

Multiverse 53

Chapter 53: Recruiting Talent

After the combat training concluded, the members of the Hero Faction—led by Siegfried, Georg, Heracles, and Jeanne—began to disperse, vanishing into the mist as they left the area.

Though the Khaos Brigade was still in a period of dormancy, the Hero Faction wouldn't remain in hiding at a single location indefinitely.

In their daily lives, they continued as usual, only gathering here whenever Cao Cao summoned them.

Some members were entrusted with personal tasks assigned by Cao Cao himself. Some were tasked with collecting certain objects, others were gathering intelligence on various mythological factions, and some, as Cao Cao had hinted before, were conducting various experiments. A select few even went undercover, blending into battlefields among different forces. In short, no one was idle.

Even Kaiser, after joining the Hero Faction, had remained in this isolated space, training every day.

Of course, he was well aware—this was intentional on Cao Cao's part.

That man was observing him.

Not only was he probing into any secrets Kaiser might be hiding, but he also wanted to understand the true extent of his strength.

To be honest, it was a dangerous game.

Cao Cao was an extreme technique-based warrior, and his greatest strength in battle lay in identifying his opponent's weaknesses to achieve victory through strategy, turning inferiority into an advantage.

Revealing too much of one's abilities in front of someone like him was an unwise move. Sooner or later, he would devise countermeasures, exploit weaknesses, and claim victory.

But Kaiser wasn't particularly concerned.

So what if Cao Cao figured something out?

His Balance Breaker—still under development—had yet to be revealed to anyone. Even though it might not be the best tool against someone like Cao Cao, the True Longinus still concealed a power that surpassed Balance Breaker.

A power that he had never unveiled.

By its very nature, that power was impossible to fully counter or defend against.

It held an almost infinite range of possibilities. No amount of strategizing from Cao Cao could truly neutralize it.

That was Kaiser's ultimate trump card.

As long as he held onto that, he had no fear of Cao Cao studying or analyzing him.

Besides, even if True Longinus was countered, he still had Ser-Veresta and Gravisheath.

While these two Orga Lux couldn't compare to True Longinus in sheer power—let alone a Longinus-level weapon—they could still take Cao Cao by surprise under the right circumstances.

Moreover, as Kaiser continued to grow stronger, his specialized weapons would evolve with him. If Cao Cao believed he had already uncovered the full extent of Kaiser's strength, he was in for a rude awakening.

With all this in mind, Kaiser had never felt the need to deliberately conceal his abilities during training. Aside from withholding his Orga Lux and the deeper mysteries of True Longinus, he had freely displayed nearly all of his capabilities, allowing Cao Cao to observe them at will.

Now, it seemed that Cao Cao had completed his assessment.

Because the task he assigned to Kaiser this time was one of his highest priorities.

"Recruiting talent?"

Hearing the mission's objective, Kaiser raised an eyebrow in surprise.

"That's right." Cao Cao rested one hand on his spear and placed the other on his hip, speaking in a relaxed tone. "For now, we aren't making any large-scale moves, but we need to start preparing for the future."

"We intend to challenge the gods of various mythologies, to stand against legendary creatures. To do that, we must gather as many talented individuals as possible and consolidate human strength."

"This is also something I personally find quite interesting."

"So I've assigned many people the same task—keeping an eye on Sacred Gear users within the human race and recruiting promising individuals from around the world."

Kaiser himself was an obvious beneficiary of this initiative. Siegfried had taken notice of him for precisely this reason, which had led to his recruitment into the faction.

Now, Cao Cao was giving Kaiser the same mission, treating him no differently than the others.

"You like recruiting talent, huh?" Kaiser gave Cao Cao a sidelong glance. "That's a very fitting approach for someone named after Emperor Wu of Wei."

"You're not the first to say that." Cao Cao shrugged. "Exceptional humans are rare—especially Sacred Gear users. We're not the only ones keeping an eye on them; all the major factions have their own interests in these individuals. If we don't act quickly to bring them to our side, humanity's strength will only continue to dwindle."

If they wanted to challenge the gods and legends, they couldn't afford to let powerful individuals slip through their fingers.

Take the Devils, for example. They had already developed a system to reincarnate other species into their own kind. If talented humans were recruited by Devils, their power would contribute to the enemy's strength, making the supernatural forces even more dominant over humanity.

Cao Cao's vision was built upon the idea that humans, unaided by supernatural lineage, could stand against mythological powers.

Recruiting talent wasn't just about growing stronger—it was also about preserving human strength and preventing their adversaries from growing more formidable.

From that perspective, his habit of scouting talent was just a small personal quirk in the grander scheme.

"Fine."

After a moment of consideration, Kaiser nodded in agreement.

He had been waiting to see if Cao Cao would try to send him on a suicide mission or force him into committing atrocities as a form of loyalty test. If that had been the case, he would have fought Cao Cao on the spot.

While he had his own reasons for joining the Khaos Brigade, he had no interest in engaging in pointless terrorism or carrying out atrocities just to prove himself.

He didn't want to be a self-righteous hero, but he also had no desire to become a villain. Staying neutral suited him best.

Thus, even as a member of the Hero Faction, Kaiser had no intention of blindly obeying Cao Cao's every command.

Cao Cao seemed to be aware of this as well.

Perhaps that was why he had never spoken to Kaiser in the tone of a superior giving orders.

To him, Kaiser wasn't a subordinate—he was a rival, someone he would undoubtedly challenge one day.

Kuoh Town – Outskirts

At the very spot where Kaiser had once clashed with Siegfried, a magic circle appeared without warning.

Kaiser emerged from it alone, returning to this familiar location.

"Time flies, huh..."

Gazing at the small town in the distance, faintly illuminated in the night, Kaiser felt an odd sense of nostalgia, as if he were revisiting a past life.

It had been less than a month since he arrived in this world, yet in that time, he had gone from a wandering vagrant to a member of a terrorist organization.

Fate truly worked in unpredictable ways.

Taking out the activator for Gravisheath, Kaiser ignited it, ignoring the weapon's thirst for blood. Manipulating its gravitational abilities, he soared into the sky, heading toward Kuoh Town.

Before long, Kaiser landed in the same alleyway where he had originally left Kuoh Town.

"Now that I think about it... I never actually checked out of my hotel room, did I?"

That realization struck him abruptly.

With that in mind, he stepped out of the alley and headed toward the inn where he had previously stayed.

Walking through the streets of Kuoh Town once again, Kaiser immediately noticed a difference.

"This time, at least I'm not being watched from every direction."

The first benefit of joining the Hero Faction was that he no longer had to worry about being constantly monitored.

Georg had personally carved a magic array onto him—an intricate spell that concealed his presence from prying eyes. This array not only prevented various factions' informants from easily detecting him but also allowed him to communicate remotely with Cao Cao and the other members of the Hero Faction. Additionally, by channeling Aura, he could activate the array to instantly teleport back to a temporary base, effectively escaping from battle if needed.

It was an incredibly useful tool.

That said, Kaiser couldn't afford to act recklessly just because he had this advantage.

If he did something too conspicuous—something that drew the attention of powerful forces—his concealment would quickly be compromised.

But on the flip side, as long as he kept a low profile and didn't draw unnecessary attention, he could remain completely undetected.

This was undoubtedly a good thing.

However, leaving his hotel room unchecked and disappearing for an entire week? That wasn't so good.

When Kaiser finally arrived at the inn, he discovered that his old room had already been occupied by someone else. Worse yet, his belongings had been sold off by the innkeeper.

"...Forget it. Not worth bothering about."

He wasn't going to waste time over such trivial matters. Without hesitation, he left the inn and wandered back onto the main street.

Now, he finally had the leisure to think about his assigned task.

"Recruiting talent, huh?"

Cao Cao really had picked the right person for this job.

Thanks to his familiarity with the original story, Kaiser knew exactly where to find individuals who fit the Hero Faction's criteria.

For example, the original protagonist—who had yet to be recruited as a Devil under Rias Gremory.

That guy was the wielder of a Longinus, a host to the legendary Heavenly Dragon known as the Red Dragon Emperor, and one of the strongest future combatants in the Underworld.

In the original timeline, many of Khaos Brigade's most powerful fighters had fallen to him—including Cao Cao himself.

If Kaiser recruited him into Khaos Brigade, into the Hero Faction...

"Now that... would be interesting."

A smirk formed on his lips at the thought.

But after some careful consideration, he realized that might not be such a good idea.

"That guy might be a Longinus wielder and host to one of the Two Heavenly Dragons, but he himself is just an ordinary person. The only reason he became so powerful in the future was because of the people he met, the bonds he forged, and—frankly—his ridiculous personality."

Sacred Gears evolved based on their wielder's willpower and emotions. The original protagonist had achieved so many miracles precisely because of this unique trait.

But right now, he was still an unremarkable, talentless human with no significant bonds and no particularly strong will.

If he joined Khaos Brigade, he might not even survive long enough to reach his potential. Instead, he could end up fading into obscurity—never becoming the legend he was meant to be.

Compared to him, perhaps there was someone else more worth considering...