

# Letting Go

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Author's Notes: This is a Final Fantasy IX fanfic/orginial character fiction. All concepts for Final Fantasy IX, including characters, lands, and other events belong to SquareSoft/Square Enix.

Ti'Mae Oakenflower Cresecent and Ayuni belong to Elizabeth Marion Whittaker.

*Sometimes, I have to wonder if what I did was the right thing. For me. For him.*

*Sometimes, I wonder if she would have turned out better if Fratley and I raised her.*

A lone figure stood out in her little garden of forget-me-nots, her pink outfit blowing behind her in the wind. Her hat was knocked off her head, landing in the grass just above her taloned feet. White hair was around her face, in her eyes and despite the blustery wind, the Burmecian woman had to smile. Despite the loneliness that ate at her heart every time she came to this place, Freya still was able to move on.

At least, when it came to day to day life. Interacting with her people and going home to see her sister, her nieces, her friend. But they all knew that deep inside, Freya was still mourning her loss for her mentor, her friend, her love. Her niece knew too well that situation. She had done everything to be sympathetic to her plight. But the village saw her as an outcast, where they saw Freya as a hero.

*Then again, magic is misunderstood since the time that Brahne was Queen of Alexandria. She ruled by fear, whereas Garnet leads with compassion. But still . . . you can't explain to the High Priestess of Cleyra that magic can be a good thing when Cleyra was wiped out and the sandstorm stopped around it . . .*

Sitting down by the flowerbed of blue forget-me-nots, Freya sighed softly, picking at one. She noticed that they had just bloomed, irregular for autumn for flowers. She knew that her niece had come, visited the place where they planted them several years before, for Fratley's memory. Only now, it was something that haunted her of her past.

*Would you really have made a difference in her life, Fratley? Would you, I wonder? You made a difference in mine . . . took me in when no one else would even look at me. How Mother humiliated me, deceived me. Always showed more attention to Ayuni more then me . . . and yet, when you came, you saw me, crying underneath the tree . . .*

The woman's mind wandered a bit as she thought for a while on her past. It had taken a lot of work to trust him. Believe in herself, knowing she could do what others could. He taught her to fight, taught her to believe in more then just what she could do. To believe in what others could do.

*"I don't know if my spear alone is enough to protect Burmecia . . . which is precisely why I must go out into the world."*

The words played at her heart as she lived in the memory of that fateful day . . . the last day she would ever see him. She remembered how much she felt, how angry she was. Upset. Confused. Her childlike ringing in her ears as she said, "Sir Fratley . . . I don't think

*I can live on my own - not without you.*" This she did distinctively remember, for she ran and hugged him close. She had just admitted how she felt, knowing it was not a childlike crush. What she knew for years but had been denying.

And gratefully, she remembered him accepting, but pushing her away gently. *"Freya, you're going to be fine. Trust your strength... and have faith in your destiny."*

At hearing that in her mind, she had shivered, fearing that was what she was running from all along. What was she doing here, sitting there, just drowning in the memories of the past? There was something more she needed to do . . . Freya just lost purpose as to what it was . . .

*"You've left me with nothing except rumors of your death."* Glimpses of words that she had recalled thinking years ago that still remained true. The words that she told herself to keep going, persevering.

*"I still won't believe it!"*

*"Never. Not until I witness proof of your death with my own eyes."*

*"And I will travel across the world forever if I must..."*

*Yet . . . haven't I already done that . . . and found . . . nothing? No piece as to tell me that Fratley just vanished? I saw him years ago . . .but that has been a long time ago. He could be dead by now . . .*

At this the wind blew harder, as if to sympathize with Freya's emotional torment.

The woman hugged herself, cold in the autumn chill. Her hat blew against the tree near her and she let it go, tears running down her beautiful emerald eyes. The trail of tears was warm at first on her rattish fur, but then quickly turned cold. "I found nothing of you . . . nothing to prove you are alive or dead. If this is punishment for not allowing my heart to guide me to go alongside you, then I have paid for it tenfold."

A hand reached to take her shoulder. "Still thinking about him, Auntie?"

The woman turned around to face another Burmecian, only her hair was long. Blue white, in a braid, which seemed to be coming undone from the wind. A sad look passed her matching emerald eyes as she pushed her spectacles up her nose. She retracted her clawed hand from her shoulder and sat down next to her. "You know . . . you shouldn't suppress your tears, Auntie."

Freya sighed as she looked to the girl. "It's been over ten years. I should be over this now." Angrily she wiped the tears off her face. "I should have moved on, Mae. Why haven't I?" She sobbed into her hands, overcome by her emotions as she saw a flicker of hair through the slits her hands made.

"Well," the girl named Mae said, "You haven't accepted that Fratley is still alive, Auntie. Maybe not in this world . . ." At this she stood up, hand held out, indicating all around them. "But in the universe. Within us. Within you." To this the girl pointed at Freya's chest, near her heart. "That's where he lives, Auntie."

Nodding, Freya stood up, brushing off some grass and dirt from her robes. "But when . . ."

Mae smirked. "Oh, you're not hard to track down, Auntie." She brushed off her matching robes that she wore, only of blue as she laughed softly. "After all . . . we did plant these when I was a child and it's been nearly ten years since then." She held a hand out and green energy swirled from it as she saw a bud. "I figured it was time to let things go, you know?" Touching the bud with a clawed finger, she accelerated its growth a bit, making the flower blossom. "Besides . . . you need to know how it is to live again."

"What about you, Ti'Mae?" This time she addressed her niece by her full title. "I thought you needed to learn how to live."

Holding her hand up, Freya's eyes saw that an emerald ring rested on her ring finger and a smile from the girl. "Oh, I know how to live, Auntie. I haven't lived my life in a memory anymore. You have. Let him out of the prison you have made for yourself. Actually, if you think about it, why don't you let his memory help you instead of hinder you?" With this, Ti'Mae picked up the bag she had left by the tree behind Freya and shouldered it. "You might find it more to your liking." Turning around, she started walking toward the direction of the sunset.

"And where are you going?"

Not bothering to turn around, Ti'Mae stopped. "Ahh, well. Here and there. You know. Working for the Council does these things."

"Thought you took a break from the Cleyran Council."

Ti'Mae laughed sheepishly. "Well, yes, I did. Going back to see my husband and child. And you? What will you do, Auntie?" She had now turned around, emerald eyes determined through her lenses. "Will you live in fear of his death? Or will you move on?"

"I don't want to accept his death. I'm used to--"

"We're all used to things, Auntie. We all hate change. But life changes. Life goes on, with or without you." Sighing loudly, the girl started walking off again. "You'll find yourself, Auntie. Believe in yourself." With that, the girl was gone, just a shadow in the slowly coming darkness.

Freya smiled for the first time in weeks as she gazed up at the stars that were starting to come, holding a hand out to seem to capture one of the stars. Her hands cradled the shape in the sky as her eyes teared once again, reflecting on what her niece said. "*Life goes on, with or without you.*" But did she want to move on, to live in the now?

"Then if life changes, Sir Fratley, I'm sure you want me to go along with it. I just hope . . . I just hope you can be proud of me."

She let her hands drop and walked over to her hat, putting it on her head after brushing it off of dust. Grabbing her polearm and her little traveling bag, Freya glanced up to the sky, nodding in appreciation.

"Somewhere, I know you are . . . because you gave me the strength to train Ti'Mae like you trained me."