

[Adam C. POV]

By the time I returned to the guild the reactions to the obvious were just as I expected them to be. Which showed just how much I knew them, or... how predictable they could be, one of the two.

Anywho.

Cana scolded me, telling me that I was nothing but a reckless moron, all while making me promise I would make sure to take some backup with me next time, and by that she meant real backup, as in, backup that could actually help me.

Like, Gildarts, or Laxus if Gildarts wasn't around.

Erza simply took my injuries as... a medium for inspiration, so to speak, bowing to become even stronger to help me carry my burdens, and fight by my side.

Laxus didn't say a word, instead he took his followers out for a training session. None of them seemed happy about this, for whatever reason.

As for the rest of the guild? They were worried.

Well, almost all of them, Natsu and Happy didn't even notice the eyepatch.

On that note, I was still getting used to the eyepatch... every now and then I would feel something moving in my eye socket, and more than not I had to remind myself not to... crush it out of reflex.

"How's my favorite cyclops?" Mavis giggled as she approached me, her eyes glistening with evil only an oompa loompa could have in their itty-bitty bodies.

"You're not gonna let this one go, are you?" I replied, knowing full well that Mavis was going to milk this for all it was worth.

She was EVIL I tell you, EVIL!

"Not in a million years," Mavis chirped, her grin growing wider. "But in all seriousness, how are you feeling?"

I shrugged. "Good enough."

In just a few months, I would get my eye back and all of this would be over. So, it wasn't that big of a deal, at least not for me.

"I can't imagine how hard it must have been to fight an enemy like that," Mavis said, her voice tinged with concern. "I read of

that... magic, no... curse before, I never thought someone would be stupid enough to experiment with it."

I sighed.

The pale bastard had... taken my memories of him, my ability to perceive him, and he wasn't even in control of it, at least not completely.

The thing that had driven him to madness was that his magic wasn't something meant to be controlled, or used in combat, it was nothing more than a failed experiment in the age of dragons.

One that humans were trying to use to avoid dragons permanently.

And sadly, for them, their experiment was a success... it simply worked a little too well.

Nobody would ever remember them, eventually everyone they have met, or known would simply forget them, whether they wanted it, or not.

I had experienced this in person, if it wasn't for my familiar, I would've never retained any memories of him, or his accursed magic.

It was a terrifying curse, for the user and the victim.

"Talking about that, do you know of any way I could train myself against mind altering magic?" I asked, turning my gaze to her.

Mavis nodded thoughtfully. "I might know a thing or two. But more than not, it all comes down to figuring out what magic your enemy is using before it takes effect."

"How so?" I asked.

"Well, have you heard of the saying that says names give power, but also take it away?" Mavis replied, taking on a seating position in the middle of the air, legs crossed. "It's the same with magic, at least this type. Of course, not as literal as the saying, but... by knowing what's affecting you, your mind can fight it, at least on a better ground."

I furrowed my brow in thought. That sounded good and all, but if that was the case, I would've been able to fight the pale man on better terms.

I might not remember much about my fight with him before my familiar arrived, but I distinctly remembered that I had managed to figure out what his power did.

And I still fell to the effects of his power.

Knowledge hadn't helped me there.

"I knew what his power did, and it still affected me," I replied.

Mavis nodded. "Yes, but sometimes even knowing what magic is used against you isn't enough. Especially if the effects of the magic in question are too complex or powerful for your mind to counteract quickly."

That didn't help much.

It seems I might need to experiment with Kido, perhaps making some sort of... mind protecting barrier, or seal. Something to block unwanted visitors or delay them if blocking them out wasn't a possibility.

"There's always other options though," Mavis continued, smiling at me.

I tilted my head. "Go on."

"Order of priority," Mavis replied, beaming at me, leaving me a bit confused. "When it comes to that kind of magic, there's always an order of priority, to summarize, if you try to alter your own memories while someone else is trying to do the same, your attempt takes precedence."

If I was catching on, this meant I could delay their own attempts for more than a while.

"Meaning you can delay their attempts more than is normally possible," Mavis grinned. "They want you to forget the dog you saw? But what dog? You don't remember a dog, you remember a cat, they try to make you forget the cat? Too bad, now it's a bird."

I chuckled. "That seems like the start of a very annoying loop."

Mavis giggled. "That being said, this method is not meant to last forever, eventually whoever or whatever is trying to affect your mind will manage to do so, all this method offers you is a... very long stall."

A very long stall was better than nothing at all.

But it wasn't enough for me.

I would figure something out, perhaps something using what Mavis had shared with me, who knows?

[Inner World - Adam.]

Stars.

A sea of stars around me and beneath me, twinkling in serene beauty. For a second, the beauty around me was such that I couldn't help but wonder if I've been transported to the cosmos, the great universe outside the planet.

The iridescent lights shimmer and dance in a perfect symphony, reflecting off the vast body of water beneath me.

However, thanks to my familiarity with the place, I soon realize where I truly am, my inner world.

It seems Zanryuzuki wants to have a few words with me.

Smiling, I turned my gaze down.

I am standing on a surface of water, and there's a mild, soothing ripple under my feet. The coolness doesn't chill me; rather, it feels like a comfort long forgotten.

It always feels like that.

"Love, we both know being mysterious is not a talent we have," I chuckled, turning around to face her as I felt her presence materialize.

"Love?" Zanryuzuki replies in a soft whisper, almost like a song. "

In the blink of an eye, I found myself face to face with a tall woman with hair cascading down to her waist. Her dress seemingly made of what appears to be liquid moonlight, flowing and blending into the water beneath her as one.

"So, what can I do for you?" I replied, smiling at her.

Zanryuzuki remained stoic for a moment, her eyes meeting mine, until eventually she inclined her head gently. "You seek strength, understanding, and control of your mind. I can grant you these, but you must be willing to listen and embrace the depths of your soul."

So, this was the reason she had summoned me.

"Not to sound like an ass, but if you had a way to help me against that situation, why didn't you say anything before?" I asked, feeling a bit frustrated.

Zanryuzuki's eyes softened as she placed a hand on my cheek. "Because to find a solution, you must first find the problem to solve. I couldn't offer you the key to a door you didn't even know existed, you had to find the door."

I blinked, taking a deep breath.

She's a part of me, how the fuck can a part of me be this cryptic?! I'm not cryptic! Sometimes it feels like I have what I imagine Iroh's Zanpakuto would be, if he had one.

"So you have a solution?" I asked, pushing my thoughts aside.

Zanryuzuki shook her head. "Not exactly. As Mavis said, some attacks can't be countered, and it doesn't matter how strong of mind you are, for example, Aizen's Kyoka Suigetsu, it's an ability that is impossible to counter in most if not all situations."

And that wasn't even the reason Aizen was so dangerous to begin with, even without Kyoka Suigetsu the bastard was broken in terms of power, skill and intellect.

At the time, there were just a few individuals in the entirety of the soul society who one could consider capable of dealing with him in their own way.

Urahara with his intellect.

Genryusai Shigekuni Yamamoto, with his blinding power and experience.

And Ichigo, and mostly because Aizen was so bored with everything he allowed Ichigo to grow to that point. He literally created the instrument that would bring forth his demise.

But that was neither here nor there.

"Well, I'm not sure what you mean then, but let's get started," I replied, knowing that whatever it was Zanryuzuki wanted to teach me, would be helpful.