

Multiverse 178

Chapter 178: The Day of Standing Beside

Division 3 Barracks, Captain's Office.

At this moment, Kaiser was sitting in front of his desk, looking at the girl standing in front of him, and a smile unconsciously appeared on his face.

Momo Hinamori was standing in front of Kaiser, looking at Kaiser, who was wearing a sleeveless white Haori, whose appearance was no different from before, and who still showed a familiar smile, and her inner excitement could not be suppressed.

But she still tried hard to control herself, making a serious and solemn appearance, and saluted Kaiser.

"New member of Division 3, Momo Hinamori, reporting for duty!"

The girl, with a crisp voice tinged with a bit of childishness, very formally reported to Kaiser.

She had already changed into a Shihakushō, with a Zanpakutō hanging at her waist. Although her figure was petite and her appearance overly cute, to the point of lacking any authority, her serious and earnest demeanor was quite proper, and with her hair tied into a bun and her gaze becoming much more determined than before, her formerly weak aura faded considerably, no longer looking like an inexperienced Academy Student.

"Welcome to Division 3, Hinamori."

Kaiser did not change his attitude because of Momo Hinamori's overly formal etiquette and still greeted her with a smile, just like before.

"I didn't expect you to come to our squad. I thought you would join Division 5 as you used to say."

This was indeed something Momo Hinamori had said before.

When Sōsuke Aizen first visited Shin'ō Academy for an inspection, this girl had expressed that she somewhat wanted to join Division 5 after graduation, so Kaiser truly thought she would, just like in the original story, run off to join Division 5.

Who would have thought that she would choose Division 3 and come before him?

"I-I didn't say I really wanted to join Division 5, did I?"

Momo Hinamori couldn't help muttering, but her voice didn't sound very confident, presumably recalling what she had said before.

"I heard that Captain Aizen contacted you even before you graduated, intending to invite you to join Division 5, right?" Kaiser deliberately asked, "Why didn't you agree?"

Upon hearing this, Momo Hinamori couldn't help but recall that time.

Captain of Division 5, Sōsuke Aizen, was a man who left a deep impression on Momo Hinamori.

He was obviously a being standing at the pinnacle of the Soul Society, a Captain, and by reason should not have paid special attention to an "ordinary" Academy Student like her. Yet before her graduation, this lofty Captain personally came to her and extended an invitation, hoping she would join Division 5.

To be honest, at that time, Momo Hinamori was indeed very moved, or rather, very touched.

Although many squads had extended olive branches to her at that time, and even the Kidō Corps had sent people to contact her, a Captain personally coming to recruit her was an immense honor, making Momo Hinamori deeply feel the sincerity and importance the other party placed on her.

Moreover, that Captain had always been gentle, with a mild attitude, never once treating her with an air of superiority, unlike some Academy Students from noble families who always acted high and mighty. At that time, Momo Hinamori was truly moved and almost agreed.

However, whenever she seriously considered which squad to join, a certain scene would always surface in her mind.

The figure standing before her, blocking the vicious claw that swung toward her with just one hand — Momo Hinamori could never forget that.

Thus, in the end, Momo Hinamori politely declined Sōsuke Aizen's invitation, as well as the others, including those from the Kidō Corps, and agreed to Chikane Iba's solicitation.

Now, she had finally come to Division 3, once again seeing the owner of that figure, and being gazed at with a smile by him, made Momo Hinamori feel that her decision was correct.

That smile was not as gentle as Captain Aizen's, but it felt within reach. Even though he was now a Captain, he didn't seem distant.

His attitude wasn't particularly gentle either, but that casual and lazy demeanor made Momo feel intimate and nostalgic.

Thinking back to the past at Shin'ō Academy, Kaiser had always been like this — carefree and nonchalant, as if nothing in the world could trouble him, always seeming indifferent and acting on his own whims.

Now, even after becoming a lofty Captain, he was still the same, completely unchanged.

This made Momo feel a kind of joy and happiness she could not explain.

However, facing Kaiser's teasing question, Momo still felt a bit embarrassed.

"Um... are you mad, Kai-kun?"

Momo asked timidly, unconsciously using her old form of address.

"Not at all. On the contrary, I'm quite happy." Kaiser didn't expect Momo to answer with a question. While sighing inwardly that girls truly mastered this kind of thing naturally, he answered honestly, "Renji and Izuru have both gone to other squads, and even Shūhei Hisagi, whom I only met once, went to Division 9. If you had also gone to Division 5, then the few friends I have in the Soul Society would have all run away."

"So, I'm actually quite happy that you came to Division 3."

This was Kaiser's true feeling.

Although he had never deliberately intended to pull all the good seedlings into his squad — after all, he didn't particularly lack people under his command — having someone familiar join his squad naturally made him happy.

He had even thought about whether Renji Abarai would, because of his relationship with him, choose to join Division 3. Who knew that after Kaiser informed him about Rukia Kuchiki's situation, the guy vanished and then directly chose Division 11? Kaiser really wanted to drag that guy back and give him a good Zanjutsu lesson to remind him of the fear of being dominated.

As for others, Kaiser hadn't really thought they would join Division 3.

Shūhei Hisagi had originally intended to join Division 9, and they had only met once, with no further interactions afterward, so Kaiser never thought he would come to Division 3.

The relationships with Izuru Kira and Momo Hinamori were not particularly close either, merely classmates and acquaintances, so Kaiser didn't expect them to choose Division 3 because of him.

As a result, Izuru Kira indeed didn't choose Division 3, but Momo Hinamori did, which still surprised Kaiser.

"Is—is that so?"

Hearing Kaiser say that, Momo became even more embarrassed, but her heart was even happier and more excited, her cute cheeks flushing red.

After finishing catching up, Kaiser began to inquire about Momo Hinamori's abilities.

"I heard you achieved excellent results upon graduation, especially in Kidō. Even Lieutenant Iba praised you." Kaiser asked with a smile, "I guess you can already use high-level Kidō now, right?"

"Yes." Momo nodded repeatedly and said, "Teachers from the Kidō Corps taught me high-level Kidō, and some seniors also gifted me some Kidō books."

"To what extent have you reached?" Kaiser asked curiously, "For Hadō and Bakudō, up to which number can you use?"

"If it's just casting, Kidō below number eighty shouldn't be a problem." Momo said a bit uncertainly, "But if it's about using them skillfully in battle, only some Kidō below number seventy would do."

"What about discarding Incantations?" Kaiser continued to ask, "Can you discard Incantations for high-level Kidō?"

"No way." Momo smiled bitterly and said, "That's high-level Kidō, you know? Even among the Kidō Corps there aren't many who can do that. How could a newly graduated Academy Student like me possibly manage?"

Speaking of this, Momo once again recalled the past Kaiser.

During that incident, Kaiser had been able to skillfully use many high-level Kidō without Incantations.

And at that time, he had only been enrolled for half a year, right?

Thinking of this, Momo felt a little depressed.

"Already very impressive."

Kaiser, however, gave a great affirmation.

A freshly graduated Academy Student, being able to use high-level Kidō, and even casting Kidō under number eighty successfully — even most Lieutenants and Captains not specializing in Kidō couldn't manage that.

In this respect, Momo Hinamori indeed had exceptional talent in Kidō. In the future, even solely relying on Kidō, she could reach Vice-Captain level.

"And your Zanpakutō?" Kaiser thought and asked, "Have you achieved Shikai?"

"N-no, not yet." Momo said somewhat embarrassedly, "Although I can hear its voice, I still can't quite catch the name."

Clearly, Momo Hinamori had spent less effort on her Zanpakutō than on Kidō, so like most Academy Students or Division Members, she had yet to achieve Shikai.

Of course, that was normal. Those who could achieve Shikai during Academy days were all rare prodigies, destined to become Captain-class Shinigami in the future.

"Izuru-kun seems close to hearing his Zanpakutō's name, and Renji-kun has already mastered Shikai," Momo said in a small voice, "I probably still need some more time..."

"It's okay, no need to rush," Kaiser shook his head and said, "Just follow your own pace. As long as your ability is enough, you will naturally hear your Zanpakutō's name."

Compared to those who had yet to achieve Shikai even after so long, Momo Hinamori was already quite good.

Kaiser believed that with a little more time, she would reach Shikai and officially become a Seated Officer-class Shinigami.

With a bit more tempering, it wouldn't take long before she could succeed Chikane Iba and become Kaiser's proud Lieutenant.

Thus, Kaiser smiled and said to Momo:

"Do your best. I'm looking forward to the day when you're standing beside me, my future Lieutenant."

Upon hearing this, a flush rose on Momo's face.

"Yes! Captain!"

