

[Adam C. POV]

By the time we arrived at Magnolia, exhaustion clung to each member of our group, which was understandable considering everything. So, one by one, everyone bid their farewells, each dragging their feet to their homes in an eager yet tired manner to get some much-needed rest.

For more than obvious reasons, Erza and I remained, our destination being the guild.

We had a report to give. And seeing we were the center of this, it was best to do so as soon as possible.

"Do you think it is finally over?" Erza asked, turning to me with a small, tired smile.

I paused for a moment. That was a difficult question, one I really didn't have the answer for. "I don't know, but as long as we remain, that place is destined to fail."

Erza's lips curved into a small smile as she tipped her head back and stared at the inky night sky sprinkled with stars. Her

voice, gentle and warm, filled the stillness of the moment.
"That's right."

I could see the pain in her eyes, her voice, but I didn't know how to soothe it, how to fix this for her. I knew she cared for Jellal, for everyone that Tower had ruined, she wanted to help them, to help everybody, and knowing there was nothing she could do, was simply torture for her.

Seeing that amount of empathy in her, I couldn't help but wonder if I was a bad person.

Unlike her, I didn't care a whole lot about the others. I pitied them, sure, but pity wasn't the same as caring.

I knew they had been taken, and other than an afterthought here and there, I never gave them much thought.

Perhaps I was just selfish, caring only for those I considered mine in some manner.

Silence setting in, we started walking towards the guild.

As we walked, the moon bathed the town in a gentle glow, its light guiding our path, in the otherwise sleeping town. The streets were quiet, the nightly hustle and bustle of the city lulled to a soft murmur.

The only sounds around to be heard were the echoes of our steps, and the distant ring of a night bird's call.

It wasn't before long, before the familiar sight of Fairy Tail's guild building loomed before us, its massive structure casting a stark shadow over us under the moonlight.

Pushing open the large wooden doors of the Guild, we stepped inside, silence greeting us.

Seeing it was quite late, the guild hall was mostly deserted, a stark contrast to the lively/chaotic day to day that usually filled the space during normal hours.

"Mira, what are you still doing here?" I asked, waving my hand, noticing the take-over wizard behind the counter of the bar tidying everything up.

At this, she looked up, her face breaking into a wide smile at seeing us. "Adam, Erza! You're back!" she greeted, her voice echoing in the empty room.

"We've just arrived," Erza replied, giving no signs of her true emotional state.

"We had a stop in the Capital, and you know how things get there," I added, trying to divert Mira's attention away from Erza's fake composure.

Mirajane wasn't dumb by any means. She pretended to be dumb and clueless, but that wasn't the reality behind the mask she wore around others.

Despite our short interactions, I knew without a doubt that she was quite possibly the smartest person we had in the guild, as well as one of the most observant ones.

Meaning, it was very likely she had already noticed there was something wrong in Erza's demeanor.

Which is why I trusted her to read between the lines.

Mira nodded sympathetically, "That sounds terrible! Would you like anything to drink or eat? I can make you something quick."

I smiled at her, a genuine smile. "Maybe a drink."

"I'm fine, thanks," Erza declined, her face adorned with her trademark confident smile.

"Very well, one drink coming up," Mira nodded, a beaming smile on her face as she headed to the back, to grab the things she needed to fix me a drink.

Mirajane gone, we turned around, and quickly headed upstairs, making our way towards the master's office, with each step making the stairs creak worryingly.

"Old man, are you busy?" I asked, as we approached the door.

Almost immediately, Makarov's distinctive, gruff yet warm voice echoed from within, granting us the green lights to enter.

Eager to see how he would react to me being a Wizard Saint, I pushed the doors to his office open, flashing a grin at the old man.

As always, his office was crammed to the brim with an unholy amount of paperwork, dusty tomes, and books that bore the collective wisdom of decades.

"Just how much of this is just Natsu?" I asked, gesturing to the towering piles of papers.

"More than I would like to say out loud, that boy will be the end of me," Makarov muttered, his expression casting a dark shadow on his features, which surprisingly did nothing to diminish the twinkle in his eyes and the warmth behind them.

"I'll be certain to discipline him for that later, before that, however, I'm ready to give my report," Erza said, before starting with her report, as methodical and detailed as always.

Throughout her recounting, the old man listened without interrupting, his eyes narrowing slightly at certain points, but beyond that slight change of expression nothing.

By the time she was done with her report, she was already offering to make a forty-page version of it, in case it was needed.

"That won't be necessary Erza," Makarov finally said with a soft sigh, "Go home, and rest child, you need it."

Erza bowed respectfully before turning to leave the office, and as she left, Makarov turned to me with a troubled expression.

"How are you doing?" Makarov asked in a fatherly tone, his wrinkled forehead furrowed with worry.

"I'm doing fine, old man," I reassured him with a grin, "There's nothing to worry about."

Makarov studied me for a moment, his eyes flickering over my face as if searching for something. "Do you think Erza will be fine?"

"Yes," I replied without hesitation. Erza was strong in ways I wasn't, at least not as much.

I had no doubts she would overcome this in no time. She just needed to rest a bit.

Sighing at my answer, the old man crossed his arms, his eyes turning dark.

"I heard the council detained you, what was the reason those bastards stopped you?" Makarov asked, his tone laced with anger.

"You know how they are, but don't worry, it wasn't anything bad, they just wanted to question me about the events in the Tower," I replied, taking a seat on one of the chairs around.

"It matters not, they still had no reason to detain you," Makarov growled, his fists clenching in anger. "If they wanted a report, they could've contacted me! I won't let them get away with this!"

Deciding it was the perfect moment to reveal the surprise I had been keeping so far. I pulled the Wizard Saint insignia from my pocket, letting it catch the firelight before I placed it on his desk. "There was also this, that they wanted to discuss."

The silver symbol of the medal gleamed in the dark wood, reflecting on its surface, the dancing light of the room.

For a moment, there was absolute silence, then it was broken by the sound of Makarov's chair toppling backwards as he fell onto the floor, gaping at the insignia like a fish out of water.

Pushing himself up, his gaze switched from me to the insignia several times before finally settling on me. His eyes were as wide as saucers, as his mouth continued to open and close in repetition.

"You... you're... a... Wizard Saint?!" Makarov finally managed to sputter out, staring at the insignia like it might disappear any moment. His eyes bore into mine, searching for some sign of jest, which considering the pranks I like to play on Gildarts was understandable.

"Old man, if I didn't know any better, I would think you didn't think I have what it takes," I replied with a smirk, enjoying the shock on his face. "I'm hurt."

His reaction to this was immediate and very loud.

In the blink of an eye, a booming laugh echoed through the room, bouncing off the stone walls as he clapped his hands together, clearly happy by the whole situation. "Don't be stupid! I know you have what it takes! It is a father's duty to know such things! What surprises me is that those old bastards actually gave you the title, seeing most of them hate the guild."

I chuckled. "Well, they didn't have much of a choice, the King was the one to offer me the position, as a representative of the Kingdom."

"Ha! Serves them right!" Makarov said, grinning from ear to ear. "So, what's your rank?"

"Eight," I replied.

"Two spots under my rank, huh? Well, it seems you still have a long way to go before surpassing this old man," Makarov said, a shit-eating grin taking place on his face.

I rolled my eyes. "In due time, old man."

Makarov let out a hearty laugh. "Now, it's just a matter of time before you are ready to take the mantle of Guild Master, so that I can finally retire!"

"Hell no," I replied, cutting his dream short. "Pick someone else to suffer in your stead."

Makarov let out a sigh of disappointment, his happy demeanor shattering into a million pieces. "First Gildarts, and now you. My last hope is Laxus..."

I snorted.

I wasn't even first choice.

"He might accept but do avoid telling him you offered the position to us first," I chuckled. "He might take offense to not being your first option."

Makarov let out a chuckle. "Will keep that in mind. But in all seriousness, congratulations on joining the Wizard Saints ranks, son, I'm proud of you."

"I only did it for the money," I replied with a serious expression.

"Why else would anyone take extra responsibilities outside their family?" Makarov deadpanned.

I'm sure there were people that would take the title for selfless reasons. I wasn't one of them though, I mean, I wasn't against helping the Kingdom without pay, but... if there was the option of getting paid, why not take it?