

Multiverse 184

Chapter 184: Hmm... That Was Pretty Abrupt

Gin Ichimaru's captain appointment ceremony was held on the third day.

The reason it was so rushed, firstly, was because the former Captain, Isshin Shiba, had already been missing for quite some time, and secondly, because the role of Division 10 was different from that of Division 3—its Captain position couldn't remain vacant for long.

Division 3 was a support division. Even if its Captain's seat was empty or they were short-staffed and couldn't support other divisions, the other divisions could still find ways to handle their duties on their own. Under normal circumstances, it wasn't absolutely necessary for Division 3 to act.

Division 10 was different. As the patrol and security division, if any problems arose within it and it couldn't perform its duties properly, it would be easy for chaos or even crises to break out in either Seireitei or Rukongai.

This was also why, after failing to locate Isshin Shiba for so long, Genryūsai Shigekuni Yamamoto was so eager to select a new Captain for Division 10.

If Division 10 couldn't function at full capacity, the impact it could have on the Soul Society was considerable. Genryūsai Shigekuni Yamamoto didn't dare let Division 10's Captain seat sit empty for decades like Division 3's once did.

As a result, Gin Ichimaru's appointment ceremony was expedited and held on the third day, officially placing the Division 10 Captain's haori on him and making him the new Captain of Division 10.

Interestingly, on his first day in office, Gin Ichimaru announced a personnel transfer.

That was: he promoted the former Third Seat of Division 10, Tōshirō Hitsugaya, to replace the former Lieutenant, Rangiku Matsumoto, becoming his new lieutenant.

"Well now, what a move."

When Kaiser heard the news, he wore a particularly amused expression.

He had been wondering how Gin Ichimaru was going to face Rangiku Matsumoto. He didn't expect the man to be so direct—stripping his childhood friend of her position just to avoid seeing her.

If Rangiku Matsumoto had remained the Lieutenant of Division 10, she, as his vice, would naturally have had reason to come and go with Gin Ichimaru as Captain.

But with Tōshirō Hitsugaya promoted, Rangiku Matsumoto was demoted a rank and took over the former Third Seat position. This way, she no longer had any reason to tag along with Gin Ichimaru, allowing him to successfully avoid her.

The key was, Gin Ichimaru's reason was quite sound.

"Third Seat Hitsugaya... no, he should be called Lieutenant Hitsugaya now."

"Lieutenant Hitsugaya is exceptionally strong, far surpassing the average Lieutenant. Leaving him in the Third Seat position would be the greatest unfairness to him."

"Since I took the Captain position, at the very least, the Lieutenant seat should go to him."

It was indeed logical and well-argued—no one could object.

After all, Tōshirō Hitsugaya had even learned Bankai and already possessed the qualifications to become a Captain. Giving him the position of Lieutenant—what's so wrong with that?

In fact, even the role of Lieutenant might have been a waste of his talents.

Thus, no one could say a single unreasonable thing about Gin Ichimaru's move—not even Rangiku Matsumoto herself. She silently removed her Lieutenant's Badge and handed it to Tōshirō Hitsugaya.

Truthfully, Tōshirō Hitsugaya wasn't very willing to accept it.

Not because he felt the position of Lieutenant was beneath him, but because he didn't want to take Rangiku Matsumoto's place.

One must understand, it was Rangiku Matsumoto who had discovered his talent while he was in Rukongai and brought him into Seireitei, allowing him to walk the path of a Shinigami.

In other words, Rangiku Matsumoto was Tōshirō Hitsugaya's guide—his benefactor.

That was also why he had joined Division 10—because Rangiku Matsumoto had invested in him early on.

But now, he had to take her position, which left Tōshirō Hitsugaya extremely reluctant.

Unfortunately, the Captain's order had already been issued. Even if he declined, Gin Ichimaru wouldn't let Rangiku Matsumoto return to the Lieutenant position. And with Rangiku Matsumoto's personal persuasion, Tōshirō Hitsugaya eventually accepted the position of Lieutenant of Division 10, becoming Gin Ichimaru's vice.

"But it seems like Shiro's mood hasn't been very good."

Inside the Division 3 barracks, in the Captain's office, Momo Hinamori said this while brewing tea for Kaiser.

"You've gone to see him?"

Kaiser was reviewing a report. Holding the document in his hand and flipping through it, he took the hot tea Momo Hinamori handed over.

"Mm." Momo Hinamori nodded and said with a trace of melancholy, "He seems to care a lot about Rangiku-san, and he's also bothered about losing to Captain Ichimaru."

"Is that so?" Kaiser replied nonchalantly. "Didn't he analyze things quite rationally that day? Even before the fight started, he said his chances of winning weren't high."

So in the end, that calm analysis from that day was just talk? Deep down, the kid still really wanted to win?

Kaiser's assumption was quickly refuted by Momo.

"That's not it. Shiro's bothered because he lost so quickly."

Regarding the duel that day, Momo Hinamori hadn't been there and didn't know what happened in detail.

But she'd heard from Tōshirō Hitsugaya that even after using Bankai, before he had a chance to launch a single attack, he was defeated by Gin Ichimaru.

Clearly, before releasing their Zanpakutō, the two had been going back and forth evenly, neither able to overpower the other—but once their Zanpakutō were released, everything changed.

After Shikai, Tōshirō Hitsugaya began to fall short, unable to break through Gin Ichimaru's defenses for a long time, and after Bankai, he lost outright. That left him deeply unsettled.

"Shiro himself said that his mastery over Hyōrinmaru isn't mature yet. If it were, he definitely wouldn't have lost so badly."

Momo Hinamori relayed Tōshirō Hitsugaya's thoughts, which finally made Kaiser put down the report in his hands.

"Looks like he's not dumb. He knows where his problem lies."

Kaiser's calm assessment piqued Momo Hinamori's curiosity.

"Captain also thinks Shiro's problem lies with Hyōrinmaru?"

The answer to that was, of course, negative.

"The problem isn't with Hyōrinmaru. The problem lies with the one using Hyōrinmaru," Kaiser glanced at Momo Hinamori and said, "Now tell me, why did you deliberately come to me to bring up that kid?"

"Well..." Momo Hinamori gave an embarrassed laugh, her expression flustered at being seen through but also pleased that the conversation was heading where she wanted. She carefully said, "Both Captain and Shiro are geniuses, so I was thinking—could Captain guide Shiro like how you guided me?"

Over the years, although Chikane Iba had been primarily responsible for Momo Hinamori's training, Kaiser had never turned a blind eye to her development.

While Chikane Iba trained Momo Hinamori in team duties, Kaiser would occasionally guide her in cultivation, helping her learn to wield her Zanpakutō and use Kidō.

Thanks to his guidance, Momo Hinamori had swiftly mastered Shikai, significantly improved her Kidō abilities, and gained a strong foundation to support her eventual rise to Lieutenant.

Today, not only was Momo Hinamori an outstanding vice, but as the Lieutenant of Division 3, her strength was exceptional—even ranking in the upper-middle or top five among all Lieutenants.

The proof: two years ago at a gathering, Momo Hinamori had defeated Izuru Kira head-on and managed to fight Renji Abarai to a draw without even using Kidō—leaving both men nearly despondent.

...Well, rumor had it Izuru Kira actually did fall into despair afterward and threw himself into intense training. For a while, he even pushed aside team duties to go into seclusion. If Jūshirō Ukitake hadn't once again fallen ill and urgently needed his Lieutenant to take charge, Kira might not have returned so quickly.

Of course, Renji Abarai wasn't far behind either.

Because of all this, Momo Hinamori had great faith in Kaiser's ability as a mentor, and back when Tōshirō Hitsugaya was still attending the Shin'ō Academy, she had even secretly asked Kaiser to coach him.

Now that Tōshirō Hitsugaya was stuck in frustration, Momo Hinamori again wanted Kaiser to lend a hand—to help her childhood friend.

"Guidance, huh..."

Kaiser looked at Momo Hinamori with a half-smile, silently sighing to himself.

"This girl, even though she's grasping at straws in desperation, she really did find the right person."

Whether others could guide Tōshirō Hitsugaya, Kaiser didn't know—but he definitely could.

Rather, aside from himself, there really wasn't anyone more suited to teaching Tōshirō Hitsugaya how to use Hyōrinmaru.

Momo Hinamori had, by sheer chance, sought out the best person possible.

"If I go guide him, how are you going to thank me?"

Kaiser teased with this remark, which made Momo Hinamori blush.

"I-I sewed a new outfit for Captain these past few days, and made a scarf and some socks too. Captain Unohana also taught me flower arranging. I want to give my work to Captain, and..."

Momo Hinamori started rambling shyly, saying many things, causing Kaiser's eye to twitch.

He wasn't exactly surprised—because in the past, Momo Hinamori had always been like this, quietly doing a lot behind the scenes for him.

Sometimes she made new clothes, sometimes she cooked, sometimes she gave little gifts. Her thoughtfulness had long since exceeded what was expected of a Lieutenant—it was practically like she was already a newlywed wife.

Even more so, there were times when Kaiser returned to his room to sleep and found that his bedding had already been laid out. And once he got in, it wasn't cold at all—warm and cozy, like someone had just been lying in it, with a faint, pleasant scent lingering...

Once, Kaiser accidentally walked into Momo Hinamori's room and saw all sorts of his old belongings there—some were gifts he had given her, others were things he had discarded, yet all were stored there like collectibles.

Hmm... that was pretty abrupt. Abrupt enough that Kaiser felt a little scared of Momo Hinamori.

"Ahem..."

Seeing Momo Hinamori still shyly continuing to talk, Kaiser cleared his throat and quickly stopped her from going any further.

"Let's go check on what that kid Hitsugaya is up to."

Saying this, Kaiser stood up and left the office as if escaping.

"Captain! W-wait for me!"

Momo Hinamori snapped out of it and hurriedly ran after him.

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Division 10, barracks.

This was a building with an interior style leaning toward European architecture.

It was located in a relatively important area within Seireitei. Due to Division 10's responsibility for patrolling and security across Seireitei and Rukongai, team members and Division Members frequently moved in and out. Everyone looked busy and serious, giving off a strong impression of dedication to duty.

Momo Hinamori seemed to be quite familiar with the place and confidently led Kaiser through the interior of the barracks.

"Shiro didn't switch rooms after becoming Division 10's Lieutenant. Let's just go straight to him."

As she spoke, Momo Hinamori carefully reached out and held Kaiser's hand. Seeing that he didn't resist and seemed to be admiring the Division 10 barracks while letting her lead, Momo Hinamori quietly smiled with joy and skipped slightly as she led him to Tōshirō Hitsugaya's room.

When they arrived, Kaiser and Momo Hinamori didn't see Tōshirō Hitsugaya right away—they first smelled a strong scent of alcohol.

"Come! Drink with me!"

A coquettish female voice rang out from Tōshirō Hitsugaya's room, causing Kaiser's expression to turn strange.

"Ah!" Momo Hinamori was first stunned, then as if recalling something, she exclaimed in realization, "Could it be..."

Not knowing exactly what she had figured out, Momo Hinamori opened the door directly, revealing the scene inside to Kaiser.

At once, the scent of alcohol grew even stronger, and a room littered with empty bottles appeared in his view.

"Hey! Stop drinking in my room! What are you doing drinking in broad daylight?!"

Tōshirō Hitsugaya had a cross popping on his forehead, shouting angrily at a woman.

"C'mon, don't be so mad. One more bottle, just this one and I'll stop!"

The woman, unfazed by Hitsugaya's outburst and even smiling mischievously, spoke while hiccupping from alcohol.

She had long, wavy orange hair, a beauty mark by her lips, and wore a very provocative version of the Shihakushō. Her bust was boldly exposed, and she wore a rose-pink shawl with a silver-ringed choker on her chest. Her hakama sash was tied into a butterfly knot on the side.

She was an exceedingly mature and sexy woman, extremely alluring—but right now, she was sitting cross-legged in a pile of empty bottles, holding one in her hand, drinking heartily, her cheeks flushed, and arguing with Tōshirō Hitsugaya like a drunkard in broad daylight.

"Here, have a drink too," the woman coaxed Tōshirō Hitsugaya with a smile. "Consider it a celebration of you becoming Lieutenant, how about it?"

"No! Need!" Tōshirō Hitsugaya seemed at his wit's end, furious yet trying to stay calm, veins twitching as he said, "Who celebrates by drinking in the barracks in broad daylight?! And weren't you demoted? What's there to celebrate?!"

"That's exactly why it's worth celebrating!" the woman shouted back. "Now that I'm demoted, I don't have to handle all that work anymore. From now on, all the Lieutenant and support duties go to you. Isn't that worth celebrating?!"

Upon hearing this, Tōshirō Hitsugaya twitched at the corners of his mouth—and even Kaiser was speechless.

Honestly... what a refreshingly absurd reason to celebrate.