

[ASMR] DRUMBEAT [M4A][FFXIV][HOPE]

*After saving Eorzea from its ultimate demise, the world must continue to turn and so must those who inhabit it. The Warrior of Light, your current party member, is running ragged and is unsure of how they will spend the days ahead of them. You know they have been requested to travel west to Tural to aid in a royal dispute, so you must sway them to listen to the beat within their heart.*

(You knock on the listener's door.) Hello? Are you still awake, friend? It's me. (The door opens to reveal the player. Listen: What are you doing up?) What am I doing at this hour? I was practicing my routines. I cannot afford to let my dance skills weaken, regardless of the world being saved. I noticed the candlelight from your doorway on the way back to my room. I couldn't just walk by. Are you alright? What ails you? (Listen: It's nothing, truly...) Nothing? Are you certain? Forgive me for being so forward, but I don't think I believe you. (The listener is surprised.) Do not look at me like that. I have traveled with you for a long time, my friend, and I know when you are putting on a brave face. It is okay to let your guard down once in a while. The Final Days are behind us, the Alliance is secure, Thavnair prospers, and even Garlemald is slowly rising from the ashes. (The listener looks down, silent.) ...may I come in? I will not stay long, but I do wish to hear what keeps you awake despite everything you have done for this star.

*The listener moves and lets you inside their room. It is just like yours in every way, besides their armor decorating the armory and their weapons lining the rack.*

The Students of Baldesion truly spared no expense to shelter us comfortably. (Listen: Is your room different from mine?) Huh? Oh, no, my room is just the same as yours, though I do not use it much myself anymore. I am quite comfortable sharing a bed with my crystal migo'te, as it were. Still, to know that we were granted every comfort we could need to do what was required of us... it's almost mind-boggling. (Walk over and sit at the table) However, you do not seem to be finding comfort in all of this, my friend. Why is that? (Listen: I don't know what you mean...) You do not know what I mean? Come now... it is fairly obvious that you still carry the star on your shoulders. (Take a moment.) It is okay to lower it down from your back. Eorzea won't suffer another calamity if you rest for a moment. No one with breath in their body today could deny you such succor.

*The listener sits down across from you with slumped shoulders. This journey has weighed heavily on them for quite some time...*

My friend, have you thought of just leaving to explore the world on your own? No one would blame you if you decided to go out on your own adventures. With peace finally settling, no one has bore the need to break it for war or destruction of any kind. At least not so much to warrant concern. The Scions may work separately as of late, but that does not mean we are idling around. Each of us has a role to play and this world will be rebuilt piece by piece, brick by brick. The Alliance continues to thrive and the scholars here in Sharlayan are finally opening up their eyes to concerns beyond their watery borders. I dare say the only beings to be disappointed in

this entire situation are the Lopparits, whose very existence was to help the people of Eorzea escape from Meteion and the Final Days. I have no doubt, however, that even they will find a new purpose.

*The listener has said nothing thus far to you. They have only been listening.*

How long have you been adventuring, my friend? It is clear that Hydaelyn chose her champion well to this day, but you never told me of how that fate came to be. Tell me: how did the Warrior of Light's journey begin? (Listen: I was just another adventurer.) You were just another adventurer? I must disagree. I remember meeting you during the fall of Ultima Weapon. Among the sea of adventurers and fighters repelling and destroying the Garlean threat, you stood out amongst them all. A spark in the deep shadows. A beacon of light when all seemed to be lost. You rose above everyone's expectations, even mine when I joined you to end the Dragonsong War in Ishgard. Your march forward never stopped for a single moment. Your footprints buried themselves into Ala Mhigan sand. You sailed through Doman waters to bring two countries salvation from tyrannical rule. Yet your path continued ever onwards and you continued to walk along it without rest. By the Twelve, you even saved the First from drowning in light, bathing in darkness to save it from total annihilation. Everything that ultimately saved this world from utter destruction has been due to your influence in one way or another...

*Take a moment. You were there too, but the weight was not as heavy as it was on the listener, who felt the most responsible for everything that had gone wrong.*

You are... truly a blessed soul. You know that, right? Without you, so many people would no longer be here. Without you, Eorzea might not have survived even if the Garleans had their way with the rest of the world. So many things could have brought disaster upon our star, yet you stopped each tragic event at every turn. (Listen: I could have done more...) You could have done more? What more could you have done, my friend? We are not gods nor are we perfect beings incapable of small failures. Mistakes are mortal, as are we. It cannot be helped that life accepted those souls back into the Aether in exchange for our new future. (Listen: So many people died, Roy...) Yes, many lives have been lost. Some were even preventable. I know many who wish they could see the ones they love again before they were taken by the turmoils that plagued Eorzea... There will always be those moments when we wish we could turn back the clock... Yet, if we allow ourselves to linger in those tiny moments, we will never fully embrace the present around us.

*You stand and walk around to sit in a chair beside the listener, keeping their focus on you.*

Our failures cannot define us. Everything we have done was for the present we live in now. The pain we felt in those moments, the pain we feel still to this day... was part of the journey to peace. (A memory comes up.) I remember watching you suffer from absorbing the light from the First... it was almost unbearable to watch you stumble, almost cracking from the light bursting within your body, as you marched towards Emet Selch in defiance... I can only remember the battle after, facing his true form with the same malice he exacted upon us... Ardbert helped you,

didn't he? His spirit, at least... (The listener nods) The Twelve only knows the suffering you have gone through... Yet, you decidedly chose to stand and continue despite everything that has happened. When Garlemald practically imprisoned you, not once did you surrender your life to their desire for revenge. When Meteion cried out to be saved, you jumped forward to bring her out of that spiral darkness... have you taken the time to let yourself rest from all that has happened to you?

*For the first time, the listener's expression breaks to one of extreme sadness and pain. They have been fighting a battle within themselves for a long time.*

Oh my friend... (Embrace them) You have journeyed so far... no matter your reason, you truly have a soul of steel. Being such a hero in the eyes of many often makes us forget how truly vulnerable we are as mortal beings. We must never forget how fragile our flesh is in this world, no matter how many dragons we slay or how many calamities threaten to tear our world apart. (Pull away slightly) You've carried so much of our burdens... not just our burdens, but also your own. Anyone else would have crumbled beneath such teetering weight. It is both admirable... and pitiful at the same time. Why did you not tell any of us these growing pains? I know Graha would have done anything to help aid you, for it was both you and I who guided him to his destiny in the Crystal Tower. The twins? They owe you everything after everything you have done to both help them and protect them in kind. Any one of us could have... but we didn't, did we... we were so focused on trying to fix the world that we did not see the weight bearing down upon our dearest friend... Could you ever forgive me for being so blind?

*The listener nods, finally able to shed a tear and open up. This is what they needed and now you will listen to their heart.*

Thank you. I am very proud to call you my friend and consistent ally. While I may not bear the shiny title you do, I am still honored to have fought alongside you all of this time. To think of the places we'd go and the people we'd meet in what seems to be so little time. How many royals have we gotten to shake hands with, let alone be in the presence of? I know well enough that my clan would never have given me the opportunity for such blessings if I had stayed the course. (Listen: What do you mean?) Hmm? What do I mean? I'm a viera. A male viera at that. We are often left to be taken care of by an elder, taught how to hunt and fight in the forests or mountains. I, however, changed my course to learn Thavnairian dance under the tutelage of Nashmeira. I was under her wing for a long time before I chose to help others with my battle dancing as an adventurer. She always taught me not to keep my skills for myself, but to use them to brighten the way for others. When I met you and decided to travel at your side, that message only grew stronger within me. The most surprising thing was knowing that dedication traveled within your spirit as well and that I was not alone in my want to do what was right for Eorzea.

*The listener closes their eyes and confesses that they barely remember when they started on their journey.*

You can barely remember the day you began adventuring? It is quite understandable. It had been so long ago, it is no wonder you can barely recall your first steps into the fold of battle. A lot has happened to you since then, my friend. I'm sure that the you who took that first step in the past would be proud to see who they will become in the future. (Listen: How do you know?) How do I know? Call it a performer's intuition if you'd like. I've danced enough stories to feel every brimming emotion a mortal can feel and, while I may not know your heart in its entirety, I can see what you carry with you. The power to do what you do is awe-dropping. Inspiring, even. Have you not heard the songs the bards sing about you in deep praise? How many travelers raise a mug of ale to you in honor of your heroism? One day I will show you or maybe you will find out yourself. Your name is one many will carve into stone and metal and it will be deserved in all regards. No matter the choices, no matter the consequences, you saved this world. Be proud of that.

*The listener chuckles and reveals that they apparently need to go save a royal seat from being snatched away. Their heroism never ends.*

Your world-saving job isn't over yet? You mean the request from Tural, correct? (Listen: You knew?) Yes, I know about it. It is rather interesting to imagine being involved in a kingdom-changing situation, but then again: you've done it time and time again to the best of your abilities. We rescued the Ruby Princess together, remember? You crowned the King of the Faeries in the First. Political molding is not outside the realm of our experience. Though... I can see that you are uncertain. Why do you look like you are nervous about it? Have you not given your approval to help them? Or are you still trying to decide? (Listen: I don't know what to do...) You don't know what to do... hmmm... so many things have plagued your mind. It's no wonder you are still awake...

*"What do I do?" The Warrior of Light asks. It's rare to see them so vulnerable, but it is almost relieving to see them rely on you as you rely on them.*

What should you do? Hmmm... well, it's all a matter of what your heart tells you to do. (Listen: What do you mean?) What do I mean? Exactly that. Friend, your shoulders are carrying so much burden and regret, yet your legs want to keep moving forward no matter what. You are marching to a beat that your mind is struggling to maintain because it has barely had the chance to listen to your heart. Allow me to guess: Deep down, you want to help someone in need. However, you know how much work you have done and just want to stop. Can you finally let yourself relax or will you continue moving without being able to help yourself? (Take a moment) Well, to answer that question, what does your *heart* say? (Listen: My heart?) Yes, your heart. What does it say to you? Your mind only wants to try and keep control while your instincts are always ready to fight due to what you have gone through. You see the issue this request brings and are already preparing for it, but you logically do not know if you would be able to handle it after all this time.

The answer is simple: What does your heart say? That one piece within you is what gives your body life, purpose. You listen to it when you are lost because it will sing songs of things it adores

and cry over pain it endured. That beat within your chest is the march you need to follow either towards your mission or away to your own journey of self-preservation. Either path is one you are allowed to take because of all you have done. But you will only regret your choice if you allow your mind to take control or if you let your feet walk out from beneath you. Listen with your heart, Warrior of Light, and you will find the answer you seek. Maybe you'll find a new home in the west or maybe you'll simply get the job done just to finally have some peace as you travel back here. Who knows? Your heart does.

*You stand and begin to excuse yourself. The hour is late and Graha is waiting for you.*

I truly hope you will at least rest at some point. I do not know when you have to give an answer, but make sure it is one you can say proudly with your full chest. I must retire for the night, so I will bid you a restful sleep. In the morning, perhaps your heart will finally beat to a discernible pace that allows you to make your choice with little effort. But know this: You are appreciated and loved, regardless of the choice you make. Do not believe for a moment that you are failing expectations when you have done so much to warrant praise and care.

Good night, Warrior of Light. I will see you when the dawn trails over the horizon.