

## Too Many Things, Lately

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# Too Many Things, Lately

by [Rockets](#)

## Summary

Ardbert wakes up in the Warrior of Light's body.

## Notes

Reading [Zacolyn's](#) excellent [Footprints in Sand](#) made me think about, what if the WoL's body was significantly different from the one Ardbert had on the First? What does it mean for Ardbert if the person who shares his soul is a woman?

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

- Inspired by [Footprints In Sand](#) by [Zacolyn](#)

Ardbert wakes up.

It takes him a full minute to realize the absurdity of that fact. He had always been a heavy sleeper, and the sound of seagulls outside the window and the smell of salt in the air meant that, for that minute, he was back home in Eulmore. Not modern Eulmore of course, Eulmore from back before he-

He jolts upright, eyes wide. He *woke up*. That wasn't supposed to happen! He was *dead*, he'd given over everything he was to Esselte so she could survive the process of fixing his mistakes. How- what- where *is* he?

He looks around the room wildly. Details jump out at him: a tall wardrobe, a vanity with a half-length mirror. A wide door with a heavy key hanging from cord slung over the handle. Sunlight slanting through the window, illuminating a side table next to the bed with a tall glass of water and a folded sheet of-

He grabs the letter, nearly tearing it in his haste. Something's off about the movement, some unexpected shifting of his weight, but he ignores it for now. The lettering is strange, a wide and curling handwritten script that nevertheless he finds he can read with ease.

My friend,

First off, I apologize for what was likely an unexpected and abrupt awakening. You were slumbering so deeply that I was unable to properly discuss my plans with you, so I had to proceed on my own. I hope you can forgive me.

You are presently on the Source, in Limsa Lominsa – this world's equivalent of Eulmore. I booked and paid for this inn room for the entirety of the moon, so please feel free to treat it as your own for that time. I've prepared regional and cultural notes for you that should be in the top drawer of this nightstand, should you need them.

As for the rest of it... I'm tired. The latest crisis here has been resolved, and I need some time to rest. No responsibilities, nobody begging for my help. I'm trying to convince myself that I'm not just being selfish, haha. I could have searched for some remote locale to vacation in, but after consulting with – well, most everyone I know besides Thancred is some kind of expert in soul magic at this point – another option presented itself. A way to give me what I needed, and perhaps also to give you an opportunity you deserve.

So, to use a nautical turn of phrase: as my second-in-command, you have the bridge.

He puzzles over this. This letter's from Esselte, obviously. He can practically hear her voice speaking the words as he reads them. But what does she mean, "he has the bridge", and what does that have to do with him being awake when he'd given himself over to oblivion? What-

His hand's wrong.

That's not his hand. The skin's too dark and smooth, the fingers are too thin, and there's a light layer of gloss on the nails which he would never have worn himself. (There was that one time, but- no, don't think about that.)

He drops the letter like he's been burned, even as he hears someone shriek in surprise. On reflex he jumps to his feet, but his body's not moving like it should and he immediately overbalances and falls face-first onto the hardwood floor. Groaning in pain, he rolls over onto his side and- there's that strange shifting of weight again. He looks down at himself.

Well. That's definitely cleavage right there. It looks odd though, he's never seen it from... this angle... before...

The sound of rushing wind fills his ears, drowning out sound and sight and thought—

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He's sitting on the bed. The angle of the sunlight has shifted, the color suggesting it's now closer to noon than dawn. The letter's in his hand again – the hand that currently belongs to him – and there's fresh ink on it, more words at the bottom where there were none before.

Sorry, sorry! I didn't expect you to take it that poorly! I won't ask 'are you alright?' because clearly you're not. I won't force you to do this, I just... I thought perhaps you'd be able to get some enjoyment out of it. But if it's truly so unbearable, just wake me up again and I'll figure something else out.

There's a pang of panic underneath the disorientation. She's going to take this away from him? That's— he swallows heavily, and keeps reading.

As you've realized, you're currently in my body. Or, 'our body', I should say; your original one was consumed during our fight with Elidibus. Of course I realize that you're not me, and I'm not you, but... in some ways, we also sort of *are* each other. Perhaps this body isn't to your taste, but I spent a lot of effort getting it this way, and I- I thought you might like it. Sorry.

I can't really hear you when we're like this, so if you want to leave me a message then you'll have to write it down. When you're done, the phrase to summon me back is "O Esselte, sister of my heart, I need you". A touch overwrought perhaps, but better to have an incantation that you won't say on accident.

I know what it's like to have a body that's unsuited to you. I had a suspicion that you might be like me in this regard, but if I'm wrong, then for you this must be a torment that I would not inflict on even my worst enemy. I beg you, do not suffer this for the sake of my vacation alone.

He feels his ears flatten against the top of his head, and isn't *that* an odd sensation? Esselte is a Mystel – no, a Miqu'te – and he hadn't ever considered what that truly meant. He feels the tip of his tail tapping against the bedsheets, feels every ilm of an appendage that he never had before, and... he kind of likes it, actually. It feels *right* in some undefined way.

He has *several* body parts that he didn't have before, in fact. He tries not to think about that too hard. Instead, he reaches for the quill on the nightstand and starts scratching out a response. His handwriting looks blocky and rough next to Esselte's, and that bothers him until he realizes that the primary difference is he's using Vrantic letters instead of her Eorzean ones. He laughs, and it comes out as a light, musical giggle.

No no, it's quite alright! I was just caught off-guard. This is all new, and unexpected, and I still don't entirely know what to think about it all, but I wouldn't call it anything like a torment. Not yet, at least. I'll manage, and if it becomes too much for me then I'll be sure to let you know. How does that sound?

That said, aren't you somewhat famous around these parts? Won't people get suspicious if they see me gallivanting about in your body? I don't think I can manage in those heels you always wear, either. Won't the difference be obvious to anyone who knows you? I wouldn't want to be accused of being an Ascian.

Is there anything else he needs to ask her? He bites his lip, thinking, then laughs again when he realizes that he's seen her do that very gesture. He'd always thought it was kind of cute.

Deciding he's done for now, he opens his mouth and says, with this body's high alto voice, "O Esselte, sister of my heart..."

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The sunlight shifts again, though not by as much as before. Once again there's more words on the parchment, and Ardbert begins to read.

Good, good! I'm sorry for the shock then, at least. Like I said, it wasn't as if I could discuss this with you beforehand. Do let me know if anything changes.

As for the matter of your appearance and identity, I had some ideas about that. Simplest is to present yourself as my sibling, freshly arrived in town from overseas. We can't do much about the physical similarities, but if you leave your hair down and wear different outfits than I do, the differences in the way you speak should do the rest. "Oh yes, she's my sister, I've been getting that a lot, don't you worry" is likely all you need to establish your own identity here.

That said, you might consider taking a different name for the duration as well. I know you're familiar with using an alias while on the Source, but whether it be Ardbert or Arbert, both sound rather masculine to Eorzean ears. More importantly, they sound distinctly *Hyuran*, not in line with Miqu'te traditions. Not that my name is either, you understand, but I'm something of a special case.

The difficulty with that is, matching the typical naming conventions will mark you as a member of a specific Seeker tribe, which means that other members might expect you to know something of the tribe itself if you run into them. In some areas this would not be overly burdensome – simply pick a tribe that is not represented locally – but La Noscea, the region in which Limsa Lominsa lies, is host to members from nearly every tribe in existence. And since *I* do not advertise the tribe I was born into, as my sibling I expect

that *your* tribe will be of much interest once people realize who you are. Which presents us with a problem.

My suggestion is to pick one of two options. The first is to take a Hyur-ish alias and claim it as simply an adventuring moniker. Something like Arberta would suffice. This is not exactly rare, but it would draw a similar amount of attention as "Esselte" did in Norvran among all the Dulia-Chais and Riqi-Tios. It's an option, but it will certainly mark you as an adventurer, and so people may... expect you to do things for them.

As for the alternative, Y'shtola has advised me that the Y tribe is something of a special case all on its own. There is great disdain among the tribe for their current leader, and so it is common for the tribe's members to not want anything to do with it. The appropriate syntax would be something like Y'dhoba or Y'rhubha. This would make you seem more unremarkable, but it's also more of a split from your past. That might be a good or bad thing for you, depending.

Either way, if you find yourself out of your depth, please do contact Y'shtola if you don't think it's enough of an emergency to wake me. There's a linkpearl in the drawer along with the cultural notes. (Remember that your ears are different now!)

Unless there's aught else, I'll leave you to it. Go get some lunch, explore the city. Buy some clothes, perhaps, or sign up with the Marauders' guild if you want to take up the axe again. (They'll recognize me there, but I'm well out of practice so the muscle memory won't be there to help you, I'm afraid. You have the knowledge but not the reflexes, at the moment.)

Wake me in a moon or so. Tataru's holding most of my savings for me, but what I've left you should be more than enough of a budget for that long. Don't go buying any priceless artifacts and you should be fine.

Most of all, try to enjoy yourself. This is your body for the duration, yours to use as you wish. I'd prefer if you didn't get us pregnant, but these things do happen sometimes.

With love,

Your sister, Esselte

Cheeks burning, Ardbert puts the letter down. "She just had to get in one last dig, didn't she?"

As for the rest of it... none of the name options feel quite right, but that's something that can be worked on. A bit of discomfort (*Is it though?* whispers a small voice. *Weren't you always a little jealous of her, deep down?*) in exchange for being able to explore a whole new world with no obligations, no responsibilities... it sounds rather nice, actually.

She stands and heads to the wardrobe to get dressed, walking carefully so she doesn't fall.

## End Notes

I'm marking this complete for now, but I might continue it; we'll see. I already have [another fic](#) that I'm slowly working on, but this idea grabbed onto me and wouldn't let go.

In the meantime, you can imagine Esselte playing Mario Kart with Fray and Myste inside their soul while Ardbert works up the nerve to try on a dress.

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