

What Makes a l'Cie

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What Makes a l'Cie

by [wingeddserpent](#)

Summary

Sazh realizes some things about himself, as told to him by the l'Cie brand on his chest.

Notes

I'm a little bit late for the August challenge, but this took a hold of me and wouldn't let me go. Hope this is what you were looking for.

For the prompt:

I absolutely loved the maturity and lack of angst that Sazh brought to the FFXIII team -- he seemed to help ground the other characters, and bring in a self-deprecating light-heartedness that I believed (and adored) way more than Vanille's perky chirpy lies or Hope's sappy speeches. Things to explore: Sazh&Dajh backstory, maybe fleshing out the nonexistent mother/marriage/relationship; meta on how or why Sazh's roles (COM/RAV/SYN) relate to him as a person (especially Synergist); anything exploring Sazh's relationships with his other party members - I'd love Sazh-Lightning, Sazh-Vanille, Sazh-Hope, shippy or not, everything is good. Basically: SAZH APPRECIATION DAY UP IN HERE.

They are sitting in the Waterscape and Sazh has never wished more in his life that they just had time to rest. He's sweaty, he's covered in who knows what, and his fingers are coated in so much gunpowder he'd be afraid of letting off a Fire spell.

(It sort of feels like growing up in Eden, all those years ago. But he doesn't dwell on it, because that part of his life is very much over.)

Vanille looks at him from where she's sitting, face covered in what looks like flan mucus, and it doesn't look like she's doing a great job getting it off and he hates to think what cleaning his jacket later will be like, and she smiles at him, smiles at him like it reaches her eyes even though he can tell it doesn't (and he wonders what she's hiding, but it's really not his place to ask. She'll tell him when she's ready, or she won't).

"You know," she says, voice bright and light and bubbly, "apparently the first two roles you get when you're a l'Cie say a lot about who you are. As a person."

"I didn't know. What does the third say?" he asks, grinning a bit.

He's not going to ask how she knows that. He knows without asking that she doesn't want him to ask. Just because they're saving each other's lives, just because they're stuck on this crazy train together doesn't mean they have to trust each other. Not really.

Loneliness is a familiar pang, especially since Elisabeth died, but what he really wants is to see Dajh. At least one more time.

Vanille laughs, looking at him intently, "Oh, you're smart. Usually, it says something about who you'd like to be."

"And what do yours say about you?" he teases.

What he doesn't expect is for her to sober, the smile faltering, and she tells him, "That I'm best at staying behind the scenes and tearing people down," she sighs, then shakes her head. "But I'd like to help people."

Then she laughs, but it doesn't sound particularly happy, so he reaches out and clasps her shoulder. For a moment, she tenses, then relaxes, but even that feels forced, so he pulls away.

(You can't help someone who doesn't want to be helped. And oh, has he learned that lesson the hard way.)

The conversation sticks with him, though. Even after they get to Pulse, he still thinks about it, tries to piece together what he is. Ravager and Synergist, followed by Commando. It sounds like a recipe, but what makes a l'Cie? (Besides a fal'Cie of course, and he tries not to snort. He's never been particularly funny and there's very little that's funny about any of this.)

He finds Hope about fifty feet from camp, dipping his feet in a stream and laughing as the small fish tickle his toes. There's a part of Sazh worried about flesh-eating Pulse monster fish but he thinks maybe that's just the overprotective father in him. Fang keeps glancing over here and he figures she'd tell them if something in the stream could eat Hope.

Probably. Most likely. He still doesn't really know her or her particular brand of humor very well.

"It feels weird," Hope tells him, face flushed, giggling a little, "You should try it."

And it makes Sazh laugh, because Hope looks so earnest, looks like the fourteen-year-old kid he is, instead of the grave adult he's being molded into, and so Sazh sits down, then undoes the laces on his boots. For a second, Hope looks surprised, and then he scoots over a little, like he's making room for Sazh, even though there's the whole bank of the stream.

(Sazh wonders, as he's shucking off his socks, if this is something Bartholomew would ever have done with his son.)

The water's not warm but not cold when he dips his feet in, so that makes it about perfect. His muscles relax some as he wiggles his toes, the tiny little fish brushing his feet, and he *laughs*, like he hasn't laughed in what feels like forever, because it tickles and he squirms, and Hope is laughing, laughing, sun bright above them, wind ruffling his fair hair.

He doesn't really think about it before he does it, he just reaches out and pulls Hope into an awkward side hug, but they're both laughing, so it's all perfect, just perfect. And Sazh wishes he could stay like this forever, and just keep Hope safe from all of this.

They're nearly to Oerba before he figures out that being a Commando means he wants to be strong enough to lead. He's never been a leader - never really wanted to be, before this. But sometimes, sometimes when he looks at Lightning or Fang or Snow, he wishes that he could take the burden of leadership off their shoulders.

He wishes he could smooth the lines from their foreheads and let them relax, just a little.

It must be the father in him.

Lightning sits away from everyone; from here, Sazh doesn't think anyone but him can see her hands shaking. He has, by far, the best eyesight of all of them.

He waits until everyone else had awkwardly shuffled off before he approaches her. "Lightning," he says.

"What?" she asks him, voice steady, even though she's shaking.

"Listen, I know this is hard," he pauses, "But you can't let him get to you. We can't afford to lose you."

She doesn't look up at him, just stares out at the expanse of the broken railroad. Her shoulders hunch a little in on themselves. "I know. I just - I wanted it to be her. But all it was was *him* wearing her face, like he had any right to -"

"Easy, Lightning. We'll show him not to underestimate us, yeah? Now look, Hope's worried somethin' fierce and I think Fang's gonna go crazy if we spend one more minute here. Gotta stand up and show 'em you're okay and ready to move. Even if you're not now, you will be later," he tells her, offers her a smile and a hand.

It almost surprises him when she takes it, letting him help her up.

When she's on her feet she looks at him intently for a moment, then tells him, "If you or anyone else calls me Claire, I'm going to electrocute you."

He figures that's a good enough *thanks* from Lightning.

That night, he figures out the rest of it. Not that he hadn't been able to figure it out before, just that he wasn't really ready to think about it. He wasn't sure he wanted to know who Sazh Katzroy was in his heart of hearts, wasn't sure he was ready to know.

But almost every day there's a new arrow. Soon, there won't be any time for self-reflection, so the first night they're in Eden, he idly traces over the raised skin of his l'Cie mark and finally gives it serious, concentrated thought.

The Ravager in him shows that he likes to keep back, to be in a support role. He wants to be the set-up for someone else's power, wants to let someone else take the limelight. While his role as a Synergist means that he wants to build people up, so they can be the best they can be.

He wants to stand in the shadows and quietly help people become all that they can. That's really all he's ever wanted, he thinks.

Even when he was just an angry kid back in Eden, all he'd really wanted to do was make sure his mom and sister had enough. Enough food, enough shelter, enough enough enough. He'd just never seen a way out - he couldn't be in a supportive role, because he couldn't even help himself, so blinded by anger.

It wasn't until later, after he'd made it through college and met Elisabeth, he could do that. Thinking about Elisabeth still sort of hurts, remembering listening to her play piano and talk about her next case. She'd been the only lawyer he ever met to honestly care about people, which is probably a nasty generalization, but he still thinks it's true.

He remembers being her pillar - making dinner when she'd had a rough day at work, which was far too often, holding her after she got so sick and swearing to take care of Dajh so that she wouldn't have to die worrying, the look in her eyes when he'd been there for her after she lost her brother.

(She'd come to him crying. It had surprised him, because in seven months of dating he'd never seen her cry. And he had just opened up his arms, kissed her temple, and listened as she talked about her alcoholic baby brother being sent to jail for killing a man while driving. How her brother had killed himself not two weeks later. All Sazh'd been able to do was hold her, but she'd sworn that was more than enough.)

All he'd ever wanted to do was raise Dajh right. Teach him everything he needed to know about life, hold his hand and show him the way.

And now all Sazh does is try to make things easier on these kids, caught in something nobody should ever have to face. All of them are too young to have their lives end like this, because no matter what happens, this is it. There is no more after this.

Sazh sighs a bit, and rubs his forehead, glancing at where everybody else seems to be sleeping, and wishes he could do a little more.

But he can't. So he'll just move on with a smile, a listening ear, and a shoulder to lean on. He's not the leader of this group, but he can be their pillar of strength, their support. Whether that means casting Haste or listening to Fang's story about how Oerba used to be or talking to Snow about what being married is like. (Jokingly, Snow had called it "Being a Good Husband 101" and Sazh had just said that he'd tried. It had seemed to be enough for Snow.)

He leans back and stares up at the sky he stared up at as a boy and wishes (not for a first time) that there was a happy ending somewhere in all this. They all deserve it.

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