

Multiverse 314

Chapter 314: "Monkey God Lord"

Tokyo metropolitan area, Kanto Region, Tochigi Prefecture, Nikko City.

This is a city where one can see natural scenic spots and well-preserved historical architecture everywhere, allowing people to clearly feel the perfect harmony between man and nature.

There are many tourist attractions here, including but not limited to Tōshō-gū, Futarasan Shrine, Rinnō-ji, Mount Nikkō, Mount Nantai, Lake Chūzenji, Senjōgahara, Yumoto Onsen, Kegon Falls, etc. In the mountainous region to the west lies Nikkō National Park, and the highest peak within its territory, Mount Oku-Shirane, has an altitude of 2,578 meters. Nearby, there are more than twenty mountains over 2,000 meters in elevation, most of which are bell-shaped volcanoes. The region is rich in famous sightseeing spots, attracting several million tourists annually and is a must-visit place for many foreign visitors.

Just like right now, even though it is still some time before the peak tourist season, a considerable number of tourists have already arrived here, with people of all ages—some traveling alone, some with family, some as couples, and some in tour groups—making the area feel very lively.

At the foot of Mount Nikkō, there was also a constant stream of worshippers arriving.

They were climbing along the main pilgrimage road from the foot of the mountain, and eventually arrived in front of a torii gate.

From here, walking through the torii would lead to Tōshō-gū; going right leads to Rinnō-ji; deeper to the left lies Futarasan Shrine.

Nikkō Tōshō-gū, this is the sacred shrine built to enshrine the deified Tokugawa Ieyasu, also known as the Great Deity Tōshō.

This sacred shrine was constructed at the cost equivalent to several tens of billions of yen in modern terms, and is a luxurious shrine that gives off a dazzling impression everywhere. Not only are the

buildings brilliant and magnificent, but there are also all kinds of carvings and exquisite small decorations. Rather than calling it a shrine, it would be more fitting to call it a palace.

This Tōshō-gū was built by the monk Tenkai, who was Tokugawa Ieyasu's strategist, a monk of great wisdom who served until the third shogun Tokugawa Iemitsu. He is a renowned enlightened person in this region.

However, very few people know that in one corner of this dazzling and luxurious palace, a shrine that ordinary people can hardly enter has been secretly built.

This is a shrine whose appearance clashes completely with Tōshō-gū—it appears very plain.

It is small, and old-fashioned, with no eye-catching decorations, looking just like a stable.

On its walls, under the eaves, many monkeys are carved.

There are monkeys with closed eyes, monkeys with closed mouths, monkeys covering their ears, sitting monkeys, monkeys looking up at the sky, lying monkeys... altogether more than a dozen monkeys carved upon it, making people puzzled as to why so many monkeys are depicted here.

In front of this building covered with monkey carvings lies the Western Heavenly Palace.

It is a part of Nikkō Tōshō-gū, but unlike the Tōshō-gū which enshrines the Great Deity Tōshō, it is an independent sanctuary that enshrines another god.

"Who would've thought that a real god is being worshipped here?"

Kaiser stood before this plain stable-like shrine, gazing at the forest behind it, murmuring to himself.

Looking closely, Kaiser's outfit today was also very plain, even to the point of being low-key, and there was not a single person accompanying him.

He had come here alone, and even concealed his visit from the others.

There was no helping it. Today, Kaiser had come here to stir up trouble.

"Leading the Four Great Families of the History Compilation Committee—Sayanomiya, Seishuuin, Renjou, and Kuhoutsuka—each has its own duty." Kaiser continued to talk to himself, saying, "And the duty of the Kuhoutsuka family is to guard the Western Heavenly Palace of Nikkō Tōshō-gū, right?"

In fact, Kaiser had already sensed the presence of an extremely powerful barrier here.

This barrier had a repelling effect, which is why, despite the endless stream of visitors at Tōshō-gū, this place alone was completely empty. Only Kaiser had intruded in.

"If it were in the past, this barrier might've worked on me."

But now, before Kaiser's magical power resistance—far beyond that of ordinary gods and Campiones—this barrier was as good as nonexistent.

Kaiser then stepped forward, walking past the stable toward the vast forest behind it.

This was a transition area leading to both Futarasan Shrine and the interior of Tōshō-gū, not very eye-catching.

Kaiser walked through the forest for over ten minutes and finally arrived before an ancient shrine.

This shrine was just like the previous stable—not very large, nor very splendid—just like those very plain and ordinary shrines often seen along countryside roads. Only the low peach trees growing around it stood out.

Arriving at the front of the shrine, Kaiser immediately saw the sacred ropes strung among the peach trees.

These were ropes made of straw, with white zigzag-shaped paper streamers hanging from them, fluttering in the wind like wind chimes.

Shimenawa mark the boundaries of sacred objects, and may appear on torii gates, sacred trees, near rocks, etc. In ritual ceremonies, even the highest-ranked sumo wrestlers wear belts similar to shimenawa.

(Shimenawa lit. 'enclosing rope' are lengths of laid rice straw or hemp rope used for ritual purification in the Shinto religion.)

Kaiser felt very strong magical power from them, indicating that a powerful barrier had also been set around the shimenawa.

"Is it inside here?"

Kaiser peered toward the interior of the shrine beyond the shimenawa, but could see nothing—only a broken lattice door blocking the way, with total darkness behind it.

"This should be the place."

Just as Kaiser was about to walk in, a large group of people suddenly appeared around him.

"Who are you?!"

A well-dressed young man in a suit, leading the group, blocked Kaiser's path and questioned him.

"People of the Kuhoutsuka family?"

Kaiser was not at all surprised by their appearance.

However, since he had come here alone and secretly, he didn't plan to reveal his identity or engage in pleasantries with them.

So...

"Shatter..."

A Zanpakutō with a gleaming blade appeared in Kaiser's hand, which he held reversed.

"Kyōka Suigetsu."

At once, centered on Kyōka Suigetsu, the entire world seemed to become a mirrored world, and then suddenly shattered.

The Kuhoutsuka clan members first panicked, then froze.

"Where did that guy go?"

"Gone?"

"Where did he go?!"

"Quick, find him!"

Under the loud command of the leading youth, those who had been blocking the shrine dispersed and began searching the surroundings.

However, Kaiser—their target—had already sheathed his sword and passed through the shimenawa.

The barrier around the shimenawa could not stop him at all. He had easily entered.

And though the Kuhoutsuka clan members were right nearby, each one ignored Kaiser as if they couldn't see him, letting him pass by as if invisible.

Very quickly, Kaiser opened the shrine's lattice door, walked into the dark interior, and slowly moved toward the deepest part of the darkness.

"Can't see anything at all."

Kaiser found it a bit strange.

One should know, Campiones gain night vision after reincarnation. In theory, mere darkness cannot deprive them of their sight. Only darkness caused by Authorities can affect a Campione.

Since Kaiser could see nothing now, it proved that this darkness was not merely the absence of light—it involved mystery.

Walking in such a place, one could lose even the sense of time and be unable to tell how long they had been walking.

But as he walked, Kaiser noticed something unusual.

He realized that he was no longer in the real world, but had entered a different dimension.

Because here, the mind was more important than the body. Kaiser could clearly feel his spirit becoming more active, while his physical senses dulled.

"Sure enough, the path within the Western Heavenly Palace shrine is a corridor between the present world and the Netherworld."

Netherworld, the realm between life and death, the void land between the human world and the realm of gods—Kaiser had arrived here.

"This place must be isolated from the rest of the Netherworld, forming a cage to imprison the god inside."

Kaiser walked through the dark corridor for a very long time until, finally, he saw a square-shaped opening.

Light shone from there, and in the deepest part, there was a dilapidated little house.

The house was uninhabited, looking like a stable. Unlike the previous darkness, there was sunlight here, a refreshing blue sky, and... a monkey.

Yes, a monkey.

Not a sculpture like outside, but a real, living monkey.

It lay in the corner of the stable, on a pile of dry grass. One glance showed it wasn't a Japanese macaque—its face wasn't red, its fur was bright, with golden-orange hair that looked majestic.

It was about eighty centimeters long—not large.

However, upon seeing it, Kaiser's heart began to race, his blood started boiling uncontrollably, his adrenaline automatically surged, and his body instantly entered combat mode.

This was the natural response upon encountering a nemesis.

This was the best proof of encountering a god.

"Oh?"

The monkey god lying on the hay seemed to sense something as well. It immediately stood up and turned its eyes toward Kaiser.

Those eyes were very bright, as if flames were burning within, golden all over, exuding authority without anger.

"What a rare visitor."

The monkey god spoke human language, and its voice, like its eyes, was especially bright.

"To think that a god-slayer would actually visit my palace. I thought it was the miko from a hundred years ago coming back to play."

The monkey god's demeanor was not exactly friendly, but not hostile either—it didn't seem at all like it was facing an enemy. It was cheerful and lively.

Looking at this somewhat peculiar god, who looked little different from an ordinary monkey, Kaiser smiled.

A smile devoid of emotion.

"Seems like you're really enjoying being imprisoned, Great Sage."

Kaiser's tone was also neither friendly nor hostile.

Because the monkey god before him didn't even qualify as an enemy yet.

"Great Sage? Are you calling me?" The monkey god tilted its head on the haystack, puzzled. "Is that my name? Or my title?"

"Hmm... feels familiar. I guess you are calling me?"

"Too bad, I'm sealed right now. My past name or title, I've long forgotten."

"Those who imprisoned me call me Monkey God Lord. I suppose that's the only name I can go by now?"

The monkey god truly couldn't remember its former name or title.

It had once been a Heretic God manifesting on Earth, a rebellious god, a hero from the East.

However, many, many years ago, it was sealed by the ancient sages of this country using a great spell formed from their life's work. From a Heretic God of Steel, it became the Guardian Sword of the Nation.

The magical power gathered from holy grounds across Japan was channeled through that great ritual to become divine power for the Great Deity Tōshō, which bound the Monkey God Lord—causing it to lose its ferocity, its wildness, its divinity, and even its nature, becoming a harmless monkey, raised here.

Whenever dragons or serpents appeared on Earth, its seal would be released, and it would regain its lost ferocity, wildness, and divinity, and, following its instincts as a Steel Hero, would destroy them.

But once those dragons and serpents were eliminated, the great spell would again take effect, and it would obediently return here to continue being sealed.

Now, it had remained here for over a hundred years without leaving, wasting away.

Therefore, the monkey god knew clearly...

"The current me is definitely no Great Sage, but rather Keeper of the Horses, no?"

The name of the great sealing spell that imprisoned it was Keeper of the Horses.

In the past, in the Heavenly Court, it once held this position—responsible for looking after the gods' horses.

But...

"And now you can so openly and righteously call yourself Keeper of the Horses?"

Kaiser said flatly.

"In the past, you were so humiliated by that position that you rampaged through Heaven, just to prove you were not Keeper of the Horses, but the Great Sage Equal to Heaven."

Hearing this, the monkey god scratched its face.

"Even if you say that, I don't remember what I used to be like."

It grinned foolishly, laughing without a care.

Watching it like this, Kaiser could finally understand Luo Hao's feelings a little.

That legendary Monkey King, being kept here like a pet with no wildness or self-awareness, and not even feeling ashamed about it—rather appearing cheerful—would indeed upset many who grew up hearing tales of the Great Sage.

Kaiser included.

"No wonder Sister Cuilian has obsessed over this matter for a full hundred years."

Kaiser ignored the monkey god, as if he had nothing to say to its current self, and muttered to himself.

"Hmm? What do you plan to do?"

Perhaps sensing something, the monkey god asked in surprise.

"Nothing." Kaiser glanced at it and said, "Just planning to wake you up."

"Awaken that unparalleled hero."

"The Great Sage Equal to Heaven, Sun Wukong."