

ISAARU always made a point of summoning his new aeons shortly after he gained them, as soon as he was away from the curious gaze of his brothers; it was prudent, he thought, to get an idea of their elemental affinities before he tried using them in battle. This was why he found himself standing outside the Macalania travel agency, discreetly waving his staff as night drew in – it was past Pacce’s bedtime, and Isaaru had instructed Maroda to stay inside to watch him – and there, the aeon descended from the sky and took shape.

It was clear even in near-darkness that this was an ice aeon, just as Isaaru had expected from the setting. Her distinctly humanoid shape was more of a surprise, but he acclimatised to it almost immediately: the bond between summoner and aeon was peculiar in that it enabled a sort of instant spiritual connection between the two. She was powerful, but gentle at once, and Isaaru felt completely comfortable in her presence, a presence that others would have found far more intimidating.

Waving his staff once more to dismiss her, he heard a crunch against the ice behind him, and turned to see a young woman dressed in the robes of one of the monastic orders of Yevon.

“I beg your pardon,” she said, sounding somewhat panicked. “I didn’t mean to intrude.”

“That’s quite all right,” Isaaru replied.

The girl seemed visibly relieved by that, but instead of relaxing, she let out a little cry of delight before sinking into a

deep bow. “Oh,” she exclaimed, “I shouldn’t have looked, but it was such an honour to watch you summon! You have truly great power.”

“The aeons hold the power,” Isaaru reminded her.

“Of course,” she said, “but it’s so wonderful to see a summoner calling them. To know we are a little closer to Spira’s salvation – it gives me such joy. I only wish I could serve Yevon so faithfully in my own duties.”

“What’s your name?” Isaaru asked her.

“Shelinda, lord summoner,” she told him.

“Then, Shelinda,” he said, “if you hold summoners in such high regard, and you wish to serve Yevon – have you never thought of becoming a summoner yourself?”

“Oh, no,” said Shelinda, lowering her gaze at once. “Such strength, such devotion – I could never!”

“We all have our doubts,” said Isaaru truthfully. “You’re a nun, yes? I take it you know the healing arts?”

“A humble acolyte,” she clarified. “I can cast basic spells, but nothing of substance.”

“You can cure?” he said. “With your hands?”

Shelinda nodded.

“Then try with this,” said Isaaru, proffering his staff.

She made no move to take it at first, but then, at his continued insistence, gripped it uncertainly with both hands, and waved it a little. Nothing happened; Isaaru showed her how to adjust her grip, and coached her through a few more mo-

tions, until she began to manage to channel her undeveloped but clearly potent magical power effectively enough to cast a healing spell. Isaaru already felt fine, after an evening's good rest, but he could tell that the magic would have been enough to restore him if he had been in need of it.

"That's good," he told her. "You'll be a summoner in no time."

"Oh, I couldn't," Shelinda said, handing the staff back with more firmness than she had shown yet. "I'm not like you, or Lady Yuna – I'm not special like you are."

"There are all sorts of summoners," said Isaaru gravely. "Think about it."