



A PAGE FROM A DAY OFF — IZACK OF AVALON

It was supposed to be a day off. Whatever that meant anymore.

Izack sat cross-legged in the warm grass outside the west-facing wing of the Spiral Spire, a half-eaten plum floating near his elbow, dripping slowly into the rune-scribed earth like an offering to the weird gods of academia. Polly circled above once, then landed unceremoniously on his head.

"This is your idea of rest? Meditating while fruit oxidizes beside you?"

"I'm not meditating," Izack replied, eyes closed. "I'm eavesdropping on the dirt."

Polly gave a dry rustle of her wings. "Of course. Dirt. Enlightened."

The field around him hummed with lazy dimensional stability — subtle ripples of harmony folding through the space like a cat kneading the edge of a blanket. In Avalon, time didn't pass unless you told it to. Izack had told it: *nap mode engaged*.

"You know," he said aloud, "the weird thing is that none of this was supposed to happen. I made a magic box to store my laundry. Now there's an academy, a government, and my student accidentally turned a shrub into a panther again."

"It purred at the headmaster's statue for twenty minutes," Polly offered helpfully. "Emotionally cathartic."

A breeze kicked through the lavender grove near the golem barracks. Clayborn was playing a lute—badly—but earnestly. Izack smiled.

He didn't wear his robes today. Just the soft cotton shirt Aria insisted he keep after he tried to burn it in a spell test and it came back from the laundry smelling like her garden.

"Some days," he said to the air, "I think I'm doing alright."

The Spiral Spire responded with a low harmonic chime, like a bell rung at the bottom of a dream. The glass gardens shimmered in reply.

Polly was silent for once.

"You're not afraid anymore," she said.

Izack opened one eye. "Of what?"

"Of it being real. Of this being yours."

He nodded. Not out of pride. Just recognition. The way you nod when the wind moves the trees just so and you feel like the world is watching—but kindly.

A student screamed in the distance. Someone else cheered. Probably Zara again.

Izack sighed. "Okay. Day off over."

He stood, stretched, picked up the plum, and chucked it gently into the air.

It exploded into a flock of butterflies.

"Yeah," he said, brushing off his pants. "Still got it."

Polly laughed—sharp, bright, ancient.

And Avalon, just faintly, laughed with her.