

[Adam POV]

"M-my name is C-Cana A-Alberona! And I'm your s-sister!"
The girl said between stammers. Her voice was barely more than a whisper, but the words were full of determination and courage.

The little girl that stood at my door couldn't have been more than four or five years old.

I could see her staring up at me with wide, frightened eyes. Her tiny hands clenched her dress and teddy bear as she stood there awkwardly, waiting for any kind of reaction from me.

My lips parted as I inhaled deeply. I wanted to tell her the truth, that I had made up the story of me being Gildarts' brat to get a rise out of her father. But the words stuck in my throat when I saw the hope in her eyes.

Right where it hurts.

In my fucking heart.

"Say something!" Mavis screamed at my ear.

"Hello there..." I smiled weakly and slowly opened the door.
"W-Would you like to come in?"

At my words, Cana stood still, her entire body trembling, as she looked around, uncertainty and hope shadowing her face. Her gaze then met mine, and after a moment of hesitation, she gave me a faint nod and stepped into the apartment.

"She's adorable!" Mavis squealed as she leaned over my shoulder. "Can we keep her?"

Mayb—

Wait, no we can't!

"I-I like your h-house," Cana's voice quivered as she spoke, and her eyes darted around the room nervously, darting from the collection of family books on the living room stand to the mismatched furniture.

Timidly offering her compliment, she wore an expression of vulnerability that tugged at my heartstrings; it was simply too adorable for me to handle.

"Thanks," I smiled at her and glanced toward the kitchen, my thoughts turning to the fridge and the jug of orange juice inside. "Would you like some juice?"

"Offer her some cookies as well! Everybody loves cookies!" Mavis whispered enthusiastically.

"And some cookies perhaps?" I added.

Cana looked at me and nodded.

I trudged down to the kitchen and quickly poured a glass of orange juice, drink at hand, I grabbed a plate of chocolate chip cookies, and made haste with both things to the living room to find Cana shrinking quietly in the corner of my sofa.

"Juice and cookies, as promised," I smiled, handing her the drink and plate of cookies.

"U-Uh, thanks," Cana said softly, taking the glass and plate in her hands.

"Hug her!" Mavis whispered out as she floated around the living room.

I just might, Mavis, I just might.

I honestly didn't know what to do right now, this was new territory for me. I knew very little of Cana's past, other than the fact that Gildarts hadn't been aware she existed for most of her life.

Was her mom still alive?

Or had she already died and instead of joining the guild first she had decided to come to me first, seeing as most assumed I was Gildarts kid thanks to my elaborate joke.

Unsure of what to do, I held my breath as I looked at the girl in front of me, feeling a pit in my stomach as she ate the cookies I had given her.

There was no easy way to deal with this.

I just need to approach one step at a time.

"Where's your mom?" I asked softly, my voice barely breaking the silence in the room.

"In the house," Cana replied, her voice barely audible, trembling slightly with emotion as her eyes darted around the room as if searching for something.

I see.

That's a relief.

Her mom was still alive, but that wouldn't be the case for long. That much I had been able to grasp from the tone Cana was using. Something that Mavis seemed to have noticed as well.

"Does... he lives with you?" Cana nervously clasped her hands together and paused briefly, glancing around the room, avoiding eye contact as she timidly whispered her question.

"No, he doesn't," I replied.

Mavis crossed her arms and leaned back, her usually bubbly face straight and serious. "You might wanna go with her and meet her mom."

I agreed.

Perhaps there was something I could do for her, I was no Unohana in the matter, but even, despite my lack of skill in the Shinigami Healing Arts there was still a chance, as slim as it was, that I could do something.

"Cana, would you mind if I meet your mom?" I asked softly.

Cana's gaze flickered between my eyes and the ground, and I could see the uncertainty in her expression, the fear, and something else that I couldn't quite figure out. She shifted a bit before finally giving me a slight nod.

I smiled.

I walked with Cana as she led me down to her mom's house. As we walked, she would peek up at me with curiosity every now and then as if wanting to do something, until eventually, she would shyly slip her small hand into mine.

This...

This right here was the moment when my heart melted.

For the next few minutes, we trailed along the well-worn path of Magnolia Town, until we reached the outskirts of the city, where a small cottage appeared in the distance, isolated from the rest, its petite garden framed by a weathered fence and overgrown flower beds.

Cana stepped forward, grabbed the brass doorknob, and with a gentle push opened the door.

I followed her inside and my breath caught at the sight before me. Cana's mother, her fragile frame sunken in a wheelchair, her paper-thin skin ashen and her eyes sunken in.

She looked so helpless, so vulnerable.

Her sunken cheeks were deathly pale, and the oxygen mask on her face only added to the solemn atmosphere.

"You brought a friend, honey?" The sick woman's voice was but a wisp of air, her eyes heavy with fatigue, her paper-thin hand clutching her wheelchair as she slowly turned her head to greet us with an eerily fragile yet welcoming expression.

I was without words.

This was worse than I imagined.

Much worse.

I knew she was sick, but not so much, not like this.

Without a word, Cana sprinted to her mother's side and flung her arms around her mom, who despite having a frail body that trembled at the slightest effort, returned the embrace with a weak but loving smile.

"He's my brother... you know, the one people talk about," Cana muttered under her mother's embrace.

"A pleasure to meet you, Adam, my name is Cordelia Alberona," Cordelia looked at me and forced a weak smile before shifting her gaze to her daughter. "Honey, can you get me a few flowers from the garden while I talk with this young man?"

Cana remained silent for a moment before nodding, leaving the room but not before glancing at us one last time.

"I know you aren't Gildarts' kid," Cordelia said, her lips parting in a hesitant smile as her eyes softened.

I guess if someone was bound to know at a first glance it was her.

I nodded. "It's mostly me messing with him."

Cordelia's lips twitched and a weak chuckle escaped her throat. "Good, that dumb oaf needs that," she said with a hint of amusement in her voice.

I chuckled back.

Taking a deep breath, I cautiously approached the wheelchair-bound woman in front of me, and with each step, it became clear that even if I was a master in the healing arts, healing her was almost impossible.

All this power and I couldn't do anything for her?

'We don't need to heal her,' Zanryuzuki spoke, her voice echoing within my head. 'We just need to save her soul.'

I blinked, taken back by those words. 'What do you mean?'

'You just need to create a Gigai,' Zanryuzuki replied.

My eyes widened at this, understanding what Zanryuzuki was proposing. Instead of trying to save her body, which was impossible for me to do, she was telling me to save her soul, putting her soul into an artificial body to inhabit.

That was easier said than done though.

I was no Kisuke Urahara, I wasn't a scientific genius by any means. I hadn't even mastered Kido yet.

I wasn't even sure how to even begin with that shit? I mean, how does one create an artificial body made to host a literal soul? I was no doctor, I knew what most people knew about the human body, which was frighteningly little.

And it wasn't like I had an expert on the subject--

"Porlyusica..."

She could help me... with her, and the help of Zanryuzuki... saving Cordelia's life wasn't that far-fetched.