

## Multiverse 189

### Chapter 189: You're the One Who's Dense, Aren't You?

"Hmm?"

At that moment, Kaiser was a bit surprised.

Seeing Byakuya Kuchiki standing before him, coldly glaring, his body radiating terrifying Reiatsu, Kaiser felt both surprised and impressed.

"Looks like after that last fight, you've spent a lot of time training in private."

The Reiatsu emanating from Byakuya Kuchiki was clearly much stronger than when he had last fought Kaiser.

This was enough to show that it wasn't just Kaiser, Renji Abarai, and the others who were improving—Byakuya Kuchiki had also been diligently training, never wasting time in the Soul Society.

Though it was unclear how much he had improved, at least judging from his Reiatsu, his strength had significantly increased since then.

"As expected of the most outstanding heir in the history of the Kuchiki Clan. Your talent probably isn't much inferior to Gin Ichimaru or Tōshirō Hitsugaya, is it?"

Kaiser gave Byakuya high praise.

Unfortunately, Byakuya Kuchiki did not appreciate Kaiser evaluating him.

"Compared to last time, how much have you improved?" Byakuya said coldly. "If you continue doing meaningless things, I don't mind confirming it for myself."

"I wouldn't mind that," Kaiser replied with a half-smile. "But the real question is, are you in the mood for that?"

As he spoke, Kaiser glanced in the direction of the prison, causing Byakuya's gaze to grow even colder.

Others might not notice it, but Kaiser knew—Byakuya Kuchiki's mood at the moment wasn't particularly good.

Just like before, one smiled calmly, the other wore an icy expression, and they stood opposed in the corridor.

Faced with this scene, Momo Hinamori didn't even dare breathe, feeling particularly uneasy and tense.

Fortunately, Byakuya Kuchiki seemed to lose patience and no longer wished to tangle with Kaiser.

"This is a warning," Byakuya said with an unquestionable tone. "If you say anything you shouldn't, then this time, even if the Captain Commander intervenes, I will not hold back."

Leaving those words, Byakuya turned and walked away.

The Reiatsu lingering in the air immediately dispersed, allowing Momo Hinamori to finally breathe a sigh of relief.

"So scary... Is that really the Captain of Division 6?" Momo patted her chest, visibly shaken.

"Don't mind him," Kaiser, in contrast, was totally nonchalant, saying casually, "He just likes intimidating youngsters. When real trouble comes knocking, he'll find out he's nothing at all."

At that time, he wouldn't be able to protect his own sister, and he'd be surpassed and defeated by the very human he looks down upon.

The shell named "Kuchiki Clan" would only be cracked open when that time came.

"Youngsters..."

Momo Hinamori didn't understand what Kaiser meant, muttering slightly.

In the entire Gotei 13, wasn't there anyone younger than you?

Unaware that Momo was silently complaining in her heart, Kaiser continued walking and arrived at Division 6's prison.

The place wasn't dark—quite the opposite, it was bright. They had merely fenced off half of a room with iron bars to serve as a prison cell. It didn't feel like imprisonment at all—there was no sense of being a criminal.

When Kaiser arrived, Rukia Kuchiki was sitting in the cell on a chair, her back to the door, gazing out the window, her face full of melancholy.

Outside the cell stood a familiar figure, keeping her company.

"Renji."

Momo Hinamori called out his name.

It was Renji Abarai.

"Momo? Kai—?"

Renji, who had been quietly watching Rukia's back, turned in surprise at the sound and looked over.

"Captain Kaiser..."

Rukia Kuchiki also reacted, turning toward Kaiser with a touch of surprise on her sorrowful face.

Clearly, neither of them had expected Kaiser to appear here.

"Didn't expect that, huh?" Kaiser smiled slightly. "Don't mind me. I'm just here to take a look. Pretend I was bored and had nothing better to do."

Hearing this, Renji and Rukia exchanged glances and then both gave wry smiles.

"You came to see me?"

Rukia Kuchiki asked, her expression complicated.

"Sort of." Kaiser nodded. "Also came to see if a certain blockhead had been devastated into depression."

"Who are you calling a blockhead?" Renji, used to hearing this kind of jab from Kaiser, knew exactly what it meant and shot back, "You're the blockhead, aren't you?"

"Me?" Kaiser hadn't expected that kind of retort. He pointed to himself and said irritably, "Come on, look at me—how could I possibly be a blockhead?"

"Why not?" Renji snorted. "If you weren't, then how could you not know that Momo, she..."

"Waaaah!" Momo Hinamori suddenly cried out, flustered, cutting Renji off as she glared at him in panic. "What nonsense are you spouting, Lieutenant Abarai?!"

"How is it nonsense?" Renji argued. "You've always liked that guy—"

Before he could finish his sentence, a flash of a blade came slashing toward him.

"Uwaah!" Renji immediately jumped back, narrowly dodging the sharp strike, cold sweat pouring down his face. "Y-You didn't have to actually draw your sword! What if I hadn't dodged?!"

"Hmph." Momo snorted, holding her Zanpakutō—when had she drawn it?—and said, "If you hadn't dodged, it's fine. I avoided the vital points on purpose. If you got hit, I'd take responsibility and heal you myself."

She wasn't joking—Momo really could heal Renji's wounds.

The girl frequently visited Division 4 to learn flower arranging from Retsu Unohana, and developed a good relationship with both Unohana and Lieutenant Isane Kotetsu. At some point, she picked up some Kaidō and could heal injuries.

And not just Division 4—Momo was also good friends with Nanao Ise, Lieutenant of Division 8. They shared books and often discussed them. Nanao visited Division 3's barracks frequently and had met Kaiser several times.

So despite looking fragile, Momo had managed her relationships quite well, forming strong ties across multiple Divisions—even with the Lieutenant of Division 11.

If Renji were slashed by Momo, he wouldn't even need to go to Division 4—she could treat him on the spot.

"Should I thank you or something?"

Renji was covered in cold sweat.

"No need to be polite, Lieutenant Abarai." Momo smiled sweetly—yet terrifyingly. "As long as you stop running your mouth, there won't be any injuries. Don't you agree?"

So scary...

All three people present had that exact same thought at the same time.

"Seeing you so full of life, I'm relieved," Kaiser said at the right moment, teasing Renji. "I thought you'd be running around in panic by now."

"...Not quite," Renji sighed, glancing at the silent Rukia in the cell. "Don't let her looks fool you—she's still a member of the Kuchiki Clan, Captain Kuchiki's sister."

"For regular Shinigami, giving spiritual power to a human is a serious crime, but for nobles... it's not like things can't be smoothed over."

"Considering the Kuchiki Clan, the Central 46 probably won't hand out a punishment that's too severe, right?"

The Central 46, composed of forty sages and six judges, was the highest judicial body—a collective council formed by nobles and elders from the Soul Society.

Any Shinigami who committed a crime in the Soul Society or the World of the Living would be judged by them. Once a sentence was handed down, even the Captain Commander couldn't object—it was the ultimate authority in Seireitei.

If the verdict required force, they would dispatch secret orders via encrypted signals to the Gotei 13 or other enforcement units. Those who received the order had to carry it out immediately, no exceptions.

In other words, it was the most powerful institution in the Soul Society. No one—not even Genryūsai Shigekuni Yamamoto—could overrule them, except perhaps the royal family or the Zero Division.

That's why the Central 46 was so feared.

But since it was made up of nobles and elders, and the Kuchiki Clan was the most powerful noble family among the Four Great Noble Clans, Renji believed they would grant leniency.

After all, what had happened was only that a human became a Shinigami—not something that endangered the Soul Society. It was labeled a crime, but in truth it was just a taboo—not something that necessarily warranted death.

That was Renji's reasoning, and why he wasn't panicking.

But not everyone was as optimistic.

"Are you sure it'll be fine?" Momo said uneasily. "I've heard the Central 46 is extremely rigid... Can the Kuchiki Clan really influence them?"

The Central 46 was an ancient organization that had existed long before the Gotei 13.

Due to its age, its approval process and methods of judgment were inflexible and cold. The judges were known for their lack of compassion, and as such, they were extremely unpopular in the Soul Society.

Momo had never seen anyone from the Central 46, nor had she ever been there, but she'd heard many stories.

She worried they might not be as accommodating as Renji imagined. Even if the Kuchiki Clan was the top noble family, the Central 46 might still refuse to bend.

"Relax." Renji waved it off. "Captain Kuchiki will find a way. If it's him, he might be able to sway the Central 46."

But his words only made Rukia lower her head and fall into deeper silence—and made Kaiser laugh.

"All these years and you're still so naive, Renji."

Kaiser's remark made Renji frown.

"What's that supposed to mean?"

Renji demanded.

Kaiser didn't answer—because Rukia spoke up.

"My brother would never plead on my behalf," Rukia said quietly. "In his heart, the name of the Kuchiki Clan and the order of the Soul Society matter far more than an adopted little sister."

"How could that be?" Renji's frown deepened, unease welling in his heart as he forced a laugh. "Captain Kuchiki even came to the Shin'ō Academy to adopt you—how could he be that heartless?"

In Renji's mind, since Byakuya had personally gone to the Academy to find Rukia, he must care about her on some level, right?

If his sister committed a crime, how could he not step in to help and try to lessen her punishment?

That was how Renji convinced himself—otherwise, he wouldn't be able to calm the unease in his heart.

"...You'll never understand how that person thinks."

Rukia looked at her childhood friend, her expression full of sorrow, and said no more.

"I..."

Renji wanted to say something but didn't know what.

Instead, Kaiser looked deeply at Rukia and said, "Actually, you don't understand what he's thinking either."

That made Rukia blink in surprise.

Before she could ask, Kaiser suddenly appeared inside the cell, right in front of her.

"C-Captain?!"

"Kai?!"

Momo and Renji both exclaimed in shock.

"Kai..."

Rukia was also startled, instinctively rising to her feet.

But before she could stand, Kaiser acted first.

He suddenly reached out and placed his hand directly on Rukia's chest.

His palm sank in slightly—somewhat... stiff.

"Wha—?!"

At that moment, everyone was dumbfounded.

Rukia's face turned red... from embarrassment.

Renji's face turned red... from rage.

Momo Hinamori... short-circuited.

Kaiser ignored everyone, closed his eyes, and golden patterns began to glow on his body.

Then, he felt it.

He sensed the existence of a strange crystalline object...