conveying a sense that all who resided within possessed noble rationality, exuding aristocratic taste and refinement.

In fact, Division 6's guiding principle was precisely noble rationality. Though not every squad member came from noble lineage, entering Division 6—which was exclusive to the nobility—meant they were effectively guards of the nobles in Seireitei. Naturally, they could not lose their composure, and even more so, could not lose their dignity.

Maintaining rationality at all times and exhibiting noble character—this was the requirement for every member who joined Division 6.

And upon learning this, Kaiser's first thought was...

"Not a single one of these traits describes that guy Renji, right?"

Standing before Division 6's barracks, Kaiser made this remark.

He simply could not imagine where exactly Renji Abarai was noble, where he was rational, or what noble character he supposedly had.

Yet this same guy would, in the future, join Division 6 and even become its Lieutenant...?

Something had to be wrong!

"If the problem isn't with Renji, then it must be with Byakuya Kuchiki."

After all, Lieutenants were usually promoted by the Captain. Squad Captains had the authority to directly appoint their Lieutenants—even if that person didn't have the power level of a Lieutenant.

In other words, if Renji Abarai would become the Lieutenant of Division 6, it would most likely be because Byakuya Kuchiki personally chose him.

Either Renji's strength had earned Byakuya's recognition, or Byakuya had learned about his relationship with Rukia and opened a back door for him.

Regardless, Kaiser couldn't believe Renji was selected for his noble rationality or refined character.

"All things considered, that guy looks more like an Eleventh Squad Shinigami than a Sixth Squad one."

While internally complaining, Kaiser walked into Division 6's barracks.

He had already sent someone in advance with a formal visit notice, so no one stopped him, allowing him to walk through Division 6's barracks unimpeded.

Soon, Kaiser arrived at Division 6's reception room.

There, he met the person he had come to see.

"...It's been a while, Captain Kaiser."

Byakuya Kuchiki was seated before a low wooden table. Upon seeing Kaiser enter, he spoke indifferently.

Beside him, Rukia sat as well. Her expression became somewhat complicated as she looked at Kaiser, who wore a sleeveless Captain's Haori.

Kaiser glanced at her and noticed that she was no longer wearing the Shin'ō Academy uniform, but instead wore the Shihakushō of a proper Gotei 13 Shinigami. Beside her was also placed an Asauchi.

Judging by her attire, anyone would assume this was a regular member of the Gotei 13, unaware that this "member" had joined through connections, not by graduating from the Shin'ō Academy on merit.

"Long time no see."

Just like before, Kaiser didn't sit formally but crossed his legs and sat down. First, he greeted Byakuya Kuchiki, and then turned to Rukia.

"You too—long time no see, Rukia."

Kaiser's smiling greeting only made Rukia's expression more complicated.

"...I apologize for not reaching out sooner, Captain Kaiser."

After a moment, Rukia bowed to Kaiser with impeccable decorum.

It was a greeting she would never have used in the past—one used only by nobles.

Clearly, after being adopted by the Kuchiki Clan, whether or not she had been trained to be a proper Shinigami remained unclear, but she had certainly been molded into a proper noble. Otherwise, the elders of the Kuchiki Clan would never have allowed her to meet guests, for fear of disgracing the family.

"That kind of talk doesn't really work on me, you know?" Kaiser smiled and said, "The one you owe an apology to isn't me, but a certain idiot who's worried sick about you."

Rukia naturally understood who Kaiser was referring to.

But her lips moved a few times, and in the end, she fell silent, saying nothing.

Seeing this, Kaiser gave her a few meaningful glances before turning to Byakuya.

"Looks like the Kuchiki Clan taught her plenty—so much so that she has to carefully weigh her words before speaking."

Kaiser's pointed comment made not only Rukia's face subtly shift but also caused Byakuya Kuchiki to raise his eyes and look at him.

"Is Captain Kaiser dissatisfied with the Kuchiki Clan's methods of instruction?"

Byakuya spoke expressionlessly.

"Whether I am or not doesn't matter, does it?" Kaiser shook his head and said, "Even if I had complaints, that's a matter for someone else's family. What right do I have to interfere?"

"Besides, even as a Captain, I'm not allowed to meddle too much in noble affairs—especially those of the Great Noble Clans. That's something even the Captain Commander specifically warned me about."

"Isn't that right, Head of the Kuchiki Clan?"

At this, Byakuya said nothing about the implication behind Kaiser's words, merely replied flatly:

"You are not of Division 6, so naturally you have no authority to question noble affairs, much less the internal matters of the Kuchiki Clan."

This was not a warning—just a statement of fact.

Noble-related matters were generally under the jurisdiction of Division 6; other squads truly had no right to interfere.

Of course, Division 3 had some exceptions.

"Harsh words to say to someone who's already exposed a noble clan or two."

Kaiser chuckled as he said this, causing Byakuya Kuchiki to furrow his brow.

"Is that why you came here today?"

Byakuya was clearly displeased.

"Of course not," Kaiser replied breezily, as if he hadn't noticed. "I just came to see how my old friend from Academy days is doing. Otherwise, I wouldn't have specifically requested in the invitation for your sister to attend, right?"

Byakuya said no more and closed his eyes.

As for Rukia, when Kaiser looked her way, her gaze instinctively avoided his.

"...I'm doing well. Thank you for your concern, Captain Kaiser."

That's what she said.

Unfortunately, her melancholic demeanor made it clear she was anything but well.

There was no helping it—Rukia was, after all, a commoner from Rukongai, and not just any district but the extremely impoverished District 78. Entering the Kuchiki Clan with that background—how could she possibly be treated kindly?

While no one would dare openly bully her, behind the scenes, she had undoubtedly been looked down on, shunned, and likely insulted.

The Kuchiki Clan was the foremost of the Four Great Noble Clans. Its members were full of pride. Especially the clan elders—no doubt they had deliberately made things difficult for Rukia, viewing her inclusion as a disgrace to the family.

But the decision to adopt Rukia had come from Byakuya Kuchiki himself. With the most exceptional successor in the history of the clan backing her, no matter how much dissent there was, it was ultimately meaningless.

And it wasn't just within the clan—Rukia surely faced plenty of gossip from outsiders as well.

After all, she was placed into the Gotei 13 purely through the Kuchiki Clan's arrangement.

This blatant backdoor entry had surely made countless people look down on her—it didn't take much imagination to guess.

Poor Rukia. She had only entered the Academy to pursue a better life, aspiring to become a Shinigami. In the end, she was adopted by the most prestigious noble family—something others could only dream of. Though her living conditions now surpassed anyone's, she still seemed unfulfilled and burdened.

"Is this really okay, Captain Kuchiki?"

Kaiser raised the cup of tea Rukia had personally prepared and sipped as he spoke casually.

"Adopting her like this... doesn't seem to be entirely in her best interest, does it?"

Kaiser's pointed comment made Byakuya Kuchiki open his eyes.

"This is the business of the Kuchiki Clan."

Byakuya coldly emphasized.

However, Kaiser calmly set down his teacup and gave a half-smile.

"Are you sure it's the business of the Kuchiki Clan... and not your business?"

Kaiser suddenly said, "Or should I say... are you sure this isn't about your deceased wife?"

The moment those words left his mouth, Byakuya's Reiatsu instantly turned icy cold.

"Deceased... wife..."

Rukia murmured.

She knew that Byakuya Kuchiki had a wife who had passed away not long ago.

She knew because he had told her that the reason he wanted to adopt her was because she resembled his late wife.

Rukia assumed that's what Kaiser was referring to.

But she was wrong.

"Seems like you don't know yet, Rukia."

Kaiser, as if unconcerned about any taboo, spoke directly to her.

"Captain Kuchiki's late wife... was actually your—"

Before he could finish, the icy Reiatsu erupting from across him surged to its peak.

"Wha—?!"

The sudden terrifying pressure made Rukia's mind buzz, causing her to briefly lose consciousness.

Because of that, she didn't see a figure suddenly reach for Kaiser's neck at blinding speed.

Kaiser, almost simultaneously, raised his hand and caught the wrist of that hand.

But its owner instantly lashed out with the other hand and grabbed Kaiser by the shoulder.

"Whoosh!"

The next moment, both figures vanished simultaneously, seemingly blasting through to the outside— one of the windows flung open.

"Captain Kaiser? Brother?"

Rukia finally regained her senses, only to find an empty room.

She stood frozen.