

[Adam C. POV]

[Two weeks of travel later.]

The sun shone brightly in the azure sky as I stepped off the train at Magnolia Station.

The bustling energy of the town immediately greeted me with a warm sense, filling my senses with the familiar mix of excitement and nostalgia.

The aroma of freshly baked bread wafted from a nearby bakery, while the laughter of children filled the air.

Smiling, I took a deep breath, my heart swelling with the warmth of finally having returned home.

"Finally!" Mavis exclaimed, letting out a sigh. "Could you please carry my bags? I am exhausted."

I raised an eyebrow. "Your make belief bags?"

Mavis pouted, crossing her arms. "You're no fun sometimes."

Chuckling at her antics, as usual, I made my way toward the guild, as Mavis talked about the town in the background.

I couldn't wait to see everyone again after being away for so long. My boots clicked on the cobblestone path, the rhythm of my steps echoing my eagerness.

Rounding the corner, the guild's wooden doors came into view, adorned with the emblem that represented unity and strength.

As I approached, I caught sight of a familiar figure rushing toward me, Cana, my little sister. Her hair danced in the gentle breeze, her eyes sparkling with mischief and joy at the sight of me.

"Big brother!" she shouted, her voice filled with delight. In an instant, increasing her speed, now darting towards me with the speed of a comet.

Taken by surprise, I barely had time to brace myself before she tackled me into a hug.

Her arms wrapped tightly around my waist, trapping my legs in an adorable and inescapable ensnare. I teetered back for a moment, nearly losing my balance, but managed to stay upright.

"Aww, she's adorable," Mavis gushed, watching how Cana hugged me with the fierceness of three hundred adorable lions.

I chuckled, the sound bubbling up from deep within my chest. "Hey there, squirt. It's good to see you too," I said, reaching down to pat her adorable little head. Her hair felt like silk beneath my fingers, and I couldn't help but marvel at how much she had grown since I last saw her.

Cana beamed up at me, her eyes shimmering with unshed tears. "I missed you so much, big brother!" she exclaimed, her grip around me tightening. "And now that I have you trapped! Promise me you won't go away for that long ever again! or I won't let you go!"

I smiled, warmth filling my chest as I looked into her almighty pleading eyes. "I promise," I said, my voice soft but firm. "I promise to always try my best to finish my jobs as soon as possible."

At this, Cana squeezed me tighter before finally releasing me, bouncing on her feet with excitement. "You better keep your word!"

I ruffled her hair affectionately, the warmth from her hug still lingering on my heart, right where it hurts. "I will, I will," I said, chuckling. "Now, let's go inside. I bet everyone is eager to see us."

Cana nodded eagerly, bouncing up and down like a rubber ball as she took my hand and dragged me toward the guild hall. I followed, chuckling softly at her enthusiasm, feeling a sense of warmth and belonging wash over me.

This was home, and there was nowhere else I'd rather be.

As we entered the guild hall, the familiar sounds and scents filled my senses.

The clinking of mugs and bottles, the laughter and chatter of guild members, and the sounds of a brawl happening in the back, all blended together in a comforting symphony.

"Finally back, brat?" Gildarts called out from across the room, a grin spreading across his weathered face. "We were starting to think you forgot about us."

I grinned back. "I wish I could, about you at least."

"So mean with your dear old dad," Gildarts teased, before walking over to ruffle my hair. "But seriously, it's good to have you back. Missed your face around here, nobody else has the balls to mess with me here."

I rolled my eyes, but couldn't help the warmth that spread through me at his words.

"You too, old man," I said, punching him playfully in the arm before turning to take in the rest of the guild.

At this, the room erupted into a chorus of cheers and greetings as I made my way over to the bar, with some of the guild members clapping me on the back, as Gildarts handed me a drink.

As I neared the bar to take a seat, I noticed Laxus, leaning in a dark corner, so with a grin I waved at him.

Laxus nodded in greeting, his usual stoic expression softened by an ever-so-small smile.

"So tell me, did you meet any girls on your trip?" Gildarts asked with a sly grin, waggling his eyebrows suggestively.

I rolled my eyes, taking a sip of my drink. "One, but she tried to kill me," I replied, with a chuckle.

Cana, who had been eagerly listening in on our conversation, piped up with a giggle. "Did you bring me back any presents, big brother?"

I grinned, reaching into my bag to pull out a small trinket that I had picked up before coming here. "Of course I did," I said, handing her the trinket.

It wasn't anything big.

Just a set of empty magic cards for her to make her own spells, knowing what I did about her it was easy enough to pick a gift that suited her well.

"You're the best big brother ever!" Cana exclaimed, her eyes lighting up as she examined her gift. "How did you know? Forget that, I can't wait to show you what I can do with them already! But first, EVERYONE LOOK WHAT MY BROTHER GOT ME!"

So she already started learning her magic, that's good.

I chuckled, feeling content as I watched her excitedly show off her new gift to some of the other guild members.

"No gift for your old dad?" Gildarts teased, holding out his hand expectantly.

I rolled my eyes, reaching back into my bag and pulling out a small bottle of his favorite whiskey. "Don't say I never gave you anything," I said, passing the bottle over to him.

Gildarts laughed, clapping me on the back. "Now that's what I'm talking about, son. You really know how to make your old man happy."

I guess he really took the joke I made all those years ago to heart. "It's the least I can do, seeing that with the amount of

child support you owe me you won't see another good drink in a while."

Gildarts' eyebrow ticked up. "I will have my revenge for that, brat, mark my words."

"Just remember, my revenge to your revenge will be twice as big," I replied, grinning at him.

"Well, my revenge on your revenge on my revenge on your revenge, will be thrice as big!" Gildarts shot back, slamming his fist on the bar, breaking the poor thing in two.

"Adam!" Erza's voice called out from across the room, interrupting our friendly banter.

Smiling, I turned slowly, the rustling of my chainmail echoing softly in the chaos of the guild. Wasting no time, she strode toward me, her armor gleaming in the candlelight of the guild, glinting like diamonds set in silver, her broad smile threatening to overtake her face, as she neared.

"I knew you would come back victorious, I expected nothing less from my teacher!" Erza exclaimed for everyone to hear, her voice full of admiration and pride.

"Of course I did, I couldn't let one of my students down, and by that I mean my only student down, could I?" I replied with a light chuckle.

Erza nodded her head with the fierceness of an army, her long red hair falling in waves around her shoulders. "Indeed."

"Have you practiced what I taught you?" I asked, quirking an eyebrow.

Erza's eyes lit up with excitement. "I have, I trained with Lilia during your absence, mastering your teachings as much as I could! And I can't wait to show you during our next spar."

"Talking about Lilia, where is--" I didn't have time to finish my thought before I heard a loud crash and felt a gust of air, as the window behind me exploded outward, showering the room with shards of glass that glinted in the sun, as whoever had broken the window landed in front of me, in a kneeling position.

"Adam-sama! It's good to have you back!"

I should've seen it coming.

"You will pay for that window brat!" Makarov's voice boomed from the other side of his office.

"You will pay for that," I said, looking at Lilia.

Lilia stood up, brushing glass off her hands and knees. "Sorry about that, Adam-sama. I just wanted to make a dramatic entrance, to show you just how much you mean to me!"

I shook my head with a sigh. "You know you could have just walked through the door like a normal person, you can be dramatic without breaking stuff."

"Indeed," Erza nodded.

"Indeed," Gildarts nodded.

"You two have no grounds to talk about this," I replied, giving them a blank stare. "You have a town-level protocol, and you break my doors on a daily basis, instead of... you know, opening them, Erza."

Erza laughed sheepishly, scratching the back of her head. "I... good point."

"For your information, I have only destroyed three houses today," Gildarts nodded proudly, puffing his chest out.

That's not something to be proud of.

I rolled my eyes. "Well, at least you're keeping it to a minimum, I think?"

Despite how crazy everyone in this guild of mine was, I was happy to be here.

Fairy Tail really had a way of leaving a mark in your heart, a way of making you feel like family, even if that family was a little dysfunctional. And as I looked around the guild hall, at the rowdy and eccentric members that made up Fairy Tail, I knew without a doubt that I wouldn't have it any other way.

"Next round is on me," I declared loudly, gesturing to the barkeep.

At this, the guild erupted in cheers, drinks were clinked together, and the party started anew.

[A few months later.]

The first light of dawn pierced through the windows of my apartment, jolting me awake. As I rubbed the sleep from my eyes, I could feel the subtle hum of magic in the air, a constant reminder of the time I'd spent training under Warrod.

Despite the simplicity of his teachings, I felt they had helped me grow immensely, not only in my abilities but in my learning rate as well.

My ability to sense energy had improved a lot. I still had a lot to learn in that area, but I was leap and bounds of what I used to be.

The familiar aroma of freshly brewed coffee filled the air as I stepped into the kitchen, pouring myself a cup to start the day. Gotta love magic coffee makers, they do ninety percent of the job themselves.

Taking a sip of my coffee, I couldn't help but feel a sense of urgency lingering at the edge of my consciousness, with the knowledge that with each passing day, canon, and the threats this one represented grew ever so near.

Pushing those thoughts aside, my gaze wandered to the plans for my future home, sprawled out on the dining table.

I'd spent countless hours designing every detail, making sure everything would be to my liking. The large plot of land I'd acquired on the outskirts of Magnolia would soon become my permanent home, my safe haven so to speak.

I smiled at that thought.

Times of peace.

The calm before the storm, right?

Missions had been plentiful during this time, allowing me to hone my skills and strengthen my resolve, as well as giving me enough money to improve upon my home plans, little by little.

Beyond that, I was getting better at Kido, a lot better, thanks to my constant training, seeing I was trying to get any possible advantage I could for the upcoming events that I knew I would have to face.

Perhaps my presence had altered some of them, or stopped some, like I imagined I had stopped the entire arc where Laxus had decided to go full evil but not really evil, because deep down he loved every one, but was misguided because he never considered option b, therapy.

But that was neither here nor there.

My time to prepare was running out, and every moment had become precious in that very sense.

As the sun rose higher in the sky, I stepped outside, feeling the warmth on my skin.

I drew a deep breath, the crisp morning air invigorating me before moving to the training grounds.

The town bustled around me, the people of Magnolia going about their daily lives, blissfully unaware of the danger that loomed on the horizon.

With a single step, I moved to the training grounds and began my daily training regimen, my body moving with precision as I practiced my spells and sword techniques, one after the other.

The words of Zanryuzuki echoed in my head, guiding my movements and sharpening my focus.

I still had a long way to go before being worthy of her Bankai.

I had made an effort to become a better partner for her during this time, knowing very well that it was unfair to let her shoulder everything, even when I hadn't asked.

Five hours later, I moved to the guild once I had completed my training, in order to have a nice lunch with Cana, Erza, Lilia, and Laxus, who I was trying as a personal mission of mine to make more social, sharing stories and laughter over meals.

The camaraderie was a balm for my soul, a strong reminder of what I was fighting for. Every time I looked into their eyes, I just knew I could not let them down.

They had survived without me in the original timeline, but that wasn't enough of a guarantee they would now. Enemies could be stronger, things could be different, this was the real world, not a show, as much as the events between the two connected them.

Lunch over, I walked out of the guild leaving my friends, and family in order to continue with my personal affairs.

Moving to the outskirts of Magnolia with a single step, I stood over the edge of my land, the moon casting a pale glow over the empty plot where my home would one day stand.

And as I looked out over the town, I couldn't help but sigh.

"One month," I muttered.

In one month the Dragon Slayers would arrive, if everything went according to canon, signaling the start of everything I knew.

From that point forward, my time to prepare would enter finite terms, at least more so than it already was. Every second mattered, every action would be vital.

I would need to gather as much power as I could, to defend my family, my guild, and the people I cared about.