

[Adam POV]

The world around me blurred and stretched as I moved through the air, racing towards the coordinates that the nihilistic bastard had given to me moments before I ended his life.

Gripping my Zanpakuto tightly I moved as fast as I could, the air roaring around me as the ever-expanding sea stretched before me, painting the horizon of a deep blue.

As the seconds passed and silence took place, my thoughts started to drift toward what I'll do once I reach my destination.

I knew what my goal was, at least on a fundamental level. The complete and utter obliteration of the Tower and any person involved in its heinous operations.

I knew that very well, but what about the innocent lives that had been enslaved within the Tower?

Saving them had always been a part of my plans.

But I never really thought much about the how behind it...

All I can think about when it comes to the Tower is about bringing forth its destruction, all other thoughts are just muted in the back.

A heavy feeling hung in the air as I continued moving forward. It seemed I would cross that bridge when I came to it.

'Don't worry,' Zanryuzuki's delicate hands caressed the sides of my face. Her presence filling my mind like a warm breeze as her voice hummed within my ears like the rumbling of distant thunder. 'This time, no one will be able to stop us.'

That's right.

This time, no one would be able to stop me.

I was strong now.

Strong enough to bring everything down.

After two hours of moving through the vast sea following the coordinates, without stopping, caged in a seeming eternity of silence with no reprieve. The place I had sworn to destroy, the place that had taken a part of me, leaving nothing but hate and anger behind, loomed ahead.

The Tower of Heaven towered over the horizon, a gargantuan structure, created by the hands of those who had been enslaved, forced to suffer and work to their graves.

A building made out of blood and pain.

A sick reminder of the unyielding desire of monsters in human skin.

At this, my rage simmered, leaving nothing but cold seeping through my veins as I descended toward the Tower. My gaze fixed on the slave pits below, once my prison and now a tomb for others condemned to an unchosen fate.

Innocent souls kept in cages of cramped filth, with a stench so overwhelming, that coated the walls, being more than enough to make anyone without a strong stomach retch.

As I landed on the Tower, without anyone noticing me. The bitter smell of blood, distress, and filth, filled my nostrils and I could hear the soft sobbing and wailing of anguish, coming from within the hallways, in a haunting echo.

The sound of Brain's laughter echoed in my head as I remembered the hunger that gnawed at me mercilessly for days on end, the sharp and searing pain of his blows, and the torture he inflicted on me with ruthless pleasure, under the mask of 'training'.

These memories, alongside the cries of suffering I was hearing all around, fueled my rage, making me shiver with cold fury as I clenched my fists, my fingernails digging deep into my palms with a shred of pain, carving deep into my skin, until a feeling of warm wetness ran down my fingers as blood seeped through the cracks of my hands, dripping into the ground.

My emotions reaching new heights of unbridled rage, and hate, that I had never thought possible, not even on my darkest nights.

It was unlike anything I had ever felt before, a maddening feeling that threatened to consume my entire being, leaving nothing behind.

My entire body was shaking with rage, with hate, and the worst part was, it wasn't because of the pain of my past or the injustice those within the Tower had suffered.

It was about the fact that I couldn't find Brain's presence within the Tower, no matter how hard I looked for him, it seemed the one person I wanted to kill the most, simply wasn't here.

I wanted to finish what I hadn't been able to last time, I wanted to drive my sword through his heart, I wanted to see him suffer, and avenge all the pain he inflicted upon me and others.

But the bastard wasn't here.

He used to be in this accursed place every fucking day, and today, he wasn't here.

'We will find him eventually, this planet is finite, our desire to end his life, it's not.' Zanryuzuki's voice reverberated in my mind, the low timbre of her speech carrying both the wrath of a raging river and the coolness of snow-covered mountains.

Yes, we would.

Taking a deep breath, I shut my eyelids tight, gritting my teeth against the overwhelming surge of rage within me.

I forced myself into a state of focus, in order to pinpoint the location of every slaver inside the tower. A feat that came very easy to accomplish, thanks to the fact they were the only ones on site not wearing the magical shackles, or collars that dampened the natural flow of magic power.

Three hundred and eighty-nine targets.

Time to slaughter them all.

My hand reaching out to my Zanpakuto, I grabbed my blade, and slid it out from its scabbard with a metallic hissing

whisper, before taking a step forward, my movements looking like those of a predator stalking its prey.

Time to end this.

I raced through Tower, my blade glinting in the faint light that illuminated this wretched place, cutting every bastard in my way, with vicious strokes, leaving every single one of them in a pool of crimson that spread around them, gasping for air and clawed at their throats in desperation, leaving behind nothing but a swath of carnage as I moved on and left them to suffer, to die in agony.

With each swing I took.

With each gasp of pain that I drained out of them.

With each drop of blood that my blade took.

Doing nothing but filling the rage that fueled my actions.

Eventually, as I continued with my slaughter descending deeper and deeper into the Tower's layout, leaving a trail of blood, corpses, and agonizing bastards behind me, I reached

the slave pits, where I heard a quiet whimpering coming from the cell I used to live in.

I froze in my steps, stopping my Shunpo midway, as I turned around and peered inside the cell, to see an old man hunched on his knees gently talking with a small girl with vibrant scarlet hair who was sitting in front of him; her tattered filthy rags barely covering her tiny malnourished frame.

Rob.

Silently, I cut open the cell door; in one clean stroke, before stepping into the darkened filthy room, my boots echoing off the walls with each step, until I stood face to face with the old man who had been the only beacon of light I had during my darkest days in this accursed place.

"Adam..." Rob muttered his tired, gentle eyes, widening in shock as he looked up at me, his face slowly turning into a gentle smile as a single tear rolled down his wrinkled cheek.

I reached down, my fingers trembling as I grabbed his shackles and gave them a forceful tug, snapping them off, before stepping closer, bringing my arms around his thin frame, feeling the ridge of every bone on his old body as I did.

Unable to hold back my tears, I hugged Rob tight, as tears cascaded down my cheeks into his wrinkled old skin. "I'm sorry I took so long to get here."

"There's nothing to apologize for," Rob replied in a whisper, his soft voice carrying the same tone of reassurance, and understanding, as it had in the past.

"Grandpa Rob?"

"Erza this is Adam," Rob said, turning his head to look at the small girl, who had been quietly watching us.

Did... did he say Erza?

In my turmoil of emotions, had I really ignored such a distinguishable character?

"Adam..." Erza muttered, her one visible eye-widening in surprise as she looked up at me with a curious expression.

"The one that... escaped..."

Her other was obscured by a dirty eyepatch. Meaning I hadn't found the Tower before she lost it.

Erza inched forward, her skin was caked in dirt, and her little frame was draped in a set of filthy rags that barely concealed the vast collection of bruises and scars that stretched across her body.

Most of her body was marred by bruises, and scars of all colors, most of which were hidden by the filth of her body.

Taking a deep breath, I slowly extended my arm towards Erza. Her little body froze in place as if expecting something terrible to happen as if wanting to squirm away from me.

Swallowing the knot that had just formed in my throat, I pushed through it, quickly yanking shackles around her wrists, tearing them apart like they were made of paper.

"Is Makarov here?" Rob's voice echoed off the damp stone walls as I stood and scanned the crowd of victims within the cell that warily regarded me, in a mix of hope and fear.

I shook my head. "I'm the only one that came. I had to do this alone."

Rob remained silent, and I could tell there was a lot going on in his head right now, things I didn't want to know or hear, at least not until I finished what I had started.

"I'm sorry," Erza muttered, her voice barely a whisper as she tugged my pants.

I glanced down at Erza and saw her brown eye glistening with unshed tears. "For what?" I asked softly, my brow furrowing in confusion as she bowed her head and nervously twisted her fingers together.

At this, Erza took a step forward closing the distance between us, standing up straighter and jutting out her chin. "I'm sorry for making you think I'm afraid of you," she said, her eyes blazing with a newfound sense of confidence, and determination as the words tumbled out of her mouth, each one more certain than the last.

Inching forward, I placed a hand on her right shoulder, giving her a gentle, reassuring smile. "There's nothing for you to apologize for," I said in a soft voice.

Rob smiled warmly and patted her on the head. "Adam is right. You didn't do anything wrong."

Erza smiled at Rob and turned to me, her expression now filled with a mixture of admiration and respect I didn't quite expect from her, especially since this was our first meeting ever. "Grandpa Rob talked a lot about you. Thank you for coming back to save everyone."

If only she knew that my desire for revenge was the driving force behind this so-called rescue... I can't help but wonder... Would her eye still gaze at me the same if she knew?

Not that it mattered.

Whatever comes from this, let it come.

I don't care if others see my actions as right or wrong; I won't back down.

Some say, revenge and retaliation only serve to perpetuate the cycle of anger, fear, and violence.

After all, this so-called cycle can't continue if there's no one seeking retribution.