

## Multiverse 24

Chapter 24: Chapter 72: Oblivious Protagonists

"Kirin!"

Seeing Ayato Amagiri charging forward with Wole-Zain in hand, Kaiser immediately called out.

"Yes!"

Kirin Toudou instinctively understood his intent. Without hesitation, she swiftly sidestepped in a curved arc, avoiding Ayato's direct charge.

Kaiser took Kirin's position, seamlessly switching places with her. As he shielded her behind him, he stepped forward to meet Ayato head-on.

"Vmm!"

Both legendary swords vibrated with excitement, resonating in anticipation. In the next instant, their wielders swung them with blinding speed, sending sparks flying as the blades clashed.

"Clang—!"

With the resounding clash of metal, the two Orga Luxes finally collided.

Flashes of light erupted as the vibrations of Mana surged, causing the two magic swords to grind fiercely against each other.

"He blocked it!"

"As expected of swords of equal standing! The supposedly unblockable attacks of both swords are now deadlocked!"

The commentators quickly provided analysis, their words fueling the crowd's excitement as the spectators erupted into cheers.

Both the Ser-Veresta and Wole-Zain had built their reputations in this Phoenix Festa as weapons that were utterly unstoppable. Numerous weapons had shattered upon contact with them. Countless competitors had fought desperately to avoid engaging these swords in direct combat, opting instead for evasive and tactical maneuvers.

Even an Orga Lux as formidable as the Blood Scythe of Supreme Collapse had been partially cut into when clashing with the Ser-Veresta—and that was when the latter wasn't even at full power.

If the Ser-Veresta clashed directly with the Blood Scythe of Supreme Collapse, the latter might have held out for two or three exchanges at most. But beyond that, it too would have been broken.

The Wole-Zain was just as fearsome. Its ability to sever space along designated coordinate axes was an overwhelming power. Even other Orga Luxes of the same tier could only last a few exchanges against it before succumbing.

And yet—here they were.

For the first time in the entire Phoenix Festa, these two legendary swords had met in direct confrontation.

And neither was able to overcome the other.

"Clang! Clang! Clang! Clang! Clang!"

In the blink of an eye, before the audience could even process what they were witnessing, Kaiser and Ayato had already exchanged dozens of blows.

The Ser-Veresta in Kaiser's hand slashed with streaks of violet-black light, its speed dazzling. Like a storm of flashing steel, his attacks came from all directions, striking at Ayato from different angles.

Ayato did not dare to be careless. He maneuvered Wole-Zain with minimal yet precise movements, intercepting every single strike. His defense was effortless yet precise, even knocking back some of Kaiser's slashes, causing them to harmlessly disperse into the air.

Had it been any other Lux, even another Orga Lux, such repeated collisions with these two swords would have already caused visible damage. But when these two legendary weapons clashed, they remained unscathed.

"No doubt about it, the Ser-Veresta is ridiculously strong."

Ayato swiftly retreated, dodging a frontal slash from Kaiser, widening the distance between them. As he did, he couldn't help but voice his thoughts.

"The Wole-Zain isn't bad either." Kaiser, seeing that Ayato's stance had no openings whatsoever, chose not to rush in recklessly. Instead, he pointed the Ser-Veresta toward his opponent and said, "But you—haven't you gotten much stronger since the start of the Phoenix Festa?"

What Kaiser meant wasn't Ayato's physical strength increasing, nor was he referring to his Prana reserves growing.

He was talking about Ayato's intuition and perception.

Had this been the Ayato from before the tournament, he wouldn't have been unable to block Kaiser's attacks, but he certainly wouldn't have defended this effortlessly.

Kaiser had the distinct feeling that his attack patterns had been completely read. Ayato's responses were precise and calculated, as if he knew exactly where the attacks were coming from. He intercepted every strike with the smallest necessary movements, neutralizing them with ease.

"Could this be the 'Awakening of Perception' from the Amagiri Shinmei Style?"

Kaiser muttered his suspicions aloud.

Ayato's eyes widened slightly in surprise.

"You know about 'Perception'?"

Ayato looked genuinely taken aback.

"I just happened to come across it." Kaiser smirked and continued, "The Amagiri Shinmei Style is an ancient school of swordsmanship. In standard classification, its techniques are divided into basic, intermediate, and esoteric levels."

"Basic and intermediate techniques aside, to use the esoteric techniques of the Amagiri Shinmei Style, there's a fundamental requirement."

"That is—to extend one's perception to its utmost limit, reaching a state where one can detect even the faintest shifts in breath, the subtlest of movements, the most minute fluctuations in space, sound, air, and energy."

"That is what they call the 'Awakening of Perception'."

Only by reaching this state could a swordsman of the Amagiri Shinmei Style execute their esoteric techniques.

Before the Phoenix Festa began, Ayato had already been exceptionally skilled—but he had not yet reached this level.

However, through his arduous battles in this tournament, Ayato had endured hardship after hardship, sharpening his instincts to an extreme degree.

And so, at some point, he broke through—achieving the Awakening of Perception and stepping into the esoteric realm of the Amagiri Shinmei Style.

"You've also resolved your issue with your seal, haven't you?"

Kaiser listed off Ayato's growth, almost as if recounting a list of achievements.

"I wouldn't say I've completely resolved it." Ayato chuckled and said, "But at least it's no longer a major hindrance."

Before the Phoenix Festa, Ayato's method of unsealing himself had been crude and inefficient. His Prana would violently surge out upon release, causing massive energy loss. At most, he could fight at full power for five minutes.

Once that time limit passed, the seal would reactivate—and the excess loss of Prana would cripple him for an entire day.

In his very first match of the preliminary rounds, he was still at this stage. The chant he recited before battle was a necessary ritual to forcibly break the chains of his seal and unleash his full strength.

But after everything he had been through, Ayato had refined his control over his seal.

Now, he could extend the time he could fight at full power significantly.

Even if he fought at full power for over an hour, it wouldn't be an issue.

He had even abandoned the chant—he no longer needed to recite an incantation to undo his seal. He could now release it instantly.

"As expected, you really are the protagonist. The moment you find an opportunity, your growth is absolutely ridiculous."

Kaiser muttered with a tone of helpless resignation.

"...Shouldn't I be the one saying that?"

Ayato gave him a strange look.

Sure, Ayato had improved significantly, but his progress had clear reasoning behind it.

He had trained in the Amagiri Shinmei Style for years. He had been on the verge of breaking through to the Awakening of Perception long ago, but his crude seal release method had generated too much interference. Once he resolved the issue with his seal, he naturally stepped into this new realm.

But Kaiser?

Ayato had heard the rumors.

Three months ago, Kaiser was an absolute nobody. He wasn't even ranked in Seidoukan Academy.

Yet, in the span of just three months, he had somehow become the wielder of the Ser-Veresta.

He had grown so much that he now stood at the very pinnacle of Seidoukan Academy.

...Now that was protagonist-level growth.

The two young men, both locked in an intense battle, found themselves thinking the same thing—that the other was the real protagonist.

Completely oblivious to the fact that they were both correct.

"Can you two stop chatting and finish this fight already?"

A voice full of urgency suddenly rang from behind them.

"I could use some help over here, Ayato!"

Hearing Julis' voice, Ayato immediately turned his head.

He saw Julis unleashing continuous barrages of Flame Wheels, desperately trying to halt Kirin's relentless advance.

Yet, each and every one of them was being cut down by Kirin's swift sword strikes. The distance between them was shrinking at an alarming rate.

"Julis!"

Ayato immediately rushed to her aid.

Kaiser, of course, was not about to let him go so easily.

Heat swirled around his body as he burst forward, accelerating at astonishing speed to chase after him.

But just as Kaiser was about to catch up—

A red magic circle suddenly appeared beneath his feet.

"Got you!"

Julis smirked.

"Bloom—Flameclaw of Honor!"

In the next instant, five towering pillars of flame erupted from the ground.