

## [Adam C. POV]

As we made our way through the streets of the bustling town, making our way to the train station, I guided the three children whose lives I was familiar with, despite only recently becoming entwined with them.

The noise of the market, the rattle of carts, the chatter of vendors, the cries of livestock, echoed off the cobblestones, enveloping us in a living, breathing symphony of human activity.

Lisanna, the youngest of the trio, clung to the hem of my cloak, her small face barely peeking out from a curtain of mousy white hair. Her wide eyes were taking in the world around her, teetering between fear and fascination.

After a few moments of silence, she shuffled closer to me, a question clearly burning at the edge of her tongue. It wasn't until her older brother, Elfman, nudged her gently that she finally spoke.

"What's... what's your name?" she asked, her voice barely audible over the chaos of the street.

I glanced down at her, a warm smile spreading across my face.

It had just occurred to me then that I had indeed neglected a basic courtesy of introducing myself in the heat of the moment, I might need to work on that.

"I'm Adam," I replied gently, and despite already knowing their names, I asked for them in return, if only to reassure the children that we were on equal terms.

Their responses were quiet but clear.

Mirajane, the oldest, spoke with a strength that belied her age, her voice carrying an unfathomable sense of self-deprecation that was almost impossible to believe.

Elfman, the middle kid of the family, responded in a timid yet firm voice, a hint of protectiveness creeping into his tone.

And Lisanna, her words were soft, like a whisper carried on a summer breeze, full of confidence and shyness in equal measure, a most odd combination.

As we continued our journey through the town, arriving at the train station, Mirajane moved to walk beside me. Her eyes, a deep blue that mirrored the midday sky, studied me, revealing a well of sadness lingering within their depths.

"Why did you help us?" she asked, her voice steady yet filled with a raw vulnerability. The question hung in the air, a

poignant reminder of the distrust that too often tainted the innocence of childhood.

Had I forgotten to tell them why I had helped them?

Perhaps I had been too focused on what was happening...

For a moment, I was silent, taking the time to consider my answer. The hustle and bustle of the town faded into the background as I turned to face her, meeting her gaze with a sincerity I hoped she could see.

If you had asked me years before the events of the tower, I wouldn't have been able to give you an answer...

But time had allowed me to grow... in ways I was just starting to see, or fully grasp.

Perhaps I had always been this way, perhaps not, it didn't matter.

I had saved them because it was the right thing to do.

But that response seemed too simple, too devoid of the human emotion that had driven my actions. I had saved them because, in their faces, I saw hope, resilience, and a spark of life that deserved to be protected.

I had saved them because, in that moment of crisis, they had needed someone, and I had been there, so why not?

But how could I convey all of that to a broken child?

"I helped you," I finally said, "Because everyone deserves a helping hand every now and then. And when I saw you three in trouble, I knew I had to do something."

Mirajane stared at me, her gaze searching.

I smiled, hoping that my words had reached her, and had offered her some modicum of reassurance, I wasn't good at this, at least I didn't feel like I was.

After a moment, she nodded, a small but meaningful gesture that told me she understood, at least enough to ease her heart a little bit.

As we boarded the train, I took a moment to reflect on the events that had led me to this point.

I knew, even though I didn't remember very well that their story had been marked with pain, I knew that before meeting them, but something about seeing them in person, instead of... my TV, had stirred a strong sense of empathy within me.

This wasn't the first time this had happened.

First Cana.

Lexus...

Then Erza.

It was surprising; really.

I smiled, it seemed that little by little the amount of people I wanted to protect was growing. Despite just having met them, at least in person, I found myself drawn to them, committed in a way to ensure their safety and wellbeing.

I wonder if this is how the old man feels about everyone in the guild.

Perhaps this is the reason he adopts so many children into the guild.

As the train began to move, I settled into a seat, and much to my surprise, the children huddled close around me, at least Lisanna and Elfman.

Mirajane was simply staring out the window, with a sense of longing that I couldn't quite grasp.

I knew they were scared, despite how happy they seemed, and I didn't blame them. They had just lost everything they had ever known, and now they were on a train headed to a new life

in a new place, with a stranger who had inexplicably come to their aid in their time of need.

Taking a deep breath, I watched as the scenery outside the window transformed from the bustling town to the quiet countryside, and the children's breathing gradually grew slower and deeper, their bodies finally relaxing into a peaceful slumber.

Despite the exhaustion tugging at my own body, I couldn't bring myself to join them in sleep, my thoughts instead drifting to the events that had led us here.

I had never taken the time to ponder how bizarre was to deal with what once you considered fiction as a reality.

I had just taken the bull by the horns as they said.

But... isn't it... wonderful and daunting how the reality of some can be the fantasy of others?

I had never given that much thought, I mean, I had always known that was the case, but I hadn't... given this line of thinking much air to breathe.

This... world, was more than just a story to tell.

These were real people, with real struggles and real emotions.

And I was a part of them.

I wonder if my story will be considered fiction to others in distant worlds, like the story I once considered fiction, and now is my reality.

I chuckled.

Knowing what I know, there was a big possibility that was the case. Isekai was a genre, after all.

Oh well.

That's neither here nor there.

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## **[Third Person - POV]**

A door creaked open, its mournful wails echoing through the cavernous room as a small, shivering figure sidled in. The room was gloomily lit, the scattered candles flickering, casting monstrous shadows against the cold, stone walls. The air was heavy with a sense of dread, the taste of fear palpable.

The man, known only as Jolul, a lowly servant, was trembling, his face as white as the ghostly pallor of the moon. His heart pounded in his chest like a war drum, the rhythm fast and irregular, echoing the fearful anticipation in his veins. His hands clung to a bundle of parchment, the ink barely dried.

In the center of the room, a grand, imposing throne sat in the shadows. Its high back, embroidered with obsidian and onyx, seemed to consume the flickering candlelight, making the occupant of the throne an ominous silhouette.

"Lord Zeref," Jolul stuttered, bowing low before the enigmatic figure, "I bring you the reports you asked for."

From the abyss of the throne, a figure emerged, a man draped in darkness, his presence unnerving and strangely captivating. The dim, flickering light danced across his face, illuminating his sharp features, and casting deep, haunting shadows under his eyes.

His ebony hair, as dark as the night itself, framed his pale face, a stark contrast to his crimson eyes that glowed with a menacing light.

Zeref's lips curled into a smile, one that seemed kind on the surface, but underneath lay a chilling malevolence. It was a smile that belonged to the face of a monster rather than a man.

His very existence seemed to radiate a dark, unholy aura that made the temperature in the room drop, making every breath feel like a gulp of icy winter air.

"Good work, Jolul," Zeref commended, his voice as cold and haunting as a winter's breeze, sending shivers down Jolul's spine.

Jolul could only nod, unable to meet his lord's gaze, before retreating, his footsteps echoing like a lonely heartbeat in the silence of the room.

Once alone, Zeref picked up the report, his eyes scanning the words. The mention of Adam's unique magic intrigued him, a power that perhaps held the potential to release him from his... accursed immortality.

Zeref's laughter filled the room, a sound as chilling as the wind howling through a graveyard. The thought of finally escaping his eternal curse, by the hand of a mere kid, was amusing.

And yet, there was an odd appeal to it.

"Adam," Zeref mused, his eyes twinkling with a dangerous curiosity. "Could your blade truly kill me, freeing me from this cursed existence?"

He decided it was time to see firsthand what this magic was capable of, that it was time to meet this Adam and see what the newest Fairy had to offer.

And with that decision taken, for the first time in a long time, Zeref felt something akin to anticipation stirring within him.