Fiction Narrative by Aaron Loguercio. Written April 18th, 2025.

A Compassionate Wizard's Mantra

I feel a sting throughout my entire body. The magical lightning courses through me, singeing my insides. I collapsed onto the ground; my staff being released from my grip. The townspeople behind me tremble in fear of their lives. The wizard fighting me steps up close to my trembling form, his boots in front of my face.

"A wizard with a heart? How repulsive." He jeers at me, kicking up dirt as he kicks me in the face. I groan in pain as I fall to my side. "Listen here boy. Magic is not something you use to play hero for some common folk that deserve to lose their coin, it is a study that you gruel over, an analysis of controlling nature and bending it to one's will. Now, give up or die." He tells me.

It is true, magic is a study, often with no room for compassion for others. It is a study that some wizards spend their whole lives doing in isolation, growing old as they grow cynical. A mantra from my magic teacher gnaws at me: "A wizard without a mind is a ship without a helm." Usually what strong wizards focus on the most is their own mind, which is how monsters like the one before me come to be. I crawl to the side and buckle my way into a standing position.

"Ready to surrender? There's no need to fight." He tells me, stroking his unkempt beard as he boasts the utilitarian view of most wizards.

For a moment, I considered his proposal. "Maybe it wouldn't be so bad to just let him take these people's money", is what I would've thought had I been the man used to be. I know these people ever since I last fought against a heartless wizard like this guy. I narrowly won, and these people that I had inadvertently helped took me in and nursed my wounds. They didn't have much money, yet they helped anyway. If I run now, they will go hungry without the money they have saved up, and perhaps more importantly, I would be betraying their kindness.

"No." I say firmly.

"A shame, you were a good wizard." He says as he raises his staff, but upon exiting the stupor of his own ego, he sees me pull out a wand from my sleeve. His eyes go wide as I am already casting a spell. A small ball of fire quickly bursts from the tip of my wand and nearly hits him in the face; however, he blocks it quickly with a wind spell.

"A wand?" He asks, cackling at my weapon. A wand can cast small and quick spells, but a staff is stronger and more versatile.

He quickly moves to cast a fire spell of his own, this time, adding a splitting rune to his spell's sorcery circle to shoot a cluster of fireballs. I weave my way through some of them and cast small wind spells with my wand to flick away the rest. He then primes his staff to shoot a lightning spell. Before he can cast it, I cast a light spell that blinds him, causing him to miss slightly. As I get close, he recovers and casts another spell, a confident look in his eyes, one that gives off an aura of calculation and precision. He knows he is going to win this struggle. I cast a lightning spell with my wand to meet his own spell. Our spells collide and it looks like he will win, but in the moment of heated combat, I yell, and the force behind my spell manages to equalize his calculated spell. He is shocked by the interaction, wondering where his estimation went wrong. In that moment, I cast an ice spell on the tip of my wand. An icicle the size of dagger manifests itself on my wand. I then stab said dagger into his chest, impaling his heart.

He groans in pain as his staff falls to the ground. "No way… a wand winning against a staff? That is not how it works."

"I would have thought so too, in the past." I tell him, panting, as he collapses to the ground. I reflect on that mantra from my magic teacher once more, but this time, I add my own conclusion. "A wizard without a mind is like a ship without a helm, but a wizard without a heart is like a ship without a sail."