There are two sides to a circle, the inside and the outside. Thus, there are two sides to this story.

On the inside…. Looking out….

The gavel felt heavier tonight.

Worshipful Master David sat in the East, the high-back wooden chair cradling a spine that ached from a long day at his secular job. Outside of the walls of the lodge room, the mundane world rushed by in a blur of sirens and traffic. But inside, the air smelled faintly of aged parchment, floor wax, and the ghost of a thousand shared cups of coffee coming from fellowship hall.

For twelve months, David had borne the title of “Worshipful Master”. When the brethren had first elected him, he had felt a surge of pride. He had envisioned himself leading with flawless ritual, delivering lectures with commanding eloquence, and guiding the lodge into a new golden age. He thought being Master was about the hat, the jewel, and the authority.

He had been wrong.

David looked down at the altar in the center of the room, where the Holy Writings lay open, supporting the square and the compasses. Surrounding it were the men who had placed him in this seat.

In the West sat Marcus, Senior Warden, a brilliant software engineer thirty years David’s junior, watching the Master for his cue. In the South sat Arthur, a retired pipefitter who had been a Mason since before David was born, his knuckles swollen with arthritis but

his eyes sharp and supportive. Scattered along the benches were teachers, mechanics, lawyers, and grocery clerks, all leveled by the white aprons tied around their waists. Being Worshipful Master, David had learned, was not about ruling over men. It was about kneeling beside them.

He remembered three months ago, when Brother Steve’s wife had passed away. There was no ritual in the monitor for how a Master should sit in a quiet kitchen, holding the hand of a grieving widower while a pot of stew went cold on the stove. There was no handbook for the phone calls at 2:00 AM from a brother facing bankruptcy, or the delicate diplomacy required to heal a petty grievance between two stubborn past masters.

The true work of the Master didn't happen under the spotlight of the East. It happened in the quiet corners of the fellowship hall, in the hospital rooms, and in the silent chambers of his own heart as he prayed for the wisdom to govern his own passions before trying to counsel others.

"Brethren," David said, his voice steady, echoing softly off the plaster walls. "Before we close this lodge, I want to thank you."

The room grew perfectly still.

"When you placed this jewel around my neck, I thought my job was to give you light," David said, gesturing to the Master's badge of office. "But over this past year, you have been the light for me. You taught me that the Master is simply the servant who holds the blueprint, while every one of you does the hard work of building the temple. Thank you for your patience, your counsel, and your charity."

Old Arthur offered a slow, deliberate nod from the South—the ultimate sign of approval from the lodge's toughest critic.

David raised the wooden gavel. With a single, crisp strike against the pedestal, the sound rang out, sealing the evening's labor.

As the brethren began to unfasten their aprons and chat, David stepped down from the dais. He was tired, but the heaviness in his chest had transformed into a profound, quiet peace. He was just a man, flawed and rough-hewn, but he had been trusted to guard the threshold of something timeless. And that, he realized, was what it truly meant to be Master.

On the outside….

The blinding glow of the three burning tapers caught the edge of the polished mahogany, but to Thomas, the real light seemed to emanate from the man sitting high above them.

Thomas sat on the hard northern bench, his hands smoothing down the stiff, unblemished canvas of his new white leather apron. He was an Entered Apprentice—the newest, roughest stone in the lodge—and everything about this room still felt immense, ancient, and slightly terrifying.

From his low vantage point, looking toward the East felt like looking toward the summit of a mountain.

There, framed by two great brass pillars and seated atop three grand stone steps, sat the Worshipful Master. He wore the traditional top hat, a symbol of authority that felt absolute in the quiet dignity of the room. Around his neck hung the heavy silver square,

catching the soft illumination of the lodge. To Thomas, the Master didn't just feel like a leader; he felt like the keeper of a profound secret, a man who had climbed the winding stairs that Thomas had only just discovered.

When the Master spoke, the casual chatter of men old enough to be Thomas's grandfather instantly ceased. His voice wasn't loud, but it carried the weight of unshakeable tradition.

"From whence came you?" the Master asked, directing his gaze toward the West.

Thomas felt a shiver run down his spine. He watched the Senior Warden stand to answer, but Thomas's eyes kept darting back to the East. He wondered what it felt like to look out over a room of men gathered in perfect symmetry, all waiting on your word. He wondered how many years of study, how many midnight hours of memorizing mouth-to-ear rituals, it took to earn the right to wear that hat and hold that gavel.

To Thomas, the Master seemed entirely apart from the world outside. Just two hours ago, Thomas had seen this same man in the parking lot, taking off a high-visibility construction vest and throwing a lunchbox into the back of a beat-up pickup truck. He had looked tired, his knuckles grease-stained, just another guy trying to beat the evening traffic.

But here, under the symbolic canopy of the starry heavens, the grease-stained hands held a gavel with absolute precision. The tired worker had vanished, replaced by a figure of quiet majesty.

The Master leaned forward, his eyes sweeping across the rows of brethren until they briefly met Thomas's. There was no arrogance in that look. Instead, Thomas saw an

expression of intense, expectant warmth. It wasn't the look of a king looking down at a subject; it was the look of a traveler who had reached the top of the hill, holding out a lantern to show the guy at the bottom that the climb was worth it.

The Master raised his gavel and struck the pedestal once. *Bang*.

The sound vibrated right through Thomas’s chest. In that single, echoing strike, Thomas didn't just feel awe for the office or the man holding it. For the first time, looking up into the East, he felt a sudden, burning desire to grow, to learn, and to one day square his own stone well enough to stand before that grand seat without fear.

Tonight, Worshipful Masters We honor you for your service, tenacity to discover, patience to govern and being tolerant in the presence of intolerance. The many emotions a true Master becomes.