

= Rukia Kuchiki =

Rukia Kuchiki ( Japanese : 朽木 露琪亚 , Hepburn : Kuchiki Rukia ) is a fictional character in the anime and manga series Bleach created by Tite Kubo . In the series , Rukia Kuchiki is a Soul Reaper in charge of slaying evil spirits known as Hollows . At the beginning , after a brief meeting with the protagonist of the series , Ichigo Kurosaki , who can see supernatural beings such as Soul Reapers , she is forced to give him her powers in order to fulfill her duties as a Soul Reaper . Rukia has appeared in several other pieces of Bleach media , including the four featured films in the series , the two original video animations , and several video games .

Rukia was the first character of the series created by Kubo , her design being the one he decided to use for all the other Soul Reapers . Reaction to her character is generally positive . Her differences from typical shōnen heroines is praised , as is her interaction with other characters . Additionally , she usually ranks second in Weekly Shōnen Jump 's Bleach popularity polls , and is consistently the most popular female character in those polls . Several pieces of merchandise have been released in Rukia 's likeness , including a plush doll and several figurines .

= = Creation and conception = =

Bleach was first conceived from Tite Kubo 's desire to draw a shinigami in a kimono , which formed the basis for the design of the Soul Reapers . Because of this , Kuchiki was one of the first characters of the series to be created . Before deciding that every Soul Reaper had swords , Kubo thought that they all should use guns , while only Rukia used a scythe . However , this was changed as he created the Soul Reaper kimono . Kubo also mentioned that Rukia did not seem like a lead character , so he created Ichigo Kurosaki to be the series protagonist . Ichigo 's initial design had black hair like Rukia ; Kubo had to modify Ichigo 's appearance to contrast with hers , giving Ichigo orange hair and a trademark scowl .

As for her name , Kubo stated that , because Kuchiki " looks like a shinigami " , he wanted her name to sound like something a shinigami would have as a name . When deciding upon her family name he considered using " Kuchiru " ( 朽木 , lit . " to rot " ) because it sounded like a name a shinigami would have , and then decided to use " Kuchiki " ( 朽木 , lit . " rotten wood " ) . He adds that he once heard something that sounded like " Kuchiki Rukia " on Japanese television , and liked it enough to use it as a name . Her first name was conceived as a result of Kubo hearing the Latin name for cosmos on television , and later decided that the name really suited her since the Latin word from which her name is derived means " light " and Kubo sees her as " a ray of light for Ichigo . " Shonen Jump asked in an interview if Kubo had any plans to make Ichigo and Rukia a couple , but Kubo chose neither to confirm nor deny it . After designing Rukia 's zanpakutō , Kubo noted he liked it a lot and made it to be the most beautiful one from the series .

When Kubo was asked to make a cover with a female character during Christmas , Kubo initially thought of using Rukia ; he later changed to use Orihime Inoue as he thought Orihime was more suitable for such role . However , Kubo commented he previously made a Christmas illustration with Rukia , and that he received request by several fans wanting to see the image . In contrast to this , Kubo has found he liked Rukia more in the illustrations in which her face expresses pain such as when she is going to be executed in the manga .

= = Appearances = =

= = In Bleach = =

Kuchiki first meets Ichigo Kurosaki in the midst of a hollow attack . After she is heavily injured by the hollow , Rukia is forced to transfer her Soul Reaper powers to Kurosaki so that he can kill the hollow and save their lives and his family . While he succeeds , Kuchiki is left too weak to return to Soul Society , and lives with Ichigo in the human world , intending to stay until her powers are restored .

Therefore , her only ability then is her kid? spells , which are severely limited in strength and variety . She uses her kid? for such purposes as restraining , healing , or attacking others . Because of the amount of time she spends with Kurosaki , Kuchiki has been able to gain a keen understanding of his inner workings . Rukia 's relationship with Ichigo is unique , for despite the relatively short amount of time they have known each other , Ichigo can easily confide in her and considers her a true friend because she is encouraging and understands what he is feeling . During her time in the human world , Rukia remains unaccounted for in Soul Society , so Byakuya Kuchiki and Renji Abarai are sent to find her and return her to the Soul Society . They succeed , and upon their return Rukia is sentenced to death for giving her Soul Reaper powers to a human . Kurosaki ultimately arrives in Soul Society in time to stop her execution , and tries to get her to safety .

During the arc , Rukia 's past is explored . She died as an infant and was sent to Soul Society with her older sister , Hisana . Though Hisana initially tried to protect and provide for Rukia , she could not ensure her own survival while caring for a baby as well , and thus abandoned Rukia . As Rukia grew up , she befriended Renji Abarai , and entered the Soul Reaper academy , where she was adopted into the Kuchiki family . One year prior to the adoption , Hisana died after asking her husband , Byakuya Kuchiki , to find and adopt Rukia as his sister . This remains unknown to Rukia until Byakuya confesses it to her . When she was accepted into the 13th Division , Rukia befriended the lieutenant of her division , Kaien Shiba , and trained under him . During the course of a mission Kaien was possessed by a hollow and Rukia killed Kaien to protect herself .

During Rukia 's bid for freedom , she is stopped by S?suke Aizen and his accomplices . Aizen , having singlehandedly orchestrated Rukia 's execution , reveals to her that within her soul is stored the H?gyoku ( " breakdown sphere " ) , a powerful artifact created and placed there by Kisuke Urahara that gives hollows Soul Reaper powers and vice versa . Wanting the H?gyoku for himself , Aizen hoped that her death would give him access to it , but settles for a nonfatal alternative . The H?gyoku is removed from her body , Aizen and his men flee Soul Society , and Rukia is acquitted of all charges . With the H?gyoku , Aizen is able to create an army of arrancar , which he uses to attack Ichigo and his friends once they return to the human world . Rukia and a group of other Soul Reapers are sent to assist in fighting the arrancar , though after Aizen captures Orihime Inoue they are recalled to Soul Society . Rukia 's zanpakut? , Sode no Shirayuki ( ??? , literally " Sleeved white snow " ) , is also revealed as a completely white blade , earning it the recognition as the most beautiful zanpakut? in Soul Society . Sode no Shirayuki utilizes ice to attack , each of its abilities being labeled as " dances " by Rukia . During the anime 's 13th season , Sode no Shirayuki manifests in a yukionna @-@ like form , voiced by Mie Sonozaki .

Unwilling to give up Orihime to Aizen , Rukia goes to Hueco Mundo with Ichigo to rescue her . While there , Rukia encounters the Espada , Aaroniero Arruruerie , who is revealed to have possession of Kaien 's body . Saddened that she had not saved her mentor from the control of a hollow as she had previously thought , Rukia manages to kill Aaroniero . Rukia is badly injured during the battle , and it is not until Soul Society sends reinforcements to Hueco Mundo that she is revived and her wounds are healed . She later assists Ichigo in his rescue to save Orihime from the Espada Ulquiorra Cifer by engaging the remaining Arrancars until requiring support . Following Aizen 's defeat and the loss of Ichigo 's Soul Reaper powers , Rukia and Ichigo bid one another farewell as Ichigo loses the ability to sense Rukia 's presence .

Seventeen months later , Rukia , now lieutenant of Squad 13 , returns to aid in restoring Ichigo 's Soul Reaper powers before engaging the Fullbringer Riruka Dokugamine . When the Soul Society is abruptly invaded by the Wandenreich , an organization made up of Quincy who has survived their genocide one thousand years before , Rukia senses Byakuya being left near dead by Äs Nodt and is knocked out before she can come to her brother 's aid . Rukia is taken to the Royal Dimension so she could be healed , and is then taught by Ichibei Hyosube to achieve her bankai , Hakka no Togame ( ??? , literally " Censure of the white haze " ) . Returning to the Soul Society when the Wandenreich resume their attack , Rukia utilizes her newly acquired bankai to finally kill Äs Nodt .

= = = In other media = = =

Rukia has made several appearances outside of the Bleach anime and manga . She appears in all of the featured films in the series : she fights the Dark Ones with other Soul Reaper comrades in Bleach : Memories of Nobody and aids in the search for T?shir? Hitsugaya in Bleach : The DiamondDust Rebellion . Rukia is also given the main focus role in the third movie , Bleach : Fade to Black where she is kidnapped and mind @-@ wiped by two mysterious rogues , and later transformed into ' Dark Rukia ' . In the fourth movie , Bleach : Hell Verse , Rukia helps Ichigo in rescuing his sister Yuzu from the depths of Hell . She is also present in both of the original video animations produced in the series , helping Ichigo in Memories in the Rain and combating the rogue Soul Reaper Baishin in The Sealed Sword Frenzy . In Rock Musical Bleach , a musical based on the Bleach series , she is played by Miki Sat? . In the Bleach video games , Rukia is a playable character in every game , including the Heat the Soul and Blade Battlers series . In some games , her human form and Soul Reaper state are available as separate characters , while Dark Rukia is playable in Heat the Soul 6 and Heat the Soul 7 .

= = Reception = =

Rukia has ranked highly in the Weekly Sh?nen Jump popularity polls for the series , placing in the top five most popular characters in all four polls . She was ranked as the second most popular character after Ichigo in the first two polls , and fell to third place in the third poll , being replaced by T?shir? Hitsugaya . In early 2008 , she was voted the second most popular character in Bleach , receiving 383 votes less than the front runner , T?shir? Hitsugaya . Her zanpakut? , Sode no Shirayuki , ranked 2nd in the zanpakut? popularity poll of the series . In 2009 , Rukia ranked 4th in a survey of the Japanese music distributor Recochoku titled " The Character I Want to Be My Bride " . In a 2007 character poll from the Japanese magazine Newtype magazine character polls , Rukia has been featured as one of the most popular female characters from any anime . She has also appeared twice in the Anime Grand Prix polls , ranking as one of the most popular female anime characters . NTT customers voted her as their eighth favorite black haired female anime character .

Merchandise based on Rukia 's appearance has been released , including a key chain , a plush doll , and a figurine . Fumiko Orikasa , Rukia 's Japanese voice actor , liked how Rukia was developed while fighting against the arrancar , noting her to be a hero during her introductions . However , she was saddened by how after Rukia defeats the first arrancar , ( Di Roy Rinker ) she is instantly stabbed by the arrancar Grimmjow . Michelle Ruff , Rukia 's English voice actress , found Rukia to be a " survivor " , due to how lonely she initially was and how she has been developed through the anime series as she had to start trusting people . She also liked how cool Rukia is when she is fighting but noted it challenging how to voice Rukia due to her various attitudes . Ruff was the winner in the category " Best Voice Actress ( English ) " from the 2009 SPJA Industry Awards for her work as Rukia . Rukia also won in the category " Best Female Character " based on her appearances on Bleach : Memories of Nobody .

Several publications for manga , anime , video games , and other related media have provided praise and criticism on Rukia 's character . Although Chris Beveridge from Mania Entertainment noted Rukia 's introduction in Bleach was typical in several others series , he praised how she interacted with her schoolmates and Ichigo . Anime News Network 's ( ANN ) Melissa Harper praised the differences between Rukia and stereotypical sh?nen heroines , asserting that Rukia 's loss of her powers and subsequent dependence on Ichigo were " a great source of both drama and comedy in the show . " However , the removal of the humor from Rukia 's scenes as a schoolgirl due to the English translation was lamented , although Ruff was extolled for doing an " excellent job . " Carlos Alexandre from popcultureshock.com regarded her as " less of a foil to Ichigo and more like the other side of the same coin " . Her actions and words were also commented by Alexendre to make Rukia deserve the respect she commands . IGN called the scene where Rukia is forced to leave Ichigo Kurosaki and return to Soul Society as " touchingly beautiful " and celebrated Rukia 's character development during her time in the human world . Her subsequent appearances in Soul Society were criticized by ANN 's Theron Martin due to her lack of activity making them " irritating given how strong a character she was in the series ' early going " .

