Shadows of Hyrule

by KayyteeLynne

Summary

Link was many things: a professional napper, a future high school drop out, a lover of food. The last thing he was was a hero. But as fate would have it, a magical talking sword would call to him in his dreams, and a crazy old woman of the ancient Sheikah tribe would force her trainings on to him to prepare him for a battle that could have only come from a video game. And to make matters worse, he was forced to train along side Hyrule's bitchiest princess, and his best friend wouldn't let him cheat off of her on the next test. As if balancing life as a lazy high school junior needed to get any harder...

*COMPLETE*

Thanks for reading and all the awesome kudos and comments! I've had so much fun writing this (almost 150,000 words worth of fun - woah!) and I hope you've all enjoyed it! But don't worry - if you're missing our teenage champs, they'll be back for more exciting adventures in *drum roll* the sequel! Read Shadows of the Yiga (gee, I wonder what will happen next... ) for the next thrilling segment! Same bat time, same bat channel ;)
*Coming Soon*

**Songs:**

*Use Somebody, The Fray*

*Chasing Cars, Snow Patrol*

*Feel Invincible, Skillet*

*Faded, Alan Walker*

*Broken Arrows, Avicii*

*Unsteady, X Ambassadors*

**Be Your Everything, Boys Like Girls**

*I Hold On, Dierks Bentley*

*Who I Am, Andrew Galucki*

**Featuring...**

Urbosa: Age 18, Senior - brains, bronze, and beauty, Urbosa has it all. The hottest girl in school with high ambitions and grades to boot. Come graduation, she hopes to be accepted into her top choice law school. She's popular among everyone due to her charm and caring momma bear personality. Witty, sarcastic, and not afraid to put a man in his place.

Daruk: Age 18, Senior - should be on the football team, or at least a professional body builder, because he is built like a tank. Also pretty popular due to his laid back and carefree personality, Daruk gets along with just about everyone. He is best friends with Link and likes to remind him that he saved Link from getting pounded to death by bullies many years ago.

Revali: Age 18, Senior - arrogant, cocky, and often too forward with the ladies, though Urbosa always puts him in his place. He tends to over compensate in all aspects of life - the brand new sports car, the attitude, and he probably even puts more time into his looks than he should. He hates Link. Why? Who the hell knows.

Teba: Age 17, Senior - calm, cool, collected. Not much bothers Teba, and he prefers to keep out of everyone's business... unless it involves everyone going to a party without him. He doesn't generally make an effort to associate himself with anyone outside of their group of friends, and if we're being honest, he's probably only in that group because he's best friends with Revali.

Link: Age 17, Junior - professional napper and food taster and probably future high school dropout. Oh, and somewhere in there, hero of Hyrule (which, let's be honest, just gives him another
excuse NOT to do homework). He's average height, slightly scrawny, and like's to do everything he can to piss of Revali. His best friends are Daruk and Mipha.

Zelda: Age 16, Junior - the king's daughter, straight A student, never did a thing wrong in her life. She doesn't have a lot of friends in school, which could be for a variety of reasons (spends all her time on homework, doesn't have much of a social life, and is basically the perfect student). But it's most likely more the fact that she is, in fact, the king's daughter, and she feels that pressure daily. This may have resulted in her being kind of a bitch as a form of defense because she already thinks people are watching and judging her constantly. And if she ever were to step a toe out of line, her father would definitely hear about it.

Mipha: Age 16, Junior - sweet, kind, and beautiful, Mipha gets along with just about everyone. She tends to be soft spoken and timid, but in her group of friends, she's quick on her feet to keep up with Revali's relentless teasing. She is best friends with Link and looks up to Urbosa.

Paya: Age 15, Sophomore - shy and quiet, Paya could be compared to a little mouse, and often times, people forget she actually exists. She doesn't speak much in class and has a hard time hiding her emotions. She has a crush on Link and has a hard time talking to him because of that.

Sidon: Age 15, Sophomore - competitive swimmer and very out going, Sidon, too, gets along with just about everyone, but he sometimes gets left to 'babysit' Riju and Yunobo. He's not very close with his sister's group of friends, but gets along with Link and Paya. He tends to be more involved with his own group of friends.

Riju: Age 14, Freshman - independent, fierce, and over all a strong personality, Riju is definitely Urbosa's sister. She says it like it is and at times, can seem very mature for her age... until she's begging Urbosa to take her to the arcade so she can beat Link's high score. She sometimes hangs around with Yunobo, but prefers to be seen hanging out with the seniors because it makes her look cooler.

Yunobo: Age 14, Freshman - a typical freshman, Yunobo is excitable and just down right jolly. Though his cousin is Daruk, they don't spend a ton of time together. He, too, usually sticks to his own group of friends, especially when Riju can get to be too much personality for him.
Chapter 2

Chapter 1

“Link.”

Link opened his eyes and looked around quickly. He had zoned out... again. He turned his attention to the board and knit his brows together. What the hell were they talking about?

Ms. Muller turned her attention to him. “Link?”

Link stared blankly at the board. She was waiting for an answer. “Seven?”

The class snickered. He turned his helpless gaze to Mipha and she rolled her eyes.

“Try to pay attention, Link,” Ms. Muller said in an exhausted tone. “This will be on the test at the end of the week.”

Link sighed lightly and let his chin rest in the palm of his hand. He stared at the board as the marker squeaked across it, but he could not focus on the equations.

“Link.”

Link straightened and looked around quickly, but all eyes were either focused on the board in front of the classroom, or glued to notebooks as their pens scribbled furiously to take notes. He turned once more to Mipha, but she, too, was being a model student. Her red bangs fell across her eyes as she took detailed notes, seemingly unaware of anyone calling his name.

“Link.”

“Shut up,” he hissed towards Mipha.

Mipha glanced at him quickly, her expression puzzled. “What?”

“Stop fucking with me.”

Mipha’s brows raised. “I’m not doing anything.”

Link slunk back against his seat. He peered around the room once more until his gaze fell upon Zelda’s from across the room. Her brows were knit furiously at him, as if he were the source of the disturbance. He ignored her, looking around one more time, but as the voice came again, it was clear to him that it wasn’t anyone in the room. Even more so, no one else seemed to have noticed. He returned his gaze to Zelda and she stuck her nose up at him and turned her attention back to her notes.

“Link.”

Link stood and Ms. Muller turned back towards him.

“Is there a problem?” she asked. She peered at him over her glasses.

“I…” Link started. “Bathroom,” he muttered, then made his way quickly out the door and into the empty hallway.
“Link.”

“What the fuck,” he muttered under his breath. He looked down the hall to his left, then to his right, but there was no one in sight. He made his way right and wandered the halls of the school until he arrived before his locker. He didn’t hear the voice again. He turned the dial to his locker until it clicked open and he stared inside. Except for his jacket, bag, and an old text book on the shelf that he had never opened, it was empty.

The phone in his pocket vibrated and he checked the message from Mipha. *R u ok?*

Link sighed and returned the phone. He swung the locker door closed and made his way back down the hall to his classroom. But as he turned the corner, the bell rang, and Zelda was first out the door. She caught Link’s gaze and her brows knit together angrily once more.

“What’s your problem?” she hissed at him.

“My problem?” Link said. “I didn’t do anything.”

“I don’t think you and your friends are funny,” she snapped at him.

“I didn’t do anything,” he repeated defensively.

Mipha emerged from the doorway next and the hall began to crowd quickly. She made her way to Link’s side and peered up at him in concern. “What’s wrong?”

“Someone kept saying my name,” Link muttered.

Mipha raised a brow. “I didn’t hear anything.”

“If this is some stupid joke,” Zelda said, “I don’t think it’s funny. Some of us want to pass this class.”

“You heard it,” Link said, more of a realization than a question.

“You heard it?” Mipha asked Zelda. Her eyes moved between Zelda and Link, puzzled by their interaction.

“I’m not an idiot,” she barked at him. “Stop pretending you don’t know what I’m talking about.”

“You didn’t hear that?” Link asked, turning back to Mipha.

“Stop playing dumb,” Zelda said before turning her back to them dramatically, causing her long, blond hair to swoop around behind her. She pushed her way through the crowd and disappeared down the hallway.

Mipha watched her curiously before turning back to Link, still puzzled. “What is she so upset about?”

“I don’t know,” Link said slowly as he stared after Zelda.

“Are you feeling okay?” Mipha asked.

Link turned his gaze back to her. “Yeah,” he said. “Just tired.”

Mipha smiled. “You should really stop falling asleep in class.”
Link returned her smile and shrugged with one shoulder. “Maybe. Must have been a dream or something.”

“Lunch?” Mipha followed him as he made his way back to his locker.

Link spun the dial quickly and lifted up on the handle, opening the door. He pulled out his bag and swung it over his shoulder before pushing the locker door closed once more. “I could eat,” he said.

Mipha moved to her own locker a few doors down and put her books and notebooks onto the top shelf, exchanging them for her own bag. She blew her bangs out of her eyes and closed the locker door, then returned to Link's side with a smile.

“What are you doing after school?” Link asked her. They walked side by side through the loud, crowded hallways towards the senior courtyard at the other end of the building.

“You can't copy my notes,” Mipha said dryly. “I need them to study.”

Link groaned loudly. “Come on,” he practically whined. “I'm gonna fail this class.”

“Maybe you should put more effort in to it,” she said, narrowing her eyes at him.

“Maybe you should be a good friend and let me copy off your test.”

“Seriously?”

Link grinned at her.

“You're hopeless.”

Link nodded. “That's why I have you.”

“I don't support this carefree lifestyle.” She sighed. “What's your plan, anyway? Everyone else has started looking into colleges except you.”

“I don't need a mother, thank you,” Link muttered. “We're only juniors, what does it matter?”

“We had an entire assembly about this, Link,” Mipha reminded him. “Did you sleep through that, too?”

Link looked up thoughtfully, then shrugged. “Probably.”

“Have you even met with your guidance counselor?”

“What's that?”

“What exactly do you think is going to happen after graduation?”

“I don't make it a habit of thinking that far ahead. Hell, I haven't even planned tomorrow's naps yet.” He grinned at her.

“You can't be serious about anything,” Mipha said, shaking her head.

“Life's too short.”

“For you, I'm sure it will be. You're gonna flip burgers, eat fried foods, and die before you hit thirty.”
“Sounds like a good plan.”

Mipha rolled her eyes and pushed open the double doors that opened into the senior courtyard. Across the way, lounging on one of the tables, was a small group of four seniors. The tall, gorgeous, dark skinned Urbosa sat on the edge of the bench with her legs crossed at the ankles, her skirt showing off her long legs. The incredibly buff Daruk wore his dark hair spiked as he typically did, his skin a few shades lighter compared to Urbosa. He stood before her with his arms crossed. And sitting on the table, their legs on the bench seat, were best friends Revali and Teba. Their lighter skin contrasted greatly against Urbosa and Daruk. Sunglasses shielded Revali's eyes, but Link could tell he was glaring at him the moment Mipha opened the doors. Teba, on the other hand, paid no mind to them, though Daruk and Urbosa turned to greet them, gesturing for them to approach.

“You know this is the senior courtyard,” Revali said with a slight snarl. “In other words, no juniors, no matter how special you think you are.”

Link ignored him and met Daruk's waiting fist bump. Revali and Teba parted slightly, allowing for Mipha to sit on the bench beside Urbosa, despite Revali's earlier comment.

“Give it a rest,” Urbosa said with a roll of her eyes. “Link and Mipha can hang out here whenever they want.”

Link grinned, then stuck his tongue out at Revali.

“That's so mature,” Revali muttered. He peered at Link over his sunglasses.

“Be nice to him,” Mipha said as she bit into her sandwich. “His usual fourth period nap was cut short today. He's a little cranky.”

“I'm not cranky,” Link said, folding his arms over his chest.

“He and Zelda had it out in the hallway.”

“Zelda?” Daruk repeated, turning to Link. “Since when do you talk to her?”

Link pulled his own sandwich out and took a bite. “I don't,” he said as he chewed.

“She was yelling at him for something,” Mipha explained.

“What did you do?” Urbosa asked Link, narrowing her eyes on him.

Link swallowed his bite. “Nothing!”

“Oh, I'm sure he did something,” Revali said. “This is Link we're talking about. He has such a way with the ladies, after all.”

Mipha giggled.

“I think I'd know if I did something wrong,” Link muttered.

“Men never do,” Urbosa said.

“Whatever,” Link said. “She's crazy.” Maybe just as crazy as he was, considering they were the only two that seemed to have heard the voice. He turned back to his sandwich, and to his relief, the conversation switched to a new topic.
“Have you heard from any schools yet?” Mipha asked, turning to Urbosa.


“I'm sure you won't get a single rejection,” Mipha said with a smile. “They'll all be fighting over you.”

“I don't know about that,” Urbosa said.

“You're one of the highest ranked students in the school,” Daruk pointed out. “Of course they're going to fight over you.”

Urbosa rolled her eyes. “Yeah, but look at my competition.” She threw a thumb over her shoulder towards Revali. “I bet even Link ranks higher than that.”

Revali scoffed. “Grades don't matter anymore,” he said. “It's all about who you know. And I know people.”

“Right,” Urbosa said. “We'll see how that plays out for you.”

“I've already gotten one acceptance letter,” he said as he pushed himself off the table. “Early submissions pay off.”

“So, who's dick did you have to blow for that?” Teba said.

“My father -”

“Woah!” Daruk yelled, his arms in the air.

Revali glared at him, then continued. “My father's friends with the Dean.”

“The Dean's gonna regret that decision real quick,” Urbosa said to Mipha.

“While you're off doing boring lawyer stuff,” Revali said, “I'll be playing the stock game with a babe on each arm. They'll wear coats made of hundos and we'll sail off into the sunset on my massive yacht.”

“I'd say he's overcompensating,” Mipha said. Urbosa nodded.

“Come on, Teba,” Revali said. “Let's smoke this joint.”

Teba sighed. “You have such a Napoleon complex.”

“A what?”


“Why are we friends with him,” Mipha said.

“Well, I liked Teba,” Daruk said.

“Why is Teba friends with him?”

“Teba and Revali go way back,” Urbosa said. “I think Teba is just stuck with being friends with him at this point.”

“They're in love,” Link said.
Daruk snorted. “Probably the only action Revali will get.”

“He's supposedly dating this girl at another school,” Mipha said.

“How do you know?” Urbosa asked.

Mipha raised a brow. “He told us yesterday.”

“Oh.” Urbosa turned her gaze up in thought. “I don't usually listen to him.”

“Someone should warn her that Revali's got a side guy,” Link said.

“Someone should tell Saki, too,” Daruk said.

“Teba and Saki are so cute together,” Mipha said. “For someone who's friends with Revali, he's a good guy.”

“Guess someone should break the news to Revali, then,” Urbosa said. “Teba will never leave Saki for him.”

“They're totally gonna get married,” Mipha said dreamily.

“Revali and Teba?” Link asked with a grin. Mipha threw her waded up trash at him and it hit him square in the chest, then fell to the ground.

“Revali has a girl friend before me,” Daruk muttered. “What has this world come to?”

“You're a catch, Daruk,” Mipha said. “You'll find the perfect girl before you know it.”

“Thank you, Mipha,” Daruk said sincerely. “I hope she's half as sweet as you.”

Link scoffed.

“And as long as you don't land a guy like Revali or Link,” Urbosa said to her, “you'll be all set.”

Mipha blushed and turned away, busying herself with her bag.

“Hey, I can be a catch, too,” Link said.

“Yeah, real catch,” Daruk said. “Ladies love scrawny high school drop outs.”

“There's more to me than that,” Link said.

Urbosa stood and put her hand on Link's shoulder. “Of course there is, Sweetie. But ladies want more than a big dick.” She winked at him and walked back towards the school.

“I'll take that as a compliment,” Link said proudly. “She wants me. I could get her.”

“You're a pig,” Mipha muttered.

“Good luck with that,” Daruk said. “She gives zero shits about men right now. And she's way out of your league.”

Link shrugged. Mipha pushed passed him with her bag in hand and waved over her shoulder. “See ya later,” she called to them.

“Wait a sec,” Link said. “She owes me notes.”
“Link,” Daruk started. “You can't expect Mipha to be your brains for the rest of your life. I love you, man, but get your shit together. You're better than that.”

“Thanks for the pep talk,” Link muttered.

“And I can't keep beating up bullies for you.”

“That was one time.”

Daruk made a muscle with his arm. “Get on my level, bro.”

From inside the school, the bell rang, signaling the end of their lunch period. Link sighed and threw his bag over his shoulder. “See ya later.”
Chapter Two

Link was at his locker just seconds after the last bell rang. He tossed his bag over his shoulder and waited for Mipha as he typically did. They pushed through the end-of-the-day crowd as students milled about the halls. When they reached the front door, they spilled out with the other students, trotting down the front steps. Link turned when he heard his name and saw Daruk waving an arm. Link and Mipha walked over to the group of seniors that stood at the corner of the building. Urbosa greeted Link with a smile, her hand on her hip, as he and Mipha approached. Teba gave a short nod with his chin, and Revali turned his back, his arms crossed over his chest.

“What are you two doing tonight?” Daruk asked.

“Studying,” Mipha said with a slight groan.

“Sleeping,” Link said with a smirk.

Mipha rolled her eyes, turning around as she heard Riju’s voice. The freshman skipped towards them and waved enthusiastically.

“Can we go to the arcade?” she asked her sister.

“That depends,” Urbosa said. “Don’t you have homework?”

“Don’t you?” Riju said. She leaned forward, her hands on her hips.

“I don’t know how she does it,” Daruk said, “but she probably has homework finished for the next six weeks.”

Urbosa grinned down at her sister. “It’s true,” she said.

“Just because you’re already accepted into college doesn’t mean you don’t have to do work.”

“She could get zeros for the rest of the year and they would still fight over her,” Teba said.

“Because I did my homework,” Urbosa said.

“I always do my homework!” Riju whined.

“Don’t you think you’re a little old for arcades, now?”

Riju shook her head and grinned. “I gotta make sure I still have the high score.” She turned to Link. “Come on,” she said. “I’ll kick your ass at air hockey again.”

Revali snorted. “It’s not hard to kick his ass.”

“Shut up,” Daruk snapped at him.

“Link.”

Link looked around him. He noticed Zelda standing outside the black town car that always picked her up. Dorian opened the door for her. She peered at Link over her shoulder before she slid in.
“Um,” Link started. “Maybe tomorrow. I gotta go.” He glanced quickly at Daruk. “I’ll talk to you later.”

Daruk raised a brow but nodded. “See ya.”

He said good-bye to Mipha and waved a had over his shoulder as he made his way away from them. Normally, he and Mipha walked home together, but he didn’t question it when she did not follow him. He hadn’t planned on going straight home, anyway.

“Link.”

It seemed to come from his left as he made his way down the road. Traffic passed lazily by in the school zone. He hesitated at the intersection, then opted to follow the direction of the voice to his left across the street. He followed the sidewalk as it moved down the next street, but the voice did not return. He continued on aimlessly as the road curved through the city until he heard the voice again, almost a half an hour later. This time, it came from his right.

Link looked in the direction of the voice. He was moving away from the center of the city, now, and the roads had started to grow narrower as they wound their way through suburban neighborhoods. He took one of the suburban roads to the right and followed it further towards the outskirts of the city. A bus turned onto the road behind him, chugging along before coming to a slow, squeaky stop just yards in front of him. A group of young children jumped off the last step, chasing each other across yards as they headed for their homes.

“Link.”

The voice moved towards another side street marked with a dead end sign. Link hesitated as he peered down the road. He couldn’t see the dead end from where he stood, but tall power lines loomed close by. He followed the dead end road as it twisted around, ending in a cul-de-sac. There were only two houses at the end, one on the left side, and one on the right. Before him was the start of the woods that would open up to where the power lines stood. And the voice seemed to call him forward into the trees.

He followed an overgrown path as it twisted through the forest, walking only a quarter of a mile where he stood in the tree line. The ground sloped upwards slightly to his left and was leveled off where he stood, and further on to his right until it met a small river. A narrow bridge crossed the river, and a lone car traveled across it. Across from where he stood was another tree line. The woods appeared to be much denser, and if he walked completely through it, he imagined he would come out by the interstate just outside the city. The voice beckoned him across the power lines and deeper into the woods.

“What are you doing here?”

He was halfway across the strip when he heard Zelda’s voice to his right. She made her way towards him, her gaze narrowed on him.

“I could ask you the same thing,” he said. “Were you following me?”

Zelda rolled her eyes. “Why the hell would I follow you?”

“So, why are you here?”

“Why are you here?”

Link hesitated. “Meeting my dealer.”
Zelda’s eyes narrowed further.

Link decided to ignore her and continued on toward the tree line, but Zelda trotted after him.

“You’re following the voice, too,” she said as she caught up to him.

Link paused and glanced at her. “Why are you following it?”

Zelda shrugged. “I don’t know,” she admitted. “I wanted to know what the hell it was.” She followed Link as he walked forward once more and they stepped into the woods, following the sound of the voice in silence.

They walked for close to an hour before the trees began to thin around them. Before they knew it, there was a small clearing in the forest where a very large tree stood in the middle. The late afternoon sunlight streamed through its branches, casting the meadow in a golden glow. Before the tree, plunged into a stone pedestal, was an old sword. Though the blade appeared rusted, the hilt shone like new.

“Link.”

“What the hell?” Zelda muttered. “Is that a sword?”

Link ignored her and stepped forward, examining the sword. As he neared, he felt a strange sensation, a pull in his chest, as if the sword itself were calling him to it. He hesitated, peering at the sword, before finally closing the gap between him and it. He touched the hilt carefully with the tip of his finger, pushing against it lightly to see if it would move, but the sword seemed to be stuck in the pedestal.

“Don’t touch it,” Zelda whispered. “We should leave it alone.”

But Link’s curiosity peaked as his fingers wrapped around it. He was filled with a strange sense of power as he gripped the sword. It fit perfectly in his palm, and in one swift movement, he pulled the sword out of the stone pedestal. It gleamed in the sunlight, surprisingly lighter than it looked. Zelda hissed from behind him.

“What did you do that for?”

Link examined the sword closely. The voice had settled, seemingly satisfied that Link had retrieved it.

“What are you gonna do with it?”

Link turned to Zelda and shrugged. “Keep it.”

She narrowed her gaze on him. “Why? What do you want with that dirty old thing?”

“It’s cool.”

Zelda rolled her eyes and turned her back to him. “I don’t hear the voice anymore.” She peered over her shoulder, her gaze on the sword for a moment. She turned her gaze to meet Link’s. She opened her mouth to say something, but thought better of it, turning away to walk back through the forest.

Link let the blade rest against his shoulder as he followed Zelda through the woods. He asked the question she had decided not to ask. “Do you think… Do you think the voice came from the
“You’re insane,” Zelda muttered. “Someone was just fucking with us.”

“Why would someone do that?”

Zelda shrugged. “Maybe they committed a murder with that thing and they wanted to frame you.”

They were both quite sure that that wasn’t the case, but neither particularly wanted to talk about the strange voice and the fact that it was only the two of them that could hear it.

“I can’t believe I wasted my afternoon coming out here,” Zelda muttered. “I should have been studying for that test.”

Link snorted, and Zelda narrowed her eyes at him over her shoulder, turning her nose up at him.

“Some of us actually want to have a future,” she said to him. She pushed herself gracefully over a large, fallen tree, while Link stumbled over clumsily behind her, dropping the sword in the old, rotted leaves.

“You’re the princess of Hyrule,” he commented as he got back to his feet. He dusted himself off and picked up the sword, then continued to follow her out of the woods. “You can have any future you want.”

Zelda stopped and spun on her heels angrily. She opened her mouth, then closed it again as her gaze landed on the sword in his hand. She pinched her lips together, huffed through her nose, and turned around to continue through the woods. “I guess. Besides, you know, being expected to take the throne.”

“Doesn’t sound like a bad deal to me.”

“Who said I even wanted any part of it?”

Link hesitated. He examined the ground as he walked, being careful not to trip on any hidden roots. “You don’t?”

“I don’t know,” Zelda muttered.

“We can trade.” He looked up and grinned at her as he met her gaze. “I’ll drive all the nice cars and you can deal with my sister.”

Zelda raised a brow at him. “You have a sister?”

Link shrugged and kept walking, taking the lead. “You’re too high maintenance for her.”

“Excuse me?” Zelda trotted to Link's side. “What's that supposed to mean?”

Link grinned, too happy to be getting under her skin. But instead of answering her, he just shrugged.

They stepped out of the tree line, the warmth of the sun greeting them. Link let the sword rest against his shoulder once more and waved to Zelda over his shoulder as he stepped away from her, moving across the field. “See ya.”

It didn't take him long to get home, but the sun had dipped below the distant mountains enough to cast their world in a quiet twilight. The air had cooled, the streetlights had turned on, and birds
began their delicate, nightly calls to the emerging crickets. Link held the sword carefully behind his back as he slipped through the front door. To his relief, neither his sister nor his father were in the kitchen.

He closed the door softly behind him and made a quick stop at the fridge. He peered inside, searching for something to satisfy his grumbling stomach. He reached his arm in, jumping at a voice and bumping his head. He looked over the door of the fridge to the young girl that stood on the other side, a wide grin on her face.

“You missed dinner,” she teased.

“Did you save me any?”
She rolled her eyes. “Dad wouldn't let me. But...” She pulled a container from behind her back and held it out to him.

“I've trained you well,” Link said, straightening and closing the refrigerator door.

“Don't be late again or Dad will kick your butt.”
Link raised a brow as he peered into the container. “Is that what he said?”
Aryll giggled. “He said you're a no good lazy dumbass and he's gonna kick you to the curb.”

“Don't say dumbass, Ary.”
Aryll rolled her eyes. “Dad says you're gonna drop out of high school and do nothing with your life.”

“That doesn't sound like a bad thing. I like doing nothing.”

Aryll's face hardened in child-like seriousness. “Dad says -”

“Do you listen to everything Dad says? You know he hates me.”
Aryll crossed her arms. “No he doesn't, stupid. He just wants you to be a better person.”

“You sound just like him.”
Aryll peered around him curiously. “What's that?”

“Nothing.” Link pushed her aside and walked around her, being careful to keep the sword hidden from her.

“You're hiding something!”
Link walked backwards and grinned. “Non'ya business.”

“I'm gonna tell Dad!”

“Go head,” Link taunted. “And I'll tell him that you were the one that ate all the cookies.”

Aryll gasped as he rounded the corner into the hallway. He trotted hurriedly up the stairs, down the hall, and slipped behind the door into his bedroom. He tossed the sword carelessly into his closet, stripped out of his shirt, and dropped onto his bed with a heavy sigh. He tilted his head towards his alarm clock. It was only seven, which left plenty of time to ignore his homework and take a nap.
Chapter Three

Though he wouldn't admit it to anyone, Link had spent most of the night playing foolishly with the sword, battling imaginary foes and breaking a few items in the process. It wasn't until he almost broke his laptop that he finally gave up with the idea that he'd ever be some hero with a sword and tossed it into his closet to be forgotten about. So when he found himself in his first period class the next morning, he was more tired than usual, and all he wanted to do was fall asleep in the back of the room. But as luck would have it, he would not be so fortunate.

Feeling a presence standing before him, Link lifted his head off his arms and looked up. There, in front of his desk, stood Zelda with her arms crossed. Clearly, she couldn't tell he was trying to take a nap.

“What?”

Her figure relaxed slightly, a wave of curiosity flashing across her face. “What did you do with the sword?” she asked.

He put his head back down on his arms and yawned. “It's in my room.”

Zelda rolled her eyes and returned to her desk as Mipha approached. She glanced at Zelda before taking her seat beside Link.

“Copying her notes?” Mipha asked with a grin.

Link didn’t answer her. He straightened in his seat as the door opened and their teacher entered. She immediately began discussing the previous night's homework, and Link had quickly tuned her out as he usually did. He let his chin rest in his hand as he spaced out, staring blankly at the board, his thoughts wandering to the sword.

What was most peculiar about it was the familiarity he felt when he held it. The voice that called to him seemed to be one he had heard before, though of course that was impossible. The sword seemed to be an entity all on its own – as if a spirit lived inside of it, watching over it, luring Link to it. He felt a comfort being around the sword, as if he were in the presence of a friend.

He was so lost in thought that he hadn't even noticed the test that was passed out until the teacher came back around to collect the blank pages from him. He looked up at her sheepishly, meeting her disapproving gaze, and slouched pathetically when she told him to hang back after class. He caught Mipha's disapproving gaze as the teacher moved back to the front of the room and he rolled his eyes.

He tried to sneak out quickly at the sound of the bell, but Ms. Muller peered at him over her glasses and beckoned to him with a boney finger. He stepped away from the door like a guilty dog as the rest of the students filed out, leaving him alone to his inevitable death.

“I'm not going to sit here and lecture you, Link. I know you're better than this, and you know you're better than this. You may have been able to skate by with mediocre grades, but lately, you're not even doing that. You're failing, Link. At this rate, you won't even get to senior year.”
Link turned his gaze to the door. From the rectangular window, he could see Mipha on the other side, her arms crossed and her head shaking. He rolled his eyes and sighed again.

“I'll give you one last chance, Link. You can stay after school tomorrow, or come in during your lunch. Make up the test. Do some extra credit. Take advantage of this, because you won't get other chances in the future.”

Just enough time to get the answers from Mipha. “Thanks.” He hurried out of the room before she had a chance to lecture him further, breathing a sigh of relief when the door closed behind him.

“What the hell?” Mipha hissed at him.

“Get off my back,” he muttered.

“You're acting like a child. What's the matter with you? You spaced that entire test.”

Link gave her his best puppy-dog look. “Can I have your notes?”

“No!”

“Come on! I need to study for the make up!”

Mipha hesitated. “Are you ever going to take anything seriously?”

“Life's too short,” he said with a shrug.

Mipha narrowed her gaze on him. “Wrong answer.” She turned sharply on her heels, her red hair flying out behind her.

“Come on, Mipha,” he whined, but she ignored him as she disappeared in the crowd. Unwilling to chase her, he sighed and made his way to his locker. To his surprise, Zelda was there waiting for him, a wide grin on her face. Link eyed her suspiciously.

“What are you doing here?”

“I just wanted a chance to make fun of you.”

He spun the code to his locker quickly, opening the door and blocking her face from his view. “You've got some shit on your nose.”

“Too busy playing with your sword all night?” Zelda said, ignoring his comment.

Link shoved a textbook onto the messy shelf and grabbed the first notebook his hand landed on. He let the door swing shut and raised a brow to her. “No one else will.”

“Ugh! Really?” She rolled her eyes, turned her nose up at him, and left him alone at his locker. He scanned the crowd as students milled about, switching out books at their lockers and talking amongst one another. Through the windows, he could see his friends gathered in the courtyard between classes, but he didn't feel up for their interrogations.

Instead, he made his way to his next class, where he made a slight effort to stay awake. It was easier to do when he wasn't being forced to stare at math equations first thing in the morning, and even slightly more exciting when his chemistry teacher announced that they would be doing a lab. Link wasn't sure exactly what concoctions they were putting together, but the end result was cool enough to hold his interest. By third period, he was starting to grow hungry, and ignored most of the english lecture. What did he care about Romeo and Juliet, anyway?
At the sound of the bell, he found himself back at his locker, where he switched his notebook out for his lunch. Going against everything he had ever known, he made his way back to the empty math classroom to take the offered make-up test.

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Link trotted down the steps of the school with the rush of students eager for the end of the day. Mipha was not yet outside, and Link debated whether he should wait for her or not. He looked around, but his friends weren’t even gathered at the corner of the building like they usually did.

He shoved his hands in his jacket pockets and strode across the school’s lot towards the road. A few cars were lined against the sidewalk, waiting to pick up students. One of the cars was a black town car that Link immediately recognized. Typically, Dorian stood outside of it, waiting to pick up Zelda, but this time, an older woman stood outside, and she was staring at Link, her brows knit together. He immediately recognized Paya, one of the sophomores in his math class, standing beside the woman, and she, too, turned her gaze to Link. Her eyes were hesitant, almost worried, before she tore her eyes away from him and onto the ground. The old woman beckoned to him with a bony finger and Link hesitated. He looked around him for a moment, hoping she was talking to someone else, but seeing no one else moving towards the car, he hesitantly obeyed.

“Where is the sword?” the woman asked.

Link blinked at her. How did she know about the sword? He glanced at Paya, but found no answers, which was almost expected. He didn't think he had ever heard her talk once.

“At home,” Link said slowly. He turned his gaze back to the woman and raised a brow.

“Link,” Paya said quickly. “This is my grandmother, Impa. She is -”

“Sheikah,” Link said simply. They weren’t typically easy to recognize, but he knew most of the Sheikah in the city had connections to Zelda and her father, the city’s king. The only reason he knew of Dorian was because he was close with his father. He wasn’t the smartest student in the school, but he had enough common sense to put the pieces together. The town car bore the crest of Zelda’s family, so it only made sense that Impa was someone of importance.

Impa raised a brow at Link. “You’re smarter than you look,” she said. “Get in.”

Paya took the opportunity to slide into the passenger's seat as Impa walked around the car. Link watched Impa carefully.

“I, uh, actually have to -”

“I said get in,” Impa barked at him. “We’ll have you home soon enough.”

His parents always taught him not to get into a car with strangers, but he got in, anyway. If he were being honest, the old woman kind of scared him. But what harm could she do to him? She was Paya’s grandmother, after all. He didn’t know what she wanted with him, but maybe this was just her way of inviting him for cookies and milk. He could go for some homemade grandmother-styled cookies.

With a small shrug, he got into the backseat of the car. He leaned forward towards Paya. “This isn’t a trap, right?”

Paya blushed and giggled. “No,” she said softly. “Grandmother only wants the sword.”
"She’s not going to kill me, is she?"

Paya grinned and shrugged. "I can’t make any promises."

Link sat back against the seat. Paya was never much for conversation, so it surprised him that she knew how to even make a joke. At least, he hoped she was joking.

"So," Link started as the car pulled away from the school. "Where are you two taking me?"

"We’re just going to the shrine," Paya informed him.

"I need some answers from you," Impa said matter of factly.

"Answers? You couldn’t just ask nicely?"

"Our questions for your are classified," she said. "Strictly confidential. I cannot risk our conversation being overheard by the wrong people."

"The wrong people?" Link muttered. What the hell had he gotten himself into? When no one offered any further explanation, he crossed his arms and muttered to himself. "Guess I am being framed for murder."

The ride felt much longer than it really was as they sat in an uncomfortable silence. Link kept his gaze out the window, fully aware of Impa's hard stares at him in the rearview mirror every few minutes. He watched as the traffic thinned and the streets narrowed as they made their way to the outer edges of the city.

The land rose and fell more freely and the streets weaved themselves along. If they drove any further, they would have left the city completely and found themselves in Hyrule's more rural countryside. And even further still, the road would take one into other cities and eventually, the coast. It was a long drive to the coast, and Link had only been a few times before, but this would not be one of those times.

Instead, the car turned onto a dirt road shaded by trees on either side. The road made its way up and around until they were on top of a small hill where the shrine sat, just out of view of the road. Link gazed upon the shrine in surprise, never knowing for a moment such a building existed. When the car stopped, he stepped out with Paya and Impa and followed them inside.

Zelda was already inside the shrine when they entered. She turned and automatically frowned when she saw Link. "You’re here, too?"

"Not by choice," Link muttered. "Why are you here?"

Zelda sighed lightly, clearly irritated. "That’s a good question."

Paya moved across the room and through the doorway into another room. Impa strode in behind her and motioned for Link and Zelda to follow her. They glanced at each other for a moment before following behind the elderly Sheikah woman into another room. This room was large and open. A variety of weapons and practice weapons were lined up against the far side of the room. Impa strode towards a bokken, picking it up and tossing it at Link.

Link fumbled with the bokken and promptly dropped it to the floor at his feet. Impa rolled her eyes at him as he picked it up and studied it. "What’s this for?"

"Training," Impa said simply.
“Training?” Link raised a brow. He swung the bokken clumsily in front of him. “For what?”

“Stop that,” Impa hissed as he continued to swing – then promptly drop – the practice weapon.

Paya entered with an old book in her arms. She made her way to Impa’s side, handing her the book carefully.

“The sword you found is the Master Sword,” Impa said in an almost bored tone as she opened the book and flipped through its pages. “It is a legendary sword that is over hundreds of thousands of years old created by our Goddess, Hylia. It is imbued with the power to vanquish all darkness and evil and is all that stands between Hyrule and our enemies.”

Zelda raised a brow. “Enemies?”

“Since the dawn of time, Hyrule has been cursed to repeat history, and it has become the responsibility of the Sheikah to prepare for the rise of our enemy, Ganondorf. It is he who holds the Triforce of Power which allows him to rise from Hylia’s seal time and time again. He seeks out the other two pieces of the Triforce, and if he obtains them, he will be granted absolute power and Hyrule will cease to exist as we know it.”

“Enemies?” Zelda said thoughtfully. “That’s the symbol in our crest.”

Impa nodded. “The other two pieces, the Triforce of Wisdom and the Triforce of Courage, are said to be passed down through the ages. The descendant of Hylia is said to hold the Triforce of Wisdom, while the descendant of the great hero holds the Triforce of Courage.” Impa turned her gaze to Link. “Only the Chosen Hero – the one who possesses the Triforce of Courage – can pull the Master Sword from its pedestal and awaken the power that is inside of it.”

The bokken fell from Link’s hands and clattered loudly against the wood floor. He stared blankly at Impa for a moment before narrowing his gaze at her. “Excuse me?”

“It is your duty, Link, to save Hyrule from Ganondorf’s dark forces when he rises once more. It is only a matter of time before he does. That’s why the sword summoned you to the forest.”

Link laughed sharply and turned away. “Come on,” he said to Zelda. “Let’s get out of here.”

Zelda hesitated, her eyes moving from Link to Impa. “I think she’s serious,” Zelda said.

Link stood beside her and stared at her. “Are you kidding? You believe this bull shit?”

“Yes,” she said softly. “My mother always spoke of the legends. She always told me that we are descendants of Hylia. I never thought anything of it before…”

“Hylia’s power sleeps inside of you, Zelda,” Impa said. “That is why you could hear the voice from the sword, just as Link did.”

Link narrowed his gaze at Impa. “How do you know that?”

“I may have told her,” Paya said sheepishly. “Grandmother has been training me my whole life to carry on the duties of the Sheikah. When I heard you guys talking about a voice, I knew that that meant Ganondorf’s rise was imminent and that we must prepare for war.”

“The legends are real,” Impa said, passing the book to Link.

Link’s eyes scanned the pages of ancient Sheikah text, none of which he could understand. But
there were various images through the pages. Images of the Triforce and the Master Sword. Images of a hero clad in green and a woman in white battling ferocious beasts. There were pictures of ancient technologies, ancient races that have long died out, and even old maps that depicted what Hyrule once looked like.

“It is the duty of the Sheikah to record history and to ensure that it is never forgotten the curse that Hyrule was put under. It is our duty to seek out and prepare the chosen heroes who must play their role in the oncoming war.”

Link closed the book and pushed it into Impa’s arms. “You have got to be kidding.”

Impa’s brows knit together fiercely. “Whether you like it or not, you have a duty to keep Hyrule from falling to Ganondorf. The Master Sword called for you and you responded. You must accept your responsibility in this war. I will train you to wield the sword to fight Ganondorf.” She turned her gaze to Zelda. “And I will help you awaken Hylia’s power that sleeps within you. Together, you must stop Ganondorf and bring peace to Hyrule.”

Link met Zelda’s gaze, hesitant, before turning back to Impa. He picked up the bokken and handed it to her. “I think you need to find yourself a new hero,” he said. He turned his back to her and left them alone in the shrine.

Zelda followed Link outside the shrine, jogging to keep up with him. “You can’t leave,” she hissed to him. “I need your help with this.”

“I can’t believe you’re buying this bullshit,” he snapped at her.

“This bullshit,” Zelda snarled, “is what I’ve been hearing my whole life.” She stopped walking and stared after Link. He hesitated and turned back to her as she continued. “I never knew it would happen in my lifetime, but I knew that I had to pass on the legends to my children, and my children to their children. It is the duty of the royal family as it is the Sheikah. That’s why we work so closely together. Whether you want to believe it or not, Link, it’s true. Ganondorf will rise, and it is our job to stop him. I cannot do it without you.”

Link studied her carefully as she spoke, still skeptical. Link had never seen her serious about anything besides school. For once, she didn’t sneer at him or roll her eyes at him. She looked concerned, but confident in her role. Ready to put her life on the line for some legend that was passed down through the ages.

A legend. And legends weren’t real.

But he had heard the voice. He had felt the power when he grasped the Master Sword. It was something he could not explain and would not have believed if it hadn’t happened to him.

He turned away from her. “Heroes don’t exist. Legends aren’t real.” He left her alone in front of the shrine and walked down the road, heading for home.
Chapter 5

Link sprinted through the forest, though he wasn't entirely sure where he was going. Yet something in his gut guided him over the fallen trees and rubble that littered the forest and he pressed on as fast as he could. Something was wrong, but he didn't know what. All he knew was that he needed to get somewhere. He needed to save something. He needed to save someone.

He caught a glimpse of something shining in the corner of his eye. It was a warm glow; a comforting glow. It was a sign of hope; a promise. He followed the glow. The Triforce was illuminated on the back of his left hand. The more he ran – the closer he got to his destination – the brighter it seemed to glow. But it didn't scare him. It encouraged him. It reminded him of who he was and what he had to do.

And suddenly, he remembered why he was running. He remembered his destiny. But more importantly, he remembered who he was fighting for. His family. His friends. The people he cherished most. The people he loved.

He would give his life for them if he had to.

The forest thinned suddenly and the world opened up to him. The rolling hills of Hyrule's old countryside stretched towards the horizon. An old, forgotten castle was all that marked the landscape, and it was shrouded in an unsettling darkness. The darkness moved about the castle, swirling through the air around it. The glow of the Triforce brightened significantly. His fingers tightened around the sword in his left hand, but he did not move further.

“Link! You are the light that shines upon Hyrule! Only you can save us!”

The darkness that surrounded the castle shot into the sky suddenly. It swirled and stretched until the sky was no more and the land was shrouded in an eerie, twilit haze. The darkness then shot across the sky towards him, and all he could do was brace himself.

Link awoke with a start, panting. He blinked in the darkness, waiting for his eyes to adjust and his pulse to slow. It was just a dream. He looked around his room, noticing then the glow that came from under his closet doors. He scrambled out of bed and across the room, pulling the doors open. The Master Sword leaned against the corner, a soft glow pulsing around it. Link stumbled backwards in surprise, falling to the floor as another glow came from his hand. He stared in horror as a piece of the Triforce showed itself on his hand. Link groaned loudly and buried his face in his hands.

“I'm not doing it,” he said loudly. “You can’t make me! It’s not real!”

“Link?” A soft voice spoke behind his bedroom door.

He got to his feet and slunk over to the door, opening it slightly. He peered down at his little sister who stood concerned on the other side. She cocked her head at him.

“Did you fall out of bed again?”
Link scratched at his head and looked quickly up and down the hallway. “Yeah. Sure.”

She smiled up at him. “Can I come in and sleep with you?”

“No,” he said quickly. “I… have to do homework.”

His sister giggled. “You never do homework.”

“Yeah, well,” he started. “If I want to graduate next year, I should probably start.”

Aryll peered around him. “Are you watching Netflix again?”

Link glanced over his shoulder. The Master Sword was still glowing faintly. He turned back to his sister. “Go back to bed, Ary,” he said sternly. “Dad’s gonna be mad if he hears you’re up.”

Aryll crossed her arms, sulking. “Fine,” she said. “But I’m telling Mipha you were mean to me.”

Link sighed. “I’ll tell Mipha that you still wet the bed.”

Aryll’s brows knit together and her mouth opened angrily. “I do not!”

Link grinned and pushed her away from the door. “Good night, Ary.” And he closed the door. He stood, listening as she muttered for a moment, then her little footsteps moved down the hallway. Her bedroom door closed softly.

Link moved across the room towards his bed, pausing in front of his closet. He glared at the sword for a moment, then sighed. “Fine,” he muttered. “Fine, fine, fine. Have it your way.” He pushed the doors closed forcefully and let himself fall face down onto his bed with a groan.

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“Link!”

Link pulled his eyes away from the back of his hand. He had been inspecting it most of the walk to school, completely ignoring whatever story Mipha was telling him.

“Yeah.”

“Yeah?” Mipha raised a brow at him and looked at his hand, still raised in front of him as they walked. “What's wrong with you?”

Link shoved his hands in his pockets. “Nothing.”

“Are you on drugs?”

“Yes.”

Mipha shifted her bag to the other shoulder. “You're not funny.”

“I was up late doing homework.”

“I'd believe the drug story before I believed that.”

They strode across the parking lot towards the corner of the building where Daruk, Teba, and Revali stood, too deep in conversation to notice the arrival of their friends.

“I'm telling you,” Revali said. “There is no definitive correlation between a man's car and the size
of his dick. If that were the case, I'd be driving Ingo's stupid beefed up pick-up. Now that's overcompensation.”

“For you or Ingo?” Teba muttered.

“All I said was I wouldn't be caught dead in that chick car.” Daruk crossed his arms.

“Well, that's one way to start my morning,” Mipha said.

“Are we making fun of Revali?” Link grinned. “Daruk, you promised you wouldn't start without me.”

Revali snorted. “Oh, don't worry, we won't leave you out. Plenty of insults to go around.”

“Alright,” Link said. “Let's hear 'em.”

Revali hesitated, then turned to Teba, but his friend did not acknowledge him.

“What's the matter? Didn't have time to prep your daily insults this morning?” Link taunted. “Too busy measuring the size of your dick?”

“Goodbye,” Mipha said with a loud sigh. Without another look in their direction, she hurried towards the front doors of the school.

“Why does it always come down to dicks with you two?” Teba muttered. “C'mon, Daruk. Let's let them sort out their feelings towards one another.”

Daruk grinned down at Link. “Where were you yesterday, anyway?”

“Huh?”

“We were supposed to hang out.”

“Oh. Yeah.” Link shrugged. “Forgot. Muller gave me a ton of extra credit shit to do to catch up.”

“You went home and did extra credit?”

“Of course not,” Revali said. He smiled slyly at Link. “He didn't go home at all.”

Daruk looked between Revali and Link. “What do you mean?”

Link looked equally as confused.

“Link's totally banging Paya.”

Daruk raised a brow at Link. “Isn't she a sophomore?”

“I'm not banging Paya,” Link snarled.

“You two seemed awfully cozy yesterday.”

“What the hell are you talking about?”

“Or was that a cover up? You did get in a marked car. Banging little miss Princess, are we?”

“You're full of shit, Revali,” Daruk said. “There's no way Zelda would have any interest in Link.”
“Thanks, man,” Link muttered.

“I'm just saying what I saw. Link and Paya got into one of those fancy town cars and took off.”

“We're doing a project together, alright?”

“Right,” Revali said with a grin. “A project.”

“Dude, she's a sophomore,” Daruk said disapprovingly.

“I'm not screwing her! I'm failing and she's smart. It's an easy A and it gets me through the stupid class.”

“That sounds believable,” Daruk said with a nod. Then, to Revali, “He is an idiot.”

“And balance has been restored once more,” Revali said. “Let the Link-bashing continue.”

“Whatever,” Link muttered. Not in the mood to deal with Revali’s relentless teasing, Link made his way into the school. Mipha was already long gone, leaving him no choice but to trudge to his first class. It should have been illegal to make biology his first class of the day.
Chapter 6

Link spent the majority of his first class staring at the back of his hand, occasionally turning it over, curiously, but there was no sign of the Triforce that had appeared in his dream. If what Impa had said was true, then he was in possession of a piece of it, which would have explained why he heard the mysterious voice that lead him to the sword in the first place. Still, as much as he turned it over in his head, he couldn't bring himself to believe it. Why would Hylia choose him, of all people? In no way did he embody the image of a hero. Courageous he was definitely not. He could barely stay awake through his classes. What business did a failing high schooler have saving the world?

He felt exhausted thinking of it all by the time his math class came around, and his brows seemed to be permanently furrowed together. He had drifted through the morning, lost in a daze, and didn't even notice when Mipha sat beside him. He jumped when she snapped her fingers in front of her face.

“What is with you today?”

Link dragged his palms down his face. “Tired,” he said simply.

Mipha rolled her eyes. “You're always tired.”

“Hm.” He desperately wanted to tell her about what had happened. Mipha always had good advice, even if he didn't necessarily want to hear it. But he didn't know if she would even believe him, or if he should even drag her into anything in the first place.

“Oh!” Mipha said suddenly, then lowered her voice. “It's today, isn't it? The anniversary?”

Link turned to her, brow cocked in confusion. “Huh? What anniversary?”

Mipha looked around for a moment, her voice lowering further. “You know. The day your mother died?”

His brows furrowed further. “What? No. Why do you...” He hesitated, thinking for a moment. She was right, as she usually was. He didn't even remember. “Oh. Sure.”

Mipha narrowed his eyes at him. “Did you forget?”

“Yeah,” he admitted, then shrugged. “So what?”

“So what?” Her brows knit together. “That's kind of a big deal.”

“Mipha, it was forever ago.”

“It wasn't forever ago.”

Link rolled his eyes. His head was pounding, now, and he was simply too tired to make it through the rest of the day. “Please stop breathing down my neck.”

Mipha turned away from him and leaned back in her seat. “Fine,” she muttered. “I was just trying to help.”

“I don't need help.” He yawned. “I need a nap.”
Mipha leaned forward and let her chin rest in her palm, her elbow on the desk. She tilted her head to the side and smiled at him. “Good thing you have all weekend to nap.”

This brought the life back into his eyes. He had completely forgotten it was Friday, his second favorite day of the week. Saturday, of course, being his first. And Monday his least. “Shit, yeah,” he said, grinning.

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By the time lunch came around, Link had managed to forget about the sword and the Triforce, but he still felt too tired – too tired to even find the energy to annoy Revali as he usually did during their shared lunch period. Instead, he folded his arms on the table and lay his head against them, closing his eyes. He was sure Revali would try to take advantage of his vulnerable state, but his attempts were thwarted by Urbosa as she batted his hand away from Link.

By some miracle, Link made it through the rest of his classes and to the final bell signaling the end of the day and thus the end of his week. He couldn't be more eager to get home and fall onto his bed. With a little luck, Aryll wouldn't bother him, and he'd sleep through the evening and well into Saturday morning.

He made his way out the front doors of the school with the rest of the students. Just as he expected, his group of friends were outside standing by the edge of the building, hanging out and making plans before parting for the evening. Cars lined up to pick up students, and the buses pulled in and around the building to let other students board. As he made his way towards his friends, he even caught a glance of the black town car with the royal crest that waited for Zelda, with Dorian standing at the door. Today, however, there was something different. Beside Dorian stood Paya, and beside her, her grandmother, Impa. Link had never seen Dorian and Impa together before. Paya spoke softly with her grandmother before turning her gaze to Link. There was concern written on her face. Impa met Link’s gaze and gestured for him to approach.

“Hey,” Daruk said as Link walked towards them. “I told Riju she could come to the arcades with us.” He raised a brow when Link did not turn to him. “We're still on, right?”

“Um,” Link started. “Maybe tomorrow. I gotta go.” He glanced quickly at Daruk. “I’ll talk to you later.”

Daruk raised a brow and smirked. “Afraid of losing all your money to Riju again?”

“You're letting her bet?” Urbosa asked, frowning. She folded her arms over her chest. “Seriously, Daruk?”

“Are you seriously leaving?” Daruk called after Link as he left his friends alone.

Link made his way to Paya and Impa curiously, but before he could think to say anything, Impa was barking orders at him.

“Get in,” Impa said simply. “You’re coming with us today.”

Link blinked at the old woman. He hardly knew her and Dorian. What could they possibly want with him again? He turned to Dorian, then back to Impa. “I… kinda have a test to study for,” he said slowly. It wasn’t a lie, anyway.

Impa smiled at him. “We won’t be long,” she said. “The king has requested to speak with you.”

“What?” Zelda barked out from inside the car, just as Link stuttered out his own similar response.
“What?” he repeated, his pulse quickening. “Why?”

“Get in,” Dorian growled.

Link hesitated a moment, turning to Paya who offered a reassuring smile. He muttered under his breath as he slid into the car beside Zelda, and Paya slid in after him, leaving him uncomfortably squished in the middle.

“Get off of me,” Zelda growled, pushing at him. Then, as Dorian and Impa got in, she barked, “What is the meaning of this? This is a town car, not a damn party bus.”

“Get over it,” Link muttered.

“Both of you, shut up,” Impa said with annoyance.

Link crossed his arms and leaned back against the seat. Zelda turned her back to him with a “hmph” and gazed out the window.

The car pulled away from the school, merged into traffic on the main road, and moved slowly through the city in silence. Dorian pulled up to the palace gates, flashed a badge, and the gates opened, allowing them entry. They drove up the road as it twisted this way and that before circling around the front of the palace where Dorian pulled up and parked. He got out and opened Zelda’s door and she stepped out quickly. Without looking back, she marched up the steps and inside the extravagant building.

Link stepped out after her, his gaze on the building in awe. He had never been this close to it before. It only seemed appropriate, however, that the King’s daughter would be raised in such an environment. It certainly explained her spoiled, bitchy personality.

“This way,” Dorian said, motioning for Link to follow him as Impa and Paya trailed slightly behind. They made their way through the elegant double doors, which opened up into a large room with cathedral ceilings. The large windows along the wall let in the light from the afternoon sun, casting long stretches of light along the marble floor. Oversized banners hung from the walls between the windows and around the large room. On the far side of the room against either wall were a wide set of stairs that moved up to an exposed second level that stretched across the room and disappeared to the right and to the left down hallways that stretched through the rest of the palace.

Link followed Dorian as he moved to the right, through a large archway that brought them out of the central room and into another open room, though this one was much smaller. Their footsteps echoed off the walls as they moved across the room and towards a door on the other side. Dorian waved his badge across the lock and the door opened, bringing them into a hallway that stretched to their left and seemed to move behind the central room they were first at. Dorian followed the hallway this way, stopping before a set of large, double doors. Dorian knocked quickly, then waved his badge across another reader and the doors opened.

Link stepped in behind Dorian into what appeared to be a large office. King Rhoam’s office, to be exact. The king stood behind his large, mahogany desk, and his eyes moved towards his guests. A large window behind him let in the only light in the room. In front of the king stood another man, his back to them.

Link hesitated, his gaze turning from the king, to the strange man, then to Dorian. He stepped forward slowly and made his way to the chair. Only then did he recognize the man that stood before the king; his father.
Chapter 7

Link narrowed his eyes on him, but his father did not turn to look at his son. Link moved his gaze to the king, but did not sit. “What is this?” he asked. “What’s going on?” But his father said nothing, his eyes on his feet.

The door behind him opened, and Link turned to see Zelda enter, clearly aggravated with her father. Her mouth was open to speak, but it snapped shut when her eyes fell onto Link.

“What is the meaning of this?” she said, her gaze narrowing on her father, but he ignored her, his gaze hard on Link.

The king gestured towards a man that stood to his left, and the man stepped forward, placing the Master Sword on the king's desk.

Link's eyes moved to his father once more, then to Impa and Paya standing by the door, over to Zelda, and back to the king. “Where did you get that?”

“Your father brought it to me,” the king said. “And it seems my advisor, Impa, has gotten to you first.”

Link turned his gaze to Impa once more, but her cold eyes were fixed on the king's, and she did not seem to try to hide her disdain as her lips twitched at the corners.

“Father,” Zelda started. “It is just as the legends say. The Master Sword has been hidden for all these years, but it called to us.”

“You are foolish, Zelda,” the king hissed at his daughter. “The legends are from an ancient time. A time where civilization was not as advanced as it is today. If any war is on our horizon, it will not be stopped my a rusty old sword.” He turned his eyes back to Link. “You and my daughter will have no part in these legends. You have no business fighting in any war.”

“Ganondorf and his army cannot be stopped by modern weaponry,” Impa hissed at the king. “It is in their blood to fulfill their duty to Goddess Hylia.”

“They are children,” the king snapped at his advisor. “I will not send my daughter out with a fool and a sword to fight against a villain from a damned movie.”

“I guess I'm the fool?” Link muttered.

“They are children,” Zelda shouted to her father. She opened her mouth to speak further, but stopped as Impa's hand rested on her shoulder. She was, however, visibly fuming at her father's stubborn behavior.

“You will have no part of this sword,” the king growled fiercely. “That is an order.”

Zelda held her ground angrily a moment longer before turning her attention to Link. She pulled at his arm and spun on her heels, leading him out of the office.

“Wait,” Link said, pulling his arm out of her grip. “What are you doing?” But she was persistent, and she pulled at him once more, leading him through the long halls until they were alone in a library.
“Dear Penthouse Forum,” Link said with a grin.

“Shut up,” Zelda barked at him. “We need to talk about how we're getting the sword back.”

Link blinked at her. “Excuse me?”

“We need to break into his office and get it back.” She turned her eyes up in thought casually, as if breaking into her father's – the king's – office was just another day in her life.

“You want me to help you break into your father's office,” Link said. “Is this a joke?”

“It will be easy,” she said. “We can pretend we're friends. Study buddies.”

Link snorted. “Everyone knows that's code for fuck buddies.”

Zelda punched his arm. Link stepped backwards, wincing, and rubbed at his arm.

“You punch like a dude.” He crossed his arms. “I don't see why we need the stupid sword anyway. He's right; if there is some kind of war coming, we'd be much better off blowing them to bits with something a thousand years more modern.”

Zelda shook her head. “Impa is right. Modern technology won't work. In the end, it comes down to you and I and that sword.”

“This is crazy,” he muttered. “Why do you believe this shit?”

Zelda's expression softened. She searched his eyes for a moment. “Why don't you?”

“Uh, because it sounds like something out of a video game.”

“It's not,” she said, a hint of determination in her voice. “My mother told me the legends when I was little. Every night, she would tell me another piece of it. I knew that I, too, would need to pass on these stories to my children. And even though she did not know I would be next in line, a part of me knew, and I knew I needed to prepare.” She turned her eyes towards the window, watching the sun begin its descent. “When she died, I approached him about it. My father wanted none of it. He said I had a wild imagination. But Impa. Impa listened to me. Impa knew. It is the job of the Sheikah, after all.” She shook her head. “There was no convincing him then, and there's no convincing him now, even with the Master Sword right before him. He won't let me do what needs to be done.”

“Can you blame him?”

She sighed. “I guess not. But as Hyrule's ruler, it is his duty not to let the legends die. It is his duty to work closely with the Sheikah in preparation for Ganondorf's revival. And it is his duty to let me do what I was born to do, as Hylia's descendant, to protect all of Hyrule from the darkness.”

“Good story,” Link said. “But I don't have anything like that. My biggest concern is who I can cheat off of next week.”

Zelda rolled her eyes. “You put up a good front,” she said, “but I know you're attached to that sword.”

“I found the stupid thing two days ago.”

“And you're pissed that your dad took it behind your back.”
Link considered this a moment. He wouldn't admit it to her, but it seemed Zelda wasn't far from the truth. He did feel a sense of familiarity with the sword. To suggest he was attached to it seemed a stretch, but when he saw the sword in the king's office, he couldn't help the pang in his gut, and he wanted nothing more than to get it back. “Yeah, what's up with that? What's his problem?”

Zelda shrugged. “He realizes his son will only chop his own arm off with it.”

Link nodded. “Most likely.”

“Why did you let him see it?”

“I didn't,” Link hissed. He paused for a moment. “I didn't think he knew I had it.”

Zelda shook her head. “Well, regardless, he knows, and it doesn't seem like anyone is going to make this easy for us.”

“Alright,” Link said slowly. “Let's say I help you get it back. How do you think we're going to do that?”

“Leave it to me. Give me your phone.” Link raised a brow, hesitant. He pulled his phone out of his pocket automatically, but did not give it to her.

“Why?”

Zelda rolled her eyes and took it from him. She tapped on the screen, smiled when she realized it had no lock on it, then navigated through quickly, adding her number into his contacts. When she was finished, she handed it back to him. “Text me tonight. Eight o'clock.”

Link looked through his phone, expecting to see something changed, but all he found was her name in his contact list. “If this is your way to extort a date out of me -”

“Shut up,” Zelda hissed. She turned her nose up at him and turned away, marching down the hallway.

Link looked back towards the way they came as voices came out of the king's office. He listened as the door closed and a lone set of footsteps moved through the hallway. His father rounded the corner, meeting Link's gaze briefly. He walked briskly past his son without a word.

Link jogged down the hallway to catch up with his father.

“What the hell? Do you plan on telling me what you think you're doing, snooping around my room?”

“It's my job to snoop,” he said simply.

“Find anything good?”

“A pitiful collection of porn under your bed.”

Link ignored him. “Why did you take the sword?”

“Because it's not yours.”

“I've heard otherwise.”

His father stopped suddenly and faced him. “That thing is garbage. Forget about it.” He hesitated a
moment before continuing out of the building. Link watched him for a moment, then broke into a jog to catch up to him again.

“What do you know about it?”

“Nothing.”

“You’re lying.” Link stepped in front of him and he stopped walking. He held his gaze on his son for a moment.

“What do you want?” his father sneered.

“The truth.”

His father hesitated. “Fine.” He let out a short breath. “I know the legends. I know everything. And I knew that my son would be Hylia's chosen hero. I knew this well before I even met your mother. I knew that you would come into the world, destined to find the Master Sword and stop Ganondorf.”

Link practically choked on the air. “Are you fucking kidding me?” He stared blankly at his father as he desperately tried to put the pieces together. “How did you know this?”

“The same way you figured it all out, I'm sure.”

Link raised a brow. “A rusted sword hidden in some woods called to you in a dream?”

“Something like that.”

“So, someone told you that your son would save the world, and you felt it in your duty to fuck the next woman you saw, bring that poor bastard into the world so that he could clean up everyone else's shit? I bet you feel real fucking proud, huh?”

“Is that what you fucking think?” his father hissed at him. “I did everything I could to keep you away from that life. I knew you found the sword, and I brought it here to destroy it once and for all.”

“Who do you think would save the world then?”

“The sword is ancient technology,” he said. “It's obsolete. We have other means of stopping any enemy should they rise.”

“Do you really believe that?”

“You will have no part in this.”

“It doesn't seem like I have much of a choice.”

“The king has made his orders.” He turned away from his son and walked towards his car. “And you have a test to study for.”

Link watched his father walk away. He was sure that there was more he was hiding, but he wasn't going to get anymore information out of him in that moment. He looked back over his shoulder, then pulled his phone out once more and stared at Zelda's name on his screen. He didn't want to believe any of it any more than his father did, but that sense of longing for the sword returned to him. A wave of remembrance – memories he never had – seemed to wash through him, and he knew what needed to be done.
His father's car was gone when Link made his way home, but Link still locked himself away in his room, ignoring Aryll's whining on the other side of the door. Aryll pressed her cheek against the door as she called to him in a sing-song voice.

“Come on, Link,” she said, her fingers rapping against the wood. “I know you're not really doing homework in there.”

“Go away, Ary,” Link said once more. He hung upside down on his bed, Switch controller in hand in an attempt to navigate a race course upside down.

“But I want to play your games!”

Link sighed. “I'm going to bed soon.”

“No, you're not! Liar!”

“Goodbye, Ary.” He grinned when he heard her push herself off the door. Her mumbling was muffled, but he was sure he was calling some kind of childish insult. Stupidhead was her favorite. After a moment more, he heard her bedroom door close. He let the controller drop from his hands onto the carpet the moment he crossed the finish line in the game and he stretched his arms out. He let himself hang for a moment before pulling himself upright. The blood drained from his head quickly, making him dizzy for a moment, and he lay flat across his bed.

At that moment, his phone buzzed on his desk, and he reached over to check it. He held the phone high above him, squinting at the name that appeared on the screen. He groaned slightly and opened Zelda's text.

Meet me at the coffee shop near the park. Now.

She sure was persistent. He moved his fingers to type a reply, but as he did so, the phone slipped from his hands and landed on his forehead. He barked in surprise and rubbed the red mark that appeared. With a grunt, he reached for the phone, turning over onto his stomach as he did so to finish his reply.

It's a little late for coffee for me.

It didn't take long for her reply. NOW.

Link rolled his eyes and blew his hair out of his eyes. He pocketed his phone, then moved across the room, opening the door quietly and poking his nose out slightly. He was sure his father was still up, and considering the fact that his bedroom door was open, he wouldn't be in for a bit. He closed the door softly, then moved back to his bed to open the window against the wall. He pushed out the screen, then pulled himself through clumsily. He landed on the roof top below his window more loudly than he expected, and froze for a moment, listening for any sign of his father. When nothing followed after a few moments, he replaced the screen, leaving the glass open, and moved carefully along the slope of the roof. He sat on the edge, letting his legs dangle for a moment before jumping down onto the grass.

Link jogged across the moonlight yard, his shadow stretching away from him, then jumped the fence on the other side. Back on his feet, he hesitated, looking over his shoulder, but there was no one following him, and he was now out of sight of every window in the house. It was a mile walk to the coffee shop, but Link knew he could make it there in a few minutes if he felt like being
He opted out of putting any effort into his travel, and it took him twenty minutes to get there. Zelda was waiting impatiently outside on the sidewalk, her arms crossed and her foot tapping. When she turned and saw Link, she rolled her eyes and sighed, her foot tapping faster.

“Please, take your time,” she said.

“I'm enjoying the nice night.”

“You have the rest of your life to enjoy things,” she hissed.

“Well, that all depends on how successful we are in our quest.”

“Quest? What is this, World of Warcraft?”

Link ignored her comment. “What's the plan?”

“My father moved the sword out of his office,” she said. “It's in Dorian's possession.”

“Great,” Link said dryly. “Sneaking around Sheikahs is just what I want to be doing.”

“I know Dorian has it in his office,” Zelda continued. “He's keeping it out of Impa's reach.”

“We're not breaking in to a Sheikah's office,” Link said, but Zelda was not listening.

“We can pick the lock no problem.”

“You know what Sheikah are, right?” Link said, narrowing his eyes on her. “You know, magical ass-kicking ninjas? There's no sneaking around them.”

“The sword won't be hard to find. We can get in and out in just a few minutes.”

“There's no chance in hell that Dorian is leaving that thing unguarded.”

Zelda sighed, growing frustrated with him. “Will you just listen?” she barked.

Link raised his hands in the air defensively. “Fine, fine. This is suicide, but I'm listening.”

Zelda rolled her eyes. “Impa's got them distracted.”

“You dragged her into this, too?”

Zelda shrugged. “It was her idea.”

“Are you sure this is going to work?”

“Maybe. Maybe not, if you insist on continuing to waste our time.”

“Fine. Are we doing this or what?”

“Fine. Let's go.”

Rather begrudgingly, Link followed Zelda to the town car that waited on the narrow street behind the coffee shop. She stopped at the driver side, her hand on the handle, regarding Link over her shoulder.
“Get in the back.”

Link raised a brow. “Seriously? You're driving?”

“Don't make me throw you into the trunk,” she snarled at him.

Link sighed and obeyed, climbing into the back seat.

“Stay down and keep quiet,” Zelda instructed. “My father suspects we'll try to get the sword back. It won't go over well if he finds out you're with me.”

“Great plan,” Link muttered. “Why don't you just give me a fake mustache, too? He'll never recognize me then.”

Zelda peeled away from the curb in response. She navigated the low traffic streets through the city until they arrived at the palace. The car slowed to a stop at the front gate, and Zelda chatted casually with the guard at the station. Link kept himself hidden as they conversed, and after a few more moments, the gates open and the car moved forward, following the winding path. He didn't move until the car came to a stop once more and Zelda cut the engine.

“Come on,” she said to him as she stepped out.

Link climbed out of the car behind her, looking around as he did so. Though it was dark, the grounds around the palace were rather brightly lit. Lights were set into the outer walls along the building, and decorated street lamps lined the drive they drove up. There were other various forms of lighting set back in manicured gardens and circled around lively fountains. The town car was parked on the side of a building which Link guessed to be some sort of garage based on the other vehicles lined around the circular drive. All were marked with the Hyrulian Crest. Peering into the windows of the garage showed Link that they were much nicer cars in the protection of the walls. He moaned lightly as his eyes moved over each vehicle in the dim light.

“Are you finished, or do you need another minute?” Zelda said, rolling her eyes. “We don't have a lot of time.”

“Do you have a less annoying sister or cousin or something so I can marry into this?”

Zelda snorted and turned her back on him. “Even my father doesn't drive those,” she said. She moved across the drive and away from the front of the palace. Link hesitated, stealing one last glance at the protected vehicles before jogging to catch up with the princess. He continued to look around as he followed her, wondering where she could be taking him.

After a few minutes more of following her blindly, Zelda stopped. They were behind the palace, almost a quarter of a mile away, to Link's surprise. High walls surrounded the property of the palace, towers at each corner. Bushes, small trees, and other various shrubberies and plans were decorated along the walls. Link also spotted a variety of security cameras. Zelda pressed her body against the wall and moved quickly along it, instructing Link to do the same. They hurried through the bushes and flowers, and after a few moments more, she stopped again. She got to her knees and lifted a door hidden behind a bush and she took the steps down underground.

The pathway under ground was completely dark, but Zelda and Link lit their way with the lights on their phones. Link kept close to her side, just at her heels as she lead the way through the secret passage ways.

“This is where you kill me, isn't it?” Link muttered.
“These passage ways have been here for thousands of years,” Zelda said. “You know, in case we ever need to make a quick and stealthy escape.”

“Or if you need to sneak it or out to see your boyfriends.”

Zelda shrugged. “I have gotten pretty good at that.”

Link barked a sharp laugh, not believing for a second that she ever had any kind of love life. She was far too high maintenance. And kind of a bitch.

Zelda rolled her eyes. “I will kill you, though, if you tell anyone of this.”

Link crossed his heart with his finger. “You're sex secrets are safe with me.”

Zelda ignored his comment as they moved further through, taking various turns as the path wound its way under the palace. After what felt like an endless amount of time, they finally neared the end of the path, climbing up another set of stairs. Zelda pressed a finger to a spot on the wall, though it was too dark for Link to see clearly. Based on what happened next, he suspected it to be some sort of fingerprint scanner, because the wall slid effortlessly open. Walking through brought Link and Zelda into some sort of storage room, and the wall slid closed behind them.

“This is some serious shit,” Link muttered.

They continued onward, moving across the storage room and out the door on the other side. This door brought them into a dark, empty hallway. Zelda moved down the hallway, and Link quickly became aware that they were not even in the palace. The Sheikah symbol marked various draperies that lined the walls, and Link suspected that they were in some sort of building off of the palace meant for the Sheikah.

They climbed a spiral staircase, moving quickly and quietly. Zelda checked around each corner before moving onward until they finally stopped before a large, clearly secure door. Link guessed the keyhole in the knob was merely for show as there were far more advanced mechanisms that secured their entry. A keypad on the wall suggested a password or code was needed. A fingerprint scanner told him that only a certain individual could gain access. And if anyone asked, he would have said he was certain that the door was also boobytrapped.

But none of this fazed Zelda.

“Looks like you didn't plan for Secret Agent Man's top notch security system,” Link said, crossing his arms over his chest.

Zelda tapped her fingers against the keypad, however, and the edges of the pad flashed green, signaling a correct code.

“Hacker.”

“Hardly,” Zelda said. “As leader of the Sheikah, Impa has access to everything the Sheikah do, including passwords, codes, you name it.”

“Sheikah told you how to break into Dorian's office?”

“She is on our side, you know.”

“Why couldn't she just get the stupid sword, then?”

“She's distracting them, remember?”
Link shrugged. “What about that fingerprint scanner?”

Zelda grinned. She pulled a piece of tape out of her pocket and carefully placed it on the scanner. After a few moments, it, too, lit green, and the door beeped lightly, allowing them entrance.

“Damn,” Link said. “Does all this come with the territory of being princess?”

Zelda laughed lightly. “Please. As far as my father is concerned, I should just stand next to him and look pretty.” She shook her head. “No, Impa has taught me everything I know.”

“Your father sounds like he's stuck in the stone ages,” Link said.

“Yeah. Well.” Zelda did not continue, however. She opened the door and stepped through into Dorian's office. Just as she suspected, the sword lay across his desk, but it was sheathed in a hilt she had not seen before. She moved to the desk, inspecting it carefully.

“You know,” Link started, looking around. “If he has this place so secure, there's probably some traps or something in here.” He pointed to the security camera in the corner of the room. “Or, you know, security cameras.”

Zelda shrugged. “We got this far. By the time he gets here, we'll be gone.”

“I wouldn't be so sure of that.
Link and Zelda spun around, shocked to see King Roham standing in the doorway. His brows were narrowed on them, but to Link's surprise, he didn't look particularly angry.

“She made me do it,” Link said quickly, pointing a finger at Zelda, who sighed and rolled her eyes at him.

“Dorian has been alerted,” King Roham said sternly. “You understand that nothing gets by the Sheikah, Zelda.”

Zelda crossed her arms. “The Sheikah are on my side.”

“Impa is,” King Roham corrected his daughter.

“Dorian should be taking orders from -”

“Dorian was working under my orders,” King Roham interrupted loudly. “Not that it is any of your concern.”

“You're working behind Impa's back?” Zelda hissed.

“Dorian will be replacing Impa soon enough. Her time as leader of the Sheikah has come to an end.”

“No,” Zelda barked. “Impa is the only one keeping our history alive. You cannot ignore the signs!”

King Roham was quiet for a moment as he regarded his daughter, however he did not move from the doorway. Link moved his gaze to the camera in the corner of the room, then back to the king. He was making it a point not to step in the light of sight. Link turned to move toward the desk, grabbing the sword and turning back to the camera, flipping the bird at it with a grin.

“Hylia help this moron,” King Roham said, shaking his head and pinching the bridge of his nose.

“What are you doing?” Zelda hissed.

“Come on,” Link said. “He's not here to stop us.”

Zelda moved her gaze to her father.

“He's smarter than he looks,” King Roham said. “If you don't hurry, Dorian will catch you, and I'll have no choice but to tell him that I stalled you.”

“Why the change of heart?” Zelda said, narrowing her eyes at her father.

“Are you going to question me are you going to get out of here?”

“Fine,” Zelda muttered. Her father stepped aside into the hallway, allowing them to pass through and closing the door behind them. He watched as they hurried down the hall, disappearing around the corner, and sighed. He turned away from the office in the opposite direction and made his way out of the Sheikah headquarters and into the palace.

Link and Zelda quickly retraced their steps, making their way back through the secret passageways until they were outside of the palace once more. They strolled across the grounds and toward the
garage with the sword now in their possession. Link swung it around him enthusiastically as they walked before returning it to the sheath.

“Where did this thing come from, anyway?” He asked as he swung it over his shoulder. He took a moment to pause and crane his neck around to try to see the sword on his back.

“That is the hilt that belongs to the Master Sword. It's been passed down by the Sheikah for many years.”

“Do I get a cool shield, too?”

Zelda shook her head. “There is a shield that was once passed on to the heroes of Hyrule, but it has long since been retired.”

“That's cool,” Link muttered. “I don't need to protect myself.”

“You have a hard enough time wielding that sword,” Zelda said, narrowing her eyes on him.

“How else am I going to protect myself?”

“Get good.”

Link smiled and Zelda continued.

“The shield will only be a hinderance. Other than being an iconic item of our history, it has no use now. It should be properly preserved.”

Link frowned as they continued to walk. “If this is as you say it is, it would be stupid to go in without some kind of defense.”

“I agree,” Zelda said with a nod. “But until we know exactly what we're up against, it will be difficult to know how to protect ourselves. We won't know what kind of magic we could be dealing with, and it may only do more harm than good to slow ourselves down.”

“With what, chain mail? I think we can get something a few hundred years more modern.”

“What do you suggest?” Zelda said. “A bullet proof vest? We're not exactly going up against some modern day army. We're talking possible magic monsters here.”

“Sounds like fun,” Link mumbled.

“In any case,” Zelda continued. “We should be more focused on our own training right now. We don't know when Ganondorf's forces will strike. We need to be as prepared as possible. You need to learn how to fight with that sword.”

“And you?”

Zelda hesitated. “I need to find how to use my own power,” she said.

“And who's going to help us with that?”

“Impa will,” Zelda said. “She knows everything we need to know.”

They stopped at the garage and Link turned to her. “You're not driving me home, are you?”

Zelda smiled and shook her head. “Impa will let you out.”
Link folded his hands behind his head and gazed up at the moon. “And here I was thinking we had something. But no, you just kick me to the curb after you have your way with me.”

Zelda rolled her eyes and made her way towards the front of the palace. “Goodbye, Link,” she said over her shoulder, leaving him alone.

Link sighed, scratched at his head, and followed the drive to the front gates where Impa was in fact waiting for him. She nodded to him as he passed, opening the gates and allowing him through. He waved over his shoulder at her, passing under the street lights until he disappeared around the corner into the night.

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It was almost midnight when Link made it back home. He unlocked the back door as quietly as he could, opening it just enough to peek inside. The room was dark, and that was enough for him to decide that the coast was clear. He slipped in quickly, closing the door slowly behind him and turning the deadbolt. He stiffened, sensing he was no actually alone in the room.

“How do you expect to save the world when you can't even get through high school?”

Link turned and faced his father. He was sitting at the table, his face lit by the light of his phone, but he did not look up at his son.

“I was hoping it would get me a free pass in life.”

“Your mother always said I'd raise an incompetent idiot.”

“I'm sure she would have done better.”

“Probably.” He placed his phone on the table and reached into his pocket, pulling out a horseshoe shaped charm on a string. He slid it across the table towards Link.

“She believed that shit, too,” he continued. “She'd want you to have that. It's been passed down in her family or something.” He shrugged. “It makes noise if you blow into it, but it's annoying. Don't let your sister touch it.” He returned to his phone.

Link picked up the item and inspected it. He recalled seeing his mother wearing it a few times, but never thought much about it. “You must have won her over with your charm.”

“Lucky for you, you've inherited my charm,” his father said dryly. “Don't get any ideas on that princess, though.”

“She hates me, anyway.”

“Heroes never get the girl.”

“What movies are you watching? Heroes always get the girl.”

His father stood and regarded Link for a moment. “If you're going to do this, please don't die, or your mother will kill me herself.”

Link strung the charm around the sword and smiled. “Okay, Dad.”
Chapter 10

Link pressed his back against the wall. He held his gun up close to him, ready to fire at a moment's notice. He pressed his cheek against the cold surface of the wall as he neared the corner and peered around carefully. The room was dark and quiet. Too quiet. Though it seemed empty, his instincts told him he was not alone; someone else was on the other side of the wall, watching him, waiting for him to make a move.

Link stepped back from the corner, holding his breath. Most of his comrades were already eliminated. Only one other remained, and he hadn't the slightest idea where she had run off to. He muttered under his breath, cursing her name. He had warned her not to be so foolish, and for all he knew, she got herself eliminated as well.

It was up to him, now, to finish what they had started. His enemies were cunning, and though he had managed to avoid their shots, it was time to go in guns blazing. It was all or nothing if he wanted to finish this. He would go down trying if he had to. He would bring them all down with him.

Link sucked in a breath and reloaded his weapon. He stepped around the corner, gun raised, and grinned wickedly. “Come out, come out, wherever you are,” he taunted.

He heard the voice before he saw the dark figure. “Die!” it shouted to him as it leapt out from its cover behind the wall.

Link didn't hesitate to shoot, dodging out of the way as he did so and narrowly missing the oncoming attack. The figure was running toward him now, and he shot twice more before throwing himself in the protection behind another wall. But it was coming at him quickly. They were coming at him quickly. He had stupidly miscalculated the remaining survivors, and they were surrounding him.

“Shit,” he spat.

“You swore!”

“I'm telling!”

“Get him!”

Link jumped out from the wall as they rushed in towards him, shooting off twice more. He hurried backwards, desperately dodging their attacks, but in his panic, he tripped and fell to his knees.

“You're finished!”

This voice was one he recognized, and when he looked up, Riju stood before him, two guns in hand. She shot them one after another, her accurate aim hitting each targets, and within moments, the children whined and threw their guns to the ground as the lights came on.

Riju jumped, thrusting a fist in the air. “In yo face with a can 'o mace! Make you cry all over the place!”

“Get a life, Riju!” one of the young boys barked at her. “Stop ruining all our fun!”

Riju put her hands on her hips and leaned forward. “Get good, son!”
They rolled their eyes at her as they filed out of the room. Satisfied, Riju turned her attention to Link and crossed her arms.

“What the fuck, man? You almost lost us the game!”

Link pushed himself to his feet and dusted off his pants. “They came at me!”

“They're ten year-olds! Damn!”

“They're evil!”

“Get your shit together or you're off my team!”

From around the corner, the rest of their team members came, heads hung low as they awaited their captain's wrath.

“What's with you losers?” Riju barked. “We're better than this! We can't be beat by Bobby's birthday party!”

“We had a plan,” one of the freshman hissed at her. “And you abandoned us!”

“You were dragging me down!”

“Help us out here, man,” he said, turning his gaze to Link.

Link shrugged. “Hey, you knew what you were getting into.”

Riju fished her phone out of her pocket when it rang. She frowned when she saw her sister's name on the screen. “I'm in trouble,” she muttered as she answered it.

“What?” Her shoulders hunched over slightly as Urbosa spoke loudly on the other end. “I didn't do anything! ... I can't help it if I'm better than them... Link did it, too!”

“Come on,” Link groaned. He didn't need Urbosa's wrath, too.

“Whatever,” Riju continued. “We're done. We already won... Why should I let them win?!... Shut up, Urbosa!” Frustrated, she tried desperately to slam her finger on the hang up button, but the screen didn't recognize the force, and she slammed her index finger against the screen over and over before finally succeeding and shoving her phone back in her pocket. She crossed her arms and stormed out of the laser tag course. She ignored the bald man behind the counter as he glowered at her.

“Watch yourself, Riju,” he warned. “Or I'll take away your pass.”

“You already texted my sister,” she hissed. “You're such a tattle!”

“I do run this place,” he reminded her. “And everyone has to follow the rules.”

“I didn't do anything wrong!”

He stepped aside to reveal one of the security cameras. Riju was frozen on the screen, standing over one of the younger boys with one of the laser guns pointed at his chest.

“I get results!”

“You're crazy!”
Riju slammed her pass onto the counter. “You can take my badge, but you can't-” Her mouth snapped shut as the man took the pass from her. He held it between his fingers.

“Suspended.”

“Come on!” Riju whined.

The man grinned at her. “You're gonna have to earn this back.”


But Link had his face pressed against the glass of the counter. “Wait,” he said. “I want candy!”

“You need tickets, dumbass,” Riju said. “Get candy at the store like an adult.”

The man leaned on the counter towards Link. “I'll give you five free coins to play the games here and buy this candy.”

Link leaned back and rubbed his chin. “Riju's right,” he said. “This place is a rip off.”

The man sneered at Link and snatched his badge from him. “You're suspended, too.”

Link shrugged, not as fazed by the situation as Riju was. “Fine, suspend your best customers,” he said. “See how business does without us around here.”

“You two are a liability!”

Link turned and lead the way out of the arcade. “See ya next week, Gus.”

“He's never gonna give me my pass back,” Riju whined, catching up to him.

“Maybe if you weren't so freaking insane.”

“Whatever,” Riju muttered.

Link patted the top of her head playfully. “Didn't Urbosa ever teach you how to play nice?”

“Playing nice is for losers,” Riju said. “Nice guys finish last.”

“So that's why I'm single,” he said thoughtfully.

Riju snorted. “You're single because you're just an idiot.”

Link shrugged. “So, what's your excuse?”

Riju hip checked him hard and jogged ahead as he swung his arms out to grab her. He missed and stumbled forward. Riju giggled.

“I have high standards,” she said, turning around and walking down the sidewalk once more. “And I ain't got time for no man.”

“Right,” Link said, rolling his eyes and catching up to her. “But instead of following her across the intersection, he stopped to cross the street, checking both ways before breaking into a jog.

“Hey!” Riju shouted, turning around when she saw him take off. “Where you going?”

Link paused in the middle of the street. “To get ice cream or commit a felony. I'll decide on the
“Wait!” she shouted to him, sprinting across the road to catch up and ignoring the cars as they screeched to a stop. “I want to commit a felony too!” When they reached the other side, she turned around to stick her tongue out at the cars that honked at her as they drove by.

“Don't you have to go home and get yelled at?” Link said.

“Oh, I have the rest of my life for that,” she said, waving a hand at him. She looked down the next block, spying her favorite ice cream store. She grabbed Link's arm and pulled him along. “And you're buying me a sundae.”

“Buy your own,” Link said, pulling his arm out of her grip.

Riju shook her head. “Uh-uh,” she said, narrowing her eyes at him. “You owe me for losing me my pass.”

“I didn't do shit!”

“You abandoned me! I had no choice but to murder those kids!”

“You're crazy!”

“You want crazy? I'll show you crazy!” She waited for Link to pass, then leapt onto his back, her arms wrapping around her neck and nearly choking him. She shimmied up his back, readjusted her grip on him, and leaned forward over his head. “Onward, noble steed!”

“I hate you,” Link muttered.

Riju messed his hair with her hand. “No you don't,” she sang. “We're best friends!”

Link sighed. He bounced lightly, readjusting her on his back, and grabbed hold of her legs. “Fine,” he said. “But only 'cause you're cute.”

“Keep it in your pants, loser,” Riju hissed. “Or I'll kick your ass.”

Link nodded and smiled up at her. “Kinky.”

She hit him on top of his head and kicked at his sides. “Go, steed! To ice cream!”
Mondays. The worst day of the week. This Monday was particularly shitty. Instead of going right home after school, Link apparently had other obligations, as per Impa's orders. From now on, he was expected at the shrine every day after school, and he had a feeling she'd want to take up his weekends, too. It was for the greater good of Hyrule, Impa would say; he needed to properly learn how to fight and defend himself with only an ancient sword. Of course, there were plenty of other things he would rather be doing. Hanging out with Zelda and Impa were definitely not on his to-do list.

He had managed to shove the sword into his backpack, arranging it carefully on his back so that his hoodie covered the rest of the hilt that stuck out. When Mipha inquired, he simply explained it was an umbrella, though the forecast did not predict rain. Mipha, however, was too focused on the test they had in first period to care about Link's poor judgement of weather.

The sword remained hidden in his locker through the day and he made sure to be extra vigilant in keeping it out of sight every time he opened the door. He dropped his books off just before lunch, jumping when Zelda appeared at his side once he swung the door closed.

“What are you so jumpy for?” She narrowed her eyes at him.

“Maybe because you're creepy,” Link sneered.

“Whatcha hiding in there?”

“What do you think?” he muttered.

“You're just going to bring it every day?”

“I don't have much of a choice,” he said. “Besides, what if I need it during class?”

Zelda considered this for a moment. “My school attendance is going to suck, isn't it?”

Link shrugged. “So much for that perfect streak.”

Zelda rolled her eyes at him. Without another word, she turned her back and disappeared in the crowd.

Link found his way into the courtyard where his friends sat, as they usually did on the nicer days. He preferred it over the loud, dirty cafeteria. He was not greeted warmly, however. Urbosa immediately crossed her arms when he came through the doors, and Revali snickered, all too eager to see him suffer Urbosa's wrath.

“Do you want to explain to me why Gus was texting me Saturday?”

“I have no idea what you're talking about,” Link said, avoiding her gaze.

“Don't play dumb, Link. You and Riju are a nightmare.”

“Really,” Revali chimed in. “You're such a child.”

“I have a record to hold.”

“Riju doesn't need you egging her on.”
“Everything we do is always Riju's idea.”

Urbosa sighed. “Yeah, you're probably right there.” She straightened and her face hardened again. “But that doesn't mean you need to go along with it!”

“She's fun. And she's a good laser tag partner,” Link said defensively. “She's tiny, so she's allowed to push kids.”

Urbosa rolled her eyes. “You're a bad influence.”

“Yeah, but that isn't news to you.”

“That's how you spend your time?” Mipha said. “You knew we had a test today.”

“Aced it,” Link said.

“No, you didn't.”

Link shrugged. “But at least I had fun. What did you do over the weekend?”

Mipha hesitated. “Studied like everyone else.”

Revali raised a hand in the air. “I didn't study for anything.” He threw a thumb towards Teba. “Neither did he.”

“I... opened a textbook,” Teba said with a shrug. “And then I decided to have a life.”

“I have senioritis,” Daruk said. “But in my defense, all of my teachers have basically given up with the year. We're not doing shit.”

“Well,” Mipha started. “Some of us still have another year left to survive.” She glared at Link, but he was ignoring her, already diving into his sandwich.

“You're not hanging out with her again, are you?” Urbosa said in a defeated tone.

Link shook his head. “Nope.”

“Good,” Mipha said. “I'm coming over and letting you copy my notes.” She rolled her eyes. “At least I can say I tried to help you.”

“Actually,” Link said, hesitant. “I, uh, have plans after school.”

“Oh,” Mipha said softly.


Link shrugged. “Stuff. What's it to you?”

“You're right,” Revali said in a moment of revelation. “I don't care.”

“Fine,” Mipha said. “Don't come crying to me when you fail another class.”

Link patted Mipha's head. “Don't worry, I will.” He batted his eyelashes at her. “And you'll come to my rescue.”

Mipha sighed and rolled her eyes, but smiled down at her lunch.
To Link's relief, that was the end of their usual nagging, and the conversation moved on as Mipha inquired about Suki. Revali's attempts to tease Teba about his relationship were cut short as they usually were when Teba ignored him, and Revali finally gave up talking all together, at least for the time being.

Link wouldn't see them again until the end of the day, and when that time came around, he chose to ignore his friends all together. Zelda and Paya were already standing beside the town car which was sent to send her, Paya, and Link to the shrine where Impa waited. She crossed her arms and tapped her foot impatiently as she waited for Link. Link ducked his head as he attempt to blend in with the crowd of students exiting the school and avoid being seen by his friends. At the car, he shoved his hands in his pockets and met Zelda’s gaze.

“Time to learn some karate shit?” he asked with a raised brow.

Zelda glanced at Paya, then rolled her eyes. “So, you’re on board, I take it? What changed your mind?”

Link shrugged. “Figured even if it is bullshit, it’s another excuse to avoid doing homework.”

Zelda put a hand on her hip. “I couldn’t care less if you drop out, but don’t think being a hero is gonna pay the bills in your future.”

Link grinned. “Maybe not. But it’s a great pick-up line.”

Zelda rolled her eyes and without another word, slid into the backseat of the car. Paya followed suit, leaving Link to get in last, thankful not to be stuck in the middle. The drive to the shrine was uneventful, and uncomfortably quiet. Link kept his gaze out the window, watching as the city passed before him. When they arrived at the shrine, the three of them climbed out of the car, and without a word, Dorian took off, leaving them alone.

“He's butthurt,” Zelda said.

“Butthurt?” Paya echoed.

Zelda nodded. “My father had our backs and told him we were gone before he got there, but I think Dorian suspects that he's lying. They had a long meeting about everything. Father isn't any more thrilled about the situation as he was earlier, but he seems to have come around and accepted that this is what needs to be done. Impa must have convinced him to let us do this. He hasn't argued with me anymore about it.”

“I don't like him,” Link said in regards to Dorian. “I get bad vibes from him.”

Zelda rolled her eyes. “Impa is still the leader of the Sheikah, and my father is still the king. As long as they are on the same page, he can't do anything about it, whether he agrees with it or not.”

“If he's Sheikah, shouldn't he be trying to convince your father to let us do this?”

Zelda hesitated and turned her gaze to Paya.

“He has different ideas about how Ganondorf should be dealt with,” Paya said.

Link raised a brow at her. “That's it?”

Paya shrugged. “It's not like he's very vocal about his opinions. Clearly he disagrees. I couldn't tell you why that is.”
Link dropped his back on the ground and retrieved the sword. “Well, are we going to do this or what?”

Zelda peered at the charm on the sword. “What's that?”

Link shrugged as he inspected it more closely than he had when his father gave it to him. “I don't know. Something that belonged to my mom I guess. My dad gave it to me.”

“A good luck charm, I bet,” Zelda said with a grin. “Hylia knows you'll need it.”

“Yeah, I think he had the same idea,” Link muttered.

“He knows you got the sword back?”

“I guess I'm not as stealthy as I thought.”

Zelda crossed her arms. “Clearly. Hyrule is doomed under your protection.”

“It's not like I volunteered,” Link said.

“We would be in better hands with a squirrel.”

“At least I won't have to get my ass kicked.”

“Death would be too easy for you,” Zelda snarled.

“So hostile.”

“Are you always this annoying?”

“Are you?”

Zelda sighed, exasperated. “Why does it have to be me stuck with you? What in the world was Hylia thinking? Clearly this is where the world as we know it ends.”

“We can only hope.”

“Are you two done bickering?”

They turned to see Impa standing in the doorway.

“Hyrule will be doomed if you can't learn to get alone.” Without another word, she turned back into the shrine.

Paya laughed lightly as she followed her grandmother, and with a glance to one another, Link and Zelda followed suit to begin their training.
Link's disappointed gaze fell on the wood practice sword. His lips twisted to the side. “Seriously? That thing? It's a piece of wood.”

Impa snarled at him. “That blade is sharper than it looks,” she said. “You have a ways to go before you will be able to use it properly. Can't have you cutting your own arm off, now, can we?”

“How incapable do you think I am?”

Impa smiled and shoved the bokken into his chest. “You don't want me to answer that.”

Link sighed, taking the bokken from her. “Fine.” He swung the bokken around and promptly dropped it onto the floor. Zelda snickered from behind him.

“Don't make me hit you,” Impa said.

Link laughed sharply. “Is that a threat?”

Without hesitation, Impa scooped up the bokken and swung it around herself impressively. Before Link could react, the bokken came down hard across the back of his legs, knocking him to the ground. Impa thrust the bokken down against his chest, and Link fell onto his back with a grunt. Impa stood over him with the tip of the wooden sword against his throat.

“That's a promise,” she sneered to him.

“Alright,” Link barked at her. He pushed the bokken aside with his arm and sat up. “You're crazy.”

Impa let the bokken drop into his lap and made her way across the room, picking up another bokken for herself. “Get used to it,” she said. “There's a lot riding on this. No pressure.”

Link grunted in response. He stood, taking the bokken in hand, and waited for Impa to return.

“Don't think I'm going easy on you,” she said. She used the bokken as a tool, hitting Link between his knees. “Stance. Balance. Move your damn legs.”

Link sighed. He watched as Impa demonstrated, then she hit his legs again.

“Will you quit it?” he barked at her.

“Stance!” She hit him again.

“Okay!”

Zelda turned to Paya. “This is going to be tedious to watch,” she said.

Paya nodded and grinned. “I almost feel bad for him.”

Zelda laughed. “I don't. He could use a little discipline for once in his life.” They continued to watch as Impa barked orders at Link, and Link tried desperately – and clumsily – to keep up with her pace, adjusting his stance as instructed.

After a moment, Zelda frowned. “I'm not going to have to do this, am I?”
Paya shrugged. “I don't know how Grandmother plans to help you with your power,” she admitted.

“As long as I don't have to swing a sword around,” Zelda muttered.

“It couldn't hurt to learn a little,” Paya offered.

“Maybe,” Zelda said. Truth be told, she wasn't feeling very confident in her ability to awaken her power. It didn't matter how good Link was with a sword; if she couldn't get control of her power, they wouldn't be able to seal Ganondorf away, and the war would be lost before it even began.

“There's no need to worry about it,” Paya said when Zelda grew quiet. “Everything will come together.”

Zelda continued to watch Link as he was knocked back by Impa. “I hope so.”

*****

His father was still not home when Link got home, despite the late hour, but it came as no surprise. In fact, Link expected him not to be home. He wasn't around through most of the weekend, despite their encounter in King Roham's office. He was sure his father had much more to say to him, but his anger was subdued by the anniversary of his wife's death. And Link was quite certain his father would be absent over the next few days as a result. Perhaps working late to avoid his feelings like he usually did, or maybe simply wallowing in self-pity at one of the bars downtown.

Link supposed he couldn't be too upset with his father. It was preferable to him drinking at home and otherwise being antisocial, but either way, it upset Aryll, and she spent the nights their father was out sleeping in his bed or generally hanging out in his bedroom. More often than not, she would dig out the old photos of their mother that were buried deep in their father's closet and peruse through them curiously, admiring the mother she never knew. To Link's relief, she never inquired about their mother, to him or their father; there wasn't much to say about her, anyway.

But for the next few days, it would become his responsibility to keep an eye on his little sister, to fill the shoes of his father until his return to duty. On the plus side, his returns were mostly cheerful, and he always greeted Aryll enthusiastically, and all would be right in the world once more. Link didn't make the best replacement – he was sure if he ever had a child, he would kill it by accident – but Aryll seemed content on his sloppy sandwiches for dinner, the hastily made cereal for breakfast after he slept through his alarm, and the walk with him and Mipha to school. Really, what more could a little girl ask for?

Aryll was still up when Link got home, waiting patiently for him at the kitchen table. Her legs swung in and out under her chair as she doodled on her sheets of homework. She smiled when Link walked in.

“You're extra late today,” she noted.

“I know, sorry.” He dropped his bag on the floor and sat across from her. “I won't be able to come home right after school for a while.” He frowned at her, but she turned her attention back to her doodles.

“That's okay,” she said. “I'm old enough to be home by myself, you know.”

“I hope you don't tell anyone that at school,” Link said. “They would disagree.”

“Link,” she said in her most adult voice. She rolled her eyes before regarding him. “I'm six! I think I can handle it.”
Link smiled, but it didn't change the guilt he felt. Maybe if he asked Impa nicely, she wouldn't keep him so late. Six hours of swinging a stick around was a bit overkill, really. And he had other responsibilities. Surely she couldn't be upset with him for that.

Link stood and moved to the counter, gathering the ingredients for his go-to dinner. Aryll hurried to his side and stood on her tiptoes at the counter as Link made his sandwich.

“What's going on here?” he asked. He let himself fall into a chair at the table tiredly.

“Link made me a peanut butter and banana sandwich,” Aryll said proudly.

“Oh, yeah? Your mother used to love those.”

Aryll beamed at her father. “Me too!” She took another thoughtful bite. “What else did she like?”

He leaned back in his chair, thoughtful for a moment. “Oh, I don't know,” he started. “I guess she liked lots of things.”

“What's her favorite color?” Aryll pressed.

“Green.”

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“What’s her favorite color?” Aryll pressed.

“Green.”

“Juice?”

He scratched his head and mouthed the word, as if baffled by such a question. He shrugged. “Orange?”

“Mine too!” Aryll chewed for another moment, thinking of more questions to ask. “What’s her favorite animal?”
“Dogs.”

“I like dogs,” Aryll said with a nod. “So does Link. Can we get a dog?”

“Don't you think I have enough to do around here?”

Aryll dropped her sandwich and stood in her chair. “I'll do everything, I promise! I'll feed it and walk it and love it!”

Link snorted, but made no other comment. His father regarded him with a smirk before turning back to his youngest child.

“Are you going to buy the food for it?”

“I don't have any money!”

“Guess you ain't getting a dog, huh?”

Aryll crossed her arms and slouched back in her chair. “Hmph.”

Their father stood with a sigh. He pointed a finger from Link to Aryll, gesturing to the both of them. “Be good children and go to bed.”

“Alright, Daddy,” Aryll said as she finished her sandwich. “Night.” She watched as he disappeared around the corner, then shot her gaze towards Link. “Do you have money?”

“Nope,” Link said, not meeting her gaze.

Aryll whined loudly. “But I want a dog!”

“I want a sister that isn't annoying,” he sneered toward her.

“Don't be mean!”

Link grinned at her. “But its my job, and you make it so easy.”

“Its your job to love me and protect me forever and ever,” Aryll said, crossing her arms.

Link put a finger to his chin, as if he were thinking long and hard about what she said, then shook his head. “No, that doesn't sound right.”

Aryll frowned at him, her bottom lip quivering. “You're not gonna protect me?”

Link rolled his eyes and sighed. “Stop it. I'm not falling for your act.”

“I thought you loved me!”

“Not enough to get you a dog.”

“Link!” She pounded her fist against the table. “That's not it!”

Link narrowed his eyes at her. “What's not?”

Aryll leaned back against her chair, her shoulders hunched over. “I dunno,” she said.

“We're not talking about dogs anymore?”
Aryll sighed. “No.” She rubbed at her eyes. “Sometimes I have these bad dreams.”

“They're just dreams,” Link said.

Aryll shook her head.

Link sighed. “I'll always protect you,” he reassured her.

Aryll smiled. “And get me a dog?”

“You're a little shit!”

Aryll giggled and jumped out of her chair. “I'm telling Dad!” She turned and stuck her tongue out at him, then ran off down the hall giggling when he jumped out of his chair.

After a moment, Link poked his head around the corner, but Aryll had already made her way upstairs and to her bedroom. He followed suit with a yawn, dragging his feet to his own bedroom, where the Master Sword waited, leaning against the wall. He frowned as he looked at it, Aryll’s words echoing in his mind. It was then that he realized that he had a lot more at stake than just simply saving the world.
Chapter 13

Link’s body ached in places he didn’t even know could ache. His legs in particular. There were light bruises in the places where Impa hit him, and his thighs burned from the seemingly endless squats she made him do. He could barely get himself out of bed the next morning, and the walk to school was unbearable as he dragged his feet along. During first period, he let his head rest on the desk, sighing dramatically when Mipha pressed him for information.

“What the hell is wrong with you? You've been whining all morning about being sore.”

Link groaned and closed his eyes. “Please kill me.”

“What did you do last night? Run three miles?”

“I wish.”

Mipha narrowed her eyes at him. “Were you playing laser tag with Riju again?”

Link sighed and shook his head.


Link smiled. “I swear, I wasn't playing laser tag.”

“Then what's wrong with you?”

Link opened his eyes and hesitated. Perhaps he should have used Riju as an excuse. He didn't really think that through. To his relief, however, their teacher entered, calling for their attention and offering him just the distraction he needed.

The day continued on without further interrogation from Mipha, and he was too tired to keep up with his usual antics, particularly annoying Revali. His behavior, however, did not seem to strike his friends as unusual. In fact, they seemed relieved that he and Revali were not bickering, and no one cared to indulge Link by addressing his complaining about his sore body. He didn't feel like coming up with a lie, but he would have appreciated some sympathy from them.

His sore body made for a perfect excuse when it came to the end of the day, however. He found Mipha in the hallway after the last bell of the day, standing at her locker as she retrieved her bag.

“What's your plan?” she said as she swung the bag over her shoulder.

“Going to bed,” Link said with a yawn. “And icing my thighs.”

Mipha rolled her eyes. “If it wasn't Riju, it must have been Aryll.”

Link nodded. “Yup. She kicked my ass.”

“She's a little girl.”

“She has a hard kick.”

Mipha grinned. “Alright,” she said with a shrug. “See you tomorrow.”

With a perfect cover in place, Link was able to sneak out the back of the school and make his way around to where Zelda and Paya waited. Like his friends, Impa had no sympathy for his deteriorated condition and showed him no mercy as they continued his training. When she wasn't
hitting his legs and correcting his stand, she was making him do squats and lunges. He lifted weights and did more push-ups and pull-ups than he ever imagined. It seemed he was doing everything but learning how to fight with a sword.

To his relief, however, their training session was shorter than the previous one, but he couldn't help but notice that Zelda had done nothing but watch and laugh at him.

“Why am I the only one suffering?” he hissed at her as they left the shrine for the night.

“Because you're the one with the sword,” she reminded him.

“So? What's your deal?”

Zelda shrugged. “I'm sure Impa has her own plans in mind for me.”

“I hope you suffer,” Link sneered.

“Hylia forbid you have to do a little exercise.” Zelda rolled her eyes.

“I've never lift more than a pencil,” Link said. “And even that's a bit much for my liking.”

Zelda pressed her palm against her forehead and shook her head, smiling. “I'm sure all the other heroes weren't nearly as lazy as you are.”

“You know what?” Link started. “I bet they were. I bet they were too busy sleeping and eating and fucking around to give a shit about some stupid destiny.”

“I'm sure that's exactly what happened,” Zelda said.

“Yeah.” Link nodded and grinned. “Hyrule needs a hero? Too bad; I'm going fishing!”

“That's the spirit,” Zelda muttered.

“Princess kidnapped? I'll get to her after I bowl a perfect game.”

“Great.”

“No one wanted to get involved in that shit. Ganondorf? No thanks.”

“Guess we’ll need to put out a new ad,” Zelda said. She moved her hands across her as she spoke. “Wanted: Hero. Requirements: Must possess Triforce of Courage and know how to wield a sword. Duties include, but are not limited to, fighting monsters and defeating Ganondorf. Must not die. Payment: bragging rights. Please send resume to Zelda, Princess of Hyrule.”

“I don't think you'll get a lot of takers for that.”

Zelda smiled and shrugged. “Anything's gotta be better than you.”

“Touché.”

**** *

Back at home, Link noticed the light on in his father’s bedroom. When he peered around the corner, it was Aryll he saw, laying on his bed with her feet in the air and a picture frame in her hands. She was singing to herself, and Link recognized it as the song their mother used to sing to them. It was the same song that played in her musicbox.
“What are you doing in here?”

Aryll pointed at the picture, not looking up. “I like to look at this picture,” she said happily. “See how happy they are?”

“That’s because you weren’t born yet,” Link said with a grin.

“Be quiet,” Aryll hissed at him. She fell silent for a moment. “Daddy doesn’t get happy like that anymore.”

“That’s because you were -”

“Shut up, Link!” Aryll snapped at him.

Link put his hands up defensively. “I’m just kidding, okay?”

Aryll sighed and turned back to the picture. “When is Daddy coming home?”

“I dunno,” Link said softly. “I’ll come home early tomorrow, okay?”

“It’s okay,” Aryll said. “I know you’re busy with stuff.”

Link pinched his lips together. “I can take the night off tomorrow.”

Aryll put the picture frame down on the bed and turned to him with a smile. “Okay.”

“Come on,” Link said, waving her forward. “Go to bed.”

“Can I sleep with you tonight?”

Link sighed. “Fine,” he said, turning down the hall towards his room.

Aryll replaced the picture frame on the nightstand and jumped off the bed, hurrying after Link into his bedroom. She jumped onto his bed and shimmied under the blankets with a sigh as Link crawled over her, laying on top of the blankets with his hands behind his head.

“So,” Aryll started. “I was thinking we should name our dog Richard.”

Link raised a brow. “That’s a weird name.”

Aryll giggled.

“We’re not getting a dog!”

“But!”

“Don’t make me kick you out,” he warned her.

Aryll made a zipping motion over her lips. She turned over without another word and closed her eyes.

*****

Aryll was awoken by two sounds; Link’s snoring, and his phone vibrating on the desk nearby. She elbowed Link annoyingly, but all he did was turn over in his sleep, his limbs sprawled in every direction. She got up and looked at the phone, smiling when she saw Mipha’s name on the screen. She slid her finger across to answer it.

“Hi, Mipha.”

Mipha checked the clock on her nightstand. It was only eleven, but she didn’t expect Aryll to answer. “Hey, Ary,” she said.

“Link’s sleeping.”

“Of course he is,” she said with a sigh. He was not one to stay up late doing homework like she was, but she had at least hoped to catch him in the middle of a late night video game marathon. But
it didn’t matter; she really didn’t have a good reason for calling. She would have said something about their assignment, but he would not have any answers for her. Mostly, she just wanted to hear his voice.

“Guess what I had for dinner every day?” Aryll said.

Mipha smiled. “What?”

“A peanut butter and banana sandwich!”

“That sounds… weird. Was it good?”

Aryll nodded. “Link made it for me. Daddy said it was Mom’s favorite.”

“Oh, yeah?” Mipha hesitated, wondering how much she remembered of her mother, or if she even knew of the anniversary of her death. “Do you miss her?”

“No, I don’t miss her,” she said. “I don’t remember her. But I know Daddy and Link do.”

“Yeah,” Mipha said, frowning. “I’m sure they do.” She leaned against the wall on her bed and turned her gaze to the full moon out hr window.

“It's okay, though,” Aryll continued. “I don't need a mom. I have you to do all the things moms do.”

Mipha smiled. “Of course you do,” she said.

“Yeah. You told me boys have cooties, remember?”

Mipha laughed, and Aryll continued on.

“And I have Urbosa and Riju. I have, like, three moms! That's way better. And Urbosa can do my hair like her's and Riju's. I want my hair to look pretty like their's.”

“I think we can arrange for that,” Mipha said. “How about Saturday? You can hang with us girls.”

Aryll grinned excitedly. “Okay! Me and you and Urbosa and Riju.” She paused. “And maybe Link, too? So he doesn't feel left out.”

“I guess Link can tag along,” Mipha said playfully.

“Okay, good. Mipha?”

“Yes, Ary?”

“I'm glad you're friends with Link. We're friends too, right?”

“Of course we are, silly. I like you better than Link.”

Aryll grinned. “Good, because I love you, Mipha. And I love Urbosa and Riju and Daruk and Link and Daddy.”

“I know, Aryll.”

“And don't forget Link loves you too.”

Mipha blushed. “I'm sure.”
“And he loves everyone and Daddy loves everyone and I bet Mommy did.”

“The world is full of love, Ary.”

“Yeah!”

Mipha laughed. “Go to sleep, now, okay? It’s pretty late. But I’ll see you Saturday.”

Aryll nodded her head. “Okay! Bye!” She pressed the red button on the screen and placed the phone back down on the desk, humming the song from her music box once more. She jumped back onto the bed, taking a moment to yank the blankets out from under her brother, and settled in beside him. Her voice was soft as she sang in the darkness.

“Youth, guided by the servant of the goddess, unite earth and sky...” Her voice trailed off and she yawned.

Link watched as his sister fell asleep beside him. Her breathing slowed into a steady rhythm, and after a few moments, she turned over and snored lightly. Her hand moved across the bed, resting on top of his, and she sighed softly
Chapter 14

Chapter Notes

I fucked up the last two chapters, so you may want to reread the chapter before this one. Got a little ahead of myself x'D

Link yawned loudly as Aryll skipped ahead of him and Mipha. Walking her to school meant he had to get up earlier than usual since her school was in the opposite direction of the high school. Fortunately for him, Mipha was always up early and eager to accompany them, which made the morning a little more tolerable.

“Catch up, lazy bones,” Aryll called to him. “I'm gonna be late!”

“No, you won't,” Link muttered. In fact, she would be one of the first kids at the school, considering they started later than the high schoolers. Aryll never seemed to mind, though.

“You're going to be there before the other kids,” Mipha said. “What are you doing to do with all that extra time?”

“The janitors let me help clean the boards,” she said cheerfully.

Link snorted. “Free child labor.”

“And sometimes I get a snack in the cafeteria,” Aryll continued. “The lunch ladies are so nice!”

“That's because they feel bad for you,” Link said.

Aryll stopped skipping and turned to him. “Why?”

“Because you look like a little homeless girl.”

Mipha smiled and used her thumb to wipe dirt off her cheek. “How did you manage to get dirty already?”

Aryll scrunched her nose and wiped her hand across her cheek, then shrugged. “I dunno.” She turned and skipped around the corner, cutting across the grass towards the school building. She waved a hand over her shoulder, shouting her goodbyes to her brother and Mipha. Once she was inside, Link and Mipha turned back around to make their way towards their own school.

“Did she tell you we have a date planned?” Mipha asked.

“Huh? What?” He turned to her, hesitant.

“A date,” Mipha said slowly. “To the park?”

“Me?”

“Us.”

“Us?”
Mipha narrowed her gaze on him. “Aryll, you, and me.” She smiled and shrugged. “Clearly she didn't tell you.”

“Oh.” He shoved his hands in his pockets. “Wait. When?”

“Saturday.”

Link’s brows furrowed together. “And when did you guys plan that?”

Mipha rolled her eyes. “I called you last night, Link. You were sleeping, as usual, so I talked to Aryll.”

Link nodded. “Right. Yeah. I heard her talking.”

“You did?” Mipha glanced at him quickly.

“Yeah. Something about sandwiches and cooties.” He shrugged, feigning disinterest.

“Oh. Yeah.” Mipha looked ahead as they walked. “You know, if you keep making peanut butter and banana sandwiches for her, someone's gonna call child services on you.”

Link grinned. “Sorry, I slept through Home Ec.”

“But there was food in that class!”

“Oh, I ate all the food,” Link said with a nod. “Just don't ask me to cook anything.”

Mipha rolled her eyes. “How are you such an incapable person?”

“It's a gift.”

“You'll never survive after high school.”

Link shrugged. “I figured I could find myself a woman who cooks and cleans and takes care of me.”

“You're sexist.”

“I prefer lazy.”

“You're going to be single forever.”

Link considered this with a thoughtful nod. “That's probably for the best.”

“Oh, poor Link,” Mipha said. “Life must be so terrible for you.” She shook her head and crossed her arms. “You're not getting any pity from me.” She stole a glance at him when he did not offer a rebuttal, but he was not paying attention to her, his eyes on his phone. Mipha dared a glance at his screen, craning her neck slightly and spying the text that came in from Zelda.

Dont bother coming tonight. You get the next few days off. See you next week.

Mipha's brows furrowed as he locked the screen and slipped the phone into his pocket. She looked away quickly, pretending she wasn't snooping, but she couldn't help but to wonder what he and Zelda were doing together.

“You say something?”
Mipha did not meet his gaze. “You were ignoring me.”

Link grinned. “Yeah, I tried.”

Mipha huffed. “Sure.”

They walked in silence for a few moments. She stole another glance when she heard his phone vibrate. She watched as he checked the message, then smiled to himself.

“What's up with you?” she dared to ask.

“Huh?”

“You're boyfriend Revali texting you or something?”

“Oh.” He slipped the phone in his pocket. “Jealous?”

Mipha hesitated, quiet literally stopping in her tracks for a moment. Link paused, looking over his shoulder. “What?”

Mipha cleared her throat and rolled her eyes. She quickened her pace as she walked ahead of him. “I dunno. Nothing.”

Link raised a brow. “You're weird.”

“You're weird!”

Link grinned and jogged to her side. “So, date on Saturday.”

“Mhm.”

“I guess I can make some time for you and Aryll.”

“Because you're so busy these days,” Mipha said. She meant it sarcastically, but there seemed to be some truth to it. What the hell had he been doing with Zelda? Is that where he was sneaking off to every day after school?

Link shrugged. “I'm a popular guy.”

“Leading some double life, are we?”

“If I tell ya, I'd have to kill ya.”

“Oh, I'm so scared.”

Link glanced at her, but she was avoiding his gaze. He draped his arm around her shoulders, and she stiffened slightly. He leaned in. “You should be,” he said with a teasing grin. He straightened and let his arm fall away from her. “But don't worry – I'll take care of everything.”

“Thanks,” Mipha muttered. She rolled her eyes. “You're such a hero, Link.”

An engine revved behind them, and they turned as Revali and Teba pulled up to the curb beside them.

“Hey, losers,” Revali said, regarding them over his sunglasses.

“Hey, losers,” Revali said, regarding them over his sunglasses.

“Hey, douchebag,” Link said.
Revali ignored him. “When are you going to ditch this guy?” he said to Mipha.

“Blink twice if he's holding you against your will,” Teba said.

“You know he's helpless, Revali,” Mipha said. “He can't do anything for himself.”

“I take it back,” Link said. “I'll let you suffer.”

Mipha shrugged. “Good thing I can take care of myself, huh?” Without another word to either of them, she made her way across the parking lot and toward the school.

“Smell ya later,” Revali said, revving the engine to his sports car before pulling away from the curb.

Link stood for a moment, racking his brain for a good comeback, but nothing came to him, and he was too tired to put any effort into it. He followed in Mipha's wake, but she had already disappeared inside the building. And unfortunately for Link, he had no time to goof off outside before his first period. He could already hear the first bell ringing.
Chapter 15

Friday couldn't come soon enough. Though Impa had graciously given him some days off from his training, he was still sore, and the rest of the week still seemed to drag on endlessly. To his relief, however, his father made his cheerful return early Friday evening, bringing a fresh, hot pizza through the door with him. His eyes were a little less sunken, his complexion brighter, and he scooped Aryll into his arms when she ran to him. He regarded Link briefly before opening the pizza box.

“Better than peanut butter and banana sandwiches,” he said as he took a slice.

Link shrugged. “You don't know what you're missing.”

“I have news for ya, kid,” his father said between bites of pizza. “You can't live off of sandwiches and cereal.”

“Look who's talking.” Link ripped off his own slice, ignoring his father's glare.

“Watch it,” his father muttered. “I'll ground you.”

Link snorted. “From what? Hero work? You'd be doing me a favor.”

“Oh, yeah?”

“Do you know what Impa does to me?”

“I'd rather not know.”

“She beats me with a stick.”

His father frowned. “I didn't know that was an option.”

“Ha. Ha.”

“Who's Impa?” Aryll asked as she finished a slice of pizza.

“A crazy old lady,” Link said. “She hates me.”

Aryll smiled. “Why?”

“Because I'm a lazy, good for nothing disappointment and Hylia should be ashamed of herself.”

His father laughed. “If that ain't the truth.”

“You know, I'm real tired of everyone being mean,” Link hissed.

“Oh, I'm sorry, did the truth hurt your feelings?” He grabbed another slice of pizza. “Hylia knows you could use a little discipline.”

“Well, that's your fault.”

“In my defense, you were a better kid up until you reached high school.”

“Well, someone had to raise Ary.”
“Touché.”

Aryll frowned. “Are you guys fighting?”

Her father smiled down at her. “Never.”

But she was not convinced. “Do you still love each other?”

Her father frowned. “Do I have to?”

Aryll's brows knit together. “Yes!”

He nodded. “Oh. Okay.” When Link snorted, he grabbed another slice of pizza and pressed it against his son's face.

“Real mature!”

His father and sister laughed together as he wiped at his face with a napkin, muttering to himself. When he was finished, he grabbed another slice of pizza. He stuck his tongue out at them, then shoved the slice into his mouth. Without another word, he left them alone in the kitchen to giggle to themselves. He finished his pizza as he made his way toward his bedroom where he collapsed onto his bed with a sigh.

*****

Aryll had him up early the next morning. He only complained a little as she pulled at his arm and threw the blankets off of him. He groaned before he pushed himself up, and Aryll threw a shirt at him.

“Come on!” she said, digging through the pile of clothes in the corner of his room. “We're going to the park, remember? You promised!”

“Actually,” Link started. “Mipha promised.”

“Come on, Link! We're all going!”

He sighed. “Alright, alright. Let me get dressed.”

She jumped up happily before skipping out of his room. He sat on his bed for a moment further, yawning and rubbing at his eyes before working up the energy to get dressed. When he made his way downstairs, Aryll was waiting impatiently by the door, spinning in circles and laughing when her dress spun out around her.

Aryll skipped by his side as they made their way outside. It didn't take long before they found Mipha, and Aryll skipped energetically to her.

“See? I told ya I could get him up!”

Mipha crossed her arms and grinned. “I'm surprised.” Aryll skipped ahead once more, leading them deeper into the city, and Mipha yawned.

“Looks like I'm not the only one who stayed up late,” Link said.

Mipha groaned. “I was up all night studying for that stupid test.”

Link laughed. “That's your problem.”
“Some of us want to go to college,” she sneered at him.

“At least I don't study myself to death,” he said. “I live my life.”

“I hate you,” Mipha muttered.

Link grinned and put his arm around her. “No, you don't.”

Mipha blushed and turned her face away from him.

“Come on,” he said, pulling at her arm and leading her into a nearby coffee shop. “I can't deal with grumpy Mipha.”

Mipha inhaled deeply as they stepped inside. The air was cool compared to the warm spring outside. “Coffee,” she said. “Wonderful, perfect, blessed coffee.”

Aryll skipped to the counter and stood on her tiptoes, her hands on the edge. “I want coffee!”

Link pushed her aside. “You're crazy enough.”

“Coffee makes you crazy?”

“Coffee is medicine,” Mipha said. “It helps me tolerate your brother.”

“Is that why Daddy drinks so much coffee?”

Mipha laughed.

The girl behind the counter smiled at Link. She leaned on her arm against the counter. “What'll it be?”


The girl looked Mipha over and frowned. “Just coffee? Hot? Iced? How do you want it?”

“I want it in a cup,” Mipha said. “So I can drink it.”

“Iced,” Link said. “She like's crappachinos.”

The girl giggled and grabbed a cup from a stack. “Flavor?”

“Caramel,” Link said.

“Caramel,” Mipha muttered.

Mipha met his gaze, then quickly looked away, smiling sheepishly. He knew her too well. The girl disappeared around the corner as she set to work making the drink.

“Stop being grumpy,” Link said as they waited.

“Stop flirting with coffee shop girls.”

“I wasn't.”

“She was.”

Link blinked at her. “She was?”
“Yeah, Link,” Aryll said, her hands on her hips. “You're not that funny.”

“Shut up,” Link said. “You don't know what flirting is.”

Aryll rolled her eyes. “Dad says when boys make fun of me it's 'cuz they like me and they're flirting.”

“What boys make fun of you?”

The coffee girl slid the drink across the counter. “Anything else?” She smiled down at Aryll. “A donut for your sister?”

Aryll batted her eyelashes at her brother. “Chocolate.”

Link sighed. “Fine.”

Mipha took her drink quickly and sighed happily as she took a sip. She turned to make her way outside. “Thanks for the coffee,” she said to Link, leaving him standing alone at the counter.

“Jerk,” he muttered. “You saw that,” he said to Aryll. “She owes me.”

Aryll bit happily into her donut. “I saw nuffin'.”

“You're girlfriend is pretty demanding,” the girl said as she took Link's money.

Link laughed sharply. “Yeah, right.”

“Don't say that,” Aryll said to the girl. “Mipha will get mad.”

“Why will she get mad?” Link asked.

Aryll giggled and shrugged. “Cuz,” she said cryptically. She followed Mipha outside, Link on her heels.

“Aren't you done flirting?” Mipha asked when they got outside.

Link pushed her gently and took her drink from her. He took a sip, then made a face, shoving it into her chest.

“I spit in it,” Mipha said.

“Sure,” he said. “Drink it and stop being grumpy.”

Mipha sighed and returned to sipping at her drink. They continued walking through the bustling city, lively with people enjoying the warm spring day. She sipped loudly until the cup was empty.

“Better?” Aryll asked, grinning up at her.

Mipha shrugged. “I'll need another dose later,” she said. “Your brother is extra annoying today.”

“Yeah,” Aryll said apologetically. “He gets like that sometimes.”

“Where we going?” Link asked, ignoring their banter.

“To the park!” Aryll said. “Remember?”

“Oh, yeah.” Link looked around absentmindedly until Aryll tugged at his arm.
“Look!” She pointed ahead. “It's the princess!”

Link followed her gaze up the sidewalk. Zelda was walking briskly towards them, her nose in her phone. She looked up briefly and noticed them.

“Oh, hey,” she said unenthusiastically to Link, but offered Aryll and Mipha a smile. “Hi.”

Mipha offered Zelda a small smile, but avoided her gaze.

“You know the princess?” Aryll said to Link in awe.

Link shrugged. “She's annoying.”

Zelda crossed her arms. “You're annoying.”

Link smirked. “Good comeback.”

“Link,” Aryll hissed to him. “You have to be nice to her!”

“He is rude, isn't he?” Zelda said to Aryll. “What's your name?”

Aryll blushed and smiled. “Aryll,” she said.

“Well, Aryll, it's nice to meet you.” She bent down and offered her hand to the young girl. Aryll shook it and giggled.

“What are you guys up to?” Zelda asked, standing.

“We're going to the park!” Aryll said excitedly.

“Yup,” Link said, taking Aryll's hand. “Let's go.”

“You should come with us,” Aryll said to Zelda. “You're Link's friend, right?”

“I'm sure she has better things to do,” Link said.

“Like what?”

Zelda hesitated. “Well,” she started, “actually, I'm just studying this weekend.”

“Link doesn't know what studying is,” Mipha said.

“I'm not surprised,” Zelda said with a grin. She turned to Aryll. “Maybe next time. Promise.”

This seemed to satisfy Aryll. She waved to the princess and skipped ahead, pulling Link with her, anxiously heading to the park. Still avoiding Zelda's gaze, she muttered a quick goodbye before hurrying to catch up with Aryll and Link.
Chapter 16

Mipha thought about Zelda's text to Link the rest of the walk to the park. Though their encounter with her didn't seem out of the ordinary, she couldn't help but to wonder why they were suddenly even talking to each other in the first place. Zelda and Link had never so much as said hello to one another, and now they were texting? It didn't make sense. But Link didn't seem to notice how she had grown quiet, too busy teasing Aryll as she pulled them toward the park.

To Mipha's surprise, their friend's were at the park when they got there. Urbosa and Riju were sitting on one of the picnic tables as Teba, Daruk, and Revali kicked a soccer ball casually between them. Even Sidon and Yunobo were there, though they were preoccupied with the gaming consoles in their hands. Riju waved to them as they approached, jumping up to greet Aryll with an enthusiastic hand shakes the two of them had made up.

“I hope you don't mind,” Urbosa started. “I told Daruk to come with us, you know, to keep Link company, and unfortunately Revali and Teba found out.” She rolled her eyes and grinned, turning her attention to Aryll. “Look; I brought all kinds of stuff to do your hair, just like I promised.”

Aryll looked through Urbosa's bag excitedly, selecting colorful elastics and hair pins to be used in her hair. The ball rolled over to them and Riju kicked it hard into the field.

“Let's play!” she said. “I'm in the mood to kick some ass!” She skipped over to Sidon and Yunobo, grabbing their games from them, despite their angry outbursts.

“Come on, play soccer with us! We need decent sized teams!”

“But I was about to level up,” Yunobo said with a frown.

“Level up later,” Riju said, setting the games down on the picnic table. “And then I'll kick your ass in that, too.”

Revali bounced the soccer ball from knee to knee as Sidon, Yunobo, and Riju joined them on the field, dragging Link along with her. “Let's go,” he said. “Teba and Riju are with me.”

Link laughed. “Riju? Seriously?”

“She's good.”

“We'll see about that,” Link said.

“Shirts!” Riju barked, taking the ball from Revali. “Take 'em off, bitches!”

Link groaned and rolled his eyes. “You better keep up,” he said to Daruk and Sidon as he pulled his shirt over his head. “If I can't see boobs, we need to at least win.”

“Can it, pig,” Riju shouted. “Your boobs are bigger than mine!” She turned around and high-fived Revali.

“There are children here!” Urbosa shouted to them from the picnic table. She rolled her eyes and turned back to braiding Aryll's hair. “What am I saying? They're the children.”

Aryll giggled. She turned her head up to Urbosa. “Yeah! I'm more mature than them!”
Urbosa smiled. “Stop moving.”

“Make it big and pretty like your hair!”

“Oh, no, yours is much prettier. Right, Mipha?”

But Mipha wasn't listening. She was watching the soccer game, more intently than she had realized, her mind wandering, first to the girl at the coffee shop, then to the test on Monday. All the while, she watched Link run across the field, stealing the ball from Riju or Revali whenever he had the opportunity.

“Mipha!”

“Hm?” She turned to Urbosa and Aryll. “What? Yeah.”

“She's mad,” Aryll said casually. She played with the frills on her dress.

“Mad?” Urbosa said. She went back to concentrating on the braid. “Why?”

“I'm not mad,” Aryll said quickly.

“You sound awfully defensive of what a little girl is saying,” Urbosa said with a smirk.

“She's mad at the girl at the coffee shop.”

“That's enough,” Mipha muttered.

“Oh?” Urbosa raised a brow. “What happened?”

“She was flirting with Link.”

Urbosa laughed and patted the little girl on her head. She finished off the braid and tied it off with an elastic. “Right.”

“I'm not supposed to talk about it.” But Aryll was unfazed by the fact that she did, in fact, talk about it.

“Oh, I know,” Urbosa said. “Shh.”

Aryll pressed a finger to her lips and turned to Mipha, smiling. She made a zipping motion across her lips.

Mipha crossed her arms, her cheeks red. “Whatever.”

“Oh, come on,” Urbosa said. “You need to loosen up.”

“I am loose.”

“You're kidding, right?”

“I'm not studying right now, what more do you want?”

Urbosa rolled her eyes. “That's your idea of being loose?”

“Yes.”

“You need to get laid.”
“What's laid?” Aryll asked.

Urbosa pressed her finger to Aryll's lips. “I said paid. She needs to get paid.”

Aryll nodded as if she understood. She stood on the table and cupped her hands around her mouth, shouting. “Link! Mipha needs to get paid!”

Link stopped mid sprint, eyebrow cocked at the girls sitting on the table. He watched Mipha bury her face in her hands, unaware of the soccer ball flying through the air until it bounced off his head. He swore under his breath and turned to Riju and Revali who were laughing and high-fiving once more.

“Pay attention, idiot!” Riju shouted to him.

Urbosa laughed loudly. “Someday you will understand, Ary,” she said.

“If you say so.” Aryll sat back down between Urbosa and Mipha.

Mipha sighed dramatically. She leaned back against her hands, palms down on the table. “Doesn't matter,” she mumbled.

Urbosa stuck a pin in her mouth and frowned. She pulled loose pieces away and secured them neatly together with the pins. “What? Oh, you mean getting paid with Link?”

“Knock it off,” Mipha muttered, avoiding Urbosa's gaze.

Urbosa grinned. “Come on, why not?”

Mipha hesitated, watching the soccer game. “Because he doesn't see me like that.”

Urbosa pondered this for a moment, putting the final touches on Aryll's hair. When she was finished, she patted Aryll on the back, and the little girl jumped up, spinning in circles and giggling as her hair flew out around her.

“I'm going to be a cheerleader now,” she said before running off towards the game. She jumped up and down, kicking her legs and waving her arms, shouting a made up cheer at her friends.

“Oh, I don't know,” Urbosa said. She smiled as she watched Aryll dance and cheer.

“Yeah?”

Urbosa met Mipha's gaze. “No, I mean, I really don't know.” She grinned. “As long as I've known him, he's never been much of a feelings guy. It would take a lot of prying to get that kinda information out of him.”

“Well,” Mipha started, turning her attention back to the game. “I'm pretty sure he's interested in Zelda, anyway.”

Urbosa snorted. “Since when?”

“I don't know,” Mipha said slowly. “They've been talking a lot recently, and texting. And it seems like they're hanging out a lot. He keeps blowing off our plans, and I'm pretty sure it's to hang out with her.”

“That's weird,” Urbosa said. “And totally random. What could she possibly see in him?”
Mipha rolled her eyes and sighed and Urbosa laughed.

“Well, he's certainly not my type, but I guess he's not the worst thing in the world.”

“You're not helping,” Mipha muttered.

Urbosa smiled apologetically. “Come on. It's not like he knows, anyway. If you don't say anything, he'll never know.”

“Yeah, well. I guess he'll never know.”

“Yeah, that's the problem with the two of you,” she said thoughtfully. “Neither of you want to talk about anything.”

“What am I supposed to say?” she said, growing flustered. “Link, I'm in love with you, please rip off my clothes now?”

“Who's clothes are getting ripped off?” Revali dribbled the ball over to them.

Urbosa laughed as Mipha buried her face in her hands. “Mipha's.”

Revali stopped the ball with his toe and grinned flirtatiously to Mipha, his eyebrows wiggling. “Oh, yeah? I've mastered the best technique for that, keeping it sexy without doing any damages.”

“Shut up, pig,” Riju hissed as she bounded up behind him. She ducked under his arm and kicked the ball out from under his foot. “Game's not over!”

Revali wiped at his forehead with the back of his hand. “I need a breather.”

“Don't tell me Link's kicking your ass!”

Link and the others wandered toward them. “What's the matter, Revali?” Link taunted. “Can't keep up with us young folk?”

Revali snorted. “Game's not over, dude.”

“We're demolishing you.”

“I don't think so.”

Revali looked passed them as four girls walked up the sidewalk. They met his gaze briefly before turning back to their conversation. “Speaking of ripping clothes off,” he said as he shimmied out of his shirt. “Watch and learn how the game is played.”

Riju crossed her arms and scoffed. “What game? Soccer? Because it doesn't seem like you know how to play.”

“The dating game,” Revali said with a smirk. “Take notes, Link. This is how you pick up chicks.”


“My good looks help, too.”

Link looked up thoughtfully. “And what exactly makes up your charm?”

“Oh, you know. A little humor. Gotta be suave. Gotta have confidence.”
“I'll give you confidence,” Urbosa said. “Maybe too much confidence. But I don't think you're as funny as you lead everyone to believe you are.”

“I'm hilarious,” Revali stated strongly. “Women love funny men.” He kicked the ball carefully over to the four girls, and they stopped as it bounced in front of them. One of the blondes picked it up, bending over and meeting his gaze as he made his way towards them.

“Unbelievable,” Urbsoa said, shaking her head. “She's practically begging for him to go over there.”

“Poor things,” Riju said. “They have no idea what they're getting themselves into.”

They watched as Revali chatted with them, taking the ball from the blonde. She laughed and threw her hair over her shoulder, popping her hip out and tilting her head to the side.

“This is painful,” Mipha muttered. “Should we warn them?”

Urbosa turned away. “Leave him be. They'll come to their senses and turn him down.”

After a few moments more, Revali made his way back to his friends, tossing the ball up and catching it.

“See?” he said. “She thinks I'm funny.”

“Statistically, I suppose someone has to,” Urbosa said disinterestedly.

“So?” Daruk asked. “Did you get any numbers?”

Revali blinked at him for a moment, then cursed under his breath.

“You're kidding?” Teba said, raising a brow. “What the hell, dude?”

“I was too busy thinking about being funny!”

Link snorted and took the ball from him. “Come on, loser. I've got a game to win!”
Chapter 17

Clearly, the world was coming to an end. Not only did Revali lose against Link – of all people – in their soccer game over the weekend, but he also down right failed to retrieve any phone numbers from the four girls he encountered that same day. And as if that weren't bad enough, word apparently got around to the girl he was seeing a few cities away that he was less than faithful – even though he was never seriously committed to anyone, and that shouldn't have been a surprise for her – and she canceled their plans for Saturday night, which meant that he wasn't getting laid, and it was all Link's fault. Hanging around him brought Revali nothing but bad luck.

And to make matter's worse, he had the strangest dream Sunday night that kept him up all night, resulting in him being extra cranky Monday morning. And today, of all days, Link decided to really push his buttons. All he wanted to do was survive the day without any shit from Link. Fate, of course, would have different plans for him.

“Hey, Ravioli!”

Revali sneered over his shoulder and slammed his locker closed.

“What's got you?” Urbosa asked. She shoved her books into her own locker, then frowned at the disorganization of it all. With a shrug, she let the door swing closed.

“Nothing,” Revali muttered. “I'm hungry.”

“You're hangry?” Urbosa said with a grin.


Urbosa held her hands up defensively. “Jeez, okay, relax.”

They walked side by side down the hallway as more students poured out of classrooms. They hurried to their lockers or to their next classes, each one waving and smiling as they passed Urbosa and Revali.

“Sup, Ravioli?”

“Ravioli! See you next period?”

“Mama mia, can I get me some Ravioli?”

Revali muttered through gritted teeth, but all Urbosa could catch was something about Link. He checked the courtyard through the windows as they headed towards the door. Just as he suspected, Link, Mipha, Daruk, and Teba were already outside. He pushed the double doors open and ignored their greetings as they made their way to the table.

“What's got him?” Mipha asked.

“I dunno,” Urbosa said with a shrug. “He's grumpy.”

“I'm not grumpy,” Revali spat. He narrowed his eyes at Link, but Link ignored him, happily eating his sandwich.

“You seem grumpy to me,” Teba said.
“Everyone called me 'Ravioli' all day today,” he whined. “I know Link has something to do with it.”

“Yes,” Link said, rolling his eyes. “Because I got the entire school to agree to do that on a whim.”

“Clearly,” Revali said. “You must have paid them.”

Link grinned and took another bite of his lunch. “It was totally worth it.”

Revali lunged over the table at him, but Link was quick to dodge, jumping backwards out of his seat, still gripping his sandwich so it wouldn't fall to the ground.

“I'm gonna rip your throat out,” Revali hissed.

“Ha,” Link barked. “I'd like to see you try.”

“You're an immature weasel.”

Link nodded. “You're right. I'm sorry. I just... I look up to you, Ravioli.”

Revali lunged over the table once more, but this time he was successful in knocking Link off of his feet and pinning him to the ground.

“Say it one more time, punk,” Revali threatened, pushing Link's face into the dirt.

Link grunted, but managed to grin. “Ravioli.”

Mipha sighed and shook her head. The three ignored them as Link continued to tease Revali, and Revali shoved Link's face deeper into the dirt.

Link finally managed to push Revali off of him, but he was sure it was only because Revali let him. Revali gave him one last dirty look before sulking away from the group. Link got to his feet and wiped his arm across his face in an attempt to remove some of the dirt that was smeared onto his cheeks.

“Can't say I didn't warn you,” Mipha said when Link rejoined them at the table.

“You did,” Link said with a nod. “You warned me.”

“But did you listen?”

Link stuck a finger in his ear, scraping out dirt. “No.”

“Do you ever listen?”

He shook his hair out. “No.”

“Are you listening now?”

He worked at fixing his pony-tail. “No.”

“It was good,” Urbosa said. “I enjoyed it.”

Daruk nodded in agreement.

“Some people appreciate my antics,” Link said with a grin towards Mipha.

“One of these days, he might actually kill you,” Teba said.
“Revali loves me,” Link said smugly.

Mipha laughed sharply and shook her head. “You're an idiot.”

“Yeah,” Link started, “but I'm you're idiot.”

Mipha cleared her throat and averted his gaze. “Speaking of being an idiot,” she muttered. “Are you even remotely prepared for the test on Friday? Or the finals coming up?”

“Probably not,” Link said frankly as he bit into his sandwich.

“Are you even going to try to study?”

Link shrugged. “I dunno.”

Mipha sighed, exasperated. “Can you put some effort into your life?”

Link smirked, taking another bite. “Maybe.”

“I'll come over and help,” she said. “But I can't keep babysitting you.”

Link shook his head. “I have plans. I can take care of it myself.”

Mipha gathered her books and stood, cocking an eyebrow towards him. “Plans? You've had plans every day after school all last week.”

Link shrugged. “I'm busy.”

She narrowed her gaze. “Doing what?”

“Doing who?” Teba said with a grin.

Link glowered at Teba. “Studying like you want,” he said defensively, turning to Mipha.

She didn't believe him for a second, but she wasn't going to push it further, slightly disturbed by what Teba had said. Was it possible that Link really was secretly dating – or screwing – Zelda? She turned away from him in an attempt to cover the heartbroken expression that slipped onto her face.

“Alright,” she said. “See ya later.”

Link, however, had not noticed her turn in behavior, and he happily finished his lunch without her nagging.

“Who would do Link?” Daruk said, turning to Teba. “Who could possibly be that desperate?”

Urbosa snorted, but said nothing, stealing a quick glance in Mipha's direction.

“That's harsh,” Teba said. “I'm sure there's some lonely girl out there for him.”

“Thank you, Teba,” Link said. He paused mid-chew. “I think.”

Teba grinned, pleased with himself. “Lots of fish in the sea, my man. You'll find yours.”

“He'll be dangling his hook for a long time,” Daruk said.

Teba nodded. “It would help if his hook actually reached the water, though.”
“Ha. Ha,” Link said between bites of his lunch. “And I thought Revali was the only one immature enough to use small dick jokes.”

“You're right,” Teba said, shaking his head and looking genuinely disappointed. “I've been hanging around him too long, unfortunately. I think my IQ has dropped being around him.”

Finishing his lunch, Link turned to Urbosa. “Hey, what did you mean Saturday? That Mipha needed to get paid?”

Urbosa blinked blankly at him for a moment. “Huh?”

“You said she needed to get paid. Is she seriously asking that I pay her for her notes, now?”

Urbosa stared at him a moment longer, than burst into laughter. She shook her head and, without a word, left the three of them alone in the courtyard.

Link stared after her, his brows knit together, but didn't question it further. He turned back to Daruk and Teba, getting up from the table. “Okay, then,” he started. “I'm too broke to pay for a tutor, so I guess I should get to class.” He regarded them when they didn't stand with him. “Aren't you coming?”

“We have a free period next,” Daruk said with a grin.

“Pretty sure it's called Study.”

“Not when you're a senior,” Teba said, his fingers tapping a message on his phone. He looked up to Link, pausing for a moment. “And when you've actually passed all your classes.”

“Whatever,” Link said, turning away from them. “Have fun doing nothing.”

“Should we hit the arcade?” Daruk said, turning to Teba.

“You can't leave,” Link sneered.

“Bro,” Daruk said. “Go learn how sex works. The condom goes on the banana.”

Teba snorted and grinned.

“Get bent.” Link turned away from them – arrogant bunch of seniors – and made his way back into the school, as if he had much of a choice.
Chapter 18

To Mipha's dismay, the rest of the week went on just as it did the previous week: instead of meeting Link after school and enjoying their usual walk home together, Link had found some excuse to cancel their plans. And when he wasn't kind enough to at least offer an excuse, he was avoiding her – and the rest of their friends – completely. More than once, she even caught him hurrying out the back of the school. And even when she didn't see where he went off to, she was certain that it was to be with Zelda.

And she wasn't the only one that had noticed his strange behavior. Though most of her friends blew it off completely, rumors had started to circulate through the school, and those rumors did catch the interest of their group of friends.

It was the middle of the week, and Mipha found herself, yet again, without anyone to walk home with. She stood on the outskirts of the group, her eyes scanning for Link. She hadn't seen him sneak out the back, but that didn't mean he didn't find another way to avoid her. She frowned, listening as the topic of the latest rumors surfaced once more, just as she caught sight of him sliding into the town car with Zelda.

“There's just no way he's screwing Hyrule's princess,” Daruk said, shaking his head. “She's way out of his league.”

“Maybe she's into losers,” Revali said with a shrug. “Why else would they be sneaking around like that?”

“Doesn't look like he's doing much sneaking, now,” Teba pointed out.

“Clearly a cover up,” Revali said. “You know, studying.” He wiggled his fingers in the air, indicating air quotes.

Riju craned her neck to see around the crowd that exited the school. “I don't know,” she said. “It's too random. I mean, they've never so much as spoke to one another.”

“I'm sure it's better when he doesn't talk,” Revali said. “Everything is better when he doesn't talk.”

Urbosa examined her nails, regarding Mipha at the corner of her eye, adding nothing more to the conversation. Mipha shifted her weight on her feet. She turned her gaze back to the school where her brother exited with his friends. He caught her gaze and offered her smile, but it melted away and his brows knit together. He spoke to his friends before trotting over to his sister.

“Going home?” he asked. He turned his gaze to the road. “No Link again?”

“He's getting laid,” Revali said with a shrug. “Do you really expect him to hang out with us over that?”

Sidon frowned down at his sister. “You really think its true?”

Revali moved an open hand out, gesturing towards the town car, his expression stating that this should have been an obvious deduction.

Mipha cleared her throat. “No,” she started in answer to her brother. “I, uh, have some things to do first.”
Sidon's lips twisted to the side, but he shrugged. “Alright.”

Without waiting to hear another word about the rumors, Mipha waved a hand over her shoulder as she left the group. She watched as the town car pulled away from the curb and down the road, pausing only when it reached the intersection further down.

Her brows knitted together as she made her way down the road, keeping close to the trees and watching closely as the car turned. She broke into a jog until she reached the intersection, catching a glimpse of the vehicle as it moved further down. The blinker signaled an upcoming turn, and Mipha once more broke into a jog, cutting through alleyways and backyards in an attempt to keep up with it. She continued on in this manner, even when the car continued in a direction that did not lead to the palace.

Before long, and only after losing the car for a brief moment, she pressed herself against a rock wall as the car took its final turn, moving up the slope of the road and turning into the dirt path that lead to the shrine. Mipha regarded the shrine atop the hill for a moment, hidden slightly from the road by the manicured cherry blossoms and various bushes and plants. The car disappeared as it rounded the corner, but Mipha did not step away from the wall. Her brows furrowed together as she stared at the shrine. The rumors had seemed entirely plausible to her before that moment. In fact, thinking back on them, they made a whole lot more sense then this. What could Link and Zelda possibly be doing at an old shrine?

Mipha couldn't make heads or tails of any of it. It only confused her more, and her confusion turned to frustration, then anger. What the hell was so secretive between them? Why were they always sneaking off? Were they coming to the shrine every single day, and for what purpose? Link told her everything. What was he hiding? Should she be worried?

And then her anger did turn to worry. Her lips pinched together and her stomach knotted with the anxiety of not knowing. She sucked in a breath and decided she would find out once and for all. If Link wasn't going to tell her, she would make him. No more secrets, she wanted answers.

She looked up and down the street, but there were no cars or pedestrians in sight. She hurried across the street and pressed herself against the fence that lined the lawn that stretched up towards the shrine. She inched along it, keeping in the shadows of the trees, and peered around up the dirt road. The car was not in sight, so she made her way up the drive, keeping to the side of the road, within the trees.

She moved slowly, hiding behind a tree as she neared the curve in the road and peering around once more. The road moved away from the protection of the trees, opening up as it crested the hill to where the shrine stood. The town car was parked off to the side and there didn't seem to be anyone in sight. She deduced that they must have gone inside, so she continued her way up the road, keeping a little deeper in the trees in hopes of staying out of sight from the windows. When the trees cleared, she had nothing left to offer her adequate coverage; all that stood between her and the shrine was the open stretch of road that lead up to the shrine and looped back around in a circle.

She couldn't see anything from where she stood, so she decided to chance it. She hurried up the rest of the drive, pressing her body against the outer wall of the shrine when she reached it. She dared to get close to the window, peering in as best as she could, but the room was dark. Except for a desk and a few book cases, the room was empty. Still, she ducked below it as she hurried on, crossing the door and moving to the other side of the building, pausing just before the next window. She sucked in a breath, steadying herself, and inched close enough to peer into the shrine.
Impa threw open the window and leaned outside, peering at Mipha. “You know what I do to spies?” she asked, her brows furrowed together.

Mipha squeaked and stepped back.

“You’ve got company,” Impa shouted over her shoulder.

Zelda peered over Impa and smiled at Mipha. “Oh, Link, it’s your girlfriend.”

Mipha’s cheeks reddened.

Paya peered under Impa’s arm. “Girlfriend?”

Link’s face appeared over Impa’s other shoulder. His brows knit together when he saw Mipha. “What are you doing here?”

Mipha’s eyes moved from each one of them, speechless for a moment. “I… uh… What are you doing here?” Her eyes fell on Impa. “What is this, a dojo or something?”

Zelda rolled her eyes and moved away from the window, disinterested.

Impa moved her gaze to Link and grinned. “Dojo,” she said. “Yes. I’m teaching him Kung Fu.” Impa, too, rolled her eyes and stepped away, and Paya quickly followed suit, leaving Link alone at the window with Mipha.

“Did you follow me here?” Link asked, narrowing his eyes at her.

Mipha averted her gaze. “I’m sorry,” she said quickly. “We haven’t talked in weeks. And you kept disappearing with Zelda and Paya. Goddesses, it looked like you were running a whore house or something.”

Link grinned. “Are those the latest rumors?”

Mipha glared at him. “Why didn’t you just tell me?”

Link hesitated, his grin disappearing quickly. He needed an excuse, and fast. He shrugged. “I didn’t think it was a big deal,” he said. “It’s just… karate. Dad was on my case about being a lazy bastard so here I am.”

Mipha frowned. “He didn’t say that.”

“He was thinking it.”

Mipha still wasn’t convinced, however. She looked passed him and into the room, but Impa, Zelda, and Paya were no longer there. “I didn’t know Zelda and Paya were into karate, too,” she said.

“Yeah, me neither. Not until I started.”

“I guess it makes sense,” Mipha said thoughtfully. “I’m sure her father would want her to know some basic self defense. Can’t have guards following you around everywhere.”

“Yeah, sure. That would make sense.” Phew.

Mipha met his gaze. “So, are you going to like, do any competitions or something?”

“I don’t think so.”
Mipha smiled. “Why not? I bet you’re good at it. I’d come and cheer you on.”

Link rolled his eyes. “No. I’m actually terrible at it.” That, at least, was the truth.

“Well, don’t let me keep you from practicing,” she said. She stepped away from the window. “Just stop avoiding me, okay?”

“Sure.” He hadn’t realized how strange it must have looked that he was suddenly always hanging around with Zelda and Paya. “I’ll see ya tomorrow.”

“Yeah, alright. See ya.” She watched as he disappeared from the window. She wasn't sure what to make of it all, but Link had never lied to her before. Perhaps it really was just karate, though she wasn't sure why he had felt the need to keep it a secret from her. Then again, he wasn't exactly the most athletic – or ambitious – person in the world. There was a good chance he'd drop it all soon, anyway, and go back to being his usual self.

She always gave him a hard time about his lazy work ethic, but now, she only wanted him to go back to being the carefree Link she had always known. The Link she loved.
“What?”

Mipha blinked at Link. She raised a brow. “Huh?”

He furrowed his brows. “You're staring at me.” She had been for some time, now, and seemed to be lost in thought. At first, Link figured she was just checking on him; checking to see if he was actually studying the careful notes she had taken in class in the days prior, which he was now borrowing to copy during class. But when he finally looked up and met her gaze, it was clear that she had completely spaced out, and was simply staring at him.

She blushed and turned away. “Oh. No I wasn't.”

“What's wrong with you?”

She sighed and leaned back in her seat, not looking at him. “Nothing.”

Link crossed his arms. “If you have something to say, then say it.”

Mipha picked up her pen and began to doodle in her notebook. “How's karate?”

Link regarded her for a moment, then turned his gaze to the board. The notes from the class were still scribbled across, yet his own notebook was just as empty as ever. His eyes moved from the board to the clock – only five minutes left to the period – then to Zelda. While the rest of the students were chatting amongst themselves, waiting for the bell to ring, Zelda had her nose in her notebook. She looked up, briefly meeting Link's gaze, and offered him a smile.

Link let his chin rest in his palm as he turned back to Mipha, offering her a single shouldered shrug. “Thrilling.”

Mipha looked passed Link, catching the short exchange between him and Zelda when he did not answer right away. She quickly turned back to her notebook to resume her doodling. “Really?”

“I don't think that's what you wanted to say.”

“What do you think I want to say?” she asked casually, avoiding his gaze.

“I don't know, but I'm sure it has to do with all these rumors you mentioned.”

“They're just rumors,” she muttered.

“So you don't believe them?”

“Should I?”

“Do you?”

She glanced towards him and held her gaze for a moment. “I don't care what you do,” she said, turning back to her notebook. “Or who you do.”

“For the love of Hylia,” he muttered. He stood just as the bell signaled the end of the period, and without waiting for Mipha, he left the classroom.
Mipha stared after him blankly. She cleared her throat as Zelda approached her and quickly gathered her things together.

“He seems more in a hurry than usual,” Zelda remarked, grinning at Mipha. 

“What do you want?” Mipha snapped – rather unintentionally. She immediately turned her gaze down, but did not offer an apology to Zelda. 

Zelda’s head cocked back slightly, surprised by the rude and unexpected remark. “I'm sorry,” she started slowly. “I just thought we could talk.” 

Mipha shrugged and threw her bag over her shoulder. “About what?” 

“Link told me what you said yesterday. About the rumors. I just thought you'd want to know that they're not true.”

“All of them?”

“Well, I'm not sure of any others, but I can assure you we are not sleeping together. So, you don't have to worry.”

“Why would I care who he sleeps with?”

“Oh,” Zelda said softly. She shrugged. “I dunno. You seemed upset by it. I just thought -”

“I couldn't care less,” Mipha said, pushing passed her.

Zelda's brows furrowed together and she turned to hurry after Mipha. “Did I do something to upset you?”

“No,” Mipha said simply as she navigated through the crowded halls.

“Well, you don't seem to like me very much. I just thought it was because of Link.”

“Why would you think that?”

She shook her head. “It doesn't matter.”

Mipha paused and regarded Zelda for a moment, her face softening. “I'm sorry,” she said. “I didn't mean to come off that way.” She sighed. “Things have just been kinda weird the last few weeks. Link was being secretive, and hanging out with you a lot.” She hesitated and shrugged. “I feel bad for following you guys, but I didn't know what else to do.”

Zelda offered her a smile. “I can't say I blame you; I probably would have done the same thing. To be honest, its weird for me, too. In a million years, I'd never think I'd be friends with him.” She hesitated, then added quickly, “No offense. He's not as bad as I thought.”

“Then you don't know him well enough, yet,” Mipha said. Her lips pulled into a smile.

Zelda laughed. “He can't be that bad if you're friends with him.”

“I don't think I have much of a choice,” she said, rolling her eyes.

Zelda looked down the hallway as it started to empty. She checked her phone – she would be late for her next class, but she wasn't particularly bothered by that. She had a feeling she’d be seeing a lot more of Mipha now that she and Link were... working together. And she would be lying if she
said she didn't want to be friends with Mipha, too.

“So, we're cool, then?” she asked, turning back to Mipha.

“Yeah,” Mipha said. “As long as you help me talk some sense into him. He couldn't care less about his grades.”

“Well, I don't know how much help I'll be there. But he's in for a rude awakening when he realizes being a big hero isn't gonna pay the bills.”

Mipha raised a brow. “Hero?”

“Oh, you know,” Zelda started quickly in an attempt to fix her slip up. “I mean, like, this karate thing. I don't know what he thinks he's going to do with it, but, you know. Karate won't pay the bills. Unless he becomes some world champion.” Zelda laughed, more loudly than she had intended to. “And let's be honest – that's not gonna happen.”

“Right,” Mipha said, slightly skeptical of Zelda's strange explanation. Perhaps she was just more quirky than she let on. She looked over Zelda's shoulder as Urbosa turned the corner, waving to Mipha before slipping out the door into the courtyard. She turned back to Zelda. “Guess I'll see ya around, then.” She shifted her bag onto her other shoulder.

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“Okay,” Zelda said with a nod. “See ya.” She watched as Mipha hurried down the hall, taking the door that lead to the senior court yard. She made her way down the hall, turning her gaze to the window and watching as Mipha made her way to the table where Urbosa sat. She recognized a few of the others that were there; Revali, Teba, and Daruk. Link, however, was not out there.

She turned and made her way down the hall, bumping into Link as she turned the corner. She sighed loudly at the interruption and rolled her eyes. She was never going to make it to her next class.

“Jeez, what the hell is wrong with everyone?” Link sneered.

“What are you talking about?”

“You women are all cranky today.”

Zelda narrowed her eyes at him. “Us women?”

“Yeah. First Mipha. Now you.”

“I didn't do anything!”

Link put a hand on his hip and sighed dramatically.

“Are you trying to imitate me? Because that was terrible.”

“Whatever.”

“Look,” she hissed at him. “I just had to deal with your girlfriend.”

“My girlfriend?” Link raised a brow.

“Mipha.”

“She's not my girlfriend.”
“Well, she's awfully upset about all these rumors. And for the record, I could do a lot better than you.”

Link laughed sharply. “You know, I'm a catch.”

Zelda rolled her eyes. “Sure. Keep telling yourself that.”

He ignored her. “And Mipha doesn't care about the rumors.”

“I beg to differ,” Zelda said. “She practically bit my head off. But don't worry; I set her straight.”

“Why would she care?”

Zelda shrugged. From the way Mipha had acted, she was almost certain that she had feelings for Link. Judging by Link's response, however, that seemed to be a one way street. Regardless, she wasn't about to say anything to Link. She stepped around him and moved down the hall. “I don't know,” she said over her shoulder. “See you in karate.” She turned to wink at him before letting herself into a classroom.
To Zelda's relief, Impa had given both her and Link Friday night off. Though Link's training was more physically intensive, Zelda still felt exhausted from the endless hours of flipping through old, dusty books with Paya. Her training relied heavily on finding the power passed down to her by the Goddess Hylia, a task that was more daunting and fruitless than she realized. No matter what she tried, she couldn't seem to awaken the power, and she was growing desperate. Each day that passed brought them closer and closer to war, and they were not nearly as prepared as they should have been.

It weighed heavily on her mind most of the day on Friday. Impa had other ideas to help her, suggesting that they visit a few of the shrines around the kingdom, but it was all starting to feel ridiculous and hopeless. She was perfectly content to just go home and wallow in self pity, but Link found her before she had a chance to sneak out of the school with the rest of the end of the day crowd. He stretched his arms over his head and pulled his shoulders back.

"Can't believe we got the night off. Can you tell Impa to stop beating the shit out of me?" When she didn't answer, he frowned. "What's wrong?"

"Nothing," she said, then sighed. "I just... I wish I was having better luck with this stupid power."

Link shrugged. "Maybe you're thinking about it too much."

Zelda rolled her eyes. "Some of us have to think."

"I have to think," he said defensively. "I've never had to think more! I have to put my feet here, or Impa hits me in the knees. And if I drop my stance, she hits me in the head. She's going to kill me!"

Zelda smiled. "We could only hope."

"If she doesn't, I'm sure Ganondorf will." He paused, thoughtfully. "I'm not sure which is worse." He turned and walked around the building. Zelda hesitated, but followed him.

"You know," she started as they walked across the back lot and towards the athletic fields. "You should take this more seriously."

"What's the fun in that?" Link said.

"It's not fun. None of this is fun."

"So far it is for me."

"You swing a wooden stick around and pretend you're some medieval super hero."

"Don't be mad at me because you got the shit part in all of this."

Zelda sighed dramatically. "You're exhausting."

Link smiled and turned his gaze to her. "You're exhausting," he retorted. "You're so negative all the time."

"I prefer realist," she said. "Someone has to be real about this all."

Link and Zelda found themselves at the soccer field. They leaned against the fence at the bottom of
the bleachers. The soccer team was on the field practicing before their game that night, and the cheerleaders were on the track practicing their routine. Link had promised Mipha they’d watch the game together and they opted to hang around after school instead of going home. He and Zelda were just out of earshot of Mipha and the others as they laughed on the bleachers behind them.

“What do you think will happen?” Zelda asked.

Link shrugged. “I’m sure at the very least, I’ll get my ass handed to me.”

Zelda narrowed her gaze on him.

Link sighed. “What do you want me to say?” He straightened and shoved his hands in his pockets. “Neither of us know what to expect.”

“I know,” Zelda said, turning her gaze to the field. “I don’t like it.”

Link turned to his friends as Daruk called over to him. They were watching him and Zelda. He made his way over to them and stood on one of the seats, peering down at Daruk.

“How come you don’t play soccer, man? You’re built for it.”

Daruk shrugged. “How come you’re not a cheerleader? You’re built for it.”

Revali laughed sharply. “He’s so tiny, he could be the top of the pyramid.”

“No one asked you,” Link snarled.

Urbosa looked around Link towards Zelda as she walked by. “You and Zelda seem pretty friendly,” she commented. She offered her a smile when their eyes met and motioned for her to join them.

Revali scoffed and rolled his eyes. “Yeah, what’s up with that? I thought she hated you.”

Zelda hesitated a moment before making her way up the steps.

“Are you staying for the game?” Urbosa asked her.

Zelda shrugged and turned her gaze to the field. “I don’t know, maybe.”

“You can hang out with us,” Urbosa offered.

Revali grinned at Zelda and patted the seat next to him.

“Not there,” Urbosa warned, pulling Zelda next to her. “Revali’s a pig.”

Zelda sat beside Urbosa and looked up at Link, still standing on the bleacher in front of them.

“No karate tonight?” Mipha asked.

Daruk turned his gaze to Link. “Karate?”

Link made a muscle with his arm. “So I can kick Revali’s ass.”

Revali laughed sharply. “Good luck, kid.”

“It’s about time you bulked up,” Daruk said. “You’re scraggly.”

Link let himself drop onto the bench seat facing his friends. “We can’t all be bodybuilders like
“I’m not a bodybuilder,” Daruk replied. “I just go to this place called a gym while you sit at home stuffing your face with food.”

Link patted his stomach happily.

Urbosa rolled her eyes. “Not that anyone would guess that,” she said. “He has a bottomless pit. Any woman would kill to eat that much and stay skinny.”

“I’m blessed,” Link said with a smirk. “Hylia has graced me with a high metabolism and good looks.”

“And arrogance,” Revali said, leering at him.

“A flaw I am willing to admit.”

Zelda turned to Mipha, her brows raised questioningly. “Is he always like this?”

Mipha rolled her eyes and smirked. “More than you realize.”

“He’s totally different -” Zelda hesitated a moment, “- in karate class. Hardly says two words to me sometimes.”

Mipha shrugged. “Sometimes he’s annoying.” She smirked and looked up at Link who was preoccupied in a conversation with Daruk. “Right?”

Link turned his gaze to her, his sentence cut short, and raised a brow. “Right.”

“Where’s Paya?” Urbosa asked.

Link turned his gaze to her. “How should I know?”

“You’ve been hanging around with her a lot lately,” Urbosa said with a shrug.

“She does karate, too,” Mipha said casually.


“I think she likes Link,” Urbosa said. She peered at her nails as if this were an obvious and rather disinteresting fact.

Zelda nodded. “Totally.”

“Yeah, okay,” Link said.

“Oh, come on,” Zelda said. “It’s so obvious.”

Link met her gaze. “It is?”

Zelda turned to Mipha and rolled her eyes. “He’s an idiot.”

Mipha averted her gaze. “Yeah, I guess it is pretty obvious,” she said softly.

“I know she’s shy,” Zelda said, “but she gets extra shy and blushy around you.”

“Shy and blushy?” Link repeated.
Zelda and Urbosa both nodded in agreement.

“Must be that charm,” Revali said.

Link flexed both arms. “Don’t be jealous, Revali.”

Revali opened his mouth for a rebuttal, but Riju bounded up the steps at that moment with Yunobo in tow. They each had a bag of popcorn in hand. Riju slid along the bench next to Link cheerfully.

“What’cha doing?” she asked. She shoved a handful of popcorn into her mouth and turned her gaze to each of them. Her gaze landed on Zelda. “You’re in the gang now?”

“Gang?”

“You may have seen our tag on the school,” Link said as he reached a hand into Riju’s popcorn, helping himself. “Watch out.”

“One of us,” Riju chanted. “One of us.”

“We’re not really a gang,” Yunobo said. He shoved a handful of his own popcorn in his mouth.

“You’re quite the intimidating gang,” Zelda said dryly. She looked up as a tall, lanky figure approached. But instead of sitting with them, he leaned against the fence.

“Stop sticking me with freshmen,” Sidon grunted.

“We don’t need babysitters,” Riju snapped over her shoulder. “No one stuck you with us.”

“You need a babysitter,” Yunobo said under his breath.

Sidon narrowed his gaze on his sister. “They kind of did.”

Mipha shrugged. “We told you we would be here. You should have kept up with us.”

“Riju was trying to pick a fight with a junior, and you were just going to leave her there.”

“And me,” Yunobo added.

Urbosa waved a hand. “I told you, Riju can take care of herself. I already warned her not to talk to strangers. There’s nothing more I can do.”

Sidon folded his arms across his chest. “Fine,” he said. “I’m going home.”

“You’re not gonna stay for the game?” Mipha asked.

“I have a competition tomorrow morning,” Sidon reminded her.

“Oh, right.”

“Don’t forget your speedo,” Revali mocked. “Can't swim without it!”

Sidon stuck his middle finger high in the air. “Big talk coming from the guy that stuffs his tighty-whities.”

Link laughed sharply and Revali fumed. He stood on top of the bleacher, shouting at Sidon as the sophomore walked away.
“Your dick is as pruny as your fingers!”

“Sit down,” Urbosa growled, pulling at Revali’s jeans. “You both have big dicks, now shut up.”

“It’s always about their dicks,” Mipha muttered, shaking her head.

“It’s a guy thing,” Zelda said. “That’s where their brains are.”

“No me,” Yunobo said through a mouthful of popcorn.

Mipha tilted her head to the side as she considered this, and then nodded in agreement.

“Don’t worry,” Urbosa started. “They’re not all this immature. Hold out for the guys after high school. They’re better. Less stupid.”

“No guy could be stupider than Link and Revali,” Daruk said with a grin.

Revali dropped back to his seat and snarled at Daruk. “Don’t put me in the same category as that loser. At least I get laid.”

“So he says,” Link muttered. “But we’ve never met these girl friends of yours.”

“No one said they were girl friends.”

“Boy friends?” Yunobo asked curiously. Revali sneered at him.

“Revali,” Urbosa groaned. “I don’t want to hear about your cheap hook ups.”

“Don’t be jealous that you missed out on this.”

Urbosa rolled her eyes and turned back to Zelda. “Find a new gang before you get roped into this one. For your own sanity.”

“And take me with you,” Yunobo said.

Zelda smiled. “So, how did you get dragged into the gang?” she asked Urbosa.

“I liked Mipha,” Urbosa said with a shrug. “She was friends with Link. Link with Daruk. And Daruk, for some reason, was friends with Revali and Teba.”

“They’re an odd bunch,” Teba said, only half paying attention to their conversation, his nose in his phone as he typed away. He looked up briefly, meeting Yunobo’s gaze. “If you find a way out of this shit hole, let me know.”

Yunobo grinned and nodded. As a gesture, he offered Teba his bag of popcorn. Teba popped a few pieces into his mouth before turning back to his phone.

“Well, it beats my group of friends,” Zelda said. They all turned their eyes to her, disbelief on their faces, and she blushed. “I do have friends.”

“Oh, yeah?” Revali said. “Who?”

“They’re... from out of town.”

Revali snorted. “You must have such an exciting social life. I bet you have a big fancy boyfriend from out of town, too.”
Zelda shook her head. “Yeah, right. My dad's kind of a big cock block in my dating life.”

“Stop it, Fatass!” Riju pulled her bag of popcorn away from Link as he reached another hand inside. “Get your own bag!”

Link frowned, his shoulders hunched over. He slid closer to Yunobo, peering over his shoulder into his own bag. Yunobo sighed and offered the bag to Link, who happily helped himself to another handful.

“I will give you the damn money,” Daruk finally said. “Stop mooching off my cousin.”

More and more students began to show up, gathering and talking amongst each other before finding seats in the bleachers. Link looked over towards the concession stand, but a long line had already formed with people stocking up before the game began. He groaned and shoved one last handful into his mouth.
Chapter 21

Link didn't care much for sporting events, nor did he care much about having any school pride, but the game gave him an excuse to avoid going home and, furthermore, avoid his heroic responsibilities. Still, Daruk, Revali, Teba, and Riju all cheered ecstatically as each goal was made. Link and Yunobo continued to stuff their faces with popcorn, Link only casually listening in to the conversation the girls were having behind him. As female conversations would go, it was rather uninteresting.

When the game came to its thrilling conclusion, the students cheered for their school's victory. The players shook hands on the field before cheering with their teammates, and after a few minutes more, the bleachers began to empty out. Link and his friends followed suit, the evening breeze cooling their faces as they strolled across the parking lot. They said their goodbyes before making their separate ways; Teba and Revali in Revali's sports car, Daruk and Yunobo in Daruk's Jeep, and Urbosa and Riju in Urbosa's Explorer. Not long after their departure, the town car pulled up for Zelda, and she bid Mipha and Link a good night before sliding into the car with the tinted windows.

“So,” Link started as they made their way down the street towards home. “What are we doing this weekend?”

“We?” Mipha repeated. “I don't know about you, but I'm -”

“Doing homework?” Link said with a grin. “Studying?”

Mipha sighed. “Yeah.”

Link nodded. “Cool. Got room in that exciting schedule for me?”


“Because I need to ace this next test if I want to pass math.”

Mipha rolled her eyes. “You're actually going to study?”

“Yeah, I guess so. Nothing else going on.”

“That's the spirit,” she muttered.

“Are you still mad at me?”

Mipha glanced at him quickly. “No.”

He held his gaze on her for a moment, then seemed satisfied with her answer. He shoved his hands in the pockets of his hoodie and looked up at the night sky.

“Zelda told me that there's nothing going on,” she said with a one shouldered shrug.

“You believe her over me?”

“Well, yeah.”

Link pushed her shoulder playfully.
“The Princess has high standards. She wouldn't sleep with any failing shmuck.”

“All the more reason to lie about it,” he said with a wink.

“Whatever,” Mipha said. “Like I said. I don't care.”

“Why not?”

Mipha met his gaze, her brows knit together. “Am I supposed to?”

They had stopped walking. Link held her gaze on her, but said nothing.

Mipha’s brows furrowed. “What?”

Link shrugged and continued on, leaving Mipha to catch up to him. “I guess not.”

Mipha watched the ground as she walked beside Link, her mind wandering. What could he have possibly meant by that?

“So,” Link started, “you'll help me this weekend?”

“Sure.”

They stopped in front of Mipha’s. Link turned to her, throwing her two finger guns. “You're the best.”

Mipha rolled her eyes. “I know.” She made her way toward the house. “I'll text ya later,” she called over her shoulder, then, before slipping into the house, “Thanks for walking me home!”

Link watched as the door closed behind her, then continued down the road towards his own house. He fished his phone out of his pocket when he felt it vibrate and squinted in the light at the text from Mipha.

Night :)

He smiled down at the phone as he typed his goodnight reply to her.

*****

Link held the notebook above his face, laying flat against Mipha's bed. He turned it to the side, then upside down, his brows furrowed as he stared at the equations.

“Stop being so dramatic,” Mipha said, sitting at her desk. She was looking down at her textbook, the end of the pen in the corner of her mouth.

Link peered at her, catching her as she chewed on the cap, and smiled. When she turned and met his gaze, he quickly looked back at the notes.

“I'm not being dramatic,” he said with a sigh. “Math sucks.”

Mipha looked passed him and out the window. The rain was falling heavily. In that moment, the room was very quiet. Sidon was still out at his swim meet, and her parents were at some work thing; they were never very forthcoming with her. Regardless, she was suddenly very aware that they were alone. Not that it mattered.

“Whatcha thinking about?”
Mipha jumped and met Link's gaze. She turned quickly back to her textbook and let her head rest in her palm in an attempt to hide her reddening cheeks. “Math,” she muttered.

“You are such a loser,” Link said with a grin.

“Whatever.”

Link pushed himself upright, leaning against the wall in the corner of the bed. He let the notebook fall open on his lap and he flipped casually through the pages. “We should get dinner after.”

Mipha chewed on her pen, but she was no longer studying the equations. She stared ahead at her laptop screen. “Dinner?”

“You know, that time of day where people eat food.”

Mipha's brows furrowed. Goddesses, he could be infuriating. “I know what dinner is.”

“You do owe me,” he pointed out. “I bought you coffee.”

“Dinner is a lot more expensive than coffee,” Mipha said.

“Fine,” Link said. “But you still owe me.”

“Since you got here,” Mipha began, “you've raided my fridge, took a nap, called Daruk, raided my fridge some more, stared at the ceiling, and now you're asking about dinner. Have you even looked at the notes?”

Link grinned. “Yeah, I looked at them.”

“So what's an absolute value?”

“A value that's absolute.”

Mipha rolled her eyes. “You're an idiot.”

“So, for dinner, I was thinking tacos.”

“I thought you were going to try?”

“I did,” Link said proudly. “I got a B- on that make up test.”

Mipha closed her textbook and met his gaze, brow raised skeptically. “You did?”

“So, tacos?”

Mipha stretched her arms above her head. She glanced at the clock on her desk. Everyone would be home soon, and she supposed Link wasn't about to drop the subject of dinner. “Alright,” she said, giving in. “Tacos.”

Link pushed himself off the bed, pulling his shoes on as he hopped to the door. He stumbled through as he opened it. “Last one there pays,” he called over his shoulder.

In just under fifteen minutes, Link stood in front of his favorite taco truck, taco in hand, and Mipha found herself handing over the money for their dinner. Link draped an arm around her shoulders as they walked down the street, tacos in hand.
“Thanks for dinner,” he said with a wink.

“Yeah, whatever,” Mipha muttered. She glanced him as he happily shoved his taco into his mouth. “So, what are we doing tomorrow?”

“Nothing,” he said. “I'm busy.”

She cocked a brow. “Busy? Doing what?”

“Studying,” Link said with a grin.

“Yeah, right,” Mipha said, rolling her eyes. “You couldn't even do that today.”

“I had stuff on my mind,” he said as he took another bite.

“Didn't seem like it,” she said through the corner of her mouth.

“Well, I'm studying extra hard tomorrow.”

“That's unlike you.”

“I've been busy lately,” he added. “I can't skate by like I usually do.”

“Maybe you should drop karate.”

Link finished his taco, then proceeded to lick at his fingers. “I wish.”

“Why don't you?”

Link shoved his hands in his pockets and kept his gaze to the horizon. “I dunno.”

“It doesn't seem like you like it very much.”

Link only grunted in response.

“If you don't like it, forget about it,” Mipha pressed. “It's not a big deal.”

“It... I can't.” He felt her gaze on him and his brows knit together. “Can we talk about something else?”

Mipha watched him curiously for a moment before pulling her gaze away. “Okay,” she said slowly. “Sorry.” They walked on in silence for a few moments before Mipha spoke again, her voice softer. “You'd tell me if something was wrong, right?”

Link shrugged with one shoulder. “Sure.”

“Is there something wrong?”

Link frowned. “I wish I got another taco.”

Mipha rolled her eyes and smiled. “Maybe if you get a good grade on the test this week,” she said. “My treat.”

“Bribery, huh?” Link nodded. “That works for me.”
Tuesday. Another day in the week, yet also another day closer to the end of the year. Link was counting down the days; just five weeks left. Twenty-four school days. The closer he got, the longer the days started to feel. He wasn't sure if he would make it to the end alive. Quite literally, in fact. As each day passed, he found himself growing more and more anxious about the coming war, with no clue as to when Ganondorf would make his appearance, and if he would even be able to stop the evil destruction that would surely follow.

Link stared down at the pages on his desk. Unfinished equations stared back. Although, this time, they didn't seem quite as daunting. In fact, he was sure he knew the answer to at least some of them. It seemed his studying was actually starting to pay off. If he kept on like that, he was certain he'd make it through to senior year. That is, if he managed to stay alive until then.

“Link.”

Link jumped light in his seat, but no one in the room had seemed to notice, too occupied with their noses in their tests. He glanced around quickly, then met Zelda’s gaze. It was apparent to him that she had heard it, too, her brows knit together in confusion. But it had been over a month since they had heard the voice of the sword. Why was it calling for him now?

“Link?” This time it was Mipha who spoke, whispering to him. Her brows knit together. “Did you fall asleep again?”

He jumped once more at the sound of Mipha’s voice. He looked around once more, this time catching Paya’s gaze from the back of the room. Her brows furrowed together as she tried to read Link’s expression.

“Yeah,” Link muttered, turning back to Mipha. “I guess so.”

“Link.”

Something was wrong. He turned his gaze out the window, and that’s when he noticed the strange dark patch in the sky. He squinted his eyes in an attempt to understand what he was seeing. The patch was a darkness unlike anything he had seen before. Blacker than any shade of black he could imagine. It seemed to split the sky, just slightly at first. It pulsed for a moment, then flashed erratically like static on a tv. The flashing grew more erratic for another moment before the hole in the sky disappeared completely.

If it weren't for Zelda's squeak of fear, Link would have sworn his mind was playing tricks on him. He twisted around in his seat to see Zelda. She had her hand over her mouth in an attempt to keep herself from screaming, but her face was pale, her eyes wide with horror.

Ms. Muller looked up from her desk and peered at Zelda. “Are you alright?”

Zelda moved her horrified gaze from the teacher, to Link, then back to the teacher. She started to stutter and babble incoherently. The teacher furrowed her brows together.

“Are you going to be sick?”

Zelda nodded quickly and hurried out of the room, the door slamming behind her.

Link turned his gaze back out the window, noticing then the dark split had returned to the sky. But this time, it seemed to be closer, somewhere in the city, and it grew larger, spreading sharply. It
opened and grew for a few moments before it finally stopped. Link watched as three dark figures seemed to fall from the portal, disappearing behind the tree line at the edge of the city.

“Link!”

Link stood abruptly, his heart racing. He met the teacher’s gaze for a brief moment but gave up trying to think of an excuse. Instead, he hurried out of the room, ignoring her shouts behind him.

“Link!”

He turned to his right and saw Zelda peering from around the corner, her face pale. He trotted to her side as she began to panic.

“What the hell is happening? How has no one else noticed that?”

Link pulled her wrist and they sprinted down the empty hallway, following it until they reached his locker.

“What are we doing?” she asked, her voice shaking. “We can’t go out there!”

“I’m getting the sword,” Link said. He worked to steady his shaking hands as he tried and failed to spin the correct code on his locker. “Something fell out of the sky. I have a feeling it has to do with Ganondorf.”

“The sword?” Zelda straightened and narrowed her eyes at him. She threw her arms in the air. “Are you insane? Call the cops! Get a gun! Blow that shit up! What are you gonna do with that damn sword?”

“No one else can see it but us,” Link hissed at her. “Impa wouldn’t have wasted her time with us if this was something that could just be blown to bits by the army. The Master Sword is here for a reason.”

Zelda’s mouth opened, but no words came out. She stared blankly at Link, still trying to process everything that was happening. But Link grew impatient with her. There was a faint glow from behind the locker door. His brows knit together as he tried once more to unlock the door. He forced his breathing, his mind, and his hands, to slow, working steadily until the lock clicked. He yanked up, then threw the door open, revealing the Master Sword. He pulled it out, slamming the door behind him, and grabbed Zelda’s wrist once more.

“W-wait,” she stuttered out as she fell into a sprint behind him. “I can't do this! I don't have any power!”

Link stopped abruptly, turning to her, but his expression was softer than she had expected. “Right,” he said. “You should stay here then. I'll take care of it.”

Zelda’s brows knit together angrily. “I don't think so! This is just as much my problem as it is yours!”

“But you have no power. You'll be useless out there.”

Zelda’s hands balled into fists at her side. “I'm not useless,” she sneered at him. “We can stop at the shrine first. I'll take one of the swords there.”

Link raised a skeptical brow at her. “Yeah, okay.”
“We're wasting time,” she hissed. “You're not going without me.”

“Fine,” he muttered. He turned and sprinted down the hall way with Zelda on his heels. They burst through the front doors of the school and across the street, narrowly avoiding the cars as they came to a screeching halt. They ignored the drivers as they leaned to shout out their windows, only a few brows raised at the boy with the sword in his hand.

They cut across backyards and skipped crosswalks as they took the fastest, most direct path to the shrine. To their surprise, Impa was nowhere to be found when they reached the shrine. But Zelda helped herself to one of the better swords in the shrine, hung with care on the wall. She snagged one that seemed light enough to hold, bounced in her hand for a moment to test its weight, then nodded to Link.

“You don't have to do this,” Link said once more.

“Yes, I do,” she said fiercely. “This is my destiny, just as it is yours.”

“I really wish it wasn't,” he muttered, then sighed. “Besides. We don't even know what we're going up against. What if this is Ganondorf's big entrance?”

“That's unlikely,” she said. “If I learned anything from the Sheikah, it's that Ganondorf always has a plan, and he never does anything alone. He has an entire army of monsters to cause havoc for him. And most of the time, they're just a distraction.”

“That seems like a pretty important item to consider,” Link said.

“A distraction? Maybe.” Zelda hesitated. “Either way, whatever those things are that you saw – they need to be stopped. They will kill. The less reinforcements Ganondorf has, the better.”

Link still felt uneasy. If it was a distraction, what could Ganondorf be going after? Who was in danger? His father? Aryll? Mipha? His stomach knotted. “I don't like this.”

Zelda shifted her weight to her back forth, a hand on her hip. “Then what do you propose we do?”

“I don't know,” he admitted, turning his gaze out the window. “To be honest, I didn't think any of this would actually happen.”

“Well, it's happening,” Zelda snapped. “And we're the only ones who can stop it.”

She was right, of course, but it didn't make him feel any better. In that moment, he felt very underprepared and inadequate, all of his earlier confidence completely gone. It was real now; he couldn't pretend otherwise. He couldn't swing a sword around haphazardly and brace himself when Impa hit his knees with the bokken. If he misstepped, his life would end in the blink of an eye, and all of Hyrule – and the world – would fall to Ganondorf. This was what he was practicing for; his destiny. Hyrule was doomed.

“We're fucked,” he muttered.

Zelda stepped closer to him, taking his hand in hers. She smiled warmly at him. “I believe in you,” she said.

“Really?”

Zelda's brows furrowed, her warm smile dissolving into an angry snarl. “No. We're fucked, and its all thanks to you.”


“No, no,” Link said, waving her off. “Its cool. You'll make a great queen someday. You'll inspire the whole world.”

“You're the hero, here,” she retorted. “You're supposed to be the inspiration. Millions of little children will look up to you and wish to be just like you when they grow up, okay? So just fight the fucking monsters!”

Link grinned and let the Master Sword rest on his shoulder. “Yeah?”

Zelda rolled her eyes. “Yeah.”

“Alright,” he said, sucking in a breath. “For all my little idols. We'll fight the monsters.”

“That's the spirit,” Zelda grunted, pulling him by his wrist. They hurried out of the shrine and made their way through the city, towards where the monsters had dropped from the sky, onward to their first battle in their war against Ganondorf.
They sprinted through the woods at the edge of the city, right where Link had seen the creatures drop from the sky, but there seemed to be no sign of anything other than the birds and the squirrels that called the woods home. Though the woods weren't particularly thick, they had already found themselves disoriented and lost as they tried desperately to search for any sign of Ganondorf or his minions.

Before long, however, they heard unfamiliar screeches from somewhere uncomfortably close, and they skidded to a stop, their breaths caught in their throats as their eyes darted around. Catching a glimpse of something black, Link pulled Zelda abruptly and shoved her into a tree, pressing a finger against her lips. He held his breath, listening as another shriek broke the silence. They both peered around the tree, squinting through the rays of the sun that found their way through the cover of the trees. Just yards away, three large figures moved through the trees, slowly heading in the direction of the city, away from Link and Zelda.

The creatures were unlike anything they had ever seen before. They were neither human, nor animal. They seemed to be simply alien. Their heads were large and disk like, and from what they could see, they had no facial features of any kind. Their four limbs, thought very similar to a human's limbs, were unusually long and gangly, and if they didn't look so terrifying, they would have looked comical with their outstretched arms. But they shrieked once more, sending chills up the spines of Hyrule's heroes.

“The fuck are those things?” Zelda hissed.

“Oh, you know, your typical every day evil monster,” Link snapped.

“They're heading to the city,” Zelda whispered, ignoring his snide remark. “We have to stop them!”

“I have a feeling that will be easier said than done,” Link muttered.

“Can you handle this?” Zelda asked him, glancing at the sword in his hand.

“Can you?” Link hissed. “I'm better prepared than you are.”

“I guess we'll see about that,” she said. “Let's get the monsters, then.”

Link hesitated, watching as the creatures picked their way through the trees. Unsure of how to begin such an attack, he bent down to grab a stray stone and threw it hard at the creatures. It hit the middle one square in the back, causing it to stop suddenly and whip around. It hissed loudly as it searched the area, its head moving from side to side while the other two turned around behind it.

“Good job,” Zelda hissed. “A couple more rocks like that and you'll definitely kill it.”

“Shut up,” Link snapped.

The creature in the middle shrieked loudly, catching sight of Zelda and Link as they argued from within the trees. Unsure of how to begin such an attack, he bent down to grab a stray stone and threw it hard at the creatures. It hit the middle one square in the back, causing it to stop suddenly and whip around. It hissed loudly as it searched the area, its head moving from side to side while the other two turned around behind it.

“Good job,” Zelda hissed. “A couple more rocks like that and you'll definitely kill it.”

“Shut up,” Link snapped.

The creature in the middle shrieked loudly, catching sight of Zelda and Link as they argued from within the trees. Without hesitation, it bounded forward, hunched down slightly and using its long arms as it ran. The two creatures behind it followed, and they bounded through the woods toward Link and Zelda.

Link pulled Zelda forward and they broke into a sprint, though it didn't take long before the monsters caught up to them, easily outpacing the two Hylians. Realizing their escape would be
futile, Link stopped and faced the creatures as they bounded up toward him. He raised the sword and they reared up, shrieking and howling. Link hesitated, stepping backwards as they came down once more, slashing their arms through the air. The ground trembled as they made impact, and Link stumbled backwards as their arms lashed out toward him again, the sword falling out of his grip.

“Link!”

Link braced himself as they prepared to attack once more, but Zelda lunged at them with her own sword, slicing through the arm of the closest creature. It howled loudly and lurched toward Zelda angrily. She waved the sword clumsily, gripping with both hands, but this time the force of the attack was too strong for her and the creature knocked her off her feet.

Link scrambled to reclaim his sword, jumping up just as the creatures closed in around him and Zelda. He threw himself at the creature, thrusting the Master Sword straight into what he assumed was the gut of the creature, and to his relief, it fell to the ground with a painful howl. The other two creatures, just a few feet further behind it, seemed to stop closing in for a moment. They reared back on their legs, their deafening cries echoing through the woods. To Link's and Zelda's horror, the slain monster struggled against the ground for a moment, then pushed itself upright with its own bellowing cry, seemingly coming back from the dead.

“Fuck,” Link spat. “What the hell? I killed that thing!”

“Obviously not,” Zelda hissed. “You're terrible at this.”

“That thing was dead,” Link said stubbornly.

“Well, it's not, now!”

The three creatures resumed to closing in around the two heroes. Zelda and Link stood side by side, their blades raised and ready. They dodged the arms as they slashed through the air, then lunged forward with their swords, desperately fighting off the monsters. With a little luck, they once more managed to slash through not one, but two of the monsters, and they fell to the ground with painful howls.

But just as before, the remaining monster reared back, letting an ear splitting shriek echo once more through the trees. And just as before, the slain monsters rose to their feet, coming back to life and leaving Link and Zelda horrified. They wasted no time as the monsters regained their composure, sprinting once more through the trees in an attempt to buy them more time. Or, at the very least, lure the monsters away from the city.

“This is hopeless,” Link said as they paused to catch their breath. He could already hear the snap of branches and the rustle of brush as the monsters barreled through the woods after them.

“I have a theory,” Zelda said. “Every time we kill one, the others make that horrible sound. I think they're reviving each other. The only way to defeat them is to kill them all at the same time.”

“Oh, is that all?” Link hissed. “Piece of fucking cake. In case you haven't noticed, there's two of us and three of them.”

Zelda shrugged, as if unfazed by this fact. “So we get creative,” she said.

“Do you have something in mind?” Link said through gritted teeth, growing aggravated with her.

“Not exactly,” she admitted.
“Well, we don't have time to come up with a plan.” Link took up the sword, then, as an after thought, he snatched the sword out of Zelda's hands, too. “Stay here,” he instructed, then turned to face the monsters head on as they burst through the brush. He waited for the first one to strike, dodged the blow at the last minute, then took off deeper into the woods, encouraging them to follow him.

And to his relief, they did. He ran until they started to close in once more, then slid to a stop on the dead leaves. He turned to face them as they charged, then dodged their next strike. He leapt to the side, and the creatures followed, swinging their claws at him and growling in frustration. He continued to dodge and dart between them, but he could not seem to outsmart them. Instead of the clumsy result he was looking for, they seemed to catch on, and suddenly, they circled themselves around Link and began to close in. There was no where left for him to run.

Link spun on his heels, looking at them as they closed in, and a new plan came to mind. They were large, and though fast when the broke into a sprint, they were slow when it came to striking and dodging, and he was about to use that to his advantage. He waited with a sword in each hand as they pressed in around him, and just as he expected, one of the monsters lunged forward, claws reaching for him.

Link threw himself at the ground, rolling away from the attack at the last possible moment, springing to his feet as the monster's claws plunged into his comrade's. Just as it did so, Link slashed through the other two with his swords, and the three shrieked their deafening shrieks before collapsing to the ground. Link jerked the swords out of their bodies, then looked over at his defeated foes blankly.

“You know,” Zelda started, coming out from the brush. “That would – in a million years – never happen again.”

Link grinned and met her gaze. “Guess I got lucky.”

“Don't count on luck to get you through this war,” Zelda said, narrowing her eyes on him.

Link shrugged. “I'll ride on it as long as I can.”

Zelda rolled her eyes and took her sword from him. She scrunched her nose at the sight of the strange, dark blood that stained the steel. “Now what?” she muttered.

Link turned his gaze back to the three lifeless monsters. “We should probably tell Impa.”

Zelda nodded. “Probably. And there's no way I'm going back to class now.”

“Shocking,” Link said with a grin. “I don't think you've ever missed class.”

Zelda sighed. “No, I haven't. This will definitely ruin my perfect attendance.”

“You're such a nerd.”

“Believe it or not, I do have an image to uphold.”

“Right,” Link said. “Excuse me, Princess.”

“Don't make me punch you,” Zelda muttered.

“I'd like to see you try.”
Zelda turned and made her way through the woods, back towards the city. “Don't tempt me.”

Link followed her. “Oh, I'm so scared.”

“You should be,” she said. “Need I remind you that I saved your ass back there. You'd be dead if it weren't for me.”

“I don't think so.”

“I know so. Remember; you can't win this without me.”

“This is going to be the worst war in the history of the universe.”

“Really, Link? The worst?”

“Yeah, if I have to deal with you the whole time.”

“That hardly makes it the worst.”

“It does to me.”

“You're impossible.”

“You're impossible,” Link mocked.

“Stop it!”

“Stop it!”

Zelda groaned loudly, throwing her fists down at her sides. “You're so immature!”
Chapter 24

Mipha watched Link as they walked towards the school. He had been quiet ever since they met up at their usual spot to walk together, barely muttering a ‘hey’ to her. His eyelids drooped low as if he were about to pass out where he stood. It was apparent that he had not gotten a lot of – if any – sleep the night before. And after his abrupt departure in the middle of class, she wondered if there was a correlation between the two.

“You don’t look like you’re going to survive the day,” she said.

Link yawned. “Probably not.”

“Is everything okay?”

“Yeah,” he said with a half shrug. “Why?”

“Well, you left in the middle of class yesterday, remember? And I didn’t see you at all for the rest of the day.”

It was true that he and Zelda had not returned to school. After their encounter with the three monsters in the woods, class seemed trivial. And when they finally managed to find Impa, the old Sheikah was not about to let them rest until she got a full report of what had happened. Link almost expected her to send him home to write an essay, detailing every moment since he woke that morning, but to his relief, she seemed content on grilling them for information.

But after receiving the third degree, Link and Zelda were privileged to information they did not have prior. Information that would give them a fighting chance in the war to come.

“Those creatures are Shadow Beasts,” Impa explained. “They come from the Twilight Realm; a world much like ours, but shrouded in darkness. What you saw in the sky was a portal; a portal that was supposed to be closed up thousands of years ago. I'm not sure how it could have been opened, but it is clearly the first sign – of what can only be many more – to indicate Ganondorf’s revival. Be on your guard; those creatures won't be the last to try to attack the city in preparation for Ganondorf's return. The safety of this city – and the world – are in your hands.”

And though Link did not have to return home to write an essay on the revival of Ganondorf, Impa was not about to let him leave without another proper lesson on how to be a hero. He and Zelda spent the rest of the afternoon and well into the evening at the shrine with a pile of books for company, each one detailing accounts of monster attacks over the years, some even more recent than Link realized. The accounts varied, but the ones of the Shadow Beasts Impa had mentioned were relatively the same over the last thousand years. And every detailed account from the Sheikah suggested what Link and Zelda already knew – that the creatures needed to be destroyed at the same time in order to prevent one from reviving the others.

The Shadow Beasts weren't the only creatures to be wary of, and by the end of the night, Link felt like a walking encyclopedia of Hyrule's biggest and baddest monsters and how to appropriately fuck them up.

“Link?”

“I had to… get home,” Link said quickly. “Ary went home sick.”

“Oh.” Mipha frowned – slightly doubtful – and met Link’s gaze. “How is she today?”
Link hesitated. He looked ahead as they approached the school. Zelda stood outside with Paya. Their eyes turned to him as if they were waiting for him. “She’s home, but she’ll be fine.”

Mipha followed Link’s gaze, her brows furrowed together. Zelda and Paya seemed to watch Link with concern. They noticed her, then, and they smiled as she and Link approached.

“So, karate after school, right?” Zelda said quickly, turning to Paya.

Paya nodded. She turned to Link. “You… brought it, right?”

Link crossed his arms. “Yes.”

Mipha’s eyes moved between them. “Brought what?”

“Equipment for class,” Zelda said casually. She turned away from them and proceeded to make her way up the steps and into the building.

“You must be like, a black belt now or something,” Mipha said. She turned as Zelda laughed sharply over her shoulder before disappearing inside.

“Or something,” Link muttered.

*****

Link just barely made it through his morning classes, and when the bell rang signaling his lunch period, his mind was set on sneaking away to take a nap, even if it meant sleeping through his afternoon classes. But when he reached his locker, Urbosa was there waiting for him, and the look on her face told him he would not have a chance to get his midday nap.

“You look like you're on a mission,” she said, stepping aside to let him open his locker.

“I was thinking of taking a nap,” he said in a bored tone. He opened his locker just slightly in hopes to keep its contents out of sight, but that only made Urbosa push in closer.

“What’s that?” She made sure to get into his space as she peered over his shoulder. Link slammed the door to his locker quickly and stepped around her in an attempt to ignore her, but Urbosa was persistent.

“Was that a sword?” She grabbed Link’s arm, stopping him in the crowded hallway, but Link avoided her gaze.

“It’s just for karate,” he said. He tried to pull his arm out of her grip, but she was surprisingly strong. Her fingers tightened around him.

“I want to talk to you,” she said simply.

Link’s stomach growled. All he wanted was a quiet place to eat lunch and catch some z's. Was that really too much to ask? But before he could argue, Urbosa was pulling him down the hallway, through the crowd of students that mingled about on their lunch period, and exiting the building through the back entrance. She pulled him through the manicured courtyards where some of the seniors had gathered for their lunch and across the back lot towards the deserted soccer field. She didn’t let go of his arm until she was satisfied that they were far enough away from anyone who might hear their conversation.

“What the hell,” he muttered, irritated.
“What the hell yourself,” she said, facing him. “What happened the other day?”

Link hesitated. “What do you mean?”

“Mipha told me what happened,” Urbosa said, her hand on her hip. “Some weird business with you and Zelda running out of class. She said she saw you guys running like mad men away from the school. And then you told her that your sister was home sick? Sounds like some bull shit to me.”

Link blinked at Urbosa. “And what do you think is going on, then?” Link asked carefully.

“I think the whole school thinks you’re fucking the king’s daughter.”

Link narrowed her eyes at her, then shrugged. “So what if I am? What’s it to you?”

“I know that’s not what it is. And I want you to tell me the truth.”

Link rolled his eyes at her and proceeded to walk away from her. “I have no idea what you’re talking about,” he said. “I need to find somewhere to hide and sleep.”

“It has to do with those monsters, doesn’t it?”

Link froze. He did not turn to Urbosa, but his pulse raced. How did she know about that? As far as he could tell, no one else had seen the portal open up. He waited for her to continue with her interrogation. When she said nothing, he peered at her over his shoulder.

“Don’t pretend you don’t know what I’m talking about,” she said fiercely. “I know no one else saw it. But you saw it. You and Zelda.”

Link turned to face Urbosa. His eyes searched hers, and she was terrified. She, Urbosa – the most independent, bravest woman Link had ever met – was scared.

“Tell me what’s happening,” she said softly. “I know you know something.”

Link rubbed at his face with his palms and sighed lightly. “I don’t have all the answers,” he said. He shook his head, exasperated. “I didn’t even believe it all until yesterday.” He paused and turned his gaze back to the school. “I don’t know why we see things and no one else does. I just thought it was me and Zelda.” He hesitated and turned his gaze back to Urbosa. “Come to the shrine with us after school. Maybe Impa will know something.”

“Impa?”

“Paya’s grandmother,” Link explained. “She’s a Sheikah. She’s been… training Zelda and me.”

Urbosa mouthed the word ‘Sheikah’ and turned her gaze to the ground, deep in thought. After a moment, she turned back to Link. “You stopped those things. With that sword. You and Zelda.” She paused, searching Link’s face. “They’re bad news.”

“I have a feeling the worst has yet to come,” Link muttered.

Urbosa nodded. “I want to help,” she said strongly. “I can see them, so there must be something I can do.”

“I don’t think so,” Link said quickly.

“You’re going to need my help,” she said sharply. “Especially if it has to do with Ganondorf.”
“How do you know that?” Link hissed.

Urbosa moved closer to him, holding a hand in the air. There was a strange sort of energy that moved out of her and around Link. He couldn’t quite put his finger on the feeling. It was as if it were… electrifying. And at that moment, a small spark zapped from the tips of her fingers.

“I know enough,” she said. “The legends were passed down in my family, too. Legends of a race once known as the Gerudos. A race I am a descendant from. A power I inherited from them.” She lowered her hand, her gaze hard on Link’s. “I guess you could say I believe in destiny. The power has been dormant for a very long time. But I noticed it in myself a few weeks ago. That can only mean that my power will be needed, just as you and Zelda are. We’re the only ones that can stop it.”

It already seemed too wild, and now this? But surely Impa would know something about it. Urbosa wasn’t necessarily a skeptical person, but she didn’t run around preaching her beliefs, either. It was starting to seem that this thing he had been dragged into was much bigger than he was realizing. And he wasn’t afraid to admit that he felt way in over his head. Zelda hadn’t had much success unlocking her own power, but with Urbosa around to help, Link wouldn’t feel like he was fighting a losing battle. At the very least, it would probably improve his odds. But he never imagined dragging anyone else into this fucked up mess. He didn’t want to. Hell, if he had a choice, he wouldn’t be involved, either. Whether he liked it or not, though, it seemed Urbosa was already in it, and there was nothing he could do to try to stop it.

“Three o’clock,” Link said. And without another word, he walked back towards the school in search for a place to take a nap.
Chapter 25

To Link's dismay, he did not have a chance to search for a place to nap, as Daruk was beckoning to him from outside in the courtyard. He supposed he could have some lunch with his friends, first. He had an entire afternoon of classes to skip and nap through. To his surprise, however, only Teba and Revali accompanied Daruk outside. Mipha and Urbosa were nowhere to be found.

“Well, well, well,” Revali said, leering at Link as he approached. He was seated on top of one of the tables, his arms outstretched behind him as if he were just enjoying the warmth of the sun. He straightened and let his elbows rest on his knees, his hands hanging between his thighs. “Zelda and Paya weren’t enough for you? Now you’re trying to go after Urbosa? I saw the two of you having a little secret chat.” He threw his head back and laughed. “I’ve got news for you; she’s way out of your league.”

Link was too tired for Revali’s shit. He turned his gaze to Daruk, hoping to find some support, but even Daruk seemed to regard him skeptically. “What’s the deal?” he muttered. “Does everyone think I’m running some kind of whore house?”

Daruk raised a brow, hesitant. “That’s one of the rumors going around.”

“One of the cleaner rumors,” Teba said, seemingly disinterested in the conversation.

“Well,” Link said. “I don’t know why I’m suddenly the talk of the school.”

“You suddenly hang out with Zelda all the time,” Revali started.

“You go off to who knows where with her and Paya,” Daruk added.

“The three of you have your little secret conversations together,” Teba said. “And you always change the subject when someone else is around.”

“And what’s the deal with yesterday?” Daruk said in an interrogating tone.

Link sighed lightly. Had the entire school seen him take off?

“The entire school saw you just up and leave.” That answered that. Daruk narrowed his eyes at Link. “If you want to skip class, at least try to be discrete about it.”

Skipping the rest of the day was starting to look more and more like the thing to do. He had no excuse to offer them.

“There's nothing going on,” he said simply. “Karate and stuff.”

It was clear, however, that his friends did not buy it, but he wasn't going to let them interrogate him further.

“I'm outta here,” he muttered, no bothering to say goodbye to his friends. Without another thought, Link moved passed his friends, out of the courtyard, and around the back of the school to jump the fence across from the soccer field and go home. At the very least, he could hide in his room and nap through the rest of school before he had to get to the shrine.

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As expected, Urbosa was at the shrine at three, making her way to Zelda and Link as they chatted
casually outside.

“So,” she started with a hand on her hip. “The big mysterious reveal.” She looked around for a moment before turning her attention back to Link. “This is what you've been doing instead of karate? Coming here?”

“Well, it wasn't a complete lie,” Zelda said with a shrug. “I mean, he's not completely useless when it comes to that sword.”

Urbosa smiled. “Seems hard to believe. So, give it to me. What's the deal?” She turned to the door where the old Sheikah known as Impa stood. Her brows were furrowed as she gazed at Urbosa.

“Inside,” she said shortly. “Let me see what you can do.”

Urbosa hesitated, glancing at Link and Zelda. “What is this, hero try outs?”

Zelda grinned. “If only. You're one of us now, whether you like it or not.”

Urbosa shrugged and followed Impa into the shrine, Zelda and Link at her heels. Inside, Urbosa looked around at the relatively empty room. At the far end of the room, bokkens were lined against the wall, along with various other weapons she assumed were for training purposes. She turned her attention to Impa, who stopped in the middle of the room and faced her.

“Go on,” she said, waving a hand towards Urbosa. “Link told me. Let me see it.”

Urbosa hesitated. “I don't think you realize how destructive -”

Impa laughed sharply. She turned her gaze to her granddaughter as Paya, too, entered the room from elsewhere in the shrine. “What is wrong with your generation?”

Paya stopped in her tracks and frowned at her grandmother. “The Sheikah tribe isn't exactly well known.”

“There was a time when we were,” Impa said, turning back to Urbosa. “Your power is no match for mine. This place will have no problem withstanding your attacks, I've made sure of that.”

“If you say so,” Urbosa said, putting a hand on her hip. She inspected her nails for a moment, then with a smile, snapped her fingers together. Lightning struck from out of nowhere, striking inside the shrine, but the building and all inside were unaffected, just as Impa promised.

“That will do,” Impa said, turning her back to Urbosa.

Urbosa slouched slightly and frowned. “I worked hard on that,” she muttered. “That will do?”

“It could use some improvement, but yes, it will do.”

Urbosa turned and glanced at Zelda. “What's with her, anyway?”

Zelda shrugged. “Nothing we do is good enough. According to Impa, all of Hyrule will fall and it will be our damned faults.”

Link nodded beside Zelda and grinned.

“This only raises more questions,” Urbosa said.

Paya strode across the room, standing with her friends, a book in her arms.
“Don't worry,” Link said. “Paya has the book of answers.”

Paya blushed and turned her attention to Urbosa, handing her the book. “It is an account of the legends of Hyrule over hundreds of thousands of years,” Paya explained. “It is a treasured possession of the Sheikah tribe, which grandmother and I are a part of. We are sworn to protect royal family and keep the history of Hyrule alive, and when the Chosen Heroes make their appearance, we aid them in any way we can to help them protect this world.”

Urbosa held her gaze on Paya for a moment before flipping through the pages. “I've only briefly heard of the Sheikah,” she said. “From my mother, I didn't think they continued to survive.”

“There are not many of us left,” Paya admitted.

“I guess, then, my mother's stories were true.” Urbosa paused on a page that depicted an image of the Master Sword. She glanced to Link, licking her fingers to continue to flip through the pages. “Hyrule is doomed if you're the Chosen Hero.”

Link crossed his arms with a grunt. “I'm tired of everyone saying that.”

Urbosa smiled. Her flipping stopped abruptly as she came upon an image of Ganondorf. She pointed at and leaned over to show Paya. “This is a Gerudo reincarnation.”

Paya nodded her head.

“Gerudo?” Zelda repeated.

Urbosa hesitated, not meeting the princess's gaze. She closed the book and passed it back to Paya. “An ancient race that once thrived in the deserts of Hyrule. It is said that they are a race of only women. One male is born every hundred years.”

“Sounds like my kinda place,” Link said.

Zelda rolled her eyes and elbowed him sharply in the ribs. She ignored his sneer as he rubbed his side. “That's interesting,” she said. She turned to Impa. “Why haven't you told me about that?”

Impa busied herself, taking the book from Paya and moving across the room. “You never asked,” she said simply before leaving them alone, closing the door behind her.

“How can I ask about something I don't know about?” Zelda muttered under her breath. She sighed and turned her attention back to Urbosa. “I'm sure you've guessed by now that Ganondorf will be making his predicted return. That's why we're here. And it's our job to stop him and protect Hyrule.”

“Well,” Urbosa started. “I'll do what I can to help. Clearly its in my destiny just as its in yours.”

“No one expects you to do anything,” Link said, his expression hardened. “We're the only ones that don't have a choice.”

Urbosa scoffed and waved him off with her hand. “I'm sorry, have you seen yourself lately? You're gonna need all the help you can get.”

“Right,” Link muttered. “Or Hyrule is doomed.”

Urbosa winked at him. “Aw, come on, kiddo. Don't be so glum.”

“You know,” Zelda started. She looked up in thought, putting a finger on her chin. “I did read
something about this. That over time, there have been others who have possessed unique powers of their own, that differed from the powers of Hylia and the Chosen Hero. Most of these powers tend to only stay within families, being passed down through the generations.”

Urbosa bit her lower lip as Zelda continued.

“I wasn't really too focused on that part at the time, so I didn't read too much into it.” She shrugged. “But I recall their being four unique abilities in total that have surfaced over the years. Clearly, Urbosa's is one of them. If we're lucky, maybe there are three other people out there who possess those powers. They could be of use to us.”

Just what Link wanted; to drag more people into this war. “What's it matter?” he said. “We may never find them. They could be anywhere.”

“I suppose,” Zelda said. “But it could be worth looking into.”

“Why drag anyone else into this?”

“Because I'd like a fighting chance,” Zelda hissed.

“Link has a point,” Urbosa said. “It's not like we have time to go hunting these people down. We wouldn't even know where to begin. But, if someone finds this power on their own, and if we happen to stumble upon them, perhaps it would be worth pursuing, then. But I wouldn't waste our time chasing something that could be impossible to find. We need to focus on preparing for this war.”

Zelda nodded and sighed. “I guess you're right.”

“I like to think I usually am,” Urbosa said with a grin.

“That settles it, then,” Zelda said. “I'm sure Impa will have plenty of training for you like she does for us.”

“Pray she doesn't beat you with a stick,” Link muttered, crossing his arms.

Zelda smiled. “Welcome to the hero club.”
Link could feel Revali staring daggers into his skull like he were some villain about to have his head blown to bits simply by using some sort of telekinesis, but Link chose to ignore the dark hero’s plot to have him destroyed as he bit happily into his sandwich. After a moment, Revali gave up and instead turned his hard gaze to Urbosa.

“I can't believe you,” he uttered. “You've joined his harem, haven't you?”

Urbosa raised a brow at him. “Harem?”

“With Zelda and Paya,” Revali continued. He sat back and cocked his head slightly, examining Link. “I don't get it. Does he pay you?” He shook his head. “That has to be it. It's not like he has anything else going on for himself.”

Urbosa rolled his eyes. “What's your problem?”

“My problem is you ditched us yesterday to go play karate with those three losers.”

“Please say that to Zelda's face,” Daruk said. “I'd love to see your head roll.”

“Urbosa,” Revali said, ignoring Daruk. “Come on. You're better than that.”

“Give it a rest,” she hissed. “My life is none of your concern.”

Revali hesitated, looking between her and Link – who was still content with his lunch – and frowned. “There's something going on. I want to know.”

“There's nothing going on,” Urbosa insisted. She plucked a cucumber off of her plastic fork and smiled. “Did you ever think that maybe I just don't feel like hanging out with you?”

“That hurts,” Revali said, his hand at his chest. “We're best friends.”

“That's pushing it,” Urbosa said. “I merely tolerate you.”

“You know,” Mipha started. “I don't think anyone here is really friends with Revali. I think he just kind of showed up one day.”

Urbosa grinned at Mipha. “Sounds about right.”

“If that's how you want to play,” Revali said, getting to his feet and crossing his arms. “Since we're not friends, none of ya'll are invited to my party tomorrow night.”

“I'm busy,” Urbosa said with a yawn.

“You're not invited!”

“I'm still busy.”


“The only party I know how to throw,” Revali said proudly. “The party of all parties. My parents are gone until Monday. There will be chicks, music, and the pool will be open. I've got plenty of
booze, food, and a little something special if you ask nice. Grown straight from Akkala. My treat for my closest friends.”

“That does sound tempting,” Daruk said. He let a hand clap against Revali’s back. “You know how to throw ’em, friend.”

Revali grinned and turned to the others. “So?”

“My friendship can't be bought with chicks and drugs,” Urbosa said.

This seemed to catch Link's attention momentarily. “I can be bought for chicks.”

“You're definitely not invited,” Revali sneered.

“I'll bring my harem.”

Mipha rolled her eyes and made a sound of disgust. “Honestly,” she muttered. “Can we drop this harem shit?”

Revali pointed a finger gun at him. “Only if they're hot.”

“The hottest.”

“I'll be the judge of that,” Revali said, pocketing his finger pistols. “Anything less than tens and you're out.”

Finished with his lunch, Link stood. “Well, if you'll excuse me; I've got a harem to pay for.” With out another word, he left his friends alone in the courtyard.

“I've got a party to finish planning,” Revali said, getting to his feet. “Smell ya later.”

Teba and Daruk soon followed suit as well, leaving Urbosa and Mipha alone at the table. Urbosa sat herself up on the table and leaned her face back to the sun.

“So, what's up with you?” she said.

“I dunno,” Mipha said. “Nothing.”

“You're not still upset with those stupid rumors, are you?”

“No,” Mipha said quickly. “I... asked him about them.”

Urbosa turned her gaze to Mipha. “And?”

“I don't know,” she shrugged “He said something weird. Or, I think it was weird. Maybe it wasn't weird.” She sighed. “I don't know.”

“What happened?”

“Well, before the game, I bumped into Zelda between classes. She said there was nothing going on between her and Link. After the game, Link asked if I was still mad. I told him what Zelda said, and said that I didn't care.”

Urbosa nodded. “Right. Because you don't, of course.”

Mipha hesitated, narrowing her gaze on Urbosa before continuing. “He... asked why I didn't care.”
“Why not?”

*Mipha met his gaze, her brows knit together. “Am I supposed to?”*

*They had stopped walking. Link held her gaze on her, but said nothing.*

*Mipha's brows furrowed. “What?”*

*Link shrugged and continued on, leaving Mipha to catch up to him. “I guess not.”*

“It just seemed... odd,” Mipha said softly.

Urbosa turned her face back to the sun. “Link has never been the most forthcoming,” she said. “He wouldn't even tell you he was taking karate.”

“So,” Mipha started, “that's weird, then, right?”

Urbosa said nothing for a moment, until she suddenly sighed dramatically. “Why won't you two just fuck and get it over with?”

“W-what?” Mipha blushed. “Shut up!”

“Clearly you both like each other.”

“Is it clear, though?”

“It is to everyone else.”

“I don't think so,” Mipha said softly. “I don't think he sees me that way.”

“You'll never know unless you ask.”

“Ask what?”

Urbosa and Mipha turned to the voice as Zelda made her way towards them with a grin.

“Nothing,” Mipha muttered, averting her gaze.

“Nothing,” Mipha muttered, averting her gaze.

“Did you hear about this party Revali's supposedly throwing?” Urbosa asked.

“I've heard something about that,” Zelda said, taking a seat next to Mipha. “Are you guys going?”

Mipha rolled her eyes. “Why would I go to one of his stupid parties?”

“Oh, come on,” Urbosa said. “Live a little. You could use a break, and this will be just the break you need. Let loose, have some fun, and don't think about anything trivial.”

“I'll go if you go,” Zelda added. “I've never really been to a party before.”

“It's settled,” Urbosa said. “The three of us are going to that party.”

Zelda hesitated. “It's going to be a legal party, right?”

Urbosa laughed. “Clearly you don't know Revali very well.”

Zelda frowned. “I can't get caught up in anything like that.”
“You’re probably right,” Urbosa said. “His parties are far from tame. You might need to start off with something more Princess friendly. Wouldn’t want to see you end up in jail.”

“But it’s okay for us to go to jail?” Mipha said. “I didn't sign up for that.”

“We don't have to stay long,” Urbosa said. “If you go home, you're just gonna be stuck in your head all night trying to decipher every conversation you've ever had and you'll go crazy.”

“Who's the guy?” Zelda said with a grin.

“There's no guy,” Mipha muttered.

“Girl?”

“I don't like anyone, okay?!”

Zelda's grin widened. She put a hand up in defense and turned away, still smiling smugly. “Alright.”

“Don't worry,” Urbosa said to Zelda. “I'll hook you up with the next party. It'll be fun.”

“I'll hold you to it,” Zelda said.
Friday night, and Revali's party was well underway. And it was just as big as Revali promised. It seemed as if the entire school, and even students from schools outside of the city, all around Hyrule, were at the party. There was a bar outside beside the pool, inside, and kegs everywhere Link looked. Smoke came out of the upstairs windows, and the stoners hung out on one of the balconies, hanging dangerously close to the edge. The music was so loud that Link could barely hear himself think, and the bass practically rattled his bones. It was a wonder no one called the cops simply on the noise alone. But really, Link was unimpressed.

“Damn,” Link muttered. “I didn't know Revali's parents were this loaded.”

“Clearly they're not very smart,” Daruk said. “Did they really think he wouldn't throw a rager the moment they left down?”

“This is not a rager.”

“The whole damn school is here.”

Link shrugged. “That's not a rager.”

“Every chick here is trashed and they either getting fucked or throwing up in the fucking bushes. I'm pretty sure the druggies are doing lines upstairs in Revali's parents' bedroom and hanging off the balcony high as a fucking kite. There's an actual DJ here. There's a waterfall in the damn pool. Should I continue?”

Link shrugged again. “This party's weak.”

Link,” Daruk started frankly. “If you were hanging off a cliff and Revali was throwing a party, I'm sorry man, but I'll see ya at your funeral. Unless Revali threw another party. Then, you know, I'll send flowers or something.”

“You're a good friend.”

“I know.”

“So, if there are all these drunk chicks, why can't I get laid?”

Daruk laughed sharply. “There isn't enough alcohol in the world, man.”

“Dude. Wingman. Where is the support?”

Daruk sighed. “Fine.” He scanned the backyard quickly, then gestured for Link to follow him. He made his way to a group of girls and smiled his most flirtatious smile. “Excuse me, ladies,” he said. “I see you're having a lovely time, but perhaps I could ruin that for you. Have you met my friend Link?”

The girls turned their gazes to Link, but Link was sneering at Daruk.

“Aren't you friends with Revali?” one of them said to Daruk.

“Friends is one way to put it,” he said.

She smiled. “So, is he single?”
Link groaned and stormed away from them. Daruk trotted to his side, laughing.

“Come on, man, they were way out of your league.”

“I could get them,” Link muttered.

“Okay, for real this time,” Daruk said as he made his way to his next target. He pushed Link unknowingly towards Mipha and Urbosa. “Hey, have you met Link? No? He's a catch.” He stopped short as they turned to them, their brows raised. “Oh, hey guys. I definitely can't trick you into getting with him. Sorry man, you're S.O.L.”

“You're the worst wingman.”

“Wingman?” Mipha repeated. “What do you need a wingman for?”

“To get laid,” Daruk said, as if it were obvious.

“Go away, Daruk,” Urbosa muttered. “You're drunk.”

“Nah, not yet.”

“Did you have any luck?” Mipha asked, avoiding his gaze.

“Does it look like I did?”

“I'm empty,” Daruk said. “Who needs a drink?”

Mipha and Urbosa both shook their heads.


“Why should I be? You didn't do shit for me.” But Link trudged after Daruk anyway as he made his way towards the house.

Urbosa shook her head. “Men.”

Mipha turned her eyes down at her feet. “Hm.”

“Oh, come on,” Urbosa said. “Link's not going to pick up any chicks.”

“I don't care what he does,” Mipha said.

“Mipha! You're the worst liar!”

“No, I'm not,” she muttered.

Urbosa rolled her eyes. “We've been over this. Why don't you just, like, tell him.”

“There's nothing to tell him.”

Urbosa looked at her skeptically.

Mipha sighed. “It doesn't matter,” she said quickly. “He doesn't see me that way.”

“You don't know that.”

“He likes Zelda,” she said.
What the hell would she see in him?"

Mipha narrowed her gaze at Urbosa.

“He's great,” she said quickly. “So dreamy.”

This time Mipha rolled her eyes. “Stop talking.”

Urbosa smiled. “Come on, I'm messing with you!” She scanned the backyard; now it was her turn
to play wingman. “What you need to do is make him jealous.”

“I don't think that will work,” Mipha said.

Urbosa shrugged. “Go flirt with someone. And if it doesn't work, maybe you can at least get laid.”

“No, thanks.”

“Come on, Mipha. Have some fun for once. Do something daring. Live!”

“I'm here, what more do you want?”

She pulled at Mipha's wrist and dragged her towards one of the guys she pointed out. “Hey, there.
Have you met Mipha?” She pushed Mipha forward before turning away and calling over her
shoulder. “Okay, bye. I have to help Daruk!”

Mipha blushed and smiled sheepishly at the attractive guy before her, cursing Urbosa in the back
of her mind.

Urbosa made her way into the house, pushing through the crowd until she found Daruk and Link.

“Where's Mipha?” Daruk asked as he took a sip of his drink.

“Flirting with some guy,” Urbosa said with a shrug.

“What guy?” Link asked, narrowing his eyes at her.

“I don't know, some guy. Who cares?”

“Oh.” Link shrugged. “Weird.”

Urbosa rolled her eyes. “What a bunch of idiots,” she said, shaking her head.

“Me?” Daruk asked.

“All of you.”

Daruk handed her a red plastic cup. “Alcohol will make you feel better.”

Urbosa scrunched her nose at the offer. “I have too much respect for myself to look like that.” She
gestured to a group of schools dancing seductively and stripping out of their clothes.

Daruk watched them and nodded. “You're right. You are a high class, respectable woman. But I
might see boob if I stick around.”

“Really, Daruk?” Urbosa hissed.
“Fine, come on.” He lead the way out of the house and back outside. Link trailed behind them, overall disinterested with the party, yet curious to see who Mipha was flirting with. It didn't take long to pick her out in the backyard. She, too, had a red plastic cup in hand, and was laughing to something the guy before her said. Even from a distance, Link could tell he was more muscular and taller. Why did they always have to be taller?

He narrowed his gaze, watching as he leaned forward and whispered something to Mipha, his hand on her waist. Mipha stepped back and laughed uncomfortably, but his hand stayed on her, seemingly trying to pull her closer.

Link made his way to Mipha, pulling at her arm, causing her to stumble backwards away from the other guy. The guy sneered at Link.

“Come on,” Link muttered.

“Is there a problem?” he hissed at Link.

“Yeah, there is.”

“Relax, man. There's plenty of bitches to go around.”

Link pulled Mipha further away. “Classy,” he muttered. “I bet you win them all with that charm.”

“Why don't you get the hell out of here and keep your nose out of our business?”

“I don't think she's interested.”

“I think she can decide that for herself.”

“You know,” Mipha said quickly. “I think I should just get going anyway.”

“Fuckin' whore,” he muttered.

Without another thought, Link spun on his heels and let his fist fly into the guy's nose. He took a step backward and grunted in surprise, his hands flying to his face.

“Say it again,” Link spat. But this time, a fist made contact with his face, and he stumbled backwards with a grunt. He fell back against a body, too small to be Daruk's.

“Take it somewhere else,” Revali hissed as Link bumped into him.

“Fuck off,” the guy said to Revali.

“Uh-uh,” Revali said, pushing Link aside as he stepped forward. “You fuck off.”

“Or what?”

Revali blinked at him for a moment, dumbfounded. “Or I'll kick your pathetic ass,” he sneered.

“I'd like to see you try.”

Revali jumped forward, but Daruk grabbed his arms, pulling him back.

“Come on, man,” he said. “Ignore him.”

“Yeah, man,” he taunted. “Really. All over one bitch.”
This time it was Daruk's fist that flew forward, nailing him in the chest and sending him flying back nearly thirty feet. He landed hard on the ground, shouting in pain as he clutched at his ribs.

“What the fuck, man?” Revali hissed at Daruk.

Daruk stared at his hand, his mouth gaping in shock and horror at what he had done.

Link pressed his hand against the bruise already forming on his face. He looked up at Daruk, meeting his confused and horrified gaze. Link, however, was not surprised. Zelda had predicted that there were others with some sort of powers that could aid them in their war against Ganondorf. Urbosa was the only other person to know about everything, but Link had never expected that Daruk would be another to have unique powers.

“Wha-what just happened?” Mipha stammered out. Her pulse was racing from the drama that had just played out so suddenly. She began to sweat as her heart raced even quicker and her head spun.

Urbosa was at Daruk's side, pulling at his arm. “Come on,” she said softly to him.

“Did I do that?” Daruk muttered. “How did I do that?”

Link felt Mipha's hand against his cheek, but he pulled away.

Her brows furrowed as she tried desperately to focus on Link. “Are you alright?”

“Fine,” he grunted. He watched as Urbosa pulled Daruk away, talking to him quietly at the edge of the yard. After a few moments, Daruk narrowed his gaze on Link, as if he didn't believe what Urbosa was telling him. He turned his attention back to Mipha, doing his best to ignore the pain. “Are you okay?”

Mipha hesitated. “Actually,” she said slowly. “I don't... I don't feel right.” She swayed lightly on her feet, her face whitening.

“Mipha,” Link started, but she stumbled forward against him. Link caught her in his arms, shouting her name, but she did not respond.

“What happened?” Urbosa was suddenly at his side, kneeling down and inspecting Mipha.

“I'll kill him,” Link snarled. “If he fucking drugged her, I'll kill him!”

“Only one way to find out,” Urbosa muttered, taking Mipha from him.

Link jumped to his feet, his blood boiling, but Daruk held him back. He scanned the yard, finding the guy quickly, but Revali had beaten him to it, his hands around the guy's throat.

Link turned quickly as Mipha vomited on the ground. She groaned and fell against Urbosa.

“Get her out of here,” Revali muttered as he rejoined his friends. “Pretty sure that guy just called the cops on us.”

“Fuck, man,” Daruk muttered. He scooped Mipha up easily in his arms. “Are you coming?”

“Captain's gotta go down with the ship,” Revali said.

“That's idiotic,” Urbosa said, rolling her eyes. “But I won't argue. Let's go.”

Without another word, they hurried toward the streets to their parked cars, leaving Revali to deal
with his out of control party.

“We should take her to the hospital,” Daruk said.

Urbosa shook her head and pulled open her car door. “She's fine. She threw everything up.”

“Sure, she's fine,” Daruk grunted. “Totally fine. She doesn't need a hospital.”

“Don't take me to the hospital,” Mipha muttered from Daruk's arms. “Please. I'm fine.”

“Well, what do you want?” he said with a huff. “Home?”

Mipha shook her head. “My parents will kill me.”

“She can come to my house,” Urbosa said. “I'll keep an eye on her.”

“I'm coming,” Link said.

Urbosa rolled her eyes. “Fine,” she said. She waited as Daruk helped Mipha into the back and Link slid in beside her, then started the car and pulled away from the curb, peeling out into the street and away from the party and any evidence that they had been there.
Link made himself comfortable on the floor of Urbosa's bathroom, holding her hair back as Mipha vomited into the toilet. When she finished throwing up, she curled up against Link with a painful sigh, her head resting in the crook of his neck. She pulled her knees to her chest and groaned.

“Fuck Revali's parties,” she muttered.

Urbosa poked her head into the bathroom, Riju under her arm. “How you feeling?”

“Swell,” Mipha said. “I'm never talking to another guy again.”

Urbosa frowned. “I'm sorry, Mipha. I shouldn't have forced you.”

Mipha shook her head. “You didn't force me to do anything. And you didn't know.”

“Men are the worst.”

“Totally,” Link said.


“Damn, that's some party,” Riju said. “Why couldn't I come?”

Urbosa narrowed her eyes at her sister. “Mipha is responsible, and look what happened to her?”

She stepped into the bathroom and knelt down to give Mipha a glass of water. “Drink.”

Mipha took the glass from Urbosa gratefully and finished it in seconds.

“You can sleep in Riju's bed if you want,” Urbosa said.

“Hey! What about me?”

“You can sleep on the couch,” Urbosa hissed.

Riju crossed her arms. “You're lucky I like Mipha,” she said, “or I'd call Mom and tell her everything!”

“Mature,” Urbosa muttered.

Mipha sighed and shook her head. “I'm fine. I'm feeling better. I can go home.”

“Take your time,” Urbosa said. “Wait until you stop throwing up, at least.” She made her way out of the bathroom, pulling Riju along with her by her wrist and closing the door behind them.

Mipha sighed and burrowed closer to Link. Link stared at his feet, feeling her chest rise and fall with each breath against him. She fell still and quiet for a moment, and Link turned to see if she had fallen asleep. He moved as little as possible so as not to disturb her, as her eyes were indeed close. She shifted at his side, and her eyes opened. She glanced up at him.

“How are you feeling?” he asked.


“Sure.”
“Really,” Mipha continued. “I don't know what would have happened... I mean, I do know. Goddesses, what was I thinking?”

Link smiled. “Yeah, what the hell? Trying to pick up random guys at a party? That's not like you.”

Mipha rolled her eyes and blew her bangs out of her face. “Yeah, I don't know. It was dumb.” She let out a breath. “I was just trying to... loosen up, I guess.” She glanced at Link. “It was Urbosa's idea. She says I'm too uptight.”

Link scoffed. “Yeah, but look where being loose got you.”

“Yeah,” she said softly. “Link?”

“Yeah?”

Mipha hesitated. She turned her gaze away. “Can you... take me home now?”

“Are you sure?”

Mipha nodded. “Yes. I just want to hide in my bed and sleep.”

Link smiled. “Okay.”

Link helped Mipha to her feet, letting her balance on him for a moment, then they made their way out of the bathroom. They thanked Urbosa and said their goodbyes before heading out into the cool late spring night. Once he was sure Mipha was settled in the front seat, Link slid in behind the wheel of his car and pulled out of the driveway, navigating through the quiet city.

Though they lived on the other side of the city from Urbosa, without the usual traffic, the drive only took fifteen minutes. Except for a light in Sidon's bedroom, the house was dark. Mipha was sure her parents were asleep, and sneaking back into the house would be relatively easy.

“Are you sure you're alright?” Link asked, turning to her.

Mipha nodded. “I just want to sleep for a week,” she said. She hesitated, her eyes on the bruise on his face. “You really should get that looked at. What if you have a concussion?”

Link shrugged. “It was a weak ass punch.”

Mipha rolled her eyes. She let her fingers run over the cut, brushing against his cheek. She met Link's gaze for a moment and her heart froze in her chest. Her fingers hesitated against his skin for a moment that seemed to last an eternity, but it was a moment that reminded her how much she loved him. The butterflies fluttered as they always did; her heart pulled to him as they always did; the words she wanted to say remained on the tip of her tongue as they always did. There was a soft glow under her finger tips, bringing her out of her thoughts, and she pulled away in shock. To her surprise, the cut on his face was healed.

Link blinked at her in confusion, oblivious to what had just happened. In truth, he was too enamored with her at that moment, locked in her gaze. He was sure she was about to say something, but now she only stared at him in unexpected horror. He hesitated, pulling away from her slightly, realizing then just how close they really were. His fingers traced the area where she had touched him and he realized then that the cut was gone. He turned away quickly, cursing under his breath.

“What?” Mipha said in a breathy whisper. “What... what happened?”
“Nothing,” Link muttered.

“It's... gone. Did I...”

“You should go,” he said quickly.

Mipha stared at him. “But... I...”

“You need to get some rest,” Link said. “I'll talk to you later, okay?”

Mipha hesitated, still holding her gaze on Link, but Link did not turn to her. She finally looked away, her eyes on her feet, as if she would find an answer to what had just happened – or better yet, why he was suddenly acting the way he was. “I don't-”

“Mipha,” Link snapped. “Just go.”

She hesitated a moment more before getting out of the car. She made her way towards the house, looking over her shoulder before closing the door behind her.

Link punched the steering wheel. Daruk and Mipha were both involved, now, whether he liked it or not. And they had no idea what they were even involved in.
Mipha pulled her blanket over her shoulder. She stared at her phone on the bed next to her and sighed. Link hadn't responded to her texts all weekend. Something wasn't right, and she couldn't make heads or tails of any of it. She couldn't explain what had happened in the car between them, or why the cut on his face disappeared when she touched it. His reaction was even more baffling, and he hadn't said a word to her since.

She spent most of her Saturday in bed, still recovering from Friday night, both mentally, physically, and emotionally. She slept through a majority of the day, only coming out to grab a snack when she got hungry and feigning a stomach bug when her parents inquired about her strange behavior.

Sidon, however, was not as oblivious as they were, though he never uttered a word to them. He knocked on her bedroom door, but did not wait for her response, opening the door and poking his head in.

“Are you going to sleep all day today, too?” he said.

Mipha shrugged. “I don't know. Why not?”

Sidon frowned. “Have you heard from Link?”

She shook her head. She hadn't told Sidon what happened in the car, but he was well aware of what had happened at the party, thanks to a text from Urbosa.

“Someone had to keep an eye on you,” Sidon had said to her.

She supposed she couldn't be mad at Urbosa for texting him, but she made Sidon swear to keep his trap shut, regardless.

Mipha sat up and yawned. She stretched her arms over her head and let out a loud sigh. “I'm getting up.”

“Okay,” he said with a shrug. “No crazy parties.” He flashed her a grin before leaving her alone in her room.

Mipha dressed quickly, then trotted downstairs to the kitchen. She made herself a quick sandwich to quiet her stomach, then set off to find Link, making her way to his house first, just down the street.

To her surprise, however, he was not home, and Aryll didn't seem to have any clue as to where he went. She was, however, more concerned with when she could hang out with her and Urbosa again, and made Mipha to cross her heart and hope to die that they would play together again soon. Mipha even pinky promised her before leaving.

She opted to try the arcade next, presuming he was busy playing some game with Riju, but according to the man behind the counter, he hadn't been there in some time. And he seemed quite relieved about that. “It's that little thing he brings with him,” he said to Mipha. “She's crazy.”

There was no sign of him at the park, either, and after a text to Daruk that confirmed he was not with him, she was starting to think he simply fell on the face of the planet. But there was one place she hadn't checked; the shrine. He had been so secretive about doing karate that it seemed plausible
he was there since no one else seemed to know where he was.

Either that, or he was with Zelda.

She considered going home instead. It was clear that, for whatever reason, he didn't want to be bothered. Or perhaps he was too busy. But in what universe was he ever busy doing anything productive? It was unlike him not to return her texts, and after what had happened Friday, she couldn't just drop it, and she didn't want to wait until school on Monday. She needed to talk to him. She needed answers. And she was just going to grow more and more anxious about it the longer she sat in her own head thinking about it.

She decided to go to the shrine. If he was ignoring her, she was going to pull the information she wanted out of him. If he was hooking up with Zelda... well, that answered that. Either way, she was getting answers.

When she reached the front gates, however, she hesitated. Her heart raced nervously in her chest, though she wasn't quite sure why. What was she afraid of seeing? Link and Zelda together? Or just Link? It's not like she had to be worried about anything he had to say... right?

She mustered up the strength to step through the gate and followed the road up to the shrine. Link and Zelda were outside, however to her surprise, they seemed innocent enough. Zelda sat on the rock wall, a book in her hands. Even more surprising was seeing Link staring intently at a book as well as he lay on the rock wall. His chin was in his hand while his other arm dangled, absentmindedly pulling the grass out from the ground.

Zelda was the first to greet Mipha as she approached, looking up and offering her a smile. “What are you doing here?”

This caused Link to pull his gaze away from the book, his brows furrowed when he saw Mipha.

“Oh, you know,” Mipha said as casually as she could. “Stalking Link since apparently he's too good to text me back.”

Link made no remark and turned his gaze back to the book, flipping the page.

“What an ass,” Zelda said. “How are you feeling, anyway?” She hesitated. “Link told me what happened at the party. That's pretty fucked up.”

“Oh.” Mipha averted Zelda's gaze. “Yeah. I'm alright.”

Zelda closed her book and stood, cradling the book in both arms. “Good.” She turned to Link. “Impa's putting me to work. I'll see ya tomorrow.” She flashed a smile to Mipha before leaving them alone as she headed into the shrine.

Mipha hesitated. When Link did not regard her, she spoke. “If you wanted to be alone, you could have just said something.”

Link sighed, blowing his hair out of his eyes. “Sorry,” he muttered. “I've had a lot on my mind.”

Mipha sat on the other end of the rock wall, crossing her legs under her. “Can we talk?”

Link closed the book and pushed himself up. He sat on the wall, leaning back against his arms. “Yeah.”

“Oh.” She paused. “I wasn't expecting that.”
Link tilted his head at her. “About Friday?”

“Yeah. I guess.”

He turned his gaze away. “I need to tell you something.”

Mipha hesitated. Her heart started racing nervously again. “Okay,” she said softly.

Link’s brows furrowed as he stared at his feet. “I’m not... doing karate.”

Mipha raised a brow. “So, what have you been doing here?”

“Training,” he said, then shrugged. “Preparing.”

“For what?”

And Link explained everything he knew, from how he found the Master Sword, to the legends of Hylia and the Chosen Hero, and his and Zelda's destiny in all of it. And then he explained Urbosa's power, and how they suspected there were other people with special abilities. He explained what happened with Daruk at the party, and then later on to Mipha in the car. He fell silent when he finished, still not meeting her gaze, but Mipha stared at him in disbelief.

“So,” Mipha started, still processing everything he had said. “When you left class the other day...” She glanced up at him. “Something happened? Was it Ganondorf?”

“Not quite,” Link said. “There were these weird creatures. Impa called them Shadow Beasts. Ganondorf's bitches, I guess.” He shrugged. “Impa thinks there will be more and more attacks leading up to Ganondorf's return. We don't really know what to expect.”

“Well,” Mipha said. “Guess you'll need all the help you can get!”

Link's brows knit together. “We don't need your help.”

“Uh, hello,” she said. “I'm the healer! Of course you're gonna need my help!”

“Absolutely not,” he hissed. “Out of the question.”

Mipha frowned. “Urbosa and Daruk can help but I can't?”

Link hesitated, meeting her gaze. “Why would you want to?”

Mipha shrugged and turned away. “If I can be useful, I want to help. If we're all getting dragged into this, at least we're getting dragged into it together, right? Besides.” She straightened and grinned at him. “I'm the most important person in the group. Without me, you'll all probably die.” Her grin disappeared suddenly as the realization hit her. “Oh my goddesses, you're all gonna die.”

“Why does everyone keep saying that?” Link said. “Does no one have any faith in my abilities?”

Mipha smiled but did not turn to him. “Well,” she started. “if you ever fuck up, I'll be here to fix you, whether you like it or not.” She met his gaze. “I'll always be here to help you.”

Link turned away from her and stood. “Fine,” he said. “But you stay on the side lines where it's safe.”

“Bench warmer?” Mipha whined. “You know, you should be nice to your healer. I'm all you sad sacks got!”
“Hmph.” He shoved his hands in his pockets and glanced at her over his shoulder. “Just stay out of trouble, alright? That means no flirting with random jerks.”

“I can flirt with all the jerks I want,” she said, crossing her arms. “You don't own me.”

“I'm not going to keep rescuing you.”

Mipha smiled. “Yes, you will.”

Link shrugged and made his way to the shrine. “See ya tomorrow.”
“So, how was everyone's weekend?” Teba asked. They were gathered together behind the school at the end of the day, none of them really in any hurry to get home.

“Uneventful,” Urbosa said.

Teba nodded. “Right, right. I'm sure it was considering you bitches all jumped ship Friday night.”

Daruk shrugged. “The Captain told us to scram, so we did.”

“We had our own issues to deal with,” Urbosa said, narrowing her eyes at Teba.

“Oh, yeah, me too, like busting Revali out of jail.”

Daruk whistled. “Nice. What was he busted for?”

Teba rolled his eyes and crossed his arms. “Well, let's see.” He looked up thoughtfully. “There's the loud noise ordinance, the underaged drinking, the drugs, assault, and somehow attempted murder.”

“The fuck?” Link muttered.

“Yeah. Turns out trying to choke a guy doesn't fly well with the cops, especially when the guy's a fucking bitch.”

“Huh,” Link said. “I thought they were getting kinky.”

“How did he manage to get out?” Daruk asked.

“Oh, you know how it goes,” Teba started. “His dad pulled some strings.”

“So, where has he been all day?” Urbosa asked.

Teba shook his head. “Maybe his father finally killed him.”

“You don't know?” Link said. “I thought he was your boyfriend.”

Teba sneered at Link. “I don't spend every moment of my life with him. I haven't seen him all weekend. I've been with Suki.”

“No one has thought to check on him?” Urbosa said. “It's not like him to go silent like that. I don't think he even knows how to shut his beak. He practically announces his presence whenever he enters a damn room.”

“And I suppose that's my job?” Teba said. “It wasn't my turn to babysit him.”

“No it,” Link said, putting a finger on his nose. “Not it times infinity.”

Daruk sighed. “I'll call him.”

“Cool,” Teba said. “Let me know how it goes. I've got shit to do. But if he's in jail again, don't call me. I did my time.”

Daruk pulled out his phone and dialed Revali's number as Teba left them. It took three rings before
Revali answered.

“Yo.”

“Hey, man,” Daruk said. “The hell have you been?”

“I dunno,” Revali said. “I found this feather and I followed it.”

Daruk raised a brow and turned to his friends. “Huh?”

“Yeah, you'll never fuckin' believe it,” Revali continued. “It's a fucking feather, man. Like, the prettiest looking feather I've ever seen.”

“Is he on crack?” Link asked.

“The fuck are you smoking, dude?” Daruk said.

“No, guys,” Revali continued, sounding excited. “You gotta check this shit out. It's fucking magic, man. A fucking magic feather.”

“And where did you find this feather?” Urbosa said in a bored tone. “He's fucking with us,” she said to them.

“I swear to fuck I'm not,” Revali shouted. “I had this wild ass dream last night and this feather was in it, and when I woke up it was on the fucking window and I followed it.”

“Why the hell would you follow a feather?” Daruk asked.

“Because of the dream, man! The dream!”

“He's lost it,” Mipha said. “He's high as a kite.”

“Shut the fuck up, guys,” Revali said, still shouting. “It's magic! I'm a fucking legend! Just get the fuck over here and check it out!”

Daruk's brows furrowed. “Where are you?”

“I dunno,” Revali said. “Outside the city. Who the hell knows. I wasn't paying attention.”

“Fine,” Daruk said with a sigh. “I'll just stalk your phone. We're coming to get you.”

“Hey, wait,” Revali said. “Don't bring Link. I hate him.”

“You're a good friend, Revali,” Link said. “I don't give a damn about your stupid feather, anyway.”

Urbosa nudged Link's ribs. “Sounds like some magic shit you may want to look into it,” she muttered. “You know, something to help with anondorf-gay.”

Link raised a questioning brow and Mipha giggled. Urbosa rolled her eyes and beckoned with her chin. “Come on.”

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The tracker on Revali's phone brought them right to him. To their surprise, he was much further away from the city than they realized. In fact, he was just on the edge of the Hebra region, almost a four hour drive from the city. The sun was already sinking low in the sky, threatening to dip behind
the distant mountain range, still capped with snow despite the warmth of the approaching summer.

Revali stood atop the hill, playing with the feather that dangled from his wrist. He turned to his friends as they crested the hill, leaving the car behind on the side of the road.

“You're not just outside the city, dude,” Daruk said angrily. “We drove almost four hours to get here.”

“Really?” But this didn't seem to interest Revali. He held the feather up for them to see and grinned.

“You have got to be kidding me,” Daruk said. “All over a damn feather?”

“Hell, yeah,” Revali said. “Check this shit out!” Revali raised his arm with the feather around his wrist and a bow took shape in his palm, materializing out of thin air with an angelic flair. Specs of glittering dust moved together to form the structure of the bow, emitting a soft, golden light as it took form. His fingers wrapped around the wood of the bow, and with his other hand, he pulled back on the drawstring, and an arrow took shape in a similar manner. He pulled the arrow back, waited a moment for the world to fall still, then released. The arrow soared through the air, a light blue hue around it, flying gracefully toward the horizon. When it didn't make impact with a target, it simply burst into a glittering blue dust, catching the rays of the sun until it dissolved completely.

“Guess we've got our ranger,” Daruk muttered.

“Perfect,” Urbosa said with a hand on her hip. “We've got our Dungeons and Dragons team.” She rolled her eyes.

“Please tell me there aren't going to be dragons,” Mipha muttered.

Revali turned back to his friends proudly. “You bitches can't do that.”

Urbosa looked up and smirked. “Actually.” She snapped her fingers and lightning struck the ground just yards from them.

“Holy fuck!” Revali shouted, springing backwards. “What the fuck?”

“Yeah, you know something,” Daruk said with a hand on his chin in thought. “Link's the only one without cool powers.”

Link crossed his arms. “I have a sword,” he said. He dropped his arms after a moment, defeated. “And... a triangle that glows.”

“Wait,” Revali started, putting a hand in the air to stop them. “Rewind. You all have cool powers?”

Mipha shrugged. “I'm the healer.”

“The healer?”

“Yeah, so stay on her good side or she'll let you die,” Link muttered.

“You're serious,” Revali said slowly. His brows furrowed. “Wait... do you guys know about Ganondorf, too?”

Urbosa raised a brow. “How do you know about Ganondorf?”

“He was in my dream. It was like... like I had to stop him or something.”
“Something like that,” Daruk said.

Revali turned his wide eyes to him. “He's real? He was like, trying to take over the world!”

“Yeah,” Urbosa said. “So, he kinda needs to be stopped.”

“Well,” Revali said, straightening. “If this world needs a hero, a hero it will get!”


“Fuck off, loser.”

Urbosa sighed. “Yeah, that's Link's job.”

“Shit,” Revali spat. “We're -”

“We know,” the others said in unison.

“Shut the fuck up!” Link barked.

“So, this is real,” Revali said. “This is happening?”

They each nodded. And one by one, they each told a part of the story; of the legends, of how their own powers came to be, and of the recent attack by the Shadow Beasts. When they were finished, Revali stared at them dumbly. After a moment, he finally spoke.

“Why the fuck am I the last to know about this?”

“Because you're an unobservant loser,” Link muttered.

But Revali did not react to Link. He looked at the feather looped around his wrist for a moment. “So, if we're gonna be superheroes,” he started. “What's our name? We need a cool name.”

“The L-men,” Link said with a grin. “For Link.”

Revali snorted. “More like L for loser. That name sucks.”

“You suck.”


“The Fantastic Five,” Revali said, then added, “and Link.”

“Those all suck,” Urbosa said.

“I agree,” Mipha said. “If anything, Zelda gets to pick the name. She is the princess of Hyrule, after all.”

Revali rolled her eyes. “She'll pick something stupid, like Unicorns or something.”

“You know her so well,” Link muttered.

“Fine,” Revali said. “But for the record, if you let Link be our little leader, you're all stupid.”

Link turned around and made his way down the hill, toward the car. “We're leaving him here, right?” he said over his shoulder.
His friends – and Revali – followed suit behind him.

“What the hell was Hylia thinking, anyway?” Revali said. “How can the fate of Hyrule rely on such an incompetent, lazy idiot?”
Chapter 31

On Monday, Zelda knew that two more people had discovered their powers over the weekend. And based on a text from Link on Tuesday, it seemed that Revali, too, had discovered his power, making him the fourth and final member of their unnamed team. On Wednesday, however, Link hardly spoke a word to her, and it wasn't until the end of the day she found him standing outside with his friends, apparently in no hurry to get to the shrine.

The others, however, were all too happy to be Hyrule's newest superheroes.

Urbosa crossed her arms and turned to Zelda as she approached them. “Please tell these idiots that we don't need a team name.”

“A team name?” Zelda echoed.

“We need a team name,” Daruk said frankly. “How else will people recognize us?”

“I'm partial to a team uniform,” Link said. “Girls can wear crime-fighting bikinis.”

Urbosa shook her head. “They can't take this seriously.”

“Give them a break,” Revali said. “This is the coolest thing to ever happen to Link.”

“Yeah,” Link said with a nod, then hesitated. After a moment, he sneered at Revali.

“If we don't pick something cool,” Daruk continued, “the media will end up calling us something dumb.”

“I was really hoping the media wouldn't get involved,” Zelda said.

“So naive,” Revali said. “Do you really think the world won't notice some giant dick in a cape trying to take over?”

Zelda cocked her head to the side and shrugged with a shoulder. “I don't know. I guess. I hadn't exactly thought that far ahead.”

“Maybe we ought to,” Daruk said, turning serious. “We're all here, now. That can only mean that shit's about to get real. If we're going to have any chance in this war, we need to get our heads in the game and come up with a plan.”

Their gazes turned to Link, expectantly.

“What? Don't look at me. I don't have a plan.”

Zelda sighed loudly and rolled her eyes. “We'll come up with a plan,” she said. “We can go to the shrine together and figure this out. Impa will be able to help us. We should take advantage of the time we have before Ganondorf rises.”

“I agree,” Urbosa said with a nod.

“Good,” Zelda said. “Then I guess I'll see you all at the shrine.”

*****
The six of them gathered together outside of the shrine where Impa was patiently waiting.

“Ah,” she said standing in the door way. “Here are our Champions.” She looked them over for a moment, then pinched her lips together. “Well,” she continued. “If any of you prove to be more adequate than Link, here, we may have a fighting chance in this thing.”

Revali grinned teasingly at Link. “Can't catch a break, can ya?”

Link's shoulders slouched and he muttered under his breath.

“You know,” Daruk started. “We still didn't settle on a name.”

“I like Champions,” Zelda said. “Hyrule's Champions.”

Daruk shrugged. “You're the boss.”

Impa stepped inside and the new Champions made their way into the shrine. They looked around curiously; Revali's attention was drawn to the bokkens on the other side of the room. He picked up one of the bokkens and examined it, turning it over in his hands. “So, this is what you've been doing this whole time,” he said to Link. “Swinging around a stick.”

Link grabbed the bokken from him forcefully. “I bet I'm better at swinging it around than you are, Elf Boy.”

“Oh, that's good, because I use a bow.” Revali rolled his eyes. “So original, Link.”

Link grinned and twirled the bokken in his fingers. “Alright, then, let's do it.”

Revali picked up another bokken eagerly and pointed it out toward Link in his outstretched arm. “You're on.”

Link moved to lunge at Revali, hoping to catch him off guard with his quick movement, but to his surprise, Revali moved even quicker, narrowly avoiding his swing and sending Link stumbling forward into the empty space that Revali had occupied. Link spun on his heels and sneered at the laughing Revali.

“Too slow,” he taunted Link.

But Link was not about to give up. He threw himself at his opponent once more, and just as it happened before, Revali seemed to merely step out of the way, letting the bokken just graze his shirt. He seemed to move so quickly that Link had a hard time following him when he spun around to attack again. This time, however, Revali raised the bokken with one arm, blocking Link's attack, and yawned.

“What the fuck,” Link hissed. “Are you on fucking steroids?”

Revali grinned at him. “Oh, did I forget to tell you? You can't touch me.”

Link's eyes narrowed at him. “The fuck are you talking about?”

Revali pushed against the bokken, dropping Link's stance. “You can't touch me,” he said matter-of-factly. “I've got that matrix shit going on.”

Link raised a brow. “You're insane.”

Revali dropped the bokken, letting it clatter to the floor, and raised his open arms. “Do your
“You're an idiot,” Link said. “I'm not attacking you.”

“Don't be such a bitch,” Revali said. “How else am I supposed to prove that I'm better than you?”

“Take it outside,” Impa hissed at them.

“Come on,” Urbosa said with a sigh. “I'll settle this once and for all. No one can outrun lightening.”

“So, you're going to kill Revali?” Daruk said, crossing his arms.

Urbosa shrugged, turning he gaze to the ceiling with a sly smirk. “Would anyone really complain if he got a little fried?”

Daruk considered this and grinned. “This I gotta see.”

“I accept your challenge,” Revali said proudly. “A much more worthy opponent.” He ignored the fuming Link and lead the way outside, behind the shrine where the land stretched to the borders of the city. He made his way out into the field, far enough from the shrine and the others, then beckoned with a cocky hand. “Let's do this!”

Urbosa was all too eager to put Revali in his place, and with a quick snap of her fingers, lightening split the sky and struck the ground where Revali stood. The whole thing barely took a second, but when the lightening was gone, all that remained was a scorch in the ground. Revali stood a few feet away, his gaze turned to the scorch mark, then to Urbosa.

“You can do better than that,” he said teasingly.

Urbosa narrowed her eyes at him and huffed. She threw another attack at him, then another, and another still. Strike after strike pummeled the ground in a wicked frenzy. Her attacks grew more fierce, a deadly storm erupting like any of them had ever seen. It was over in a matter of mere seconds, but still, Revali remained unscathed.

“What the fuck,” Urbosa muttered. Revali laughed and returned to the shocked group.

“I'm invincible,” he said. “None of ya'll stand a damned chance!”

“Great,” Daruk muttered. “He needed a confidence boost.”

Link folded his arms across his chest, sulking. “Whatever,” he muttered. “Just means one less ass I have to save.”

Revali scoffed. “We'll see who's doing the saving around here,” he said as he walked by Link.

“My dumb sword is the only thing that can save the world,” Link barked after him.

“Wait,” Daruk muttered. “You keep swinging that dumb sword around.”

“My dumb sword is the only thing that can save the world,” Link barked after him.

“Well, we have yet to see that little Triforce on your hand,” Revali reminded him.

Link followed Revali back to the shrine, muttering under his breath the whole way. Daruk followed suit, doing his best to offer words of encouragement to his friend.

“I believe you, Link,” he said with a grin. “Someday you'll kick Revali's ass.”
Urbosa sighed and shook her head. “I gotta get better at this,” she said. “If Revali can get passed my attacks, I may be useless when it comes to Ganondorf.”

“Revali is a freak of nature,” Zelda said. “I wouldn't worry about it.”

Urbosa considered this for a moment before following the guys back to the shrine. Zelda and Mipha followed suit, walking side by side.

“It all seems so surreal,” Mipha said. “These powers we all have.” She frowned. “Mine seems so... lame compared to theirs.”

Zelda offered her a reassuring smile. “Please. You're the most important person here. I'm quite certain we will get destroyed if we didn't have you to fix us up.”

“Maybe,” Mipha said. “Still. I wish there was more I could do.”

Zelda nodded. “I get that.”

Mipha turned to her. “What about you? What's your power?”

Zelda sighed. “I'm not really sure. I'm supposed to be able to seal Ganondorf away. I've been training and training with Impa to find that power. I've read every book I could find, but...”

Mipha frowned. “No luck?”

Zelda shook her head, her brows furrowed. “None of this means anything if I can't do that,” she said. “Everything you guys will have done – everything Link will have done – it will all be for nothing. So much relies on me and I won't be able to pull through.”

“Maybe you're going about it the wrong way,” Mipha offered, hopeful. “It seems to me that this isn't the kind of thing you can just learn by reading about it in a book.”

“Do you expect me to be able to figure out on my own?” Zelda muttered, growing frustrated.

“No,” Mipha started slowly. “I mean. Well. Maybe it's like me and my power, you know?” She hesitated and averted her gaze. “I mean. I didn't know I had it at all until...”

Zelda regarded Mipha. “Until?”

Mipha's cheeks reddened. “I mean, it just happened, I guess. Without realizing it.”

Zelda's brows furrowed. “How could you not realizing you were doing it?”

“I don't know,” Mipha said softly. “I wasn't thinking about anything except that... he was hurt... and I...” She sighed. “It just happened.”

Zelda processed this for a moment. “I don't see how that could be possible.”

Mipha smiled, but still did not look at Zelda. “You're too much of an academic, that's your problem. You're one of the smartest people I know. But everything you know, you got from a book.”

“That's not true,” Zelda said stubbornly. “I know what you're saying. You're saying I have no common sense. No street smarts.”

Mipha shook her head. “That's not it at all. I just don't think this is something you'll be able to
figure out by reading a book. There's no instruction booklet to this kind of thing.” She met Zelda's gaze. “I just think you should try a different approach. I know you'll figure it out. You always do.” She offered a warm, encouraging smile, which seemed to ease Zelda slightly.

“Maybe you're right,” Zelda said with a sigh. “Clearly I'm getting nowhere with anything this way.”

“I have complete faith in you,” Mipha said with a proud grin. “You and Link... you make a good team. Hyrule couldn't be in better hands.”

Zelda met her gaze and smiled. “Thanks.”
Chapter 32

Link stared at the clock on the wall. The day was so close to being over, yet time seemed to drag on, slower and slower. It took all his might to keep himself from groaning loudly. He let his chin rest in his hand and sighed softly out his nose. In his final period of the day, he was alone. Mipha was not there to giggle at his quiet suffering. There was no Zelda to watch scribbling notes furiously in her notebook. Even Paya – one of the smartest sophomores who's schedule consisted of mainly junior classes – was not there to let him peek at her notes.

He would not suffer from boredom for long, however, as the voice of the sword echoed in his mind, causing him to jump. He turned his gaze out the window as he felt a familiar sensation; the sword calling to him. Inside the school, stuffed in a bag in his locker, the Master Sword was pulsing.

“Shit,” Link groaned. He watched as the sky split open, revealing the same, strange, dark portal he had seen before. It widened enough to allow three more monsters fall from the sky, and they dropped down into the woods behind the school.

He was not the only one to notice the threat that fell from the sky. Throughout the school, the rest of the Champions turned their gazes to the sky, witnessing the same portal opening up.

“What’s the matter with you?” Teba asked, but Daruk and Revali seemed to have their attention turned to the sky, puzzled expressions on their faces.

“What the hell is that?” Daruk muttered, scratching at his head.

“What?” Teba looked up at the blue sky. “What the hell is what?”

“A cloud?” Revali asked.

“That’s not a cloud,” Daruk said.

Teba continued to search the sky. Not a single cloud could be seen. “What the hell are you guys talking about?”

Revali pointed with a finger towards the sky. “It has to be a storm cloud.”

“The sky is clear,” Teba growled. “Are you on drugs?”

“There.” Daruk pointed out to the woods where the creatures dropped. “Something’s over there.”

Without another word, the two of them hurried out of the library, leaving the clueless Teba staring after them. He shouted to them for a moment, then threw his arms in the air and rolled his eyes. He didn’t even notice Link sprinting down the hallway with what appeared to be a sword. Clearly, the three of them were on some kind of drugs.

Outside, behind the school, the Champions met, frantically turning to Link and Zelda for an explanation.

“That's what happened before,” Zelda said. “Those things – the Shadow Beasts – are trying to attack the city. We need to stop them.”

“How are we supposed to do that?” Urbosa asked.
"If it's anything like last time," Zelda started, "we just need to take the three of them out at the same time. If we don't, they'll resurrect each other."

"Piece of cake," Revali muttered, crossing his arms. "Don't worry, I got this."

"Sure, you do," Daruk said. "But we'll cover ya, just in case." He grinned at Revali.

"Let's go," Zelda said anxiously. "The sooner we take care of them, the better."

"You should stay here," Link said, turning to Mipha.

She narrowed her gaze at him. "I'm not useless," she hissed. "You'll need me if shit goes south."

Link sighed. "Is there anything I can say to get you to stay?"

Mipha grinned at him. "Nope."

Before Link could argue further, Mipha hurried to catch up with the others. With a sigh, Link brought up the rear, following the group across the fields and into the woods where the creatures had dropped.

It didn't take long to find the Shadow Beasts lurking in the trees. They shrieked as soon as they were spotted and wasted no time charging toward the intruders.

Revali – in all his proud, cocky glory – was the first to make an attack, sliding to a stop against the dead leaves and raising his arm. His fingers caressed the feather on his wrist as he made a motion to pull back on an invisible bow string, and the bow took shape in his hand. As he drew the string back, the arrow, too, took shape in his fingers, and just as soon as the arrow was formed, he released it. The arrow sailed through the trees and hit its first target in the arm. The creature pushed through the attack, however, and the three Shadow Beasts drew closer still.

As the beasts got within range, Daruk thrust his fist into the ground, causing the world to tremble under their feet. The force of his attack was enough to stop the beasts, knocking them off their feet, crashing to the ground on top of one another.

And all this happened before Link even had a chance to catch up to his friends. But before he could think to jump into the battle, Urbosa snapped her fingers, and three bolts of lightning made contact, each one striking one of the beasts. Their shrieks were cut short almost instantly and they fell to the ground, lifeless.

"Piece of cake," Revali said proudly. He turned to Link. "Nice of you to join us."

"What... the fuck..." Link panted. Once he caught his breath, he straightened and pointed his sword at Revali. "You couldn't have waited for me?"

"War waits for no one," Revali said with a smug smile. "Beside, as you can see, we handled it."

He shrugged. "I don't know, but you and Zelda made them seem a lot tougher than they were."

"It was the two of us against the three of them," Link sneered. "We were outnumbered."

"Of course," Revali said. The bow disappeared and he dropped his arm. "Though, I can't help but to think that wouldn't have been a problem if it were any of us. Urbosa alone could have handled all three without any problem. Seems odd that, of all of us, you are the one that carries the fate of Hyrule."
“Watch it,” Link hissed. “I didn't sign up for this. If you want to trade, let's trade.”

“No, no,” Revali said. “I'm only here to assist you, apparently. And Hylia knows you'll need it.”

Link's hands curled into fists at his side. He stepped forward, but Urbosa's hand on his shoulder pushed him back.

“Enough,” she growled. “We're a team. We got the job done, and that's all that matters.”

“This should be an easy war,” Revali said, turning his back to Link. He regarded Link over his shoulder for a moment with a smug grin. “Don't worry, Link. We'll pick up the slack.”

Steaming, Link bit his tongue and glared at Revali as he jumped over a fallen tree and made his way back toward the school.

“That arrogant fucking twat,” Link spat.

“Ignore him,” Daruk said. “He's cocky. It will blow over.”

“That all did seem too easy,” Zelda said. “He shouldn't let this get to his head. I have a feeling we've hardly gotten started.”

They followed behind Revali, making their way out of the woods and crossing the fields once more. In the distance, they could see students pouring out of the school. The end of the day bell was ringing faintly from inside the building. Link trailed behind them slightly, and Mipha stayed at his side. She glanced at him and frowned, but said nothing.

“What do we do now?” Urbosa asked.

“I'm going to the shrine,” Zelda said. “Impa will want to know what happened. And we need to figure out where these things are coming from and how to stop it.”

“We'll all go,” Urbosa said with a nod. “The more we know about what we're in for, the better off we'll be.” She called to Revali, and he stopped, looking over his shoulder and waiting for them to catch up.

“You're coming with us to the shrine,” Urbosa said to him.

Revali sighed. “This war is really going to put a dent in my social life, isn't it?”

“You mean you haven't convinced everyone you're the big hero yet?” Daruk said.

Revali considered this for a moment. “It wouldn't take much convincing,” he said. He grinned and winked at Link, but Link ignored him.

“Oh, come on,” Revali continued, pushing against Link's shoulder. “Don't be such a puss.”

“Don't worry,” Link said. “When Ganondorf shows his slimy face, you can do the honors.”

“I'll hold you to that,” Revali said. “Maybe I'll even let you help. Gotta use that sword of yours for something, hm?”
“Well, if it isn’t Hyrule’s Champions,” Paya said. She smiled over her arm-full of books as the group entered the shrine. However, they seemed to be bickering amongst each other, and Paya frowned as she watched them. She couldn’t quite understand what caused the tension between them, but Revali seemed to take the brunt of the arguments. Daruk insisted that he be more cautious. Urbosa was giving him an earful about being an ‘arrogant ass.’ Even Mipha seemed more annoyed than usual, though she didn’t feed into the conversation. It took a moment before they realized she had spoken, and Urbosa turned to Paya, looking rather exhausted with her friends.

“Is something wrong?” Paya asked, hesitant.

“I vote to have Revali kicked out of the group,” Link said.

Zelda rolled her eyes at him. “There was another attack. Three more Shadow Beasts behind the school.”

Paya frowned. She took a moment to shift her weight and attempted to readjust her arms under the piles of books she carried. At that moment, Impa stepped out from her office.

“I could hear you coming a mile away,” she hissed. “What’s wrong with the lot of you?” As she walked by them, she let her hand slap Link upside the back of the head.

“The hell was that for?” he barked.

“Did you take care of it?” Impa asked. “The Shadow Beasts?”

“We did,” Revali said stubbornly. “Can't say much for Link, though.”

“This is the second attack,” Zelda said. “There doesn't seem to be any rhyme or reason behind them. They just happen randomly. The portals show up, and those things drop from the sky.”

“There has to be a way to stop those monsters from coming through the portal,” Urbosa said.

“There is,” Impa confirmed. “Since the first attack, I've done a little research of my own. As you know, these attacks stem directly from Ganondorf. His forces are able to drop into our world from these portals, likely to weaken our own defenses before Ganondorf rises.”

“So, why now?” Zelda asked.

“It is likely that his plan went into effect the moment Link found the Master Sword. I can't say for certain, but I have suspicions that Ganondorf planted four portals around Hyrule. One of those portals was likely being sealed shut by the Master Sword. Once it was pulled from its seal, that seal was broken and the portal was able to open, thus bringing these monsters into Hyrule. I am sure they are searching for a way to open the other three portals, but I don't know where they could be.”

“So,” Daruk started, “we need to seal up the opened portal?”

“Before the other three open,” Impa said.

“And how the hell are we supposed to do that?” Revali asked skeptically.

“That will be Zelda's responsibility.”
“Sure, easy enough,” Revali said. “Except for one tiny problem. Zelda has no power.”

“I have the power,” Zelda hissed. “I'll find it, alright?”

“How do we find these portals?” Urbosa asked.

“They are likely scattered throughout Hyrule,” Impa said. “I will do everything I can to locate them before they are opened.”

“What if they are opened before we are able to stop it?” Mipha asked.

“Then you'll have a lot more work cut out for you,” Impa said. “Right now, the six of you need to be focused on finding that open portal and sealing it before there are any more damages. The fate of this city relies on sealing that portal. If you can seal it up before the other three seals break, we'll have a head start in this war. Ganondorf will be defenseless.”

“Why do I have a feeling it won't be so easy?” Daruk muttered.

“Make it happen,” Impa said, her gaze hard on them. “We can't give Ganondorf any advantages.”

“Where do we find the first portal, then?” Zelda asked.

“Where you found the Master Sword,” Impa said. “But don't expect to be able to walk right in with no problems. Chances are, there will be Shadow Beasts all over the place.”

“Looks like we're playing hooky tomorrow,” Daruk said.

“I have a test tomorrow,” Mipha muttered. “I've never missed a day of school before.”

Urbosa offered her a reassuring smile. “At least you're not on the fast track of drop out status,” she said, flashing a grin toward Link.

“This war thing is really going to mess with my GPA,” Mipha said in a huff.

“Really?” Link said, narrowing his gaze on her. “That's where your priorities are?”

Mipha sighed. “It's easier than admitting to this Hollywood logic that I'm suddenly part of a team that is expected to save the world.”

“I hope they pick someone good to play me,” Revali said.

“Let's hope the world survives long enough to get to that point, hm?” Impa said. She rolled her eyes and waved a hand at them. “Go home. Rest. You will need it for tomorrow.”

“So,” Daruk started as they left the shrine. “What exactly does this adventure entail?”

“We have to go back to where we found the Master Sword,” Zelda said. “In the woods just outside the city.”

“That doesn't sound so bad,” Revali said bitterly. “What could possibly go wrong in the middle of the woods with no one else around?”

“Good thing we have you to save us,” Link muttered.

“Good thing indeed,” Revali confirmed with a nod.
“Will you chill out already?” Zelda hissed at him. “You've let all your power get to your head.”

“In his defense,” Urbosa started, “he's always been this way.”

“His new found power just feeds into his ego,” Mipha muttered.

“Whatever,” Revali said. “At least I'm useful.”

At the road, Link and Mipha parted ways with the others, though Link hardly muttered a goodbye to his friends. He let the sword rest on his shoulder as he made his way down the road with Mipha at his side.

“Don't let him get to you,” she offered.

Link sighed. “I don't care anymore.”

Mipha frowned. “What's wrong?”

“I'm tired.”

Mipha smiled. “When aren't you tired?”

Link frowned, his brows furrowed. “I guess.” Truth be told, he already felt exhausted with the war. Two attacks already, and he knew it was only going to get worse from there. And he was sure Revali wasn't going to leave him alone about any of it.

“Do you think we're in over our heads?” Mipha asked softly.

“Yes.”


Link shrugged. “At least we're in over our heads together,” he said with a grin. “I don't think I'd survive it if it were just me and Zelda. I'd probably kill myself just to get away from her.”

Mipha frowned, unamused with his joke. “How are we supposed to close this portal without her power?” she asked softly. “This feels like a waste. It's probably suicide.”

“That sounds about right,” Link said. “That's about how my luck has been lately.”

“So, why are we doing this?”

Link sighed. “We have to at least try, right? If we don't, it's just going to get worse.”

“I suppose,” Mipha said softly. She sighed. “I hope this war can at least hold off until summer break.”

Link smiled. “Well, there's only a few weeks of classes left.”

“True,” Mipha said. “Maybe I won't finish the year with a terrible GPA after all.”

“At least you'll finish,” Link said.

“You will, too. Barely passing is still passing.” She offered him a smile.

If only it was passing he was worried about. His main concern now was simply staying alive.
They looked across the field, the power-lines stretching onward on either side of them. But the forest that Link and Zelda had found earlier was no longer across the way. Instead, the field rolled on away from the city and toward the distant interstate.

“You said there was a forest here,” Revali said, his brows furrowed. “I don't see a single tree.”

“I don't understand,” Zelda said. “It was here. This is where we found the sword.”

“Were you on drugs?” Revali asked skeptically.

Zelda turned and sneered at Link.

“What? This isn't my fault,” he said defensively.

“Now what do we do?” Mipha asked. “This is where the portal is supposed to be.”

“Something's not right,” Urbosa said.

“I think that old hag sent us on a wild goose chase,” Daruk muttered.

“No,” Zelda said firmly. “It has to be here.”

“What do we do?” Mipha asked.

Their eyes turned to Zelda.

“I don't know,” she said slowly. “I guess we have to try somewhere else.” Her phone rang at that moment. Impa's name flashed on the screen and she answered it quickly.

“Impa -” But Impa cut her off. She listened intently, her brows knit together. “You can't be serious... In Akkala? ... Of course... Right. We'll head over there.” She hung up the phone and blew at her bangs, exasperated. She turned her attention back on her friends. “I have bad news, and worse news,” she said.

“Of course you do,” Revali said.

“The bad news is that the portal is definitely not here.”

“And the worse news?” Mipha asked.

“The second portal has been opened. The Shadow Beasts beat us to it. It's in Akkala. Some people in the area have reported seeing something going on at the old citadel. My father has already sent detail out to keep people away, so we should be in the clear to take care of it.”

“More Shadow Beasts?” Urbosa asked.

Zelda shook her head. “I don't think so. It sounds bigger. Impa wasn't sure, but we need to get over there and close it before whatever it is attacks the city.”

“That's a long drive,” Urbosa said. “It will be the middle of the night by the time we get there.”

“Impa can help with that,” Zelda said. “Sheikah can teleport.”
“You mean, she’s not a useless old hag after all?” Revali said.

“Watch it,” Link warned. “Or she’ll beat you with a stick, too.”

*****

Impa was waiting for them rather impatiently when they got back to the shrine. She looked at her wrist, yet there was no watch on it. “If I had a Rupee for every time I had to wait around for some damned hero, I’d be the richest person in the world.”

“Along with your title of the oldest person in the world,” Revali said with a grin.

Impa slapped him upside the head. “No respect,” she hissed. “I will not make this an easy trip on you.” She turned to her granddaughter at her side. “Go with them. Bring them back when they’re done. Unless they all die. Then leave them there.”

Paya hesitated. “Grandmother,” she said softly. “That’s... a lot. I’ve never had to teleport seven people before.”

Impa shrugged. “Well, at least bring Link and Zelda back. Unfortunately, we’ll need them.”

“Hey, hey, hey,” Revali said. “You’re not ditching us in Akkala.”

“Relax,” Impa said, waving a hand at him. “You have legs. You can walk home.”

Revali opened his mouth to argue further, but Impa raised a hand, and immediately the world seemed to melt around them. They looked around in a panic, turning to Paya for some clarification, but she averted their gazes. And just as suddenly as the world began to melt and disappear around them, they felt as if they were jolted through time and space. Their insides lurched sickeningly, and in a snap, the world focused around them once more. Except the scene around them was not that of the shrine. They were deep in Akkala, now, the world shrouded in an eerie and unnatural twilight. In the distance, the citadel stood tall against the horizon, a dark shape against the dark storm clouds that rolled in.

But the storm was the least of their problems. Above the citadel, the opened portal seemed to grow and pulse. In the field that stretched between them and the citadel was an army of what appeared to be skeletons, some clad in armor, all with swords and other various ancient weaponry, and they were marching straight towards them.


“Are those fucking skeletons?” Revali said.

“Of course they are,” Urbosa said. “Why would we expect anything less than insanity?”

“How are we supposed to destroy an army of bones?” Revali said.

“They’re just bones,” Link said. “What’s the worse that could happen? They’ll just fall apart... right?”

“I have a feeling it won’t be that easy,” Mipha muttered.

“Well, what are we waiting for?” Revali said. “Let’s get this over with.” He drew his bow and let an arrow fly. It hit its first target, knocking the skeletal soldier to the ground. But after a moment, it returned to its feet, seemingly unfazed by the attack.
“Awesome,” Revali muttered.

Urbosa stepped forward then, and with a snap of her fingers, lightening plummeted against the ground. Skeletal soldiers flew through the air where the ground erupted. Those in the direct path of the strike were turned to ash. As the soldiers fell to the ground, their bones broke and scattered, seemingly ending their short-lived lives.

“You're on,” Revali said to Urbosa. “There's no way I'm letting you have all the fun.”

Revali and Urbosa eagerly plunged themselves into battle, taking out as many of the skeletal soldiers as they could.

Link turned to Zelda and Mipha. “Stay out of the way,” he growled.

“No way,” Zelda said. “We can help.”

“Find that power,” Daruk grunted at her. “You can help by closing that portal before we get our asses handed to us.” He turned to Link. “I'll stay here with them. I've got more going for me than these fists.” A red orb took shape around the three of them suddenly; a protective shield that enveloped Daruk, Zelda, and Paya. “Just take care of that army.”

With one last glance to his friends, Link and Paya hurried to join Revali and Urbosa in the battle. However, when they neared the skeletal army, Link froze, gripping the sword in both hands. Battling the Shadow Beasts seemed easy enough, despite their terrifying forms and horrific shrieks. In comparison, a walking structure of bones was not nearly as scary, but there was one difference between the two, and that difference was weapons. This was exactly the moment Impa had been training him for, yet he suddenly felt overwhelmingly unprepared. As they charged towards him, weapons raised, they seemed more real than anything he had encountered yet, and he couldn't bring himself to move. But it was kill or be killed, and Link wasn't about to succumb to an army of walking corpses.

He raised his sword as the first skeletal soldier charged him, deflecting his enemy's blow and dislodging the sword from the soldier's hands in one swift movement. The sword fell to the ground, leaving it defenseless, and in that moment, Link swung his sword around again, cutting through the midsection of the soldier and ending the brief battle.

He felt a wave of adrenaline wash over him as he tore his gaze away from the corpse and onto the next soldier charging at him. He gripped the sword in his hand once more, feeling more confident than he had in a long time, and repeated the process of battling and killing.

But as the battle wore on, the skeletal army seemed to grow, and their attacks moved en masse. Suddenly, he found himself in clusters of soldiers, working hard and fast to take them out before they had a chance to surround him. He didn't have a chance to think, only react, yet his body seemed to move automatically, just as Impa had taught him to do in combat.

Though the battle had seemingly only just begun, Daruk could see that his friends were already being overwhelmed. The hoard of skeletal soldiers seemed endless, and the battle showed no signs of ending any time soon. From time to time, his friends disappeared in the madness, only to resurface a few moments later, looking more exhausted than the last time he caught a glimpse of them. He couldn't sit by and do nothing any longer.

“Stay here,” Daruk growled to Zelda and Mipha before running out to join the fight, leaving them alone in the protection of his shield.
They watched helplessly in the protection of his barrier. Without her power, and with Mipha’s only ability being to heal, they felt useless. Zelda grew agitated; there just had to be something she could do. She couldn’t stand idly by in Daruk’s protection while her friends fought for their lives and all of Hyrule.

She desperately tried to gather her inner strength, just as Impa had been training her do. She fought to relax and focus her mind, but it was impossible in the midst of battle. She could hear the sounds of steel clanging together as Link plunged deeper into battle, fighting off the attacks of Ganondorf’s army. She felt the ground tremble as Urbosa let loose her terrifying power, lightning striking all around them. She listened to Daruk’s grunts as he threw his strong fists at his enemies, and Revali whooped as his arrows hit their targets.

“Curse this damn power,” Zelda practically shouted in frustration. Her hands made fists at her sides, her knuckles turning white. Her fingernails dug into her palms as she tried once more to awaken the power inside of her, growing more and more desperate as time ticked by.

They were already severely outnumbered, and the longer the fight took, the more tired Hyrule’s Champions were becoming. Zelda watched helplessly as Daruk panted after each blow. Urbosa moved further away from the heart of the battle, her power growing weaker. Revali desperately shot arrow after arrow, but he was growing careless and his arrows missed more frequently. Even Link was slowing down, stumbling backwards and moving to a defensive stance, no longer making any attempt to attack his enemies. They didn’t have the energy to continue like this. They were losing.

“No,” Zelda muttered. She closed her eyes and tried once more to summon her power, but it was useless. She cursed loudly and pressed herself as close to Daruk’s shield as she could without breaking it. Her eyes darted around the scene of the battle, her mind racing, hoping to find something she could use to help them. Her eyes stopped on Link as she heard the sound of steel on steel. She watched in horror as the Master Sword was thrown from his hands, clattering onto the ground just yards away.

Mipha screamed to him, and together, they watched as he lost his focus, his attention turned to the sword, but Mipha's voice was lost in the chaos. Her heart leapt in her throat as the enemy’s sword plunged forward into Link, stunning him for a moment, his mouth open in shock. He blinked up at the enemy for a moment until the sword was withdrawn and blood splattered out of the wound in his gut, staining the blade, his shirt, and the ground around them.

Mipha’s throat burned as she screamed into the night. Zelda threw herself out of the protection of Daruk’s barrier, shattering it. Without thinking, she sprinted forward towards Link, unable to see through her blurred vision. She threw her arm out desperately in an attempt to stop them from attacking again and a surge of power shot through her body. She gasped for air as her breath was seemingly sucked out of her lungs and the surge shot down her arm and out her open hand in a sharp and blinding light.

The light shot across the battle and seemed to extend far across the land, as far as she could see. When it subsided, she fell to her knees, gasping for breath. She blinked through her wet eyes. The world had grown quiet. Too quiet. The sounds of battle had ceased, and everything was still. She looked around; skeletal bodies were strewn across the ground, defeated. Her eyes moved over to her friends; they, too, were examining the sight of the finished battle, their mouths gaping open. One by one, they turned their eyes to Zelda as she pushed herself to her feet. And then they looked passed her at something far more disturbing than an undead army. Urbosa’s face whitened and she cried out to Link, bringing Zelda’s attention back to him. She spun around on her heels, doubled over and gasping sickeningly. Blood spewed out of his mouth as he fought to
fill his lungs with air.

“No!” Mipha ran to his side, her weak knees collapsing under her. She caught him as his body gave out under his own weight and he collapsed against her. Blood seeped through his shirt and onto her hands as she frantically ripped open his shirt in an attempt to cover the wound, but it was much too deep.

“No, no, no,” she muttered, her hands shaking, as she pulled her closer to him. “You’re going to be okay,” she sobbed. “Don’t leave me. You’re going to be fine.”

Link’s gaze met her’s for a brief moment, but his eyes seemed empty. They closed and he fell limp in her arms, no longer breathing. She screamed to him, her vision blurred. She could barely make out the voices behind her until she felt Daruk’s strong hand on her shoulder.

“Fix him,” he growled to her. “Snap out of it and fix it! If you don't hurry...”

Mipha hesitated, staring down at Link. The only time she had used her powers to heal was a cut on his face. This was no simple wound, however. What if she couldn't do it? She pinched her lips together in an attempt to hold back a sob. Without another word, she closed her eyes and set to work healing him with shaking arms.

Daruk turned away as Mipha worked and made his way to Revali’s side.

“Do you think she can do it?” Revali asked, hesitant. For once, his expression seemed to show concern, even fear, for Link. “Wounds are one thing. But this...” He turned his gaze to Daruk. “He’s a dead man, Daruk.”

“Shut your mouth,” Daruk growled. “She can do this. She has to.”

Revali turned his attention back on Mipha as she worked, unaware of the rest of the world around her.

Zelda leaned against Urbosa, who seemed to suddenly be her only support as she stood watching Mipha. She bit back a sob, but her body shook, and Urbosa pulled her closer, running her fingers through Zelda’s hair, just as she did with Riju when she was upset. And it seemed to work. Zelda felt a little more calm, a little more focused. It grounded her in reality as she watched Link carefully, waiting for some sign of life.

After a few more minutes, they got their sign. Link gasped and choked as his lungs filled with air. Mipha quickly pulled him against her as he gasped for breath and then passed out once more, his head in her lap. The wound continued to bleed profusely, and Mipha turned her attention to it, closing it up as quickly as she could to stop it from bleeding further, now that Link appeared to be stable.

“We can’t stay here much longer,” Daruk said, his voice rough. But there was a small sigh of relief to it. “Once he’s stable enough, we need to move and get back to Impa.”

“We can’t leave without closing that portal,” Urbosa said. “If we don't hurry, who knows what else will come out of it.”

Zelda nodded and stepped out of Urbosa's comforting hold. “I'll take care of it,” she said, her face creased with concern.

“You're not going alone,” Revali said. “Come on.”
Zelda didn't bother to argue with him. They hurried toward the citadel where the portal pulsed in the sky, leaving the others to tend to Link.

After a few minutes more, Mipha sat back against her legs and lowered her arms, her gaze still on Link. “Okay,” she said softly. “He should be okay to move. The wound is sealed.”

Daruk didn’t hesitate once she gave him the okay, scooping the still unconscious hero in his arms. Mipha got to her feet, realizing how suddenly exhausted she was. She had never had to heal someone who was almost dead. It took more out of her than she realized, and her legs gave out under her own weight, too tired to support her any longer.

Urbosa caught her as she collapsed and lifted her off the ground as she drifted in and out of consciousness. “She’s exhausted,” she said. “She’ll need rest.”

“I can get you back to the shrine,” Paya said. “It will be easier in a smaller group for me. I'll come back for Zelda and Revali.”

Daruk hesitated, glancing towards the citadel. He nodded. “Alright,” he said. “Just make it quick.”
Chapter 35

From the top of the citadel, Zelda and Revali looked up at the portal in the sky. The pulsing
seemed to have quickened since their trek over the abandoned ruins. She would have to work
quickly to seal it before their world was attacked once more.

“Do you know what you're doing?” Revali asked, turning his attention to her.

“Not really,” she admitted. She closed her eyes and sighed. “Here goes nothing.” She raised her
arm, her palm pointed towards the portal, and she tried to relax. She tried to bring out that same
power that had ended their battle, but she wasn't even sure how she had done that in the first place.
The visions of the battle flashed through her mind, causing her stomach to twist sickeningly. She
watched as Link fell to the ground, gravely wounded, and she bit back a sob.

In that moment, however, she felt the familiar jolt she had felt earlier. It seemed to suck the air
completely out of her lungs as the power surged through her body, down her arm, and burst out of
her palm. A beam of light shot through the sky, towards the portal, and the light seemed to explode
on impact. When it subsided, the portal was gone, and the twilight dissipated.

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Link felt as if he were jolted awake, but he did not recall falling into any form of unconsciousness.
The last thing he could remember was the pain that ripped through him as the sword twisted in his
gut. He could vividly remember those seemingly final moments, the world moving slowly in an
eerie silence. He remembered seeing Zelda run before him, and an unexplainable blinding light. He
remembered seeing Mipha's face, feeling her tears on his cheeks, and then nothing.

Even now, there was nothing, yet he was very much aware. The world was dark; he didn't know
where he was or what had happened since those moments. And though the world was quiet, it was
not silent. He was sure he could hear low voices. They sounded both near and distant, echoing; he
couldn't make any sense of what direction they came from, or what they were saying.

But after a few more moments, the world began to take shape around him. It was still quiet in the
room, but it seemed a loud sort of quiet as he grew more and more aware of his surroundings. The
darkness began to lighten until he felt like he needed to close his eyes to shield himself from the
light, but to his surprise, his eyes were already closed. So, instead, he opened them. He squinted
and blinked a few times as his vision adjusted and sharpened, first at the corners until he could
completely make out the room he was in. From his right, he could see the sunlight as it spilled
through a window and onto his face. To his left, there was simply a door.

His body was trembling uncontrollably. Goosebumps dotted his skin, and though he felt very cold,
it didn't make sense as to why he felt so cold. In those early summer days, even the nights weren't
enough to send him into such a violent shiver, and there seemed nothing he could do to stop it. He
was exhausted merely from the act of shivering, and he leaned back against the pillow, pulling his
knees to his chest.

He remembered the wound that had been inflicted upon him, and he quickly scrambled to sit up.
He stared down at his bare chest, but there was no sign that he had been injured; not even a scar.
He blinked blankly for a moment until the door opened, and he looked up to see Impa.

“You're awake,” she said simply. Her head cocked to the side as she looked him over.
Link pulled his knees back to his chest, his body still shaking. He didn't move as Impa moved about the room, then draped a warm blanket over him.

“You're in shock,” she said. “The shaking will stop.”

“Where's everyone?” he asked, his voice hoarse. “Are they alright?”

Impa smiled. “They insisted on waiting around for you, but I've sent them all home just now. They're all fine, but they'll need their rest.”

Link's brows furrowed as he tried to put all the pieces together. “What happened?”

“From what I've gathered,” she started, “Zelda and Revali went off to close the portal while Mipha took care of your dumb ass.” She sighed. “Paya brought the four of you back and I went to retrieve Zelda and Revali.”

“The portal. It's closed?”

Impa held her unchanging gaze on Link. “It is.”

Link studied the Sheikah for a moment. “What about the first one? Why couldn't we find it?”

“You ask a lot of questions,” Impa said, narrowing her gaze.

“You're hiding something.”

“No,” Impa said slowly. “I'm just choosing not to indulge you with information. It is not of your concern at the moment.”

“Not my concern?” Link hissed. “You're kidding, right?”

“You just got gutted by a damn sword,” Impa barked. “Take a chill pill for two damn seconds, will ya?”

Link's brows knit together. “We don't have two seconds,” he muttered.

“The discussion is over with.” She turned her back on Link and let her hand rest on the doorknob. “We will talk more when you and Mipha have recovered.”

“What happened to Mipha?” Link asked quickly. His heart leapt in his chest.

“She's fine,” Impa assured him. “Just wasted all her energy saving your life.” She glanced over her shoulder and narrowed her gaze on him once more. “Do not disturb her. She's resting. If I see you so much as go near her room -”

“Alright,” Link muttered. He threw the blanket off of him.

“Don't push yourself,” Impa warned. “Not that you'll listen to me anyway.” And with that, she left Link alone in the room.

*****

Zelda sat alone on the rock wall in front of the shrine looking over the city, illuminated against the dark sky in the late hour. It had been almost an hour since the others had left, returning to their homes for a much need night's rest, but she couldn't bring herself to leave yet. Not until she knew Link was really alright. She replayed the battle over and over in her mind, recalling every heart
wrenching detail, but still, she could not figure out why her power came seemingly out of no where like it did. The only logical conclusion was simply the stress of the battle, and the desperation she felt when she saw her friends failing.

She was so lost in thought that she jumped when she heard the door open behind her. She did not acknowledge the presence, assuming it was Impa. She waited until the person moved towards her, and then Link pushed himself up onto the stone wall beside her. Her breath caught in her throat as she turned to him, staring blankly at him for a moment.

“How are you feeling?” she finally breathed out. Her eyes scanned him, but he seemed unscathed. It was a miracle he was alive at all.

Link let a crooked smile split across his face. “Like I wasn’t just gutted by a damn sword.”

And with that, Zelda burst into tears. She buried her face in her hands as she sobbed, unable to control herself as the images flashed through her head. In truth, it was a long time coming, but she held the tears back as long as she could, still reeling with adrenaline. Seeing Link alive, however, was just enough to push her over the edge, to remind her of how real the situation was, and she couldn't hold back any longer.

Link leaned away for a moment, unsure of how to handle the situation. “I’m… sorry,” he muttered.

“It’s not funny!” Zelda shouted at him, moving her hands away from her face and meeting his gaze. Her brows knit together. “I thought... I thought... you were going to die!”

Link hesitated, blinking at her. He averted her gaze for a moment, then pulled her closer to him, wrapping his arms around her. “I’m sorry.”

Zelda froze in his arms, her sobbing ceased. She relaxed after a moment and buried her face against his shoulder. “Don’t do that again,” she whispered.

“I'll try really hard not to,” he said.

Zelda pulled away from him with an exasperated sigh and turned away from him. She wiped at her eyes with the back of her hand and sniffed. “You're such an idiot,” she muttered. “A damn idiot.”

“I've been called worse.”

Zelda stood. “I need to get home,” she said, averting his gaze. “And I need to rethink all my life choices.”

“Including accepting this role of yours to save Hyrule?” Link grinned.

“Yes,” Zelda said with a sigh. She shook her head and let a smile tug at the corner of her lips. “Or, at the very least, pray the hell to Hylia that she knows what she's doing, because I sure as hell don't.”

“That makes two of us.”

Zelda cast her eyes over to Link for a moment. The blood on his shirt had dried around the edges where the sword cut into him. She turned away quickly and pulled her phone out of her pocket. “See you Monday, I guess.”

“Sure.” Link watched her until she disappeared in the shadows of the trees, away from the lights that lined the drive. He turned his gaze back to the shrine as Impa stepped outside into the cool
“Go home,” she said to him. “Mipha will be out for the rest of the night.”

Link's brows knit together. He opened his mouth to argue with her, but Impa cut him off.

“Go home, Link.” Her voice was harder. “Sitting around here worrying will only piss me off. I will let you know when she’s awake.”

Link held his gaze on her until the old Sheikah disappeared back inside the shrine. After a moment, he got to his feet and began his walk home.

*****

The house was dimly lit as Link approached, despite the late hour. His father was up, which made sneaking into his room without being noticed impossible, but it didn't seem so trivial anymore. He sighed and pushed open the door, the light from the kitchen immediately washing over him.

His father was leaning against the counter, beer in hand, when Link entered. He turned his gaze onto his son, his eyes immediately drawn to the torn and bloodied shirt, though the wounds beneath were healed. He lifted the bottle to his lips, taking a sip and moving to meet his son's gaze.

“Rough day at the office?”

Link looked down at his shirt and grunted. He pulled it over his head as he walked across the kitchen, tossing it into the garbage before turning the corner to head to his room.

His father stared at the shirt for a moment. His deep frown caused creases in his forehead. He finished his beer, then reached into the refrigerator to pull out two more bottles. He let himself into Link's room without knocking. His son was on his bed, staring up at the ceiling, and did not bother to turn as his father entered. He sat himself at the desk and handed Link the beer.

Link did not hesitate at the offer. He ignored his watchful father as he downed half the bottle. His father raised a brow.

“So, this is beer?” Link said with a grin. “Never had this stuff before.”

He rolled his eyes. “Just don't let me catch you drinking those fruity chick drinks.”

“Don't hate 'em 'til you try 'em,” Link said with a smirk. “Those things are delicious.”

He shook his head. He pointed to his son with his bottle. “Mipha does good work.”

Link glanced down at his bare chest and shrugged. “What do you want?” he muttered.

“I feel like I haven't seen you in weeks” he remarked. “Was starting to wonder if we were going to lose this war before it even starts.”

“Probably.”

He took a moment to drink, more slowly than his son. “Are your friends okay?”

“Yeah.”

“So,” he continued. “Is this what it's going to be like? You're going to run out of shirts real fast at this rate.”
“I'd say that's the least of my problems.”

His father nodded.

Link narrowed his eyes at him as a realization came to mind. “I never told you about Mipha.”

He grinned and lifted his beer to his lips. “I know everything. That's my job. Can't count on you to tell me anything.”

“It's not your problem,” Link said.

“It is damn too my problem,” he hissed, turning his gaze to Link, his brows furrowed.

“What are you going to do about it?” Link said. “There's nothing you can do.”

His father hesitated and pulled his gaze away. He finished his drink and tossed it across the room into the barrel.

“Uh-uh,” Link said. “No. See? I know what you're thinking. This is why I don't tell you things.”

“I don't know what you're talking about.”

“Shut up,” Link hissed. “You're so arrogant sometimes, you think you could save the world.”

“I'd do a hell of a better job than you.”

“You don't have a clue of what's coming,” Link sneered. “Your solution to everything is to shoot it.”

“Well, it's worked pretty well in the past,” he said with a shrug.

“Hyrule's army wouldn't stand a chance,” Link said.

“Well, that's not your call.”

Link stared blankly at his father. “What are you saying?”

“It won't be long before word gets out. It's going to be the biggest media blow up in the history of the world. The king is prepared for that. Hyrule's army is prepared for that.”

“And I bet you think you're going to come out of retirement and be some big shot?”

“Why do you get to have all the fun?”

Link fumed. He threw his bottle into the barrel across the room and got to his feet. “You're an idiot.”

“I guess that's where you get it from.”

“Don't worry,” he sneered. “You won't get your fun. I'm taking care of this all before anyone else has to get involved.”

“That's ambitious. But maybe it's time to let someone else take over.”

“I'm the only one that can stop this!”

His father frowned. He got to his feet and walked toward the door. “You're in over your head,” he
said over his shoulder.

“You don't have a damn clue,” Link muttered. “Stay out of this.”

His father shrugged before stepping through the door, closing it behind him. Link stood alone in his room, staring at the closed door.
When morning came, Link still hadn't heard from Impa. He hardly slept over the night, so when
the sun finally crested the horizon, Link dressed and made his way to the shrine. But instead of
going inside and bothering Impa with simply his presence, he lay against the rock wall and stared
at the clouds as they floated lazily across the blue sky.

He must have fallen asleep, because when he woke, the sun was high above him, shining brightly
in his eyes. He pushed himself upright and blinked, letting his eyes adjust to the noon lighting. He
glanced toward the door of the shrine, realizing then that someone had come out. Mipha stood in
the doorway, not looking as rested as Link assumed she would be. She stared at him for a minute,
then leaned against the wall of the shrine, her eyes cast down to the ground. She sighed and slid
down until she was sitting on the grass and buried her face in her hands.

Link made his way to her, sitting beside her and wrapped his arms around her as she leaned into
him. They sat together in silence for a while before Mipha finally spoke.

“You're not supposed to die,” she muttered.

“Not for nothing, but I didn't.”

Mipha punched him in the chest and he winced.

“I didn't!”

“No thanks to me!”

He smiled at her. “Thanks.”

“He smiled at her. “Thanks.”

“Shut up,” she muttered, turning away from him. “What the fuck, Link.” She rubbed at her eyes in
an attempt to keep herself from falling apart. She sucked in a breath, holding it for a moment, then
blew it out loudly. “I can't do that again,” she said softly.

“I know,” Link said, hesitant. “You're not supposed to be the one saving me. I'm sorry.”

Mipha glanced at him. She opened her mouth to speak, but wasn't sure what she wanted to say. She
turned away from him and looked at her feet. “Idiot,” she mumbled.

Link didn't argue with her. She leaned against him again, and before long, she was asleep at his
side.

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Mipha had only slept for an hour, but she felt more rested in that hour than she felt after an entire
night's sleep. It was a voice that had finally stirred her, and when she opened her eyes and looked
up, she saw Zelda standing over her and Link. Zelda met her gaze and smiled.

“I'm sorry,” she said quickly. “I didn't mean to wake you.”

Mipha yawned, shaking her head. “No, no, it's fine.” She rubbed at her eyes. “I should really head
home soon, anyway.”

Zelda frowned. “You haven't been home yet? Your parents must be worried.”
“If they ask, you stayed over Urbosa's,” Link said with a grin.

Mipha sighed, relieved. She could always count on Urbosa to cover for her. “Yeah,” she said softly.

The door opened, and Impa's head poked out. “I thought I heard voices,” she said. She turned her gaze to Link and pointed at him with a bony finger. “You. Inside. Let's chat.”

Link sighed and got to his feet. “Fine,” he said. “No bokkens, right?”

Impa smiled. “I'll beat your ass later.”

Link trudged inside, leaving Mipha and Zelda alone outside. Mipha stood and dusted off her pants.

“Well,” Zelda continued. “I'm glad you're alright.”

“Me too,” Mipha said. “I mean, you know, that you're alright.”

Zelda smiled. She shrugged. “Yeah. But now Impa is set on pulling this power out of me anyway she can. I've managed to do it twice, but I still really don't know how I managed it.”

“Not at all?” Mipha asked.

Zelda cleared her throat and looked down at her feet. “No.” She paused. “It just… came out of nowhere, I guess.”

Mipha looked across the city. “It took me a long time, too,” she said thoughtfully. “I didn’t even know I had any powers. Making it all work the way they were supposed to work was… difficult.” She turned to Zelda and shrugged with one shoulder. “So, I understand your frustration. I’m glad it finally worked out, though.”

Zelda met her gaze. “How did you get it to work?”

Mipha hesitated and turned her gaze to the ground. “I don’t know,” she said softly. “I guess, after seeing everything happening and how real it was – knowing that we could actually get hurt – I couldn’t live with that. I thought about what could happen… I thought of Link, everyone.” She added that last bit quickly, as if to correct herself, though she was only thinking of the first time it happened, after Revali’s party. Though her mind was reeling from everything that had happened, being alone in the car with Link felt safe. It eased her mind. It awakened the butterflies in her gut. And seeing him hurt – hurt for her – she wanted nothing more than to make things right. To kiss his cheek. To hold him close. “If I could be the reason between life and death,” she continued slowly. “I would do everything in my power to choose life.” She sighed lightly and turned back to Zelda.

Zelda tried to recall exactly how it all happened, and even though it had only been a day since it happened, it was all a chaotic blur. She could barely remember the exact details, and even what she could remember didn't seem to make any sense, as if the memories were out of logical order. Everyone was fighting but her. She was stuck in Daruk’s shield, being utterly useless. And then it flashed before her eyes; the sword as it plunged into Link’s gut. The way the blood spewed out of him as he gasped for air. His body lying limp. It was somewhere between all that when her power surged through her. When she ran out of Daruk’s protection in a desperate attempt to save Link, the only thought running through her head was the fear that he would die. Don’t die. Don’t die. Don’t die.

And there was a moment just before that, when she watched it all happen in what seemed to be an impossible slow motion. When the sword pierced his body and seemed to rip through her own
heart. In that precise instant, her mind was clear. She didn’t fight with her body to awaken her power. She didn’t think of how useless she had felt. She didn’t really think of anything. All she did was see – watch the events unfold before her eyes. Watch the life drain out of Link’s body with a simple weapon, so easily taking from her what she loved. Perhaps it was in that moment when it all came together; when she realized what she was fighting for. When she realized who she was fighting for. Perhaps it was cheesy. No; it was totally cheesy. But in all her training with Impa, there was never a real threat. Even in their earlier battles, it didn’t seem real until she saw the sword plunge into Link’s body and she thought she would lose him. Lose everybody.

She spoke softly, her eyes on the ground. “I think maybe it was like that for me, too.”

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When Mipha went home, Zelda joined Impa and Link inside the shrine.

“Good,” Impa said. “You're still here. We need to talk about what's next.”

“What's next?” Zelda echoed regretfully.

Impa nodded. “Though you were able to close the second portal, the first remains open, its whereabouts unknown. I have suspicions of where the third one is, at the old temple just outside of Faron. There have been reports of strange clouds near it. As you can imagine, the media is very curious, now, especially what happened after the other night.”

Link was already watching the news reports on his phone. Zelda peered over his shoulder as the reporters spoke to one another about a strange cloud that appeared, and a sudden blinding light that followed soon after.

“Don't worry about any of that,” Impa said. “King Roham will take care of the media.”

“Yeah,” Link said abruptly. “The media doesn't keep their nose out of anything.” He hated to admit it, but it seemed his father was right. They were already suspicious, and the would likely bring them to a crossroads: hide the truth and lose the trust of the kingdom, or tell the truth and likely be marked as simply crazy? Who would believe that the legends were true? And worst of all, who in their right mind would trust the fate of their world in a pathetic group of high school kids?

“You need to be more concerned with the third portal,” Impa said. “Unfortunately, there is nothing you can do until it shows completely, and by that point, it will be open. Once it opens, your priority is to get to it right away and close it before there are any damages.”

“Wouldn't it be better if we just hang around Faron until that happens?”

Impa shook her head. “Your father has given me strict orders to maintain your presence at school. The less you miss, the better. We will deal with the portal when it is time.”

Link frowned. “I was hoping this would get me a free get out of jail pass.”

Impa smiled at him. “Not in your wildest dreams.”

“Alright,” Zelda said. “So, we wait. That's hardly the worst thing we've had to do.”

Link, however, couldn't disagree more. The waiting was the worst. He just wanted it to be all done and over with. Not knowing when the portal would open only brought him a sense of anxiety and impending doom. But, at the very least, they would have a chance to rest and recuperate and train more in preparation for whatever was going to come next.
Monday afternoon. Lunch in the courtyard. Another normal day in school – or, as normal as things could get with war sitting on their horizon, unbeknownst to the rest of the people of Hyrule. Still, the Champions were perfectly content to act as if everything were normal and not like they got their asses handed to them a few days earlier. Any and all trace of their battle – wounds and all – were gone by the end of the weekend, though mentally it sat in the back of their minds.

Teba bit into his apple thoughtfully and turned to Link. “So, what’s the deal? Everyone’s skipping school together and not inviting me?”

Link raised a brow at him and popped a grape into his mouth. “Huh?”

“Friday,” Teba said. “None of ya’ll showed up.”

Link shrugged and picked another grape. “I was home with Ary. She’s been sick a lot, lately.” At least he could use Aryll as an excuse. She went to an entirely different school, so she was an easy target. And he didn’t care to make the excuses easier for the others.

“Zelda and I had some girl time,” Urbosa chimed in. She turned to Zelda and smiled.

Teba raised a skeptical brow. “You couldn’t have girl time on the weekend?” He turned to Zelda. “I didn’t take you for a skipper.”

“Not usually,” Zelda admitted. “But I was, uh, feeling stressed. I guess Urbosa dragged me to the dark side.”

Urbosa grinned and winked at Zelda. “One of us,” she chanted.

Teba turned to Revali and Daruk and took another bite of his apple. “So, what’s your excuse?”

Revali turned his nose up at him. “Why do I need an excuse?”

Teba considered this for a moment, then shrugged. “So, everyone just decided to skip on the same day?” He shook his head. “I don’t buy it. You went off partying without me.” He threw his finished apple into the trash can, making a swooshing sound as it entered.

“If it makes you feel any better,” Mipha said. “I didn’t get invited, either.”

Teba raised a brow at her. “You were here?”

“Of course I was here,” Mipha said, rolling her eyes.

“I didn’t see you here.”

“We’re in different classes,” she reminded him. “And I have other friends besides you guys.”

Link snorted and Mipha narrowed her eyes at him.

“Oh,” Teba said simply. He seemed to buy into her lie. He never considered the fact that he could go an entire day without seeing some of them. It made sense, of course. Link, Zelda, and Mipha were a grade below him, after all. This seemed to satisfy him, and he dropped the interrogations. He turned his attention back to Link. “Looks like those karate classes are working in your favor.”
“Hm?” Link popped another grape into his mouth.

“You don’t look like Riju could break you in half.”

Urbosa snickered and poked at his upper arm. “Damn, look at those things.”

Mipha tried not to notice the muscle, but her eyes wandered anyway.

“You need shirts that fit, dude,” Daruk said. “Your arms are gonna rip right through those sleeves.”

Link ignored them as he popped two more grapes into his mouth. “Just for you, Revali,” he said between bites. “I can kick your ass now.”

Revali rolled his eyes. “I’d like to see that,” he said. “What are you gonna do, swing a sword at me?”

Daruk elbowed Revali sharply in the side. Revali sneered at him but said nothing more.

“A sword?” Teba raised a brow. “What kind of karate do you do?”

Link pushed himself off the table and stretched his arms above his head. His shirt lifted slightly, revealing abs that Mipha clearly noticed.

“You know, samurai shit,” Link said. “Isn’t that what karate is?”

Urbosa shook her head. “All bronze and no brains,” she said.

Link shrugged and walked away from them, disappearing back into the school building.

“Okay, seriously,” Teba started. “I work out daily and I don’t look like that.”

Urbosa snorted. “Jealous, Teba?”

Teba folded his arms across his chest. “No way.” He paused in thought. “Can I do karate with you guys?”

*****

When the end of the day came around, Link held back in a desperate attempt to play catch-up while the others made their way to the shrine. It was early in the evening when Link finally did leave the school, satisfied to have two make up tests under his belt and a boat load of extra credit homework that he practically had to beg for. Maybe if word ever got out about the Hero of Hyrule his teachers would be a little more lenient with him. Who could blame a hero for getting a little behind on homework?

He opted to skip his trip to the shrine and head straight home to tackle his make-up work, but to his surprise, he wasn’t the only one still hanging around. Riju stood at the corner of the parking lot, her nose in her phone as her fingers flew across the screen in mid-text. She looked up as Link approached, her eyes narrowed on him before finishing her text.

“What are you still doing here?”

“Waiting for Urbosa,” she said. She slipped her phone in her pocket and pulled out a folder from under her arm, waving it in the air. “And collecting some stuff she missed on Friday.”

Link frowned. “Oh.”
“I need to talk to you,” she said, her brows knit together.

Link paused and turned to her. “What did I do now?”

Riju rolled her eyes at him. “What haven’t you done?”

Link put a finger to his chin. “I’m sure there’s a list.”

“Look,” Riju said simply, her hand on her hip. She was clearly Urbosa’s sister. “I know you’re a guy and all, so you’re kind of an idiot at these things, so I’ll give you a break here. But I need to talk some sense into you.”

Link raised a brow at her. “What?”

“Are you really that clueless?” she said.

“What are you talking about?”

“How can I put this delicately,” Riju said, her finger on her lips. She thrust her hand down as she shouted at him. “Girls like you, you idiot.”

Link grinned. “Yeah? What girls?”

Riju waggled a finger at him. “Uh-uh,” she said. “That’s not how this works. I’m not telling you.”

Link frowned. “Why not?”

Riju rolled her eyes. “Because, you’re a guy!” She said this as if it were the answer to all the world’s problems. And it probably was. It would have explained a lot, at least. “Guys have this way of being so involved with themselves that they don’t notice these things. And that’s fine. I get it. You have a lot going on. I don’t know what that stuff is, but I can tell you’re focused on other things. But you need to be more aware of what’s going on around you. You need to notice these things, because you don’t, and you may not realize it, but you’re leading these girls on.”

Link furrowed his brows. “What girls?”

“I’m not saying names,” Riju said sternly. “Because that’s what happens. I tell you who likes you, and then you think you have to like them, and then you lead them on even more. It happens, I’m not saying you’d do it on purpose. But people automatically think they have feelings for other people who have feelings for them. You need to figure out your feelings on your own. And if you can’t do that right now, then you need to start being more aware of this shit and stop leading them on. Tell them how it is. They deserve to know the truth.”

Link blinked blankly at Riju, then let a sly smile split his face. “It’s you.”

Riju wrinkled her nose at him and made a face of disgust. She folded her arms across her chest and rolled her eyes. “Please. You’re not my type. I prefer my men tall, dark, and handsome.” She looked Link up and down quickly. “You’re short, lanky, and annoying.”

Link lifted his shirt, showing off his abs. “You can cross off lanky.”

Riju raised a brow and cocked her head to the side for a moment, as if admiring the package Link presented her. “Alright, you’re chiseled, I’ll give you that.”

Link let his shirt fall back into place. “You’re too kind.”
“Still not my type. And,” she added, “for the record, you’re not my sister’s type, either.”

“That’s too bad,” Link said. “She’s hot.”

Riju rolled her eyes once more. “You guys are all the same. And that’s why I won’t tell you any names.”


“That’s exactly the problem. You don’t care.”

Link narrowed his eyes at her. “Why should I care who likes me? In case you haven’t noticed, I’m not a giggling freshman girl like you. I don’t need to go home and have slumber parties and gossip about who likes who.”

Riju snarled at him. “Good, they’re better off without an asshole like you around, anyway.”

“Why do you feel the need to tell me all this, anyway?”

“Because I think deep down, in that stupid, empty head of yours, you do care, and you do have feelings you won’t admit to. You’re my friend and… these people are my friends. And I know you’re not someone who would lead anyone on.” She hesitated. “I know there’s something going on. Something with you and my sister, Daruk and Revali and Mipha and Zelda. You have this little secret group thing going on. It seems important. I won’t pry. But you need to get your shit together, Link. Stop fucking around and get serious.”

Link hesitated, his gaze hard on Riju.

“I know something bad’s gonna happen,” she said, her voice softer. “I know it has to do with Ganondorf.”

“Riju-”

“I should know. Urbosa and I know the legends. And though I don’t see Urbosa as much lately, when I do… I know there’s something on her mind. I hear her talking in her sleep sometimes.” She sighed. “There’s a lot at stake in this world,” she said softly. “Don’t let your big head get the best of you.” She smiled sheepishly and turned away, leaving Link alone on the sidewalk.
Chapter 38

Link mulled over Riju's mysterious confrontation the next morning. It seemed she knew a lot more than he realized – about Ganondorf and about what they had been up to the last few weeks. And, apparently, she knew something about his love life that he didn't. He tapped his pen against his blank notebook and let his chin rest in his hand. Girls talked to each other – he knew that much. So, it wasn't strange that Riju would know something he didn't. But to bring up the subject and not give him all the details – what was the point? He didn't get it. He wanted to blow it off as plain old gossip, but still, it nagged at him. Who was it that Riju was talking about?

Link glanced at Paya in the back of the room. There was mention that Paya liked him; Riju wasn't the first to hint at it. But besides when they were at the shrine together, they hardly spoke. She was so shy in the first place. When he thought more about it, he supposed she did seem extra shy around him, as Zelda had pointed out earlier. But did he really need to bother with it? He didn't see how it was a problem. So what if she liked him? He definitely wasn't leading her on. There was no way she would think he liked her back.

He sighed lightly and turned back around. His eyes moved briefly over Mipha who sat beside him, watching him. He hesitated on her for a moment before turning his gaze back to the board. He squinted at the math problems, then turned to his blank notebook. With all the school he had been missing lately, he would be lucky if he passed his junior year. And there was just a couple weeks left. He supposed it would be unrealistic for Ganondorf’s forces to give him a break until summer. He smiled to himself.

“What’s so funny?” Mipha whispered.

Link shook his head. “I might as well drop out of high school now and make saving Hyrule my full time job.”

Mipha grinned and rolled her eyes. “I bet I could get you up to a C,” she said. “That’ll at least get you to senior year.”

He moved his gaze to meet Mipha’s. She smiled warmly at him. He didn’t even notice the bell ring until the other students stood and shuffled about around them. Mipha’s smile disappeared for a moment.

“What’s wrong?”

Link shook his head, closed his notebook, and stood. Riju was right about one thing – he was hiding his feelings. But they definitely weren’t for Paya.

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Link winced and looked up from the floor where he lay on his back. Impa stood over him angrily. She had been completely merciless on him the last few days, and the more he lost to her, the angrier she became.

“You’re an idiot,” she hissed. “A complete moron. We’ll all die no thanks to you.”

Link pushed himself back onto his feet, then leaned forward to get in her face. “I didn’t exactly sign up for this, you know,” he shouted. “It’s not my fault you guys picked the worst possible guy in the world.”
“Oh, if only we had a choice,” Impa sneered. “Hylia sacrificed herself when this forsaken curse was placed on Hyrule, leaving the fate of Hyrule in her chosen hero. She did pretty well up until this point, giving us an absolutely incapable dumbass.”

“Look, you old hag,” Link snapped. “If you’re so unhappy with your options, go find yourself a new damn hero.” He spun on his heels and marched away. He kicked at the Master Sword as he walked by where it leaned against the wall, and it fell to the floor clattering loudly. Zelda stood in the doorway, alerted by their yelling, and she stepped in front of Link as he tried to make his escape.

“Where are you going?” she hissed at him.

“I quit,” he said simply.

“You can’t quit!” Zelda sneered. “You're being a child.”

“I'm being a child?” Link said. “She's the one beating the shit out of me.

“Maybe if you weren't so incapable,” Impa started, “you'd be able to defend yourself for once.”

“I can defend myself,” Link muttered.

“You were gutted by a damn sword!”

Link hesitated. As the days passed, he was more and more convinced that he, the Hero of Hyrule, would fail in his task. He was so convinced, in fact, that he had come to accept it as truth. He would die trying to save the world, and there was no amount of luck that would be able to change it. And once he came to that realization, he stopped caring about everything else. What did it matter, anyway? School, life, love – it all seemed so meaningless in the end.

“Link!”

Link spun around, glaring at Impa, still standing in the middle of the room. She had seemed to regain her composure slightly and she beckoned him forward with a finger. Link hesitated a moment before making his way to her.

“What?” he sneered.

Impa pressed two fingers against his chest and looked up at him. Her smile was unsettling. “You think I’m tough?” she said. “Why don’t you try telling this guy you want to quit?” She pushed his chest with strength Link would not have expected from her and he stumbled backwards. As he stumbled, the room seemed to melt away. The ceiling dripped down the walls, revealing a dark, starless sky, and after what felt like an eternity, he fell against the ground. Strands of grass tickled his skin as he looked around quickly. Except for the grass beneath him and a dark sky, there was literally nothing around him. Nothing but unsettling blank space. He looked before him and found himself staring up into a skeletal figure clad in armor with a sword in his grasp.

“Get up.”

The voice must have come from the skeleton soldier. It was the only explanation. It sounded deep and hollow and it almost echoed through the eerie space around them.

Link pushed himself to his feet, holding his gaze on the figure. Once he was on his feet, the figure tossed the sword to him. He pulled another out from on his back and held it out before him. Link caught the weapon clumsily, taking his gaze off the soldier for only a brief moment.
“Fight me.”

Link furrowed his brows together. “What? What is this? Who are you?”

The soldier lunged at Link and Link was just barely able to dodge the blow, jumping to the side.

“You’re pathetic,” the soldier hissed at him. “You are no descendant of mine.”

Link blinked at the soldier. “What?”

The soldier let the tip of his blade rest against the ground. He folded his hands on the hilt and leaned against it slightly. “Hyrule doesn’t stand a chance if you won’t fight for it.”

“I’m doing everything I can,” Link hissed.

“You’re not!” The soldier picked up his sword and lunged at Link once more. This time, Link blocked the blow with his own sword. He struggled under the weight of his ancestor, his body shaking as he strained to push back. After a moment locked in this stance, the soldier pushed back violently and Link stumbled and fell to the ground. The soldier moved over him, peering down at Link.

“You are not fighting with everything you have,” he said. As he spoke, apparitions of his friends appeared around them. Link could see through the images, and they seemed to move about with ghostly attributes. Their images swayed as if blown by a gentle breeze. He watched as one by one, his friends were slain before his eyes. They fell to the ground where they promptly vanished, leaving only a strange smoke in their wake.

“They will all die because of you,” the soldier said fiercely.

“No,” Link muttered angrily. “No. I won’t let them!”

“Then fight!” The soldier swung his sword through the air towards the dying images of his friends, but Link lurched to his feet, throwing himself forward against the soldier. But his ancestor was quicker and stronger, and he rolled beneath Link and threw him off. Link slid across the ground, but returned to his feet quickly, taking his sword in hand and holding it before him.

“Come at me!”

Link threw himself at his target once more, but the soldier blocked Link with one arm, blocking his blow and sweeping him aside with ease.

“No!” he scolded. “You cannot win like that. Let your anger fuel you, but never blind you.”

Link wiped at the blood that dripped down the corner of his mouth. He grunted in response as he took his stance once more.

“Again!”

Link stepped forward, but as he did, the soldier stepped backwards. He forced his breathing to slow as he tried to recall everything Impa had been trying to teach him over the last few months. She frequently hounded at him to watch his stance and not to let his guard down. As the soldier moved, he moved, keeping the distance between them as he tried to plan his best method of attack.

But the soldier lunged at him, leaving Link little time to think. He blocked the blow with his sword and pressed back forcefully. After a moment, he swung his sword around, dislodging the soldier
and giving him the opening he needed. But he waited too long, and the soldier jumped back out of his sword’s reach. Without hesitation, he moved forward again, thrusting the sword towards Link, but this time Link was quick enough to dodge the attack, and even quicker to jump to the offensive, finally landing the blow he had been working for.

The soldier stepped back, the sword dislodging from his skeletal body. “Fighting has become a forgotten skill,” he said. “Society relies too heavily on modern weaponry; weaponry that will not stand a chance against Ganondorf’s power. Hand to hand combat is not simply throwing yourself at your opponent. It’s about catching him when he is weak and exposed. It is about giving yourself an opportunity, and not giving your opponent a chance to strike you.” He raised his sword once more and let it come down hard against Link’s as Link blocked the blow. The soldier leaned forward.

“If you cannot find it in yourself to fight for Hyrule, find something or someone to fight for.” He pushed back strongly and Link stumbled backwards, but quickly regained his footing.

“I understand, Link,” he said, his voice softer, if that were at all possible. “Like you, I was called forward to leave the life I knew, to put my life on the line for this world. I would be lying to you if I said I didn’t wish it were different. None of us signed up for this, as you so delicately put it. But it is our duty – it is in our destiny – to save this place we call home. To keep the people we love safe. It is because of me that Hyrule lives on, and it will be because of you that Hyrule will continue to live on.”

His ancestor replaced the sword to its sheath behind his back and stepped towards Link. He pressed two boney fingers against his chest, like Impa had done, and spoke. “Do you accept the task that has been given to you by our Goddess Hylia? Will you fight with everything you have to keep our land safe from the darkness that threatens it? To keep the people you love safe?”

Link held his gaze on his ancestor. His answered flowed freely from his lips, strong and confident, ignoring the shame he felt for not taking the situation so seriously. “Yes.”

“Take up the Master Sword,” his ancestor said. “And fight. Win. Live.” He paused for a moment before adding, “And tell Impa to stop interrupting my sleep.” And with that, he pushed against Link’s chest, and the strange, empty world melted away. The walls of the shrine quickly reformed around him and the next thing he knew, he was blinking up to the ceiling. Zelda’s worried face came into view above him.

“What the fuck was that?” Zelda asked, looking between Link and Impa.

“Did you have a nice time?” Impa asked.

Link narrowed his eyes at her. “He asked me to tell you to stop waking him up.”

Impa’s smile grew and seemed more genuine. She tilted her head slightly at Link for a moment before turning her gaze up. “You sleep too much.” She shrugged to herself and turned her back on them, replacing the bokken she held against the wall. “I’ll see you tomorrow.” It wasn’t a question, for she knew Link would return. She disappeared through the door and out of the room.

Link got to his feet and absentmindedly dusted off his pants, but there was no sign of his brief battle in that strange world. His lip no longer bled, either. He dabbed at it quickly with a finger, double checking, as Zelda spoke.
“What the hell did she do to you?”

Link shrugged. “Sent me into another dimension or some shit.”

Zelda narrowed her eyes at him. She couldn’t tell if he were being serious or not. “Why?” she asked slowly.

“To let my dead ancestors beat the shit out of me.” He turned his back to her and made his way out of the shrine. Zelda trotted after him.

“I can’t tell if you’re being serious,” she said. “But the way things have been going, it wouldn’t be the craziest sounding thing to happen.”

“I’m sure the crazy won’t end there,” he said.
Chapter 39

The sun was still half exposed behind the distant mountain range when Link and Zelda left the shrine that night. The evening sky was cast aglow in tones of golds and oranges, fading to purple as the sky stretched away from the setting sun. They walked side by side down the narrow road leading away from the shrine and to the road. Branches stretched above them from the trees that lined either side, a canopy of deep green where the sun sparkled through. They rounded the corner, just out of sight of the shrine and the road, hidden by the cover of the trees, where they paused for a moment.

“You're not... giving up, right?” Zelda asked slowly. “Not to beat a dead horse, but I can't do this without you. We're the only ones who can save Hyrule.”

“No,” Link said, avoiding her gaze. “I'm not.”

Zelda hesitated. “Because it seems like you are.” She paused and looked away. “It seems like you don't have any faith in yourself.”

“Do you?”

“Of course,” Zelda said, her brows furrowed. She met his gaze and smiled softly. “I have faith in us.”

“Oh.” Link shrugged. “Well, at least someone does.”

Zelda sighed and turned her gaze down the drive. “Why do you have to be like this?”

“I'm not being like anything,” Link said. “I'm being realistic. Things are just going to get harder, and we are not prepared in the slightest.”

Zelda pinched her lips and looked down at her feet. “I'm scared, too.”

Link glanced at her as she continued.

“After what happened Friday... I know we're in over our heads. And the worst part is, we don't have a choice. We have no one to rely on but ourselves.” She turned to Link. “How can the fate of Hyrule rely on us?”

Link shrugged. “It's not ideal,” he said. “We give it our all or die trying.”

“You say that like it's so easy to do.” Her eyes narrowed on him. “You don't think we're going to survive this, do you?”

“I'm sure you will,” he said.

“You're an idiot,” Zelda hissed. “You've given up already.”

“I haven't given up,” Link said. His brows knit together. “I've just accepted the fact that we might very well die.”

“Well, I haven't,” Zelda said. Her voice softened. “I won't let us die. Maybe you're not afraid of death, but...”

“You're right,” Link said. “I'm not afraid of death. I'm afraid of failing.”
“Well,” Zelda said, meeting his gaze. “Don't fail.”

“Sure,” Link said. “That won't be hard at all.”

Zelda smiled. “I think we make a pretty good team,” she said. “You don't give yourself enough credit.”

“The scoreboard isn't exactly ideal,” he said. “I've already been gutted once.”

Zelda frowned. “Then don't let it happen again,” she whispered.

“It's not like I want to be gutted,” Link said.

Zelda offered him a smile. “Then get good.”

“Sure,” Link said. “Anything for you, Princess.”

Zelda hesitated, turning her gaze away for a moment. She moved closer to him, met his gaze once more, then pressed her lips against him softly. When he didn't pull away, Zelda let her hands move to his face, pulling him in even closer, fiercely, deepening the kiss. She let her hands move to the back of his neck, then down his chest, tugging at his shirt as he moved as close as he could against her. Zelda stepped backwards, pulling Link with her as they left the road, her back pressed against a tree, where Link paused for a moment. He moved away slightly, his gaze moving back to hers.

But their passion did not go unnoticed. Mipha stood on the road, having emerged just around the corner, just where the trees began to line the road. She froze where she stood, suddenly noticing Zelda and Link, and her heart dropped to the pit of her stomach. She watched them for a moment before she finally managed to tear her eyes away and turn around quickly, running back towards the shrine.


Link hesitated, looking away. “Nothing,” he said after a moment.

“Nothing?” Zelda narrowed her eyes at him. “You know, you could be kissing a princess right now.” She grinned playfully.

“Uh-huh.”

“What? No sarcastic comment?” Her face softened when he did not respond. “Guess I misjudged this,” she muttered.

“No,” Link started. “Sorry. I just... Sorry.”

“That's a first,” Zelda said, crossing her arms.

“What?”

“You always have something stupid to say.”

Link forced a crooked smile. “Sorry.”

“It's Mipha, isn't it?”

Link hesitated and turned his gaze away. He looked up the road towards the shrine, but there was no sign that anyone was around to overhear their conversation.
“How long are you going to pretend you're not in love with her?”

“I'm not.”

Zelda snorted. “Please. That's a lie.”

“What do you care?” Link sneered.

“Right,” she said softly, then shrugged. “Well, if there's no spark, there's no spark.”

Link stole a glance at her. “Sorry.” He felt stupid for apologizing to her over and over, but he wasn't sure what else to say. “For what it's worth, I thought there would be.”

“So,” Zelda started. “Our kiss only made you realize that you're in love with someone else?”

“Well, when you put it that way,” he muttered.

Zelda forced a smile, then laughed lightly. “Whatever. It's not a big deal. Can't force something that isn't there, right?” She took advantage of his hesitance and made her way down the road, waving over her shoulder. “See ya later.” She quickened her pace and didn't turn around until she had rounded the corner and she was sure she was out of sight. She looked back up the road for a moment, doing her best to ignore the pain in her chest that suggested her heart had broken. How foolish she felt. Her face reddened and in a huff, she turned around and hurried out of the protection of the trees, away from the shrine, and towards home.

Mipha was already around the corner, and neither Zelda nor Link were aware of her earlier presence. She hurried briskly down the city sidewalks, her vision slightly blurred as she made home. Her phone was in her hand, and she was tapping on Urbosa's name to dial her number. She answered almost immediately.

“Wassuppp?” she said playfully. “Was that weird? That was weird. Please don't judge me; it'll never happen again. - Riju! Knock it off! Give me my hairspray back! Riju!!” There was a scuffle and Riju whined in the background. Urbosa returned. “You're so lucky you don't have a sister,” she muttered. Urbosa shifted the phone to her other ear and held it in place with her shoulder. “Anyway – what's up?”

Mipha burst into tears, unable to hold them back any longer.


Mipha shook her head and wiped the back of her hand across her eyes. “Goddess, I'm so stupid.”

“Why? Are you okay? Who do I need to kill?”

Mipha sighed and sniffed. “No. I mean. It's just.” She sighed again, exasperated. “I saw Link... and Zelda... kissing.”

“Oh, no,” Urbosa said sincerely. Mipha could hear the deep frown in her voice. “Really? Goddesses. He's an idiot, you know that.”

“Why?” Mipha sniffed. “Because he likes someone else?” Her voice started to sob towards the end of her sentence, and she erupted into tears once more. “I mean, I knew he didn't like me like that,” she continued. “But I just thought... I don't know.”

“Mipha, it was just a kiss,” Urbosa reminded her friend.
"Please," Mipha muttered. "That's how it starts. And then tomorrow I'll have to see them making out on top of the lockers all day long. I won't be able to escape it."

"Mipha -"

"What was I thinking?" Mipha went on. "The two Heroes of Hyrule. Of course they're going to get together. Isn't that how it goes? The Princess and the Hero. I should have known I didn't stand a damn chance."

"It doesn't always have to be like that," Urbosa said. "I mean, this is Link we're talking about. He doesn't exactly fit the mold."

"But he's still a stupid guy who will do anything to get laid. Especially by a princess." She was less upset now and instead growing more and more angry with him, and herself for that matter. "Ugh! I knew this would happen. I'm such an idiot."

"You're not an idiot, Mipha." Urbosa sighed. "He's a stupid guy. He's not worth it, alright?"

"He is to me," Mipha muttered, quieter now. Her wild range of emotions made her feel suddenly tired. Her head hurt from her crying. To her relief, without even realizing it, she was almost home. She could see her house just down the road.

"I know," Urbosa said softly. "I think you need to just get away from the world for a while. What do you think? You can come over. We'll like, do all those girly things. Eat some ice cream, watch movies, do our nails. Oh! We could go shopping! Pick out some super sexy outfit and make all the boys jealous!"

Mipha sighed. She slowed her pace as she continued down the quiet road. "I dunno. Maybe."

"Think about it, alright? You know I'm here for you."

"I know," she said softly. "Thanks, Urbosa. I think I just want to go to bed and sleep the rest of the week away."

"Okay," Urbosa said. "Call me if you need anything, alright?"

"Mhm." She ended the call and slipped the phone into her pocket. She turned her gaze to her house a quarter of a mile away down the road. It was just around the corner, but she could still see it through the trees that marked one side of the property. Exhausted, she walked the rest of the way down her road, all too eager to hide in the comfort of her blankets.
Chapter 40

Link walked alone to school that morning when Mipha was nowhere to be found. He had waited for her like he usually did, texting her when she did not show, but after receiving no response (and realizing he would be late if he didn't get moving), he decided he couldn't wait any longer. He got into the school just as the first bell rang and managed to get to his first class before the late bell rang. Mipha was already at her desk when Link entered the room, her nose buried in her phone. Her fingers flew across the screen and she seemed incredibly focused on whatever text she was sending. So focused that she hadn’t heard Link’s greeting, or perhaps she was ignoring him. Link sat down at his desk and watched her. When she finished her text, she let the phone drop to the desk, but she did not meet Link’s gaze.

“Too good to walk with me now?” he asked playfully, but she did not appear to be in a joking mood. She did not answer him.

Link narrowed his eyes at her. “Are you mad at me?”

Mipha glanced at him quickly and let a soft sigh escape. “No,” she said quietly.

“What’s wrong?” Link pushed.

“Nothing.”

“Something is. I can tell. I read you like a book, you know.”

Mipha’s brows furrowed together but she did not respond.

Link’s gaze softened as he tried to guess at the problem. “Did I do something wrong?”

Mipha hesitated. She looked down at her lap. “No.”

He held his gaze on her for a moment before turning away. Clearly she wasn’t going to talk about whatever was bothering her, and he wasn’t going to keep pushing it. He figured she’d talk about it when she was ready; she usually did. And then everything would be back to normal.

He dug through his bag as their math teacher entered and he pulled out his textbook. The binding made a snapping sound as he opened it, giving it its first crease in the spine. The pages were still fresh and white, never seeing the light of day until that moment. He squinted at the equations across the pages and sighed. It didn’t seem likely that he would get any help from Mipha today. He was on his own for class. On the plus side, he had a folder full of make-up homework and extra credit that he hoped would give him the boost he needed to pass the class in these final days of school.

When the bell rang to signal the end of the period, Mipha was one of the first out the door, not bothering to wait for Link, or even say goodbye. Link watched her leave, but made no effort to chase after her. Whatever funk she was in, he was certain she would shake off by lunch time.

But when lunch came around, Mipha was not in the courtyard with the others. To his surprise, however, Zelda was.

“Where’s Mipha?” Zelda asked as Link swung his legs over the bench beside her.

He shrugged. “She’s been avoiding me.”
Zelda raised a brow as she took a sip from her water bottle. “Why?”

“I don’t know,” he said with irritation. “She’s mad about something but won’t tell me what.” He put his chin in his hands and sighed. He just did not understand women. He turned his gaze up as he noticed Urbosa watching him. “Do you know something?”

Urbosa looked away from him, but he could not read her expression. He suspected that she did, in fact, know something, but wasn’t about to tell him.

“Did you do something to piss her off?” Zelda asked.

“No,” Link said quickly, getting defensive. “I didn’t do anything. We were fine the other day.”

“Sometimes you think that,” Zelda said pointedly. “But most of the time, you probably did something and don’t even realize it.”

Link searched his mind frantically, but nothing struck him as something that could have ticked her off. He watched as Urbosa stood, and now she was glaring at him.

“I need to talk to you,” she said shortly. Without waiting for a response, she moved away from the table and headed for the back parking lot.

Link hesitated a moment, looking to Daruk who simply shrugged. He followed her out quickly into the lot where she waited, her arms crossed.

“Is it something I did?” Link asked warily. “Something I said?”

Urbosa sighed. “It’s not your fault,” she said.

Link narrowed his eyes at her and waited.

“Mipha saw you and Zelda,” she said, pausing for a moment. “Kissing.”


Urbosa stared at him blankly for a moment, then narrowed her gaze back on him. “Are you serious?”

“Serious about what?”

“What’s going on with you and Zelda?”

Link blinked at her. He did not expect to be interrogated about his relationships. Not that he exactly had an answer for her. “Nothing,” he muttered, averting his gaze. “I don’t know. What’s it to you? It’s none of your business.”

“Maybe not,” Urbosa said. She sighed. “Look. I can’t believe I have to spell it out for you. I don’t want to do that to Mipha. But clearly you’re an idiot.” She put her hands on her hips and leaned closer to Link. “She likes you, you fucking moron. A lot.”

Link laughed. “What? No she doesn’t.”

Urbosa rubbed her forehead with her fingertips. Hylia was this boy dumb. “Link,” she started softly. “You relationships aren’t my business. But you need to be straight with Mipha. And with Zelda, too, for that matter. Don’t lead them on.”
“Your sister gave me the same speech,” Link muttered, folding his arms over his chest.

“You need to figure some shit out,” she continued. “I won’t sit back and let you toy with them and hurt them.”

“I was never trying to do that,” Link hissed. “I would never do anything to hurt Mipha.”

“Well,” Urbosa said. “She’s hurt. And I know you can’t help that if you don’t feel the same way about her. But just tell her the truth. She deserves that.”

Link pinched his lips together and turned his back to her. He shoved his hands in his pockets as he looked towards the building.

“Figure it out, Link,” Urbosa said. “Don’t be that guy.”

“I’m not,” Link muttered.

“So what is it?” she asked. “What are you doing?”

Link turned back towards her angrily. “I’m trying to save this damn world and keep everyone else from dying.”

“You’re avoiding it.”

“Avoiding what?”

“Your feelings.” Urbosa sighed, annoyed. “You’re such a typical guy.”

“No,” he muttered. “I’m just not telling you.”

Urbosa smiled slyly, as if she got what she was looking for. “So, you have feelings in that stupid, empty skull of yours?”

“Why do you women always want to talk about everything?”

Urbosa let a hand rest on his shoulder, sending him a slight shock as she did so. She tilted her head at him and smiled as she walked by. “I have to act as your mother and try to make you a more sympathetic person, because Hylia knows your father won’t.” She winked at him. “You’re just like him, sometimes.”

“You know,” he started, “I'm never sure of how to take that.”

Urbosa laughed. “Well, he got the girl in the end, so I guess there's something to be said for that.”

“I turned Zelda down, okay? Happy?”

Urbosa considered this for a moment, then smiled. “Yeah. Okay. I wasn't on team Zelda, anyway.” She left him standing alone.

“What's that supposed to mean?” he barked to her, but she ignored him. He shoved his hands in his pocket, muttering under his breath. When did his love life suddenly become an episode of The Bachelor? And why the hell was everyone watching?
Chapter 41

Link waited for Mipha outside the school at the end of the day. She walked by him briskly, ignoring him as he followed after her. He trailed behind her for a moment as they walked down the road until the school was out of sight. He grabbed her wrist tightly, pulling her to a stop, but she would not turn and face him.

“Stop being so damn stubborn,” he growled at her. “Just talk to me.”

“I have nothing to say,” she mumbled over her shoulder.

Link pulled at her arm so she had to step backwards to keep from falling, closer to him. “Fine,” he said. “Then I guess I’ll talk.”

Mipha turned her head just slightly, studying him from the corner of her eyes for a moment. Link hesitated, unsure of how to begin such a delicate conversation. He wasn’t even sure if he should bring it up, but he couldn’t stand her ignoring him. He let go of her wrist and her arm dropped to her side.

“I’m sorry,” he said softly.

Mipha studied him a moment further. “For what?”

Link scratched at the back of his head, averting her gaze. What exactly was he sorry for, anyway? Sorry for kissing Zelda? Sorry she saw them? That seemed even less ideal. In truth, he was sorry that he wasn't completely honest with Mipha. He was sorry that his actions had hurt her. He was sorry that it had taken him this long to accept the fact that he had feelings for Mipha. Despite that, he wasn't ready to admit that to her. Life was complicated enough with the threat of Ganondorf on their horizon.

“I know you saw us,” he muttered. “Me and Zelda”

“Oh.” Mipha turned her head away from him. She didn’t want him to read the pain that flashed across her face. She felt so stupid and humiliated in that moment, she just wanted to disappear. “Are you sorry that I saw?”

Link could hear the sting in her voice. His heart sank in his chest, feeling awful that he wasn’t smart enough to put the pieces together earlier. He hadn’t meant to hurt her.

“I just… I didn’t know…”

“Know what?”

This was not the conversation he thought he would be having when he woke up that morning. Or ever, for that matter. In truth, he never really considered having to have any sort of conversation about relationships. Almost a senior in high school, and really, he had never had any sort of relationship. He didn’t know how to have this talk, and they weren’t even a couple.

“I didn’t try to hurt you,” he said.

Mipha sighed. “I know.”

“So, why are you mad at me?”
Mipha hesitated, still not looking at him. “I’m not,” she finally said. “I’m mad at myself.” She started to walk forward away from him, and Link did not follow. He let her go, watching until she disappeared around the next block. He wanted to run after her. He wanted to tell her the truth; that he was in love with her. That she shouldn’t have doubted that for a second. But he didn't move from his spot on the sidewalk. Perhaps it was better than she was mad at him. If she assumed he didn't care, then maybe she would move on and find someone better worth her time. Someone who wasn't bound to a hopeless destiny.

Link decided to make his way to the shrine. To his surprise, neither Impa nor Paya were there, but he did find Zelda scurrying about Impa's office. There were books scattered along the floor and papers flying in every direction as Zelda ripped through the office like a hurricane She jumped and spun to face Link when she heard him enter, but once she realized it was only him, she turned to resume her frantic searching.

“The hell are you doing?” Link asked.

“There were books here,” Zelda said quickly. She dug through the shelves, flipping through the books before tossing them over her shoulder. “They're not here anymore.”

“So?”

Zelda huffed in frustration. She turned to examine the mess she had made, then quickly set to work replacing the books. “I found them a little while back,” she explained. “They were written in ancient Hylian. I couldn't make heads or tails of them. I asked Impa about them, but she totally blew me off. Told me not to worry about them. And now they're gone. She took them. She's hiding them.”

Link's brows knit, puzzled. “Why would she hide books you can't even read?”

Zelda sighed as she carefully placed the books back where she found them. “Because I tried to read them. I've been teaching myself the language so I could. I've been staying up late to figure it out. Somehow, she must have found out. She's hiding something.”

“Why would she be hiding something?”

Zelda sneered at Link. “Well, that's a good question, isn't it? Worth finding out, don't you think?”

“Alright, alright,” he said defensively. His brows furrowed. “Where do you think she took them?”

“If I knew that, I wouldn't be searching for them,” she snapped.

Link sucked in a breath in an attempt to be patient with her. “Do you want some help?”

“No,” Zelda said sharply. “Why are you here, anyway?”

Link looked around the office. “I just assumed Impa would be here waiting for my dumb ass to show up.”

Zelda snorted. “Well, she's not here.” She sighed. “And I can't be here when she does show. She's already suspicious of me.” She crossed her arms and looked around the room. “I don't know what she did with them, but they're definitely not here.”

“What about the third portal?” Link asked. “Has there been any signs?”

Zelda shook her head. “That's another thing that concerns me. It's been too quiet. We need to find
the third portal before someone else does, but it could be anywhere.” She turned back to Impa's
desk. “I was hoping I could find some clue as to where it would be so we could be two steps ahead
in this war, but,” she hesitated. “Impa seems dead set against us knowing any more than we need to
know, and maybe not even that much.”

“What about Paya?” Link asked. “Would she know where the books are?”

Zelda paused in thought. “Maybe,” she said slowly. And then another thought occurred to her. She
remembered seeing Paya with a large stack of books in her arms. Was it possible she was moving
them? Were those the books she was looking for? Her brows furrowed. “She's too close to Impa,”
she said, shaking her head. “I don't know how much we can trust her.”

Link frowned. “Can't trust Paya? I don't think that girl even knows how to lie.”

Zelda shrugged. “Still. She was carrying all those books the other day, remember? Even if she
wasn't aware that I was looking for them...”

“You don't trust anyone,” Link said.

Zelda crossed her arms. “No, frankly, I don't.” She sneered at Link. “I haven't been given any
reason to trust anyone. Right now, it's me against the world.”

“So, I can quit my day job?”

“You're merely a tool that I'm using to accomplish what I need,” Zelda said, turning her nose up at
him.

“Right,” Link said. “I guess we're back to square one where you hate my guts?”

Zelda turned her back to him. “If you're not going to help me look, then leave me alone.”

Link sighed. He didn't seem to be doing well with anyone these last few days. Leave it to him to
royally fuck up. He was starting to wonder how long this stretch would last.

“Fine,” he muttered. His brain was simply too tired to try to understand all of Zelda's conspiracies.
Wasn't this war complicated enough already?
Chapter 42

Link was the last one out of the building. It was finally Friday, and the world had been fairly quiet. There were no further appearances from the Shadow Beasts, no sign that the third portal had been open, and in general, no sign of Ganondorf's revival, but that only made Link feel more uneasy. He was preparing. It was only a matter of time before he made his next move.

He looked over as his friends were huddled together at the corner of the building where they usually stood. Revali leaned against his car, just outside of the huddle, his arms folded over his chest. They seemed to be surrounding Urbosa, and he approached them curiously. He peered over Mipha’s shoulder to see what was going on. Urbosa stood with a letter in her hand, frowning.

“What are we looking at?” he asked, moving his gaze around the circle.

“Urbosa got an acceptance letter,” Riju said. Her gaze was hard on Link’s.

Link hesitated. “Isn’t that… good?”

Mipha sighed softly and shook her head, disappointed in his stupidity.

“I have to tell them no,” Urbosa said quietly.

Link’s brows furrowed together and he took the letter from her hands. His eyes scanned it quickly. “We are pleased to inform you… blah blah blah… your shining performance… blah… ideal candidate… blah… scholarship of $50,000 to cover your first year…” Link moved his gaze back to Urbosa. “This is your dream school,” he said. “They gave you fifty-freaking-thousand-dollars. What do you mean you’re going to say no?”

Urbosa met his gaze. She hesitated. “Link… I only get two months this summer before I have to move half way across the world to go to this school. And one of those months is a four week prep course I need to take before I move in.” She paused, waiting for him to put the pieces together, but it became clear she would have to spell it out for him. “I can’t possibly go to college and try to defend Hyrule from Ganondorf’s forces.”

Link blinked at her. He handed the letter back to her. “No one said you were required to help us,” he said with a shrug.

“I have to,” Urbosa said sternly. “You sad bunch need all the help you can get.”

Link shook his head. “This is more important.”

“More important than our lives?” Urbosa hissed. “My dream school won’t matter if we’re all dead.” She hesitated, her voice lowering. “I can always… apply next year, or something.”

“Look,” Link said sternly. “I never asked for your help. I never asked for anyone’s help. As far as I’m concerned, Zelda and I are the only ones that need to do this.”

“It better be finished by next year,” Zelda muttered. “Because I won’t give up my dream school for anything.”

Link ignored her. “You volunteered yourself,” he continued. “You want an out? Here it is. Get out. Get out while you still can.”
“I don’t want an out,” Urbosa hissed. “I volunteered for this. I’m in it to win it.”

“Well, I don’t want you here,” Link snapped. “I won’t be responsible for anyone getting killed.”

They were silent for a moment, the idea of putting their own lives on the line weighing heavily on their minds.

Riju crossed her arms. “Link has a point,” she said. “He obviously can’t even take care of himself. You’re all gonna fucking die if you stick around with him.”

“You’re not even supposed to know about this,” Urbosa hissed to her sister.

Riju looked up into the sky. “I may not have any super powers, but as an outsider, can I just say, you’re all in way over your heads. Who has to die before you realize that? You’re all damn lucky you made it this far. And if you let Urbosa die, so help me, you will feel my wrath. I bet I’ve got that power in me. I’ll shock you into oblivion, so help me Goddess.”

Link sighed and pinched at the bridge of his nose. “I’m doing this alone from here on out,” he said simply. He turned away from them and shoved his hands in his jeans pockets.

Revali stood up and moved away from his car. He stepped in front of Link, his brows knit together fiercely. “Look,” he said. “We’re all involved in this. One way or another, we’re gonna finish it. We don’t have much of a choice. The fate of this world is on our shoulders. If we all bail, we’re all doomed. Get it? I don’t like it anymore than you do, but we’re not about to ditch. I can’t believe you would think any of us would do that. I thought you thought better of us.”

“Don’t try to turn this around on me,” Link hissed.

“Get over it, tough guy,” Revali said, pushing passed him. “You don’t scare me. You’re nothing without that sword and Triforce, anyway.” He smirked at Link as he made his way back to his car and jumped into the seat without opening the door. The sports car roared to life as he turned the key in the ignition. “Smell ya later, bitches,” he said as he pulled out of the parking lot. He paused next to Link. “Urbosa’s going to that school one way or another. I’ll kill you myself if she doesn’t get this chance. So you better wrap this war up quick.”

Link said nothing as Revali pulled out of the lot and onto the road, the engine roaring loudly as he drove away. Revali had a point, anyway. Without the sword and Triforce, he was just a scrawny nobody.

Mipha watched as Link left them alone without so much as a goodbye. Daruk called after him, but when he didn't respond, he hurried to catch up with his friend, leaving Mipha and Urbosa alone. Urbosa folded the letter up and tucked it in her bag with a sigh.

“How are you doing?” she asked Mipha.

“I don't think my love problems compare to your college problems right now,” she muttered.

Urbosa smiled. “True love comes but once in a lifetime,” she said. “I can catch the college train the next time it comes around. It runs on a pretty regular schedule.”

Mipha rolled her eyes but said nothing further, distracted by vibrating in her pocket. She pulled out her phone and scrunched her nose when she saw Zelda's name on the screen. She hesitated, letting it ring a few times before begrudgingly answering it.

“Hey,” Zelda said. Her voice was wary. “I kinda have a huge favor to ask of you. Do you time to
meet me today?”

“Sure, I guess.” She listened as Zelda gave her strict instructions, which included a time and place to meet her. She was very cryptic, but Mipha did not question her.

“Who was that?” Urbosa asked when Mipha hung up the phone.

“Zelda.”

Urbosa frowned in an attempt not to look catty. Even though she didn't dislike Zelda, she felt obligated to hate her for the sake of her friend. “What does she want?”

“I don't know,” Mipha said. “Wanted to ask me a favor. I gotta go meet up with her.”

“Odd.” She paused for a moment. “And you're going to help her?”

“I guess so.”

“Even though you kinda hate her right now?”

Mipha sighed. “It's not her fault,” she said. “Besides. I should probably stay on her good side. But Link is dead to me.”

Urbosa laughed. “Call me later,” she said over her shoulder as she made her way across the parking lot. “I want all the gossip.”

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It was getting dark when Mipha found Zelda, sitting atop the trunk of her car in the empty parking lot just outside one of the city parks. The swings in the empty playground swung lazily in the breeze, making an eerie squeaking sound that could have only been the start of a horror movie. Hesitant, Mipha approached Zelda.

“What's this big favor?”

Zelda looked up from the open book in her hands, her expression very serious. “I need your help,” she said simply. She moved the book at an angle that Mipha could see it, inviting her in to investigate it.

Mipha peered at the text on the pages, but she couldn't make heads or tails of any of it. Her brows furrowed. “What is this?”

“It's ancient Hylian,” Zelda explained. “I found this book, among others, a while back. I didn't think anything of it at the time, but when I asked Impa about them, she didn't seem to want me to have anything to do with them. Next thing I know, they're all gone. Impa hid them from me.” She looked down at the book, her brows knit together. “Impa is hiding something from us, though I'm not sure why. But I'm going to find out.” She turned her gaze back to Mipha, closing the book. “I've been teaching myself how to read ancient Hylian, and I've managed to find a few of the books that were missing. But I can't possibly do all this by myself.” She hesitated, her gaze softening. “You're the smartest person I know. I need to know what these books say. Will you help me?”

Mipha hesitated, looking from the book to Zelda. “I don't understand,” she said slowly. “Impa... she's supposed to be helping us.”

Zelda's expression hardened once more. She looked down at the book. “I know. I don't trust her. I
“don't know who I can trust.”

“So, why trust me?” Mipha asked.

Zelda was quiet for a moment. “Well,” she began. “I like to think we're fighting for the same thing. And if I can't trust my own comrades, then I won't get very far in this world.” She sighed loudly. “And if it turns out you all betray me, I think I'll be able to kill you all easily enough.” She grinned up at Mipha. “So? Are you in?”

Mipha nodded. “Alright,” she said. “But, this sounds dangerous. If anyone finds out, I'm throwing you under the bus.”

Zelda hopped off the car and threw open the trunk. “Deal.” She dug through various items, pulling a few more books out of the blankets they were wrapped in. She handed them to Mipha and jabbed her finger into one of the covers. “This is the best thing I've found to help translate ancient Hylian,” she said. “You'll need it.”

Mipha hugged the books close to her chest, bidding Zelda a goodnight before making her way back towards the street. She looked down at the books as she walked, still pondering Zelda's words to her. It seemed strange that a Sheikah would go to such lengths to keep information from not only the princess of Hyrule, but the chosen heroes who were supposed to save the entire world. She couldn't blame Zelda for being so cautious and wanting to get to the bottom of the secrets hidden in the texts. Still, she couldn't help but feel overwhelmed. Not only did she have finals to study for, but now Hyrule's princess was giving her homework, too. Sometimes being one of the smartest students in school came at a price.
Chapter 43

Link found himself with no plans on Saturday. Mipha had hardly spoken to him in school – in fact, she barely even looked at him – but he didn’t push her. Distance was what she needed, and he felt obliged to give it to her. However, that meant he was now free to drag Aryll around the city, wherever she wanted to go. And she was set on spending the entire day with her big brother. He couldn’t be too upset, however. Since his newly appointed role of Hero, he was hardly home, and Aryll made it a point to express that to him.

Link let her drag him through the city, stopping only for a moment to get her a donut, and himself the biggest cup of coffee they would sell him. To his surprise, Urbosa was seated at the bar facing the window. She took a long sip from her iced coffee as her brows knit together, her eyes scanning the open book rapidly.

After they got their order, Link slid into the seat beside Urbosa while Aryll took the chair next to him. He sipped from his drink loudly and peered over her shoulder curiously. “What’s that?”

Urbosa sighed and closed the book. She turned her gaze to him and grinned. She held the book up, displaying it dramatically. “This, dear Link, is called a book.”

Link snorted and rolled his eyes. “Shut up. I mean what kinda book? It looks old as fuck.”

“That’s because it is old as fuck,” Urbosa said, turning her eyes back to the pages as she opened it once more. She flipped through it casually. “Zelda brought a bunch of them. She said a lot of them are recordings from the Sheikah of thousands of years ago.”

“Sounds boring,” Link said. He turned his gaze out the window and continued to suck loudly from the straw in his coffee. He stole another glance, wondering if they were the books Zelda had been searching for.

“It’s all about how the curse on Hyrule came to be, and some of the books recount all the times Ganondorf has risen, and various other villains.”

“Other villains? Sounds like a terrible movie. The Legend of Hylia: Ganondorf Returns, Episode Three.” He grinned at his own joke.

“You know,” Urbosa started. “You’re ancestors were much better for the job.”

Link nodded and sipped some more from his coffee. “I’m sure they didn’t have to juggle high school while they were trying to save the world.”

Aryll leaned over Link to look at the book. “Is that a good story?” she asked as she bit into her donut.

“It’s about Hylia,” Urbosa said, turning her gaze to the young girl. “You know about Hylia, right?”

Aryll nodded. “The beautiful Goddess of all of Hyrule!”

“And do you know why she’s so important?”

Aryll met Urbosa's gaze. “Because she's pretty?”

“Hylia sacrificed herself so that we can leave peacefully here in Hyrule.”

Aryll's eyes widened. “She did?”
Urbosa nodded. “When evil threatened the lands, Hylia sacrificed herself to stop the darkness, sealing it away. She was reincarnated as a young woman hundreds of years later when the seal broke. With her power, and with the help of her Chosen Hero, they were able to stop the darkness from taking over the land again. That's the curse that Hyrule must bear. And every time evil threatens our world, Hylia's spirit and the spirit of the hero are reborn so they can save the world again.”

Aryll's lips twisted to the side. “Is that like a princess movie?” she said. She stood up on the chair excitedly. “Do they fall in love and live happily ever after?”

“Hylia and the hero? Maybe they do.”

Aryll turned to her brother excitedly. “Does that mean you and Zelda are gonna get married?”

Link scrunched his nose. “What? No. Why would we?”

“Because you're the heroes and you're gonna fall in love!”

“Not in a million years,” Link said. “Zelda is the most stubborn, irritating, know-it-all -”

“Link and Zelda sitting in a tree,” Aryll sang.

“Stop it,” he grunted.

“You gotta get married!” Aryll shouted, slamming her palms down on the table. “If you do, then I get to be a princess!”

“I don't think that would make you a princess.”

“Yeah huh! Why don't you wanna marry a princess?” Aryll whined as Mipha came into the coffee shop.

“Who's marrying a princess?” she asked.

“Link is gonna marry Princess Zelda,” Aryll announced proudly.

Mipha met Link's gaze, but he tore his eyes away.

“No, I'm not,” he muttered.

“Aryll,” Urbosa warned, but she was not heard.

“But that's how the story goes,” Aryll said. “The heroes fall in love and live happily ever after.”

Link hesitated. “I'm not a hero.”

“Go get another donut,” Urbosa said to her, but still, she was ignored.

Aryll rolled her eyes. “Yes, you are, Link,” she said as if it should have been obvious. “You're the spirit of the hero and Zelda is the spirit of Hylia.”

“What makes you think that?”

“I'm not as dumb as you think I am,” Aryll said. “I'm way more mature than you. And that's why you have that sword.”
“She's got you there,” Urbosa said.

“They're just legends,” Link started, his brows furrowed at his sister. “Legends aren't real.”

“Its the truth, Link. You guys are destined to be together!”

Urbosa glanced at Mipha, but Mipha was elsewhere, staring out the window. She opened her mouth to say something more to Aryll, than thought better of it. “No one's listening, anyway,” she said to herself with a shrug.

“Has it ever occurred to anyone that its possible for me to live my own life?” he sneered. He pushed himself abruptly from the table. “No, of course not. Let me live the life everyone thinks I'm supposed to live. Because that's all I'm here to do.” He started to walk away, then hesitated, turning back to his sister. “And none of it is real!” And with that, he left the coffee shop, slamming the door angrily behind him.

Aryll sighed and let her chin rest in the palm of her hand. She turned to Urbosa. “Guess I don't get to be a princess.”

Mipha looked toward the door for a moment, then followed after him.

“Guess not,” Urbosa said. “But maybe you should stop talking about your brother's love life.”

“What love life?” she said. “He's never gonna get a girl friend with that attitude!”

Urbosa grinned. “You're way smarter than Link says.”

Aryll smiled proudly for a moment, but her smile quickly disappeared. “What does he say?” she demanded. “He's stupid!”

Mipha hurried out the door, looking in both directions before catching Link across the street. She jogged to him, but he did not wait for her to catch up.

“You're just going to leave your sister alone?”

“She's with Urbosa,” he said simply, jamming his hands in his pockets. “Aren't you mad at me or something?”

Mipha hesitated, stopping on the sidewalk. After a few more paces, Link, too, stopped, looking over his shoulder at her.

“I'm not mad at you,” she said slowly.

“It seemed like you were the other day,” he said angrily. “Oh, wait, you're mad at yourself.” He rolled his eyes.

“What's your problem?” Aryll hissed at him. “You have been unbearable lately.”

“Right, I've been unbearable,” he said. “I'm sorry that my problems have caused such a strain in your life.”

“Your problems?”

“Sorry, what was I thinking? I have no problems. All I'm supposed to do is give up everything to save the world. No problem at all.”
Mipha hesitated. “Link -”

“Forget it,” he snapped. He glanced at Mipha, hesitant, before turning his back to her. “Just forget it,” he muttered. He shoved his hands in his pockets and continued down the road, leaving Mipha alone on the sidewalk.
Chapter 44

It was Sunday night when Link finally ventured out of his room. After storming out of the coffee shop and leaving the responsibility of his little sister in the hands of Urbosa, he spent the rest of the weekend locked in his room. He didn't answer his phone when it rang, nor did he reply to Urbosa's annoyed text messages. When Urbosa did bring Aryll home, he ignored his sister as she yelled at him through the door about breaking his promise. Of course, it only made him feel worse, but to his relief, Aryll did not bother him for long.

Link made his way into the living room where he found his father and Aryll together on the couch. His father had his chin in his hand, his elbow against the arm of the couch, and was staring at the tv with an annoyed look on his face. Aryll, on the other hand, was humming happily to herself with her father's bare foot in her hands. She concentrated hard on his middle toe, painting it carefully in a bright pink color. The other two were purple and green.

“Sucker,” Link said as he walked by them.

“This could have been you,” his father muttered.

“But it's not. It's you.” Link grinned when his father shot him a dirty look.

“Don't be jealous, Link,” Aryll said. She closed the polish in her hand and dug through a basket for a new color. “Daddy's gonna have pretty feet.” She gasped when he wiggled his toes. “Stop it! They're not dry yet!”

“They'll look so nice in my new heels,” he said dryly, and Aryll giggled.

“Have fun,” Link said over his shoulder.

“Where are you going?”

“Thought I'd see what kind of trouble I could get into.”

“Hmph.”

Link hurried out into the cool night air and immediately set down the road towards Mipha's. The house was dark when he arrived except for her bedroom window. He moved through the darkness to the side of the house, just under her window, and pondered a way to get her attention that wouldn't involve sending her a text. He looked around, hoping to find a rock small enough to throw at her window, but when he found nothing, he opted to simply climb his way up. He scrambled up the side of the house, stepping on window sills and gables before he reached the landing where her window was. If she hadn't heard his noisy entrance, she was sure to hear his knock.

Mipha yelped and jumped off her bed, stumbling backwards onto the floor. She looked up at the window as Link peered through and sighed. Her brows furrowed as she got to her feet, then moved to the window. She threw the pane up and put her hands on her hips.

“What the hell? You couldn't use the damn door? What if I was naked!!”

Link grinned and held his phone up. “I played music, but its not the same when its not coming from a boombox.”

“Have you been watching chick-flics again?” Mipha said.
“I don't watch chick-flics!” He climbed through the window as Mipha stepped aside and tumbled to the floor. He sighed, laying on his back, and blinked up at the ceiling as Mipha looked over him.

“Right,” she said. “What do you want?”

He pulled a chocolate bar out of his jacket pocket. “Friends?”

Mipha rolled her eyes, then snatched the bar from him. “You can't buy my friendship,” she said as she opened the wrapper. She sat on the edge of her bed and broke off a piece, tossing it into her mouth.

Link sat up. “Well, that was my only plan,” he said.

“Really?” she said. “You're only plan?”

Link rolled his eyes. “Alright, fine. I'm sorry I've been an asshole lately.”

Mipha turned her attention to the chocolate bar, mulling his words over for a moment as she broke off and ate another piece. “I don't know,” she said. “You don't sound very sincere.”

Link threw his head back and groaned. “Why do you have to make things so difficult?”

“I'm really not,” she said. “You're just being overly dramatic.”

“I'm not the one -” Link sneered at her, but he snapped his mouth shut.

“No, please,” she said, narrowing her gaze. “Finish that sentence. You're not the one that what?”

“I turned Zelda down,” he blurted out.

Mipha blinked at him, nearly dropping the chocolate bar onto the floor. “What?”

Link averted his gaze, fiddling with his phone. “She kissed me. I turned her down. Happy?”

Mipha pulled her feet up onto the bed, crossing them under her. She turned to the chocolate bar and broke off another piece. “Why would I be happy about that? Do you think that would make me happy?”

Link glanced toward her. “Yes?”

“So, is that what you're telling people?” Mipha met his gaze. “I have a feeling its the other way around. You made a move and she turned you down.” She smiled at him.

Link stood and shoved his hands in his pockets. “You're impossible.”

“The truth comes out. The Great Hero Link, denied by the princess of Hyrule. How does it feel?”

“That's not what happened,” he sneered.

“So, why would you turn her down?”

Link held his gaze on her for a moment. “I only share secrets with friends. Since we're not friends...”

Mipha rolled her eyes and offered the other half of her chocolate bar to him. His eyes moved between her and the bar before he took it from her and sat on the bed beside her. He popped a piece
in his mouth before he spoke. “So, we're cool?”

“I guess so.”

Link frowned. “You guess so?”

“It still wasn't much of an apology.”

“How can I make it up to you?”

Mipha hesitated and looked at her feet. “Tell me why you turned her down.”

Link shrugged. “I'm gay for Revali.”

“I knew it,” Mipha whispered. She grinned at Link. “I was always rooting for you two.”

Link met her gaze and popped another piece in his mouth. “For the record, you were right. I'm not sorry you saw.” He shrugged and finished the chocolate. “I'm sorry you missed how she stormed away when I turned her down.”

“You are the worst person,” Mipha muttered.

Link smiled and balled up the wrapper. He tossed it across the room, missing the basket. “I turned her down because I don't like her like that,” he said. “Or at all, really. She's really mean. And kind of a bitch sometimes. And really annoying.”

“She's not that bad,” Mipha said, rolling her eyes. “But I always had a feeling she liked you.”

Link shrugged. “Well, it doesn't matter.”

“Alright,” Mipha said softly.

“So, we're cool?”

“Sure. We're cool.”

“So, you're happy I turned her down?”

Mipha's nose wrinkled and she averted her gaze. “No. I mean. I guess. I don't know. I don't care.”

“Oh.” Link studied her for a moment. When she looked up, he tore his gaze away. “Okay.”

Mipha's brows furrowed. “Okay.” She got to her feet and moved toward the window. “Let me walk you out.”

“I don't know,” he said slowly. “I think someone already called the cops on me.”

“Well, I would hope so,” Mipha said. “For all they know, some guy just came into my room to take advantage of me.”

Link snorted. “Who would take advantage of you?”

Mipha crossed her arms. “I'm cute,” she said with a slight pout.

Link got up and stretched his arms. “Cute is an understatement.”

Mipha's arms dropped to her side and her cheeks reddened. “What?”
“You should consider locking your windows in case the next guy is a total creep,” he said over his shoulder as he let himself out of her room.

Mipha stared after him. “Right,” she said softly. A smile tugged at the corners of her lips.
Chapter 45

Link waited at the intersection for Mipha Monday morning, but to his surprise, she didn't show. He was sure after his visit the night before that she was no longer mad at him, but just as he did last week, he found himself walking alone to school. But even there, Mipha was nowhere to be found, and her desk in their first period remained empty.

By the time his lunch period came around, there was still no sign of Mipha. She did not sit with their friends in the courtyard, nor did he bump into her in the hallways. He texted her a few times throughout the day, but there was no response from her.

When the end of the day came around, he didn't think anything more of it, chalking it all up to her simply being home sick. But when Tuesday morning came around and Mipha was still absent, he started to worry.

“Where’s Mipha?” Link asked, looking around the room. Once more, her desk was empty in their first period class. He stood in front of Zelda's desk, but she didn't seem interested in engaging in conversation with him, her eyes on her notes.

Zelda shrugged. “Haven’t seen her,” she said simply.

Something was wrong. Instead of sitting at his desk, he left the room quickly. He ignored Zelda as she called after him. He made his way through the building and outside, jogging down the sidewalks toward her house. When he arrived, he was greeted by the pulsing red and blue lights of police cruisers. Sidon stood at the corner of their driveway, his hands in his pockets as he watched the cops moving about, discussing with one another. Link’s heart leapt into his throat as he made his way to Mipha’s brother.

“What’s going on?” he asked, fearing the answer.

Sidon turned his gaze to Link. His eyes were swollen and red, showing signs of exhaustion and fear. “Mipha’s missing,” he said. “She never came home yesterday.”

“I didn't see her at all yesterday,” Link said.

Sidon turned his gaze back to the police presence. “I guess she never made it to school. They interviewed everyone, but nobody saw her. No one knows what happened to her. She’s just… gone.” He turned his gaze to Link. “You might not want to stick around,” he said quickly. “I made the mistake of telling them you were probably the last one to see her. They'll consider you a suspect.”

Link’s pulse quickened. “Sidon-”

“I know you didn’t do anything,” Sidon said quickly. His brows furrowed together. “But I know you can do something about it.”

Link hesitated and Sidon continued.

“Riju has told me a few things in passing. She had to when Mipha didn’t come home a few weeks ago. I knew she wasn’t staying with Urbosa, but Riju said she was safe with Paya.” Sidon shook his head. “I don’t know if I want to know the details, Link. Please don’t tell them to me. Just find her. Keep her alive.”
Link swallowed and watched the officers as they spoke into their radios. He turned his back on the scene. “I’ll fix this,” he muttered to Sidon before leaving him alone on the sidewalk.

Link ran through the city, his mind racing, though he was unsure exactly where to go. His first thought was to head to the shrine and tell Impa, but after hearing Zelda's suspicions, he wasn't sure if Impa could be trusted. Instead, he dialed Zelda's number as he ran through the city. It took three tries before she finally answered, her voice annoyed.

“What?”

“Don't you know how to answer a phone?” Link hissed. He came to a stop at an intersection, just a few blocks from the palace. He paused to catch his breath as Zelda spoke angrily in his ear.

“Uh, hello,” she hissed. “I'm in class, unlike you! You know we have finals next week, right?”

“Shut up,” he spat. “Mipha's missing.”

The other end of the line was quiet for a moment. “What do you mean she's missing?”

Link looked over his shoulder as if to make sure he hadn't been followed. “I'm sorry, what part of that did you not understand?”

“Goddesses,” she muttered. “Alright. Relax. We'll find her, okay?”

The other line on his phone beeped. He pulled it away from his ear, glancing on the name on the screen. “Shit,” he hissed. “It's Impa.”

“Answer it,” Zelda said simply. “I'll get the others and meet you at the shrine.”

Link switched the line without another word. “What?”

“Portal number three is at the temple south of the city.”

“I'm a little busy,” Link hissed into the phone.

“Too busy to save Mipha and close a portal?”

“What are you talking about?”

“Mipha is there,” Impa said. “Are you going to waste time asking questions?”

Link hesitated. He looked around him once more. “I'm on my way over,” he said. “Start talking. How do you know Mipha is there?”

“I'm a Sheikah,” Impa hissed. “I make it a point to know everything.”

“What are you hiding?” Link hissed.

Impa was quiet for a moment. “Now isn't the time for your accusations,” she said sharply. “If you want answers, do your job.” The line clicked and silenced.

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It didn't take long for Zelda to get Urbosa, Daruk, and Revali, and within the hour, the five of them were gathered at the shrine awaiting Impa’s instruction.
“Ganondorf's forces aren't just trying to give him an edge in this war,” Impa said. “They're looking for something. I can't be sure what that something is, but they have Mipha now. They must believe she will be able to help them.”

“Could it be her powers?” Daruk asked.

“Perhaps,” Impa said simply.

“Did it ever occur to you that maybe they're just trying to lure us in?” Revali muttered.

“Of course,” Impa said. “Unfortunately for them, the five of you won't make anything easy for them, right?”

“We don't have a choice,” Urbosa said. “We need to get Mipha back before something happens.”

Impa nodded. “Paya will take you there. Close that portal before you leave.”

Link marched out of the shrine, his hands balled into fists at his side. He walked briskly away from the shrine as the others hurried to catch up.

“How much good are we doing closing these portals, anyway?” Daruk asked, turning to Zelda.

“Well,” she said, hesitant. “I don't know. But it's got to be better than if we ignore them.”

“None of this matters if we can't find that first one,” Revali reminded them. “As long as that one remains open, the others could open up again after we close them. We're wasting our time.”

“One thing at a time,” Urbosa said. “We need to save Mipha, then figure out what the hell is going on.”

They gathered together in the drive under the cover of the trees. Revali narrowed his gaze on Paya.

“You planning on splitting us up again?”

“No,” Paya said softly. “I can do this. Grandmother hasn't let me rest a day until she knew I could.”

“No pressure,” Urbosa said with a soft smile.

“Where are we going?” Daruk asked.

“The Temple of Time,” Paya said.

Zelda narrowed her gaze on Paya. “That's where the portal is?”

Paya nodded. Zelda's face whitened, her expression a combination of fear and uncertainty.

“What?” Revali hissed at her. “How fucked are we?”

“That temple holds a lot of history, and likely a lot of secrets,” Zelda said. She glanced quickly at Link. “At one time, it held the Master Sword. Legends also say that it houses a secret entrance to the Sacred Grove.”

“The Sacred Grove?” Urbosa repeated.

Zelda shook her head. “There's no time to explain,” she said quickly. “We need to close that portal immediately.”
“I can't promise this will be an easy ride,” Paya said regretfully. Her arm circled the air above her. The world flashed with a snapping sound, and the six of them were gone in an instant.
The teleportation was a feeling Link would not have been able to explain to anyone, and it was a feeling he didn’t exactly want to feel again. It all happened so quickly. He felt as if his insides were being pulled violently out of him. His vision seemed to snap off like clicking off a tv, but only for the briefest of instances until it turned on once more. All the while, his feet seemed to remain planted on some sort of hard surface, but when the world snapped back into focus, he gasped for breath.

The Champions looked around in an attempt to orient themselves once more with the world around them. They were no longer in the city. In fact, they were just outside of city's boundaries, marked by the river that twisted around it. The two bridges that crossed the river on either side brought traffic out of the city and onto the main interstate. The road that stretched east, Link knew, would eventually split, leading into the Hebron region to the north, and the Gerudo region to the south, while to the west would bring one eventually into Akkala, Eldin, and Lanaryu. All the while, the main road would slowly and surely split into smaller roads, bringing any traveller through smaller cities and towns as they reached the most remote parts of the country.

From where they stood, the old, abandoned temple loomed before them amongst the cover of the trees, just on the edge of the Faron region. The air around it seemed to vibrate with dark energy, and once more, the world around them seemed to be cast in a strange twilight. To their surprise, however, they were not alone. A figure stood on the top step, and Link immediately recognized Mipha. Her terrified gaze met his for a brief moment before she turned and ran into the temple.

“Mipha!” Link stepped forward, but a hard grip pulled him backwards.

“Wait,” Daruk’s voice growled. “I don’t like this. It's a trap.”

Link pulled his arm out of his grip angrily and, ignoring him, sprinted forward and into the temple. With a groan, Daruk trotted after him, Revali, Urbosa, Zelda, and Paya following closely behind him.

Link stopped suddenly inside as Mipha ran to the far end of the temple where a dark, cloaked figure stood. She ran to his side dutifully and turned around to stare blankly at the group that followed her. The figure let a hand rest against her shoulder, but she did not react, her gaze seemingly lifeless.

“How easy it is to manipulate you, Link,” the voice said, low and raspy. “I must thank you for making my job so easy. You delivered yourself and Zelda right to me.”

Link narrowed his fierce gaze on the man. “Let her go.”

The man smiled under his cloak. “I’m afraid I can’t do that,” he said. “You see, she has a wonderful power that will be useful to me. She is under my control, now, and I will use her as I please.”

Link drew his sword, never moving his gaze off of him, but the man only laughed.

“You continue to play into my plan, Link,” he said. “Don’t you see? You and Zelda are exactly what I need. By taking your pieces of the Triforce from you, I will have the ultimate power. None of you are leaving here alive.” He drew his own sword and held it against Mipha’s throat.

“He won’t do it,” Daruk said to Link. “He needs Mipha.”
“This girl is a valuable tool,” the man said. “But I can assure you, with the entire power of the Triforce, she, too, will be useless to me.” He pressed the blade harder against her skin, and Mipha still did not react. A trail of blood ran down her neck from beneath the blade and down her collarbone.

Link’s heart leapt into his throat. He hesitated, lowering the sword slightly. He moved his eyes to his friends, then back to the man before them. He lowered himself slowly and let the sword drop on the floor. “It’s me you want,” he growled. “Here I am.”

The man’s smile widened. He stepped away from Mipha just slightly, the blade moving away from her neck as he lifted his other arm out before him. Dark energy seemed to collect in his hand from out of thin air. But at that moment, he was distracted, and exactly two things happened. One: Daruk thrust his arm out, commanding a barrier to form around Mipha. And two: Urbosa snapped her fingers with a grin, her power moving much faster than the man’s. Lightning shot through the air and struck the ground around him, throwing him back off his feet. As that happened, Link scooped up his sword once more, shouting to Daruk.

“Don’t let him get near Zelda!”

Link ran across the temple, closing the distance between him and the man he assumed to be Ganondorf. Ganondorf got back to his feet, laughing wickedly before disappearing in thin air. Link slid to a stop, searching frantically for him. He spun around as he heard a grunt from Daruk, watching helplessly as Daruk flew into the opposite wall, the stone crumbling as he made impact. In that same instance, before Urbosa and Revali could react, Ganondorf swung his arm around him, sending the other two flying backwards as well. He wrapped his other arm around Zelda’s neck, dragging her backwards as Link charged towards him.

Ganondorf laughed wickedly as he disappeared once more, his laughter hanging in the air until he appeared at the head of the temple. He gripped his fingers around Zelda’s neck, lifting her into the air as she gasped for breath, her legs kicking helplessly. Link moved to run towards him, but Ganondorf's voice boomed off the temple walls.

“It’s over!”

He raised his other hand, collecting another ball of dark energy in his palm. The power grew, enveloping around him and Zelda until it burst, blinding them for a moment in its strange, dark light. When the darkness cleared, Zelda was limp in Ganondorf’s hand, and he dropped her body to the floor where she lay at his feet.

“Zelda!”

But Ganondorf was far from finished. He thrust his arm towards her, and Zelda’s body rose, her skin a sickening pale blue. Her eyes glowed dark under Ganondorf's command, and she lurched forward towards Link. Link just narrowly dodged her attack, throwing himself to the floor as she rushed by him. He scrambled to his feet, turning around just as she came charging him once more with a blade in her hand. Link threw his sword up to block her blow, but she leaned against him with strong force, bearing down against him. Link winced, faltering under her unusual strength, until all he could do was push against her with all his might before slipping to the side and letting her stumble to the floor.

Link gasped for breath as he watched Zelda rise once more. She turned slowly to him, her wicked gazing glowing. She moved towards him slowly, raising her rapier, but Link did not react. He stared at her, watching as she closed the distance between them, ready to attack, but he could not bring himself to hurt her. Zelda lunged at him and once more, Link blocked her blow, but did
“You’re making this too easy,” Ganondorf’s voice boomed. “If you don’t stop her, you will die.”

Zelda’s gaze bore into Link’s as she pressed further against him. But before Link could try to push her off of him again, Zelda moved her blade against his with blinding speed, swooping it up over their heads and knocking it out of Link’s grip. The Master Sword flew across the room, clanging loudly as it landed on the marble floor, leaving Link vulnerable. But Zelda did not move to attack him. Instead, she jumped away from him and darted across the room with wicked speed. She picked the sword up and disappeared only to appear a moment later at Ganondorf’s side.

“Thank you, puppet.” Ganondorf took the sword from her, his gaze never moving from Link. He smiled down at him as his fingers wrapped around the hilt. “I’m sure you know I cannot use the sword’s power without you, Link. Will you consider making this easy and hand yourself over?”

Link glared at Ganondorf, forcing himself to remain steady, but his mind raced frantically. He had nothing to defend himself with and nothing to attack with. He was utterly useless. And if the others didn’t come to soon to do something, Ganondorf would win. Link cursed under his breath.

“Never,” he hissed.

“Well, nevertheless,” Ganondorf said in a rather bored tone. “You have no way to make this fight worth my while, so I’ll just take what I need from you.” He thrust the Master Sword into Zelda’s arms with one hand and raised the other in the air. But this time, he did not collect a ball of dark energy in his palm. In fact, it seemed that nothing happened at all. Nothing, that is, until Link felt his insides lurch forward sickeningly, as if being pulled out of his body. He fell to his knees, staring in horror as the Triforce on his hand began to glow before disappearing sharply. The glow it left seemed to travel away from his hand and towards Ganondorf, pulling every ounce of power out of Link’s body.

Link gasped and heaved as he felt the strange sensation of being drained, but it did not seem to harm him otherwise. He watched as the glow traveled towards Ganondorf, and the evil man grinned wickedly as it came to him.

But in one, swift movement, Zelda swung the Master Sword across Ganondorf’s body, slicing him straight across. Ganondorf yelled in surprise and stumbled backwards against the back wall, gasping, but no blood dripped from the wound Zelda had caused. She reached a hand towards the glowing orb that bobbed in the air. Her fingers wrapped around it and the force of the energy blew against her like a sudden wind.

Ganondorf pushed himself off the wall, a fierce roar escaping his throat as he did so, and he lunged forward towards Zelda. Zelda sprinted toward Mipha, the Master Sword still in hand, while the other arm moved in a circular motion around them. They disappeared as Ganondorf neared, causing him to stumble forward. He whipped around to see them reappear beside Link. Another wicked, deafening roar escaped his throat, and Zelda arm circled her arm once more, teleporting them away from the temple.

Just as it happened when Paya transported them, the sensation of being pulled through the world ripped through him in a violent wave of sickening nausea. However, this time, he could feel his knees weaken under him, and when the world snapped to once more, he fell to the ground, gasping to fill his lungs with air.

He took a moment to let his stomach settle and his mind slow before getting to his feet and looking around. They seemed to be quite literally in the middle of nowhere, standing atop a grassy hill. The land seemed to move away from them in every direction, rolling hills moving off into the horizon.
There were no trees to mark a forest, no mountains to mark a range, no lights to mark a distant city.

He turned his focus around him. All seven of them were there, and his friends were just coming to, groaning as they struggled to their feet. They, too, took a moment to take in their surroundings, confusion written on their faces. One by one, their gazes turned to Link as Zelda made her way to his side. Without a word, she put her hands on his, and the golden glow of the Triforce returned. His breath caught in his throat as the power seemed to be sucked back into his body. The force of it blew a strange wind forcefully against him and he had to step backwards to keep his footing. The Triforce on his hand pulsed, and Zelda pressed the Master Sword into his palm.

Link met her gaze quickly, taking the sword from her.

“Finish this,” she said, her expression fierce. The air cracked and flashed once more, and they were back standing in front of the temple.

Ganondorf’s dark shape loomed before them, standing on the top step. He threw his head back and laughed, but his attention snapped to Urbosa as the ground shook and her power rained down around him, catching him off guard. He could not avoid the attack as lightning struck him and he flew backwards, sliding against the ground when he landed.

Link sprinted forward with the Master Sword in hand, and before Ganondorf could react, he plunged the sword into his gut. A wicked roar escaped his throat and his hands shot up towards Link. His fingers gripped around Link’s throat, smiling wickedly. Link fought against his strong grip, pulling the sword out of Ganondorf’s body.

“Fool!” Ganondorf hissed. “You cannot kill me!” He threw Link backwards, releasing his grip and letting Link fly through the air. He crashed against the hard ground, his head spinning violently and his stomach twisting sickeningly as he fought to orient himself. He gasped for air as his hands searched the ground blindly until he found the hilt of his blade. He looked up as Ganondorf loomed over him, and in one last desperate attempt to win, he thrust the Master Sword up and through his body.

As the sword made contact, a golden light burst from its blade. The light seemed to pierce Ganondorf, shooting through him in every direction. Ganondorf’s screams bellowed over the rolling hills. Link pulled the sword out violently and Ganondorf fell to his knees, heaving. He looked up at Link for a moment, a wicked grin splitting his face.

“You cannot kill me,” he breathed once more before bursting into thin air. Dark energy rained down like dust where Ganondorf once stood, and a strong wind blew the pieces away from Link.
Chapter 47

Link stared at the empty space that Ganondorf once occupied. He was still on the ground, the Master Sword laying at his feet. The glow of the Triforce had ceased, and the world around him was still and quiet.

“Is that it?” Daruk asked.

The Champions looked around themselves. It seemed Ganondorf has been defeated, but something was off. It seemed too easy, and Zelda didn't even play a role in his defeat. She turned her gaze to the portal above the temple, still pulsing. No, it couldn't have been Ganondorf – not the real King of Evil she had read so much about. Something told her their war was far from over.

At that moment, there was a dark flash from either side of the temple. The skeletal troops like they had encountered at the citadel appeared before their eyes and began to charge forward. As they neared, there were two more flashes around the field, this time bringing forth more of Ganondorf's army. Some of the soldiers were similar to the skeletal soldiers, yet they were bigger, clad in armor, and seemingly deadlier. Other various creatures flashed onto the battlefield, and it was only a matter of moments before there seemed to be thousands of troops charging toward the seven Hylians.

“You have got to be kidding me,” Revali muttered.

“The portal,” Urbosa said. “If we close it, they might stop appearing.”

Zelda nodded. “I think you're right. But I'll need to get closer.”

“Come on,” Daruk said. “I'll help you get through. You guys cover us.” He turned his gaze to Link, but it didn't seem like he was listening. “Got it?” he said, narrowing his eyes on him.

Link nodded slowly, his eyes fixated on Ganondorf's charging army. “I think I got it,” he said slowly. “But just in case... Tell me the whole thing again. I wasn’t listening.”

Daruk ignored him and grabbed Zelda's wrist. “Come on,” he grunted as he pulled her across the battlefield, taking the long way around to the temple in hopes of avoiding the undead army. Not to their surprise, however, the army split, half of them turning their attention to Daruk and Zelda.

The other Champions sprang into action, colliding with the charging army and doing everything in their power to protect Daruk and Zelda as they made their way to the portal. Link gripped the sword in hand, but he could not will his feet to move. He was frozen to the ground, his eyes darting around panicked, watching as the battle unfolded before his eyes. Memories of his last encounter with the undead troops flashed in his mind and his stomach twisted sickeningly.

His friends were seemingly lost in the battle. He could only pick them out from time to time when he saw one of Urbosa's attacks, or Revali's arrow soar through the air. His teeth grit together as he fought against every instinct that told him to run, and he pressed forward, swinging his sword as he charged at the undead soldiers.

Fully engaged in battle, Link lost all sense of time and the world around him as he focused only on plunging his sword into his enemies as they pushed in around him. He deflected their attacks, dodged their blows, and pressed onward as the battle raged. He was so engrossed in the battle and keeping himself from getting gutted once more that he hadn't even noticed when the portal was closed and the twilight lifted from the land, though the world was still dark and gray, the sun now
It wasn't until he heard a familiar scream that Link's mind seemed to snap into focus, no longer simply engaged in the battle, but now aware of his surroundings. The portal was closed, and as Zelda and Urbosa predicted, the army ceased growing. Still, they were outnumbered in ways they never thought possible, and it seemed as if the battle would drag on forever, or at least until Hyrule's Champions all fell. Regardless, the odds were not in their favor.

Link froze when he heard the scream again, and he immediately recognized it as Mipha. He searched frantically, but he couldn't pick her out in the battlefield, too overrun with monsters. He pushed through Ganondorf's army in a desperate attempt to follow the sound of her voice, but every time she called out for him, it seemed another wave of monsters came at him, hindering his movements. He used the sword to push himself through, no longer trying to stop them, but simply just trying to find Mipha.

But she no longer called for him. His heart leapt in his throat as he searched, panicked. He yelled to her, but she did not respond. He pushed through the battle more desperately, slashing through his enemies as they continued to interfere with his search. When his eyes did find her, however, he froze.

Her red hair was draped across her face where she lay motionless on the ground. There was blood and mud her body, but Link could not tell exactly where the wounds were, or how bad they were. All he could tell was that she was not responding to him when he called out to her – she was not moving at all.

He dropped the sword and sprinted towards her, ignoring the battle still brewing around him. He ignored the shouts of his friends, ignored the monsters that lunged at him, ignored the weapons that were thrust at him. But his friends were not oblivious to what had happened.

“Shit,” Daruk muttered. He threw his fist into a group of monsters as they lunged at him. When he was cleared for the moment, he spun on his heels, thrusting his palm out towards Mipha. His barrier came to life around her, though he wasn't sure how long it would hold at such a distance.

“I've got this,” Revali called to Daruk. He refocused his attention to the edge of the battlefield, letting his arrows fly at any creatures that tried to get over to Mipha. He ran through the waves of monsters, dodging them with ease as time slowed around.

Link dropped down to Mipha's side, pulling her frantically into his arms, calling to her. Her eyes fluttered open and she gasped and choked. She was looking passed Link, her eyes wide and terrified. Her hands reached for him, and he took them in his.

“No, no, no,” Link muttered, his vision blurring. “Come on, Mipha. Hold on.”

She found the energy to choke out his name, but could do nothing more than that. She closed her eyes and her grip on his hand loosened.

“Mipha!” He pulled her closer to him, pleading with her. “No. Wake up. Wake up!”

But Mipha did not respond. Her body fell limp in his arms. Her hand fell out of his.

Link pressed his forehead against her, burying his face in her hair. He continued to call her name softly, his tears falling onto her cheeks.

“I'm so sorry,” he sobbed. “I promised I'd protect you. I promised. I promised.” He pulled away slightly after a moment, his eyes tracing over the features of her face. He pressed his hand to her
cheek and let his forehead rest against her's once more. He didn't move when Paya dropped to her knees in front of him, nor did he hear her speak to him, but she set to work regardless, doing her best to heal Mipha.

Link felt the power of the young Sheikah immediately. It was unlike when Mipha healed him; it was much stronger. It was a warm, comforting feeling that seemed to blow through his body, instantly relaxing him. His mind quieted and the world seem to fall still and silent. He was unaware of everything around him, and in that moment, he realized how familiar the sensation had felt. It was similar to when he thought he was going to die, gutted by a rusted sword. After the initial shock from the pain, he soon felt nothing, the world seemingly melting away. He was calm; relaxed. Accepting of his fate.

“No!” Mipha couldn't die. She couldn't.

But instead, her muscles twitched, and she shifted slightly, a light sigh escaping her lips. Her eyes fluttered open and she met Link's gaze. She smiled up at him.

“Hi.”

With a relieved sob, Link pulled her into his body once more, pressing his face against her hair as he cried.

“Link,” she choked out after a moment. “I... I can't breathe.”

Link pulled away slightly, just enough to allow her to breathe once more.

“Please don't suffocate me,” she muttered. She closed her eyes and sighed. “My head hurts.”

Paya sat back on her knees. “You need rest,” she said to Mipha. “It will be some time before you're back to normal.” She turned her gaze to Link, but he was not paying attention to her. She moved her eyes to the rest of the group that had stood close by behind Link. “She won't be able to use her powers until she is fully healed.”

His friends muttered to one another behind him, but Link paid no mind to their conversation. He hadn't even noticed that the battle had come to an abrupt end thanks to Zelda's sudden burst of power. She stood outside her group of friends, watching Link and Mipha for a moment before tearing her gaze away.

Link pulled Mipha close once more, perfectly happy to never have her leave his hold. He ignored the relieved chatter behind him, his attention only on Mipha as she relaxed in his arms. She buried her face against his neck, breathing in deeply.

“I'm so sorry,” Link whispered against her, his voice breaking. “I'm so sorry, Mipha.”

Mipha took hold of his hand and squeezed as best as she could, given her weakened state. “It's not your fault.”

“I broke my promise.”

She shook her head against him. “You can't possibly protect everyone, Link.”

“I don't care about everyone,” he said. “Only you.”
Chapter 48

Impa confirmed their suspicions when they returned to the shrine. The man they had battled was not the real Ganondorf, but merely a phantom of himself. Impa spoke to them as they did their best to dry their clothes and Paya worked to heal the rest of their minor injuries. Mipha, upon returning to the shrine, promptly went home, but not before cursing her friends under her breath. “Protect your damn healer,” she muttered, “or you all die with me.”

Link was unamused, but he said nothing. She barely regarded him when they returned, and was more focused on what excuse she'd give her parents after her abrupt kidnapping. She had the walk home to come up with something for that.

“The first portal still remains at large, along with the fourth portal,” Impa reminded them. “However, I'm concerned with the power behind the third one you just closed. It is not a good sign, and it is becoming more and more difficult to keep this out of the light of the media. The strange darkness that befalls when the portals open has caused a lot of panic across Hyrule. King Roham has already stationed his own men across the kingdom.”

“They won't be able to do shit against Ganondorf's forces,” Link muttered.

“That may be,” Impa said with a nod, “but it is the duty of Hyrule's army to protect this nation at all costs.”

“That's only going to raise more suspicions,” Revali hissed.

“And King Roham is ready to deal with that,” Impa continued. “This war can no longer be kept a secret from the people of Hyrule.”

“I don't think they will be so accepting to hear that the fate of their world lies on our shoulders,” Urbosa said.

“Why do you think my father has taken action?” Zelda said, her brows furrowed. “No one would trust the world in our hands. Even if our army doesn't stand a chance, they don't know that. If our army is involved, they will feel safe.” She hesitated. “Could you imagine the riots if they knew the whole truth?”

Revali crossed his arms. “Maybe if they weren't naive biggots.”

Zelda shook her head. “It doesn't matter. We knew it would come down to this. This is way more than we can handle. We could use all the help we can get. That's what the army is for, after all.”

Though Link didn't necessarily agree with it all, he kept quiet. It was true; this was out of their hands now. He only had one duty, and that was to kill Ganondorf.

“What about Mipha?” Daruk asked. “Is she in danger?”

“Mipha's powers are unique,” Impa said. “It's no surprise that she has caught the attention of our enemies. I can't say she is out of the woods, not until Ganondorf no longer poses a threat to our nation.”

“How did they find her?” Zelda asked, narrowing her gaze on the Sheikah. “Better yet, who found her?”

Impa shook her head. Mipha's memories of the kidnapping were conveniently missing, despite
Impa's earlier prodding when they returned to the shrine. “Likely one of Ganondorf's minions,” Impa said. “King Roham is already aware of the situation. He will take the actions necessary to keep her – and the rest of you – safe. You needn't worry. Just keep focus on the task at hand.”

If Impa had any suspicions that Zelda doubted her, it would have been clear by the wary expression on Zelda's face, but as far as Zelda could see, Impa didn't seem to notice her distrust. Zelda cast a cautious glance at Link, and he seemed to share in her distrust for the Sheikah.

“You're not going home like that, are you?” Paya asked softly as they all started to disperse, eager to be in the comforts of their homes to rest from their battle.

Link regarded her for a moment, then looked down at his shirt. It was torn, dirty, and bloodied. His injuries were not severe, though he couldn't even remember how he got them, not once remembering any pain during the battle.

“That depends,” Link said with a shrug. “You got a cute top for me to borrow?”

Paya blushed and smiled, turning her gaze away. “I don't think so,” she said. “It's not my job to provide you with a new wardrobe.”

His father was right; he was going to through shirts faster than Aryll went through nail polish.

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It wasn't very late when Link returned home, though it felt like he had been up for two days straight. The glow of the setting sun warmed the world after the rain passed and spilled through the windows of homes along the streets. It shouldn't have been a surprise to him to see his sister watching tv when he entered, but after not seeing her for some time, it was a surprise regardless. He couldn't remember the last time he had really spent any time with her, the days all blurring together.

She turned to Link when he entered. Aryll's wide eyes began to water as she stared at Link's torn and bloodied shirt, her mouth gaping. Link cursed under his breath and lifted his shirt to prove to her he was unharmed, but the moment he did so, the tears broke free and she sobbed into her hands.

“Aryll,” Link groaned. “I'm fine, okay? Stop crying.” It only made him feel guilty.

Aryll wiped at her eyes and sniffed, her lip quivering as she tried to remain calm. She pulled a pillow onto her lap to cradle against herself as little sobs escaped her throat. Link sat on the couch next to her and pulled her into his arms.

“Is this a prank?” she said, her voice wavering. “It's not funny!”

Link sighed; how could he possibly explain any of it to his little sister? His absences from home, his tired and depressed demeanor, not to mention the far too occasional torn and bloodied shirt. Clearly his father hadn't bothered to say a word to her. Aryll needed answers.

“It's because of the sword,” she said. “Isn't it?”

“Kinda.”

“Why?”

Link hesitated. “Because people need my help.”

Aryll was quiet for a moment as she thought this over. “I don't like it.”
“I have a job to keep everyone safe,” Link said. “Even you.”

“But you get hurt.”

“Nah,” Link said in his best attempt to dismiss her concerns for him. “Nothing can hurt me. I'm the best.”

“You're stupid, Link,” Aryll muttered. “You can't be the best.”

“Well, I am. And I have lots of help.”

Aryll nodded. She patted the back of his left hand. “I know. I always knew. I just thought maybe it wasn't real.” She turned her face to him and smiled, though her cheeks were still wet with tears. “I don't like it, though, so promise me you'll be okay. Okay?”

“I promise.”

This seemed to be enough to comfort her. She settled back against the couch and leaned against her brother. It wasn't long before Link fell into a deep sleep, stretching out on the couch with a sigh. Aryll patted her brother's leg and stared at the newscaster on the tv screen. Though she couldn't possibly comprehend exactly what was going on in the world, she knew it wasn't good.

She turned to greet his father as he came downstairs. His gaze moved from his daughter, to his son, before moving into the kitchen.

“Someone decided to come home?” he said over his shoulder. His attention was turned to another ripped up shirt in the trash. The Master Sword was laying out on the table where Link casually tossed it, the pendant still looped around the hilt. His brows furrowed and he turned to the fridge to grab himself a beer.

“You know,” he started, moving into the living room. “This isn't a damn barracks.” He turned his gaze to his sleeping son and sighed.

“What's a barracks?” Aryll said, looking up at her father.

“It's somewhere I'm going to send your damn brother,” he muttered.

Aryll frowned. “Why?”

He turned his attention to the tv. Still images of the strange portals seen throughout Hyrule were moving across the screen as the reporter spoke.

“King Roham's press conference is expected to be sometime later this week. Stay tuned for all the latest updates...”

“Are you mad at Link?”

He turned his gaze back to his daughter. “Huh? No. Why?”

Aryll shrugged. “Sometimes it seems like you're mad.”

“I'm not mad,” he said, though he was far from reassuring. “Your brother is an idiot, but I'm not mad at him.”

“So why are you angry all the time?”
He hesitated. “You think I'm angry?”

“Sometimes.”

“Oh.” He pulled his gaze away and reached for the remote, clicking off the tv. “Don't you have cartoons to watch?”

“Its okay to be scared,” Aryll said. “I'm scared, too. And I bet Link is, too.”

“Oh, yeah?”

Aryll smiled and nodded. “But its okay. I know everything will get better.”
School was already boring enough for Link. When you added being Hero of Hyrule on top of that – and considered the fact that it was just a week before finals and most of the teachers had already given up for the summer – school seemed extra, extra boring. However, it did bring a sense of normality to his life, and he felt comforted seeing Mipha sitting next to him once more. She, on the other hand, seemed to be annoyed with Link's constant stares.

“It's like you think I'm going to spontaneously combust or something,” she muttered.

Link smiled. “Is that a possibility?”

“No,” she sneered. “The sun would die out before that happens to me.”

“Huh.”

“Stop looking at me. You're being weird.”

Link turned away and put his chin in his hand. “You're weird.”

She blinked at him for a moment before turning back to her notes. They were supposed to be using this time in class to study, but everyone in the room was chatting amongst themselves. Even Ms. Muller had her nose in her phone. But Mipha could not comprehend her notes, her mind occupied with memories of their battle the day before. And not only memories, but lack of memories. She couldn't remember how she had gotten kidnapped in the first place, or exactly what had happened between the time the battle began, and the moment she looked up into Link's tearful gaze. It wretched at her heart and made her sick. Did Link feel something similar when he had fallen? Did he suffer the same emptiness – the gap in memory – that only raised more questions than it answered?

“Stop thinking,” Link said.

Mipha turned her gaze to him, but he was staring at his opened textbook.

“Thinking about it only makes it worse.”

Mipha pinched her lips together and turned back to her notes. “I wasn't thinking about anything.”

Link snorted but said nothing further.

She stole another glance at him. She wanted to talk about his seemingly brief confession from the day before, but school wasn't the time or place. Still, her mind kept going over that moment in his arms. Her chest ached for him. She wanted nothing more than for him to know that everything would be okay and that she would be there for him. She wanted to hold him. Kiss him. Be with him.

“I'm not going to survive this,” Link muttered.

Mipha's gaze shot over to him. “What?”

“The finals,” he said. “They're going to kill me.”

Mipha sighed. She had a feeling these last two weeks were going to feel very long.
The day was a relatively normal day, or as normal as it could get for Hyrule's Champions. To their relief, there were seemingly no repercussions from their battle, and it seemed no other portal would make an appearance. Any other day, Mipha wouldn't have thought twice about her daily routine, but now, she cherished her walk home with Link more than ever.

“You know,” Mipha started. She glanced quickly towards Link. He had his head tilted up towards the sky as they made the walk home. “I never did get to thank you for saving my life during that last attack.”

Link's eyes moved to Mipha for a moment before returning to look upon the sky. “I didn't.”

Mipha's brows furrowed. She turned back to look ahead down the road. “You didn't?”

Link shrugged. “Not really. Daruk did more good than I did.”

“Oh.” She couldn't remember much, but now that he had mentioned it, she seemed to remember seeing Daurk's shield around them. “I take it back, then.”

“Fine,” Link said. “You're not welcome.”

Mipha hesitated. “I think you do more good than you give yourself credit for.”

“I'm glad you think so,” he said. “It feels like I'm just swinging a sword around and hoping for the best.”

Mipha smiled. “I know its like, kind of your job and all, but I really don't think we'd be able to do any of this without you, you know.” She offered him a smile. “I know you'll be able to keep us all safe.”

His brows furrowed. “That's not exactly the kind of responsibility I want,” Link said. He turned his gaze to Mipha. “I don't want to be the one responsible for saving the world.”

Mipha's smile faded and she turned away. She walked on quietly for a moment, pausing only when she realized Link was no longer beside her. She turned around, her eyes settling on him. His hands were shoved in his pockets and his eyes were turned back to the sky.

Link and his father stood before the closed door. All he knew about the door was that his mother was in the room on the other side. He looked up at his father, but it did not seem as if he heard his question. His father hesitated, searching his son's eyes, desperately wishing he did not have to have this conversation with him. “This will be the last time you see her.”

Link frowned at his father. “Why?”

He looked up at the ceiling, averting his son's questioning gaze, and pinched his lips together. “Because she's not going to get better. We need to say goodbye to her.”

His eyes started to well and his lip quivered. “But why, Daddy? Why isn't she better? Why do we have to say goodbye?”

His father wiped at his eyes with the back of his free hand. He sighed. “I don't know, kid. That's how life is sometimes.”
“But I don't want to say goodbye!”

His father's voice softened further. “Me neither. But we need to be brave, okay? For Mom and for Aryll. Do you think you can do that?”

The tears rolled down Link's cheeks. “But I'm not brave, Daddy. I don't know how to be brave.”

“It's okay,” he said. “I'll be brave for both of us.”

Link sniffed and nodded. “I can do it, Daddy.” When his father stood, he reached up for his hand. His father held on tightly and after a hesitant pause, he opened the door and let them into the room.

Link saw his mother first, laying in the same white bed he had seen in other rooms. There was a blanket over her and wires that were attached to various places on her body. The wires moved away from her, attached to various machines and computer screens. Some of them beeped rhythmically. His mother's breathing sounded shallow, but otherwise, the room was eerily still and quiet. Link was unsure of what to make of it all, but a part of him felt afraid of what he was seeing, and he wasn't quite sure why.

He looked up when his father released his hand, then turned his gaze back to his mother. He moved toward the side of the bed and put a hand on his mother's. She turned her head slowly to face her son, a pained smile on her face.

“Hey, Baby,” she cooed to him.

Link smiled at the sound of his mother's voice, almost completely forgetting what his father had told him. “Are you coming home now?” As soon as he said it, however, he frowned. He turned his gaze to their hands, still together. “I want you to come home.”

“I know, Baby.” Her voice shook as she spoke. When Link met her gaze again, they were wet. “I want to come home, too.”

“I'm going to miss you,” he sniffed. He wiped his free hand across his eyes as the tears spilled through.

“Me too, Baby.” She put her palm against his cheek. “I need to tell you something, okay?”

Link nodded.

“Sometimes life is going to get really hard. You're going to be scared, and angry, and sad. Things might seem impossible. But you need to be brave in those times, okay? And remember that I will always be there with you. I will never let you fight alone. I love you, Link. Always and forever. Never forget that, okay?”

“Link?”

Link met Mipha's gaze. “Huh?”

She hesitated. “I said... that you don't have to do it alone.”

“Oh.” He shrugged and continued walking. “I know.”
Mipha watched him for a moment before jogging to catch up to him. “What are you thinking about?”

“Nothing.”

“Something,” she said. “You're brooding.”

“I'm not brooding.”

“The mysterious brooding thing doesn't work for you. It's not attractive.”

“So,” Link started, “what is attractive, then? Enlighten me.”

Mipha blushed and averted her gaze. “I dunno,” she muttered. “Men that aren't high school drop outs.”

“Hm. I guess I've got a lot of work to do.”

Mipha rolled her eyes. They stopped in front of her house. “A lot is an under statement,” she said.

Link pulled Mipha into his arms and he let his chin rest on her shoulder. He smiled and whispered in her ear. “That's what I have you for. Can I borrow your notes to study for the final?”

Mipha groaned loudly and pushed away from him forcefully, causing Link's grin to widen.

“Come on,” he whined. “At least I'm studying!”

Mipha left him alone on the sidewalk, heading into the house. “Maybe,” she said over her shoulder. “If you're nice. I'll text ya later.” She let her gaze linger on his for a moment before closing the door behind her.
Chapter 50

To Link's relief, he had managed to convince Mipha to come over after school the next day and help him study. At the very least, he figured he could use all his free time studying, not that he had much free time with Ganondorf's forces seemingly in full force. His father was at the table when they entered.

"Mipha," he said with a nod behind his newspaper. "You're still hanging out with this loser?"

Mipha smiled towards Link, who was clearly ignoring his father's remarks, and shrugged. "He's not so bad."

He flipped the page noisily. "You're right. I don't give him enough credit. He's smart enough to have smarter friends to cheat off of."

"Bye," Link said over his shoulder as he rounded the corner.

"I always suspected he was just using me for my brains," Mipha said with a wink towards Aryll. Link's father looked up from his paper, smiling to Mipha as she followed Link towards his room. Inside, he was sitting on his bed, his back against the wall, his nose buried in his phone. Mipha rolled her eyes and let her books drop loudly onto his desk.

"What do you want to start with?" she asked as she sorted through her notes.

Link made an annoyed sound, but let his phone drop onto his bed. He sighed. "I don't care."

Mipha grabbed a textbook, a notebook, and two pens from her bag, then sat on the bed next to Link, her legs outstretched. "You must care since you asked for my help."

"Just get me a barely passing grade."

"That's the spirit," Mipha muttered. She tossed the notebook into Link's lap and opened the textbook. Link groaned as she flipped through pages and pages of endless equations.

"Math is literally the worst," he whined. "Unless I'm going to be a damn accountant, and even they use calculators. This is a waste of my time."

"So much ambition," Mipha said dryly. "I hope that doesn't rub off on Aryll."

Link snorted. "Don't worry, she has Mom's brains."

"Thank the Goddesses she doesn't have your father's traits."

"I have his traits."

Mipha grinned at him. "I know." She pointed to an equation in the textbook. "Solve it."

Link sighed and squinted at the numbers and symbols on the page. His brows furrowed for a moment, then he leaned back with a smug smirk. "Seven."

Mipha rubbed her temples and shook her head disappointingly. "I should just let you keep cheating off of me."

"That would be a lot simpler," Link said in agreement.
“Look,” Mipha said with a sigh. “None of these answers are going to be just a number.”

Link pointed at an equation. “What’s this check mark thing?”

Mipha stared blankly at Link for a moment. “That means you need to find the square root. Link, we’ve been doing this for almost three months now.”

“In case you haven’t noticed,” Link muttered, “I haven’t exactly been in school for the last three months.”

Mipha sighed. “Okay.” She grabbed the notebook out of his lap, her fingers lightly moving over his thigh as she did so. She flipped through the pages until she found the notes she was looking for, written in her delicate handwriting. She shoved the page at Link. “See? Read this.”

Link leaned away from her just slightly, his eyes in his own lap. He cleared his throat and grabbed the notebook from her, but he could not concentrate on her notes. “Yeah, I dunno,” he said, tossing the notebook back at her.

“What’s wrong with you?” she hissed. She pointed at the page with her pen. “Look, it’s not that hard. The square root is like, the opposite of a squared number, remember? Two squared is four, because two two times is four. Two times two is four. So the square root of four is two. So if we did the square root of nine, the answer is...”

Link tried his best to follow around with her pointing. When she trailed off, he met her gaze and bit his lip. “Two?”

“Ugh! You weren’t even listening.”

Link grabbed the textbook and notebook from her and stared at the pages for a moment, trying to review her notes as best as he could.

“Okay. I get it. Three squared is nine. So the answer is three.”

Mipha patted his head playfully. “I don’t think that brain of yours has ever worked so hard.”

“Yeah, alright, whatever,” he mumbled. He let his eyes scan the page of the text book and his brows furrowed once more. “Wait... how do you find the square root of ten?”

“It’s three point one six,” Mipha said simply. “One six two two seven seven six six.”

Link blinked at her. “How do you know that?”

“Because I pay attention!”

Link typed the numbers into the calculator in his phone. The answer came up just as Mipha had called it. “You’re as smart as a robot,” he said, feigning shock and awe.

“You’re a child,” Mipha muttered.

“Yeah, but you love me.”

Mipha flipped through the pages of the textbook, clearing her throat and avoiding his gaze. “You think the world loves you.”

“Everyone loves a hero.”
“You're going to milk that forever.”

“Sure gonna try. It's about all I've got going for me.”

“Is that supposed to be funny?” Her brows furrowed together, but he still refused to look at him.

“I thought so,” Link muttered.

“So, what happens after, Mr. Hero?”

“Babes and parties?”

“I don't know why I bother,” she said, exasperated. She closed the textbook loudly and stood, but Link grabbed her wrist.

“Alright, I'm sorry,” he said, pulling her back onto the bed. “I'm serious. I won't be a lame high school drop out.”

Mipha hesitated, then opened the book again.

“But for the record, I'm only doing this for you.”

“Why can't it be for you? For your future?”

Link did not respond. Mipha looked over to him, but he was flipping through her notes silently. His eyes were not on the pages, however; he was looking intently on the sword that was propped against the wall.

“You can have a future,” Mipha said softly.

Link shrugged and turned to a blank page. “Babes and parties.”

“Here.” Mipha handed the book to him. “Do the extra credit. I have my own shit to do.” She opened another notebook, and without looking at him, added, “And don't use your phone.”

Link sighed softly but didn't argue with her. He stole glances at her between math problems, occasionally peaking at her notebook. Her pen flew across the page as she wrote quickly, but the words were not anything he recognized. In fact, it seemed to be a completely made up language.

“What the hell is that?”

“Ancient Hylian,” she said without breaking her concentration. She paused for a moment as she finished the sentence, then checked the answer in the textbook.

“Ancient Hylian? Is that a class?”

“No,” she said dryly. “Though, it should be.” She flipped back a few pages, then began to translate something else she had written. “Zelda's been teaching me.”

Link’s brows knit together as he watched her write. “Why?”

“She found some old books, but when she brought them to Impa, Impa just told her they were more stories of Hyrule's history. Zelda's convinced Impa is hiding something from her, so I agreed to help her figure it out.”

Though Link shared in Zelda's suspicions, he didn't know she had dragged Mipha into it, and he
made no notion to show that he, too, was suspicious. “Impa is a Sheikah,” Link said. “What could she possibly want to hide from us? It's her job to help us, after all.”

“Even more reason for us to find out,” Mipha said. “If it were nothing, Impa wouldn't have been so adamant about ignoring the book. Zelda is suspicious, and I trust in her judgement more than I trust Impa. If Zelda is worried, then maybe we need to be.”

When Link did not respond, she looked up from her writing. Link's gaze was on the sword once more, but this time it was glowing faintly, pulsing.

“I'm never going to pass high school,” he muttered. He closed the textbook in his lap and got to his feet. He strode across the room, grabbing the sword in his left hand in the process. At the door, he struggled to put his shoes on with one hand, then stumbled out into the hallway.

Mipha sighed as he disappeared around the corner. She closed her own books, then hurried after him. “Wait up,” she said. “I'm coming!” She jogged across the kitchen in Link's wake, waving over her shoulder as Aryll shouted from behind them. “Go get 'em, Link!”
Chapter 51

Link stood in the driveway, his eyes to the sky. Mipha followed his gaze. The night was darker than they were used to. Clouds even darker than the night were visible in the distance, coming up over the horizon and rolling in rapidly. Link's phone buzzed in his pocket, and he quickly answered Zelda's incoming call.

“What's going on?”

“The city is under attack,” Zelda said quickly. She was panting slightly, as if she were running. “I don't know where they came from. Impa never said anything about the forth portal.”

“Or the first one,” Link muttered. “Where are you?”

“I'm heading out of the city,” she said. “There's a base just outside where there are some troops stationed. They're doing what they can, but they're falling back.”

“Alright,” Link said. “We'll meet you there.” He ended the call, then slid the phone back into his pocket. He glanced at Mipha, hesitant.

“Don't even think about telling me to stay behind,” she said, her arms crossed.

“Not even for me?”

“Fat chance.”

Link didn't argue further. He moved to his father's car, sliding in behind the wheel and starting the engine. Mipha got in beside him, and once the door was closed, he peeled out of the driveway and sped down the street towards the outskirts of the city.

By the time they reached the base, Link could see the battle as it crested over the distant hill, and the conditions did not appear to be in their favor. Link threw the car into park and barely had a chance to cut the ignition before he ran towards the base with Mipha at his heels. The Hylian soldiers that stood guard, however, were not about to make things easy for him, despite his arguments.

“I don't care who you are,” he said, narrowing his gaze on Link and stealing a glance at the sword in his hand. “Unless you have orders from the king, you're not getting through.”

“Don't be ridiculous,” Zelda said as she pushed passed the two soldiers. “Link doesn't need permission from anyone.” She narrowed her gaze on them. “In case you have forgotten, Link is the only one that stands a chance in that battle. Unless you plan to lose all your men out there, I suggest you let him through.”

The two soldiers exchanged uneasy glances. One of them turned his back to them, speaking into a radio as he walked away.

“Look, Your Highness,” the first soldier said, turning to Zelda, his voice fierce. “Our orders are to -”

“Your orders are to stand back and let us do our job.”

“Our orders are to defend the Princess of Hyrule.”
“While I'm out there doing my job.”

The soldier turned over his shoulder when his comrade called to him. He beckoned with his hand, and the soldier sighed.

“You're clear,” he said, turning his back to them abruptly.

Link and Mipha followed Zelda into the base. More soldiers hurried about, shouting commands to one another. When Link passed, their eyes turned to him, their voices momentarily silenced. Link met their gazes, his brows furrowed. He pulled his gaze away and tried desperately to ignore their stares. When they reached the center of the base, they found Daruk, Revali, and Urbosa waiting for them.

“Does anyone have any clue what the hell's going on?” Urbosa said.

Zelda shook her head. “I can't get a hold of Impa, either. Or Paya for that matter.”

“There was a problem,” a voice said from behind them. Dorian emerged from the hurrying soldiers. “They're safe right now. Focus on keeping the city safe.”

At that moment, there was a loud explosion, and the ground erupted just a few yards away from them, ripping the corner of the base apart and turning it to rubble. From the opening, Link could see that the battle had moved closer.

A decorated soldier moved to them, then, sneering at Dorian.

“Sheikah,” he hissed. “Get out of the way and let us do our jobs.”

Dorian's brows knit together angrily. “And why don't you stand down and let me do mine?”

The captain chose to ignore him, however, and started barking commands to his men once more. “Let's move!” he shouted to his men, but they didn't need any orders to tell them it was time to fight. They were already on their feet, scrambling to their weapons and hurrying out of the base to meet the onslaught of enemies.

“No!” Link shouted at him. “You're sending them to their deaths!”

“In case you haven't noticed,” the captain barked at him. “That's what we do in war. Keep out of our way and let us handle this.”

“You're weapons will be useless,” Link hissed. “This isn't my first rodeo.”

“You will stay here and out of our way.”

“I don't take orders from you.”

“Your orders,” Dorian started, “are to protect them while they clean up your mess.”

“Fine,” he muttered. “I don't give a fuck what you do. But if I so much as see you drag the princess out there, I will make sure the King throws your pathetic ass in jail.”

Link watched the captain join his army, still barking orders at them until they left the base.

“You can't let them go out there,” Daruk hissed.

“Let them,” Link said stubbornly. “I don't fucking care anymore.”
“This isn't their war,” Daruk reminded him. “They'll all die out there.”

Link pinched his lips together and crossed his arms. Daruk was right, of course. Link knew that. And when it came down to it, he wasn't going to sit back and watch them get slaughtered. Still, it didn't make him any less infuriated with the captain and his damn army.

“His threats are empty,” Zelda assured him. “And there's no way in hell I'm staying behind.”

“Of course not,” Link said. He sighed and let the sword rest on his shoulder. “Alright,” he continued. “Let's do this.”

The six Champions hurried out to join the army on the battlefield. Just as they expected, the gunshots proved to be ineffective against the undead army. From time to time, the explosion from a grenade showed to do fairly well, scattering the bones of the smaller skeletal soldiers. Yet, the larger, heavily armored skeletal soldiers were unfazed by such attacks, and they pressed on, grabbing Hyrule's soldiers by the neck and slicing through them with ease with their sharp swords. They were losing men and barely making a dent in the battle.

“Pull back!” the captain barked to his men. “Pull back!”

The soldiers ran back towards their base, prepared to defend it at all costs, despite the grim outlook of the battle. But Link and Zelda and the other four Champions burst through the rush of retreating soldiers, meeting their charging enemies head on. Urbosa's attack hit first, knocking the undead soldiers down. Those that remained standing, still charging forward, met the power behind Daruk's fists, and Revali quickly shot his arrows, taking out the undead one by one. He whooped with each hit, counting out loud in triumph as each undead soldier fell to his bow.

“Catch up, Link,” Revali shouted over his shoulder. “I'm already at seventeen!”

Link ran forward, swinging his sword across his enemies with ease, all too pleased to be showing up Hyrule's trained army and their snobby captain.

Daruk thrust his fist into the ground, sending a wave of the undead army flying through the air and crashing to the ground in pieces. “I've got seventeen in one blow,” he said with a smug grin. “Don't get cocky.”

Zelda and Mipha fought side by side. While Mipha did her best to control her own power, sending water-based twisters through the battle, Zelda focused her power on close ranged attacks, taking their enemies out en masse as they tried to close in around them.

Above them, two helicopters circled. Dorian's voice shouted to them, and the six Champions quickly retreated back to the base. As they did so, the helicopters each dropped a set of explosives which erupted upon impact with the ground, demolishing the rest of the undead army almost instantly. Hyrule's soldiers hurried forward, quickly taking out the few stragglers that remained and thus ending their battle.

“Assholes,” Revali muttered as they made their way back into the base. “Stole the winning point from us, just to prove that they could.”

“We're probably better off,” Zelda said. “We really don't need that kind of attention.”

But she spoke too soon. There, waiting in the base, was a crew of cameramen and reporters, and they instantly turned their attention on the six teens as they entered the base.

“Keep your damn mouths shut,” Zelda muttered to them as the reporters swarmed in around them.
They thrust cameras and microphones in their faces, shouting questions and accusations.

“A hero? Me?” Revali said smugly in response to one of the reporters. He shrugged, feigning modesty. “I've never considered myself a hero. Just doing what's right.” He winked at the camera. “All in a day's work for this single guy.”

Link would have done anything to ruin Revali’s moment of fame, but he was too busy feeling suffocated as the reporters continued to press in.

“So, you're saying that the legends are true?”

“Princess Zelda; is it true that you possess the power of the Goddess Hylia?”

“How are we supposed to believe that you are the spirit of the Chosen Hero?”

“Do you really posses a piece of the Triforce?”

Dorian pushed his way through the crowd, snarling. “That's enough,” he growled at the reporters. “You have no business being here, now scram.”

But this only caused the reporters to ask more frantic questions.

“The kingdom deserves answers!”

“You will get your answers,” Dorian said. “There will be no further comments until then.”

This still did not satisfy the reporters, but Dorian pushed through them once more, clearing a space for Hyrule's Champions to make their escape.
Chapter 52

Link and Mipha were back sitting on his bed. After their guarded escape from the base, they made their separate ways, but only after Dorian strictly instructed them not to breathe a single word to the reporters – or anyone – about the attack and the rise of Ganondorf. And despite Link's interrogations, Dorian provided no answers to where the next portal was, and no explanation to the attack that just happened.

Mipha held his arm carefully as she worked to heal the deep gash he had sustained in the battle. Her hands were warm on his skin and Link felt very aware of her touch. His hard expression softened, and he could no longer focus on all his unanswered questions. When she finished, she let her hands linger on his arm for a moment longer before pulling away. Neither had spoken since they returned to his room, and the silence between them felt heavy, though Link was unsure why.

“Thanks,” he finally said softly. He let his head rest against the wall and closed his eyes.

“Of course.” Mipha's voice was just as soft.

Link opened his eyes and glanced towards her. Their gazes met and she smiled sheepishly. He realized, then, how close they were to each other, and he couldn't help but to lean closer to her. Mipha met his gaze, her lips pursed together.

There was a sudden loud knock on the door, and Aryll's voice shouted his name. Link jumped back, the distance between them growing dramatically, and he shot an angry glare towards the door. “What!”

The door opened and Aryll bounded into his room. “I saw you on tv, Link!”

“Great,” Link muttered. He pulled his knees to his chest and turned to Mipha, but she was averting her gaze, staring down at her feet.

“You too, Mipha!” Aryll continued. “I saw you all! You kicked butt!”

To Link's dismay, his father poked his head around the doorway. He studied them for a moment. “Fortunately for you, the camera did you a favor by adding ten pounds.”

Link narrowed his eyes on his father. “What do you want?”

His father crossed his arms and Aryll continued to jump excitedly around the room. “You're gonna be famous!” she said. “And everyone's gonna want your autograph!”

“I hardly think so,” their father said. “In fact, they're doing a hell of a job of slandering your names already.”

Mipha frowned. “Slandering us? How?”

He shrugged a shoulder and turned on the tv. A reporter flashed on the screen mid-sentence, her brows knit together with determination.

“...attack is unclear. Whether the legends are true or not, what is clear is that Hyrule is in grave danger.”

The screen flashed to another reporter who stood outside of the base. “The king has made no
comments about the attack as of yet, but we'll stay on scene to catch the latest developments as soon as they happen. We're expecting the king will make a statement shortly. Until then, stay tuned.”

The screen flashed again, back to the newsroom where two more reporters spoke to one another.

“Can we talk about those kids for a second?” he said, turning to his partner.

“I can confirm that none of them are recruits,” she said in response. “And their ages are currently being questioned.”

“What in the name of Hylia would they be doing in the middle of a war zone?”

She shook her head. “We don't have any footage of the battle, either.”

“Do you suppose, then, that the legends are true? That we are supposed to put the fate of our world in the hands of a bunch of teenagers?”

“I have yet to see any proof that they are the living embodiment of Hylia and her supposed Chosen Hero. It's nothing but nonsense, and they're only going to get killed.”

The screen flashed to a woman who was being interviewed. “They're just children,” she said, her brows knit together. “Who could have allowed them to get caught up in this mess?”

The screen flashed to another interviewee. The man was clearly angry. “It's not right,” he said. “Especially if they're minors.”

The screen flashed to Dorian, making his earlier statement. The six wide-eyed Champions could be seen behind him.

Link got to his feet and shut off the tv. He turned to glare at his father.

“Don't get all cranky with me,” he said to his son. “Besides, this isn't your problem.”

Link crossed his arms. “I get no respect around here.”

His father grinned and turned to leave. “Yeah, get used to it.”

“I believe you,” Aryll said, turning her gaze to her brother. She smiled up at him. “You can do it!”

Mipha stood and sighed. “Now that my face is plastered all over the news,” she said. “I should probably go and prepare for the wrath of my parents.”

Link frowned at her. “I'll come to your funeral.”

“Thanks,” she said with a grin, but it quickly disappeared. Her stomach knotted with the idea of facing her parents and telling them the truth. She was sure they would be as doubtful as the rest of the world was. And, of course, there was no easy way to explain to them that their daughter was putting her life on the line every day for the sake of Hyrule.

“How did you convince your father to be okay with all this?”

Link snorted. “I didn't have to. He already knew.”

Her brows furrowed. “He knew?”
“It doesn't matter,” he said quickly. He hesitated. “I'd offer to help, but I don't think your parents would be very happy seeing me right now, either.”

“You're probably right,” she admitted. “It's alright. I'll be fine. I'll text you later.”

Though Link had no interest in the gossip shared by the news reporters across the channels, he waited anxiously for the king to make his appearance, staring anxiously at the screen. Aryll lay on her stomach on the floor, coloring in a coloring book and humming happily to herself while her father and brother sat on the couch.

“We're live in front of the palace where King Roham has just stepped out.”

Link cast his eyes back to the screen. The camera zoomed in and focused on the very serious looking king of Hyrule as he took his place behind a podium, ready to address the crowd of reporters and civilians that had gathered despite the late hour. They fell momentarily silent as the king spoke. Behind him, just at the edge of the view of the camera, Link spotted Zelda, her expression serious, yet she regarded her father with wary caution and curiosity. It seemed she was just as unaware of how her father would handle the situation as the rest of the world was, waiting patiently.

The king wasted no time with a needlessly long introduction, nor did he sugar coat the situation. “As you may be aware,” he began, “there was an attack outside of the city.”

The crowd began to murmur, but they fell silent once more as the king continued.

“I can assure you that the attack did not stem from our neighboring countries. Hyrule remains at peace with our allies.” King Roham hesitated, choosing his words carefully. “However, there is an evil that threatens this kingdom. The attack this evening came from Ganondorf’s forces, which can only mean the return of the King of Darkness, Ganondorf himself.”

The crowd erupted at that moment, shouting their questions and accusations at the king. The reporters thrust their microphones and cameras as close to him as the security details would allow them, their faces mixed between anger, confusion, and fear. King Roham looked over the crowd for a moment, then raised a hand in an attempt to quiet them. When they did not, he continued, his voice booming as he spoke over them, and they quickly quieted once more to listen.

“I can assure you that I am taking every precaution to keep this city and this kingdom safe from Ganondorf and his dark forces. Troops have been stationed across the country and are prepared for whatever may come.” He paused, listening to the reporters as they shouted their questions at him. After a moment, the crowd quieted once more, eager to hear his answers.

“The legends are indeed true,” he said in answer. The crowd waited with bated breath. Zelda's eyes moved to her father, her lips pressed together as she waited, and he continued. “Though a grave darkness threatens our home, we are not without light, without hope. Just as we this kingdom has done in the past, we will overcome. We are prepared. We will stand strong in the face of evil, and we will keep this world safe from all who dare threaten it.”

Despite his confidence, many in the crowd remained skeptical, and their questions turned to the teens that were seen in the barracks. Though there was no footage to prove what had taken place on the battlefield, rumors spread quickly from those who had caught a glimpse of the heroes who threw themselves into the battle and came out victorious.

“There are many people involved in this impending war with Ganondorf,” he said simply. “It is their duty to ensure the safety of Hyrule, and it is my duty – the duty of our troops – to keep them
safe. I can assure you that Hyrule is in the best hands possible.”

He was avoiding a direct answer, of course, but it was not enough for the reporters, and only angered them more. They demanded the truth. They demanded to know of the mere children and the roles they would play. They wanted answers.

“As you can imagine, the situation at hand is a very delicate one,” King Roham continued. “We are doing everything in our power to keep all involved safe and keep the threat of Ganondorf at bay. There will be no further questions at this time.”

The reporters lurched forward as the king turned to depart from the podium, but the security detail held strong against the rioting crowd. Zelda quickly followed her father into the palace, and the cameras turned violently back to the reporter. The woman stared open mouthed into the camera for a moment, but a voice in her ear caught her attention. Her expression hardened and she nodded once before speaking into the microphone with the news stations logo on it.

“It seems we won't be getting any more details at this time.”

The camera cut back to the two reporters back in the news room. They glanced to one another with wary expressions before regarding the camera once more. On news stations all across Hyrule, reporters were expressing their doubts towards their king's press conference, more questions raised than answered. It seemed there was nothing more they could do but utter gossip and wait for war to break.
Chapter 53

Now that Link and his friends were the talk of the world, he shouldn't have been surprised when he got more attention than he was used to. Still, when he got to school the next morning, he wasn't prepared for the entire school to fall silent, their eyes turned to him. Unfortunately, there was still a few minutes before the first bell, which meant that no one would make their way into the school until then, too content to be staring at the six students that were plastered all over the news.

Link shoved his hands in his pockets and hurried over to his friends, but the staring did not stop.

“This is uncomfortable,” Mipha muttered. “What are we supposed to do?”

“Milk it,” Revali said. He scanned the crowd that had gathered outside the school and winked at a few of the cute girls he spotted. They giggled and turned to whisper to one another. After a moment, a few of the students stepped forward.

“Is it true? Is Ganondorf coming back?”

Another kid elbowed his friend in the ribs. “Of course not, you idiot,” he hissed. “They're a bunch of liars.”

Zelda's brows knit together, but she bit her tongue.

Revali, however, was not about to let himself look foolish. “Idiots,” he spat. “Do you really think I'd waste my time with Link for nothing?”

“Thanks,” Link muttered.

“Prove it, then,” the kid said. “Let's see it. The Triforce.”

“Well, they can't just will it to appear,” Revali said, as if it were obvious.

“How convenient.”

“Don't waste your breath,” Urbosa said. “They're uneducated biggots.”

To their relief, the first bell of the day rang. It took a few moments, but slowly, one by one, the students started to make their way inside the building, mumbling to each other and casting final glances towards the six Champions. They waited until most of the students made their way into the school before following suit. They were, however, stopped in the hallway, by none other than their principal.

“Let's have a talk, shall we?” he said to them.

Without argument, they trudged after him, following him into his office. Though in adequate sized office, with eight people in there, it proved to be slightly cramped. Still, he closed the door behind him and sat himself at his desk. One of the school's counselors sat beside him. He smiled at the six students that stood before him and was the first to speak.

“You should know,” he started, but Revali interrupted him.

“We're not crazy,” he snarled. “And we don't need help from the likes of you.”

The counselor cleared his throat and folded his hands in his lap. “I never said you were crazy,” he
said, meeting Revali’s gaze. “There are people in the world that still believe the legends.”

Daruk narrowed his gaze on the man. “You say that as if it’s nonsense.”

“We’re not here to make life anymore difficult for you,” their principal said. “But after what happened last night -”

“You’re in the eye of the media,” the counselor said. “You’re being watched by the entire world. Some of you are minors. There is going to be a lot to handle in the next few weeks.”

“And, you know, saving the world,” Urbosa said. “We gotta do that, too.”

The counselor nodded. “I trust you know what you’re doing,” he said. “But I wouldn't be doing my job if I stood idly by.”

“So,” Revali started, “What's your job? You're not exactly a pysch.”

“But if I believe it is in your best interest to -”

“We don't need therapists,” Zelda hissed. “What we need is the world to stop breathing down our necks.”

“That will never happen,” he said. “Your lives will never go back to normal.”

The six of them were quiet as they considered this. It never occurred to them what their futures could be like. They were simply too busy worrying about Ganondorf, and if they were even going to survive the war.

“A price we must bear, then,” Revali said simply.

“I don't think you understand the severity -”

“I don't think you understand,” Zelda said fiercely. “The entire world is in danger, and its our job to save it.”

“If you ask me,” Revali said, “it seems like you doubt us. We're not children. We know we're in way over our heads.”

The counselor smiled. “Perhaps, then, you should take a step back and consider your options.”

“There are no options,” Zelda said. “It all comes down to us, whether you like it or not.”

“That's a daunting task, don't you think?”

They were quiet again, waiting for the counselor to speak further. When he did, he stood.

“You don't have to be alone in this,” he continued. “Don't be afraid to ask for help.”

The principal stood, too. He walked around the students to open the office door. “You can get late passes from the front desk,” he instructed them.

The six Champions said nothing as they left the office, though their anger and frustration was written on their faces. They didn't speak to one another until they were back in the hallway.

“That was a load of bullshit,” Daruk said. “Thank the Goddesses we're out of this shit hole soon.”
“On the plus side,” Urbosa added, “we'll be able to finish this war without worrying about school.”

“I don't think I can stand their stares much longer,” Mipha muttered. “Why couldn't the media get involved after school ended?”

“You're telling me,” Zelda said. She shifted her bag on her shoulder and sighed. “This is going to be a very long day.”

And a very long day it was for Hyrule's Champions. Still, they managed to pull through to the end, all too eager to leave the suffocating walls of the school, only to be stopped by Teba in the parking lot.

“I want to know what's going on,” Teba said.

They stared at him for a moment, then turned their gazes to Link, as if they expected him to explain it all to him.

“Nothing's going on,” Link muttered.

“Cut the bullshit,” Teba barked. He stepped into Link's space, glaring down at him. “Tell me the truth.”

“Fine!” Link shouted. “We're a crime fighting team and we call ourselves Hyrule's Champions. We go around fighting monsters because some fucked up bad guy is about to rise from his pit in hell and take over the world with his evil power. And guess what? I have a magic sword that's gonna stop him. And Mipha and Urbosa and Daruk have magic powers. Revali? He's fucking good with a bow and arrow and he has matrix-like reaction. And there's this old hag is a Sheikah who's probably a thousand years old and she's kind of our leader.”

Teba stared at him long and hard for a moment before a grin split his face. He laughed sharply. “That's a good one. I like it. Do you wear costumes and capes and shit, too?”

Link smirked and shrugged. “I voted for crime fighting bikinis for the ladies, but that got shot down.”

“So, that's the best you've got?” Teba asked. “You're not even trying with the excuses anymore.”

“For the love of the Goddesses,” Urbosa said. She put a hand on her hip and raised her other arm in the air, snapping her fingers. Lightning split the clear, blue sky out of no where, and Teba jumped back in surprise.

“What the fuck was that?”

“My super power,” Urbosa said, rolling her eyes.

Teba blinked at her. “No it's not,” he said after a moment. “You're fucking with me.”

Revali sighed. He leaned over his car, pulling out a plain looking dagger, and plunged it into Link's arm. Link shouted and doubled over in pain, clutching at his arm.

“What the fuck, Revali?!”

Urbosa turned to Revali and slapped him across the head. “Are you fucking serious?”

“The fuck is wrong with you, man?” Teba shouted at him.
“You’re such a dick,” Mipha muttered as she hurried to Link’s side. She got to her knees and moved her hands over his arm. A light emitted from her palms, enveloping the wound, and within a few moments, Link’s arm was healed. Link sneered up at Revali as he got back to his feet.

Teba stared at Link's arm, his mouth gaping open as if he were trying to speak. His mouth opened and closed for a moment before he finally managed to spit out “What the fuck!”

“Obviously Mipha’s the healer,” Daruk said with a smirk. “I'm the tank.”

“You... heal... tank...” Teba shook his head. “This is a fucking dream.”

“I wish,” Urbosa muttered.

“Wait, wait, wait,” Teba said, holding up his hands. “So, you fight monsters?”

“Yes,” Link said in a bored tone.

“And some bad guy is trying to take over the world and you need to stop him?”

“Yes,” Zelda said, exasperated.

“But,” he continued, “why you guys?”

“Because they were chosen by destiny,” Paya said. “Zelda is a descendant of the Goddess Hylia and has inherited her power, just as Link is a descendant of Hylia’s appointed hero. Over the years, she has gifted others with a power that would be crucial in aiding them in the war against Ganondorf.”

“Ganondorf,” Teba muttered. “The bad guy?”

“Ganondorf holds a piece of the Triforce, which grants him enough power to rise time and time again, no matter how many times he is defeated and sealed away. He is after the other two pieces, which Zelda and Link possess. He will never rest until he claims the full power of the Triforce.”

“So, this has happened before?”

“It is the job of the Sheikah to make sure each hero finds the Master Sword and takes up the duty to defeat Ganondorf. It is our job to keep our history alive and not lost to legend. The moment we lose touch with our past, we will lose all of Hyrule.”

“This is real,” Teba said. “You're not fucking with me.”

“Honestly, Teba,” Urbosa said. “I have better things to do than craft elaborate lies with these idiots.”

Zelda nodded in agreement.

Teba frowned. “Why am I always left out of all the exciting shit?”

“Don't worry,” Revali said. “I was the last to know, too. And it's not as exciting as I expected it to be.”

“Not for nothing,” Teba said, looking around. Students still had their eyes on the Champions as they slowly made their way home for the afternoon. “But ya'll in way over your heads.”

“This isn't news to us,” Daruk muttered.
“What can I do to help?” Teba said.

“Nothing,” Revali hissed. “Get as far away from us as you can. Its for your own good.”

“Yeah, I don't think so,” he said, shaking his head.

Link opened his mouth to argue with Teba, but Revali stepped in instead, his fierce gaze on his friend.

“Do you think this is a game?” he snapped at Teba. “Do you think we want to be doing this?”

Teba hesitated. His brows furrowed as Revali continued angrily.

“Shit, we'll be lucky if we live another day. Our lives are on the line. The lives of every person in the world is in our hands. If we fuck up, that's it. And if by some miracle we win this, nothing is going to be the same. The media has turned us into fucking pariahs. In the end, no one will trust us, even if we come out on top. You get to go on and live your life, marry Suki, whatever the fuck you want to do. We'll always be judged, everywhere we go. We'll be held to expectations we can't live up to. We threw out futures away for this. So everyone else could live. Don't make us regret it.”

Revali turned on his heels and got into his car, slamming the door behind him, still fuming. He turned the key in the ignition, then looked up and pointed a finger at Link.

“End this before I end you.”

Link narrowed his eyes on Revali, but said nothing. They watched as he peeled out of the parking lot and disappeared around the corner.

“College seems so meaningless if the world is going to end tomorrow,” Teba muttered.
Chapter 54

The next day wasn't any easier for the Champions. The stares from their peers continued. They gossiped quietly among themselves, silencing only when one of them was near. Most of the students stayed away from them all together, but a few regarded them with respect and awe, speaking to them even though they had never spoken before. Still, the attention was unwanted, even from those who believed in what they were doing, and the end of the day couldn't come soon enough to provide them their needed escape.

Per Zelda's request, they met at the park after school, only then noticing Revali's absence. She sighed in annoyance when they realized no one had seen him all day, and calling his phone only brought Daruk to Revali's voicemail.

“We need to plan our next move,” Zelda said. “I think I’ve found some answers that could help us. He needs to be here.”

“Well, he's not answering,” Daruk said, his voice hard in frustration. “I can't make him appear.” To his surprise, his phone rang, but it was only Teba. He answered it, muttering under his breath, and listened as Teba spoke. “What?... For real?... Alright, we'll be right there.” He shoved his phone back into his pocket and sighed. “Revali's in jail.”

“Seriously?” Urbosa practically moaned.

“The cops picked him up in some parking lot with a case of empties throwing up on some chick's car. Teba's at the station trying to get ahold of his dad to bail him out.”

“Fucking idiot,” Link muttered.

“Come on,” Urbosa said with a sigh. “We should give Teba a hand.”

*****

By the time they reached the station, Teba had gotten through to Revali's father, and with only a small amount of begging, he agreed to bail his son out of jail once more. Revali leaned against Teba as Teba guided him out into the parking lot where the others waited outside their cars. They stopped for a moment as Revali heaved, but when nothing came out, they pressed on until they reached the cars.

“'Hanks, man,” Revali slurred. “Y-you're... good. Ma bes' friend.” Revali patted Teba's head and Teba rolled his eyes, irritated.

“The fuck is wrong with you,” Daruk said. “You couldn't get drunk at home?”

Revali shook his head lazily. “Nah, man. Can't. Ol' man kicked me out.”

Teba propped him up against the car. “What happened?”

Revali sighed and shrugged. His body swayed despite the support from the car. “I dunno.”

“He needs to get sober,” Daruk said.

“Can I – can I crash withya, man?”

“Yeah,” Teba said with a sigh. “Okay.”
“Teba,” Revali said.

“Yeah, dude?”

“I want out.”

“Out?”

Revali slid down the body of the car until he landed on the ground. He leaned his head back against the car door and turned his gaze to Link. “I can't.”

“Goddesses,” Urbosa muttered. She turned to Mipha. “Can't you heal this or something?”

Mipha shook her head. “I don't think so.” She sat on the ground beside Revali and he leaned against her, closing his eyes. Mipha patted his head.

“We're gonna die, you know,” Revali said. “I can't watch e'ryone die.”

“No one's gonna die,” Mipha said softly. “That's what I'm here for, right?”

Revali sighed. “This'n't as cool'z I thought it'd be.” He was quiet for a moment. “I'm scared.”

“Let's go, Captain Depressing,” Daruk said as he hoisted Revali to his feet. “Now I need a drink.”

He passed Revali off to Teba and Teba pushed him into the passenger seat.

“I've got him,” he muttered, then, into the car, he said, “No more parking lots for you.”

Revali leaned his head back. “I'm gonna throw up all my insides,” he muttered.

“Please don't,” Teba said with a frown. “I like this car.”

“Are you sure you don't need any help?” Link asked.

“I'm fine. Thanks.” He slid into the driver's seat.

Urbosa sighed and shook her head. “Text us and let us know what's going on,” she said.

Teba nodded once. The car roared to life, and after pushing Revali off of him once more, he pulled out of the lot.

“Why did he kick you out?” Teba asked as he navigated the city.

“Mad,” Revali hiccuped. “Nuthin' I do's good 'nuff.” He sighed loudly. “Um only going to tha' dumb college 'uz his makin' me. Iss what 'e wants. Iss always been what he wanted.”

“It doesn't have to be like that,” Teba said.

“You don't get it,” Revali snapped. “Iss not... Iss not even about that.” He paused for a moment, groaning, and slunk down into the seat. “After the las' 'tack... After everything we've been through... We're all fucked. We're in way over our heads. An' I can't watch them get hurt anymore. We've all been on the brink of death. If it weren't for Mipha, we would have all died a long time ago.”

Teba's brows knit together, but he focused on the road, glancing only momentarily at Revali as he started to break down.
“Dad thinks... he thinks I'm dangerous,” Revali continued. “An' um an idiot. An' no son of his is gunna be playin' pretend with the king's dumb daughter. I told 'im ta go ta hell. 'E 'as no fuckin' clue wha's goin' on.” He paused. “He's disowned me. Um shit to him.”

“That's not... that's not true.”

“He took everythin','” Revali said. “Said if I didn't quit this fuckin' game, he'd take everythin'. An' he did. College kicked me out before I even started. Pulled my scholarship. Fuck, I bet he a'ready changed the house keys.” He hesitated. “I've got nothin' left. Even if we win this, what am I supposed ta do afta?”

Teba frowned. “Give yourself a curly-cue, put on some glasses, and get a day job?”

Revali snorted. “Funny.”

“Why does it matter right now?” Teba said. “You've got the rest of your life to figure that shit out.”

Revali only grunted in response. His eyes were closed in the passenger seat.

“Dude, don't pass out, or I'm leaving your ass in the car.”

“Mk.”

“I'm serious,” Teba continued. “I'm not dragging your ass in the house.”

“Mhm.”

Teba pulled into the driveway and put the car into park. He looked over at his friend who, despite his warnings, seemed to be out cold. Teba sighed and punched Revali in the arm. Revali grunted and opened his eyes. He pushed himself up in the seat, looked around for a moment, then opened the car door and tumbled to the ground.

Muttering to himself, Teba stepped out and moved around the car, pulling Revali to his feet. Revali burped and giggled, leaning against Teba.


Teba rolled his eyes and guided Revali into the house. “No, Revali,” he muttered. “It's only Thursday. Suki has finals like we do next week.”

“Shit,” Revali spat. “Fuck finals, right?”

“Sure,” Teba said as he pushed him through the door. “Go to bed.”

“Your parents are gonna hate me, too,” Revali whined.

“They've always hated you,” Teba said with a grin.

“Aw, for real? Why? I'm a wonderful person.”

“Oh, yeah,” Teba said, rolling his eyes. “They love the fact that I've had to bail you out of jail twice already.”

“We should get an apartment together,” Revali said excitedly. “After graduation. We'll have all the babes.”
“Whatever you say, man.”

Revali hit Teba's shoulder repeatedly as he stumbled into the bedroom. “Fuck yeah!”

Teba pushed Revali onto the bed. Revali proceeded to pull his shirt off, but Teba punched him in the arm. “You're not sleeping naked in my bed,” he hissed.

“I always sleep naked!”

“I'll fucking kill you,” Teba muttered. “I swear to Hylia, Revali.”

Revali grunted and let himself fall onto the bed. Just as soon as his head hit the pillow, he started to snore lightly.

“Don't throw up on my bed, either.” But Teba's words were not heard. He sighed and made himself as comfortable as he could on the floor, making sure to keep out of the path of any projectile vomiting. Revali murmured in his sleep, then turned over with his back to Teba and curled up on the bed.
Chapter 55

It was the last Friday before finals, and Link couldn't help but to feel more disconnected with his life as a high school student. Finals were the last thing on his mind, though he had a feeling he couldn't say the same for his friends. In fact, he was certain they werefairing far worse, trying to juggle both hero work and school work. But after Revali's drunken mishap, it was clear that it was taking a toll on the group, and Link couldn't help but to feel responsible for all their troubles. He was determined to try to make things right. And to do so, that meant snagging the keys to his father's beloved antique Firebird while he wasn't paying attention and playing hooky. And sneaking a few beers into a cooler while he was at it.

Link had the top down, the radio up, and his sunglasses on when he pulled into the school’s parking lot. Just as he suspected, his friends were standing in their usual spot in the morning, waiting until the very last minute to make their way inside to their first classes of the day. He noticed then how truly exhausted they looked; worn and hopeless from their trials and tribulations. He pulled the car up towards them and flashed his most charming grin.

“Get in, losers,” he said.

They peered at him questioningly before exchanging glances with one another.

“Where are we going?” Zelda asked.

He shrugged. “Road trip.”

Urbosa raised a brow. “Road trip?” She lifted a hand, gesturing to the school as if he were an idiot.

“Right, I’m sorry,” he started, pushing his glasses up onto his head. “We’ve never skipped a day of school in our lives.” He rolled his eyes. “Come on, it’s a Friday. Head start on the weekend.”

“But next week is finals week,” Mipha said. “I’ve hardly had time to study as it is and -”

“Mipha’s out,” Link said, cutting her off. “She’ll just ruin all the fun with her whining.”

“I don’t whine,” she muttered, narrowing her gaze on him.

“Why are we questioning him?” Revali said, stepping forward and jumping over the door into the front seat. “This is the smartest thing he’s ever suggested in his life.”

With a wide grin, Daruk quickly followed suit, jumping into the back seat. He slid over as Urbosa, with only a shrug in response, jumped in after him.

Zelda strode towards the passenger side and threw a thumb over her shoulder. “Fine. But Princess gets shotgun.”

Revali sighed loudly. “Fine, but only because I’m a gentleman.” He ignored Link’s snort as he climbed into the back between Urbosa and Daruk without getting out of the car.

Zelda opened the door and gestured towards Mipha, who only hesitated a moment before sliding into the front with her. As soon as they were seated and the door was shut, Link threw the car into gear and peeled out of the parking lot.

“So, where are we going?” Zelda asked once more.
Link shrugged. “Haven’t thought that far ahead.”

“As long as we can stop for burgers for lunch,” Daruk said. “I could go for a good burger.”

“And milkshakes,” Urbosa chimed in.

“I’ll give you a milkshake.” Revali waggled his eyebrows at her, and Urbosa rolled her eyes with a dramatic sigh.

“Wait, can I at least work on this essay?” Mipha said as she rummaged through her bag.

Link shifted gears as he navigated the city streets. “No burgers and shakes for Mipha,” he said. He tilted his head to the side as he grinned over at her.

“Fine,” Mipha said, trying hard not to grin back. “No homework at all today.” She supposed one day wouldn’t kill her. But then again, she had been missing a lot with all of their world saving business.

“I got so behind on homework,” Zelda said. “And I don't even care anymore. It’s never felt so freeing.”

“Well, it’s official,” Revali said. “We converted her to the dark side.”

Zelda pulled out her phone and opened the camera. She stretched her arm out as best as she could in an attempt to get them all into the picture. Revali leaned forward to give Link bunny ears with his fingers while the rest of them grinned widely.

“In case I go missing, Dad will know who to hunt down,” she said playfully. She tapped through the filters on her phone, trying each one out on her own face. She leaned closer to Mipha, putting them both into the frame where a pair of bunny ears appeared on both of their heads. They laughed as they flipped through the filters, taking goofy pictures. A message came through showing a picture of Revali with a mustache and beard and the words ‘send nudes’ over his face.

“Get bent, Revali,” Mipha said over her shoulder.

“It was worth a shot,” he said with a shrug.

They continued to talk and laugh as Link navigated them out of the city and across the countryside. Within the hour, they were driving through one of the other cities scattered across Hyrule and were pulling up to a burger joint, per Daruk’s request. In twenty minutes, they each had a burger, bag of fries, and a milkshake, which they devoured happily in the parking lot. With full stomachs, they piled back into the car and took to the road once more, without any real care as to where they would end up.

Another hour of driving through the countryside finally brought them somewhere appealing at the base of a mountain. They parked the car on the side of the road, then followed the marked trails, hiking through the forest until they reached a clearing with a lake. On the other side of the lake, green hills rolled down into the valley.

“Can we get out of these woods?” Zelda whined. “These bugs won’t leave me alone!” She stopped to shoo the mosquitos away as best as she could, but Daruk and Revali continued on, following the path up a steep hill and shouting behind them, beckoning for their friends to follow.

Reluctantly, Zelda dragged her feet behind them, following the steep path as it wound its way through the trees and eventually to a cliff overlooking the lake. They each peered over the edge
into the lake below them. From below, the cliff didn’t look very high up, but from where they now stood, it seemed a long way down.

“Well that was a steep hike for nothing,” Zelda muttered, crossing her arms. “It’s so hot, why are we doing this?”

But before anyone could think to answer, Revali was sprinting past them, bare chested and down to his boxers, springing off the edge of the cliff and diving down into the water, hollering the whole way down. They peered down below once more in shock and watched as his head popped through the glassy surface with a wide grin.

“Last one in gets naked,” he shouted up to them.

“Fuck that shit,” Daruk muttered, shimmying quickly out of his shirt and jumping in after Revali. Half way down, he wrapped his arms around his legs, causing a large splash as he cannon-balled into the water.

Urbosa put an arm on her hip and shook her head. “What a bunch of idiots,” she said. She turned to Zelda, but to her surprise, Zelda was already stripping out of her own clothes until she was only in her underwear. She blushed slightly when she met Urbosa’s gaze.

“What? I don’t get to do anything fun!” Without giving anyone a chance to see her any longer than necessary, she sprinted towards the edge and threw herself into the air, flailing her arms and legs until she splashed into the cool water below.

“Well, if you can’t beat ‘em,” Urbosa said with a shrug. She, too, stripped out of her shirt until she was in her bra and shorts, then dove off the edge and into the water.

Mipha let her toes hang over the edge as she eyed the water below. Though heights had never been a fear of hers, she was weary of throwing herself over the edge, and even more so of stripping out of her clothes in front of the guys. Especially Link.

But before she had a chance to consider her options, Link was sprinting up behind her, scooping her into his arms, and throwing the both of them over the cliff. She clung to him as they dropped, splashing into the cool water where they separated once submerged. They swam up until they reached the surface, filling their lungs with air as they gasped and laughed and splashed one another.

“That doesn’t count,” Revali said. “Mipha was last.”

“In your dreams,” she said, splashing water in his direction.

“Last one back up sends nudes to Revali,” Daruk shouted, already scrambling out of the water.

“Fuck that,” Urbosa said, and one by one, they quickly followed Daruk, racing each other up the path towards the cliff’s edge once more.
The morning turned into a sweltering afternoon, but none of the Champions had noticed the heat of summer as they splashed and lounged in the lake. When they weren't racing each other up the cliff or challenging one another to diving contests, they sat against the rocks in casual conversation. They stayed in long after their fingers began to prune, getting out only when the refreshing water started to feel cold.

They sprawled out on the grass, turning their faces to the warmth of the sun as it dried their bodies. Revali dug through the cooler, pulling out the still cold beer cans that Link had stolen that morning from his father and passed them around. They enjoyed the cold beverages in quiet contemplation for a moment.

“This is a much better way to spend our last day of high school,” Revali said.

“Maybe for you,” Mipha said. “We still have finals next week.”

“We still have rehearsal,” Urbosa said.

“How hard is it to walk across a stage and get a piece of paper?” Daruk said.

Link snorted. “You’d be surprised. Revali needs all the help he can get.”

Revali threw his balled up shirt at Link, but otherwise did not retort. He moved his sunglasses from the top of his head to cover his eyes and turned his face back to the sun.

Link tossed the shirt back at him casually, then stretched his arms over his head and yawned loudly. When he opened his eyes, he noticed Mipha watching him, her lips pursed together. He followed her gaze to his bare chest, marked by various scars that had gone untouched by Mipha’s healing abilities.

“I could have fixed those,” she muttered, turning her eyes away from the pronounced scars on his chest.

Link rolled his eyes and shimmied back into his shirt, feeling self-conscious now that everyone had their eyes turned to him. “Scars look cooler,” he said in an attempt to blow off her concerns.

“Even cooler when your dead,” Urbosa stated. “You’re too lax about this all.”

“I didn’t bring you all hear to talk about work,” Link muttered.

“He’s right,” Zelda said. “We needed a day off.”

“You’re welcome.”

Zelda rolled her eyes at him.

“What if Ganondorf doesn't feel like giving us a day off?” Daruk said.

“Don't jinx it,” Revali muttered, elbowing Daruk.

“Do you think he'll give me my birthday off?” Zelda said. “It's in a couple of weeks.”

“Just for you,” Revali started, “he'll make an extra special appearance.”
Zelda scrunched her nose, then shrugged. “Good. Bring it on. I'll be happy to kick his ass. Happy birthday to me.”

“I'll kick his ass,” Link said. “Happy birthday to you.”

“Bitch, you're the only one that's been gutted,” Zelda said. “You don't stand a damn chance.”

Link crossed his arms. “Not true,” he muttered, but said nothing more. He didn't exactly feel like reliving the memory of his – or Mipha's – near death experience.

And neither did anyone else, it seemed, as the group fell suddenly silent.

“I need another beer,” Revali muttered, but when he reached for the cooler, Daruk pulled it away from him.

“I don't think so,” he said simply. Revali pulled back, but Daruk's strength far outmatched his. “We're not picking you up at the station again.”

Revali crossed his arms and sulked, turning his head away from his friends.

“What do you think it was like?” Zelda said thoughtfully, her gaze turned to the sky. “For the other heroes, all those years ago?” She smiled to herself. “Do you think they sat here, too?”

“And did what?” Revali said. “Waste the day fishing while Gannondorf terrorized the county?”


“You make an excellent hero,” Revali said, rolling his eyes.

“Thanks, man.”

“Why do I get the feeling that's exactly what they all did?” Mipha said with a playful grin.

“Thank the Goddesses for the women that set them all straight,” Urbosa said.

“Let's be honest,” Zelda said. “No hero in the history of Hyrule could have done it without a woman's help. I'm proof of that.”

“This is good,” Revali said. “You're all finally on board the link-bashing train.”

“You did good for a while,” Link said. “But you were starting to lose your touch. You'll need all the help you can get.”

“Well, to be honest,” Revali started, “I've gotten quite bored of it.”

“Because you have nothing new. You're washed up, man. You've hit the end of your career. Time to retire.”

“Never.”

Mipha sighed. “Is this how it's gonna be when we're old?”

“You're assuming we're all going to still be hanging around together when we're old farts.”

“We're not?”

“I sure hope not.”
Mipha smiled at him. “But then who else will you harass?”

Revali shrugged. “I can retire and for once in my life, have a little peace and quiet.”

“You'd miss me,” Link said.

“As long as it means you will be far, far, far away from me.”

“This is nice,” Urbosa said, rolling her eyes. “This will never get old.”

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It was only when they glanced at their phones and realized it was nearing three o'clock when they decided to make their way back into the city. The conversation had moved on to a lighter subject, and once they piled back into the car, they were back to laughing and singing along with the radio.

When they reached the school, the parking lot was almost completely empty as most of the students and teachers had already made their way home for the evening. Except for a few vehicles, only those belonging to Daruk, Revali, and Urbosa remained. Standing beside the three vehicles, Riju waited, her arms crossed and her foot tapping.

“Way to play hooky without me!” she shouted at her sister when Link pulled up beside her. She stamped her foot, fists at her sides. “I've been waiting here for over two hours!”

“You could have walked home,” Urbosa said as they each slid out of the car. “Or called Mom.”

Riju huffed angrily. “I'm not walking to the other side of the damn city,” she said. “And you KNOW if I called Mom she would have asked where you were.”

“And you couldn't think of a good enough excuse?”

Riju narrowed her eyes at her sister. “Don't you think if I had a good excuse, I would have used it?” She crossed her arms again. “I'm done covering your ass.”

Urbosa shrugged. “It's not like it's a big secret anymore.”

“Yeah,” Riju started, following her sister to the car. “About that. I translated the rest of those notes from the Gerudo. Well, Mom helped with a lot of it. But -”

“Gerudo?” Mipha repeated.

Urbosa hesitated, turning to glance at her friends over her shoulder. She caught Link's narrowed gaze.

“Gerudo,” Zelda whispered to herself, then, louder, “You're Gerudo.” It wasn't a question.

Mipha looked between them. “What's a Gerudo?”

“I'm not Gerudo,” Urbosa hissed, but her face softened as she hesitated. “I mean, I guess, a little bit.”

“What's a gerudo?” Mipha repeated.

“The Gerudo is an ancient race,” Zelda said. “I came across a few notes on them. They're a race of only women. According to Hyrule's history, only one male is born among them every hundred years. One of those men included a reincarnation of Ganondorf.”
“Reincarnation?” Revali repeated.

“Ganondorf himself hasn't always been able to return to Hyrule. Or, so I've read. It seems over the history of Hyrule, there have been other instances where others have tried to overthrow the kingdom in his stead. Believe it or not, there are those who follow him.”

“Hold up,” Daruk said. “Like, people right here, right now?”

“No,” Zelda said quickly. “I mean. I don't think so. A lot of the history of Hyrule has been lost on people. No one even knows who he is. I can't imagine he has any followers now.”

“So, what about these Gerudo?” Mipha asked. She turned to Urbosa. “What have you been translating?”

“Not much,” Urbosa admitted. “I always knew a little bit about the Gerudo. Mom told Riju and I stories of them. We knew it was a part of our heritage. But once the cat was out of the bag about all of this, Mom told us more about it. She had these old books and notes that were written in Gerudo, and she started teaching us more of the language so we could read the books. She never bothered to open them before, but she was sure there was something in there that would be important.”

“And?” Revali pressed.

“And,” Riju started, holding a finger up and grinning. “I found out that Gerudos are totally badass and if you have any hope of winning this, its to have us on your team!”

Urbosa narrowed her gaze on her younger sister. “Is that really all you found?”

Riju sneered at Urbosa. “That,” she started casually. “And something about a group called the Yiga Clan.”

“What's the Yiga Clan?” Link asked carefully.

“A bunch of wannabes who probably only want to get their grubby hands on the Triforce.”

“More of Ganondorf's minions?” Zelda asked.

“Followers,” Riju said, and shrugged. “It was only mentioned briefly. It was from a thousand some odd years ago, so I doubt its anything relevant.”

“See what else you can find out,” Zelda said. “We can never be too careful, right?”

“Guess our vacation is over,” Revali said.


“Study while you can,” Zelda said. “I'm calling a team meeting this weekend.”

Revali groaned loudly as he moved to his car. “I want a raise.”

“Am I on the team now?” Riju asked excitedly.

“No way in hell,” Urbosa said as she dragged her sister back to the car.

“Well,” Mipha started, turning to get back into the Firebird. “I walked here this morning, so you can drive be home.”
Link's mind was on the Yiga Clan, but he smiled at Mipha and slid into the driver's seat. “Alright,” he said. “But we're stopping to get tacos.”
Chapter 57

It was nearing noon when Zelda's group text alerted Link, and it couldn't have come at a better
time. He shook his head as he watched his father skate across the parking lot, standing on one end
of the cart while his sister stood on the other, cheering loudly. He kept his distance from them just
in case anyone should recognize him – and let's be honest, who didn't? - and squinted down at his
phone, shifting it slightly to keep the glare of the sun away.

1:00. The guards will let you through the front gate. Don't consider this an open invitation.

He looked up from his phone to see his father and sister nearly collide with an oncoming vehicle.
Aryll raised a fist in the air and shouted at the driver while her father spun the cart around and
pushed them into the empty spot beside their own vehicle. He grabbed his daughter, spinning her
around him before planting her firmly on the ground. The two of them laughed.

Link looked down when his phone alerted him of another text.

Sounds fancy, Revali's response said. What's the password?

Is there a dress code? Daruk's came in almost immediately after, and a second followed that. I've
never had a secret meeting with a princess.

Revali followed that with a series of suggestive emoticons and finished it with a few winking faces.

I hate you all was Zelda's reply. Please be on your best behavior.

That's asking a lot of these guys came Urbosa's text. Are you sure you don't want to rethink this?

Zelda's response was to simply send an emoticon that looked exhausted with them all. After a
moment, she followed that with a more cryptic response. I'll explain it all later.

Revali followed that with a gif of a saluting soldier.

Daruk's text came in just moments later. No one got back to me on that dress code thing...

WEAR WHATEVER YOU FUCKING WANT!

Link was sure Zelda would regret that text.

Orly? Came Revali's response. But to the group's surprise, he didn't follow that with anything
further.

“_heads up!”

Link looked up from his phone as his father threw an armful of t-shirts at him. He leapt forward to
catch them and brought them to his chest in an attempt to keep them from falling out of his arms.

“Don't ruin those shirts, too, Link,” Aryll scolded him.

“Yeah,” his father said. “I'm not buying you anymore.”

“You didn't have to buy these,” Link reminded him.

“But I wanted to go shopping, too!”
“Me too!” His father grinned at him.

“You guys are so weird,” Link muttered. He slid into the front seat of the car and waited for his father and sister to follow suit. He turned back to his phone, a few more new messages waiting for him to view.

*Wait, what's going on?* Mipha asked.

*Earth to Mipha* was Urbosa’s reply.

*Leave it to Link and Mipha to not be paying attention,* Daruk wrote.

Revali sent a few more winking faces.

*I'm trying to study!!!*

Link decided to finally chime in. He simply sent an emoji of a woman and a shopping bag.

*The fuck is that supposed to mean?* Daruk sent in response.

Link replied with an emoji of a hand with nail polish.

*Nice* came Urbosa’s reply. *Who do you go to? I need a new girl.*

Revali’s text came next. *I'm out.*

Mipha followed. *Oh, wait, 1:00?*

*OMG* was from Zelda. *Never again.*

“Is that all you kids do these days?” his father said as he started the car. “Fight monsters and text all day?”

“It's great to be a millennial,” Link said without looking up from his phone.

“I don't do that, Daddy!” Aryll chimed in from the back seat.

“That's because you're my perfect little angle,” his father said, looking at Aryll through the rearview mirror. “The first one is always a mistake. But with you, I got it right.”

“That's a good parenting thing to say,” Link said.

His father moved his hand to rest against the headrest of the passenger seat – purposefully hitting Link in the process – and checked the area before backing out of the parking spot.

“If there's anything I've learned as a father,” he started, putting the car into drive and navigating the parking lot. “It's that children will always test your patience. And in the end, you either kill them, or you come out a better person.”

“That's what you've learned?” Link rolled his eyes. “That's not much of a life lesson. The way I see it, we're still alive, and you're still a terrible parent.”

“Well, I never said I learned anything from that lesson,” his father said. “You try it and tell me how easy it is.”

“I'm easy, right Daddy?” Aryll said.
Her father practically snorted. “Don't ever be easy,” he muttered.

“You are the worst person,” Link said.

Aryll frowned. “Why can't I be easy?”

“Shut up, Ary,” Link snapped. “Why do you listen to anything he says?”

Aryll's lip quivered. “Because Daddy is the best daddy!”

“Yeah, Link,” his father said. “Haven't you gotten the memo?”

“Are we a bad family?” Aryll whined.

“We're so bad we're good,” her father said reassuringly to her.

But Aryll's brows only furrowed. “I don't know what that's supposed to mean, Daddy.”

Link groaned and let his head hit the window. “Why?” he said to himself. “Why me?”

“Don't be so dramatic,” his father said to him. “Your life would be so boring without us.”

“You know,” Link started. “I don't think that's such a bad thing.”

His father grinned over at him. “What's the matter, Mr. Hero? Day job getting to be too much for ya?”

Link's gaze narrowed on his father before he pulled away to look out the window, but he said nothing. He felt his father's gaze on him for a moment longer before he turned his attention back to his daughter.

“What's next, Your Highness?” he said in the rearview mirror.

*****

Link trudged along with his father and sister as they continued to drag him around the city, first to bring Aryll to the local shelter to play with the puppies, and then to her favorite ice cream stand where they each enjoyed an ice cream cone. It was nearing one o'clock when they finally made it home, but Link wasn't particularly in a hurry to get to their secret meeting. In fact, he was in a slightly better mood since that morning. Instead of unanswered questions about the Yiga Clan, the Gerudo, or even what Zelda wanted to talk about, he decided to focus his energy on following his little sister around as she showed him to her favorite dogs at the shelter. It felt like months since he had really spent time with his little sister, or his father for that matter, and for a moment, he appreciated their company and forgetting his own troubles, even if only for a little while.

But as one o'clock came around, he decided to make his way to Zelda's, where he was escorted inside nearly twenty minutes late. Despite that, the guards seemed to be expecting him, and they brought him right into a conference room of sorts where the rest of his friends waited. Revali looked at the invisible watch on his wrist as Link entered, and Zelda rolled her eyes in exasperation.

“Look who decided to show,” Daruk said.

“Late as always,” Revali commented.

Link flashed his fingers at Urbosa and wiggled them in the air. “Like the color?”
“Ah, yes,” she started. “Nude. Goes great with your makeup.”

Mipha looked down at her own, plain nails. “I stopped getting my done when they kept getting coated in all your blood,” she muttered.

Revali leaned over to Daruk and they inspected their own nails.

“Do you feel like doing manly stuff after this?” Daruk asked.

Revali nodded. “We are the only two men here. We must stand strong in our manliness. Link may be lost, but we do not have to succumb!”

“Can we get to it, then?” Zelda said tiredly. She dropped a couple of books on to the large, oval table.

“Let the secret meeting begin,” Daruk said with a nod.

“What's this about, anyway?” Urbosa asked.

Zelda hesitated. She opened one of the books on the table. “Well,” she started. “I was trying to do more research into these portals, specifically the first one we tried to find. Impa has been... less than helpful in the matter. Secretive, even. So, I decided to take matter into my own hands and try to get us ahead in this war.”

“And?” Revali asked.

“What I found is... unsettling.”

The group waited in silence for her to continue.

“This one talks about the fall of the hero,” she continued quietly. “It tells of a time where Hylia's descendant and her Chosen Hero failed in their duty to protect Hyrule.”

“How is that possible?” Revali said, his gaze narrowing. “I've been telling myself this whole time that we're destined to win this bullshit, and now you're telling me you're fucking ancestors have failed?”

Zelda's brows knit together. “It says that Ganondorf was able to take possession of the complete Triforce, but was sealed away by the Seven Sages. As a result, his power created a dark underworld, which is likely where all these beasts and monsters are coming from.”

“I don't understand,” Urbosa started. “He wasn't defeated, but Hyrule never fell to him?”

“The Triforce was eventually split,” Zelda explained, “which likely prevented him from doing further damage. The Triforce pieces of Courage and Wisdom found their way back to Hylia's descendant and the Chosen Hero. Through the efforts and sacrifices of the Sages and something about Knights, the next hero was able to rise and stop the next rise of Ganondorf. It's a continuous cycle.”

“So, long story short,” Revali said, crossing his arms. “We could still lose this war.”

Zelda hesitated and closed the book. “Yes, I suppose we could.”

“I can see why Impa wouldn't want us to find out,” Mipha said softly. She turned her gaze to Link, but he was looking down at his feet, stretched out in front of him as he leaned back in the leather chair. It turned side to side slightly.
“There's more,” Zelda said carefully. “In other books I've found. About the Sheikah.”

“I'm guessing it's not good news,” Daruk muttered.

Zelda shook her head. “It talks about the Yiga Clan.” She hesitated. “They're a group made up of ex Sheikah who have chosen to follow Ganondorf.”

“So, you're telling us that Impa may not be on our side?” Revali hissed. “She's setting us all up to die.”

Zelda pinched her lips together and averted her gaze. “No. I don't think so.”

“But you don't know,” Revali snapped at her.

“Why would the Sheikah do that?” Mipha asked.

“There were disagreements between the Hylians and the Sheikah,” Zelda explained. “The Sheikah wanted to use advanced technologies to help defeat Ganondorf, but the Hylians were skeptical, to say the least. They were afraid of the technology being misused and thus distrusted the Sheikah. The Sheikah became outcasts, and those that were angry at the betrayal broke their loyalties with the kingdom of Hyrule. They formed the Yiga Clan and dedicated themselves to serving Ganondorf.”

“Do we know if the Yiga Clan still exists?” Daruk asked.

Zelda shook her head.

“We need answers,” Mipha said. “Impa will have to know something about this.”

“She won't help me,” Zelda said, shaking her head. “Every time I bring something up, she tells me that they're just legends, or stories from Hyrule's history.” She paused. “I haven't dared ask her about the Yiga Clan.”

“She's hiding something,” Daruk said.

“We'll need to take this into our own hands,” Urbosa said.

“But how?” Mipha asked. “We don't know where to begin.”

“I have an idea,” Urbosa replied. She tapped a manicured finger on the book. “There's mention of an old, Yiga Clan hideout in the Gerudo Desert.”

“You're not serious,” Link said, cocking a brow. “That desert is huge. There's nothing out there. You couldn't pay me to go out there.”

“I have to agree with Link,” Revali said. “We'll definitely get lost and die out there.”

Urbosa rolled her eyes. “It's not a wasteland.”

“Actually,” Mipha said. “That is the technical term for a place with no inhabitants.”

“Hundreds of thousands of years ago, the Gerudo race thrived there.”

“And there's a reason why they don't anymore,” Daruk pointed out.

“What do you suppose happened to them?” Zelda asked softly. She flipped through the pages of the
book. “Wouldn't it be worth finding out?”

“Maybe,” Mipha said.

Revali shook his head. “We don't have enough information on the Yiga Clan. And we don't have the time to waste trying to get answers,” he said. “For all we know, Ganondorf could make his appearance tomorrow. We need to focus our efforts on stopping him before he gets his chance. We need to close the portals and give ourselves every advantage we can get our hands on.”

“That's the smartest idea you've had yet,” Daruk said.

Revali shrugged. “It happens from time to time. Especially when the other options are completely suicide. I'm not throwing my life away like that.”

“It seems like the Triforce is causing a whole lot of problems,” Mipha said.

“Yeah,” Revali agreed. “Wouldn't it be simpler to, I don't know, destroy it or something?”

Zelda shook her head. “The Triforce is what keeps our world in balance. Without it, the whole world would be destroyed. And from some of the books I've read, that's exactly what someone tried to do. It's our responsibility to protect it and keep it from falling into the wrong hands. The curse of Demise thousands of years ago is one we must bear for all of time.”

“So, what's the plan, then?” Urbosa asked. “The portals – did you find anything of use?”

“There is something,” Zelda said slowly. “Impa had every reason to send us to the forest in search of the first portal. It seems that when the sword was removed, that may have been what started everything.”

“What do you mean?” Link asked, narrowing his gaze on her.

“I mean,” she started. “When you removed the sword, you opened the first portal.”
All eyes were on Link. Revali looked the angriest, but the others simply regarded him with wary curiosity or sympathy.

“All right,” he grunted. “It's not like I knew that would happen.”

“I can't confirm for sure if that's what happened,” Zelda said. “But based on what I've read from other events, it is a very real possibility.”

“So, what?” Daruk asked. “What does this mean? How do we close it?”

“It's possible that it can't be closed until the sword is returned,” Zelda said. “If that is the case, it can't be closed until Ganondorf is defeated and he is sealed away.”

“But there's still one other portal,” Urbosa said. “Right?”

Zelda nodded. “We should find it and close it as soon as we can,” she said. “Then, if time allows us, we can focus our efforts on researching the Yiga Clan some more. As long as we can, we should be proactive in keeping Ganondorf's forces as minimal as possible before he makes his return.”

“Do we have any clue where the next portal is?” Revali asked. “You know, maybe we can get ahead of this before more chaos ensues?”

Zelda shook her head. “We don't have any clues to the next portal right now,” she said. “Impa would tell me if she knew something.”

“Would she?” Urbosa asked skeptically.

Zelda hesitated. “I've taken matters into my own hands,” she said. “I'm not relying on Impa. But that doesn't mean I know what I'm doing, either. I don't even know where to begin searching for the next portal.”

“Maybe we should look at the other two,” Mipha suggested. “They were at the Citadel and the Temple of Time.”

“The Temple of Time supposedly used to once protect the Master Sword,” Zelda said.

“So, there's a lot of history there,” Mipha concluded. “It's an important place.”

“But why put a portal there?” Daruk asked.

“And a fake Ganondorf,” Revali muttered.

“Maybe it's like Harry Potter,” Urbosa said. “And the Hor-thingies.”

Mipha giggled. “Horcruxes?”

Urbosa pointed a finger at her. “Yeah. Those.”

“Sounds right,” Link said. “Ganondorf is a huge Harry Potter fan, didn't you know?”

“There's some legitimacy behind that,” Zelda said. “I mean, the idea of Horcruxes. There was once
a lot of power there. It only makes sense that Ganondorf would be able to utilize that to his advantage. I don't think the portals are placed anywhere by accident.”

“What about the Citadel, then?” Daruk asked.

“There's a lot of mystery surrounding the Citadel,” Zelda admitted. “But, thousands of years ago, it did remain Hyrule's last defense during the age of the Great Calamity. Hyrulean soldiers and Knights made their last stand there, where they were ultimately destroyed. I mean, completely annihilated. They didn't stand a damn chance.”

“Sounds pleasant,” Revali muttered.

“So,” Urbosa started. “Sources of power and history. That's what we're looking for in the next portal.”

“There's got to be a ton of places like that around Hyrule,” Mipha said.

Zelda nodded. “That was my thinking, too. I've narrowed it down to a few places that I think would be worth checking out.” She unrolled a map and pointed to a few marked locations. The first place she pointed to was to the north-west of the city, just on the edge of the distant mountain range in the Hebra region. “This is the location of the Forgotten Temple,” she explained. “It holds a large Goddess statue that is thought to be as old as Hyrule itself, dating back to when Demise first placed the curse on the kingdom.”

“Seems logical enough,” Revali said.

“What are these other places?” Daruk asked.

Zelda's finger moved across the map to the other marked location. “Spectacle Rock,” she said. “Supposedly, it was once Ganondorf's lair.”


Zelda continued. “And this,” she started, moving her finger once more, though she hesitated. “This is a shrine,” she said softly. “Actually, I don't think anyone knows of its location. No one but the Sheikah.” She pulled her finger off the map and straightened. “Impa was keeping this a secret.”

“What's so special about it?” Urbosa asked.

“It was known as the Shrine of Resurrection,” she said. “It was apparently used during the Great Calamity when the hero fell.”

“Used?” Mipha asked, her brows furrowed. “Resurrection?”

“It could bring back the dead?” Revali cocked his head to the side. “That could be useful.”

“I hardly think it has any magical healing properties,” Zelda said.

“What if it does?” Urbosa suggested. “It was used, wasn't it? Successfully?”

Zelda hesitated. “According to the Sheikah notes I found, yes.” She continued quickly. “But that was thousands of years ago. And clearly the Sheikah have made it a point to keep it a secret.”

“Why would they want to keep that a secret?” Mipha asked.

“Because they're all part of the Yiga Clan,” Revali said, crossing his arms. “Of course they don't
want any of us to survive this war.”

Zelda was hesitant. She bit the corner of her lip. “Impa isn't with the Yiga Clan.”

Daruk narrowed his gaze on her. “Can you say that with complete faith?”

Zelda pulled her gaze away and did not answer him.

“Well,” Urbosa said, leaning back in her chair. “Maybe we should check out this Forgotten Temple, then?”

“It's a start,” Daruk said with a nod.

“Can it wait until after finals?” Mipha asked with a careful smile. “Please, Hylia, just let me pass this year.”

Zelda smiled. “Sure. As long as Ganondorf doesn't have any plans between now and then.”

*****

For the first time in his life, Link opened his text book and actually studied – or attempted to study – the equations on the pages. What better time to turn over a new leaf than the day before finals? He still couldn't help but to feel that it was all for nothing – that he would never survive the war for any of it to matter. And learning about the Shrine of Resurrection didn't make him feel any more confident in his abilities. But, for a moment, studying gave him purpose – a different purpose. A purpose he could – for the most part – control in his life.

However, he wasn't more than a page in when his phone went off, alerting him of a text message from Zelda.

We need to talk.

Link pondered the message for a moment. Then, with a sigh, he typed out his reply.

Are you breaking up with me?

Her response did not take long. Yes. Our heroic partnership is over.

Thank the Goddesses, Link typed back. Guess I have to start putting more effort into my life now.

Can you come over? Another text came through immediately following that one. No, this isn't a booty call.

Well you just take the fun out of everything. He paused after he hit send, then typed again. I'll be over in a few.

He didn't exactly feel like going out. In fact, he was quite happy to pretend to be a normal high schooler, even if only for a day. But there was something on her mind, he was sure of that. Something she didn't want to say in front of the others.

Link closed the textbook almost regretfully, then grabbed a fresh t-shirt from off his bed, exchanging it for the one he had on. Outside, it was raining, but he didn't bother to wear anything
more to protect himself from the elements. He grabbed his father's keys from the counter, holding them in the air as he moved through the kitchen to indicate that he was leaving.

“Oh, sure, go right ahead,” his father said, looking over at his son from his seat on the couch. “Take my car. Take my wallet too, why don't you.”

“Thanks,” Link called over his shoulder as the door closed behind him.

It only took him a few minutes to navigate the city, hitting mostly green lights as he made his way to the palace of the royal family that rested just on the northern border of the city. It seemed the security guards were expecting his arrival, as they let him right through the tall gates when he approached. He was slightly disappointed that he didn't have more hoops to jump through. An iris and finger scanner, for example, to prove his identity. A special badge that needed to be flashed as he drove up. Something to make him feel just that much cooler. As if being welcomed into the palace wasn't cool enough.

Zelda was waiting for him when he was brought inside. She immediately dismissed the guards, then without a word, turned and walked down the hall. Link hesitated before jogging to catch up with her.

“Is that how you greet all your guests?” he said.

“You're hardly a guest,” she said, keeping her gaze straight forward. “As Hero of Hyrule, you can come and go as you please.”

“Oh, yeah?”

“Within reason,” she said, glancing at him from the corner of her eye.

“So, I can just swing by tomorrow and raid your fridge?”

Zelda shrugged. “If it pleases you.”

“You're being weird,” Link said.

Zelda pulled at his wrist as they turned quickly down another hallway. Her pace quickened and she kept close to the wall. Before he realized where they were going, he found himself back in the dark underground tunnel they came through when they stole the sword back.

“You said this wasn't a booty call,” Link said.

“Listen,” she hissed. “There's security all over this damn place. As far as I know, there isn't much around here, but we need to be careful where we talk and what we say.”

“Okay,” Link said slowly, his voice hushed. “What's going on?”

“I think there are still members of the Yiga Clan,” Zelda said. “Sheikah who are working for my father. Whether it's Impa or someone else. There is a mole.”

Link narrowed his gaze on her. “Do you know this for a fact? Or are you making an assumption?”

“I'm putting the pieces together,” Zelda hissed. “You know I'm the last one to jump to this conclusion.” She averted his gaze and looked down the dark hall. “Impa came to me after you guys left. She pulled me into the library. She warded it.”

“Warded it?”
“I don't know much about their powers,” Zelda said, “But I know she did something. I could feel it the pressure. Whatever she did, it stopped the security cameras. It would have stopped any devices if the room was bugged. It probably would have been enough to throw off any other Sheikah who may have been watching us.” She turned back to Link. “She warded it. And she told me to stop looking into the Yiga Clan.”

Link blinked at her for a moment. “So, obviously we keep looking into it,” he said.

Zelda shook her head. “No. We can't. Not yet.”

Link's gaze hardened. “Are you insane? That's all we need to know that we should be looking into it.”

“I trust Impa,” Zelda said fiercely.

“How can you trust her?” Link's voice raised.

“Because she's all I have!” Zelda hesitated, then lowered her voice. “My mother trusted her with everything. When she died... Impa practically raised me when my father was simply too busy. Everything I know about the history of Hyrule came from her. She never kept secrets from me. If she's keeping secrets now... there has to be a reason for it. When the time is right, she will tell us. She'd never keep us in the dark, not at the risk of our lives or the future of Hyrule.”

Link said nothing for a moment. The silence was heavy between them as Link considered her words. Finally, he spoke. “What do you want us to do?”

“I think,” she started, “we should continue to focus our efforts on the portals. I think we can try to find the next one. Maybe it is at the Forgotten Temple. It's worth taking a look. We need to be completely focused on stopping Ganondorf. Everything else can come after.”

Link nodded once. “Alright,” he said, his voice steady. “I trust you.”

“Thank you,” she said softly. “I needed you to know. But I couldn't have everyone else know. Not yet.”

Link grit his teeth together. “They won't be happy.”

“I'll cross that bridge when we get to it,” she said. She lead the way out of the passageway and back into the palace.

“I don't know what will happen,” Zelda continued. “But I have a feeling Ganondorf has been plotting out every move. And when he makes his appearance, it will be quick and sudden. I know you don't want to hear this, but we will have to rely on our army to keep our enemies at bay. We'll need people to have our backs while we finish this. This has gone way beyond what the six of us can handle by ourselves.”

Link listened quietly as he walked beside her through the halls. He nodded when she finished, but offered nothing more. When she stopped walking, he looked up, surprised to see Mipha, Daruk, Urbosa, and Revali standing before them.

“What are you guys doing here?” Zelda asked carefully. “And how did you get in?”

Link met Mipha's gaze questioningly, but she tore her eyes away.

“Revali pulled the 'Do you know who I am' card,” Urbosa said, crossing her arms.
Revali smirked. “I am one of Hyrule's Champions, as appointed by the princess herself. You would think that means something.”

Zelda turned her gaze to the ceiling and a smile pulled at her lips. “Oh. Right. I guess I forgot to give security the memo.”

“I thought they were going to shoot him,” Daruk said with a grin. “Too bad they didn't.”

Zelda shrugged. “So, what do you want?”

“Since no one responded to our texts,” Urbosa started, narrowing her eyes, “we felt we should come and warn you.”

Zelda raised a brow. “Warn me? About what?”

Urbosa turned her gaze to Mipha, hesitant.

“My parents,” Mipha said softly, her gaze on the floor. “They're... not happy.” She shook her head. “Ever since the media blow up,” she continued. “They refuse to accept that I have any part of this. They've been arguing ever since. Talking about how King Roham betrayed them. I don't know what's going on, but they're on their way here as we speak.”

Zelda's brows knit together. “I won't say we don't need your help, Mipha, but -”

“It's more than that,” Mipha said quickly. “I think we're in deeper than we realize.”

Zelda opened her mouth to speak, but it snapped shut as her father rounded the corner, his gaze hard and angry. Beside him, a man and a woman stepped forward, their gazes equally as angry.
“Mom,” Mipha started, her hard gaze on her parents. “Dad. I -”

“Enough.” Mipha’s father stepped forward. “Under no circumstances will you continue this, Mipha.”

“I won’t let my friends -”

“Friends?” he sneered. “You are finished with them. I won’t see you near Link again.” He turned to King Roham, letting his angry gaze pause for a moment on Link first. “This ends our alliance.”

King Roham’s angry glare disappeared as he turned his attention to the man beside him. “Please understand -”

“We had an agreement,” he hissed. “You dragged my daughter into this and broke that agreement.”

“Dorephan, I offered you and your family nothing but safety -”

“And sent my daughter into a war that has nothing to do with us!”

“This war,” King Roham growled, “has everything to do with you. If Ganondorf succeeds, there will be nothing left. He will destroy Hyrule, and then Termina, Labrynna, and Holodrum. He will destroy the entire world.”

“That is the difference between you and I, Roham,” Dorephan said. “This war of yours – it’s all based on legends. When war threatens your lands, you wait for your Chosen Heroes to come to your aid. If your Goddess Hylia is as real as you Hylian’s believe her to be, surely she wouldn’t have let such a curse befall the kingdom. That curse is your burden to bear, not ours. My daughter will have no part in these foolish affairs. Our time here in Hyrule is over. We will return to Termina. Do not ask for our aid any longer.” He turned his gaze back to his daughter. “We’re done here, Mipha.”

Mipha stared blankly at her father, her mouth open slightly. “No,” she started. “What are you talking about? This is our home!”

“Our home is in Termina,” Dorephan said sharply. “You are no Hylian and should not be concerned with what happens here.”

“What?” Mipha hissed. “How long have you been lying to me?”

“Tell your daughter the truth, Dorephan,” Roham said. His cold gaze rested on the man beside him, but Dorephan did not turn to him. “She deserves to know the truth.”

“She cannot possibly understand -”

“Don’t condescend me!” Mipha shouted, her hands balled into fists at her side.

“This is not the place,” her father hissed.

“I won’t go with you,” she said sternly. “I won’t abandon Hyrule. I want the truth, and I want it now.”

Her father hesitated. He turned his gaze from Mipha, to Zelda, then to King Roham. He knew she
would find out one way or another. There was no sense keeping the secret any longer.

“When you were born,” he started, “We were approached by Dorian, one of the Sheikah. He told us that you had a special power that would catch the attention of Ganondorf's followers, and that they would try to use that power to strengthen Ganondorf's forces, and Ganondorf himself.” His gaze moved briefly to King Roham before continuing. “I have never trusted the Sheikah, but I trusted my friend. King Roham offered us protection in Hyrule. In exchange, a promise. A promise that he would not drag us into any future wars with Ganondorf. A promise that was made long before we came to lead Termina.” His angry gaze narrowed on the king. “You promised to protect my family, and yet even in your protection, she found herself in Ganondorf's very hands. You've broken our agreement – your promise. You've broken our trust.”

“He had nothing to do with that,” Zelda said. “No one did.”

“Then how did she end up kidnapped?” Dorephan hissed.

Zelda tore her gaze away and said nothing. Her brows furrowed as she tried desperately to put the pieces together.

“The Sheikah were the only ones who knew of her power,” Dorephan said.

“The Sheikah are loyal to us,” King Roham said fiercely.

“Then a traitor lies among them,” Dorephan said simply. “We are no safer here than we were in Termina.”

“If you return to Termina,” King Roham started, his gaze hard, “I cannot offer our protection.”

“You can no longer offer us protection,” Dorephan said. “Your words are empty.”

“No,” Mipha said. “I'm not leaving Hyrule. They need me here.”

“This war has nothing to do with us,” Dorephan said sternly. “You will have no part in these affairs.”

“This war has everything to do with us,” Mipha said, her voice raising. “If Hyrule falls, so will the rest of the world. Our armies don't stand a chance. Whether you believe it or not, there are only two people who can end this war. It's because of them I'm alive. It's because of them this world will survive. Hyrule is counting on me – on us – to save it, just as heroes have done thousands of years ago. I've seen the truth – I've seen Hylia – with my own eyes. I see the power of Hylia in Zelda. I've seen the Triforces mark their hands. You can deny it all you want, but I can't. I won't. I belong here, and I will help save Hyrule.”

“Mipha,” King Roham started. “Your father is right. I don't believe you should leave Hyrule, but I cannot stand by and let you fight our battles. Ganondorf will do whatever it takes to take advantage of your power. In his hands, it could prove to be very dangerous. It could very well put all the effort Link and Zelda have done to waste. I can promise that the Sheikah will keep you safe within my boundaries, but I cannot see to your safety beyond Hyrule. Regardless, you should have no part in this war. For the safety of you and your family, for the safety of Link and my daughter, and for the safety of this world.”

Mipha stared blankly at the king. Her brows furrowed after a moment, and she turned her gaze to her friends, then to her father. “I won't leave Hyrule,” she said, but her voice softened. “If you want me to stand down, I will stand down.”
Zelda held her careful gaze on Mipha, but said nothing.

Dorephan was quiet as he looked upon his daughter, seemingly debating his options and the consequences of each.

“Your hesitance suggests that you know I am right,” King Roham addressed Dorephan. “Termina won't be any safer than Hyrule.”

Dorephan turned his gaze to the king. “Perhaps we should discuss these matters in private.”

King Roham nodded his head once, and without a word further, he lead Mipha's parents down the hall. The Champions fell silent, watching as they rounded the corner. They waited until their footsteps disappeared before speaking.

“What in the actual fuck,” Revali said.

“So, that's it?” Urbosa said, turning her attention to Mipha. “You're going with them?”

Mipha hesitated, her gaze on her feet. “What choice do I have?”

“Well, you could not go,” Revali said. “I'm sure you can have sleepovers with Urbosa. And pillow fights. And -” Daruk elbowed him hard in his ribs and he gasped for air. When he caught his breath, he sneered over at Daruk, but said nothing more.

“You're not safe in Termina,” Zelda said, her gaze hard.

“In their defense,” Daruk said, “she's not any safer here. None of us are.”

“Maybe they'll decide to stay,” Revali said with a shrug.

Mipha stared at the ground. She genuinely did not know what she would do if they left Hyrule. She couldn't bring herself to leave the only home she ever knew. She couldn't abandon her friends who were risking their lives for the world. She couldn't leave Link. She turned her gaze to him, but he was looking down the hall, his hands shoved in his pockets as he always did when he was deep in thought, which seemed to be more and more often lately.

“I guess all we can do is wait,” Urbosa said. “Wait and see what they decide.”

Mipha shook her head. “I won't go. I don't care what they want.”

“You're a minor,” Urbosa reminded her. “I don't think that will be a decision you can make so easily, and they won't leave you here.”

“Well, sure, if you want to be logical about this,” Revali said. “But she's not a child, either. If she's old enough to fight against the forces of evil, I think she can make her own decisions as to whether or not she remains in Hyrule.”

“Let's not open that can of worms,” Urbosa said. “That's not exactly flying well with anyone, either. No one under the age of eighteen can join the army. Those rules don't exactly bend for us, regardless if its in our destinies or not.”

“My father will figure this out,” Zelda said. “He and Dorephan respect each other. They've always got along. I'm sure they will come to a reasonable agreement.”

“And what if they don't?” Daruk asked. “What's the plan, then?”
“My father will see to their safety,” Zelda said. “All we can do is move forward in our original plans; close the portals and stop Ganondorf.”
It was almost an hour before Dorephan and King Roham emerged from the palace, strolling across the manicured courtyard where the six champions waited. To their surprise, the two men seemed relatively relaxed, even cheerful in each other's company, as if an old friendship had been rekindled. Mipha stood as they approached, watching with anxious eyes to hear her father's decision.

“There is an important matter we must tend to in Termina,” her father said to her. “However; I will agree to let you stay here in Hyrule under the condition that you no longer concern yourself with the impending war.”


Dorephan narrowed his gaze on his daughter. “Do not take this lightly, Mipha,” he warned her. “Step one toe out of line and we will go back to Termina.”

Mipha said nothing, holding her gaze on her father until he turned his back on her. He made his way back to the palace, leaving King Roham alone with them for a moment.

King Roham turned to follow Dorephan, looking over his shoulder just long enough to issue his own warning to the Champions. “Our alliance is on thin ice, Zelda. I support Dorephan's decision to the fullest. You should know that I expect you to cooperate in the matter. However, as Hyrule's Champions, the fate of the world lies on your shoulders, and I expect you to make the decision necessary to keep this world safe. Those... decisions... do not need to be of my knowledge.” And with that, he followed Dorephan back to the palace.

“Cryptic,” Revali said.

Zelda stared blankly after her father. Once they were inside, she cursed under her breath. “That bastard,” she hissed. “Why would he put that on me?”

Urbosa shrugged. “So our choices could make or break a very important alliance,” she said. “No pressure at all.”

“Well, as long as he doesn't know about it,” Daruk offered in an attempt to be helpful.

“Great,” Revali said. “We're on our own. No surprise there. Why would anyone want to help us?” His light laugh grew slightly panicked as he continued. “It's okay. We don't need help. We got this,
right guys? Guys?"

Urbosa patted Revali's head and his shoulders slumped. “It's okay,” she cooed to him. “You're a traumatized flight risk, aren't you? Well, Momma's gonna get you some beer and we're gonna work through these feelings.”

Revali snarled and shrugged her off of him. “Cut it out.” He folded his arms over his chest, still slightly sulking. In an attempt to lighten the mood, he turned his attention to Link, who had been way too quiet through the entire ordeal. “Hey! Earth to Mr. Hero. Care to weigh in on anything, or are you just going to keep brooding?”

Link glanced at Revali and narrowed his gaze. “I'm not brooding.”

Urbosa nodded in agreement. “You're brooding.”

Daruk narrowed his gaze on Link. “He's hiding something.”

“I'm not hiding anything,” Link said. He had to practically bite his tongue to keep from snapping in response and seeming more obvious than he apparently already was.

“Nah, he's brooding,” Revali said. “Almost got his girlfriend taken away from him.” He yelped when Urbosa elbowed him sharply in the ribcage.

“Girlfriend?” Mipha repeated, her cheeks warming suddenly.

“Is that not a thing?” Revali said with a disinterested tone. “I thought that was a thing.”

Link pinched the bridge of his nose. He had a headache the size of Hyrule. He listened as his friends bickered, though it was mostly Urbosa trying desperately to cover up the awkwardness that had risen after Revali's comment, and Mipha stuttering in a desperate attempt to deny all accusations. At some point, Daruk chimed in, making some crude joke to Revali, but Link hardly noticed any of this. It wasn't until Zelda spoke when his mind was grounded in reality once more.

“Alright,” she said sharply. “I'm done with you. Get out of here so I can study for finals in peace.”

“Shit,” Mipha hissed. “My first final is tomorrow!” How did the weekend get away from them?

“Suckas,” Revali said. “All we have to do tomorrow is walk across that stage.” He and Daruk high-fived.

Zelda practically pushed them through the courtyard. It was already late in the afternoon, and she wanted to use every minute she could getting some final studying in.

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The last week of school brought on an alternative schedule that crammed two classes worth of finals in the morning and giving the students the afternoon free. As the school rules stated, the free time was to be used for studying, or, with a note from a parent, they could be excused from the property all together. Of course, hardly any of the students had followed that rule, casually walking out of the building to meet up with their friends the second they were finished with their last final of the day.
On Monday morning, Mipha's parents left early for the airport to make their trip back to Termina, promising her that they would be home before the end of the week, though to Mipha, it seemed more of a threat. *We'll be home before the end of the week... don't get caught up in any hero work or you'll be on the next plane to Termina.* Of course, she had no intentions in backing out now, despite her parents' beliefs. Still, the way the media had been involved, she knew it wouldn't make her sneaking around any easier.

Mipha, Link, and Zelda made it through their first two finals, and by the afternoon, they were sitting in the bleachers outside, cheering for their three senior friends who were officially high school graduates. The speeches were long and chalked full of cliches. The ceremonial accepting of the diploma was even longer considering the number of students in the senior class. And the summer sun didn't make things any better. But by the time the pomp and circumstance had finished, the bleachers started to empty out as friends and family hurried onto the field to meet with their new graduates. Caps were thrown in the air, bouquets were passed around, and cameras and phones flashed as students hugged their parents, brothers and sisters, and fellow graduates, their images frozen in time.

They were chatting amongst themselves at the edge of the field when Urbosa, Daruk, Revali, and Teba found them, still dressed in their gowns with the exception of their caps.

“Hey, losers,” Revali said with a grin. He waved his diploma in the air. “See you next year, not!”

“Revali,” Mipha said, shaking her head. “Really? That's so ten years ago.”

“I'm bringing it back,” he said with a shrug. “'Not' should never have left. It's so much better then some of these other words you basic bitches come up with. Like, what the hell is a fleek?”

Zelda snorted. “Wow,” she said. “He graduates, and suddenly he's an eighty year old man.”

“Shove it, Princess,” he said. “Are we gonna smoke this joint or what?”

Teba shook his head. “You're embarrassing yourself, man.”

“C'mon,” Revali said, leading the way. “It's time to party and drink.”

“If it's at your house,” Mipha started warily, “you can count me out.”

“A guy throws one helluva rager and all you can think about is that one douchebag that had to shut it down.” He draped his arm around Mipha. “Did I, or did I not, have your back?”

“Oh, Revali,” she said dreamily. “Thanks for providing us with an escape. I had a great night throwing up my insides.”

“Thatta girl,” Revali said, patting her head. He leaned in closer to whisper in her ear, but he was still loud enough to be heard. “I know all the tricks, Mipha, and I know you were playing the jealousy game. Did it even work?”

Mipha blushed and scooted out from under his shoulder.

“Is it just me,” Urbosa started, “or is he extra douchey today?”

“That piece of paper is getting to his head,” Daruk said.

“I was starting to appreciate the more humble Revali,” Teba said.
“Yeah, but that was getting to him, too,” Urbosa said with a frown.

“Will you quit it?” Revali snapped over his shoulder. “Can't a guy have a meltdown without ya'll throwing it in his face?”

Teba shook his head. “Sorry, man.”

Revali threw his arms in the air as he walked across the parking lot.

“Where are you going?” Urbosa called after him.

“Partying,” he said simply.
Link awoke with a start. His head was pounding. He opened his eyes and waited for his vision to focus. He didn't recognize the room he was in. Where the hell was he? There was a grunt at his side, and he turned over and almost rolled over Daruk who was also laying on the floor. His eyes were closed, but his waving hand indicated that he was not completely asleep as he waved off Link.

“Five minutes,” he grunted simply.

And then it all came back to him. The club Revali dragged them to. The loud music, the drinks, the dancing. He remembered the stares as they walked through the city. It had been a while since the big media blow up, and since then, they had basically been preoccupied with school. But as they hit the town, they were noticed. Revali picked a fight with a few of them, but others looked upon them with admiration. Young kids ran up to them excitedly, asking for their autographs. It was unlike anything Link could have imagined.

And it surely explained why they got into the club without so much as a glance at their IDs. Link didn't exactly plan on drinking, but when the drinks came for free, it would have been rude of him to say no. Mipha, on the other hand, had no problem refusing the drinks, and Revali gladly accepted the ones offered to her.

At some point in the night, Zelda had disappeared completely. The only thing he could remember clearly was Daruk and Urbosa dancing together. And damn, they made a good team. It seemed to Link something straight out of a movie. Of course, that could have been the alcohol clouding his brain.

“Wassup, bitches?” Revali called loudly as he burst into the room. He looked down at Link and grinned. “Aw, is little noob hungover?” He tossed a bottle of pills at him, and they landed in Link's lap.

Link winced and his lips pulled into a snarl. “What the hell, man?”

Revali's grin widened. Teba appeared over his shoulder. He, too, was grinning.

“Aw, man,” Teba said. “Do you remember anything last night?”
Link hesitated, then shook his head. “No, not really.” He rubbed at his forehead, then opened the bottle and quickly downed two pills.

“Yikes,” Revali said. “Let’s hope Mipha doesn’t.”

Link’s face whitened, and Revali and Teba exchanged gleeful glances.


Revali laughed loudly and Link winced further. “Oh, man, what didn't happen?”

Daruk sat up at that moment, practically hissing. “Shut up!” He looked around, blinking for a moment as he took in his surroundings. “Where are we?”

“In my basement,” Revali said with a shrug.

There was a shriek from somewhere above them, and this brought Link and Daruk to their feet. They pushed passed Revali and Teba, who were laughing together, and ran upstairs to the source of the yell.

“Revali!” Urbosa screamed at the top of her lungs. “You're so immature!”

Daruk and Link skidded to a halt in front of a door where Urbosa was standing in her underwear. Her nostrils flared as her gaze landed on them.

“I swear to Hylia,” she hissed threateningly. “I will kill you all.”

Daruk blinked blankly at her, still groggy. He rubbed at his eyes. “What's wrong?”

“That asshole put plastic wrap on the fucking toilet!”

Mipha came out of a door just down the hall, rubbing her eyes. When she lifted her arm, her t-shirt slid up slightly, revealing her bare thighs. When her vision focused and her gaze fell on Link, she yelped in surprise and fell back against the wall. She scrambled along it before falling back into the room, the door slamming behind her.

“What the fuck is happening,” Link muttered to himself.

“I need a fucking shower,” Urbosa hissed.

“I need an adult,” Daruk mumbled.

“You are the adult, man,” Link said.

“Shit.”

Fuming, Urbosa slammed the bathroom door closed, leaving Daruk and Link standing dumbly in the hallway. Daruk turned to him, and it was then that he realized what exactly Link was wearing. He snorted first, then burst into laughter.

Link looked down, first at his bare chest, then at the skirt that he recalled Urbosa wearing earlier in the night.

“What the fuck,” he muttered.

“And take off my skirt!” Urbosa yelled through the door.
“Dude,” Daruk gasped between bouts of laughter. “What the fuck?”

Link turned and snarled at Revali as he and Teba made their way up the stairs.

“I have to admit,” Revali said with a grin. “You do pull it off.”

“Don't worry,” Teba said, his face serious. “Most of the craziness happened when we got here.” He turned to glare at Revali. “I made sure of that.”

Daruk wiped at his eyes, tearing up, still grinning. “Why?”

“You guys really don't need any extra media attention,” Teba said. “Despite how Revali thinks he can win them over with his charm.” He air quoted the last word with his fingers.

“Revali, I'll fucking kill you!” Urbosa called from inside the bathroom as the shower turned on.

“Where are my pants?” Link said with regret. He never thought he'd ever have to say those words. “Will someone tell me what the hell happened?”


“Why do you have to take the fun out of everything?” Revali whined.

“Give him a break,” Teba said. His lips curled into a smile. “He has a lot of feelings to sort through.” He and Revali broke into laughter.

“Man, you like to talk when you're drunk,” Revali said.

Link traded the skirt for his jeans quickly. “I will kill you both if you don't start giving me answers,” he said in a deep growl.

“That's so scary coming from Mr. Feels-a-lot,” Revali said with a grin.

Link lunged at him then, knocking them both to the ground. It didn't take long for Link to pin Revali, despite his struggles.

“When the fuck did you get that strong?” he grunted under Link's weight.

Urbosa stepped out of the bathroom at that moment and stared at the two men on the floor. She was dressed, her hair pulled back in a wet ponytail. She shook her head at them. “Do I even want to know?”

“Link's butt hurt because he acts like a gossipy girl when he's drunk,” Revali snarled.

Urbosa frowned. “Stop teasing him,” she said. “You wouldn't know the pain that comes with being in love.”

“I – what?” Link sputtered out.

“Don't worry,” Urbosa said. “You only confessed everything to me. Revali, unfortunately, just happened to overhear.”

“Great,” Link muttered, not daring push the conversation forward.

Revali grinned up at him, grunting slightly when Link pushed him forcefully against the floor. He opened his mouth to speak further, but it snapped shut when a door opened from behind them.
Mipha squeaked when she stepped out into the hallway. Link turned and glanced at her over his shoulder, then pushed himself off of Revali, shooting him one last dirty look. He turned back to Mipha, noticing then how white her face had become. “What's wrong?”

Mipha blinked at them for a moment. Her eyes dropped to the phone in her hand, then back to Link. “Termina is under attack.”
Chapter 62

September 3 Update: For those who have been keeping up with this and have read my recent author's note (please see chapter 72 "Author's Note"...) you will know that I stupidly skipped like, 3 chapters somehow.

We are now back to our regularly scheduled chapters, with an additional note:

I apologize in advanced for these next few chapters and the lack of actual detailed action within them. I actually changed a lot in this area, rearranged chapters completely, deleted others, and changed entire ideas, and it got to the point where I was finally able to reorganize myself and the story and get back on track, but then I admittedly got frustrated and, well, the resulting next two chapters or so are just kind of rushed through. I probably could have just deleted them entirely without changing much of the plot but, whatever, it is what it is lol. So I'll probably just post these quickly so we can get back to the better stuff ;P

It took them less than twenty minutes to dress and make their way to the shrine, but each second felt like a second too long as Mipha frantically tried to get through to her parents. The calls were either dropped, or simply rang endlessly without answer, and the texts came in jarring pieces, mostly warnings for her to stay in Hyrule. That, of course, was the last thing she was going to do. Her parents, and likely all of Termina, were in trouble, and if it had anything to do with Ganondorf, they were the only ones that could save them.

Zelda and Impa were aware of the situation and waiting for them at the shrine when they arrived. Impa's response, however, couldn't have been less than ideal for Mipha.

“I cannot risk sending you over there myself,” she said to them. “Termina does not take kindly to the Sheikah. Hyrule is on thin ice with them as it is.”

“It's a four hour flight over there,” Mipha shouted in frustration. “It will be too late!”

“I can get you there in two. Termina's army will be able to hold strong until you get there.”

“What exactly are we dealing with?” Zelda asked.

“Is it a portal?” Daruk followed.

Impa shook her head. “No, a portal has not opened. It sounds like it is part of Ganondorf's army. Nothing you can't handle.”

“Why are they there?” Urbosa asked.

“Chances are, they expected to find Mipha there,” Impa said. “The moment they knew her parents were back in Termina, they made their attack.”

Within a few minutes, the sound of a helicopter buzzed in the sky, growing louder as it neared. The Champions looked up, watching as the craft landed before them, blowing their hair out behind
them. Impa hurried them into the helicopter, and just as quickly as it landed, it took to the sky once
more, bringing them to Termina.

The Champions were not alone. As the helicopter moved away from the city, others began to rise
and follow suit. Six more helicopters trailed behind them, each one carrying troops of Hyrulean
soldiers to come to Termina's aid.

And just as Impa had promised, they had crossed the sea and made it to Termina in two hours.

The helicopters flew over the remarkably flat lands of Termina until the walls of the city rose in the
distance. A few of the helicopters had moved ahead of them, lowering themselves to allow for the
soldiers to jump out. They immediately began to shout to one another as they rushed at the city
where Ganondorf's forces had already broken through.

The helicopter with the six Champions, however, moved closer to the city, gradually getting lower
and lower before circling the air above the city. From where they were, they had a clear view of
the battle.

Termina's forces desperately pushed against Ganondorf's undead army, but their weaponry, as the
Hyrulean soldiers had learned earlier, were no match for the skeletal soldiers. Slowly, the enemy
army gained ground, hesitating only when Hyrule's forces flanked from behind and caught them
off guard. Some of the soldiers had even traded their modern guns. Though swords weren't exactly
in demand, they did bring with them various knives, daggers, and bayonets. A few tossed smoke
grenades, giving the mortal soldiers a slight advantage as they plunged their weapons into their
enemies, taking them by surprise.

This was not the time to be suffering from a hangover.

“What's the plan?” Daruk shouted over the noise of the helicopter.

And find and protect Mipha’s parents.”

Link glanced at Mipha, but she spoke before he had a chance to open his mouth.

“Don't even think about asking me to hang back,” she snarled at him.

The helicopter continued to move over the city, away from the battle, before lowering in an open
area inside the walls. Hyrule's Champions jumped out as it hovered above the ground. They hurried
back to the battle, immediately getting lost in the chaos as they threw themselves at their enemies,
offering aid to the Hyrulean and Terminan soldiers. Even in the midst of battle, Link could clearly
see the locations of his friends. Revali’s arrows soared while Urbosa’s lightning struck the ground
around her. From time to time, the ground shook with the force behind Daruk’s power, and even
Mipha kept herself busy healing those who had fallen with the help of Daruk's shield.

It wasn't long before Link picked out a bigger threat; the commander of Ganondorf's army. A large,
skeletal creature clad heavily in armor that barked orders to his troops, consisting of not just the
skeletal army, but Bokoblin soldiers of varying sizes as well.

But the orders the commander shouted at his soldiers were what caught Link's attention. He was
shouting for them to pull back. It wasn't an order to retreat from being overwhelmed, but because
they had exactly what they had come to Termina for.

Mipha's screams immediately alerted Link to this, and he sprinted through the battle desperately as
she was pulled backwards, surrounded by three larger Bokoblins. Link lunged at them, just as
Daruk came crashing through, and within moments, Mipha was freed from their clutches, clinging to Link. She pulled at his arm, shouting to him.

“They have them,” she said. “Let them take me.”

“Are you fucking insane?” Link shouted at her.

“They’ll bring me right to them,” she barked. “We'll find them, and we can save them.”

“No,” he said fiercely. “Absolutely not.”

But Mipha was already pulling away from him. He grasped at her, but only grabbed air as she threw herself back into the chaos. Link let a chain of vulgarities flow out of his mouth before chasing after her. He waved Daruk on and they pushed themselves through the battle in search of Mipha once more.

When they heard her shouts again, Link and Daruk were reunited with Revali, Urbosa, and Zelda. From the edge of the battle, two more Bokoblins were dragging Mipha away from the battle. Link waved them on, and they hurried after her, keeping back and watching to see where they brought her.

Just as Mipha predicted, she was dragged to where her parents and various other people were held hostage. They first dragged her down a narrow alleyway where they disappeared in a door in the wall which lead to a narrow and complicated tunnel system under the city. There were more Bokoblins and skeletal soldiers guarding the hostages, and they were prepared when Hyrule's Champions made their surprise attack, immediately springing up to meet their attacks head on.

The Champions, however, took this smaller troop out with ease, but they were far from out of danger. The impact of their attacks threatened the integrity of the underground systems. The ground trembled and the walls cracked. They desperately tried to dodge to rubble that dropped from the collapsing tunnels as they ran back into the city and into the heart of the battle once more.

The escaped hostages, however, were met head on by more of Ganondorf's troops, quickly overwhelming them. But Hyrule's Champions sprang into action once more, defending the hostages and taking out the enemy soldiers en masse.

With the enemy troops significantly reduced, the Hyrulean and Terminan soldiers were able to finish the battle quickly and easily. As their enemies dropped, the survivors started to pull back, making their escape as they rushed out of the city. The soldiers continued to chase after them, taking out as many as they could, not daring to let a single one escape alive.

Helicopters and fighter jets rushed over the city, moving outside of the city walls, to wear the few survivors remained, sprinting desperately as they retreated. The pilots chased them down, pushing them further away from the city where they promptly gunned them down and dropped bombs to take out the remaining troops. After hours of fighting, the battle was over, and Termina was victorious.
Chapter 63

The Hyrulean helicopters brought the soldiers back home, leaving one behind to return with the six Champions. It waited quietly on the landing pad with Daruk, Urbosa, Revali, and Zelda standing just outside. It was late in the evening and the battle had ended hours ago, but they held back to ensure the safety of the city as Mipha was reunited with her parents.

To Link’s relief, they agreed to let Mipha remain in Hyrule, promising her they would return soon, though not as soon as they had originally planned due to the battle. And though they didn’t seem eager to let Mipha continue on with her heroic duties, they didn’t argue or push the matter further. She was sure there would be more to discuss upon their return to Hyrule, but she would deal with that when the time came.

Eager to return home to study for her last few finals, she hurried back to wait with her friends at the helicopter, the engine now started and the blades running. Dorephan followed them out to the helicopter pad, though hung further back. “You and King Roham cannot possibly ensure the safety of Termina,” he said as he walked beside Link. “Try as you might. Mipha is in danger, and it very well may be putting you in danger, too. I won't say I care much for you, Link. But I care deeply for my daughter. I will do anything for her – even break my ties with Hyrule. I won't see her die in this war.”

“I won't let her die,” Link said. “I will give my own life before I let something happen to her.”

Dorephan eyed Link carefully for a minute. “I see.” He clasped his hands behind his back. “And what intentions do you have for my daughter?”

Link blinked at him, taken aback. “What?”

Dorephan turned and looked at Link at the corner of his eye. “When are you going to tell her you're in love with her?”

Link pulled his eyes away. “Never.”

He raised a brow. “Never?”

He watched Mipha as she chatted and laughed with their friends. “She deserves better. Better than someone who will definitely get gutted by the King of Evil.”

“You should have a little more faith in yourself,” Dorephan said. “I would be lying if I said I wasn't impressed with the way you handled that attack. I’d say Hyrule is in adequate hands.”

Link glanced skeptically at Dorephan but said nothing further.

“But know I will kill you myself if something happens to my daughter.” He smiled down at Link.

“Right,” Link said. “Get in line.”

Mipha turned and watched her father and Link curiously. She frowned. “I hope he’s not giving him a hard time,” she muttered.

Urbosa turned her gaze to them and shrugged. “I’m sure he is,” she said. Her face turned serious and she pointed a finger at Mipha as she mimicked his voice.
“You protect my daughter with your life or I’ll kill ya.”

Mipha rolled her eyes. “Yeah. I don’t think so.”

Urbosa smiled. “You’re his kryptonite,” she said dreamily. “He’ll do anything for you, you know.”

Mipha glanced over at them once more. Dorian was making his way back to the city, and Link trotted down the steps of the base. His gaze met her’s.

“Sometimes, I think you're more of a distraction that anything,” Urbosa continued. “He's too focused on you and making sure you're okay. Really, he's only doing this for you. I think you're the only thing keeping him going.”

Mipha held her gaze on Link, and Link showed no sign of breaking away. After a moment, he moved towards them and pulled at Mipha's wrist.

“Can I talk to you?”

Mipha hesitated, her gaze moving from Link to Urbosa, then back to Link. She nodded once and let him lead her away from the group, desperately trying to ignore the stares from their friends.

“They're so OTP,” Urbosa gushed happily as she watched them together.

“You did not seriously just say OTP,” Daruk said.

“Shut up,” Urbosa snapped, still grinning. “Romance turns me into a nerd!”

This conversation, however, went completely unnoticed by Link and Mipha.

“What’s wrong?” Mipha asked carefully. She watched Link, but Link did not look at her.

“Last night,” he started.

Mipha grinned. “Oh, wait, let me guess,” she said. “Is it about the selfies you took in Urbosa's skirt?”

Link glanced at her for a moment, his brows furrowed. “What?”

“I mean, Revali did keep his promise. He dared you to put it on in exchange for ten rupees. You said you would have done it for five.”

“Right,” Link said. He shook his head. “Wow. What the fuck.”

Mipha laughed. “Or, did you want to apologize for spilling your beer all over my shirt?”

“Sorry?”

Mipha shrugged and smiled at him. “Don't worry,” she said. “Whatever Revali may have said, you weren't that much of an embarrassing drunk.”

Link hesitated. “Did I... do or say anything else?”

Mipha's smile disappeared. “Like what?”

“I don't know,” Link muttered, turning away.

Mipha seemed to think about this for a moment, then shook her head. “Not really. Nothing out of
the ordinary."

That was a relief, to say the least. How did the expression go? Drunk minds speak sober hearts? He didn't exactly believe Revali, but he felt instantly better knowing that he didn't actually saying anything to Mipha. Not that he would have regretted such a conversation. But being drunk was not the way he wanted to do it. Not that he had planned on doing it at all, really. Not at first. But maybe. Just maybe.

“Whatcha thinking so hard about?” Mipha asked, her smile returning.

“Nothing,” Link said quickly. “Just that I need to get the hell home and to bed if I'm going to survive another final tomorrow.”

Mipha sighed. “Crap,” she said. “Why did you have to remind me?”

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The trip back to Hyrule was uneventful, and once they landed, the Champion’s felt able to relax again, even returning to their earlier end of the year high.

“So,” Revali said, practically bouncing ahead of them as they walked through the city. “Where should we take this party?

Mipha shook her head. “No way,” she said. “I’m out this time. We do have more finals this week.”

“Lame,” Revali said. He turned to Urbosa and Daruk. “C’mon, we don’t need these babies.”

Daruk considered this for a moment, the nodded. “I’m down. Let’s do it.”

Urbosa waved them off with a hand. “You boys have fun,” she said. “I’m hitting the mall.”

Zelda perked up at this. “The mall?” She put a finger to her chin thoughtfully. “I could skip a night of studying,” she said. “I need a new bathing suit.”

“I changed my mind,” Revali said quickly. “I wanna go shopping, too.”

Daruk narrowed his gaze on him. “No, you don’t. You want to -”

“I have excellent fashion sense,” Revali said quickly, cutting him off. “I’ll be the judge of which bikinis look best. May I suggest a little thong? It says ‘I’m a fun and adventurous ruler of Hyrule.’”

Urbosa slapped him upside the head. “You’re disgusting.” She turned to Zelda and offered her a smile. “I could use some retail therapy. Let’s go.” She shot a dirty glance at Revali as she took Zelda’s wrist and lead them away from the group.

Revali groaned loudly. “C’mon, Daruk,” he said. “Let’s go find us some tail.”

“Classy,” Mipha muttered.

Daruk shrugged and grinned, waving to them as he followed Revali, parting ways and leaving Mipha and Link alone.

“Guess I can’t convince you to hang out,” Link said, turning to Mipha.

She narrowed her gaze on him. “Don’t you think it would be worth putting a little effort into the finals?”
Link groaned and threw his head back as he walked ahead of her. “Fine,” he said, dragging the word out into another groan. “But only because Ganondorf hasn’t had the balls to show his face around here yet.”

“That’s the spirit,” Mipha muttered.

Link looked at her over his shoulder and smiled. But something else had caught his attention in the form of a flash.

Mipha’s brows furrowed and she followed his gaze, noticing then a man and a woman with a camera. The woman had a microphone in her hand with the logos of one of the news stations. She smiled and waved to them excitedly.

“Is this my life now?” Mipha said, her shoulders slumped. “I didn’t sign up for paparazzi.”

Link took her wrist in his hand and pulled her forward. “Don’t worry,” he said with a grin. “They’ll see soon enough how boring you are and lose interest.”

“Ha, ha,” Mipha said, but she lead Link lead her quickly away from them and towards home.
To Link's relief, the rest of finals week went off without further incident, and by the end of the week, Mipha's parents had made it back to Hyrule safe and sound. Summer vacation was officially in full swing, but Hyrule's Champions could not enjoy in their new found freedom, for they still had another portal to find. And with school no longer in the way, they had to dedicate themselves fully to the fast approaching war, and take every moment they had to prepare for Ganondorf's return.

When Saturday morning rolled around, the six Champions met at the edge of Lake Hylia in preparation for their trip to the Forgotten Temple. The largest lake in Hyrule and with forests that bordered one side, it offered them plenty of protection from prying eyes - Impa and Mipha's parents, specifically - however, to their dismay, they would so learn that getting into the Forgotten Temple would be very difficult, and next to impossible to even get out.

"The entire temple is under water," Paya informed them regretfully. "It sits in the Tanagar Canyon, just at the end to the north."

"So," Revali started. "Can't you just bippity-boppity-boop us in there?"

Urbosa rolled her eyes, already exhausted with him.

Paya pursed her lips with a slight frown. "I don't know," she admitted. "I don't have the same strength my grandmother has," she reminded them.

"What's the worst that could happen?" Daruk asked.

"Well," Paya said softly. "I mean. It could kill me. It could kill you."

Daruk sighed and pinched the bridge of his nose. "Right. Of course."

"Sheikah power is not something to be messed with," Urbosa said. "Paya has only just begun her own training. We can't expect her to be able to do everything for us."

"Then what's the plan?" Revali snarled. "Borrow a sub? Rent some scuba suits? I mean, come on."

He threw his arms in the air.

"I scouted out as much of the area as I could," Paya said. "If we need to get inside, I think, - she emphasized this heavily as she spoke - "there may be a way to get in from the top of the temple."

"But?" Zelda asked.

Paya shrugged. "But, any number of things could go wrong. For starters, the temple is thousands of years old. It could be completely demolished on the inside, getting us nowhere. Or, it could very well collapse on top of us. The temple is very large, and we could be so high up that we simply fall to our deaths."

"You mean they didn't have elevators?" Revali muttered under his breath.

"We don't know where the portal is," Urbosa said. "It might not be in the temple at all."

"I didn't see anything around, though," Paya said. "But, I didn't have a lot of time to go hunting around, either."
“Fine,” Zelda said, growing anxious. “Let’s just get there and see where the day takes us.”

Paya nodded. “It would be best if we don’t take every car, though,” she said, looking at everyone’s cars around her.

“We’re driving,” Urbosa said, indicating to Daruk. “Our cars will handle the terrain best.”

Revali whined for a moment, then hurried to Daruk’s SUV. “Shotgun!” Once he was seated inside, he waved a hand at Paya. “Sheikah’s with us.”

Urbosa frowned. “I don’t want the two of them with me,” she said, thrusting a thumb at Link and Zelda. “What if we crash and die? Then it’s my fault that the Hyrule’s only heroes are dead.” Her tone suggested this was more of an inconvenience than a genuine concern.”


Zelda’s brows furrowed. “Zelds?” She trudged toward the car as Daruk got in behind the wheel. “I don’t like that. Don’t call me that.”

Urbosa frowned. “Please take care of her,” she shouted to Daruk. “Don’t let anyone hurt my little bird.”

Zelda turned a desperate gaze in their direction. She mouthed the words ‘help me’ before climbing into the car.

“Aw, come on, Zelds,” Revali teased. “This is the fun car. This is the car without Link.”

Link rolled his eyes. He, Mipha, and Paya followed Urbosa to her Jeep.

“And we’re the car without Revali,” Urbosa said with a playful wink.

Though the drive to the Forgotten Temple was uneventful, it was also long, and it was well after noon when they finally arrived at the canyon, crossing the bridge as the rapids raged below. Over the years, the area had turned into a bit of a tourist attraction, and there were various cars parked along the edge in dedicated lots. It wasn’t particularly busy with tourists, but there were plenty of teens and young adults enjoying their summer, challenging each other as they dove into the calmer areas, despite the clearly marked signs that warned them of such dangers. The area was meant simply as a place to sightsee. From the dedicated lots, one had a great view over Hyrule, but otherwise, that was all that seemed impressive about the canyon. None knew of the temple that seemed to sleep beneath the surface and all the history it held.

The Champions navigated away from these lots, their eyes open for anything out of the ordinary, but they found no signs of a portal. They continued their drive north, away from the more active tourists spots, and soon away from the concrete, following the makeshift dirt road that continued to follow the canyon, even up through the woods. It was likely the path was carved by other rebellious teens over the years, looking for a place to escape reality. They drove as far as they could until the brush became to dense. They stopped and stepped out, looking around them for a moment before moving deeper still into the forest.

They were about to give up their search in the woods, none eager to get lost, when they heard the screams from somewhere close by. They hurried towards the screams until they came upon four teens, just around their age. The Champions did not recognize them, likely being from another school around Hyrule, but the teens definitely recognized them as they came to their rescue.

There was no direct sign of the portal, but the Champions were not surprised to see the Bokoblins
that swarmed the teens as they cowered. The creatures were quickly dispelled by the Champions, and the moment the Bokoblin broke ranks, the four teens made their desperate escape, dashing through the woods without looking back at the short battle.

When the Bokoblins were defeated, the Champions decided to press on, for surely the portal would be close. And close, it was. It came upon them quite suddenly, in fact, as they plunged seemingly through the forest floor until they landed with a thud on the hard ground. The ground, however, was sloped downward, and they continued to tumble through until they dropped once more, landing in what had to have been a small, underground room where more Bokoblins waited.

The Champions sprang into action, quickly taking out the second small troop of creatures, but their presence had not gone unnoticed. From somewhere deeper underground, more Bokoblins waited, and upon hearing the battle, they quickly came to aid their fellow soldiers.

However, the force of their attacks quickly threatened the integrity of the room they were in, and the floor began to tremble. Cracks shot up the walls and the ceiling began to crumble. Zelda shouted to her friends, urging them to cease their attacks and simply escape while they still could. It didn’t seem likely that they would be able to return to the surface from where they came, the climb much too steep, but it didn’t matter as the opening began to cave in around them. Instead, they ran further, deeper through the tunnel as it continued to move deeper underground.

They quickly outran the rest of the Bokoblins, who’s battle cries quickly turned to panic screams, which were then promptly silenced as the cave in crumbled on top of them. The Champions didn’t stop running until they reached the end of the tunnel, which promptly opened up to the wide open insides of the Forgotten Temple.

They jumped out of the tunnel as it closed up behind them from the cave in. Bits of rock and dirt followed them into the temple before the cave in ceased completely, sealing their only way out of the temple. They took a moment to catch their breaths and look around them.

In the center of the temple, they could clearly see what they had come for. The open portal pulsed threateningly, as if feeding off of the energy of the temple. Though there were no other Bokoblins in the area, it seemed entirely plausible that this was where they had come from, and were making their way to the surface to launch their attack on the nearby cities and towns. But that wasn’t all that caught their attention.

Dark purple goo seemed to cover most of the inside of the temple, coating the walls, ceiling, and various areas on the floor around them. There were puddles of water around the edges of the walls where water had seeped in over the years in various cracks in the structure. It seemed a miracle that it didn’t crumble under the pressure of the water, or that it wasn’t completely submerged in the first place, but it seemed the goo played some sort of role in preserving the temple.

Or so they first thought.

“Malice,” Zelda said. “I read about it in one of Impa's old books.”

“I'm assuming it's not good news,” Revali muttered.

“Not at all,” she said. “We can't let it touch us.”

The malice dripped down the walls, the stone hissing as it burned and crumbled away beneath it. Water began to spurt through the weakened points of the temple in the wake of the malice as it continued to drip, moving slowly down the walls and across the floor, as if determined to trap Hyrule’s Champions.
One thing was clear to them: if the malice didn’t get to them first, they would surely be killed by the collapsing temple.
Chapter 65

It trailed down onto the ground where it seemed to creep in around the six of them, slowly closing in and trapping them. They inched closer together, their eyes moving between the trails of malice as it moved towards them. It splashed down from the ceiling at their feet, threatening to rain down upon them. Daruk erected his shield, enclosing them in safety. But as the malice dripped down on top of it, the barrier steamed and hissed, slowly melting away and allowing the malice to fall into their only means of protection.

Link quickly pulled Mipha out of the way as the malice started to drip in. He pulled her into his chest, shielding her as best as he could with his own body and holding her tight against him. He looked around in a desperate attempt to find an escape as Daruk and Revali pulled Urbosa, Paya, and Zelda into their own huddled protection. The malice was all around them now, leaving no opening, and Daruk's shield was quickly starting to crumble around them, allowing more and more malice to drip through.

“Close the damn portal!” Link shouted at Zelda.

“Wait,” Zelda said quickly. “There’s no way out of here. Except.” She hesitated and turned her gaze to the portal.

“No,” Paya interjected. “We can’t go through there!”

“Then we die in here,” Zelda hissed.

“We don’t know where that thing goes,” Urbosa said. “We could be just as fucked through there.”

The malice dripped onto their bodies, hissing as it made contact with their clothing and quickly burning away their shirts. Their skin burned and sizzled with each drip, and even Daruk could not hold back his yelps of pain as the malice melted away the skin on his body.

Zelda struggled against Revali as he fought against the pain brought on by the malice. She couldn't bear to be protected while the malice was slowly killing her friends. There had to be something she could do, and she was certain there was, but the more she struggled to free herself, the harder Revali clung to her.

When she finally did manage to break free, she threw herself to the edge of Daruk's protection as the last of the barrier melted away. She desperately summoned the power within her she had only been able to use a few times prior, but the energy pulsed through her and burst out of her body just as she had hoped it would. A strong, golden light shot forth, temporarily blinding them as it filled the cavern before subsiding, eliminating the malice as it did so and promptly closing the portal.

For a moment, they seemed to be safe, and Mipha hurried out from under Link, unaware that she was all that kept him standing. He fell to his knees with a soft whimper as Mipha spun around on her heels and hurried back to him, dropping to his side. Her hands hovered above his back for a moment as she stared in horror. She moved her eyes to Daruk and Revali, who barely stood on their feet, their bodies in similar fates. Their skin had seemingly melted away where the malice touched them, leaving charred muscle and even bits of bone exposed, and bringing with it the smell of burned flesh. Her stomach churned sickeningly and she held her breath, fighting desperately not to pass out from the sights and the smells.

“I can fix this,” she muttered.
Link shook his head, wincing, and balanced against her as he forced himself to his feet. “No. We need to get out of here. Now.”

The walls, now weakened under the destruction of the malice, began to tremble. Cracks shot their way up towards the ceiling, causing pieces to crumble away and rain on top of them, the temple threatening to collapse. The ground trembled violently. Link pulled at Mipha's wrist and broke into a sprint, pushing her and the others ahead of them as the temple began to collapse. The walls broke away and the water from the lake burst through the cracks and lapped at their ankles. They stumbled as they ran, their pace significantly slowed by the pain brought on by the malice, but they pushed forward, desperate to find an escape before they were buried alive.

But they could not outrun the collapsing temple. The ceiling rained down on them and moved ahead as the structure continued to weaken dramatically. Rubble piled up on the ground and they had to work harder to avoid it, jumping to the side and climbing over the larger pieces. Before they knew it, the temple began to crumble far ahead of them, stopping them in their tracks. They watched in despair as the rubble piled high before them, completely blocking their path. The water that flooded in crashed against the blockade before settling around their ankles, slowly rising as it continued to gush in.

Stunned, they stood motionless, only their eyes moving about as the situation began to settle in their minds. Trapped in rising waters, they were surely doomed to die there.

“No,” Zeda murmured, her head shaking slowly. “No!”

Link looked around them, frantically searching for some way out. The water had already risen past his ankles and was quickly at his knees. His eyes moved around his group of friends, the same, terrified expressions on all their faces, causing a wave of anger to rush over him for dragging them into this mess.

He moved to the blockade, desperately grasping at the rubble in an attempt to free them, but the stones refused to loosen. Ignoring the searing pain that shot through his body, he continued to scratch his fingers against the rock until the skin was raw and bloody. He shouted in anger and dug his nails into any crevice he could find, still to no avail.

The water had risen to his thighs and Zelda had begun to sob, her hands covering her face. She muttered to herself, over and over, shaking her head. “Hylia, no, this cannot be happening.”

Breathing heavily, Link finally stopped grasping at the rocks before him. He turned his desperate gaze to Daruk, who's face had grown paler than Link had ever seen.

“Do something.” It was all Link could think to say. He didn't have the answers anymore. He needed someone to turn to. Someone had to have a better idea than he.

“It might kill us anyway,” Daruk muttered. “But I have an idea.”

“No,” Urbosa started. “It will definitely kill us.”

“We're going to die, anyway,” Revali muttered.

Daruk stepped forward regardless, the water now at their hips and waists. He pushed Link behind him and flexed his fingers, then cracked his knuckles. “We're getting out of here,” he said through clenched teeth. He made a fist, braced himself, then let a punch fly straight into the pile of rubble. The blockage cracked and shuddered under the weight of his punch, but it was hardly his full strength.
“Wait,” Mipha said suddenly. “We need to get higher. We need to break through the ceiling. We’ll have a better chance of not being crushed by the temple or the force of the water.”

They fell silent for a moment. A hole in the ceiling of the cavern would cause the space they were in to fill much more quickly with water. But they would have a way out. They could surely swim through and, assuming Mipha was right, to the surface.

“Nothing is ever that easy,” Zelda muttered. She sniffed slightly. “It won’t work.”

Daruk turned his gaze to Link. “You’re the boss.”

The water was to their chests. He didn’t want to be the boss. “Just do it,” he muttered.

They quickly started to climb the blockage, reaching to one another to help each other up. Their feet slipped as rubble shifted under their weight, but otherwise, they managed to get close enough to the ceiling. The water was still rising quickly below them, lapping at their ankles as they climbed, chasing them.

Daruk turned his attention to the ceiling. Despite their climb, they could not out race the rising waters, and they simply gave up to tread water. Daruk steadied himself, stretched his neck to the side, then let his fist fly as hard as he could against the ceiling. His fist burst through the ceiling of the temple and the water came rushing through. The pressure of the water cracked the rest of the ceiling, and they pressed their faces to take in the last of the air before the temple completely filled with water.

Link blinked underwater, taking a moment to orient himself. Daruk was already pulling Urbosa and Paya through the water towards him and pushing them up. The sun was shining through the surface, lighting the underwater world around them, making fresh air seem just in their reach.

Link found Mipha and pushed her forward, where she swam quickly and easily catching up to Urbosa and Paya. Revali pulled Zelda with him, and he and Daruk quickly followed suit.

Already, he could feel his lungs burning from the extra force he had pushed onto his body, and his mind started to feel dizzy from lack of oxygen. He was quickly disoriented as he fought against his mind to stay in focus. He recognized the sunlight from the surface, but could no longer see his friends. He kicked hard, swimming up towards the light, but the surface only seemed to move further and further away.

The edges of his vision began to blur and darken and he had to fight against his brain to open his mouth and take in oxygen that wasn't there. He fought against every instinct he had until he could feel his mind begin to shut down, and without realizing it, his lungs quickly filled with water.

He wasn't sure if he had closed his eyes, or if his vision had simply given up on him, but his world was very dark, and his mind very quiet. He didn't even notice the hand that grabbed at his wrist and yanked him through the water. Revali pulled him up onto solid ground where he choked and sputtered, throwing up the water he had swallowed unwillingly. He coughed and gasped, his head pounding and spinning, and slowly but surely, his vision returned to him.

He was on his knees, staring at the green grass as he choked up the last of the water that was in his lungs. They burned in his chest, but otherwise gladly welcomed the fresh air that filled them. He put a hand on the ground to steady himself and let his eyes wander. The sword lay just a few feet away against the grass. and Mipha was kneeling beside him, her wet hair and clothes plastered to her body. Her brows knit together in concern as she looked him over.
“Are you okay?”

Link sighed in an attempt to slow his breathing and grunted in response. His body, now realizing that he was out of harm's way, let the rush of pain flood back to his mind, and a small whimper escaped his lips as the searing pain on his back returned. His elbow shook under the weight of his body and he let himself collapse to the ground, his eyes closed.

“Link!”

“Don't touch me,” he grunted, forcing the words out instead of another whimper. “Just let me die here, now. Thanks.”

But the pain was already diminishing. He could practically feel his wounds healing; the muscle regenerated fresh, healthy tissue. His skin pulled and tightened as the pieces formed and came together, as if he were being stitched close. Within a few minutes, the pain was gone and his wounds were completely healed.

“There,” Mipha said softly, her warm hands against his bare back. “Good as new.”

Link rolled over lazily and sighed loudly. “Thanks.” He opened his eyes, but Mipha was not there. He pushed himself up, looking around. Mipha was already at Revali’s side, who was also on the ground, doubled over in pain from the malice wounds on his back. Zelda held his hand in her best attempt to comfort him. Just yards away, Urbosa was letting Daruk lean against her. She said something to him and smiled. Daruk did he best to return her grin, but he was wincing at his own pain.

Link turned away from the sight of his wounded friends and took the opportunity to look around them. They were somewhere along the edge of Lake Hylia. He could barely make out the bridge in the distance, but had no idea where they had come from. He tried to busy himself with his phone, but it was dead, either from the malice or the water. There would be no calling for help and no use of the GPS to get themselves back to the shrine.

After a few minutes, both Revali and Daruk were healed, though Mipha was worn from the process. She was sitting on the ground with Urbosa, her eyes closed as she leaned against her. Urbosa let her fingers run through Mipha's hair, looking up as Link approached them and offering a tired smile.

“I have a new found hatred for this damn country,” Revali muttered, his arms crossed. “Let's get out of this shit hole.”

Link stepped aside as Daruk approached, bending down and lifting Mipha into his arms. “You know what we look like, right?” he muttered.

“Too many rumors I care to be associated with,” Zelda said. She sighed as she tried to turn her phone on. “We're definitely getting the cops called on us.”

“Three guys with no shirts and a passed out girl.” Urbosa shook her head. “What could go wrong?”
Though they managed to close the portal and escape the crumbling remains of the Forgotten Temple, Hyrule’s Champions were not out of the woods. Unbeknownst to them, several more Bokoboblins had managed to make their way out of the woods undetected and were pushing forward in their own mission to cause even more chaos in the land. They had just managed to pull themselves out of the waters of the canyon and navigate through the woods when they first noticed something was amiss.

It came first as a tremble, seemingly deep beneath their feet. They hesitated, their eyes darting around for danger, but the world was still. The trembling ceased, but only for a moment before it returned, stronger, closer, until the ground erupted just yards from them. They stumbled backwards, their horrified gazes locked on the strange machine that rose from the cracks and crevices in the ground. Two spidery, mechanical legs emerged first, quickly followed by what could only be some sort of head on top of a dome. The head turned left and right quickly, its mechanics squeaking and groaning with years of disuse. After a moment, it turned completely around, revealing a single, blue center, much like an eye. It moved until it found the seven teens, seemingly alerted by their presence. It focused in on them, then turned red. The mechanics whirred to life as it pulled itself out of the ground, revealing four more legs.

Now completely emerged from the ground, it moved quickly towards them on its six legs, and the Champions didn’t have to think twice, turning on their heels and sprinting back into the woods. But the machine charged after them regardless, taking down the trees that dared hinder its attack. It closed the space between them quickly, and in a matter of seconds since it locked on to them, a deadly blast shot from the center eye, just barely missing the Champions. The ground burst where the attack hit and the dry grass and leaves instantly ignited.

They pressed onward, as fast as they could, desperately dodging between the trees in hopes of throwing off the machine that pursue them, but it quickly became clear that they would not be able to outrun it for much longer.

“Paya,” Zelda shouted. “Get us out of here!”

“Don’t you think we should, I dunno, stop this thing?!” Revali barked at her.

Urbosa stopped dead in her tracks, spinning on her heels to face the machine. With a snap of her fingers, lightning struck violently. The machine stuttered for a moment, then came to a stop as the shock of the attack moved through its internal structure. It seemed stunned, if such a thing were possible for a machine. But after a few moments, it came back to life and picked up the chase once more, its blue eye quickly turning red as it locked onto its target.

Urbosa hurried to catch up with her friends, but not before snapping her fingers again, taking every advantage she could to hold the machine off. It stuttered and hesitated once more, allowing them to gain their lost ground back, if only for a moment.

“Paya!” Zelda shouted once more.

“I can’t!”

Link grit his teeth together, slamming on his own breaks and drawing out his sword. He turned and ran towards the machine, just as Urbosa let another strike of lightning slam into it. When it was stunned, Link swung his sword at the nearest mechanical leg, and it sliced through it with ease. He
jumped backwards just as the machine regained itself, and he and Urbosa turned to run once more.

“Five more times,” Urbosa said with a grin. “We got this.”

But the machine seemed irritated to have its leg cut off. Despite its missing limb, it seemed to move faster, bursting through the woods and knocking down every tree in its path. The time between its attacks seemed to increase, and the Champions found themselves having a more difficult time dodging the deadly blasts.

Once more, Urbosa and Link stopped between blasts. Urbosa stunned the machine, and Link threw himself at the next leg he could reach. With two legs missing, they picked up their pace, narrowly dodging another blast from the pissed off machine.

The blasts came quicker still, and more erratic. The next one struck much too close, sending the Champions stumbling to the ground, allowing the machine to quickly close in on them, readying another blast.

Daruk’s shield burst forth around them, but it immediately shattered behind the force of the blast. The machine was quick to prepare another attack, and they just barely had enough time to throw themselves out of the path.

Urbosa stunned it once more with another attack, and Link lunged himself at the third leg, slicing it clean off from the body of the machine. But being down to its last three didn’t seem to hinder its movement as much as they had hoped it would, and still, it pressed on, firing blast after blast at the exhausted Champions. Urbosa could no longer keep up with its speed, and Daruk did not have the energy to continue to erect barriers around them for protection.

While his friends continued to run for their lives, Link turned to face the machine once more, this time waving his arms in the area in an attempt to catch its attention. The blue eye turned red again as it focused on him, then locked on, following quickly as Link brought it away from the group. He sprinted through the woods, narrowly dodging three more blasts as the machine chased him.

From somewhere behind him, Urbosa tried desperately to slow down the machine. Lightning struck the ground around Link and the machine, hitting everything else and knocking trees down around them, giving Link more obstacles to avoid. From the corner of his eye, he saw Paya appear just a few yards to his left. She thrust her palm out and an invisible force wave pulsed through the forest, taking with it even more trees. It knocked Link off of his feet, but in turn, it pushed the machine violently, sending it flying backwards a few more yards.

Before he had a chance to react, a hand yanked him back to his feet, and Revali ran beside him as the machine took up the chase once more.

“What’s your fucking plan?” Revali snapped at Link.

“I don’t have one!”

Without realizing it, they had come to the edge of the forest. The trees had thinned, and before them was nothing but the canyon. Unless they wanted to dive back into the raging rapids, they had nowhere else to go.

Before Link had a chance to even comprehend the situation he had found himself in, he felt a hard, blunt force against the entire left side of his body, knocking him abruptly to the ground where he lay stunned for a moment. And then he realized the sounds of the machine had silenced. He pushed himself up onto his knees and saw first Daruk’s red barrier above him. Then, beside him, Revali
lay motionless. Paya was already hurrying to him, dropping to her knees beside him.

From the treeline, Urbosa and Daruk - still carrying Mipha - emerged. Zelda was standing a few yards in front of them, her arm outstretched, which explained why the machine seemed to have fallen silent. But to Link’s dismay, it was not yet defeated, though visibly and badly damaged. It whirred to life once more, turning its red eye back towards the forest where it promptly shot off another blast. From behind it, Link could not see where it hit, but his heart dropped when the barrier around him shattered abruptly.

“Daruk!”

Lightning strikes pummeled the machine, one after another. There was a loud crack that seemed to split the air, but it did not come from Urbosa’s attacks. Panicked, Link’s eyes darted back and forth until they landed on what could have only been a mirage of sorts. The old Sheikah leader stood before them, both arms outstretched, and suddenly, Link felt the all too familiar force of being seemingly ripped through time and space.

It was not at the shrine where Link found himself. In fact, he didn’t recognize his surroundings at all. But he barely had a chance to even try to put the pieces together before he was being pulled abruptly to his feet. He only barely recognized the man that grabbed him as Dorian, Impa’s next in command. His gaze was fierce on Link, and based on the sudden wave of energy he felt, Link assumed Dorian was healing him, but he pulled himself out of Dorian’s grasp as his eyes darted around.

Around him, he could now see that the room was buzzing with energy. Voices shouted to one another and bodies hurried about. Link recognized a few of the people to be other Sheikah based on their signature tattoos and similar white hair, while others were draped in scrubs, some already stained with blood.

Link’s brows furrowed as he tried to figure out what was going on around him. He caught a glimpse of Urbosa’s red hair, and as people passed between them, he could see that she, too, was in the clutches of another Sheikah. Their confused gazes met briefly before more people hurried between them.

Link was jolted backwards, and he let himself be pulled by Dorian. They moved briskly out of the room, down a bustling hallway, before finally turning through another doorway that brought them into a dimly lit room. The door closed loudly behind them. Link stood in the middle of the room, staring dumbly at Dorian. His eyes took a moment to adjust to the change in light, and that’s when he realized he was in some sort of hospital. He turned his gaze to Dorian, who regarded him coldly.

“What the fuck did you do?”
Chapter 67

Link continued to stare at Dorian, and this only angered the Sheikah further. He stepped forward and grabbed Link by his shirt. His nostrils flared as he shouted at him.

“What did you do?”

“Uh,” Link started. “You know. Went out for tea and fruitcake.”

Dorian thrust him forcefully. His lips pulled back in a sneer.

“We closed a fucking portal,” Link shouted at him.

“Impa gave you no orders to close a portal,” Dorian barked back.

“I didn’t know I needed to take orders from Impa,” Link sneered. “We had an idea where one of the portals could be, so we checked it out.” He crossed his arms. “Maybe if Impa was a little more forthcoming -”

“Idiot,” Dorian snapped. “You had no business being at the Forgotten Temple.”

Link narrowed his eyes on the Sheikah. “No business? It’s my damn job to close those portals so we have a damn fighting chance in this war.”

“Your job,” Dorian hissed, “is to do as Impa says, when she says.”

Link held his gaze on Dorian. Something didn’t sit right with him, but he knew he would get no answers from the Sheikah.

“You’re friends almost died for that stunt you pulled,” Dorian continued. “You’ll be lucky if they pull through.”

He suddenly remembered Daruk and Revali and Mipha. His forehead creased with worry, then narrowed on Dorian once more. “Where are they?”

“They’re being taken care of,” Dorian said, his voice softer. “They will stay here until Impa approves them to leave.” He turned to the door. “This is a highly secure, classified military support hospital. Do not step foot outside without permission from Impa.” And with that, he left Link alone in the room.

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It took awhile for Link to navigate the hospital in search of his friends. Most of the doctors and Sheikah ignored him completely, too busy trying to save lives. And from what Link could gather, there was a lot of lives in the hospital needing saving. Hyrulean soldiers milled about the hallways, some gathered together in casual conversation while others seemed to be stretching their legs after their own recovery. Though, Link couldn’t imagine what they were recovering from. He was sure he would be aware of any and all battles that would be going on. Clearly, secrets were being kept from him, but he couldn’t worry about that until he knew his friends were alright.

He finally found Zelda, Urbosa, and Paya in one of the waiting rooms. They stood quickly when they saw Link, their faces torn with confusion and worry.

“What’s going on?” Zelda asked. “What did Dorian want?”
Link shook his head and shoved his hands in his pockets. “Nothing,” he lied, then shrugged. “To tell me I’m an idiot.”

This didn’t seem to satisfy Zelda as she held her gaze on him, but she didn’t press further.

“What is everyone?” Link asked. His brows knit together as he looked around, hoping for some sign.

“I don’t know,” Zelda admitted. “I think Revali and Mipha are fine,” she continued, then hesitated. “Daruk was hit pretty bad. He was trying to protect Mipha.”

Link cursed under his breath. His knees felt weak, and he felt suddenly exhausted. He let himself fall into one of the seats and dragged his palms down his face. Zelda sat next to him.

“I’m sure everything will be fine,” she said in an attempt to sound reassuring, but her own voice shook. She turned away from him and slouched in the seat slightly, feeling defeated.

Time ticked by endlessly as the four of them sat and waited. Soon, the waiting became too much for Link, and he paced back and forth, his mind racing. His fists were balled at his side, causing his fingers to cramp. He flexed them at his side for a moment before they curled into his palms once more, his nails digging into the skin. The room was much too quiet as everyone waited in solemn silence until Zelda finally muttered.

“Your pacing isn’t going to make things go any quicker.”

In a moment of weakness, a wave of frustration washed over him, and he punched his fist through the wall. He immediately regretted it as he felt his knuckles shatter from the impact and he had to bite his lip to keep himself from shouting angrily. Instead, however, the anger continued to course through his blood, and he resorted to kicking his shoe into the wall. After another hole was put into the wall, he tossed his sword across the room and it clattered loudly against the floor.

He stood for a moment, his breathing heavy, staring at the sword, until he finally calmed down enough to let himself lean against the wall. He slid against the wall until he met the floor where he stared at the floorboards in silence, still holding his broken hand.

“Link.”

He turned his gaze to Zelda and in that moment, he felt the water well in his eyes. He closed them in an attempt to keep the tears at bay, turning suddenly when a door opened and Impa emerged. She turned to look at the two holes in the wall, then turned her gaze onto Link as he got to his feet.

“I’m sure you plan on fixing that,” Impa said.

Link bit his tongue, fuming once more.

“Is Daruk going to be alright?” Urbosa asked softly.

Impa sighed. “Yes, but we’ll need to move him to ICU to be watched for the next few days. My power can only do so much in these instances. I suggest you all get home and get some rest yourselves. It’s only a matter of time before Ganondorf shows himself. You must take time to prepare yourselves.”

“I leave when we all leave,” Zelda said, and Urbosa nodded.

Impa shrugged. “Suit yourselves.” And with that, she left them alone in the waiting room.
Paya moved toward Link hesitantly, her hand outstretched for a moment before taking his wrist. Link said nothing as she worked at healing his broken knuckles. When she was finished, she offered him a smile as he pulled his hand away.

“Thanks,” he muttered. He wiped the still fresh blood on his jeans without a second thought, and without another word, he left the waiting room. He couldn’t stand to be there any longer, but he didn’t know where else to go, so he wandered the hospital aimlessly until he stumbled upon the room where Mipha slept. He poked his head inside, then slipped in quietly and took the seat against the wall, facing the bed.

He slouched in the chair and let his arms dangle loose over the sides as he watched Mipha. The heart monitor beeped in steady rhythm, and her chest rose and fell with each soft breath. Satisfied that she was alive and well, Link let himself drift off to sleep.
Chapter 68

It took Mipha a few moments before she realized where she was when she woke up. She blinked for a moment as her eyes adjusted, then tilted her head to the sound of a soft snore. Link was oddly sprawled out on an oversized chair, one leg managing to drape over the arm while the other was outstretched, his heel on the floor. His body was twisted around to allow his head to rest on one arm as a pillow while the other hung off the chair. It was enough to make her giggle, which awoke the groggy Link.

He blinked in the light before pushing himself upright. He let out a yawn as he stretched, then blinked a few more times in the light before turning his gaze to Mipha. He smiled, then settled back into the chair. “How was your nap?”

Mipha's smile disappeared. “Uh. Not very restful.” She hesitated. “How long have I been out?”

Link shrugged. “Most of the night.”

“Oh.” She sighed lightly and turned her attention back to Link. “How are you?”

“All in one piece, thanks.” He stood and stretched. “And now that you're awake, I won't feel so bad taking the bed.” He grinned and pushed her over, sitting beside her and stretching his legs out. He nestled in close to her, letting himself sink into the pillow with a sigh.

“Have you been here the whole time?”

“Yes.”

“You didn't have to be,” she said softly.

“I know,” he said through a yawn. “There's a lot of things I don't have to do. But I do them anyway.”

Mipha smiled and looked down at her hands. “I know. But sometimes I wish you wouldn't.”

“Hm? Why?” Link's eyes were closed and he was quickly fading.

“I don't know.” She hesitated. “I know you want everyone to stay alive, but you have to stay alive, too.” When he didn't respond, she looked over to him. His eyes were open, but he seemed to be staring off into space.

“What's wrong?” she asked softly.

Link shifted and shrugged with one shoulder. He closed his eyes and sighed softly through his nose. “Nothing.”

Mipha said nothing for a moment. She looked around, her eyes moving across the wires that were attached to her when another concern came to mind. “Is everyone else okay?”

Again, Link did not respond, and Mipha moved her gaze back to him.

“Yeah,” he finally said after a moment. “I guess.”

Mipha’s brows furrowed. “You guess?” She bit her lower lip. “What happened?”
“What didn’t happen?” Link muttered.

Mipha sat up, causing Link to drop back against the bed. He sneered at her briefly for the disturbance, then tore his gaze away immediately.

“What happened?” she asked again, her voice hard. “Are they alive?”


Her voice raised. “You think?”

He lay back against the bed and closed his eyes. He didn’t want to have to discuss it with her. He didn’t want to relive the events that happened just twelve hours ago. He didn’t want to think of his best friend seemingly hanging on for dear life. He wanted to ignore it all, at least for a little while. And he definitely didn’t want to cry, but the lump formed in his throat all the same. It seemed to cut off his airway completely and he sighed loudly in an attempt to keep himself from breaking down.

He didn’t open his eyes until he felt Mipha settle back into the bed beside him. Her fingers brushed stray strands of hair out of his face. He met her worried gaze and did his best to offer her a reassuring smile before closing his eyes again. Her fingers moved between his, squeezing tightly in an attempt to comfort him, unsure of what else she could do.

“Everything’s going to be okay,” she said softly.

Link tore his gaze away. “Who else has to get hurt? Who has to die?”

“No one’s going to die.”

Link straightened and met Mipha’s gaze, his brows knit together. “You can’t heal everyone, Mipha. You can’t bring back dead.”

Mipha hesitated and averted her gaze. “No one’s -”

“I won’t let anyone die for me,” he said fiercely.

“Would you do it for us?”

His expression softened. “Yes.” He paused. “But I’m allowed to. It’s my -”

“It’s not your job,” Mipha said sternly. “It’s no one’s job. We volunteered to do this. We want to help you, Link, no matter the consequence.”

“I care about the consequences,” Link said. “I don’t want my friends dying over this.”

“Well,” she started softly. “We don’t want you dying over this.”

Link hesitated and met her gaze, but said nothing more. He was simply too distraught and exhausted to be able to hold any kind of conversation. He sighed loudly through his nose and settled back into the bed beside Mipha. He hadn’t meant to close his eyes, but they felt so heavy, and he thought he would for only a moment.

Mipha smiled as he let his head rest against her. He moved closer against her, his arm draping over her. Within seconds, he was snoring softly.
Link slept soundly for the next couple of hours, but to Mipha’s relief, Urbosa had found them both and quickly and quietly explained what had happened to them after their escape from the Forgotten Temple. Since then, they had learned of the machines that were known as Guardians. Thanks to Zelda’s excessive research, they learned that the Sheikah had created the Guardians thousands of years ago to aid them in the approaching war with Ganondorf. Upon his return, however, he turned the Guardians against Hyrule, which resulted in the Sheikah being blamed for the destruction that had followed.

It was no mystery to them that the Sheikah weren’t exactly favorable in Hyrule, or the rest of the world for that matter. They had seen the way some of the Hylians acted toward Impa and Dorian, but now it was a little more clear as to why. The Sheikah, though always loyal to the Royal Family, were clearly a powerful and mysterious race, and that was enough to make any other ordinary person weary. To learn of the weapons that they had created - and then had turned against them - did not shed them in any better light.

Regardless of the intent of the Guardians, they had been long sealed away - or so the Hylians thought. It was a mystery as to how and why they had resurfaced, but Zelda seemed sure it had something to do with the portals. Still, it didn’t explain why Impa had kept the Guardians a secret from the Champions.

Mipha also learned that the Guardian that chased them down was not the only other Guardian to surface. In fact, many others had surfaced all around Hyrule, and Hyrule’s army was in full force defending the country from their attacks. Of course, the Hyrulean soldiers fared far better than the Champions, as their modern weaponry easily stopped the Guardians in their tracks, unlike the rest of Ganondorf’s minions. Still, there were many casualties, and the media was in an obvious frenzy with the recent Guardian attacks.

Clearly a lot had happened in the mere twelve hours Mipha was unconscious. And all the while, her friends had suffered greatly. She couldn’t help but to feel guilty for not being able to heal them sooner when they needed it, the second time around.

Link had awoken somewhere in the midst of their conversation, but he made no notion that he was awake. He listened quietly as Mipha and Urbosa spoke until Mipha had been completely filled in and the topic of the conversation turned to a lighter, more casual note. It was then he decided to make his presence known, stretching yawning loudly before turning his gaze onto Urbosa.

“Can’t a guy get any sleep around here?”

Urbosa’s head tilted and she smiled. “Get your own damn bed.”

Link straightened and stretched his arms over his head. His legs swung to the side of the bed and he yawned again. When Mipha caught his yawn, he turned to regard her over his shoulder.

“You’ve been sleeping for twelve damn hours.”

Mipha crossed her arms. “Bite me.”

Link grinned. He opened his mouth to make a snarky comment, but was interrupted when the door opened. He turned to see Impa poke her head in, then help herself into the room. Her eyes moved over the three of them, then frowned.

“Where’s the other one?”
“Zelda?” Urbosa asked.

Impa waved a hand at her. “Why can’t you all just stick together? I have a hard enough time keeping tabs on you lot. Revali’s ordering me around like I’m some servant.” She huffed in aggravation. “Apparently having a room with a tv isn’t enough for Daruk. And where is Zelda?”

Link jumped off the bed. “Daruk?”

“Yeah, yeah,” she said, turning back to the door. “I swear to Hylia, you heroes are all entitled.”

But Link wasn’t listening to her anymore. He stepped around the elderly Sheikah and hurried out of the room.

“Entitled,” she called after him. She turned back to Mipha and offered a warm smile. “Well, guess that means you’re all up, now. Excellent. I need these beds, so get out of here before we raise any more suspicions, hm?”

It didn’t take Link long to find Daruk’s room, thanks to the loud cussing that came from down the hall. He rounded the corner and poked his head into the room where Daruk sat on the bed, practically growling at the tv. His gaze turned to Link for a moment.

“I save the world, and all I can get is three damn channels?”

Link blinked at Daruk for a moment, as if unsure of whether he believed what he was seeing. Daruk growled at him in aggravation, and Link moved to collapse in the chair against the wall. In truth, he still felt overwhelmed from all that had happened, and seeing his best friend alive was enough to make him feel like breaking down again. He stared at the tv as Daruk flipped through it five more times, as if to prove to Link that there was, in fact, only three damn channels.

He finally tossed the remote control onto the table beside the bed and sighed loudly. “This place sucks. Can we leave yet?”

Link shrugged. “I guess so.”

Daruk’s brows furrowed. “Wait, we all lived?”

“Unfortunately.” Link grinned. “I heard Revali’s making demands of everyone.”

“Mipha? She’s good?”

Link nodded. “Yeah.”

Daruk seemed relieved at this news. He sighed. “Well, shit,” he said. “What the shit was that, anyway?”

Link sprawled out on the chair, letting his legs hang over the arm. “Your guess is as good as mine.”

Daruk scratched his head. “He must be close,” he said after a moment, his expression serious, but then he grinned and punched the palm of his hand. “I’ll pound him into oblivion!”

“Sure,” Link said, looking up at the ceiling. “You do that.”

“Just do me a favor,” he said. “Stop running head first into everything. I can’t possibly protect our passed out healer and the idiot hero.”
Link frowned. “You know what sucks?”

“What?”

“I have to thank Revali for saving my life.”


“And if I don’t acknowledge it,” Link continued, “Revali will bring it up, anyway. Either way, I lose.”

“That’s what you get,” Daruk said. He shook his head. “You know, I helped, too. Where’s my thanks?”

“You almost got killed,” Link said, his brows furrowed at the ceiling.

“And you were gutted by a damn sword.”

Link shrugged. “Don’t let it happen again.”

Daruk smiled. He picked up the remote and flicked on the tv once more. A female reporter was on the screen, her forehead creased as she spoke to the camera of an attack in Faron.

“Right,” he said. “Anything for you, brother.”
Mipha and Urbosa joined Link in Daruk’s room, and before long, Zelda, too, had appeared to join them. After a few minutes of casual conversation, Link met Zelda’s gaze, and she quietly signaled to the door.

In the hallway, Zelda’s voice was hushed as she spoke with Link, informing him of her own confrontation with Dorian which was surprisingly similar to Link’s.

“I don’t like it,” she said, shaking her head. “If you ask me, there’s something going on with him, and it sounds like Impa may not even be aware.”

Link crossed his arms and glanced down the hall. “What about the Guardians?” he asked. “If we don’t get rid of them now, we won’t stand a damn chance.”

“I agree,” Zelda said. “As far as I know, our army has it all under control. The attacks were sudden. There have been a few casualties, but nothing compared to what it could have been. They’re being destroyed, and the Sheikah have gone out to try to find any others that may remain, above ground and underground. The Guardians will be a thing of the past.”

It was the first reassuring thing Link had heard in a while. At the very least, it proved that not all of the Sheikah were suspicious. Whatever was going on with Dorian, or even Impa, it seemed the others were innocent, at least for now. If they were willing to prevent the Guardians from being an issue in the future, than that had to count for something. Maybe.

There were a lot of unanswered questions. It made Link’s stomach knot with anxiety. But there was nothing he could do about it. Not yet, anyway. Their main objective still remained their first priority; prepare for Ganondorf’s return, defeat him, and seal him away, which would hopefully lead to the sealing of the final portal. With all of that taken care of, there would be time to worry about everything else.

Mipha emerged from Daruk’s room. “I’m going to check on Revali,” she said.

Link frowned. “Why?”

“Because he’s our friend,” Mipha said with a frown.

“He is?”

Zelda grinned. “Yeah, that’s news to me.”

Urbosa came into the hall behind Mipha, an arm on her hip. “Me too,” she said. “But I did promise him a bag of chips from the machine.” She shrugged, then lead the way down the hall to Revali’s room, stopping to retrieve his snack first.

Inside his room, she tossed the bag of chips onto his lap, and he eagerly ripped into them. He licked the salt off of his fingers and sighed.

“I don’t remember the last time I ate,” he said before emptying the contents into his mouth.

“How are you feeling?” Mipha asked.

Revali pressed at his temples with his fingers. “Fine. Except for this headache. Comes and goes.” He looked up as Link came in and sighed. “Oh, look,” he mumbled. “There it is.”
“Well, that’s enough Revali for me for one day,” Link said, turning on his heels, but Urbosa grabbed his arm and pulled him back.

“Why can’t you two just get along?”

“What’s some teasing between friends, hm?” Revali said.

“He’s right,” Link said with a nod. “We’re best friends. Didn’t you know?”

“Well, that might be pushing it,” Urbosa muttered.

“Noat all,” Link said, grinning. “Because Revali saved my life, didn’t you, Buddy?”
Revali regarded him carefully. Link was up to something. “I would not do it again,” he said. “It really hurt.”
“Yeah, but you did do it.”
Revali rolled his eyes. “And I regret doing it so much.”
Link frowned. “Revali, you’re ruining this.”

“Come over here so I can slug you,” Revali barked.

“Get out of that bed, Asshole.”
Revali sighed and leaned back against the bed. “Too much effort. I’ll kill you later.”

“Well, this is nice,” Urbosa said. She rolled her eyes. “Glad your near death experience made you a better person.”

Revali peered into his empty bag of chips and laughed. “Near death? Please. I was faking. Had to make Link feel bad.” He frowned and attempted to get the last of the crumbs into his hand.

“Right,” Zelda said, crossing her arms. “Let’s get out of here,” she said to Urbosa, turning back to the door.

“Thanks for visiting, come back soon,” Revali said dryly as Urbosa and Mipha turned to follow Zelda out of the room.

“Whatever,” Link muttered, turning to follow suit, but Revali stopped him, his face serious.

“What’s your plan?” Revali said to him, narrowing his gaze.
Link hesitated. “Not die?”
Revali nodded thoughtfully. “That’s a good start,” he said. His eyes moved to the door, as if checking to make sure no one was in earshot. “What do you know?”

“Nothing,” Link answered slowly.

“Don’t play games with me,” Revali hissed. “I know you know something. And it has to do with Dorian and Impa.”

Link said nothing, but this was enough for Revali.

“I don’t trust them, either,” he said. “Let’s get on the same page; from here on out, they’re out of the picture.”

Link turned his gaze away and looked out the door.
Sensing his unease, Revali settled back into the bed and busied himself with the empty chip bag once more. “Besides. We’re Hyrule’s Champions. We don’t need them. Not with me around saving everyone’s damn lives.”

“Right,” Link said. He glanced at Revali. “Just keep your beak shut.”

“Aye, aye, Captain.”

Link’s lips pulled up at the corners, sneering at Revali.

“Come on, man, don’t you trust me?” Revali whined. He flashed him a grin, then his expression turned serious once more. “Stop trying to get fucking killed, alright?”

Link shrugged. “K,” he said, turning back to the door. “See ya.” Behind him, he heard Revali crumple the empty back of chips, and it landed softly on the floor beside the trash.

*****

By late afternoon, the Champions were officially discharged from the hospital. Impa was all too eager to get rid of their ‘sorry asses’ and with a wave of her hand, the seven of them found themselves back at the shrine. The setting sun shone on the shrine on the hill, just in their eyes, but the warmth of the rays was welcomed on their faces.

After a brief discussion between the Champions, it was determined that there was nothing more they could do but wait for Ganondorf’s arrival, whenever that may be. It didn’t seem ideal to be playing the waiting game, but they had done all they could to prepare for the war and give themselves every advantage they could. So, they parted ways for the evening, each of them eager to return home to their beds and catch up on much needed sleep.

Link, however, was not particularly anxious to get home and try to act like everything was fine in the world. Still reeling with the emotions of the last twenty-four hours, he much preferred being alone to his own thoughts, without the interrogations of his father, or even the worries of his innocent sister, who seemed to know more than she lead on. But with no where else to go, he simply wandered the streets of the city until he ended up in the driveway, looking up at the house.

He blew heavily out of his nose and opted to sit on the trunk of his father’s car over going inside. But his presence had not gone unnoticed, and within a few minutes, his father poked his head outside. He stepped out into the cool night air, bringing with him two beer bottles. His father sat beside him on the car, passing him the opened bottle. Link took it without a word and quickly finished the entirety of it.

“Alcoholism is a good career choice, too,” his father said. “Goes well with the title of hero.”

“I learned from the best,” Link muttered.

“Don’t learn from my mistakes,” he said. “I’m a bad role model.”

“I know.”

His father sighed. He was quiet for a moment, sipping his beer, before he spoke again. “Did I ever tell you about my last deployment?”

Link glanced at his father. He never spoke of his time in the army. “No.”

“It was shortly after your mother found out she was pregnant with Ary,” he said. “And when she
got sick. I had been in and out for the last year, but they decided to let me go home for good. You know, right after one last mission.” He paused to drink, then used his bottle to point at his son. “King Roham spent a long time trying to find that sword,” he said. “Before anyone else could get their hands on it first.”

“Like the Yiga Clan?”

“They’ve been a thorn in our side for years,” his father said. “And they were just as set on finding it as we were.” He drank again. “They ambushed us while a few of us were in Faron doing some scouting. And you know how the Sheikah are. Now imagine a rogue Sheikah with vengeance in his eyes. Those motherfuckers don’t stop at nothing.” His father grinned. “But we had Dorian on our side. Hell, we hardly went anywhere without him. We would have all been six feet under long ago if it weren’t for him.” He paused and his smile faded. “You know, all I wanted to do was go home. I was so done with it all. And I was certain in that moment, I was going to die. There was no walking away from a Yiga ambush, that was just the fact of life. But I was also ready to die. For your mother. For you. For Aryll.” He leaned back on one arm and finished his beer.

Link’s brows furrowed. Where the hell was he going with this?

“Are you so willing to do the same?”

“Yes,” he said.

“That’s idiotic, Link. It didn’t take me long to realize how stupid that was, and you need to understand that, too. You’re no good to them - to anyone - dead. If you die, your friends are doomed to die anyway. If you want them to survive this, you need to survive. You need to fight and end this.”

“Easier said than done,” Link muttered.

His father’s voice softened. “Yeah.” He pushed himself off the car and turned to face his son. “You’re crazy,” he said with a grin. “Running head first at a Guardian with a damn sword. The fuck is wrong with you?”

Link shrugged. “I took a chance.”

“Use your damn head once in a while,” he said.

“Sure,” Link said. “As soon as you stop stalking me.”

“It’s my job,” he said with a shrug. “And Dorian tells me everything.” With that, he left Link alone outside.
Without school or the threat of the portals, life in Hyrule seemed relatively boring. Still, the Champions embraced their temporarily mundane lives, welcoming it eagerly, for they were sure it would not last long. Even Revali - who was perfectly happy to ignore Link outside of school - seemed to enjoy his company as the six of them spent their days together. It felt like a long time since they had any sense of normalcy in their lives, and Riju was even able to convince them to team up in a game of laser tag, much to the dismay of the arcade owner. Though, in truth, he had missed his best customers, but was quick to remind them that the course was not to be used for ‘hero practice.’

That didn’t stop Link, Daruk, and Revali from getting carried away nonetheless, capturing Hyrule’s princess and using her as bait. Zelda, however, was less than amused with their antics, and found herself more concerned over her broken nail than anything else.

When their days turned to night, Link and Mipha found themselves alone. When they were together, they almost completely forgot about the approaching war, too content in each other’s company to care about anything else. They took to long drives out into the countryside of Hyrule where they would lay on the roof of the car, talking about nothing and gazing at the starlit sky.

Link lay on the roof with his head draping over the windshield, while Mipha lay the opposite way, just beside him. She looked up into the night sky with a sigh. The light, summer breeze felt cool on their faces compared to the heat of the sun during the day, and it blew their hair over their eyes slightly. She closed her eyes and smiled. She cherished these quiet moments together, now more concerned over her broken nail than anything else.

“What do you think we’ll do when this is all over?” she asked quietly. She opened her eyes to gaze at the stars once more.

Link was quiet for a moment. His mind was repeating his father’s words over and over like a broken record. He had come to realize that he wanted nothing more than to keep his friends – to keep Mipha – alive, even at the cost of his own life. It seemed almost unavoidable. His fate – the fate of the world – seemed to hang by a delicate string that could snap at any moment, and he lived day after day with that fear. He would be responsible for whatever happened, and that thought festered in the dark corners of his mind, causing him to feel sick.

But Mipha’s voice and presence were a comfort he, like her, had come to cherish. He turned his gaze to Mipha, who had turned to look at him questioningly. “Live normal lives?”

“That doesn’t seem possible,” she said with a soft laugh. She turned back to the sky. “I don’t remember what normal is anymore.”

Link sighed lightly but said nothing further.

“I suppose we’d have to go back to school,” she continued. “That will feel normal, even boring, compared to these last few months.”

“I’d be okay with boring,” Link said.

Silence fell between them, with only the melody of the crickets, and the sad cry of a distant loon to remind them the world still turned. It was a while before Mipha finally spoke.

“I’m so terrified,” she admitted to him softly.

Link’s brows furrowed. “Of your dad kicking your ass?” he said in a hopeless attempt to ease her worries.

Mipha frowned. She turned her head to him, but Link’s eyes remained on the stars. “I’m scared…
for you.” She hesitated. “I’m so afraid you’re going to do something stupid and get yourself killed.”

Link smiled. “That sounds about right.”

“It’s not funny,” Mipha said, her brows furrowing. She sighed. “I wish you would take things seriously.”

“I do,” he said. He propped himself up on his elbow and met her gaze. “Mipha. You won’t let me die even if I wanted to.”

Mipha frowned, but Link continued.

“I wouldn’t be alive right now if it weren’t for you. I don’t even know where I would be without you. Don’t you get that?”

Mipha blinked at him. Her forehead creased as her mind processed his words. After a moment, she met his gaze once more.

Link’s eyes traced the features in her face that he had come to know so well. “I’m scared, too. Scared of losing you.” He hesitated. “You’ve always been in my life, and I never want that to change. If I’m fighting for anything in this forsaken war, it’s for you. Everything I do is for you. To keep you safe. To keep you with me.”

Mipha pulled her gaze away. “Don’t say that.”

“I didn't want to throw my life away for this world. I didn't want any part of this. But you're in this world. You're worth saving. You're what I want to fight for.” He shrugged and grinned. “And if it means I have to save everyone else in it, too, then I guess that's what I gotta do.”

Mipha blushed and avoided his gaze. Her lips pressed together. After a moment, she turned her gaze back to him. “Just promise me one thing,” she said softly.

“Anything.”

“You have to stay alive, too. You have to see this through to the end. Because I can't live without you, Link.” She hesitated a moment and took his hand in hers. “I don't want a life without you in it. I love you.”

Link blinked at her, and for a brief moment, her heart felt as if it had stopped completely, torn between the fact that she had just admitted so much to him, and the fact that there was a very real possibility he did not feel the same way.

But Link put her hands on her cheeks and pulled her up just slightly until her gaze met his. His fingers moved to her chin, pulling her up just slightly until her gaze met his. His fingers moved across her cheek and into her hair where they lingered for a moment. Mipha pressed her lips eagerly against his once more, pushing him back until he was laying against the car once more, her body on top of him. Their kiss deepened for a moment until she pulled away.
His chest moved with each soft breath he took, reminding her how grateful she was that they had all made it this far. She could feel the soft thump-thump of his heart in his chest, an even rhythm that seemed to fall in sync with the chirping crickets and the sad song of the distant loons. They stayed together until the night brought on a chill, the clouds moving in to cover the starry sky. The first few drops of rain weren’t enough to part them until it fell heavily suddenly, quickly soaking them as they laughed and scurried to the shelter of the car.

It was just passed midnight when they drove back into the city and a text from Urbosa came through on Mipha’s phone.

*Your parents called. I told them you were crashing at my place. Where the hell are you?*

Mipha typed out her brief and mysterious reply. *Thanks. Talk later.*

Urbosa sent varying emojis, one that suggested she was curious. The others that followed, however, were seemingly innocent enough, yet when put together, suggested that she was hooking up with someone. Mipha chose not to respond, knowing well enough that it would drive Urbosa crazy, but that she wouldn’t pry further. Not until at least the morning.

After driving aimlessly through the city, neither willing to cut their night short, they found themselves moving quietly through a darkened house, being careful not to wake either of sleeping souls that belong to Link’s sister and father. They lost themselves in the sheets of the bed until the night turned to dawn, and with a heartfelt goodbye, Mipha hurried out before the morning alerted anyone else to her presence.
Chapter 71

Chapter Notes

Oh hey look a new chapter - syke. You already read this (most likely) because I fudged up. I apparently skipped like, 2 chapters (of gold, let's be honest... not really but I enjoy writing partying Champions) and none ya'll seemed to notice (come on guys, yell at me or something lol). SO ANYWHO. I went back and posted the 2 that I missed and now I'm just... reposting the rest so that it's all caught up and back on track. My deepest apologies for my fudge. So you may want to go back (or don't, it's no skin off my back, and they really don't add much to the plot line anyway. You're just missing all the drunken partying action and Link apparently wearing a skirt so...) and read those 2 extra chapters. I believe they start around chapter 60. I think I marked the chapter as 'oops...' in the drop down chapter list thingy there. Okay, so, there ya go. Check 'em out, or don't. But we should be back on track now ^_^

It was late in the morning when Link finally trudged out of his room, dragging his feet across the floor as he made his way downstairs. He had hardly slept - for obvious reasons - and only managed to catch a few hours after Mipha made her sneaky escape. On the plus side, he was officially on summer vacation, and he had the entire summer to sleep.

With the exception of Ganondorf’s ominous return.

His sister sat at the table, her legs swinging under the chair as she colored in a coloring book. Link sat himself with a sigh beside her. His stomach was growling, but he wasn’t ready to put in any effort into making food. He looked around, noticing then his father’s absence.

“Where’s Dad?”

“He had to run to work for a little bit,” Aryll said without looking up from her coloring.

“Oh.”

“I wanted Mipha to make me breakfast,” she continued as she scribbled away.

“Why would she do that?”

“Because you were having a sleepover and I wasn’t invited.”

Link practically jumped up in his seat. His gaze narrowed on his sister. “How do you know that?”

“Because I saw her. Duh.”

“Don’t tell Dad,” Link snapped.

Aryll paused her coloring, meeting Link’s gaze with a frown. “Why?”

“Because he can’t know, okay?” he said, flustered.

Aryll looked at him curiously. “Why?”
“Because - Just - Because I said so, alright? Just keep your mouth shut.”

Aryll crossed her arms. “That’s not very nice.”

Link rolled his eyes. “Promise, please, Ary?”

Aryll’s gaze narrowed on him for a moment, then she shrugged and returned to her coloring. “Fine,” she said. “But only if you let me paint your nails.”

Link groaned, but agreed to her terms. He found the energy to make himself a bowl of cereal, and once his stomach was silenced, he moved to his room to dress, returning to the living room to await his fate. Aryll already had the nail polish out, organizing them on the coffee table in rainbow order. Link slouched on the couch and clicked on the tv as his sister set to work painting his toes.

She had finished one foot when their father entered, but Aryll took no notice, too busy painting her brother's toenails in lively colors.

His father took one look at his son, snorted, and grinned. “Ah, how the tables have turned, Sucker.”

Link rolled his eyes.

“Link said I could paint all his toes if I kept my mouth shut about Mipha sleeping over in his room.”

Link yanked his foot back from her angrily. Her jaw dropped at the realization that she had spilled the beans. She jumped up suddenly, spilling the contents of the open nail polish bottle, and jumped forward towards Link, narrowly missing his groin as she pulled at his shirt.

“I'm so sorry, Link!”

Link grunted, his hands moving to protect himself. “Get off!”

But she continued to pull and shake him. “I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry!” After a moment of this, she flung herself on top of the couch, her arms dangling as she regarded her father with an apologetic look on her face. “I fibbed, Daddy,” she said. “Don't ban Mipha from coming over ever again!”

Their father looked between them for a moment, still standing in the kitchen as the spectacle took place before his eyes. After a moment, he grinned, laughed, and moved across the room. When he passed his son, he hit him upside his head. “At least he won't die a virgin,” he said to seemingly no one as he rounded the corner to make his way upstairs.

Aryll turned to her brother questioningly. “What's a virgin?”

“Nothing,” Link muttered.

“It can't be nothing,” Aryll said stubbornly.

“Are you done with my damn feet?”

Aryll moved to pick up the nail polish bottle that was on the floor. She hurried into the kitchen to grab some towels, then returned to attempt to clean up the spill she had caused. Most of the polish simply smeared and would require additional efforts, but Link couldn’t have cared less at that moment. When Aryll finally gave up, she looked up at her brother with big, sweet, innocent eyes, and stated “I still have some more toes to do or they will look funny.”
“They already look funny,” Link said with a sigh as he settled back into the couch. “Hurry up.”

Aryll sprang up gleefully and sat herself on the couch, taking her brother’s foot once more and set back to work. “Are you gonna show Mipha later?”

“Yeah,” Link said with a roll of his eyes. “Sure. She’ll love ‘em.”

Mipha nodded, still concentrating on painting her brother’s toes. “Almost as much as she loves you.”

Aryll spent another half an hour perfecting Link’s toes and blowing them dry before finally releasing her brother from the torture. He wiggled his toes in faux admiration, then got up to retrieve his phone, dialing Mipha’s number.

“You know,” she said, answering the call. “You’re supposed to wait three days so I won’t think you’re needy or something.”

Link grinned. “I’m needy.”

“Clearly.”

“I just had my toe nails painted by Ary,” he whined. He chose to leave out the bit about her spilling the means to their father. “I need an excuse to get out of here before she starts braiding my hair.”

“So, now I’m just an excuse?” Mipha feigned being hurt. “And here I thought we had something special.”

“Okay, goodbye,” Link said.

“Wait,” Mipha said quickly. “I promised Urbosa we could hang out today.”

Link’s gaze narrowed as he spoke. He was sure that could only mean gossip. “So you can give her all the juicy details?” If a blush could have been heard, Link heard it.


“You’re a good liar. But if you could at least work in somewhere that I’m a proficient and passionate lover, that would be great.”

“Proficient?” Mipha repeated. “That’s a big word for you. Who you trying to impress?”

“Just trying to give myself an edge in the dating world for when you find something better.”

“I thought you were a catch?”

“Well, I sure like to think so.”

“Alright, Fabio,” Mipha said with a sigh. “I guess you can tag along.”

“Great,” Link said. “Let me just put on my heels. Ary did an excellent job painting my toes.”

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Mipha made sure to warn Urbosa in advance that Link would be with her, and thus blowing their plans of gossiping all together, but as it worked out, Riju had insisted on tagging along as well, quickly and easily convincing Revali that they needed a rematch against Link. By the afternoon,
Hyrule’s six Champions, including Riju, Teba - and now that school was out - Suki, had found themselves between the park and the soccer field, Riju bouncing a soccer ball from knee to knee. She looked up just as Mipha and Link approaching, making the group complete.

“Finally!” Riju shouted, drawing the attention of the group to Mipha and Link. They were hand in hand and either in the midst of conversation, or simply staring lovingly into each other's eyes, which the group assumed to be the more plausible explanation. Riju's outburst brought them out of their gaze, however, and they turned their attention curiously onto their friends.

Riju bounded up and down, clapping her hands together. She pointed to Mipha and Link, then to herself, then back to the new couple excitedly. “I called that, you guys, you heard it, I called it. I knew it! I told ya! I did that!”

Urbosa put a hand on her hip and shook her head, grinning. “Yeah, sure, Riju, you called it.”

“So, this is finally a thing, now?” Zelda said. “Officially? The ship is sailing?”

Mipha's brows knit together, her cheeks turning a soft shade of pink. “The ship?”

“Apparently everyone knew it but the two of you,” Teba said with a tone of disinterest.

“I was starting to wonder if Link would be single for the rest of his life,” Revali said with a smirk.

“That doesn't say much for me,” Mipha muttered. Link elbowed her playfully in the ribs.

“Ignore them,” Urbosa said, waving her hand at them.

“I’m not here for gossip,” Revali said, clapping his hands together. “I’m here to kick Link’s ass.” He grabbed the ball from Riju and grinned devilishly at Link.

“Shirts!” Riju yelled. “Me and Revali, you and Daruk.”

Link turned a helpless gaze to his friend. “Can’t you just punch him?”

“I’m not losing to Revali,” Daruk said. “And definitely not Riju.”

Link sighed, pulling his shirt over his head as he jogged after the four of them onto the field. Once the game started, Teba and Suki had wandered off, leaving Urbosa, Mipha, and Zelda alone to watch the game.

Urbosa put a hand on her hip and grinned at Mipha. “You hit that.”

Mipha yelped lightly and buried her face in her hands.

Zelda turned to her in surprise. “You hit that?”

Urbosa nodded. “She hit that.”

“Can we stop saying that?” Mipha muttered.

Urbosa shrugged. “You fucked? Screwed? Made love?” She bent over and grinned. “He put his dick in your -”

“Urbosa!”

“You promised me details!”
“I hate you,” Mipha muttered.

“Remember last time?” Urbosa said, reminiscing happily. “We were right here when I told ya you needed to get laid. And you finally took my advice.” She patted Mipha’s head. “My little girl is all grown up.”

Mipha groaned loudly. She turned her attention on the game, which had apparently stopped for a moment while Urbosa was teasing her. A group of young children had swarmed the field, jumping up and down around the players. One made a muscle with his arms, and Daruk was clearly pretending to be impressed with the little guy’s biceps. Another made shooting motions with his arms, as if shooting a bow, and Revali was in all of his glory as he signed an autograph for the child. A couple more were fighting with imaginary swords, while the other was telling an apparently very thrilling and animated story to Link, judging by the way his hands circled around him and made what appeared to be explosion gestures. Riju shared in this child’s excitement, engaging just as excitedly in the conversation.

“You’re totally gonna have his babies,” Urbosa said.

Mipha met her gaze. She hadn’t realized she was smiling while watching Link.
Chapter 72

Chapter Notes

also hey look I gave Link's dad a name, 70 chapters later, oops. :)

“Link.”

Daruk passed the ball to Link, but it flew right by him as Link spun on his heels, meeting Zelda’s gaze. His eyes narrowed, then moved to look out over the city. Revali sprinted by him, chasing after the ball and dribbled in between his feet.

“That was weak, man,” he shouted to Link over his shoulder. But when Link did not have a comeback for him, he stopped and turned around, following his gaze out over the city. Something wasn’t right. “Link?”

At that moment, the ground started to tremble, now bringing the game to an end. Their eyes darted around, searching for the source of the trembling, but the world seemed otherwise quiet. After a moment, the shaking ceased, but was quickly followed by a dark, strangely blinding light that split the sky like an explosion. They shielded their eyes, and when the light subsided, the sun had seemingly disappeared all together. The sky had turned a dark, eerie shade of purple twilight, though no stars shone through. Curtains of sheer darkness seemed to move ominously over the sky like the northern lights would do high in the mountains.

“That can’t be good,” Daruk muttered, standing at Link’s side. The Champions slowly gathered round, their eyes turned to the sky.

“Do you think this is it?” Urbosa asked.

“Ganondorf,” Revali hissed.

“Link.”

Zelda’s phone rang. She answered it wordlessly. She nodded as the voice on the other end spoke. Her brows furrowed. “We’ll be right there.” She hung up and turned to her friends. “There’s a large army heading this way, just south of the city,” she said quickly. “Our army is prepared and is heading out to defend the city. Ganondorf is not with his army, but Impa suspects he is not far behind. She and my father are waiting for us.”

Urbosa nodded. “Let’s not waste any time, then,” she said.

Riju frowned, looking up at her sister. “What about me?”

“Stay out of the way,” Urbosa growled to her.

Riju didn’t dare argue with her sister. For the first time since it all began, she was afraid for her sister. She turned her gaze to Link, her brows furrowed. “Don’t let her die.”

“I think Urbosa can take care of herself better than I can,” he said.
Urbosa winked playfully at him.

“We’ll bring her home,” Suki quickly offered, and the Champions hurried to their vehicles, climbing in and speeding through the city.

Just as promised, Impa and King Roham were waiting for them at the base just outside of the city. Troops of Hyrulean soldiers had already made their way out to defend the city. Though the battle was still a couple of miles away, Ganondorf’s army was moving in quickly. They were gathered in a small room with a monitors. One screen had one of the news stations playing on it; the media was on full alert to the approaching battle and were warning people to stay in their homes.

Impa pulled Zelda and Link quickly out of the room, glaring at the rest of the Champions as they tried to follow. They remained where they were, heading her wordless warning, and turned their attention back to the screen.

Impa walked briskly down the hall of the base, speaking quickly as Zelda and Link trailed behind her.

“There’s no report on Ganondorf’s whereabouts,” she informed them. “But my men have both eyes on every corner of the country. As soon as he shows, we’ll know. You know what your jobs are.” She turned a corner and moved briskly through into a dimly lit room. She regarded the two heroes over her shoulder for a minute, then shrugged. She pulled two vests from a table and threw them at Zelda and Link.

“Put them on,” she instructed. “You’ll need all the help you can get.”

“These are bullet proof vests,” Zelda said. “I hardly think they’ll be able to stop Ganondorf’s power.”

“Maybe, maybe not,” Impa said. She moved to snatch it away, but Zelda pulled it out of her grasp. “If you don’t want it,” Impa continued, “don’t wear it.”

“No,” Zelda said quickly. “I won’t take my chances.”

Impa smiled, pleased. “Good. I’d like you to stick around a little longer.” With that, she left them alone in the room. Link and Zelda exchanged uneasy glances.

“I’m not ready for this,” Zelda whispered, her gaze fearful. “I can’t do this, Link. I can’t. I -”

Link grabbed her wrists, feeling suddenly calm about it all. He shoved the vest into her chest. “Why are you the one panicking right now?” he hissed. “You’ve got a hell of a lot more going for you than I do. You’ll need to save my dumbass, remember?”

Zelda blinked at him, then turned her gaze to the back of her hand. She pulled out of his grasp, then worked at putting the vest on. “Right,” she muttered. She forced a smile. “You really did get the shit end of the deal. Everyone’s got a cool power but you.”

“Don’t remind me,” he muttered as he, too, fastened the vest around him. “This thing is not gonna do shit if I get gutted.”

“Don’t get gutted.”

Revali paced the room as they waited. In the background, the reporters continued to speculate and
warn their viewers of the war that had broken out outside of the city. Reports came in of troops all around Hyrule, moving in to attack other various cities. From time to time, questions arose above the Champions that had made the appearance just weeks ago, and the debate of the legends picked up once more. Could the fate of Hyrule really rely on six teenagers?

Soldiers hurried about the base, shouting orders to one another. What little they caught of passing conversation was enough to tell them that the war for Hyrule was not going in their favor, and this only made Revali more anxious.

“What are we waiting for?” he muttered. “We need to get out there!”

“Don’t like missing out on all the fun?”

Mipha looked up at the figure that stood in the doorway. Link's father leaned against the frame, his arms crossed. He was dressed in the Hyrulian army's typical uniform, which she hadn't seen on him in over a decade. There was a weapon on either hip, and she was sure another hidden under his vest. She knit her brows together as he met her gaze.

“Does Link know you're here?” she asked.

“Hello to you, too,” he said.

Mipha rolled her eyes at him. “He's not going to be happy.”

“My deepest apologies,” he said. “I didn't realize he ran this country. Hero or not, I don’t take orders from him.”

Mipha frowned, but said nothing more. She turned her gaze back to the live news coverage.

“What are you doing hanging back here, then?” Revali asked. “Missing out on all the fun.”

“None of your business,” he said coolly. He stepped out of the doorway and back into the hall as Zelda and Link made their return. He met his son’s angry gaze and frowned. “Why is no one ever happy to see me?”

“What are you doing here?” Link snarled.

His father said nothing for a moment. He sighed softly through his nose, then turned away from his son. “Let’s talk.”

Link hesitated, then followed his father around the corner. When he stopped, he turned back to face him.

“What are you doing here?” Link repeated.

“Same thing as you,” he said dryly.

“This doesn't involve you,” Link hissed.

“Look; when the king calls, you answer.”

“You're retired.”

“Not anymore.”
Link hesitated. His father had made no mention to him that he was back in Hyrule's army. He hadn't been since just before Aryll was born. “You can't do this,” Link said, beginning to panic. “What about Aryll?”

“I'm not going anywhere,” he said. “King Roham was kind enough to keep me around here. Besides, Aryll’s fine. She’s safe with Riju.” He hesitated for a moment. “Well, probably in more trouble than if she were home alone.” He shrugged. “But Riju said I could pawn her off on her.”

Link's lips twisted into an annoyed snarl, but his father only grinned.

“That look was more terrifying on your mother,” he commented.

“This isn't a joke,” Link hissed. “She’s not safe. No one is safe. And you're not supposed to be a part of this.”

“The whole world is a part of this,” his father said. “This is a war, Link. You cannot possibly end this by yourself. The sooner you realize that, the better off you'll be.”

“And when did you plan on telling me this?” Link muttered.

His father hesitated. “Never.”

“Never?” Link repeated, growing more enraged with him.

“See, that's how this parenting job works; I don't have to tell you shit.”

“And what happens if you get yourself killed?” Link hissed.

“You underestimate me,” his father said. “I have a lot more experience under my belt than you do.”

“No,” Link said. “I have enough on my plate. I can't be saving your ass, too.”

“You're the one that's going to need help.”

“I'm the one that's going to lose a father!”

“Well I won't lose a son!”

Link stared blankly at his father. After a moment, he pulled his gaze away and looked down the empty hallway. At the corner of his eye, he watched as his father fumbled with one of the weapons at his side. He pulled out the small hand gun, slipped in the clip, and handed it to Link. Link turned to look at the gun questioningly, then up at his father.

“That's useless to me,” he said.

His father shrugged. “Never know when you'll need it.”

Link took the weapon slowly, turning it over in his hands.

“That's the trigger,” he said with a smirk, pointing to the trigger on the weapon.

“I'm not an idiot,” Link hissed. He pocketed the weapon regardless.

They stood facing each other wordlessly for a moment.

“You know,” his father started. “I did alright.”
Link blinked at him. “What?”

“That your mother said I couldn’t do it, but,” he crossed his arms, “I showed her. I raised a decent kid.”

Link rolled his eyes. “Right,” he muttered. “Keep telling yourself that.”

His father pulled him into a hug. Link wrapped his arms around his father, but just as soon as they embraced, his father pulled back and forced a crooked smile.

“Go kick some ass,” he said.

Link said nothing. He looked passed his father as more soldiers filed out of the base. One of the men paused and watched them.

“Rusl!” he called.

His father hesitated, glancing over his shoulder, then turned his gaze back to his son. He saluted him playfully. “Come back alive, k?” He turned away to join his comrades.

Link watched as he rounded the corner and disappeared. He jumped slightly when he heard Mipha’s voice. He turned to her as she appeared around the corner. She regarded Link with worry.

“Are you okay?”

“Peachy,” Link muttered, unsure of how much of his conversation with his father was heard. But Mipha gave no indication to what she heard. He met her gaze, then pulled her towards him, pressing his lips against hers. After a moment, Mipha pulled back, her lips hovering over his as she hesitated. She met his gaze. She opened her mouth to speak, but the room began to shake suddenly.

Link caught her as she stumbled forward. The shaking stopped for a moment, and they hurried outside of the base. The world was still cast in an eerie twilight, but something was different. A dark cloud seemed to shroud the palace, and the shaking picked up once more. A deafening boom echoed across the country. On the tv screen inside, the reporters that had surrounded the palace ran in panic. Cameras dropped to the ground as they made their escape, though they continued to record as the King of Evil stepped forward out of the darkness.
Chapter 73

The city was overrun with monsters as they followed Ganondorf out of the darkness that enveloped the palace. Though most of Hyrule’s army was preoccupied elsewhere, defending the cities around the kingdom from the earlier attacks, the soldiers that remained to stand guard by the capital were quickly dispatched inside the city to defend against the newest threat.

The Champions were gathered together in the base just outside of the city, shouting at one another as they watched the battle unfold before the media outlets cut out completely. Each of them had their own idea of how to take on Ganondorf and his army.

“We can’t just dive in head first,” Urbosa said in a desperate attempt to rein them in. “We need a plan.”

“Urbosa’s right,” Revali said. “We know how rash and irresponsible Link can be.”

“When have I ever done anything rash or irresponsible?” Link said, crossing his arms.

“I have a list,” Mipha said dryly. “It’s alphabetized.”

“There isn’t much we can do,” Zelda said. “Link and I need to get in there and end this, sooner rather than later. You need to cover our asses while we do that.”

“Absolutely not,” Link said. “It’s not their job to cover us.”

“They’ll do a hell of a better job than our army,” Zelda said.

“No,” Link said sharply. “We go alone. End of story.”

“Then what the hell do you expect us to do?” Daruk said, his gaze narrowed on Link. “We’ve been a part of this since the beginning. You can’t expect us to back out now.”

“Yeah, get off your high horse, man,” Revali said. “We’re not sitting this out. Those soldiers don’t stand a damn chance. They need us.”

Link grit his teeth together. He knew he wasn’t going to win this. But at the very least, they would be out of the way of the bigger threat; Ganondorf. “Fine,” he muttered, his brows knit together. “But if shit goes south, get yourselves out. Understand?”

“Alright,” Zelda said with a nod, her gaze fierce on her friends. “Let’s end this.”

Without a moment to lose, Hyrule’s Champions made their way back into the city with the next wave of troops. In the short amount of time since Ganondorf’s return, the city had transformed into a completely unrecognizable battlefield. Cars were strewn about the streets where people left them, fleeing in panic. Soldiers were either escorting the remaining citizens to safety, or were plunged deep in battle with Ganondorf’s army. On the edges of the city, medics had their hands full with soldiers and civilians alike, causing Mipha to hesitate as they hurried through the city. She could help them. She had to help them.

When she spoke up, Link didn’t think twice. He was unwilling to let her follow him and Zelda into the heart of the battle, and it seemed the safest place for her to be while still doing some good. Mipha didn’t waste a moment throwing herself into the chaos as the wounded were moved away from the battle, and she quickly disappeared.
“Look,” Zelda said quickly. “Link and I are going to find Ganondorf. Don’t follow us.”

“You’re insane,” Revali said.

“Our army needs help here,” she hissed. “Don’t get in our way.”

“Fine,” Revali said. “But the second Link drops the ball, we’re coming to save your asses.” He flashed Link a grin and a wink.

“Give him hell,” Urbosa said with a nod. “We’ll be here.”

“Crush ‘im!” Daruk called after them as they ran towards the palace.

They moved through the battle with relative ease, fighting through the occasional hoard of monsters that were not hindered by Hyrule’s army. To their dismay, however, Ganondorf seemed to be nowhere near the palace, despite the mysterious darkness that shrouded it. In fact, they were completely alone, not a soldier or other soul in the area. They looked out over the battle, their brows furrowed.

“Where is he?” Zelda hissed.

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Mipha dropped to her knees beside a Sheikah, working furiously to save a young woman who lay unconscious on the ground. She hadn’t been there more than twenty minutes, helping the other Sheikah and medics healing the injured, but it felt as if she had been there an eternity, and the wounded continued to come in quicker than they could heal.

“The boy,” the Sheikah said quickly, indicating with his chin. Mipha moved her gaze to a boy who stood just a couple of yards away, looking on with terrified eyes as the strange man worked at saving his mother. He had a deep gash in his head and it was bleeding profusely. Mipha hurried to him, and as she approached, the boy broke into tears. He trembled as she took him in her arms and placed a hand over the wound. Within moments, it was healed. The boy’s crying quieted as he patted his head where the gash had been. He looked at Mipha.

“Are you a Sheikah, too?” he asked.

Mipha smiled and shook her head. “No, not exactly.”

He frowned, but his attention was turned to his mother as she choked and coughed, catching her breath. He shouted for her and ran to her, throwing himself in her arms. Mipha stood, but she was immediately jerked backwards as Revali grabbed her wrist.

“Time to go,” he said.

Mipha pulled her arm out of his grasp. “What are you talking about?”

“Link will kill me if you die,” Revali spat. “And I’m not about to let that stupid asshole gut me with his stupid sword.”

She opened her mouth to argue further and question his motives, but she quickly got her answers. The ground began to tremble suddenly, and though she stumbled as she ran, Revali was quick to pull her up, keeping her on her feet as they continued to sprint through the busy city streets. Before she knew it, she was reunited with Daruk and Urbosa. The ground shook violently again, then exploded just yards ahead of them, splitting the ground and preventing them from moving further.
“What’s going on?” Mipha shouted as they slid to a stop. They turned on their heels, but they were completely cut off from the rest of the battle by the same strange cloud of darkness that shrouded the palace. A wicked laugh seemed to come from the darkness. A cloaked figure stepped through. In one hand, he carried a large, deadly sword. He held his other hand up before him, and a piece of the Triforce glowed and pulsed. In his palm, the darkness swirled and moved as if it were being sucked into his hand. For a split second, the air fell silent, then the darkness burst forth in the form of a ball of energy that plunged towards them, only to bounce off of Daruk’s shield. Daruk yelped under the force of the attack and his shield quickly fell as the attack was diverted.

Ganondorf moved towards them, removing the hood of his cloak and smiling wickedly down at them as they stumbled backwards. Daruk and Revali pushed Urbosa and Mipha behind them, but Ganondorf pushed in closer still, raising his arm once more.

“Where are they?” he growled. When they didn’t answer him, his smile disappeared. “You cannot protect them from me,” he hissed. His fingers curled into his palm and once more, the ground began to tremble. He thrust his open palm toward them and in one final, desperate attempt to keep his friends alive, Daruk erected his shield around them and braced himself for impact.

But the impact did not come. Instead, the darkness that swirled in Ganondorf’s palm was quickly diminished by a warm, golden streak of light. It slammed into his palm, knocking him backwards and providing enough of a distraction as Link threw himself at Ganondorf, sword in hand. There was a loud clang as steel met steel and Ganondorf pushed back against Link’s surprise attack. But Link held his ground, grunting under the force until he found the strength to dislodge himself, jumping backwards as Ganondorf came at him with his sword.

“Let's go,” Daruk said with a grunt, pulling at Mipha's wrist, but Mipha pulled out of his grasp.

“No!” She tried to run to Link, but Daruk pulled her back once more and ran forward to catch up with Revali and Urbosa.

“We’ll only get in the way,” he hissed back to her. “We agreed to stay out of the way.”

Mipha hesitated, looking over her shoulder once more before letting Daruk drag her away. She didn’t want to leave Link alone, but she knew Daruk was right. It was just as Urbosa had said to her only a week ago. She was too much of a distraction. She couldn’t be the reason for Link getting hurt.

The sound of clanging steel continued as Link lunged at Ganondorf, every attack met with a strong defense. As Ganondorf dislodged Link’s blade, he came at Link with his own. He was much stronger, however, and Link could not deflect the blows as he had hoped, leaving him to resort to jumping and dodging each swing. He had the advantage in speed however, which was just enough to allow him to spring forward immediately after he dodged Ganondorf’s attack, only to have his attack blocked again and again.

Ganondorf’s sword came down across Link’s once more, but this time, the block didn’t feel as forceful. He bared down against Link, but otherwise, showed no signs of continuing the battle. He grinned at Link, seemingly pleased with himself.

“How much more must we continue this, Chosen Hero?” Ganondorf said. “You know as well as I do that I get stronger and stronger, each and every time. And you have become more and more foolish.”

Link ignored his words as he put the weight of his body behind his sword, pushing Ganondorf backwards, but Ganondorf was quick to dislodge himself before Link could do so, and with a
simple, all too easy swing of his blade, the Master Sword was flung from Link’s hands. Before
Zelda had a chance to react, Ganondorf thrust his palm out toward her, and she immediately
dropped to the ground.

Link shouted to her, his gaze moving from her, to Ganondorf, to the Master Sword, and back to his
enemy. He stepped backwards as Ganondorf pressed forward, closer to him.

“Hyrule is mine,” he hissed. “The Triforce is mine!” He raised his arm, collecting another ball of
dark energy, and threw it at Link. Link threw himself out of the path of the attack, rolling away as
it burst upon impact with the ground beside him.

“Die!”

Mipha looked over her shoulder as they ran, stopping suddenly and yanking her arm out of Daruk's
grasp. Daruk, shouting to Revali and Urbosa, slid to a stop, spinning on his heels to catch Mipha
once more, but his attention moved beyond Mipha to the fight before them as Ganondorf’s sword
plunged into Link.
Link looked down, horrified, at the sword that had pierced his gut, his vision quickly fading.
Mipha’s shrieks echoed through his quiet mind as his hands clutched at his stomach. He struggled
to breathe, but his lungs could not fill themselves, and he could only gasp desperately as he
dropped to his knees.

Mipha’s vision blurred as she tried to run to Link, ignoring everything else around her, but once
more, someone pulled her backwards, and the force caused her to fall to her knees as she screamed
for Link. She watched in horror as the darkness seemed to swarm in around them. But just before it
had a chance to cut them off from the rest of the world, a bright, golden light burst forth, arching
over them and dispelling the darkness completely.

Ganondorf’s booming shouts could be heard throughout the city as Zelda stood before him, her
arm raised to the sky. The golden light enveloped them quickly, seemingly stopping Ganondorf in
his tracks completely.

Mipha screamed Link’s name once more, but there was no sign of him. In the bright light that
Zelda had created, she could no longer see where his body lay. The hands that had stopped her
pulled her back to her feet, and she turned to sob into Rusl’s chest.

“I can heal him!” she shouted, pulling back, but Rusl’s hands were tight on her wrists. “Let me heal
him!” She could barely see through the tears that welled in her eyes, but was still surprised to see
Link’s father clutching her. At this realization, she fell against him once more and sobbed.

Rusl wrapped his arms around her. He looked passed her to where his son fell, to where Zelda
stood tall, holding back Ganondorf as he continued to shout with rage. He looked up as Daruk’s
shield erected around them, then over his shoulder through his blurred vision as Ganondorf’s
troops hurried towards them.

“That fucking asshole,” Revali spat, but he, too, was just as distraught as his friends. “What the
fuck are we supposed to do?”

“We can’t leave Zelda up there,” Urbosa said. Her cheeks were wet, but she turned her gaze to
Zelda.

Rusl pushed Mipha away from him and reloaded his weapon. “Get out of here,” he barked at them.
“Get out of the city, to the base. Dorian will be there waiting.”
Daruk opened his mouth to argue, but Rusl cut him off abruptly.

“If you all die, we’re fucked! Now move!”

Daruk pulled at Mipha, and once more, they were running through the city. They didn’t know what would happen next, for none of them had planned to lose the war. But if anyone would have an answer, surely it was the Sheikah. Surely the war could still be won...
Chapter 74

The world was strangely white, empty, and silent. There was no sun, no ground, no sky, no sign that life should exist at all. And yet, he existed. There seemed to be no breathable air, yet his lungs were full. His heart beat in his chest. He could see, yet there was nothing to see. It seemed he was simply in a void, yes despite all he knew to be logical, he could feel a breeze on his skin. His feet could walk on a surface that did not seem to exist. And he was not alone.

Her voice was melodic, sweet, beautiful and peaceful. When she spoke his name, he felt a sense of familiarity. Of safety. Of love. The woman who spoke his name was the woman he had loved so dearly, perhaps in a past life, but he knew it well, as if he had never not known it. He knew her. He knew her so deeply. He had memories of her he could not have recalled before this moment. In any other moment, none of it would have made sense to him, but in that moment, there, in that void with her, it all made sense, and all felt right in the world.

And when his gaze fell on her, it was as if he had never forgotten her. Her features were so striking, so sweet, so lovely, he felt ashamed just to be in her presence. Though she was a familiar figure, the part of him that had completely forgotten saw Zelda in her. She was truly Hylia’s descendant. A reincarnation of Hylia herself, it seemed.

And he, her Chosen Hero.

Hylia smiled as she looked upon Link. She moved toward him and let her hand rest on his cheek. Their eyes met, and Link could not pull his gaze away from her. He didn’t want to. If he could have, he would have stayed with her forever.

But he couldn’t. She wouldn’t let him.

“You are too important for this world,” she said. “Your work there is not yet finished, Hero.” Link wanted to speak with her, but he found himself at a loss for words. In fact, he wasn’t even sure if his voice would allow him to speak at all.

“I cannot interfere so easily,” she said softly. “Not like I once could. My power weakens with each generation of heroes.”

Still, he could not speak, but his eyes pulled at the corners in fear.

“Do not fear for me,” Hylia said. “For I will always live on in Hyrule. In you and in Zelda. As long as you two remain, I know Hyrule will be safe.”

Link’s brows furrowed. He had so many questions for her. He wanted to save her. He had to save her. How could her power be weakening? What did that mean for Hyrule? For him? He didn’t want to be without her; he couldn’t.

“Do not fret,” Hylia continued. “All will be as it should be, thanks to you.” She took a step backwards, her sad smile returning. “I will do everything in my power to save you, Link. Please - save Hyrule.” She raised an arm out before her. “And when all of this is over, will you come to wake me up, too?”

Link awoke with a start, his chest heaving as his lungs filled with air. He winced in the bright light, shielding his eyes with his hand as everything began to come into focus. The room was buzzing with voices, and he suddenly realized that there were nurses and doctors surrounding him. His chest ached as if he something heavy had slammed into him. Impa’s face hovered uncomfortably
close over him, causing him to gasp and choke in surprise. Impa straightened, her arms folded over her chest.

“You get one of those,” she said fiercely. “You stupid, idiotic, foolish little -”

Link sat up and sneered at her. “I get it!” He looked at the back of his hand, realizing then that he was hooked up to machines. The nurses stepped away, regarding him wearily before Impa shooed them out, leaving her and Link alone. She shook her head and pressed a finger to her temple.

“How do you feel?” she asked him.

Link hesitated. He looked himself over; he appeared as good as new. Surely Impa’s handy work. “Fine,” he said slowly. His chest was still aching, however. He poked at himself with a finger, half expecting his chest to cave in, or something else to explain the pain.

“Guess Hylia had other plans for you,” she said. “Because those paddles sure as hell weren’t doing the trick.”

That explained the pain. Impa poked him in the nose - it beat slapping him upside the head - and the pain was gone. “There.” She smiled at him. It was the kindest smile he had ever seen on her hard, wrinkled face. But just as quickly as it appeared, it disappeared, and her gaze hardened once more. “I believe you have a war to win, no?”

Link blinked at her. He looked around the room, unsure of where he was, how he ended up there, or how long he had been there.

“Zelda,” he said quickly. What had become of her? Mipha? His friends? Hyrule?

“She’s holding Ganondorf back,” Impa said. “But she won’t be able to for much longer. Save her, Link. Save Hyrule.” Impa held the Master Sword in her hands. She thrust it into his chest. Link took the sword from her, gazing at it for a moment. He nodded, but before he had a chance to speak further, Impa thrust a palm against his chest, and he was instantly pulled through time and space, experiencing the same unsettling feeling he had felt too many times before.

When the world snapped into focus, he found himself at the shrine. From where he stood, he could see the bright, golden light around the palace that held Ganondorf back. He was familiar with Zelda’s - Hylia’s - power, and even from the distance he was at, he could tell that Zelda was quickly growing weaker with each passing moment. He hardly had any time to even process what had happened, but there was no time for his thoughts - Zelda, and all of Hyrule, needed saving.

*****

None of Hyrule’s Champions were quite able to think straight, but with Rusl’s quick thinking and guidance, they were able to get themselves out of the falling city and back into the base just outside. Though, none of them knew what they were supposed to do next. In that moment, there were only two things on their minds; how to save Zelda, and the fate of the fallen hero.

Rusl’s mind was clearly occupied with these thoughts as well, but it took the four heroes by surprise when he burst through the doors of the base and confronted Dorian with a raised weapon. His nostrils flared as he approached the Sheikah.

“Rusl,” Dorian warned, but Rusl had no interest in listening to him.

“Shut up,” he barked. “This is your fucking fault!”
Dorian’s gaze narrowed on Rusl, but he continued to shout.

“You’re the reason my son is dead!”

Dorian hesitated, his face whitening slightly. He looked over Rusl’s shoulder at the four heroes behind him. They watched with pained and confused expressions.

“What’s your plan, Dorian?” Rusl snarled. “Zelda’s going to die holding that bastard back if you don’t get your fucking shit together!”

“Put your gun down,” Dorian hissed.

Rusl cocked the weapon. “What’s a measly little gun to you, Sheikah?”

Dorian turned his back on Rusl. “You’re right,” he said simply. “But you won’t kill me, and I won’t kill you.”

Rusl hesitated. His arm lowered slightly. He held his gaze on Dorian, his expression torn.

“We need to get Zelda out of there,” Dorian said. “Her hold on Ganondorf will drop. I will get them...”

“No,” Rusl hissed.

Dorian regarded Rusl over his shoulder. “You don’t trust me?”

“I should have killed you when I had the chance,” Rusl said, his voice cold and even.

This didn’t seem to faze Dorian, however. “Fine,” he said simply. “I’ll send Paya with you. She will get them out of harm’s way for the time being.”

“And then what?” Revali said, his gaze narrowing on Dorian. “Leave Ganondorf to destroy the city?”

“Our concern is the safety of Hyrule’s Champions,” Dorian said, raising his voice.

“Your hero is dead!” Revali barked. “The war is over. We lost!”

“As long as the Triforce stays out of Ganondorf’s hands, Hyrule will have a chance.” Dorian turned to face them, his gaze hard. “Are you going to take that chance, or let Link die for nothing?”

The Champions fell silent. They turned their gazes to Rusl. His lips pulled back in a sneer at the mention of Link’s name. His furious gaze was back on Dorian. But after a moment, he pocketed his weapon and, without another word, he turned and left the base.

The Champions followed him out quickly. Revali pressed him further for answers.

“The fuck was all that about?”

But Rusl did not answer him. Revali jogged ahead and stepped in his path. His hard, angry gaze met Rusl’s.

“I want answers,” he said. “Now!”

“There are no answers,” Rusl hissed. “I have no fucking answers.”
Revali’s gaze narrowed on his. “You know more than you lead on,” he said. “And we need this information.”

“You’re right,” Rusl said frankly. “There’s a lot that you don’t have a fucking clue about. This war has been in motion since before you were even a thought in your mother’s head.”

“What do you know?” Revali pressed. “What’s the deal with Dorian?”

Rusl broke his gaze and continued forward. “I don’t know,” he said simply.

But Revali wasn’t about to let him go that easily. “What do you mean you don’t know?” he hissed, keeping up with Rusl.

“It’s of no concern to you,” Rusl said. He shook his head. “I should have killed him a long time ago. But I didn’t.” He stopped walking and looked up at the golden light that shrouded Ganondorf. “I didn’t do it. I didn’t stop him. And it’s because of me Link is dead.”

Revali hesitated. He turned his gaze to his friends, but only found pain and confusion in their eyes. Silence fell between them until Daruk stepped forward.

“Zelda needs us,” he said, his voice soft. “We need to get her out of there.”

Rusl pulled out his gun and casually checked the clip inside. He shoved it back into place in the weapon with a nod. He regarded the four Champions over his shoulder for a moment. “Alright,” he said simply. “Let’s go save the princess.”
Chapter 75

Zelda could feel her power quickly diminishing as she stood her ground against Ganondorf. Though he was infuriated at first with the disruption of his power, he, too, knew it was only a matter of time before Zelda’s defenses would fall. He simply paced in waiting, his lips pulling up in a wicked smile.

She needed a plan, but in her desperation, she couldn’t think straight. Her mind was lost in the chaos of war, playing the images over again and again in her head. And all the while, in the back of her mind, a voice repeated the same thing over and over; he’s dead. Link’s dead. We lost.

She choked out a sob as she fell to a knee. She used one hand to steady herself as she kept her other hand raised, desperate to keep her hold on Ganondorf as long as she could. There was no chance she could win this without Link. Not really. But, perhaps she could put a hold on things. If she could still seal Ganondorf away, maybe, just maybe, it would give them the edge she needed. She was sure she couldn’t do it without Link’s piece of the Triforce, but she had the sealing power in her. It probably wouldn’t be secure, but she could do it. She was sure it would be enough for them to escape the city. To take the Master Sword and return it to where it belonged, thus closing the final portal. All she needed was that extra time. Just a little extra time.

But her power was growing weaker and weaker with each passing moment, and she couldn’t help the feeling in the back of her mind that crept forward; a feeling that told her that this decision would likely end her life, too. The strength needed for such power was beyond what she could muster, and if she should succeed, it would be her final act to save Hyrule. The rest would fall into the hands of her friends; her entrusted Champions.

She was running out of time, but her mind was made up. She knew what she had to do to save Hyrule. It was the only option left. She pushed herself back on her feet, but let her arm drop. The golden light that held Ganondorf back disappeared, and Ganondorf looked down at her with a wicked smile.

“Have you finally given up?” he said.

Zelda glared at Ganondorf. Her lips pulled into a snarl. “Never.” She thrust her arm forward, willing every ounce of energy through her body and out through her palm. But before her power had a chance to burst forth and seal Ganondorf, she was knocked to the ground forcefully. In the spot where she stood, the ground erupted with Ganondorf’s own attack.

“Idiot,” Link hissed at her. He pulled her abruptly to her feet, and Zelda stared at him.

“No!” Ganondorf shouted as he thrust another attack towards them.

Link pulled Zelda out of the path of the attack once more. “Stop him!”

Zelda nodded, and before Ganondorf had a chance to hurl another attack at them, she thrust her palm out once more. The light shot forth and collided with Ganondorf. He roared loudly as the light cut off his own source of power and rendered him immovable for a moment. It was just a moment, but it was enough for Link to plunge his sword into Ganondorf, and with a horrifying shout, the King of Evil fell to his knees.

Link pulled his sword out and stumbled backwards as Ganondorf gasped for breath. But he looked up at Link and Zelda, his wicked smile still plastered on his face.
“Fools,” he spat. “Hyrule will be mine.”

The ground began to tremble violently. Zelda stumbled backwards into Link’s arms. They watched in horror as Ganondorf rose to his feet. The strange darkness burst forth from him, as if coming straight out of him, and shot forward across the city, temporarily blinding all within its boundaries. When the darkness subsided, a giant, wicked beast stood in place of Ganondorf. Its wicked, red eyes glared down at the two heroes. It raised an oversized paw and swiped at them, roaring loudly as Zelda and Link narrowly dodged it.

“Fucking awesome,” Link muttered.

Zelda stood tall, holding out an arm where a golden bow took form. She drew back on the string, and an arrow took shape in her fingers. “I’ll hold him back,” she said as she narrowed her gaze on the rampaging beast. “Finish this.” She released the arrow and it soared through the air. It hit the beast harder than it seemed possible for such a dainty arrow, and as it did so it burst into a golden light. The beast roared loudly as it stumbled backwards, shaking its head before pouncing forward once more.

Link and Zelda dodged it as Zelda drew another arrow, holding steady as she took aim once more. Link searched the beast desperately. It seemed unlikely he would be able to get many shots at the rampaging giant; he had to make each attack count. For a moment, he couldn’t help but to think of the video games he once played, before he got caught up in hero work. Every enemy had a weak point, and a strategy had to be in place if he wanted to win the battle. Why should real life be any different? It had gotten him this far, anyway.

He dodged another oversized foot as it came crashing down to the ground. By now, he and Zelda had split, and though he lost sight of her for a moment, he could see her arrows soar through the air, each one hitting their target. With each arrow that hit, the beast became more and more distraught and seemingly disoriented, but this only caused him to grow more and more furious as he continued rampaging about. His roar bellowed over the city as he plunged himself at Link and Zelda whenever he could.

After a few moments of dodging and analyzing, Link came up with his plan to not have a plan at all. Through most of their battles, he really never had much of a plan, so it only seemed appropriate that he dive in head first once more. Truth be told, he couldn’t waste any more time second guessing himself. Zelda was barely able to dodge the beast’s attacks. She was slowing down, growing weaker with each passing moment. And though her arrows were enough to provide a distraction and weaken the beast, even their power was weakening.

So, when the beast was distracted, Link threw himself at the creature, plunging his sword into the beast’s leg. The beast roared and threw itself about in a desperate attempt to dislodge Link, but Link pressed the sword deeper, using it to hold himself onto the beast. When another arrow distracted the beast for a moment, Link pulled the sword out and took the opportunity to climb its leg.

Once he reached the beast’s back, he plunged his sword in once more just as the beast tried to dislodge him for a second time. Link held tight to the sword until the beast was distracted, then pulled the sword out and dashed across the creature’s back. But the beast reared up on its hind legs, throwing its head back with another trembling roar, sending Link flying off of his feet and sliding down the creature’s back.

He plunged the sword into the beast once more as he fell and clung to the blade as it ripped through the beast’s flesh before coming to a stop. The beast threw itself backwards, and Link just barely rolled out of the way before the large creature toppled down on top of him. The sword
pressed deeper into the beast’s flesh when it landed, and with another painful roar, it quickly turned over, but not before Link had a chance to throw himself onto the beast once more.

As the beast rampaged, Link scurried across its back towards the sword. He could barely find it in the mass of fur, and it had been plunged deep into the flesh, making it difficult for Link to pull out. But Zelda’s arrows continued to plummet the beast, giving Link just enough time to pull the sword out and run the length of the beast. Again, it reared back on its hind legs, but not before Link had a chance to throw himself forward, plunging the sword deep into the skull of the beast.

A pained roar ripped through the beast’s throat as it collapsed onto the ground. It trembled as the sword was withdrawn from it’s skull, a second roar promptly cut short. Link jumped down from the beast as Zelda thrust her palm out, and a golden light shrouded the beast. The Triforce pieces glowed on their hands as the light pulsed and grew before enveloping the entire city.

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Rusl and the Champions hurried through the city, battling their way through enemy troops as they desperately tried to reach Zelda. When the golden light that shrouded Ganondorf disappeared, they turned their panicked gazes towards the palace, fearing the worst for Zelda. But to their surprise, she was not alone, and they caught sight of the familiar blond hair of Hyrule’s Hero.

Their distraction did not come at a cost, however, as they were quickly surrounded by another wave of enemies. Rusl threw himself in front of the Champions in an attempt to shield them from further attacks, taking a rusted sword into his shoulder. Daruk’s shield erected around them and Revali dragged Rusl back into Daruk’s protection as Urbosa sprung forth, quickly finishing the hoard with a violent and electrifying attack.

They pressed onward, hurrying towards the palace to come to the defense of the heroes as the beast emerged. For a moment, they were out of the battle, and they watched in stunned horror as the beast rampaged about. Daruk moved to hurry forward, but Rusl pulled him backwards, growling at him to stay out of their way. Though they didn’t want to stand by helplessly and watch the battle, the Champions knew that only Link and Zelda could finish it and end the war once and for all.

And to their relief, the heroes did. They had to shield their eyes as the light shot through the city. When it subsided, they looked up at the palace from the street below, just as Link and Zelda collapsed to the ground. The Champions sprinted forward toward their friends, leaving Rusl behind to stare at the scene. After a moment, he choked back a sob of relief and radioed in for a medflight. Once he received confirmation that help was on its way to Zelda and Link, he took a moment to inspect the rather unfortunate stab wound he had received on his shoulder.

The wound had been bleeding heavily, but had since slowed. Still, it was fresh and vulnerable to infection, so he tore at his shirt and pressed it against his shoulder. Sheikah and Hylian soldiers hurried up the road behind him, making their way to the palace to check on the heroes. With one last glance toward the palace, Rusl turned and made his way back to rejoin his comrades. And perhaps get a proper bandage for his throbbing shoulder wound.

His phone rang as he walked through the city. Seeing Riju’s name on the screen, he answered it quickly and smiled when his daughter’s voice came through.

“Riju said we won!” Aryll said excitedly. “Did we win, Daddy? Are you and Link coming home now?”

“Hyrule one, Ganondorf zip,” he said. He looked up as the helicopters soared over head towards the palace. “Let me talk to Riju.”
The phone shuffled before Riju’s voice came on the line. “‘Sup, Chief?” she said cheerily. “All’s quiet on the western front. I loaded Ary up with sugar and she’s ready for her return.”

Rusl pinched the bridge of his nose. “I warned you not to do that,” he said. “Now she’s going to be a little Gremlin.”

Riju giggled. “Not my problem, now!”

“Actually,” Rusl started, and Riju groaned. “Can you keep her occupied for a bit longer?”

“I suppose,” Riju said. “What’s in it for me?”

“I don’t kick your ass.”

“Ah,” Riju said with an understanding tone. “That’s where Link gets it from.”

“I gotta get to the hospital,” he continued. “I’ll text you later and you can bring her down.”

Riju frowned. “You know,” she said. “I get to kick your ass if something happens to my sister.”

“That’s Link’s department, not mine,” he said. “She’s fine. I’m fine, too, thanks.”

“Yeah, sure, I’ll tell Aryll,” she said. “Hit me up later.”

“Hit me up?” Rusl repeated questioningly.

“Oh, come on,” Riju shouted at him. “Even my grandma knows what that means!”

“Goodbye, Riju,” he said before ending the call.

After the long awaited threat of Ganondorf’s return, he was defeated and sealed away once more. The battle was over. The war was won, and Hyrule was safe from his threats once more. Hyrule’s Chosen Heroes and their Champions were victorious, if not a little worse for wear.
Chapter 76

Link noticed the brightness first, but he couldn't find the source of the light. It was making his head hurt and all he wanted to do was turn it off and stay in the dark. He groaned and shifted, noticing only then a solid presence against him. He felt a warm hand on his arm and realized how cold he felt. He turned his face towards the form beside him, but still only saw a strange, bright red color.

“Link?”

He tried to speak, but no sound came out. He wasn’t even sure if he was moving his lips to make any words form. And then it hit him; his eyes were closed. He opened them slowly, and the light only seemed to get brighter, but the red color disappeared. He blinked quickly, allowing his eyes to adjust, and as they did, shapes and colors started to come together. He looked down towards the voice to see Mipha laying against him. Her concerned gaze met his, and though his head pounded, he smiled reassuringly at her.

“Hey.” His voice was hoarse and it hurt his throat. He closed his eyes and sighed.

“Hey.”

He could hear the smile in her voice and couldn’t help but to let his mouth turn up once more. He tried to clear his throat, but did not open his eyes. “Where... when... what’s up?” He couldn’t quite figure out what he wanted to ask first.

Mipha laughed. Her fingers moved between his. “Where? You’re in a hospital. When? It’s been two days since you and Zelda sealed Ganondorf away. I’m Mipha, you’re Link, and you were so delusional you tried to hit on a male nurse.”

“Hm.” Link nodded. “I don’t remember that.” Or much of anything, if he were being honest, but he didn’t want to worry her anymore.

“You’ve been in and out of consciousness,” Mipha said, her voice softer.

Link settled into the bed and wrapped his arms around her. He pressed his cheek to the top of her head. He let his fingers play with her hair and she sighed.

“I guess it’s all over now,” she said.

Link nodded and kissed her hair. He closed his eyes for a moment and sighed. “At least we still have a few weeks left of summer break.”

Mipha laughed. “Guess we will have to go back to our ordinary lives.” She pulled away slightly and met his gaze. “Are you even going to try this year?”

Link shrugged and grinned. “Guess I don’t have any more excuses.”

Mipha fell silent. Her gaze lingered on his for a moment, the tears quickly filling her eyes. She pressed her face against his neck and moved her body as close to him as she could.

“I thought you were dead,” she sobbed softly. “You were dead!”

Link pressed his face against her. He had no answer for her, for he was certain that he had died.
“I can’t fix dead,” she said, her voice shaking.

“It was you or me,” he muttered, but Mipha only slammed her fist against his chest, and he winced and grunted.

Her sobs quieted, however, and after a moment, she turned her face up to him. “What happened to you?” she asked softly.

“I could ask you the same thing.”

Mipha shook her head and let her head rest against his chest. “Not now,” she said with a sigh. “A story for another time.”

Link frowned but didn’t argue further. He didn’t particularly feel like talking about it, anyway. He brushed her tears away and pressed his lips against hers. But to his dismay, they were not alone for long. Revali happened to walk by, and seeing Link was up, burst into the room with Daruk on his tail.

“My bitches,” he said cheerfully. “Are you awake for real this time? Or are you going to try to get in my pants again?”

Link hesitated and met Mipha’s gaze. She grinned and shook her head quickly.

“Don’t ruin all my fun,” Revali whined. “What’s the point of having a delusional friend if you can’t exploit him once in a while?”

At that moment, Urbosa’s head poked in around the corner. Her gaze landed on Link and she grinned. “So, this is where the party’s at.”

“Mipha already pooped on the party,” Revali said, crossing his arms.

Mipha rolled her eyes. “Your presence ruined the party, Revali.”

“Hey,” he snapped at her. “I am the life of the party.”

Urbosa put a hand on her hip and leaned against the doorway. “Zelda’s up, too,” she informed them. “Looks like we can all get out of here soon.”

Link’s brows furrowed. But before he could say anything further, Daruk spoke up, his tone serious. He met Link’s gaze.

“We’ve gotta get you both caught up.”

“Caught up?” Link echoed. “On what?”

“Don’t worry about it,” Revali said. He turned his gaze to Urbosa. “I thought you were bringing along that little thing with you.”

Urbosa raised a brow. “Thing One or Thing Two?” She grinned and looked over her shoulder. “They’re on their way.”

But Link didn’t have to ask who, as he heard their loud voices coming from down the hall. The sound of skipping souls on tile grew closer until Riju and Aryll both skidded to a stop in front of the doorway.

At the sight of her brother, Aryll flew through the door and threw herself onto Link, ignoring his
pained grunts as her arms clung around his neck. “Finally,” she exclaimed. She poked his nose with a little finger. “You take too long to get up all the time!”

Link smiled sheepishly at his little sister. “Sorry.”

“I don't like being here,” she said, crossing her arms and pouting slightly. “Can we go home now?”

“Soon,” Link said. “I'm sure we can go soon. Why are you here, anyway?”

“Where else am I gonna be?” she said as if it were obvious. “I wanted to be here with you and Dad until we could all go home together.”

Link turned a nervous gaze to Mipha as Aryll continued on.

“Urbosa and Riju tried to make me leave with them, but I didn't want to, so Mipha said she would stay here with me.” She turned to Mipha and grinned at her.

“He's fine,” Mipha assured him, and Link visibly relaxed. “We got caught up in... some trouble. He saved us.”

“Oh.” Link's brows knit together as he tried to put the pieces together. So much had happened in that battle; so much he was unaware of, and it made him feel uneasy. He turned his attention back to his sister. She had retrieved the Master Sword from the table across the room and was holding it carefully, sitting cross-legged at the end of the bed. She was smiling and speaking to it quietly.

“I bet Fi took good care of you,” Aryll said, looking up and meeting her brother's gaze with a smile. “She promised me she would.”

Mipha sat on the edge of the bed and raised a brow to the sword. “Fi?”

“That's her name,” Aryll said proudly.

Mipha turned to Link and grinned. “Is that what you named her?”

“I didn't name her that,” Link muttered. He crossed his arms. “It's just her name.”

“Sometimes I think you like that thing more than me.” Her grin widened playfully.

“Maybe the same,” Aryll said, running her fingers along the dull of the steel. “She's special.”

“Room three-sixteen,” Revali said over his shoulder as he made his way out of the room. Urbosa and Riju followed suit, making their way down the hall, Riju speaking excitedly about the hot doctor she saw earlier in the day. Revali made a comment, and judging by the yelp that followed, Urbosa had hit him upside the head.

Daruk smiled and shook his head. “See ya later, brother,” he said before following his friends down the hall.

Link turned another questioning gaze to Mipha, but Aryll answered his unspoken question.

“That’s Daddy’s room,” she said. She placed the sword down at the foot of the bed and jumped off. “He said I had to come over here and annoy you so you would wake up. You must’ve known I was comin’, Link!” She grinned up at him.

“I heard you a mile away, Ary,” he said.
Aryll jumped up, clearly pleased to hear this. “Okay, I’m going to play with Riju, now,” she said. She brushed her hands together. “My job here is done!”

“Stay out of the closets!” Mipha shouted at her as she ran out of the room. “And no running!”

Link snorted. “You’re such a mom,” he said.

Mipha blushed and crossed her arms. “Someone has to be,” she muttered. “Without you or your dad, she’s been running around like a cucco with its head cut off.”

“Wasn’t that Riju’s job?”

Mipha rolled her eyes. “Please. You know how well that had to have gone.”

He turned to the wires that seemed to come out of every place on his body, and he frowned. He pulled gently at the one on his arm; an IV that seemed to be simply pumping fluids into him. He groaned lightly - more like whined - and settled back against the bed.

“Get me out of here,” he murmured. He was beyond done with hospitals and anything that was even remotely relative to the battle he had endured just a couple of days ago. He wanted to stretch his legs, and more importantly, see his father. And Zelda, though the thought of that made him unexplainably anxious. He stretched his legs and wiggled his toes. “I’m so done with hospitals.”

Mipha stood and stretched her arms. “Me too,” she said with a sigh. She tilted her head and smiled at him. “I know you’re fine, but,” she shrugged, “you know, logistics.” She turned and made her way to the door. “I’ll hunt down Impa and get things moving. Don’t go nowhere.” With one last smile, she stepped out into the hall, closing the door behind her.

Link looked around the room. He checked his body quickly, ensuring that he was really all in one piece, then found the control for the tv that hung on the wall. He clicked through it with a bored sigh, but most of the channels were still abuzz with news reports of the battle that had taken place in the city.

On one channel, a female reporter stepped carefully through rubble and debris in the city streets. The palace stood tall in the background of the shot. She looked around her as she spoke, occasionally turning her eyes to the camera.

“There’s still no word on the number of casualties,” she informed her viewers, her gaze somber. “King Roham’s statements, however, seem to hold true. Despite the chaos that took place just two days ago, it seems Hyrule has fared better than expected.” She went on to mention reports that came in from other reporters from around the kingdom, and the screen flashed to another reporter. The clip was dated nearly twelve hours ago as he, too, reported on the Faron region.

Link clicked off the tv. He had no interest in hearing anymore about the battle, though he knew he wouldn’t be able to escape it so easily, especially once he stepped foot out of the hospital. He was sure reporters would be waiting to shove their microphones at him. Not only that, they still had to find and close the fourth and final portal - or the first one, however they chose to look at it - and apparently, there was much more to be discussed.

Link sighed and closed his eyes. Though he had seemingly slept most of the last two days, he felt exhausted, and all he wanted to do was sleep some more.
Chapter 77

When Mipha returned, she brought Impa with her. The old Sheikah was just as short with Link as ever, but she seemed genuinely relieved that he and Zelda had made it out alive and in one piece. After a few sarcastic remarks about him being the laziest hero she had ever met, she barked orders at the doctors in the hallway until one entered with a clipboard. Impa snatched it out of his hands and flipped through the pages with a disinterested glance at them. With an annoyed look, she tossed the clipboard over her shoulder. The doctor just barely caught it in his arms as Impa waved him off.

“Discharge,” she barked at him. “Get him out of this bed. He’s wasting our resources.”

Within the next few minutes, nurses came and went, working at unhooking him from the various machines. When he was finally free, he stretched his limbs, wiggled his fingers and toes, and got to his feet. He stumbled slightly until his legs seemed to remember how to hold up his weight. After dressing, he ventured out of his room, looking up and down the hallway to get a sense of direction. He took a guess and turned to his right, making his way down the hallway and examining door numbers as he passed various rooms.

The first door he stopped at wasn’t his father’s, but Impa had hurried out into the hallway, nearly knocking Link over. She sighed loudly and shook her head at him. “You’re still here?” She threw a thumb over her shoulder. “Take her majesty with you.”

Link watched as Impa moved quickly down the hall, still barking orders at the various doctors and nurses she passed. Link turned back to the door as it opened and Zelda poked her head out. She seemed surprised to see Link, but her expression softened and she stepped inside, saying nothing to him. Link hesitated before following her in and closing the door behind him. Zelda regarded him wearily for a moment before she sat on the edge of the bed with a sigh.

“What the fuck, Link?” she muttered, meeting his gaze.

“Yeah,” he said. “Rough day at the office?”

She sneered at him for a moment, but then found she was just too tired. She pulled her gaze away. “What happened to you?”

Link hesitated. “Well,” he started softly. “I fucking kicked Ganondorf’s ass.” He grinned, but Zelda was unamused. Her eyes were glassy as she stared at the corner of the room. She met his gaze for a brief moment. Her mouth opened to speak, but she couldn’t find the words she wanted to say. They stared at each other in silence for a moment before she finally spoke.

“You saw her, didn’t you?”

Link watched her for a moment, studying her. Hylia looked so remarkably like her - rather, she looked like Hylia. His heart pulled in his chest and he tore his gaze away. “Did you?”

“Yes,” Zelda breathed. Link dared a glance at her, but she was looking at the floor.

“I hadn’t realized,” she started, but paused. Her lips pinched together. She looked up at him. “How much of her… her own memories, it seems…” She trailed off, desperately trying to find the words to explain how she felt. How Hylia felt.

“Yeah,” Link said simply. “I know.”
Zelda blinked at him. “You… you too?”

“He totally wants to bang her.”

Zelda sighed and shook her head. “You are so immature.”

Link shrugged and grinned.

“For the record,” Zelda said quickly. “I don’t… Hylia’s the one… She… ugh.” Her cheeks reddened. “I wish she would get out of my head.” She threw her arms down in frustration. “She’s so fucking in love with you.”

“Not me,” Link said, crossing his arms.

“Well, I’m not either.”

Link rolled his eyes. “I’m a catch.”

Zelda’s lips pulled into a sneer, but after a moment, her face softened. “You feel it, too, then?”

“I’m trying not to,” he muttered.

Zelda nodded and stood. “Good. Do me a favor and keep it that way.”

Link hesitated. “Is this going to be a problem?”

“No,” Zelda said quickly. “Only if we let it become a problem.”

“Well,” Link started. “I’m not him.”

“Clearly,” Zelda muttered. “I’m sure he was much more suitable as a Chosen Hero.”

“Just like old times,” Link said, turning to the door. He hesitated with his hand over the handle. “Did Revali talk to you?”

Zelda frowned. “Briefly. Something that happened?” She shook her head. “He was quite vague about it all.”

Link pinched his lips together. “I’m ready to be done with this,” he muttered.

Zelda nodded. “Me too.”

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It didn’t take long to find his father’s room. The door was already open, the number Revali had given him was labeled just on the wall to the right of the door. His father’s nose was buried in his phone. His shoulder was wrapped, but otherwise, he was safe and alive. Link leaned against the frame of the door, his arms folded across his chest. “And I thought I was the only idiot that ended up here,” he said.

His father looked up from his phone. He regarded his son for a moment, then smiled. “Can you believe how awful the WiFi is here?”

Link smiled and took the seat beside the bed. He draped his legs over the arm of the chair and leaned back to gaze at the ceiling. “Mipha told me what happened.”
“You mean how I got my ass handed to me by a pile of bones?”

“For what it’s worth, I’m pretty sure their bones are made of steel.”

His father considered this with a small nod.

“Thank you,” Link said. “For protecting them.”

His father turned his attention back to his phone. “Someone had to.” He looked up, his brows furrowed, and met his son's gaze. His lips parted slightly, as if he wanted to speak, but then they pinched together instead. His face softened for a moment before he turned back to his phone. “You're grounded.”

Link's brows knit together. “The fuck? For what? I saved this country!”

“For getting gutted by a sword.”

Link slunk down against the chair and turned his gaze back to the ceiling.

“I told you not to get yourself killed.”

“I didn't,” Link muttered. “I’m here, aren’t I?”

“Hm. Guess Hylia has other plans for you.”

Link groaned. “I sure as hell hope not.”

His father smiled and let his phone drop on the bed. “Have you seen your sister?” he inquired. “She was bugging the shit out of me, so I sent her to bug you.”

“Her and Riju are wreaking havoc and flirting with doctors.”

Rusl frowned. “She told me boys smell.” He shook his head. “I knew this day would come.”

Link rolled his eyes. “No one said they were flirting with male doctors.”

Rusl groaned. “Girls are just as bad,” he said. “They lure you in with their good looks and charm and next thing you know, you’re married with two damn kids.”

“You would know.”

Rusl nodded. “Don’t worry,” he said. “You’ll end up the same sucker.”

“Let’s see if I can graduate senior year, first.”

“If there’s one thing you’ve been smart about, it’s picking your women. Cute and smart. With a little luck, maybe Mipha can get you through the year.”

“I’m banking on cheating off of her the whole year.”

Rusl looked up at the ceiling. “Well, at least he has a plan.”

“I always have a plan.”

“Not that I’ve seen,” Rusl said.

“Life plans and battle plans are two totally different games, you know.”
“I would know,” Rusl said. “I’ve been doing it a lot longer than you, and not once did I get myself gutted by a sword.”

“You’re not going to drop that, are you?”

Rusl sneered at his son. “Seriously?” He opened his mouth to argue further, but was cut short by the sight of his daughter in the doorway. Her mouth was pulled into a full blown, childish frown.

“Are you guys fighting?” she asked.

“Yes,” they answered in unison.

“I knew it,” she said. “You always fight!”

Rusl patted the bed. Aryll trotted to his side and he lifted her to sit beside him. “We fight because we love each other.”

“Promise?”

“Shes going to be so dysfunctional when she gets older, you know that, right?” Link said.


“She won’t have any solid relationships because she doesn’t know how normal people show affection. That’s what you’re doing to her. That’s where strippers come from.”

Rusl turned to his daughter and poked her nose. “You’re not going to be a stripper, are you?”

“Daddy,” Aryll whined. “I dunno what that is.”

“You’re not going to have dysfunctional relationships, right?”

Aryll sighed, already giving up with their conversation. “Probably.”

Rusl planted a kiss on her head. “Ah, that’s alright,” he said. “You don’t need to have any kind of relationship. No dating until after you’re married.”

Aryll raised a skeptical brow at her father. “Okay, Daddy.”

“She’s too smart for you,” Link said.

Rusl frowned. “Yeah. I got lucky with you. You were stupid and easy.” He sighed.

Aryll grinned, her eyes closing. “Link is smart now,” she said. “He’s the smartest and bravest around!”

“Well, I don’t know how he got like that,” Rusl said.

“From you, silly!”

Rusl pointed a finger at himself, a look of surprise on his face. “No way.”

Aryll nodded enthusiastically.

“Huh,” Rusl said. “Well, I guess it runs in the family, then.”

Aryll nodded. “Yeah, probably.”
Link snorted, but said nothing further.

“I guess I have the best family, then,” Aryll said.

“Well, I’m glad you think so,” Rusl said teasingly. “I think so, too.”

“So, can we go home, now?” Aryll asked her father.

“I’m sure we can soon,” Rusl said. “As soon as one of those doctors gives me the a-okay.”

“I’m friends with them,” Aryll said matter of factly. “I’ll tell them we can go home now.”

“Right,” Rusl said. “But take back-up with you just in case they give you a hard time.”

Aryll hopped off the bed and pulled at Link’s wrist. “Come on, back-up guy,” she said.

Link sighed but stood and let his sister pull him out of the room. He glanced over his shoulder one last time at his father, who was grinning. “Keep her out of trouble,” he called to him as Aryll pulled him down the hall. Rusl watched as his children disappeared, and he smiled.
Chapter 78

Just as Link expected, the media had gathered around the hospital, anxiously waiting for Hyrule’s Champions to make their appearance. But to his relief, they were also greeted with heavy security detail, and despite Revali’s eagerness to brag to the cameras, they made it through the crowd without incident and into the awaiting town cars.

All Link wanted to do was go home and sleep in his bed for the rest of the summer. But even though the war was over, there were still some loose ends that needed tying up. For one, the sword needed to be returned to where he found it, which would - hopefully - close the last portal, sealing Ganondorf away once and for all.

Secondly, there was the matter of Revali’s mysterious remark to him and Zelda. Something still weighed heavily on the minds of the Champions. Something that Link and Zelda were completely unaware of. Link hadn’t the slightest idea what had happened while they were separated, but the thought festered in his mind and made him sick to his stomach. He wanted nothing more than to put the entire thing behind him.

And as he thought about it, another realization came to mind. There was still the unanswered question about the Yiga Clan. Zelda had her suspicions that there was a mole among the Sheikah entrusted with the safety of the royal family. She had mentioned that Impa had warned her not to look into the Yiga Clan. Surely she wouldn’t have made such a warning if there was nothing to hide.

He hoped, at the very least, the hardest part was over.

The Champions found themselves in each other’s company once more. They were gathered together at the park. The same park they so frequently visited. The park where their last soccer game was suddenly interrupted by Ganondorf’s return. On this cool, summer evening, however, the park was empty as they huddled together, keeping their voices low as they spoke.

“So,” Link started, shoving his hands in his pockets. “What’s the deal?”

The four Champions exchanged wary glances for a moment before Revali spoke.

“We think the Yiga Clan is still in business, and we think there’s a mole in the Sheikah. Someone is working with them.”

“Right,” Zelda started, slightly hesitant. “I know.”

Urbosa narrowed her gaze on Zelda. “What do you mean you know?” she hissed.

“I mean. Well. I… had my own suspicions,” she admitted.

“Since when?” Daruk asked.

“For a while,” she said.

“And you didn’t think to tell us?” Revali said.

Zelda narrowed her gaze on him. “It was just a suspicion.” she said. “It’s not like there was anything I could do about it unless it amounted to something. I have no proof.”
“Well,” Revali started, crossing his arms and turning his attention to Link. “If it’s proof you need, your father’s got it.”

Link’s brows furrowed. “What the hell are you talking about?”

“It seems he and Dorian are out to kill each other,” Daruk said. “It’s a wonder they haven’t offed the other yet.”

Link shook his head. “They’re best friends.”

“So, threatening each other with loaded weapons is your idea of friendship?” Urbosa said.

“I wish I had known that,” Revali said with a grin.

“What are you talking about?” Link sneered.

“Look,” Daruk started seriously. “After you got gutted for a second damn time, we thought we were fucked. Zelda was holding that dickwad back with everything she had, and we needed to get her out of there and come up with a damn plan.” He hesitated. “We went to the base outside the city, but your dad had other plans. I thought he and Dorian were going to kill us all right then and there.”

“He said he should have killed Dorian when he had the chance,” Revali said simply.

“And he was the reason everything happened,” Urbosa said.

“Everything?” Zelda echoed. “Like…”

“Like opening the portals and giving Ganondorf every advantage he could, probably,” Daruk said.

“Exactly what a Yiga bastard would do,” Revali confirmed.

“No,” Zelda said quickly. “Dorian… he’s not with the Yiga. He’s Impa’s second in command. She trusts him.” She grew angry. “And don’t you dare tell me she’s one of them, too!”

“Probably not,” Urbosa said. “But it’s likely she doesn’t have a clue.”

“Or she does,” Daruk pointed out, “and she’s just not telling us.”

“And she won’t say anything,” Urbosa said.

“No, she won’t,” Zelda said slowly. “She knew I was looking into the Yiga Clan. She pulled me aside and told me to stay out of it.”

“That’s enough for me,” Daruk said. “Sounds like the Yiga Clan is still a very real threat. And if Dorian is a mole, that’s even more bad news for us.”

“What do you think they’ll do?” Mipha asked.

“I’m sure they’ll do everything in their power to bring Ganondorf back and fuck up everything we’ve done to get rid of his sorry ass,” Revali said.

“How could they do that?” Mipha’s brows furrowed together.

“I’m sure they have their ways,” Urbosa said. “And we shouldn’t wait to find out. I’m not doing a second war with that giant dick.”
“What do you want me to do about it?” Link muttered.

“Oh, I don’t know,” Revali said, rolling his eyes. “Get your dad to talk.”

“He won’t,” Link said. “He won’t tell me shit.”

“How can you be so sure about that?” Zelda said. “After everything we’ve been through already -”

“Because he’s been hiding shit from me since the beginning,” Link snapped. He hesitated and kicked the toe of his shoe into the dirt. “And he probably has every reason to. If I needed to know, he would have told me.”

“I’d say if it has to do with the safety of Hyrule, you should know,” Urbosa said. “You are the Chosen Hero, afterall.”

“Yeah,” Link grunted. “Let me know what that means anything to anyone. It doesn’t give me any special treatment.”

“So, you can’t put that on your resume?” Revali said.

Link sighed. “Are we done? I have a sword to get rid of a portal to close.”

“I’ll see what I can find,” Zelda said. “About Dorian and the Yiga.”

Urbosa pinched her lips together. “Be careful. Don’t do anything without us.”

“I’m the princess of Hyrule,” she said. “What is he gonna do? Kidnap me in my own home?”

“I’m not coming to anyone’s rescue,” Link said, turning his back on his friends. “My job is done.”

“Don’t relax too much,” Revali warned him. “We may be kicking Yiga ass next.”

“Sure,” Link said over his shoulder. “As long as I can sleep the rest of the summer away, first.”

*****

His father was home when Link got home. He and Aryll were happily stuffing their faces with pizza when Link entered. He sat himself at the table with a heavy sigh and reached across to snag his own slice.

“Did they have pizza in the olden days?” Aryll asked with a mouthful of pizza.

“The olden days?” Rusl repeated.

“Yeah. Like. Do you think Hylia liked pizza?”

“I don’t think they had pizza, Ary,” Link said.

Aryll frowned. “Those poor people.” She shrugged and took another bite of her slice. “So, tomorrow,” she continued, changing the subject. “We’re gonna get a puppy, right?”

“I don’t think so,” Rusl said.

“But you said if we won we could get a puppy!”

“In my defense,” Rusl said. “I was fairly sure we would lose.” He grinned at Link.
“Ha. Ha,” Link said sarcastically.

“Well,” Aryll said. “We win. And I get a puppy.”

Rusl put his chin in his hand and sighed. “We’ll see.”

“When I’m a Mom, I’m gonna get all the puppies and do what I say!”

Rusl laughed sharply. “We’ll see about that.”

“Yeah huh!”

“That’s the best part of being a parent,” he said. “You get to be the biggest hypocrite you want, and your best excuse is ‘because I said so.’”

“You say that all the time, Daddy.”

His grin widened. “It’s a wonderful world, Ary. Someday you’ll appreciate it.”

Aryll turned a helpless gaze to Link, and her brother simply shrugged.

“Why do you bother, Ary?” he said. “You’re old enough to know by now.”

“I’m six!”

“When I was your age,” Rusl said, “I had to walk -”

“Uphill, both ways, in the snow,” Link said dryly.

Aryll gasped at Link. “You’re turning into him!”

“No way.” Link shook his head. “I have a better excuse than that.”

“What, saving the world?” Rusl said. “That won’t get old fast.”

“I’m milking that one forever.”

“Does that mean you and Mipha are gonna have babies?” Aryll asked.

Rusl snorted and Link choked slightly on his pizza.

“Hylia, I hope not,” Rusl said. “Do you really think he could keep a damn kid alive?”

“He could make them peanut butter and banana sandwiches!”

Rusl nodded. “Ah, yes, a key category in the food pyramid, with all the nutrients a growing child needs.”

“Don’t you have to go to bed or something?” Link said to his sister.

Aryll shook her head. “No! It’s summer! I get to stay up all night!”

“Go to bed, Ary,” Rusl said.

Aryll frowned. “Do I gotta?”

“Yes,” they said in unison.
Aryll turned her gaze to each of them, then sighed. “Alright,” she said as she slid off the chair. “But only because I’m gonna build a fort in Link’s room and play his video games.”

“Have fun,” Rusl said as Aryll skipped out of the room.

Link listened as her feet hurried up the stairs and waited for the faint sound of a closing door before he spoke.

“So,” he started, taking another slice of pizza. “What’s the deal with Dorian?”

Rusl met his son’s gaze, his brows furrowed.

“Come on,” Link said. “Don’t do this shit. Everyone told me what happened.”

Rusl still did not answer his son. He picked at his pizza for a moment.

“Is Dorian working with the Yiga Clan?” Link pressed, his gaze narrowed on his father. “Is he going to fuck up everything we’ve done to stop Ganondorf?”

Rusl met his son’s gaze once more. If there was anything he knew, Link could not have guessed what it was. His father’s expression was completely void of any emotional response. He held his gaze on his father, and when endless minutes passed of no response, he got to his feet angrily.

“Stop hiding things from me!”

Rusl smiled and returned to his pizza. “Your job is done. There’s nothing more you need to worry about.”

“There is if the Yiga Clan is going to undo everything we’ve done,” Link sneered. “I’m not doing this again.”

Rusl’s smile disappeared. He regarded his son once more. “I won’t let you do it again,” he said softly. He took a bite of his pizza. “Stop worrying. You’ve done your part. Leave the rest up to us.”

Link hesitated. “What about Dorian?”

Rusl leaned back in the chair and met his son’s gaze. “Don’t worry about it. It doesn’t concern you.”

Admittedly, Link was not happy with this answer, but he trusted his father. “I thought you were friends.”

“It’s complicated.”

“Is that what your Facebook status says?” Link grinned.

Rusl smiled and got to his feet. “Promise me you’ll drop it,” he said fiercely.

Link hesitated, then nodded. “Fine,” he said. “But I can’t promise Revali will, or anyone else.”

Rusl considered this with a shrug. “Convince them. I don’t need any more trouble than I already have.”

Link frowned. “I don’t like this.”

“I know.” Rusl sighed. He patted his son’s shoulder as he left the kitchen without another word.
Chapter 79

Link quite literally slept through the next two days, only getting up when his stomach demanded that he eat. When his phone alerted him to a call or text, he lifted his head enough to check to see who it was from. Unless it was Mipha, he mostly ignored these alerts. He would have slept through the rest of the summer if he had the chance, but there was still one last thing he needed to; return the Master Sword. The Triforce on hand was a reminder of that. It was dim, but it had been pulsing softly ever since he and Zelda sealed Ganondorf away. He knew he couldn’t waste any more time, but a part of him was sad to part with the sword. It wouldn’t be there waiting for him, leaning against the wall in the corner of his room. As anxious as he was to get back to his normal life, normal life seemed rather dull.

Still, Link finally pulled himself out of his bed, and without a word to his father or his friends, he left the house with the sword and made his way back to the forest where he had found it. If it were still there. The last time they tried to close the portal, the forest seemed to have mysteriously disappeared with no explanation at all. This time, however, the forest was there, just as he had remembered it, seemingly waiting for the return of the Master Sword.

There was no voice to call to him, but he didn’t need it to guide him like he had the first time he wandered through. It was as if he had navigated his way through the bizarre forest time and time again; he knew the path like the back of his hand, picking his way over the brush, weaving in and out between the trees. He was unfazed when a fog crept in around him, but just as quickly as it appeared, it disappeared, and soon the forest opened up into the meadow. In the center, in the light of the sun, was the pedestal that homed the Master Sword.

Link looked down at the ancient pedestal, covered in dirt and moss. There was a deep slit in the center where he had pulled the sword six months ago. And now, it was time to return it, though it felt as if he were saying goodbye forever to a very close friend. He turned his gaze to the sword in his hand and let his fingers run over the blade. He turned back to the pedestal and before he changed his mind, he placed the sword back into its hold, pushing it in until it would not go any further. He kept his hand on the hilt for a moment, then pulled upwards, but the sword did not budge. He let a light sigh escape his lips, then worked off the string of the charm his father had given him and slid it into his pocket.

“Goodbye, Master... Thank you...”

Link looked down at the sword and smiled. He saluted it casually before turning his back on it and making his way out of the forest. Once he was passed the treeline, he looked over his shoulder, expecting the forest to disappear. Though it remained, he was sure it would be gone soon enough, protecting the precious weapon that now slept within.

*****

When Link returned, Daruk, Revali, and Teba were waiting for him.

“Where the hell have you been?” Daruk asked.

“Yeah, way to ignore our texts,” Revali said. “Now that you got a girlfriend you’re too good to respond to us?”

“Yeah,” Link said. “Because those group messages were so important.”
“I don’t know how I got dragged into that,” Teba said. He sneered at Revali. “Why the hell did you add me to that?”

“But if you weren’t in it,” Link started, “you would have missed all those gems like.” He paused and fished his phone out of his pocket, scrolling through the messages. He grinned and pointed at the screen, reading the text out loud. “When someone says ‘hold your horses’ they are telling you to be stable.”

“It’s true!” Revali said. “I just realized that!”

“Were you high?” Daruk asked.

“Yeah, probably,” Revali said with a grin.

“What do you want?”

“We are here to discuss the official disbanding of Hyrule’s Champions,” Revali announced.

“Excellent,” Link said. “Just in time. I just dumped the sword.”

“Aw,” Revali said. “Now you’re not cool like the rest of us.”

Link rolled his eyes.

“Do you think you can handle the city this year while we’re off being awesome?”

“Don’t be like that,” Teba said. “You know he’s gonna miss us terribly.”

“We are the only friends he’s got,” Revali said with a frown. “Poor Link.”

Link shrugged. “I’m sure I’ll survive.”

“He’s got a girlfriend now,” Daruk said. “He’s already doing better than you.”

“But does he get laid?” Revali said. “At least I got laid.”

Teba snorted. “When was the last time that happened?”

“Hey,” Revali snapped. “I’ve been a little busy saving the world.” He turned back to Link. “Speaking of the Yiga Clan.”

“No one was talking about the Yiga Clan,” Teba said.

“Look,” Link started. “I talked to him, alright?”

“And?” Daruk asked.

“And,” he said slowly. “He told me not to worry about it.”

“That’s exactly what they say when we should be worried about it.”

“He has it under control,” Link said. “We don’t need to be involved.”

“Maybe he’s the one with the Yiga Clan,” Revali said.

“Shut it,” Link growled. “I’m staying out of it. I trust him.”
Revali nodded. “Alright. Fine. If Mr. Hero says it’s fine, then it’s fine.” He wiped his hands together. “Won’t be our problem, anyway. Just remember, you’ll be missing half your crew. Don’t get into trouble. Or killed.”

Link smiled. “You take the fun out of everything.”

“I’m going to miss this,” Revali said, then shrugged. “I’m sure I’ll find someone in college to pick on.”

Link frowned. “You’re replacing me? I thought we had something special.”

Revali winked and threw him two finger guns. “Come on, men” he said, turning away. “I still got some partying to do before I gotta ditch this city.” He turned to Link over his shoulder. “Not you.”

“It’s fine,” Link said. “I’m gonna go get laid.”

Revali threw his hand up in the air, half of a high-five. “Nice!”

Teba shook his head and lowered Revali’s hand for him. “Come on, Idiot,” he said. “Or I’m ditching you to get laid, too.”

Daruk followed them out of the driveway. “I can’t believe everyone’s getting laid except me.”

*****

The rest of the summer went just as Hyrule’s Champions hoped it would go. They stayed out late and slept through the mornings, more often than not in each other’s company in one way or another, and usually with three extra tagalongs; Aryll, Riju, and Teba. They spent their days roaming the city or keeping the local restaurants open with their bottomless pits. And from time to time, they dropped by their favorite arcade, only to be chased out by the owner an hour later after an unruly game of laser tag.

And everywhere they went, they were recognized. Children ran up to the for autographs. Teens asked for selfies. Even the older crowd seemed to regard them with a respectful nod, despite the varying degrees of gossip and arguments that had ensued following the first media outbreak. And when it got to be too much for them, they escaped the city to the countryside, returning to their favorite lake with a case of beer.

But the summer quickly came to a close, and before they knew it, Urbosa, Daruk, Revali, and Teba parted ways with their friends to begin their first year in college. Urbosa moved south to the Gerudo region to study law at a prestigious college. Daruk went to Akkala to a school known for their boxing and wrestling teams, which he decided to get into, proudly stating to his friends that he would have to hold back, otherwise there would be no challenge for him.

And despite his father’s refusal to help get into college, Revali managed to follow Teba to a school in Hebra, stating that he would have a babe on each arm and a suit made of ‘hundos’ when he graduated. As far as the group knew, he simply went in with the intent to get a degree in business, but whether he would actually graduate was an entirely different story, considering the college was known to be one of the biggest party schools in the kingdom. “Well, there’s nothing else to do up there,” was Revali’s defense.

The city - and their lives - were much quieter once their friends left for college. But senior year was quickly approaching for Link, Mipha, and Zelda, with promise of heavy work loads and one final push for college applications. It would be enough to occupy their minds and give them a normal life once more, but still, they couldn’t help but to miss the way things were a year ago when the
group was whole.

But the night before their first day of senior year, they were all dragged into another group text message, courtesy of Urbosa.

*My little babies are seniors tomorrow. Pack a healthy lunch and study hard! I’m looking at you, Link!*

Revali didn’t hesitate to jump at the opportunity to tease Link. *Let’s be real here. He’s not going to college. He’s gonna milk the hero thing for the rest of his life.*

Teba’s response was next. *Why am I a part of this…*

*Because you’re our cheerleader, bitch,* texted Revali.

*Revali we’re sitting next to each other.* There was a lull in the chat for a moment until Teba texted again. *Revali punched me.*

Urbosa responded with an emoji shaking its head.

*You bitches are coming to my first fight,* Daruk texted.

*Link doesn’t condone violence, Revali said. Make love not war guys.*

*Dude,* Link replied. *Youre like a 3 days drive away.*

*Its a 4 hour drive, loser. Dont you miss me?*

Link replied with a heart emoji. *So much.*

*Why dont you stick it in his butt,* came Revali’s mature reply.

*Don’t be jealous of our relationship,* Link said.

*Does Mipha know?* Teba asked.

*We have an open relationship,* Mipha finally chimed in.

*Does that mean youre open for business?* Revali said.

*Eat shit,* Link quickly replied.

*Link and Mipha sitting in a tree,* Revali texted.

*Oh shit,* Link said.

Revali finished the song with a series of kissing emojis and various other symbols that suggested more than kissing.

*Omg dont tell her that* Link said.

*Link, we’re dating.*

He responded with two blushing emoji faces.

*Where the fuck is Zelda,* Urbosa texted.
After a moment, Zelda’s text came through. *Hylia, why have you put me into this insufferable group of people.*

*You love us,* Revali said.

*Destiny,* Daruk said. *Isn’t that kinda her thing?*

*We belong together,* Revali texted.

*Revali is singing,* now, Teba said. *I cannot believe I’m stuck with him for the next four years.*

*Welcome to my hell,* Link said.

*I’m muting you all,* Zelda said. *Some of us have school in the morning.*

*Suckas,* Revali said.

*Revali, you do, too,* Teba said.

*I didn’t come here to go to school.*

*Good night idiots,* Zelda said.

*Good night my precious lil babies,* Urbosa texted. *I love you all and i hope you have a good first day of school! Send mama pictures! And BEHAVE!!*

*What happens if we don’t behave?* Revali asked, following that with a series of winking faces. *Are you going to spank me?*

*Zelda left the chat.*

*Mipha left the chat.*

*Link left the chat.*

*Urbosa left the chat.*

*Ha.*

*Daruk left the chat.*

*FUCKERS.*

*Teba left the chat.*
“Link.”

Link jumped slightly in his seat. He had zoned out... again. But he was sure he heard Fi calling to him. He looked around for a moment before settling back into his seat. He had just fallen asleep for a moment. He turned his attention to the board and knit his brows together. What the hell were they talking about? Oh, right. Math. Link sighed lightly and let his chin rest in the palm of his hand. He turned his gaze over to Mipha. She was doodling absentmindedly in her notebook. She glanced at him and smiled.

“You’re not sleeping again, are you?”

“Never,” he said with a grin. The bell rang, signaling the end of the period, and he and Mipha made their way through the halls and out into the courtyard for their lunch period. Zelda was already out there, sitting at their usual table, her nose in her phone. She offered them a shorty ‘hey’ when they sat across from her. After another moment, she put her phone down and sighed.

“I never thought I’d say this,” she said. “But I miss Revali. He made life exciting.” She regarded her friends for a moment and frowned. “You two are so boring.”

“It’s called being mature,” Link said.

Zelda laughed sharply. “Right, sure. Because you’re so mature.” She picked up her phone once more and proceeded to text, her fingers flying across the screen.

“Who are you texting that’s more important than us?” he said.

Zelda regarded him over her phone for a moment and smiled. “None of your business.”

“Secret boyfriend you’re not telling us about?”

Zelda shook her head.

“Girlfriend?”

Zelda put her phone down once more and sighed. She turned to Mipha, ignoring Link. “Your boytoy is nosey.”

“Yeah,” Mipha said with a tone of disappointment. “He’s a lot of things.”

“That’s very nice, Mipha, thank you,” Link said. “I love you, too.”

Zelda snorted. Their phones vibrated simultaneously, and they each groaned lightly as they checked the group message that came through. The image that Teba sent, however, brought smiles to their faces. Revali was passed out on a bed, wearing a skirt and a bra. The text below the image said “Link’s Revenge.”

“Sweet, sweet, revenge,” Link said. “That’s what he gets.”

“Remind me not to apply there,” Mipha said, rolling her eyes.

“Where have you applied?” Zelda asked.
Mipha listed off various colleges. Link frowned.

“You’re applying already?”

Both Mipha and Zelda turned their gazes to him.

“Yes,” Mipha said. “Aren’t you?”

Link blinked at her. “Uh. No.”

Mipha sighed and shook her head.

“You’re not seriously going to try to get anywhere in the world with the hero excuse, are you?”

“Of course not,” Link said, then hesitated. “I can’t, right?”

Mipha shook her head disapprovingly.

“Well,” Link started. “I guess I’ll apply to that school Revali’s at. You know, make his life miserable.”

“That’s a good use of your money,” Zelda said. “There’s nothing at all that you want to do with your life?”

Link thought about this for a moment. “I like eating and sleeping. If there’s a job where I can do that, sign me the fuck up.”

“You could do business,” Mipha suggested.

“Business is what everyone goes into when they have nothing else.”

“Ouch,” Link said. “There are some good business people out there.”

“And I’m sure you’ll be one of them,” Zelda said dryly.

Link shrugged. “I’ll ask Ary what I should do. She’ll pick something good.”

Zelda ignored him. “What are you going for?” she asked Mipha.

“I was thinking nursing or something,” she said.

Link narrowed his gaze on her. “Why? So you can wiggle your fingers and make people magically better?”

“Daruk’s fighting people,” Mipha whined.

“He’s not using his power,” Link reminded her. “And you shouldn’t be, either.”

“I have to agree with him there,” Zelda said. “With great power comes great responsibility.”

“That’s good,” Link said, stuffing his face with his sandwich. “Did you make that up yourself?”

Zelda sneered at him, then turned back to Mipha. “I’m just saying. People will get greedy, and next thing you know, they’re shoving sick little orphans in your face and dying old people and expect you to save the world and make them live forever. Even the Sheikah are careful in what they do in front of people, and you know how mixed the feelings are about them. Don’t put yourself in that situation.”
Mipha frowned. “Well, it’s a waste of a power if I can’t do anything with it.”

“I’m sure Link will keep you busy, the way he likes to get into trouble.”

Link nodded. “I might get gutted again.”

Mipha rolled her eyes. “Goddesses, I hope not.” She sighed. “Well, if I can be of some good, I want to do it, regardless if I can use my powers.”

“Of course you do,” Zelda said. “Because you’re a good person who contributes to society.”

“I contribute,” Link said with a mouthful of food.

Zelda stood and gathered her books.

“Leaving already?” Mipha asked.

“I gotta meet with my advisor about my college applications.”

“Is there a special college for princesses?” Link asked.

Zelda narrowed her eyes at him. “No, Idiot.” She grinned and patted his head as she walked by, leaving them alone in the courtyard.

“College for princesses,” Mipha muttered, rolling her eyes.

“If I’m too dumb for you, you can leave,” Link said, sticking his tongue out at her.

Mipha smiled and kissed his cheek. “I’ll stick it out a while longer.”

*****

At the end of the day, after walking Mipha home, Link opted not to go straight home himself. His mind was on the sword and the voice he had heard earlier that day. Though he was certain it was just a dream and meant nothing, he hadn’t been to the forest since the day he returned the sword.

So, Link made his way back to where the forest was. He circled back to the power lines, but he did not see the trees he remembered seeing across the way. Instead, the forest seemed to be replaced by rolling hills that lead out into the countryside. He paused, searching around him. He was sure he had gone the right way, but the forest where he found the sword had simply vanished, just as it had the first time. Though this was a relief, he couldn’t help but to feel saddened that he would never see the sword again.

“Link?”

He turned to see Mipha behind him. The breeze blew her sundress gently as she stood in the tall grass.

“What are you doing here?”

Mipha hesitated. “You texted me.” She showed him her phone. Just as she said, there was a text from him. *It’s gone.*

He didn’t remember texting her. Nor did he even have a clue how long he had been out here. The setting sun was a clear indicator that it had been quite a few hours searching for the forest
Mipha walked to his side and looked out over the rolling hills where the forest once stood, but she did not question its disappearance.

“I'm sure she's safe,” she said, offering him a smile. “She'll come around again when she's needed.”

Link nodded as he stared out over the rolling hills. After a moment, he shrugged. “Hopefully not in our lifetime.”

“That would be ideal,” Mipha said with a grin. She took his hand in hers and pulled him closer. She planted a kiss on his lips and smiled up at him.

“So, college,” Link started. “I don’t have a damn clue.”

Mipha laughed lightly. “You can do whatever you want to do.”

“What a concept,” he said. “I thought I’d be stuck as the hero for the rest of my life. In fact, I was kind of banking on that.” He paused in thought. “Firemen are heroes. They save little kitties from trees.”

“And run into burning buildings,” Mipha said with a frown.

“That sounds reckless. I could get on board with that.”

“How about something safer?”

“Why you gotta crush my dreams?”

Mipha smiled and pulled him across the field. “I’d like you to stick around for a little while. And I really don’t want to be chasing you around all day healing you.”

“But I thought that was the plan,” Link said. “What good is dating a healer if I can’t use her as I please?”

Mipha grinned at him over her shoulder and winked at him. “Guess you’ll just have to think of something else to do with me, huh?”

Link smiled. He could think of lots of things to do with her. Someday, one of those things would be marrying her.
Epilogue

Whether it was by pure dumb luck or the few occasional nights Link put in ‘studying’ with Mipha, Link made it to the end of the school year with not only passing grades, but an acceptance into the city’s community college. It seemed hardly an achievement in comparison to his girlfriend’s beyond stellar reviews and her choice of nursing schools, but Link took the victory as his own regardless.

With the end of the year, however, came the unsettling feeling of collared shirts and awful ties pressed up against his neck. Link pulled at his tie and groaned. Around him, the room was filled with extravagant dresses of all colors and styles. Mipha had insisted on getting his opinion on dresses, especially colors, because apparently he had to match her. Still, he couldn’t deny how stunning she looked in her apparently mermaid cut green dress with the open back. Clearly prom was invited by a woman, because no man could have come up with such ridiculous nonsense.

“I know this is a high school prom,” Link said, looking into his plastic cup and scrunching his nose. “But don't I get an exception being Hyrule's damn hero?”

Mipha grinned and rolled her eyes behind her own cup. “How long are you going to milk that?”

“For the rest of my life,” he stated, as if it were an obvious statement. “People should be giving me free shit and letting me drink.”

“The paparazzi and fame weren't enough?”

Link shrugged. “I could do without that.” He scanned the crowded dance floor until his eyes landed on Zelda. She was in the midst of a seemingly animated conversation with another girl.

“You should dance with her.”

Link scrunched his nose once more, absentmindedly. “Nah,” he said. “I don't dance.”

Again, Mipha rolled her eyes. She placed her palms on his back and pushed him. “She came alone, the least you can do is dance with her.”

Link groaned as he was pushed forward, but made his way to Zelda nonetheless. He bowed dramatically to her, offering his hand. “A dance, My Lady?”

Zelda turned and blinked at him for a moment, cut off mid-sentence. She looked him up and down quickly, seemingly considering her options, then shrugged and offered him a smirk. “Alright.”

Zelda took his hand and pulled him towards the edge of the dance floor. She hung her arms loosely on his shoulders and he placed his hands hesitantly on her waist.

“I don't think I've ever seen you in a suit before.”

“It sucks,” Link grunted. “I'm going to die in this.”

“Well, I like it,” Zelda said, straightening his tie.

A camera flashed practically in their faces and Link groaned. “I have no privacy now,” he said.

Zelda grinned. “You get used to it.”
“Yeah,” he said slowly. “I don’t think I will.”

Zelda sighed. “So, this is it. The end of an era.”

“Is it though?”

“Do you think,” she started slowly, averting his gaze. “Do you think this is… the end of it all?”

Link’s brows furrowed. “The end of what?”

Zelda shrugged. “I dunno. The last year and a half has been, well, us. The whole group. And now it’s just me and you and Mipha. And after tonight… after this summer… we’ll all leave, too.” She hesitated and met his gaze. “Well, some of us.”

“Hey, I’m going to college,” Link said. “Just not in the middle of nowhere like everyone else.”

“Well, I guess I’ll be back, anyway. I’ll have a kingdom to run soon, after all.” She paused. “It was just… nice to be a part of something, you know?” She smiled lightly. “Even though we got our asses kicked multiple times. At least, you know, we did it together.”

“It’s like you’ve never had friends before.”

Zelda shrugged. “Not really. I mean, you know, a few here and there.” She rolled her eyes. “I was too focused on school to really hold many friendships.”

“That’s surprising,” Link said sarcastically.

Zelda punched him lightly in the shoulder. “Shut up,” she said. “I’m going to miss everyone. And it feels like our friendship is over, now. We’ll never see each other.”

“I could be okay with not seeing Revali,” Link said.

Zelda smiled. “Don’t lie. You guys are best friends now.”

“That’s pushing it.” Link glanced over at Mipha, who was chatting with a few other girls. “I don’t think you have to worry,” he continued. “I think you’ll see you can’t get rid of us that easily.” He met her gaze and smiled.

“Well,” she said softly. “I’ll hold you to that.” The song came to an end and she dropped her arms. “Anyway. We got our hero photo everyone was dying to get, but I got other appearances to make.”

Link bowed dramatically to her and she rolled her eyes before turning away and disappearing into the crowd. Link made his way back to Mipha who greeted him happily with a kiss.

“Did you have a nice time?” she said teasingly.

“Wonderful,” Link said dryly. “Princess Knows-it-all is afraid no one is going to be friends with her anymore.”

Mipha frowned. “That’s not true. Did you tell her that?”

“Yes,” Link said with an exhausted tone. “Damn, why does prom make everyone depressed? I was banking on getting laid.”

Mipha punched his arm, but Link caught her wrist and scooped her into him, planting a kiss on her lips.
“It does feel weird,” she said. “To be done with high school. Done with war. We’re not a group anymore.” She hesitated. “We’ll probably never see anyone ever again.”

“Oh, not you, too,” Link groaned. “I just heard this same thing from Zelda.”

Mipha sighed. “Everything is changing.”

“Not really,” he said. He offered her a smile. “I’ll be here.”

Mipha met his gaze. “Promise?”

“Where am I gonna go?” He shrugged. “Besides. I’m not going anywhere without you.”

Link moved his fingers to her soft cheeks, turning her face towards him. He leaned closer to her, jumping just slightly as he heard Zelda’s voice. Mipha pulled away, and their eyes turned to Zelda as she hurried through the crowd towards them, grinning widely.

“Urbosa’s home,” she said, flashing her phone at them. She pulled at Mipha’s hand. “Come on!”

*****

Link, Mipha, and Zelda quickly ditched their prom, and after a brief drive out of the city, they found themselves at the lake where, to their surprise, Urbosa, Daruk, and Revali waited. For the first time in almost a year, Hyrule’s Champions were together again.

“I can’t believe you ditched your prom,” Urbosa said. “We’re here all summer, you know.”

“Yeah, but Mipha and Zelda were getting all emotional,” Link said. “You couldn’t have come back at a better time.”


“Because they were sad they’d never see Revali again,” Link said with a grin.

“I do have that effect on people,” Revali said.

Zelda crossed her arms and rolled her eyes. “I could do without you.”

“Reunited and it feels so good,” Revali sang.

“Yeah, let’s not,” Daruk said.

“So?” Mipha started. “How was your first year?”

“Busy,” Urbosa said.

“Awesome,” Daruk followed.

“I barely remember it,” Revali said.

“Don’t worry,” Link said. “Teba sent us all the pictures.”

“Do you know how much tail I got?” Revali said. “We’re freaking celebrities. Ladies love a hero. We’re gonna be in damn history books.”

“I’ll wait until they make a movie out of it,” Daruk said.

“That’s a lame movie,” Urbosa said. “It should be, like, The Legend of Hylia.”

Zelda shook her head. “No way. The Legend of Zelda. Yeah, I like the sound of that.”

“It should be The Legend of Link,” Link said, crossing his arms.

“Ganondorf would be ruling Hyrule if it weren’t for me,” she said. “I’m the one that held him back and sealed him away. You were too busy getting your ass kicked.”

“Well, I’m the one with the sword,” Link said.

“Now, now, children,” Urbosa said. “All that matters is they get someone hot to play me.”

“Me, too,” Revali said with a nod. “And someone stupid to play Link.”

Zelda smiled and shook her head. “I did miss this.”

“Don’t worry, Princess,” Revali said, draping an arm over Link’s shoulders. “You get this all summer long.”

Link rolled his eyes and groaned. “Great.”

“Isn’t it?” Revali said with a grin. He reached into his car and passed the beer cans around the group. He cracked his own open and raised it in the air. “To my good looks and future success.”

The group groaned in unison, and Revali’s grin widened.

“To us,” Urbosa said. “For surviving hell.”

“I can get on board with that one,” Daruk said.

Their beer cans met in toast, and the night went on, Hyrule’s Champions together again.
Flashback: The Little Family

Chapter Summary

Believe it or not, Link's family was relatively normal before he realized he was Hyrule's Chosen Hero (and as he likes to tease Aryll, before she was born). Plus, I had a need to give his mother some screen time and show his parents together. (I like to think this add's more depth to Rusl's character, too, and probably some of Link as well.)

Chapter Notes

I decided for funsies to post some of the 'deleted scenes' and some short little flashbacks that I had written. Maybe even some just for giggles 'gag reels' cuz why not? So, the following chapters will be these little bits, as titled. Enjoy! :)

His tongue was sticking out the corner of his mouth just slightly as Link concentrated on his coloring. Crayons were scattered over the kitchen table along with various pieces of paper. Some already had doodles on them, while others remained blank and waiting for his imagination to make them come to life. His current drawing used a lot of purple and blue crayons with the exception of a stick figure done in green. The legs of the little man he created were brown, and he sported a green pointy hat of sorts.

Link paused for a moment to admire the drawing so far. He drew a sword coming out of the man’s hand. At the top of the page was a purple ghost-like shape near a shakily drawn sun. It’s yellow rays stretched nearly half way across the page. He looked up as his mother moved about the kitchen, humming to herself.

“Mum,” he said. “Are we havin’ lunch now?”

His mother smiled at him over her shoulder. “Are you hungry, kiddo?”

He nodded and craned his neck to see what she was making. “I want what you’re having.”

“I dunno if you’ll like it,” she said. “Daddy thinks it’s weird.”

“What is it?”

“Peanut butter and banana sandwiches,” his father said as he rounded the corner into the kitchen. He grinned over at his wife. “Please don’t corrupt my son.”

She rolled her eyes at him. Rusl wrapped his arms around her and kissed her cheek and she giggled.

“He can eat whatever he wants,” she said.

“I wanna try it!”

Rusl groaned and pulled away from his wife. “I’ve lost him,” he said, shaking his head. “He’s
gone. My son is gone.”

“Stop being so melodramatic,” she said with a grin. She prepared a second sandwich and brought it over to Link. Rusl promptly sat across from him and put his chin in his hands, watching Link as he inspected the sandwich.

Link turned his gaze to his father and smiled. “Do you want half?”

Rusl made a look of disgust. “No, thanks,” he said. “I eat normal food.”

Link grinned and took a bite of the sandwich. He chewed thoughtfully for a moment, swallowed, and smiled. “I like it!” he declared.

Rusl turned to his wife as she sat between them. “I’d like another one,” he said. “And this time you can’t partake in the parenting. I’m raising it right.”

She smiled at her husband as she took a bite of her lunch. “That kid would be so dysfunctional,” she said. “You can’t be trusted to raise a kid by yourself.”

“Touche,” Rusl said. “I guess it’s a good thing I don’t have to.”

“Thank the Goddesses.” She stuck her tongue out at him.

Link finished his lunch, then quickly returned to his coloring, humming the same song his mother was humming earlier. Rusl’s brows furrowed as he watched his son.

“What’s that?” he asked, pointing to Link’s drawing.

“I dunno,” he said with a shrug. He pointed to the stick figure in green. “That’s the hero!”

Rusl frowned. “The hero?”

“Yeah, he was in my dream.” He stood up and thrust a fist in the air. “He’s so awesome!”

“I see,” Rusl said slowly. “What’s that?” He pointed to the purple figure in the sky.

“That’s his sword!”

“Isn’t that his sword?” Rusl pointed to the stick in the hero’s hand.

“Well, yeah,” Link said as if it were obvious. “But, that’s the sword for real. Her name is Fi.”

Rusl stood abruptly, now looking angry. Link frowned.

“What’s wrong, Daddy?”

“Can’t you draw something else?”

“Rusl,” his wife warned.

“He’s a damn kid,” Rusl hissed. “He doesn’t understand.”

“Exactly,” she reminded him casually. “He doesn’t understand. Let him be.”

Rusl’s face softened, but he still looked sad.

“I’m sorry, Daddy,” Link said softly. He dropped his crayon and looked down at his drawing,
unsure of what had made his father so upset.

Rusl sat down once more, moving closer to his son. He put his chin in his hand as he regarded the drawing once more. “It’s cool,” he said, dismissing his son’s apology. He sighed. “So, the hero. He wins, right?”


“Well, that’s good,” his father said with a nod. He brushed his hand through Link’s hair, messing it up. But Link wasn’t bothered by this. He smiled up at his father.

“Sometimes,” Link started, “the hero is you. And I want to be just like that. Do you think I could be?”

Rusl blinked down at his son. “I dunno,” he said slowly. “I am pretty freaking awesome.”

Link giggled. “Daddy, you’re weird.”

“And you take after me.”

“Does that mean I’m weird, too?”


“Yeah,” Link said with a nod. “Probably, huh?”

His mother laughed and stood, shaking her head. “You’re definitely not raising number two by yourself.”

Rusl’s brows furrowed. “Is that a thing?” he asked carefully. “A definite thing?”

“Maybe someday,” she said cryptically.

“Ah,” Rusl said. “I guess I’ll need to start trying harder.”

“Don’t get any ideas,” she said over her shoulder as she cleaned the kitchen counter.

“Link needs a friend.”

“He has friends.”

“If we have another boy,” he started. “We could call him Rusl Junior, obviously.”

“What if we had a girl?” she asked, cutting him off from his fantasy.

Rusl frowned. “What if she got knocked up?” He turned to his son. “If you have a sister, you’ll beat up all the guys she dates, right?”

Link looked up from his coloring. “What about the girls?”

“Well, you can’t beat up a girl.”

“Then I’ll tell her she can date girls,” Link said.

“No, wait,” Rusl said. “She can’t date anyone. You gotta protect her forever.”

Link frowned. “I dunno,” he said warily. “That sounds like a lot of ’sponsabilities.”
“He is totally your son,” his mother said with a grin.

“Was there any doubt?” Rusl said, narrowing his gaze on his wife.

“Well, there was that one other guy,” she said teasingly, turning her back on him. She paid him no mind when he got up but giggled as he wrapped his arms around her and spun her briefly around the room. When her feet were back on the ground, she turned to him and kissed him lovingly.

“You’re a terrible liar,” Rusl said.

“I know,” she said with a grin. “So, number two, then?”

Rusl raised a brow. “Number two?”

She shrugged a shoulder. “Think you could handle that?”

“I dunno,” he said with a smile. “Sounds like a lot of responsibility. Are you sure you wanna take that chance?”

“I think I did pretty good with the two guys I’ve got now. Why not add another to this crazy mix?”

“Don’t worry, Daddy,” Link said from the table. “I’ll help you with all the stuff you gotta do for little kids.”

“You are a little kid,” Rusl said to his son.

“Yeah, but I’ll be older, so I know all the stuff that kids should know.”

“That makes complete sense,” Rusl said with a nod. “I have faith you’ll do a better job than me.”

Link smiled at his father. “We can do it together.”
As featured in Chapter 48 - Link sees his mother one last time.

Link watched his legs as his legs disappeared under the chair, then swung out before him, then back under the chair. He moved them simultaneously for few moments, then switched to move one leg out and one leg under. He busied himself with this pattern, swinging his legs back and forth, as he waited for his father to return through the large double doors he disappeared through. It had only been a few minutes since then, but to the young boy, it felt like hours. And the hours they spent in the hospital waiting room felt like days. All the while his father came back and forth, moving out of the waiting room and through the doors, disappearing into the bright, white world on the other side.

Link was curious about what was on the other side of the doors. He had been spending a lot of time in that hospital waiting room, and every time different people came in from those doors and left through those doors. Some were nurses dressed in scrubs, or doctors with white lab coats. Sometimes he would see a policeman or two. Most of the time, they were regular people like him and his father. Most of them were adults, but from time to time, he would see kids his age, too. What was even more confusing was the range of emotions of all the people. Sometimes they were smiling and laughing, and other times they were crying.

Link couldn't make heads or tails of it. All he knew was that he was spending a lot of time in that hospital waiting room. Almost every day after school, his father picked him up and brought him there. And every time, his father could not sit still, even though time and time again he instructed Link not to move. His father paced, rocked the baby, and moved between the double doors, back and forth, making him dizzy. If he had to sit still, why didn't his father have to sit still, too?

Sometimes an adult would talk to him. They were always smiling. Sometimes they asked if he was hungry or thirsty. Sometimes they told him everything would be okay. He didn't quite understand it when they told him this. Perhaps it had to do with his mother? But whenever he asked, his father simply told him she was sick and that they were trying to make her feel better.

But she wasn't getting better. He didn't need an adult to tell him that. He didn't understand it, but he knew if she were getting better, his father wouldn't be pacing so much. He wouldn't look so tired all the time. He would be at home helping him with homework, or playing soccer with him. He would be smiling and laughing like he used to do.

He wasn't like that in a long time.

Link sighed. His eyes moved to the doors as they opened and another family came through. They were sad. The little boy that was with them was sad. He met the boy's gaze and smiled, but the gesture was not returned. The little boy watched Link as they walked by, across the waiting room, and eventually until they disappeared outside through the revolving door. Link's lips twisted to the side in displeasure and he returned to watching his feet swing out from under him.

It was a few minutes before the doors opened again, and to his relief, his father came through. He was still holding Aryll in his arms. She was sleeping soundly, her head resting against his shoulder. His father's eyes were on his feet as he walked across the room, sitting in the empty chair beside
Link regarded the baby on his father’s shoulder, and she opened her eyes slowly. Link smiled, and the baby’s eyes opened wider. She laughed at the sight of her brother and reached a tiny hand out towards him. Link moved a finger to poke at her nose, and she laughed, delighted. She grabbed onto his finger as tight as she could and closed her eyes. Her grip loosened as she drifted back to sleep and Link pulled his hand away from her.

He moved his gaze to his father, but he was still staring at his feet. His eyes were red and he appeared very, very tired. He looked as sad as the adults that walked through the waiting room just a few minutes before him. What was possibly on the other side of those doors that would cause such a mixture of emotions?

He turned to inspect the next person that came through the doors. This time, it was a doctor. He looked around the room for a moment until his gaze landed on Link. His father looked up at that moment, then got to his feet as the doctor made his way towards them. He spoke softly to Link’s father for a moment, and his father nodded. Link tried to listen to their conversation, but he could not understand some of the words they said. After a moment of them talking, their eyes turned to him. His father held a hand out, and Link instinctively took it, allowing his father to guide him wherever he wanted.

As fate would have it, he was guided across the waiting room and to the large, double doors. Link felt a sense of panic as they neared the doors. He was afraid of what was on the other side. He did not understand why people went in and out, what they saw, and why they all reacted in such varying ways. It was confusing, and terrifying, yet his curiosity kept him from pulling back. All those days – weeks, even – spent sitting in that waiting room, doing nothing but wondering. Now, he would finally see for himself.

The doors opened automatically and the doctor stepped through first. His father led him through the doors and into the brightly lit hallway. More doctors walked through these halls, some running quickly, some taking their time, talking and smiling with the other adults. More brightly lit hallways stretched off from the one they walked, but they continued to walk forward until they came through another set of doors.

It was quieter in this hallway, and they took their first immediate left down another hall. Most of the doors that lined either side of the hall were closed. Some had windows, but most of the blinds were drawn, so Link could not see inside. The select few that were open, however, Link either saw an empty bed, or a bed with someone in it. They had visitors, and they were smiling and laughing.

The doctor finally stopped in front of a closed door. The window to this room had its blinds drawn so Link could not see inside. From what he understood of the other rooms, it was a bad sign that the room was blocked from allowing people to see inside. The doctor nodded to his father, then walked away, leaving them alone in front of the closed door. It was quiet. The doctor disappeared around the corner, then turned his gaze back to his father. His father was looking at the closed door, but made no attempt to enter. On his shoulder, Aryll stirred, but remained fast asleep.

“Daddy?” he finally spoke. “Are we going inside?”

His father turned his gaze slowly to him. He nodded, then crouched down so he was eye level with his son, balancing on the balls of his feet.

Link smiled at his dad. “Is this Mum’s room?”

“Yes.” His father's voice was soft.

“Can we say hi to her?”
His father hesitated, his eyes closed for a moment. When they opened again, they were wet. He spoke slowly to his son, carefully stringing his words together in hopes of making him understand. “Yes, we can go in and say hi. She would like that very much. But we need to be quiet and calm; she is very tired.”

“Okay.”

“There's something else I need to tell you.”

“Yeah?”

He hesitated, searching his son's eyes, desperately wishing he did not have to have this conversation with him. “This will be the last time you see her.”

Link frowned at his father. “Why?”

He looked up at the ceiling, averting his son's questioning gaze, and pinched his lips together. “Because she's not going to get better. We need to say goodbye to her.”

His eyes started to well and his lip quivered. “But why, Daddy? Why isn't she better? Why do we have to say goodbye?”

His father wiped at his eyes with the back of his free hand. He sighed. “I don't know, kid. That's how life is sometimes.”

“But I don't want to say goodbye!”

His father's voice softened further. “Me neither. But we need to be brave, okay? For Mom and for Aryll. Do you think you can do that?”

The tears rolled down Link's cheeks. “But I'm not brave, Daddy. I don't know how to be brave.”

“It's okay,” he said. “I'll be brave for both of us.”

Link sniffed and nodded. “I can do it, Dad.” When his father stood, he reached up for his hand. His father held on tightly and after a hesitant pause, he opened the door and let them into the room.

Link saw his mother first, laying in the same white bed he had seen in other rooms. There was a blanket over her and wires that were attached to various places on her body. The wires moved away from her, attached to various machines and computer screens. Some of them beeped rhythmically. His mother's breathing sounded shallow, but otherwise, the room was eerily still and quiet. Link was unsure of what to make of it all, but a part of him felt afraid of what he was seeing, and he wasn't quite sure why.

He looked up when his father released his hand, then turned his gaze back to his mother. He moved toward the side of the bed and put a hand on his mother's. She turned her head slowly to face her son, a pained smile on her face.

“Hey, Baby,” she cooed to him.

Link smiled at the sound of his mother's voice, almost completely forgetting what his father had told him. “Are you coming home now?” As soon as he said it, however, he frowned. He turned his gaze to their hands, still together. “I want you to come home.”

“I know, Baby.” Her voice shook as she spoke. When Link met her gaze again, they were wet. “I
“I'm going to miss you,” he sniffed. He wiped his free hand across his eyes as the tears spilled through.

“Me too, Baby.” She put her palm against his cheek. “I need to tell you something, okay?”

Link nodded.

“Sometimes life is going to get really hard. You're going to be scared, and angry, and sad. Things might seem impossible. But you need to be brave in those times, okay? And remember that I will always be there with you. I will never let you fight alone. I love you, Link. Always and forever. Never forget that, okay?”

Link nodded again. “I won't, Mum.” He let his mother pull him into a weak hug and he wrapped his arms around her. “I love you.” He didn’t want to ever let her go, fearing that once he did, he would never see her again. But eventually, his mother pulled away, and Link stepped back, watching as she took her infant daughter in her arms one last time. He watched as his father sat on the edge of the bed. Their foreheads touched, and his parents kissed over the sleeping baby. His father was the saddest he had ever seen, and though he tried to hide it from his son, Link could tell he was crying. He didn’t quite understand it, but it made him even more sad.

It felt like they were in that room for a very long time, but finally his father brought him outside. He cradled Aryll in his arms, leaving Link without a hand to hold. But he walked next to his father, not daring leave his side for even a moment. His father was silent as they walked back to the car and on the drive home. He was sad and quiet for a very long time after that, and Link never saw his mother again.

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