

[Adam POV]

My life as a slave working for the tower of heaven continued, and the days weren't getting any easier. I would be beaten constantly, it didn't matter if I did a good job, or a bad one.

It was all about the power they had over us. And how that made them feel.

The slaves were abused in every conceivable way, from physical torture to starvation and rape. I was lucky I hadn't tickled the fancy of any guard, male or female, but some prisoners weren't as lucky as I was.

Not that they didn't get creative with their physical abuse, but from day to day, it varied from exhaustion to harsh whippings, to being dropped from high places just to see us struggle to stand up.

I had no doubt that seeing us suffer was their favorite pastime.

At the slightest bit of resistance, that level of torture would get worse, much, much, worse. I got my taste of that when I glared at one of the guards in anger.

I couldn't walk right for two months after that.

But no matter how much they tried to break me, no matter how scared I was, I had long decided I would never give in to these pathetic creatures, that only abuse those that can't defend themselves.

When I wasn't getting beaten for the sake of entertainment, I would spend my day doing manual labor alongside the other prisoners. It was hard, even for the adults, my young body could barely hold the things they wanted me to carry, but I would push through.

I would not give them the satisfaction.

Most days, I would not be given food, only water to drink and rancid gruel to eat.

As anyone can guess, the gruel tasted like shit, but even though I wanted to throw up at every sip of it, my stomach was calling for food, so I had to choke it down.

On a good day, I would be sent to my cell, with my body relatively intact, in there, I would spend most of my time talking with Rob. It helped to have someone to talk to, if anything it silenced some of the thoughts I didn't want to hear.

They weren't bad thoughts, not really. But what they meant, it... scared me. I wanted to see every single bastard in this place suffer, a long and painful death.

I was okay with killing them. But the thought of enjoying it... It frightened me, because it made me feel there was something wrong with me.

I wanted to hate them, without enjoying the hate. It was a complicated affair.

"You've been doing okay kiddo?" Rob asked, the old man offering me a comforting smile.

"Same as always, what about you?" I asked, staring at the damp ceiling of our cell.

"Good," Rob smiled, pulling out an old piece of bread out of his clothes. "I saved this for you."

I looked at him and then at the bread. My entire body was screaming at me to take it, to snatch it out of his hands before he could change his mind, but I kept myself from doing so.

"Rob, you need it more than me. You barely eat, you give all your rations to others," I replied with a sigh. "I appreciate the gesture, but... you have to take care of yourself. Do you have any idea how low morale would go if you died?"

Rob sighed before smiling, "You're far too kind for your own good, kiddo, you know that?"

I shrugged, choosing not to respond.

"Don't worry about me, I won't die anytime soon. These old bones are strong, and will keep me on for a few more years."
Rob beamed at me.

I sighed, shaking my head. "You are far too optimistic for your situation. I envy you. Honestly."

"Take the bread, please," Rob smiled, extending his hand a bit closer.

I fought the instinct to take what he was offering for as long as I could until I could no longer fight it. So, I took the food from him before shoving it in my mouth in one big bite.

I had trouble chewing it, the bread was stale and hard, and it tasted horrible. But it was still the best thing I had eaten in so long, that it felt like heaven on earth.

"Thanks," I muttered, cleaning my tears.

One day, one day I would escape this hell. And if I was any lucky, I would bring it down with me.

"Slave 127." That's me.

I looked up to see the cultist guard opening the cell.

I said nothing, giving Rob a look before standing up and going to the entrance.

"Follow me," The guard spat, his voice dripping with disgust.

Keeping my emotions in check, I did as he said, exiting the cell. Behind me, Rob gave me a reassuring smile as he mouthed in silence. "Good luck, kiddo."

I nodded, before walking away, my legs shaking, and my body ragged.

I followed the guard to the upper levels of the tower, where a man awaited me, a man I had seen before. Brain.

"Leave us," Brain ordered as soon as the guard dropped me in his office.

The guard didn't protest and left immediately, shutting the door behind him. I gulped, looking at Brain.

This was bad. If Brain had summoned me here, it could only mean one thing, and one thing only, he was interested in me, just as he would be interested in Jellal.

"I can still see the fight in your eyes," Brain spat at me. "On your knees, if you want to keep them."

I knew better than to defy him as I was now, so I did as I was told, getting on my knees.

Brain sat down on a golden chair, looking at me with a sadistic smile, "You are quite the special little slave, you know that?"

I stayed quiet, my fingers digging into the ground.

"But before we discuss that, how do you find your accommodations?" Brain asked, his voice mocking me. "Have you enjoyed your stay so far?"

"Yes," I answered, my voice neutral.

"Have you?" He asked, this time his voice dripping with pleasure.

My fists clenched.

"I thought so. You must be wondering why I brought you here. I brought you here, because I see something interesting in you, something valuable, a diamond in the rough."

He leaned forward, looking at me.

"Do you have any idea how strong you are?" Brain whispered, a sick smile forming on his face, showing his yellow teeth.

"Well, you see. That's what I want to know."

Great, he senses my magical potential that so fucking far has been fucking useless.

"Are you going to kill me?" I asked, keeping my head down.

Brain chuckled. "Kill you? Are you even listening to me? Why would I kill such an interesting project? No, no, no."

I tensed.

"I want to see what makes you tick. I want you to show me what you can do," Brain said with a sickening smile that went well with his deranged tone.

"Then what?" I asked, pretty much not caring. At this point, I had made my peace with whatever happened, all I knew was that if I survived I would kill them all.

Brain got up from the chair, walked towards the window, looking down at the slaves working.

"I have decided to take you out of this filthy place, giving you a new place to serve," Brain answered, still looking out the window. "Your latent abilities are wasted as a simple slave."

"And what would be my purpose then?" I asked, looking at him. "To serve you?"

Brain turned towards me, a sadistic smile on his face. "Yes, how quick are you to catch on? Good, I prefer smart servants. So, what do you say, scum?"

"And what if I refuse?" I asked, my voice turning cold.

Brain walked towards me, his hand touching my face. "You won't."

I did not answer, but I kept my eyes on his.

"I can see it in your eyes, kiddo, I can see your hate, your anger. You want to stay alive, you want to survive," Brain whispered in my face. "So be a good little boy, and do as you are told, and you will live."

I would have his head. One day, I vowed that much.

"Very well," I answered, my voice a bit rougher than usual.

Brain's smile grew. "Good, I knew you would see reason."

I dug my hands further into the ground, to the point I was starting to bleed.

"I will have your new clothes soon, in the meantime take a bath, you stink," Brain laughed, pulling his hand back. "And a word of advice. Don't test me, if you think the pain you have felt is anything, you will soon learn that is not the case."