

YUNA wakes in the night, sometimes, from a dream in which her mother is still there, and it never takes Braska long to be alerted to it despite the quietness of her sobs: he has a father's ear. He can't bring her into his bed to comfort her – someone else is there too, after all, and it would be unfair on both of them. So he slips into her room to hold her, trying not to feel wounded by her confused words about her mother, because if he listens too much he can almost start to believe the same thing, that crying enough might bring her back. He holds Yuna until she is quiet and still, and then he rearranges the blanket and steps away, and tries not to think about it.

Auron doesn't wake, but he shouts out sometimes, thrashing a tangled arm or leg towards the ceiling, and Braska wonders what horrors he must have seen in combat that still pursue him now. Sometimes he sweats and groans in his sleep, and Braska passes a cool hand across his head, mustering whatever healing spell he can when he is still groggy from being awoken by Auron's cries. He keeps a steady hand on Auron, waiting until his restlessness subsides and he turns back towards the pillow, his eyebrows drawn even as he sleeps. The next morning, he is always unaware, as ready and as dedicated to his duties as ever, but Braska wonders how much he is putting himself through, and whether the pilgrimage will be respite or the final straw.

Braska wakes sometimes to find himself weeping. In dreams, when he has nobody to watch, there is no need to

be strong, and he can let himself go; and he is too careless too often, and his despair shows through. Even though he has a purpose now, and a plan, he worries that it will come to nothing, and he knows but refuses to admit that it will cause still more hurt to those he loves. But he does not want to hurt them any more than he must, so each time he climbs quietly out of bed and makes his way to the bathroom, where the sight of his own reddened face in the mirror is little consolation. When he has calmed down enough, he returns to bed, trying to be discreet, but more often than not the sounds of his careful feet and muted hiccoughs wake Auron. Auron knows by now not to enquire: the answer will always be the same, and the question will remain unresolvable. Instead, he reaches out to hold Braska, steadying him as the last of his sorrow trickles out, his strong hands maintaining the embrace until they both fall into sleep again together.