

## [Adam POV]

Having completed my mission, I wrapped the woman's lifeless body in an old blanket and held the severed head tightly against my chest. As I trudged through the crowded streets, terrified eyes followed me and women and men alike crossed themselves, muttering prayers under their breath.

I might need to look into learning a spell to move the bodies without people watching.

Ignoring the looks I was getting, I reached the Mayor's Office, and heaped the corpse and the head in front of him, and silently waited for his response.

The Mayor's face was drained of color, his eyes widened to the size of dinner plates, and he stumbled backward with a stutter, "T-that's..."

I sighed. It's not like I had wanted to drag the body across the town, alas, I had been forced to do so by the job's parameters. My arms were crossed over my chest defensively as I met his terrified gaze. "If you didn't want to see the body, you shouldn't have asked for it. You specified in the job request you wanted to see the body before payout."

The Mayor gulped, his eyes flicking between the body, the head, and me, “That's right, I'm sorry, I see now that was a mistake. Could you leave the body somewhere else, please?” The mayor offered me an apologetic smile.

“Sure,” I replied with a shrug, before grabbing the body and head and shoving them both into his closet. “I would recommend you order someone to bury or burn the body before it begins to reek. Now back to our business, just pay me, then I'll be on my way.”

The mayor quickly drew out a couple of stacks of cash from his drawer and offered them to me, his hands shaking.

"What... if it's not done?"

I took the cash, before putting it in my bag. "In the rare event that happens, just contact the guild, and ask for me, I will back and do a cleanup without charge."

"I-I see."

With that said, I turned on my heels and left the Mayor's office, hastily making my way to the train station, only to find terrible news when I arrived.

The next train to Magnolia was delayed.

I slumped into a chair, feeling a bit down. This was why I hated traveling so far, more than twenty hours in a train to complete a quest in less than one.

I sighed.

I should really focus on mastering my Hoho to the fullest extent, it would save me some trouble.

Then again, using such a technique for travel would only be a waste of energy. Though I could probably use it as training, I mean, I don't recall Yoruichi ever being tired from using Shunpo.

I grinned at the thought, leaning back in my chair as I looked at my blade. "Why don't we give it a try, sweetheart?" I suggested, "What do you say?"

Without delay, a warm, pleasant sensation washed over me, showing Zanryuzuki approved of my idea.

A deep, throaty laugh erupted from me as I sprang from my chair, the sound echoing off the walls of the station. Taking a deep breath, I rolled my shoulders and neck, feeling the tension in them slowly diminish. I continued scratching, lifting my arms above my head trying to reach for the ceiling, while letting out a satisfied sigh.

That should be enough.

Time to travel with style.

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Shunpo or Flash Step is a movement technique that allows the user to move faster than the eye can follow. As speed is the main factor of the technique, the skill can be best characterized by how fast one can get from point A to point B in the least amount of steps.

Training and skill are what establish how fast the user in question can move.

To elaborate further on that, users of little skill in the technique or those who have not used it for an extended period of time are usually considerably slower, which in turn requires them to use of more steps to move the same distance others would accomplish in one step and also become winded in a shorter amount of time with continuous use.

I wasn't sure how good I was with this technique, I mean, I had nothing to compare myself against, but according to Zanryuzuki my skill with it was more than adequate.

That being said.

I still had a lot to learn and master with it.

"Oh god," I gasped, struggling to catch my breath as I stumbled backward, feeling the full force of the heat from the sun that bore down on me. After one hour of Shunpo, my clothes were plastered to my body with sweat that I could feel dripping from my forehead and onto the parched earth below me.

In the last hour, I had covered a considerable distance, ending in a forest nearby a small town. Be that as it may, I was tired beyond comprehension.

"I can't even begin to imagine the stamina Yoruichi must have," I said between labored breaths. After just one hour, I had reached a breaking point, with my heart thudding against my ribs threatening to escape its confines.

That woman must fuck whoever she fucks for an entire week straight, non-stop, there ain't no way that's not like that. She has to drain the literal soul of the man she chooses.

Leave it to me to turn my thoughts into something dirty.

Meh, fuck it. Anyone in my position would've thought the same shit, sooner or later.

"Is it really necessary?" Zanryuzuki sighed in the back of my head, her tone that of a mother disappointed in her child.

My chest heaved as I took a deep breath and said, "Absolutely..." My voice grew louder and more confident as I declared, "And I regret nothing!"

I would not be shamed for my dirty thoughts!

Before I could continue my chat with my Zanpakuto, I sensed a malicious intent approaching. Instinctively, I leaped backward dodging the invisible attack as I unsheathed my blade in a single, smooth motion.

I recognized that malicious intent anywhere.

Ivan Dreyar.

It had taken me more than it was acceptable to detect his presence. Being tired was no excuse to lower my guard this much.

"I'll admit, that it doesn't surprise me at all that you're attacking me while I'm tired," I said, standing up straight and squaring my shoulders. My breath was coming in shallow bursts and the place felt like it was spinning, but I forced my breathing into a steady rhythm.

For a moment, the trees of the forest seemed to part as Ivan stepped out of the shadows. His figure accentuated by a thin sliver of sunlight that illuminated his face dimly as he

approached me, his gruff voice carrying nothing but anger. "Foolish brat," he spat. "It was high time I showed you what it means to disrespect me!"

A smirk tugged at my lips as Ivan halted his march a hundred meters away, his eyes narrowed with a lethal combination of hate, anger, and cockiness. "High time, huh? We both know you are doing this now because it is your only chance to have a fair fight," I scoffed.

"You insolent whelp." He hissed, his eyes narrowing. "I should have killed you long ago."

My smirk widened. "That's a lot of what-ifs, old man."

"Oho?" He laughed, his eyes showing nothing but sadistic glee, "Do you really think that you have the power to stop me? Or that those that insult me can go with their lives unpunished?!"

I raised an eyebrow, before taking a single step forward. "Really? Because I remember a certain someone, aka, Gildarts calling you a creepy bitch the last time he was at the guild," I said with a smirk. "And yet it seems like he got away without any consequences. I wonder why?"

Ivan's eyes narrowed and his jaw clenched as his body trembled with rage. "I humored your existence at the guild,

long enough! You could've been a great asset, but you chose to oppose me, to challenge me, well you're no longer needed!"

I wonder what this creepy bitch is talking about.

Ivan's lips curled into a manic smile, "Thanks to me, and the lacrima I put inside my pathetic son, you are no longer needed at the guild. The bastard will grow strong thanks to me, and thanks to that! You are past history!"

Oh, so Laxus finally got his Dragon Lacrima.

That's good.

That means I no longer have a reason to tolerate this insufferable man that has the ego of a fucking God.

Ivan's dark eyes glinted maniacally and his thin lips pulled back into a mirthless smile as he asked, "Tell me, what does despair feels like?!" Suddenly, from out of nowhere, small scraps of colorful paper appear before twisting themselves into the paper dolls that began to float around him, their tiny limbs flailing in the air.

I was tired as fuck thanks to my little Shunpo adventure.

I was also a bit dehydrated.

And quite honestly, fucking hungry as well.



Taking all of that into consideration, and the fact he looks completely rested, he might make this an interesting fight.

Though for my sake, I shouldn't really get cocky.

I took a deep breath and popped my neck from side to side, before getting into a ready stance. "Not really," I replied. "But feel free to keep trying, don't let me crush your dreams, as impossible as they might be."

Ivan gritted his teeth and his eyes glinted with anger. And with a burst of magic that said he was done talking, an avalanche of paper dolls came to life, hurtling towards me like a violent torrent.

"Ye lord! Mask of blood and flesh, all creation, flutter of wings, ye who bears the name of Man! Inferno and pandemonium, the sea barrier surges, march on to the south!" I muttered as the torrent of paper dolls approached me without any signs of slowing down. "Hado #31. Shakkaho!"

Having finished the incantation, I thrust my left arm forward, my hand clenched into a fist, as I felt a surge of energy course through me. Then as the attack approached me, I opened my hand and unleashed a torrent of crimson fire that engulfed the paper dolls, reducing Ivan's attack to nothing but blackening ashes.

My attack, however, didn't stop after having burnt the paper dolls, instead, it screeched forward with a loud roar, consuming everything in its path and heading straight for Ivan. Seeing this, Ivan twisted his body to the side, barely dodging as his long cloak caught fire from the heat of the flame.

Seeing this, I raised an eyebrow at Ivan, as a sly smile played on my lips, "Who would've guessed paper was so flammable?"

Ivan's jaw clenched, and his teeth ground together so hard it sounded like one of them had cracked. His eyes narrowed, determined rage gleaming from them. "You will regret that!" he spat through gritted teeth.

Ivan's magical aura thickened, causing the small hairs on my arms to stand on end, but not out of fear, but anticipation. Taking a deep breath, I felt my Zanpakuto, asking to be unleashed in response to Ivan's challenge.

I sighed.

I honestly didn't want to kill the man, I mean, sure, I wanted to beat him, but not kill him.

Not because I cared for his life, because I didn't, but because it would just bring me problems in the future down the line. I mean, Makarov has yet to excommunicate him, so he might react very badly to his son being killed all of a sudden, and

Lexus... well, he had yet to come to terms with how much of a shit his father was.

If I released Zanryuzuki, refraining from killing him would become rather difficult.

Zanryuzuki was quite a stubborn lady when it came to fighting or training, one that refused to hold back regardless of who or what stood in our way.

I suppose I better aim for non-vital parts if I wish to preserve his life.

"Judge all things in this universe. Zanryuzuki!" I shouted the release command, holding my Zanpakuto in a firm grip in front of me. A mix of lights coursed down the length of the blade, crackling before my Zanpakuto entered its Shikai state.

Shikai released, a powerful wave of energy surged outward from me, washing across the forest and illuminating everything in its path.

"Ready when you are, Ivan," I said, smiling at the man who seemed shocked at the display of power I had shown by releasing my Shikai.