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HOPE
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hope

(for Laleh and Ladan Bijani)

Hope was exhausted, worn-out, frayed. Over the years, her vision -- once the brightest and clearest there was -- had become clouded with fatigue and worry over the thousands little chores needed to take care of her many clients daily. She was called on all the time, for every reason imaginable -- to watch over the smallest of promises, to end an unnecessary silence, or gift a child with things he did not truly require. She answered so many requests that people started to notice only when she failed to show, or even when she was merely late for a much anticipated appointment. She received many complaints and drop-outs. The past few years, fraught with war and pestilence and tragedy, had not been good for her -- the work load had mounted, but her resources had dwindled also. Even among her hard-working staff, there were those who faltered: the pattern was clear enough -- beginning among the most fervent of her crew, they burnt out with waiting; resignation soon followed and they were quickly lost to her rivals. Most of the time, she tried her best to do what she could, even for those deeply skeptical of her abilities. Her most innovative solutions also tended to be her quietest and most subtle, and as a result, she found it difficult to raise support for her causes despite her successes -- unlike her competitors, Anger and Delight, who had never been more powerful.

And then she came across the case of two sisters, who wanted nothing else than simply to be apart; who longed -- as hard as true lovers yearned to be joined forever -- to hold each other at arm's length, look into each other's faces and laugh. They had travelled a long way to see her, and with a certainty possessed by too few of those who'd come asking for her favours. When Hope told them how little she could do under the circumstances, expecting them to turn away in dismay and leave, she was surprised to find them smiling at her, their trembling hands locked to hers in the shape of a plea. With eyes made keen again by tears she set them free of each other, let them bid their farewells and walk at last apart, on their final and separate journeys across the endless fields.

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