

NOT for the first time on his pilgrimage, Braska was at a loss. He normally relied on Auron to help him in these situations, but Auron had declared himself too angry with Jecht to spend another second in his company, and had gone for a long walk to stop himself turning to violence.

The problem was this: having handed over all his money at the Moonflow crossing in compensation for Jecht's misdeeds, Braska had neither the gil to pay for his dinner, nor the negotiation skills to obtain food by other means. Instead, he sat on the bank by the trader's stall, trying not to look too pathetic as he watched other travellers step up for a delicious meal. He had always appreciated the cuisine of the Moonflow region; now, he was beginning to wish he didn't know how exquisite it was.

The smell of the food was so uncomfortably distracting that Braska failed to notice the young girl approaching him until she said, "Aren't you having any dinner?"

He studied her: she could hardly be more than ten years old. A little older than his Yuna, surely, but not by more than two or three years.

"I'm not hungry," he lied, and was betrayed instantly by a loud rumbling from his stomach.

The girl frowned; she looked at his robes, his staff, his head-dress – and then she said cautiously, "You *are* a summoner, aren't you?"

*Guilty as charged* was the sort of response Braska would

usually make, but that kind of remark would have gone over her head. “Yes,” he said instead.

She nodded gravely, and then skipped off. Braska returned to his thoughts; failing to conjure up something that would distract himself from his ongoing hunger, he resorted to wishing that Auron might return soon and sort things out.

But it was the girl who came back, not Auron, with a bowl of steaming rice and vegetables. “For you,” she said simply.

“Oh, I couldn’t,” he protested.

“You must,” she said, with an insistence that seemed at odds with her young age. “Ordinary people need to help summoners, or they won’t be able to finish their pilgrimage and defeat Sin.”

Her juvenile logic was impeccable; Braska took the bowl with both hands, its wonderful smell having broken his already weak defences. The girl probably didn’t even know what happened to summoners at the end of the pilgrimage, he thought. Yuna knew, but only because he had had to tell her before he left; it had been cruel enough, but the alternative would have been still crueller. Most children were unaware – a small mercy in their miserable, fearful lives.

“Just what I needed,” he said after the first few mouthfuls. “Thank you.”

The girl bowed and departed, and Braska found himself marvelling, as he often had, at the kindness of strangers. The people of Spira were so good to him; he needed to return the

favour in the best way he knew. He needed to bring the Calm:  
for this little girl, and for Yuna, and for everyone.