

Multiverse 226

Chapter 226: The Man Marked with a Number

In the time that followed, the Gotei 13 did not immediately launch a large-scale operation but instead focused on organizing the affairs within Seireitei.

The Central 46 had been completely wiped out. The forty sages and six adjudicators all needed to be reselected, but this was a matter for the Noble Clans—it had nothing to do with the Gotei 13. What the Gotei 13 needed to do was handle the various troubles caused by the vacancy of the Central 46, and at the same time carry out repairs within Seireitei.

Due to this catastrophe, many buildings in Seireitei had been damaged. The Sōkyoku Hill had completely collapsed, and not to mention that in order to break the Negacion, Kaiser had cleaved all of Seireitei into two halves—these all needed to be rebuilt.

Many areas had even turned into complete ruins. Even if they weren't rebuilt, the ruins would at least have to be cleared away; otherwise, they would affect the environment and the operation of Seireitei.

Of course, these were all minor matters. Once the Captains and Lieutenants of each Division were discharged after recovering from their injuries, with their direct involvement, the work would surely progress smoothly. The real trouble was the rift cleaved by Kaiser—it was unfathomably deep, like an abyss, and the crack was so wide that it was nearly impossible to fill.

With no other choice, the Gotei 13 could only repair the outer walls of Seireitei, and as for the abyss that split Seireitei in two, they simply left it as it was, building bridges across the chasm to reconnect the divided Seireitei.

This made many Shinigami gain a deeper sense of Kaiser's power, and private discussions about him became even more frequent. Some gossipmongers even revealed that he had defeated Captain Commander Genryūsai Shigekuni Yamamoto, causing Kaiser's reputation to grow to an unprecedented height during this period.

Under such circumstances, the title of the oldest Shinigami within the Gotei 13 still belonged to Genryūsai Shigekuni Yamamoto, but the title of strongest Shinigami had silently shifted to Kaiser.

After hearing of this, many Captains realized that Genryūsai Shigekuni Yamamoto might be deliberately fanning the flames behind the scenes, allowing the rumors to spread. This made all of them start speculating wildly.

As the central figure of all the talk, Kaiser also experienced significant changes in his surroundings.

First, he noticed that wherever he went, people looked at him with admiration and awe, and the respect shown to him had risen by at least two levels compared to before.

Second, the members of Division 3 walked outside with a newfound sense of pride and confidence, holding their heads high, feeling honored—no matter where they went, they were the center of attention.

Even students in the Shin'ō Academy began proclaiming that they wanted to join Division 3 after graduation. The Academy's headmaster even replaced his statue with a larger, more luxurious one and had his deeds written into books to be used as teaching materials.

As for the Division 1 members, whenever they saw him, they showed a mix of resentment and awe—their expressions were extremely complicated.

In short, he became more eye-catching than before and more awe-inspiring than before.

Even the once-arrogant Noble Clans bowed their heads low upon seeing him, as if they wanted to bury their faces in the ground—even members of the Four Great Noble Clans behaved this way.

The Kidō Corps, after hearing he could cast Hadō #91 without an Incantation, sent people to approach him more than once, hoping he would come teach in the Corps. The Onmitsukidō no longer dared to wander around him or openly monitor him, knowing full well that his Shunpo exceeded even that of their Commander.

Like this, changes happened silently, and they happened quickly—so quickly that even Kaiser felt as though he was on the verge of dominating the entire Soul Society.

However, Kaiser did not change anything because of these developments. What he was before, he remained now.

He went to the General Relief Station to visit Renji Abarai, Izuru Kira, and others, and even went to check on Rukia. Unexpectedly, he found that Byakuya Kuchiki had also gone to visit Rukia. The two seemed to have had a long conversation, and afterward, their relationship visibly improved—as if only now did they truly become siblings.

"That ice-face must've told her the truth, right?"

Kaiser quickly figured out what had happened.

Byakuya Kuchiki had always hidden one thing: that Rukia was actually the younger sister of his deceased wife.

He had claimed he took Rukia as his adoptive sister because she resembled his late wife. But in truth, the reason he adopted her was because of his wife's final wish.

When Rukia was young, due to the harshness of life, her sister had abandoned her. Only after marrying into the Kuchiki Clan did she begin searching for Rukia, but she died of illness before finding her. She entrusted that wish to her husband and asked him to fulfill it on her behalf.

So, when Byakuya Kuchiki discovered Rukia in the Shin'ō Academy—who looked nearly identical to his late wife—he immediately realized her identity and decided to adopt her.

Naturally, this stirred immense dissatisfaction within the Kuchiki Clan.

As the leader of the Four Great Noble Clans, the status of the Kuchiki Clan needed no elaboration. And as the most outstanding heir in the clan's history, Byakuya Kuchiki had no reason to marry or adopt anyone from the Rukongai slums.

Yet for the sake of his wife and her abandoned sister, Byakuya Kuchiki defied the family rules twice—marrying Rukia's sister and adopting Rukia. The repercussions of this were easy to imagine.

Therefore, Byakuya Kuchiki once swore to his grandfather that he would never again violate the rules, that he would become a proper head of the Kuchiki Clan and a model for all Shinigami—only then did he suppress the numerous objections and dissent.

This was why Byakuya Kuchiki did not plead for Rukia this time.

He no longer dared to break the rules or go against order. Even if it pained him, he had to follow the judgment of the Central 46 and allow Rukia to be sentenced to death.

Now that the truth was revealed—that everything had been orchestrated by Sōsuke Aizen—Rukia naturally had no reason to be executed. So Byakuya Kuchiki finally explained everything and told her the truth.

"You should've done that from the beginning."

After leaving behind such a comment, Kaiser turned and walked away.

As for Rukia, Renji Abarai and Byakuya Kuchiki could concern themselves with her—he didn't want to spoil the moment.

Later, he took some time to check on Ichigo Kurosaki and his friends, but he didn't stay long, nor did he try to form a close relationship—after a few words of concern, he left.

He wasn't close with Ichigo Kurosaki—they had merely fought once. He wasn't particularly familiar with Ichigo's father either, so there was no need to pretend otherwise.

Ichigo Kurosaki and his companions would soon leave the Soul Society and return to the World of the Living, which might trigger a new wave of unrest.

Kaiser had no interest in meddling with Ichigo's affairs. He just wanted to wait until Sōsuke Aizen returned or until the Gotei 13 recovered enough to officially launch their assault on Hueco Mundo and Aizen.

Later on, Tōshirō Hitsugaya officially assumed the position of Captain of Division 10, and Rangiku Matsumoto resumed her role as Lieutenant, filling the vacancy left by Gin Ichimaru's betrayal of the Soul Society and stabilizing the situation in Division 10.

As for Division 5 and Division 9, their Captain seats remained vacant.

Genryūsai Shigekuni Yamamoto had wanted to quickly fill those two posts so that the Gotei 13 could return to full strength to face Sōsuke Aizen, but without suitable candidates, there was nothing he could do.

Renji Abarai had achieved an incomplete Bankai, but his strength still fell short of true Captain level. The rest of the Shinigami were even less qualified to take on the role—unless someone deliberately hiding their strength stepped forward to expose themselves, Genryūsai Shigekuni Yamamoto would rather leave the seats empty than appoint the unworthy.

Thus, in the end, the Captain positions for Division 5 and Division 9 remained vacant. Even after Ichigo Kurosaki and the others returned to the World of the Living and some time had passed, no suitable candidates had been found.

Just as the Soul Society was busy with preparations, the situation finally changed...

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World of the Living, Karakura Town.

This was a modern town—not too big, but not too small either. It couldn't be called prosperous, as there weren't skyscrapers everywhere, but it couldn't be considered backward either. It was filled with residences and seemed livelier than the Soul Society.

Unfortunately, the people living here were unaware that their town had already become the center of a massive storm.

In recent times, the Soul Society had been paying close attention to this town, even secretly stationing many powerful Shinigami here in case of any incoming chaos.

On this day, in a corner of Karakura Town, space was torn open.

A Garganta appeared, and several figures slowly stepped out from within.

"So this is Karakura Town?"

A man with a wildly arrogant demeanor and immeasurable pride was the first to speak.

He had spiky light blue hair and sky-blue eyes, several bangs hanging over his forehead, teal eye shadow markings on his face, a strong build, a jagged fragment of a Hollow mask on his right cheek, and a black hollow hole in his abdomen. On the lower right of his back, the number "6" was tattooed. His appearance was rather intimidating.

"Doesn't look like much. Is this really the Concentrated Spirit Zone zone Lord Aizen chose?"

A large, dark-skinned man with black hair, four oddly shaped protrusions on his head, symmetrical red markings on both cheeks, and a jawbone-shaped mask on his chin grunted disdainfully. He had a black hollow hole in the center of his chest and the number "10" tattooed on his left shoulder.

"Begin the operation."

A man with short black spiky hair and green eyes, pale skin, and distinctive green tear-like markings on his face spoke coldly. The number "4" was tattooed on his left chest, and the left half of his head wore a horned helmet-like mask. His body was slim and slight, but his presence was chilling.

Powerful Reiatsu surged around them—each one was Captain-class or beyond.

A new calamity emerged at this very moment.