

## [Adam C. POV]

I blinked my eyes open, an endless sheet of sterile cotton tightly wrapped around my midsection. My mind sluggishly registered a throb of pain radiating from my torso. I tried to rise, to sit upright, but my body outright refused to comply, shooting a jolt of discomfort that forced me back to the cold hardness of the bed.

"Yep, that's about right," I muttered. I honestly don't know what I was expecting in the condition I was in.

I sucked in a breath through clenched teeth, trying to will away the pain. It was like trying to ignore a serrated knife buried in my gut.

I had a high pain tolerance, but it still hurt.

The sound of the door creaking open snapped my attention away from my aching midsection. The room was bathed in a dull, gloomy light. Against this backdrop, the figure that entered looked even more severe than usual, the old lady, Porlyusica.

Her pink hair was tied up in a messy bun, a few strands stubbornly framing her face. The harsh lines of her face softened momentarily when her gaze met mine, but quickly hardened again.

"Hi," I said, preparing myself to deal with the consequences of bothering her.

She cleared her throat, a grating sound that echoed in the stillness of the room. "Awake, are we?" she grumbled, the corners of her lips curling downwards into a familiar frown. There was a clipboard in her hand, filled with scribbles that probably held a thousand curses for me.

I nodded, grimacing as another wave of pain washed over me. Her eyes were piercing, they seemed to take in everything, my pain, my discomfort, my vulnerability. She moved closer, her steps slow and measured, her gaze never leaving my face.

She finally broke the silence that had crept up between us. "You brainless brat! What the devil were you thinking?! Didn't I tell you not to get injured like this again?!"

Leave it to Porlyusica to skip the pleasantries. That being said, I had to appreciate her frankness. She'd never been one for sugar-coating. That was one of the few comforts I could take when it came to her.

"It's not like I wanted this to happen," I replied.

Could this have been prevented? Sure, if I had used my Bankai, the result would have been much different, however, I couldn't afford to use that on Selene.

"Tsk," Porlyusica clicked her tongue, her frown deepening. "Well, you better try to avoid this kind of shit. It's a hassle to patch you up so often."

Despite her words, Porlyusica approached me, as she started to peel back the bandages to examine the wound, her hands moving in an uncharacteristically kind way for her. Silently, her fingers probed the tender flesh around the wound, causing a spike of pain.

"It seems everything is going as it should," Porlyusica grumbled, her eyes never leaving the wound. "At this rate, you should be back to normal in a few weeks."

I sighed in relief, trying to ignore the pain of her examination, and the cold air that hit the exposed wound, causing me to shiver.

"Well, you are the best after all," I replied, trying to lighten the mood.

"I can still hurt you; a lot... you know?" Porlyusica growled, as she quickly reapplied the bandages, the coolness of the antiseptic cream causing me to flinch. "On that note, you are

locked here until you're back to full strength, this time, I'm not letting you ruin my work."

Her threat was all too real. She was perfectly capable of making good on it if she thought I wasn't taking care of myself.

"You're a fool, you know that?" Porlyusica continued, tucking the bandages in place. "Don't think your recklessness doesn't affect; the others. You've got them worried sick."

Sometimes it was easy to forget that underneath her prickly exterior, Porlyusica still cared deeply about the Guild.

"By the time your new wound heals, you should have your eye back as well," Porlyusica sighed, putting her clipboard on one side of my bed.

I offered a weak thumbs up in response. "Thanks for everything, I know it might not mean a lot, but thanks for always being there."

Her gaze softened a bit once again, before quickly hardening, this time carrying a colder tone to it. "That being said, there's something I would like to review with you. As I worked on your injury, I found something else." she said, her voice low and serious.

"Something else?" I replied in an even tone. Hoping she hadn't found out about that.

"Yes." Porlyusica replied, shifting her weight to the other foot, a sure sign of discomfort. "During the surgery, I discovered a strange irregularity in your entire body. Your magic cells..."

The silence seemed to stretch on endlessly, a chasm of the unknown that threatened to swallow the room. She had figured it out, not that it surprised me, if anyone could do so was her.

Still.

I would've wanted, just this time to be wrong.

"Magical cellular deterioration," I finished for her, my voice barely above a whisper.

Porlyusica nodded, her mouth forming a thin line. "So, I was right, you knew about this."

I nodded, forcing a small, unconvincing smile onto my face. "Yeah, I figured it out a while ago."

"And you didn't tell anyone?" The accusation hung heavy in the air, her voice echoing in the silent room.

"Who could I tell?" I chuckled silently, gazing at her. "It doesn't have a cure, so telling anyone would only bring them unnecessary pain."

Porlyusica sighed. "I suppose you're right," she admitted, her voice almost inaudible. "I still think you should tell them, this isn't a minor thing, kid. It's a time bomb, and we don't know when it might explode."

I shrugged, letting out a tired breath. "I've been living with this time bomb for a while now, Porlyusica," I said, my voice firm. "I know the risks. And I've made my peace with it."

Magical cellular deterioration.

In short, my body had too much magic power, to the point my own power was slowly, but surely, tearing me apart. That's the thing about getting powers from another universe, it never occurs to anybody that said powers could very well be not compatible.

Shinigami powers are not meant to be used as a mortal being. Shinigami's fight with their souls, because they themselves are souls.

That wasn't the case for me.

I was a human, one who had been given the powers of a God of Death. Unfortunately, the human part meant I had to channel and store the immeasurable spiritual power I had been born with, with my human body.

This was something I had learned about after learning my Bankai.

The main reason why Zanryuzuki had been so reluctant to teach me was because she knew that the moment I learned my Bankai, would be the moment a timer inside of me would start, counting the seconds to my death.

Zanryuzuki had been my filter.

My barrier against this.

But once I had learned her Bankai. That barrier had shattered.

Nothing is free. Everything has to be paid for. For every bit of strength someone gains, there has to be a sacrifice of some kind.

For every life, a death.

This was also the reason why my Bankai was a one-time use only card.

Because the moment I used it, I would release all of my Spiritual Power, no more barriers, no more filters, no more holding back.

"At the rate your cells are deteriorating, I don't think you'll survive more than a year," Porlyusica sighed, her words causing me to look at her.

One year.

I smiled.

I guess luck was on my side.

That was more than enough time to kill Acnologia.

"That will suffice," I replied calmly.

"You don't care?" Porlyusica asked in disbelief, frowning deeply. "Don't you want to live?"

"Of course, I fucking do," I shrugged off her question. "But seeing this situation has no fix, I've decided to do the only thing I could, accept it."

That wasn't entirely true.

I hadn't stopped looking for a fix.



Unfortunately, for all the knowledge Zanryuzuki had been bestowed upon, I couldn't do a thing. I was no Urahara, Mayuri, or Aizen.

I wasn't a super genius that could whip out the cure to a formally incurable disease in the span of a few minutes like it's nothing, I wasn't capable of understanding what they could.

I really wished I could.

But you can't become something you're not.

I'm smart, at least I like to think I am.

But compared to them, I might as well be a chimp pretending to be a man.

"Who's the person you want to kill?" Porlyusica asked, her voice breaking through the silence that had settled in the room.

"The Dragon of the Apocalypse, Acnologia," I replied without hesitation.