Last Rounds

by BritishSarcasm

Summary

After Link's fateful encounter with not one, but two Guardians, he is close to completing all the Shrines and decides to visit some friends on one last circuit around Hyrule before he's ready to take on Ganon. Along the way, he discovers some unforeseen problems with his new arm and is greeted with various responses to it.

At Goron City, he detours to have some fun with Yunobo and give an encouraging speech of his own... Towards Rito Village, Link encounters technical difficulties and has to face Teba's stern fatherly disapproval... In Gerudo Town, the inhabitants admire his limb upgrade and then Link gets lost in the desert... Finally at Zora's Domain, Sidon nearly has a heart attack and Link needs advice when he realises he’s in love with two people… the two events are not related.

Notes

Ideally, you will need to read Ironic Technology (Part 1) first to understand the premise. Updates weekly on Fridays~
Bolstered by his success – eventually – with obtaining the true power of the Master Sword, Link had gone on to complete one hundred shrines. However, upon finishing his one hundredth he didn’t receive any sort of notification from the Sheikah Slate, which is what he had expected. Nor did he get a message from the Goddess saying that he had reclaimed his full vitality from one hundred years ago when he next traded in his Spirit Orbs. He’d maxed out his stamina a while ago…stubborn white horse.

He therefore assumed that there must still be Shrines left to find, and he wasn’t about to storm the Castle without being at his full potential. There was a niggling feeling in the back of his mind that there was going to be a Shrine hidden within the Castle; one that had been there all along. He just knew it.

“Maybe I should explore the Castle before I try to get in to take on Ganon,” Link murmured to himself, taking the reins of the horse he was currently riding and directing him towards the stables at the base of Death Mountain. “What do you think, Geoffrey? Should I do some recon before storming in there?”

Said horse merely huffed at him as it came to a stop by the lean-to outside the stable. Link had named the black horse ‘Geoffrey’ as an inside joke with one of the travellers staying at the stables he’d registered the horse at. It was only meant to be a temporary name while he thought of a better one, but ‘Geoffrey’ just seemed to stick. If he were being truly honest, Link quite liked the fact that there was a good set of memories associated with the horse’s name; it gave him a smile to recall it when anyone asked about his sturdy companion. The fact that he’d had the long mane and tail dyed green to match the Monster saddle probably just added to the odd looks he got, not that he cared. He boarded his horse and handed the reins over to the stable hand, giving Geoffrey a goodbye petting on his muzzle before turning to head up the mountain.

When he was out of sight of the stable he selected the Flamebreaker armour to cover his chest and legs, watching it materialise around his body to replace his Champion's Tunic. He summoned the Sapphire Circlet directly into his hand so he could place it carefully upon his head. With no intention of getting into a direct fight with an Igneo Talus he had no need of the flameproof effect that his upgraded complete armour set granted him. He would also like to have full periphery vision for this trip.

Link flexed his right arm under the Flamebreaker chest guard, still amazed at how well the armour was able to fit over his prosthetic. If it were not for the fact that the Sheikah Slate literally formed the armour around his body Link would have had genuine problems wearing some of his sets. He’d since been to Robbie’s Lab to let the man tinker around with his arm, and optimise the components to make it slimmer. Apparently, Purah was very put out that Robbie had been able to claim Link as his test subject before she could, but not before having the last word:

“He’s only your guinea pig until the Princess comes back, I’m pretty sure she had first dibs anyway.”

Link had merely blinked in confusion in response to this, with just a smidge of fear. He remembered the frog incident.
Rotating his robotic wrist, watching the glow from within flicker with the movement, he selected the shrine at the top of Goron City. He intended to visit a friend before he started searching the Eldin region for any missing Shrines.

Re-forming at the Shae Mo’Sah Shrine, he could immediately feel the oppressive heat, even through several layers of protection magic. He decided to scout around for Yunobo quickly before he got distracted by the other denizens of the city. Last he had seen him the young Goron had been standing guard above the entrance to the city, fully embracing his role as the descendant of Champion Daruk.

Link was a little proud of him.

He jogged over to the nearest cliff and started to scale it. Reaching the top, he hoisted himself up over the edge and then began to sprint nimbly along the uneven surface. He skirted around the monument of the Goron Champion, hopping between protruding rock and sheer cliff face, until he could spot the mine track below him. He located Yunobo walking along the upper levels of the mountain surrounding the city, he did not seem to be particularly rushed but his strides looked purposeful. A patrol route.

The Hylian Champion considered whistling to get his attention, but over the rumble of the mountain and the general noise from the Gorons below them he’d have to do so quite loudly. He didn’t fancy abusing his airways to such a degree. Instead, he paraglided down to the walkway that acted as a welcome arch to the city. He then resumed his loping sprint until he had neared the good-natured Goron and side stepped around him to wave cheerily in greeting.

“Link! Oh, it’s so good to see you, goro! How have you been? It’s been ages since I saw you last or, at least, it feels like it has,” Yunobo said happily, equally pleased to see the Hylian as Link was to see him.

“It’s good to see you too! It has been a while, been busy, had a bit of an accident, the usual,” Link shrugged, still grinning. It quite easy to speak with Yunobo, and he still wasn’t sure why but it was a relief none-the-less. At the word ‘accident’, however, Yunobo looked concerned.


“Well, I could show you… but I don’t want to catch fire,” Link said, casting some looks around them at all the lava and semi-melted stone.

“OH! Then let’s go down to a level where the heat isn’t so bad.”

Realising he had become a distraction, Link placed a hand on Yunobo’s wrist as the Goron turned to look down the mountain trail.

“I don’t want to interrupt your patrol.”

“Ah, it’s ok! I’ve already completed my route twice today, and nothing seems to be out of place. I think I can slip away to catch up with a friend for a bit, goro.” Yunobo laughed, “Now, it’s your turn to follow me, come on!”

The Goron rolled into a ball and tipped himself over the edge of the cliff he’d been walking along and barrelled down the mountain path towards the cooler temperatures at the bottom. Link stood there stunned for a moment before laughing out loud and reaching for his shield.
They both eventually reached the Eldin Sheikah Tower, Yunobo unrolling with a flourish, pumping his fists into the air just as Link skidded to a halt on his shield and kicked it up so he could catch it. Halfway down the mountain Link had almost overtaken the young Goron by utilising Daruk’s Protection in a risky manoeuvre off a cliff edge. Unfortunately, this had served as a reminder to Yunobo that he also had this shielding ability and had started to deviate into much more uneven terrain. Terrain the little Hylian could not traverse on his shield. Still, Link congratulated Yunobo on his win for the impromptu race with a double thumbs up and a smile on his face.

Sitting on the ledge of rock before the base of the tower, Link was able to swap his Flamebreaker chest guard for his climbing top and show Yunobo what he had meant by ‘an accident’.

“Link! That’s more than a bit of an accident, goro!” Yunobo exclaimed, his giant hands hovering over the arm made of ancient composite materials. His movement showed he wanted to confirm for himself that Link was ok, but didn’t dare actually touch his arm in case he caused more damage. As if this guy would ever let himself harm someone, Link thought, fondly. A literal gentle giant.

“You can touch it y’know, it’s not going to break. This thing is more resilient than I am!” He emphasised his point by waving his arm up and down, then bending the limb repeatedly at the elbow. “It’s also pretty strong too.”

Reaching over to his right, Link picked up a rock in his Ancient tech hand, throwing it up and catching it a couple of times before crushing it into powdery pieces.

“Woah, that’s amazing, goro! You could probably punch through rock as easily as a Goron with that arm,” Yunobo said, enthusiastically.

“That might not do my shoulder any good,” Link admitted, looking slightly sheepish. “That part of me is still just weak Hylian.”

“You’re not weak! You got all the way up here on your own, saved me from a cave in, saved my home from Rudania and saved Rudania itself… that’s not weak. Actually, I’d like to be more like you.”

Link turned to look up at Yunobo, genuinely surprised.

“Why would you want to be anything but yourself? Yunobo …you’re great as you are.”

“Huh?” The Goron in question seemed taken aback by how adamant Link suddenly was about this topic.

The Hylian propped himself up on his knees so he was closer to eyelevel with his friend and took a deep breath, gathering the energy he needed to say his piece.

“You’re a descendant of Daruk, one of the Champions, and you have his gift. Which means you must have a desire to defend and protect people. But at the same time, you’ve never shown any intention to hurt another being; you’re not aggressive at all. You also didn’t give up on me the entire time we went up the mountain – you were fired out of a canon for fuck’s sake!”

“Link!”

The Hylian grabbed onto Yunobo’s hands, shaking them slightly to get the Goron’s full attention for what he had to say next before his voice failed him.

“Please don’t wish to be anyone else when you’re a wonderful person just the way you are. I’m so
Yunobo’s jaw dropped open slightly, staring at his small friend in awe, processing what he had just heard. He was elated beyond words for moment, and incredibly honoured to have this Hylian as his friend, whilst also being quite shocked at how many words had just come out of the Champion’s mouth.

“Thank you, Link. That means a lot to me, goro.”

Yunobo’s hands had been released and the Goron could only sit there and twiddle his large thumbs in silence for a bit, not sure how to follow a discussion like that.

“Hey, how’s that arm of yours with high temperatures?”

Link blinked in surprised at the subject change, still in the process of winding down, but he easily went with it. “Well, it was still functioning back in the city, plus it was made from the same material as those Guardians and I’ve seen those walk through lava unscathed… I’m still not sticking my hand in the volcano though,” he affirmed, wrinkling his nose at the idea.

Yunobo openly laughed at that, “that’s probably wise!”

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An hour later and the pair were walking back up the mountain trail. Yunobo had chosen to travel alongside Link as the Hylian couldn’t exactly shield surf up hill. While their walk back to the city had started off side by side, it had devolved into an excuse to stress test Link’s new prosthetic some more. He was now hanging off of Yunobo’s bicep by his hands, keeping his feet off the floor as they continued their way along the path.

“Do I even weigh anything to you?” Link asked, laughing, as he hefted himself up to cross his arms on top of the Goron’s outstretched limb.

“Not really,” Yunobo said, shrugging and accidentally dislodging Link from his arm for a second.

“Oh, sorry!”

“No worries, I’m still here. It must be great to-“ Link was interrupted as the Sheikah Slate on his hip suddenly started chiming. He looked down at the device on his hip to see the screen pulsing blue. That was fast.

“What’s wrong, goro?” Yunobo asked, stopping to look down at the source of the noise.

“Shrine,” Link answered succinctly. He dropped down from Yunobo’s arm to take the Slate in hand and bring up the map, they were just passing Goronbi Lake, before looking back up at his friend, face apologetic. “I’m sorry, but this is where I need to leave.”

“Sure, you go do what you have to do. The faster you finish that, the faster you can go save the Princess, right?”

Link nodded.

Yunobo hesitated for a minute before enveloping Link in one of the gentlest hugs he had ever received. It should have been strange, being caged in arms made of rock yet instead it was bizarrely comforting. He reached his own arms around Yunobo’s massive frame as best he could, squeezing slightly, before drawing back just as the Goron’s arms retreated.
“Take care of yourself, goro,” Yunobo said, gesturing at Link’s right arm, that was once again covered by the Flamebreaker armour.

“Don’t worry, I learned a valuable lesson from this. I’m taking much better care of myself than I used to.”

“Good! Now, remember to say goodbye before you leave and good luck with your Shrine.”

Yunobo patted Link on the back, mindful of his strength, a complete opposite to his Ancestor, and Link couldn’t help a small smile at the thought.

“Thanks, Yunobo.”

With that, Link turned away and started to follow the incessant beep beep of his Sheikah Sensor.

**Next Stop… Rito Village**

Chapter End Notes

I am aware you cannot shield surf down Death Mountain, but I think that’s bullshit and a missed opportunity so I’m ignoring that fact…

I’m also basing Link’s ability to talk on whether he has the energy to at the time. Sometimes it takes a lot of built up energy to actually start talking, and when that energy is gone the desire to speak is just non-existent. Of course, it’s easier around people he’s comfortable with. Later he’ll start using sign language that will be based off BSL, because I am of course British.

Chapter art is [here](#)
Before Link had even crossed over the first rope bridge on his way to Rito Village he could hear the birdsong of the Rito fledglings. It was such an uplifting sound it made Link feel physically lighter, walking up the first set of stairs with a bounce to his steps. It also eased his anxiety a smidge.

He was worried how Teba would react to his new appendage and was slightly worried he would receive more than a simple clip around the back of the head. More like I’ll become moving target practice for his son, Link thought. At least it would be a good father-son bonding experience for them.

He’d considered simply avoiding Teba all together, but had instantly scrapped that idea for a couple of reasons. One; he wasn’t a damn coward and he’d take the anticipated dressing down like the Champion he was. Two; it would be a completely dick move to miss out Teba when he was catching up with everyone else. Three; he actually really needed to talk to Teba. All in all, there was no avoiding Link’s fate of being stared down by the Rito warrior and being subjected to an unimpressed gaze akin to a disappointed father.

As Link reached the highest landing he could see Kass’ daughters scattered about the platform, testing their vocal chords and bursting into birdsong for short moments before quietening again. He may not be a coward, but he knew an excellent excuse to delay the inevitable when he saw one.

He jogged over to the platform edge next to the multicoloured fledglings and waved in greeting. “How have you all been? Has your dad come back yet?”

“Link!” He was immediately surrounded by a feathery rainbow as the girls hugged his legs in joy. “It’s been ages!”

“Did you bring more salmon?”

“Dad is still on his quest.”

“He sent a letter to us and mum yesterday - He’s in Faron!”

“You didn’t come to see us at Warbler’s Nest…”

Link gently settled himself down onto his knees so he could return their hugs one by one, careful to pay attention to what each was saying. Even if they were all talking all at once.

He made a mental note to swing by Faron region for a Shrine song he may have missed.

“I’m glad your dad is doing well. Also, I’m sorry I couldn’t see you sing, I was suddenly needed elsewhere. But,” Link paused, looking over the edge of the platform to where Warbler’s Nest was located, “I have plenty of time now.”

Still kneeling on the floor, Link clasped his hands together in front of him as he looked at the young Rito. “Would you all mind singing that song again? I think I might know what the secret is.”

He gave them his best beseeching look, even though they all looked extremely happy to be asked to
sing. That was until the green fledgling, whose name Link recalled was Genli, suddenly perked up.

“Guys, group huddle,” she said, and the sisters all clustered together.

The Hylian Champion cocked his head to the side like a confused dog as he watched the Rito sisters converse in quick, harsh whispers. Then, as suddenly as they converged, they broke apart to line up before him. Genli stepped forward towards him and raised a prominent feather.

“We will sing, on one condition.”

Link titled his head forward expectantly, slightly apprehensive as to what he was about to be asked to do.

“You have to cook us all Salmon Meuniere!” The girls cheered.

He started to laugh, nodding vigorously as the colourful fledglings started to sing in joy, flapping their small wings excitedly.

The Shrine turned out to be fairly simple to uncover, or simple for a man that had already discovered over a hundred of the damn things. Yet, he would admit he hadn’t realised at first that he needed to blow wind through the numbered hands from the Shrine pedestal and got confused when nothing happened as he did it from around the edges.

Of course it’s supposed to be done on the pedestal, Link berated himself, face held in his hands as the Shrine finally unearthed itself behind him.

Luckily for him, when the Shrine appeared the girls had abruptly stopped singing to marvel at the new structure and then immediately started to race each other back home to tell their mother. This left Link alone to enter the Shrine without an audience and any subsequent probing questions from five inquisitive young Rito. This Shrine also turned out to be particularly hazardous.

Why is it always lava? How did they even get lava in here? And how is it STILL HERE?!

The Shrine only highlighted the issue that Link had discovered with his mechanical arm, and the reason that Rito Village had been his next point of interest after Death Mountain.

Once he had concluded that there were no more shrines to find around Death Mountain, he had set off west. Passing the eternally dark forest, which already held a completed shrine, Link had also come across some Korok puzzles. Puzzles that required quick and accurate aim. It was at this point that he started to notice a problem.

He had already noted that his new arm had no sensation in it, which until now hadn’t been an issue. Feeling the tension of the bow string against his fingers, or the weight of a weapon and the force needed to swing it. These things had been second nature to him, even after his one hundred year stasis, but were now no longer possible with his right arm.

He still had to correct himself when he would reach for the Master Sword, with his previously dominant hand, only to find the space over his shoulder empty. In an effort to correct his habit, Link had started to wear his belts and weapons angled on the other side of his body, favouring his left hand instead. The fact that he was equally competent with weapons in his left hand had come as a bit of a shock to him initially, but other matters had pushed it to the back of his mind. However, his natural inclination was still to shoot a bow with his right arm drawing the arrow back. Given the situations in which he often needed to make a quick shot, he couldn’t easily just swap hands after
pulling back on the string and realising his error. So, Link had lined up against the flying target of the Korok puzzle, and released a shot with his right hand. He missed.

He hadn’t missed a shot since his early, confused, and very disoriented days after coming out of the Shrine of Resurrection. For obvious and understandable reasons, Link had assured himself, and it wasn’t as if he had missed by miles, the arrow would sail past just slightly to the left. After many more attempts, all with equal failure to hit the target and even a few splintered bows, his logical conclusion had been that he was ill and that his coordination was off.

He had not been ill, according to Impa, but regardless she had demanded he rest for the day in Kakariko Village.

“You’re more than likely tired. Your insistence to carry out your duty is undoubtedly noble, whilst also being incredibly foolhardy. If you fall in battle because of your complete disregard for your health, who do you imagine will save the Princess, hmm? Rito Village can wait for a day or two.”

It was obvious bait but it had the desired effect and Link felt no offence in her accusations, as he knew them to be completely true. He was not arrogant enough to deny her wisdom, and not stupid enough to ignore her advice. Besides, Link reasoned with himself, it’s not as if I haven’t had that said to me before.

However, even with the ‘recommended healthy amount’ of sleep he now demanded of himself, the number of misses he was going through was becoming alarming. It was a growing concern for him, a constant background level of anxiety as he imagined countless life or death situations that would not go well for him if this continued. Returning to the Korok puzzle, Link had grown incredibly frustrated with his inability to aim accurately, the draw on his bow getting steadily harsher. The result was yet another spectacularly shattered bow.

He concluded, one night sat at a campfire staring off into space, that the arrows were being released at an angle. As his right hand could not sense the connection of the arrow against the bow string, he must be bringing the arrow up and aligning it incorrectly. He also suspected his grip on the string was too lax or his fingers were still in the way of the string snapping back. Not that he would notice.

He may have whined out loud a little, sitting there beside the fire, his horse nudging his head in response to the sudden noise. I really hate Guardians.

All this time he had been relying on muscle memory born from extensive training he no doubt completed one hundred years ago, but now he was lacking those muscles it was all going to hell. His new limb simply did not have the finesse or practiced dexterity needed to nock and release an arrow from a bow with the timely precision he required.

Link realised he needed a second pair of eyes to watch what his prosthetic arm was doing, while he focused on aiming and holding the bow steady.

There was only one person he could possibly ask to help him with this, someone he respected and who held great mastery over the bow and arrow, Teba. Plus, his visit to the Rito Village would tie in nicely to a hike up the Hebra mountains for any wayward Shrines. Two birds, one st- … ooh.

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After his productive endeavour at Warbler’s Nest, he had travelled through Dronoc’s Pass until he saw the Flight Range, Teba’s popular haunt. Travelling further forward, bundled up in his snowquill armour, Link had spotted the white Rito on the landing. He’d been demonstrating correct form and posture while holding a bow to his son Tulin, who had been watching with enthusiastic attention.
This attention was diverted, however, when the child spotted a blonde Hylian coming towards the Flight Range. The Rito’s lesson was effectively put on hold while they greeted Link and they both insisted they could go back to training some other time, prompting the Champion to ask what he needed. So, now he stood before the rather intimidating adult Rito, having explained his predicament and how he got himself into it, awaiting the response.

Link’s guess about being clipped around the head had been close. Instead, Teba raised a wing up and then swiftly brought it down to slap upon the foolish Hylian’s head, ruffling his hair viciously.

“I knew you were crazy, I didn’t think you were that crazy!”

Teba eventually relented, huffing at the ridiculousness of the situation and muttering to himself while Tulin giggled at Link’s now very fluffy hair.

The century-old Champion sighed and looked contrite as he shrugged as if to say ‘Yeah, I know.’

He was considered for a moment longer, the unbroken focus of predatory avian eyes starting to become a little unnerving before Teba hesitantly started to speak.

“…I don’t want to insult you and state the obvious but … have you considered just swapping your draw arm?”

Link proceeded to visually demonstrate why this is a problem, reaching for the bow on his back with his left hand while his right drew an arrow from his quiver and moved to nock it. He paused halfway through the motion. Frowning down at his hands, Link started the motions to swap the bow over to his right hand. He was stopped by the Rito warrior’s wing coming to rest on his arm.

“Ah, yes. That will take some time to break. Thankfully, I have plenty of that.” Teba looked down to his son and ushered him to grab his things and pack them away neatly, before turning back to Link.

“Looks like we’re going on a bit of a walk. Follow me.”

After leaving the Archery Range, they began trudging through the snow in peaceful silence; Teba was a fellow being of few but meaningful words. Tulin, on the other hand, was happily running ahead of them, occasionally kicking up flurries of snow and holding his wings out to the side in mock flight.

“Careful, Tulin. You never know what might be hiding in the snow around here,” Teba warned, in a firm but calm tone as they passed the Sha Warvo shrine.

While Link had already dispatched of all of the snow-camouflaged Lizalfoes in the area, on his way to the Flight Range, he didn’t wish to undermine Teba’s reminder on caution. His thoughts must have been broadcasted, however, as seconds later the Rito warrior leaned down to ask him a question.

“There are no monsters left, are there?”

Tebas side eye glance was rewarded with a small grin from the shorter Hylian. The Rito huffed, humoured, and continued to watch his offspring frolic, comfortable in the knowledge that there was no immediate danger.

The trio headed for a rocky patch that rose out of the snow and Teba told Tulin to watch and listen.

“First, show me your draw. Let me see if I can spot the problem before you tell me your suspicions.”

Teba gestured with a single wide wing for Link to get into position and aim at a small cluster of trees
between the path and the high-rising cliffs of the Hebra Mountains that encompassed the Flight Range. The Hylian drew back on the bow and held his position.

“Hmm.”

Link heard Teba move through the snow toward him, his noise of consideration didn’t sound negative or positive. Out of the corner of his eye Link could see Teba lining up an imaginary shot next to him, a wing extended parallel to his arm. The Rito frowned as he relaxed again.

“Your form and stance are perfect. If you were to release the arrow you should hit the tree third furthest from the back there, correct?”

“Yes,” Link confirmed, gratified in the knowledge that there wasn’t anything wrong with the way he was handling the bow, but not feeling the need to preen at the praise. The Rito warrior was just being factual. “Should I shoot?”

Teba returned to his previous position, next to his son, to watch him take the shot.

“Alright. Go!”

Predictably, the arrow soared past the tree of interest to bounce off sheer rock some feet behind it. Link heaved a massive sigh and turned to look at Teba, but he looked just as confused as Link used to when this problem started.

“That … doesn’t make sense. Your aim was there, you had the bow drawn back all the way, your arm was steady, and yet …” Teba couldn’t seem to bear finishing the sentence.

“I missed,” Link finished for him.

“But the arrow should have hit the tree.”

Those darn misbehaving arrows, Link thought, nearly laughing out loud but he contained himself. Teba was trying to help.

Releasing a disgruntled breath, the white Rito indicated that Link should try lining up a shot whilst holding the bow in his other hand. Link didn’t even get to pull the bowstring even half the way back before it became evident that that wouldn’t work.

“Perhaps swapping your bow hand is not the best solution after all,” Teba assented, scarcely an hour later, eyeing the discarded remains of the bows that had once belonged to Link, and now merely served as firewood.

The first, more fragile bow had splintered in the excessive mechanical grip, followed by a sturdier mid-weight bow, and finally culminating in a Royal Bow that now lay in two pieces. Teba grunted.

“I need to make you a proper bow, not these things you keep finding after one hundred years of being locked in a chest in a river.”

The Hylian Champion looked a little embarrassed, but he also didn’t want to cause more work for Teba. He opened his mouth to assure him it was fine but the elder beat him to it.

“No arguing, I am making it and you will take it. That way I know you’ll actually have a decent bow with good firepower, seeing as you don’t seem to have Revali’s Bow.” Teba eyed him questioningly, “I know Elder Kaneli gave it to you.”
Link hesitated for a moment before saying, “I’m saving it for Ganon,” and he could see Teba’s scrutiny disappear instantly.

“…Good.”

There was an easy silence before Link geared himself up to break it.

“There’s another reason I don’t want to change my draw arm,” Link said, holding out his technologically enhanced right limb, palm thrust outward. “I’d stand back if I were you.”

Teba raised a single, bold eyebrow, before taking a step back and reaching out with a free wing to push his son even further back. The pair watched, one with an expectant face, the other barely containing their excitement. Their expressions turned to outright incredulity as blue light started to flood out of Link’s right arm, building up through the snowquill just above the elbow before running down the length of the forearm and collecting at his palm. Link suddenly braced his entire body as the blue light shot out of his hand in a concentrated bolt, blasting into the rocky cliffside. The force of the attack caused the frost-weathered stone to shatter in places, entire slivers of slate falling away from the cliff and falling as rubble onto the snow-laden ground.

The Hylian’s posture relaxed as the blue glow dimmed from his arm, returning to a subtle pulse beneath the armoured exterior. He turned to face the two Rito, with a lopsided grin as he waved his right hand at the pair.

“I like keeping this hand free.”

There was silence, except for a few more pieces of rock cracking and splintering into the snow. Both Rito appeared stunned, but it was Teba who regained coherency first.

“You could have just led with that point first, you know?”

“Why bother with a bow?! That was so cool!” Tulin exploded, rushing over to Link faster than expected and missing the offended look Teba gave him as he rushed past.

“Actually, I find the bow very useful. It’s much faster and more versatile.” Link explained, whilst letting the eager youngster inspect his right hand, “it also drains a lot of energy to produce a single attack like that.”

“Yes, Tulin, archery is an incredibly important part of Rito culture. I also highly doubt you would be granted a machine replacement should you ever lose a wing.”

Link winced, and added onto Teba’s warning as he said, “yeah, please don’t do anything stupid, like me. I was very lucky.”

But Tulin, who had only been half listening, was looking very intently at the fingers of Link’s mechanical hand, especially the joints of his index and middle fingers.

“Huh? Hey, Link-“

“Master Link. He’s a knight, Tulin, be respectful,” Teba admonished, as he gently flicked his son’s head feathers.

“I don’t mind, I’m not actually-“

“Master Link, you’ve got something stuck in your hand.”
Both adults looked down to see Tulin looking up at them, gesturing to the fingers Link would use to grip a bowstring. The Hylian raised both eyebrows as he crouched down to Tulins level so he could see where the young Rito wanted him to look.

“See, there’s something caught on the edges here,” he pointed with a small wing tip feather to the glowing joints uppermost of his index and middle digits.

Squinting, Link spotted a collection of white and blue fibres lodged under the sheer edges of the knuckles. The area that grips just behind an arrow’s fletching. He looked back up at Teba, face incredulous.

“Tulin just solved my problem.”

After watching Link fire several more arrows, Teba could confidently say that his son had spotted the cause for the wayward shots. Upon closer inspection, it was discovered that in reaching back for an arrow, Link’s fingers were brushing across the fletching to nock the arrow in place. The long fletching was caught in the joints of the fingers and upon being released the tearing and disturbance of the fletching was enough to send the arrow off course. The Ritos also noticed that the artificial fingers would sometimes fail to move out of the way of the string fully, causing an obstruction and again sending the arrow off course.

Teba was very proud of his son for being so vigilant, even if he was just being incredibly nosy at the time. Tulin squawked through his giggles as his father ruffled his head feathers.

Watching the pair, relieved that he could now work to fix the problem, Link was suddenly struck by an intrusive thought. *I wonder if I ever had moments like that with my father*, before he very firmly placed that curiosity into a mental box to open at a later date. *Nope, we’re not doing this now.* Instead, he smiled openly as Tulin was finally free of his father’s affections and ran to fetch the various arrows that had missed their target.

“Come on,” Teba said, already walking back towards the Flight Range as he gestured for Link to follow. “I have a bow to make, for a change.”

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Link continued to stay in Rito Village as Teba constructed a brand new bow that could stand up to his ‘harsh treatment’. He spent his time traversing the mountains, waiting for the Slate’s Shrine Sensor to wake up and direct him to his next challenge. His time was also spent with a Rito named Harth; a warrior that had trained with Teba in their early years before becoming a bow craftsman. He was able to keep a close eye on Link’s hand placement as he drew and nocked an arrow over and over, until the motion was practiced enough for his new limb to correctly place and fire an arrow in relation to the rest of his body. He was also able to pull some strings with the village tailor and produced a set of leather finger covers for Link’s right hand to prevent the fletching from catching when he drew an arrow.

“Try shooting that,” Harth suggested, pointing to a lone tree in the distance one foggy morning.

The tree was met with an arrow, now imbedded perfectly in the centre of its trunk.

Harth accompanied Link on the walk back to the village in order to inform Teba himself of Link’s success, and so the little Hylian was rewarded with a brand new bow. It was similar in design to Revali’s, except where the Great Eagle Bow had a more realistic feathered effect at the ends of the bow’s limbs, this bow was more angular in appearance.
“Mechanical wings for your mechanical arm,” Teba explained, looking extremely proud, as he handed it over to Link.

Taking the bow gently, he tested its weight and tensile strength, marveling at the designs carved all along the surface of the yew-wood. It was perfect. He carefully secured the bow to his back, taking the time to make sure it was balanced properly before launching himself at Teba.

Flapping his wings in alarm, the older Rito was unsure how to deal with the Hylian Champion suddenly giving him a furiously determined hug. His dilemma was only added to as Tulin caught sight of them and raced to join in the hug, clinging to Link’s shoulders and Teba’s armour.

The white Rito looked at Harth in askance, as if daring him to make his situation any worse, but the midnight Rito simply scoffed.

“I’m not helping you.”

Teba was therefore left to fend for himself against his son and a small Hylian, who were unwilling to let go anytime soon.

**Next Stop… Gerudo Town**

Chapter End Notes

This chapter was an adventure. Shout out to PilotInTheAttic for beta’ing and helping me with some facts; turns out I know bugger all about archery.

Also Teba is definitely the ‘Dad Champion’; he looks after Link with occasional stern observations, followed by genuine praise.

Chapter art can be found [here](#)
Link’s first problem, he realised, was that his Vai clothes did nothing to hide the appearance of his new limb and he highly doubted that he would be able to avoid any attention it garnered. His second problem was the sand, and how it got everywhere.

He winced as he heard trapped grit grind in the joint of his mechanical wrist, and glared at all the particles that seemed to be sticking to his right arm by static. If he hadn’t needed to walk here in case he found some shrines on the way he would most definitely have teleported by now.

No wonder there are no Guardians in the desert.

This gave him a small giggle at the irony. If he recalled correctly, Ganon had once been a man called Ganondorf, a male Gerudo Sorcerer. The fact that his possessed machines were rendered ineffective by sand, from his native region no less, was just too good.

Or maybe he’s feeling sentimental by not having them here…

Link squashed that line of thought. Ganon was nothing but sheer hatred and corruption; there wasn’t any sentimentality to be found there.

As he approached the guarded entrance way, Link briefly considered using his Hylian hood to hide his right arm, but one of the guards, Merina, had already spotted him.

“Sav’otta little vai, how have-“ The guard stopped as she honed in on his right arm.

Here we go.

“That,” said the second guard, Dorrah, gesturing with her spear slightly towards his right side, “looks really cool.”

“That’s some very intricate armour you have there. You must have friends in high places,” Merina surmised, side eyeing her partner as if to remind the other that they were supposed to have an air of some professionalism.

[Thank you] Link signed, pointedly using his ‘armoured’ arm.

“Always so polite too, you really are a curious one, little vai. Welcome back,” Merina said and tilted her head towards the inner town to indicate he could go in.

On his way to the palace, he spotted Dalia who was gathering some wood chippings in a pot from a wood carving Gerudo sat in the shade by the jewellers. He made a detour towards them, nodding in greeting to the woman whittling a flute before waving to the little girl.

“You came back! My wildberries are sprouting, but the ground keeps drying out too quickly. Marseq suggested I use wood shavings on the ground to protect it from the sun,” Dalia explained, excitedly, indicating the Gerudo next to them who blew sawdust off of the flute before speaking to them.

“It’s called mulching.”

Link cocked his head. He’d never heard of that before and he was unsure how to repeat it with his
hands. He stared down at them helplessly for a moment, before looking back up at Marseq. She chuckled.

“My best guess would be to say ‘ground cover’,” she demonstrated the two hand movements that seamlessly merged together and Link repeated them. “It keeps the moisture in the ground so little Dalia here doesn’t need to keep ferrying water to the area. We may be blessed with an infinity pool but constant monitoring and watering gets tiring.”

Dalia gave a small whining noise of assent, while Link made a mental note to try this method on the spare patch of land he had beside his house in Hateno.

Suddenly remembering why he had come over in the first place, Link clicked his fingers and then selected a couple of items from the Sheikah Slate. Several wildberries and a durian appeared in his hands, which he then offered to the little girl.

“These are for me?” she asked, placing the pot of wood shavings on the ground to take the fruit gently into her arms, looking overjoyed.

[I’ll bring different fruit next time]

Dalia responded by shifting from foot to foot elatedly, and then scampered off to her garden. Unfortunately, in her haste and enthusiasm, she had completely forgotten about the pot she had put down.

Both Link and Marseq looked at each other before the Hylian signed out a quick ‘thank you’, grabbed the pot and jogged to follow Dalia.

After helping Dalia prepare a patch of ground to plant the new fruit Link had brought, he had finally arrived at the Palace, where the guards directed him up the stairs. Link found Riju standing at the top of the stairs looking out over the town just outside her room. The Chief turned to watch Link approach her and as he drew nearer she, like everyone else, was drawn to his right arm.

“To be fair, it is a stark difference from my left.” Riju said, chuckling as she patted Link on the shoulder and turned away to walk into her room.

Link immediately had questions.

“And what have you got here?” Riju asked, her voice filled with intense curiosity.

The Champion immediately started to recall the very well worn story of his encounter with a sneaky Guardian and the acquisition of his inorganic right arm from the Sheikah. All the while, Riju was very intently inspecting said arm and rapping her knuckles against the surface to admire it’s integrity. Once he had finished, she stopped her investigation and turned her head up to look at him.

“Oh, so that was you, I should have guessed,” Riju said, chuckling as she patted Link on the shoulder and turned away to walk into her room.

Link immediately had questions.

“Hold on, how have you heard about that?” He asked, incredulous as he turned around to follow her.

“There was a Gerudo in the area that night. Returning here, she reported to me that she saw a small Sheikah run head long into a Guardian and got surprised by a second one. She had assumed the Sheikah was completely vapourised, ‘if the first shot didn’t get them the second must have’ I believe were her words. Once the Guardians moved away she went over to check the area and said there was nothing there but torched grass. You teleported out I’m assuming,” she guessed, eyeing the
Sheikah Slate still attached to Link’s hip.

“Y-yeah.”

“I’m sure she would feel a lot better if you wouldn’t mind talking to her for me. I think she feels a little bit guilty because she could only stand and watch.”

“Sure, but … aren’t you going to say how reckless it was, or call me an idiot?”

“Oh, Link,” Riju grinned, turning about to face him, “I don’t need a reason to do that.”

“…Touché.”

The pair had decided to take a walk around the town to catch up before Link went to explore the desert. All the Gerudo inhabitants seemed pleased to see their Chief walking about. Despite Riju’s young age, everyone showed her the utmost respect, and Link found himself automatically walking about two steps behind her. Riju allowed this for all of five minutes before grabbing his right hand and yanking him forward to walk beside her as they moved to walk around the outer walls of the town. He carefully returned her grip on his hand, suddenly missing his lost sense of touch in that limb.

Out here Link was able to take his head gear off and shake his hair out for a bit. It had grown quite long now and he’d already had many offers from Kass’ children to braid it for him. So, it made the Hylian Champion laugh when the young Gerudo walking beside him squinted at his hair and told him to get one of the kids to tie it up for him. They enjoyed their companionable stroll around the town; Riju detailing the trials and tribulations of being Chief, and Link similarly demonstrating his adventures as ‘Hyrule’s last defence’. He excluded the incident with the Guardians this time, however.

On the way back to the palace, so Riju could retrieve Patricia, Link heard the rhythmic footfalls of a patrol and the clinking of metal on metal coming towards them. He attempted to quickly slip the veil back on just as the guards came around the corner of the towns side entrance in front of them.

“They know, Link,” Riju whispered, leaning in to speak to him and pushing his hands back down as the guards passed by and they re-entered the town.

“What?” Link blurted, completely blindsided by this revelation.

“Link … it’s a bit obvious, but you are also kind of androgynous so some we’re giving you the benefit of the doubt. I’m sure they all told you that they would keep your secret,” she turned to raise an eyebrow at him, to which he could only nod, weakly. “This entire town is keeping it a secret, and so, everyone knows.”

[Men are forbidden] Link signed slowly, still unsure if he should be booking it back out of the town or not.

“Yes, they are, but luckily you are a valued friend of mine and you’ve never portrayed yourself as particularly masculine anyway. Admittedly, this whole charade at first was so you could get in to talk to me, I can accept that.” Riju nodded to him once as they passed under an archway into the main town square. “Desperate times and short notice. But since then, you have always respected our customs and our rules, and never once tried to sneak in or sneak anyone else in. Ideally, I’d like to welcome my friend freely as they are in this town. However, one does not simply change millennia’s worth of tradition for a single being and if others outside the town saw you they would start getting
The young Chief stopped in her track and turned to face Link in one fluid motion, bringing him to an abrupt halt as well. She poked him in the chest. “So, the guards will catch you and throw you out as an example to others should you attempt to enter as a voe. Inside these walls, Link, you are a vai. Does that bother you?”

[No]

Link couldn’t fathom why being considered a vai would be a problem, or what the difference was, but he was relieved regardless.

He’d always liked the fact that having typically feminine features here was not seen as something to mock, and none of the Gerudo warriors had seemed to underestimate him or belittle him for his small stature. If he said he was going to do something, they had provided him with the information he needed and wished him luck. Hylian men at the stables, by comparison, would laugh and say he was too weedy or too delicate looking to achieve anything. Link had very nearly smacked one such man around the face with the Master Sword when he had sniggered at the idea that smaller Hylian could have retrieved the legendary sword.

Riju beamed at him.

“Good. However,” Riju suddenly looked shrewd as she leaned towards him again, “just who was it that gave you that outfit? It’s not exactly suitable attire for one with skin as pale as yours; I’m surprised you haven’t already suffered horrendous sunburn. Plus, the idea of someone dressing up a bunch of men in vai outfits to gain entry into the town is … concerning to say the least.”

“It was someone in the Bizarre,” Link answered, a little guilty that he couldn’t remember exactly who it was that had given him the outfit.

“I see. I would advise wearing some more traditionally vai Hylian clothes on your next visit. It wouldn’t do any of us any good if you collapsed of heatstroke but you are always welcome inside Gerudo Town, Link… just don’t let anyone else outside these walls know. You get a pass, but we won’t be extending that benefit of the doubt to just anyone.”

Link nodded.

He was quite sure he wouldn’t give a benefit of the doubt to most of the men he’d met either. His thoughts immediately went to a certain someone who used to continuously jog around the perimeter of the town. Not that he jogged anymore.

Patricia was quite an old sand seal, a gift from Riju’s mother years ago, and she had gained her scars after tackling an irritable electric lizalfio, but she was far faster than any wild sand seal Link could tame.

“What do you want to do, best out of ten?” Riju taunted, as Link surfed to a stop beside her.

“No, I think I’ll just bow down to Patricia’s superiority,” Link answered, his hand occupied holding the rope tied to his tan coloured sand seal. He inclined his head in reverence toward Patricia, getting a honk in response.

The pair of them stepped off their shields to admire the sky turning various colours as the sun set and Link was incredibly grateful for the heat resistance his Desert Voe armour afforded him. A quick
glance at his Sheikah Slate informed him that the temperature had settled around forty five degrees celcius.

*I wonder how the armour prevents my skin burning, there’s certainly enough of it showing,* Link thought ruefully, looking down at his exposed torso and then back round to his pale calves.

“Riju?” Link asked slowly, turning back to look at her as she inclined her head in his direction. “How come you don’t suffer heatstroke?”

Riju started to laugh; it was a small titter at first before it evolved into a hearty guffaw, hands clutching her knees as she doubled over. Link huffed but stood there patiently waiting for her to calm down which she eventually did, back straightening up and wiping tears from her eyes.

“Oh, yes, how does a Gerudo who lives, fights, and dies in the desert become immune to the effects of the sun?”

“I know when you say it like that it sounds obvious, but what do you have that I don’t?”

“A different heritage for starters. While Hylians were of course favoured by Hylia, the Gerudo became favourites of Din, who is known for her strong and fiery nature.” Riju nudged at Link playfully when he rolled his eyes, “and so we are blessed with higher levels of melanin, which soaks up the sun. We also run hotter than Hylians, so our bodies are already naturally inclined to survive in higher temperatures. But we still require water to compensate for the heat just like every other living being.”

The young Chief snorted as she caught sight of Link’s face, whose eyes had gone wide with attentiveness, eager to remember her words, before pouting slightly.

“I just burn,” Link admitted, scratching the back of his neck as if he could feel the phantom pains of burnt skin.

“That I would love to see,” Riju said, smirking as she got back onto her shield.

Buliara, who had been watching the races from the finishing line, had started to come over to them when it became apparent they were not racing anymore. She came to a stop at Riju’s shoulders but her attention was on Link, who had also returned to his sand seal.

“I suggest that if you wish to reach the far end of the desert that you leave now,” the bodyguard suggested, pointing to the building sand storm in the distance in the dimming light. “Delay any longer and that storm will go from being ‘annoying’ to ‘lethal’.”

Link nodded at her advice as he checked to make sure he was once again clipped to his wrangled sand seal, who was snorting into the sand.

“We should do this again, soon. Next time I’ll catch a wild seal too, that should be fun!” Riju had a child-like expression of glee at the idea, while Buliara didn’t look quite so enthused.

The Hylian gave them both the thumbs up, and then tugged at the rope around the snuffling sand seal to start towards the vast expanse of the Gerudo Desert.

Over an hour later and Link was beginning to suspect that he was lost. While he had originally followed the trail of warrior statues to lead him to a Shrine in the north of the desert, he had not discovered any waypoints to get him to the massive skeleton he’d spotted on the map in the west. He’d decided to don the Ancient Armour helmet, to avoid getting sand in his eyes. The desert surroundings were still visible even under the helmet as they were channelled through the blue glass
eye on the front of the helm to a display on the inside. It had taken Link a while to get his eyes to focus on the display and rely on it rather then try to see underneath it. However, it was now proving to be invaluable as he stared into the storm, convinced he should have reached the skeleton already.

*Who knew travelling in a straight line was so difficult.*

His seal did not seem to be particularly bothered, as it continued trudging through the dunes, Link still determinably keeping it going west. Or, at least, what he thought was west. His slate had turned to nothing but disjointed and chaotic shades of blue about twenty minutes ago.

Starting to become a little worried that he had somehow ended up in a magical storm that never ended, in the dark of night no less, his sand seal increased in speed and the gusts of sand became weaker. As the air cleared the gigantic structure of a leviathan skeleton, highlighted by the moon, loomed before him and his Sheikah Slate came alive.

He ignored the incessant beeping of the Slate to release the sand seal and collapse face first into the sand. Static arm be damned.

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Eventually, the beeping became too much to ignore, and he was starting to get cold, the sand beneath him losing any residual heat from the day quickly. So, with great effort, he got back up to his feet and waddled through the sand to reach the Shrine under the skull of the leviathan.

The Hawa Koth Shrine was a series of circuit challenges, all with their own source of electricity and Link had to get creative with some conductive objects to finish the puzzles. Overall, he found it rather fun, and he didn’t get electrocuted once this time. Exiting the Shrine, now donning the Snowquill chest armour and headpiece to keep him warm, the Champion spotted a large, green and tangerine coloured flower bud at the other end of the skeleton.

*Why in Hylia’s name is the fourth Great Fairy in the ass-end of the desert?*!

He swapped out his trousers for the sand boots and leggings before making his way over to the under powered Fairy. He had defeated so many Talus at this point and discovered so many treasure chests that the amount of rupees this Fairy needed didn’t even phase him. He was aware that he had a hoarding habit, but he wouldn’t consider it to be a problem.

The fairy burst out of the pool that unfurled from the closed bulb, stretching sensually with a pleased sound before turning her attention to him. While Link could appreciate that they were attractive, he was more concerned with how predatory they appeared as they eyed him up.

This fairy introduced herself as Tera and had chosen to don attire with an opalescent theme. The various scales and adornments reflected various hues from the shafts of moonlight that peeked though the ribs of the ancient skeleton. It was, quite honestly, dazzling.

“It seems you have already freed all of my sisters, that means I should be able to enhance your clothing to the max!” Tera informed him, graciously.

This was both good news and bad news. The good news was he could now upgrade all of his armour to be as optimal as it could possibly be for his fight into the Castle. The bad news was he still remembered being smothered by many kisses from the last set of upgrades he asked for. He wasn’t sure he wanted to know what this fairy would do on the next level.

*Here goes nothing.*
Link brought out his Ancient Armour to show her, and she responded with what materials and what quantities he would need. Naturally, he had all the materials needed to upgrade the entire set and he was quick to show her this. He was, however, less quick about avoiding the hand that suddenly swung out and grabbed him. Tera cuddled him close before dragging him down into the pool with her and Link would never be able to deny that he emitted a loud scream.

The sensation of being dragged through water at a sudden speed, while not registering any temperature change was a bizarre experience. The slight Hylian was suddenly set down onto a soft surface with great care and Link was able to get his breathing back in order to look around.

He had been transported to a grove surrounded by glowing crystals and large flowers. Above him was the open sky with many stars glittering above him, stars he did not recognise. Sprawled out on a bed of gigantic flowers, each petal being bigger than the length of his arm, he extended a hand to poke at one of the flowers and found it to be quite squishy and yielding under his touch. He retracted his hand.

In the centre of the grove was Tera, who was watching him with a smile on her face as he investigated his surroundings.

“Comfy?”

Link redirected his attention to the massive fairy before him, nodding slowly. He was comfortable but he was still apprehensive as to what she was planning. The caution was necessary as a finger came forward to tilt his chin up before he could dodge it.

“Good.”

The finger turned to trace lightly over his throat before it dragged down to his now bare chest, he noted with sudden alarm. The fairy continued to follow a path down the length of his torso before she reached his, thankfully, clothed crotch.

Link yelped and propelled himself backwards which resulted in him falling into a gap between the flower petals. Tera’s hand quickly withdrew as she leaned forward to see where he had gone. She watched with slight amusement and a bit of concern as the Hylian’s face became visible between the flowers and densely packed ground cover, his ears a bright red and eyes wide. When he spotted how close she was to him again he ducked back under the cover the petals afforded him.

“It’s alright, I won’t hurt you.”

She went to pry the flowers apart to pick him back out again but he was following the path of her fingers warily and crossing his legs, knees up to his chest as his face blushed furiously. She pulled her hand back again and instead leaned down closer so she could speak to him quietly.

“I’m sorry, the men that have found me before were usually very receptive. I assumed you … hmm.” She leaned back again to give Link some space, “fear not I won’t touch you again unless you want me to.”

The Champion slowly hauled himself back onto a sturdy flower and settled himself before watching Tera’s face. She didn’t seem to be lying.

“Why are Great Fairies so handsy?”

Tera gave a giggle that sounded like wind chimes.

“We require the subjects of our magic to be pleased, it fuels our kind, and the easiest way to achieve
satisfaction for ourselves and our subjects in the past has been to…well.” She inclined her head to one side with a small shrug and pointed up and down the length of his body. “It’s worked well so far.”

Link relaxed marginally, scratching the back of his head, “Oh. Well, I’m not particularly … inclined to that I’m afraid.”

He shrugged, hoping he wouldn’t have to explain himself further as he has had to in the past to some very insistent parties that were interested in him for some unfathomable reason. This Fairy, however, simply shook her head and her confident smile was back.

“That’s fine, I’m sure there are other ways I can satisfy you.”

Link was about to congratulate himself on his continued paranoia about Great Fairies wanting to eat him until Tera clicked her fingers and a cup of tea appeared next to him accompanied by a plate of skewers and various bowls of fruit.

“Let’s eat and have a chat then shall we. Us Fairies do love a good story or a light hearted bitching session.”

His opinion did an immediate turn a round.

_I love Great Fairies._

_Last Stop… Zora’s Domain_

Chapter End Notes

Here is where sign language is important 1) to cover for his masculine sounding voice, 2) the Gerudo understand Hyrulian sign language. Gorons and Rito cant make the hand signs. Also his concept of gender is :shrug emoji: he has a job to do why does it matter how he interprets himself.

Has anyone else noticed how the majority the Hylian NPCs tend to be quite rude to Link? Also before anyone asks, no there is no wood carver Gerudo called Marseq, I made her up just to introduce the idea of mulching…

As for the Great Fairies, you can’t tell me they would not love an excuse to bring out the tea and biscuits to discuss various juicy goings on from the world of mortals. Link eventually just falls asleep in this place outside of time while the Great Fairies upgrade all of his stuff with the materials he has.
Smug was definitely the emotion Link was feeling as he strolled up the winding route to Zora’s Domain, the Thunder Helm perched on his head.

*And to think this journey used to be a struggle*, Link mused as he ignored the shock arrows whizzing over his head. *Ah, the early days.*

Prince Sidon had affectionately called the first days Link experienced after his one hundred year coma as his ‘hatchling phase’.

“If a hatchling managed to calm Vah Ruta … what does that so about you?”

“You wound me, my dear friend. But see how much you’ve grown since then, and I thought you were extremely impressive before!”

Link was still trying to bring Sidon around to the idea of friendly ribbing. However, the giant shark man couldn’t seem to help himself, and whenever he did manage to make a depreciative comment towards Link he felt compelled to immediately follow it up with positivity. The Zora was far too good for this Kingdom.

The Hylian Champion had already completed the Shrines in this region at the very beginning of his adventure, bar one. Back when he wasn’t quite so confident in exploring the wilds as spontaneously as he does now, the Domain had been his safe space. After he had defeated a new and particularly gruelling monster, he would often travel back to the Zora’s home just to speak with people who knew him. Not just people claiming to know what he was but who he was; they had memories of him from when he was a child. The Zora here knew what he was like as a person, before he was hindered with the responsibilities of a Champion and being the wielder of the Master Sword. Link thought that was a truer reflection of himself than the snippets of memories he recovered from the Slate images.

Ironically, it was Sidon, who knew the least about him, whom Link had found a stronger friendship with. Perhaps it was better this way, as the Prince had no prior preconceptions of Link and had made his opinions based on what he saw himself. Despite being the brother of the one Link was intended to marry.

*Was I to marry her?*

Exploring this new line of thought, he recalled that King Dorephan had known of Mipha’s intentions as did Sidon. Mipha had no doubt asked her father for advice and her brother had apparently been very nosy as a child.

*But was I aware of it?* Link asked himself, puncturing an Octoroc ahead of him with a perfect arrow before he could be targeted. *Did I have any idea that Mipha was intending to ask me? Would I have said yes?*

He would like to believe that he would have said yes. He had clearly been close to the Zora Princess, and from the few memories he had of her she seemed to be a kind and incredibly fair person. Link considered himself extremely lucky to have had a friend like her. However, he had the strong suspicion that his dedication to the Princess of Hyrule, which had carried over to this era, may not
have been solely duty related. Kass’ parting song to him had only confirmed his suspicions and had made him both parts elated and guilty.

*I really hope I wasn’t a bastard about it.*

If he could assume that his personality of one hundred years ago was the same as the personality he had now, he could easily imagine that he would have had a soft spot for the both of them. Therefore, in an effort to avoid either being hurt, he would have made no advances toward either of them. Plus, they were both Royalty.

*King Dorephan didn’t seem to mind though, he actually seemed pleased about the idea.*

Looking down at the Zora Armour he was wearing, running a hand down the side of the material, he admired the impossibly small scales melded together to form the main body, and the larger silver scales that ran over his shoulders and back. It was beautiful and fit him perfectly, he could only imagine how long it must have taken her to make. Link decided that had Mipha presented it to him now, he would have had a hard time not saying ‘yes’.

Closing the lid on that concluded string of thoughts, the small Hylian eventually stepped onto the opalescent, smooth stone bridge leading into the heart of Zora’s Domain. Link removed the Thunder Helm and watched it breakdown into streams of blue light as it was sucked back into the Slate before he selected the Zora Helm to replace it. Mipha’s trident had been left back in his house in Hateno where he knew it would be safe. Karson seemed to favour the tree outside the front of his house and made sure no-one even thought about breaking in.

He passed Rivan and his daughter, Dunma, by the south entrance, waving to them both as he approached. The older Zora beamed at him only to be scolded by his daughter for his unprofessionalism, which caused the dark Zora to sulk. After his daughter had finished her reprimand, he snuck a glance back at Link who walked backwards to sign [Later]. This seemed to appease Rivan who set his gaze forward once again, his daughter none the wiser.

Walking into the Domain, heading for the statue of Mipha, Link surreptitiously scoped out the area trying to locate a very large, red Prince. A task that did not tend to be very difficult. Said Prince, however, had already seen Link walking along the bridge and was now leaning over the edge of the balcony in front of the Throne Room.

“Up here, Link!”

The Hylian looked up at the shout to see Sidon leaning over the railing, a wide, excited grin taking up most of the space on the handsome Zora’s face, before he pushed himself away from the edge to jog over the west staircase. Link met the giant shark Zora halfway as he leapt up the stairs to be scooped up and lifted from the ground into a strong hug. With both of their faces smushed up against each other neither noticed Muzu walking down the stairs after Sidon, shaking his head in despair.

“Prince Sidon! Please control yourself, and you!” The Zora Elder shouted, pointing an accusatory finger at Link, “stop encouraging his bad habits. I won’t have you leading both Royal children astray.”

As Link opened his mouth to deny any accusation that this was at all his intention, a bellowing laugh reached them on the stairs.

“You’re wasting your time, Muzu!”

King Dorephan had clearly heard the manta Zora’s disapproval and only found the situation
amusing. Obviously, he recognised there was no curbing his son’s rather eccentric and overly exuberant nature.

“Indeed, does my happiness at seeing an old friend offend you, dear Muzu?” Sidon asked, shifting Link until the small Hylian sat atop his left shoulder.

“Yes! Yes, it does,” Muzu answered, exasperated, “let me be old and grumpy in peace, honestly!”

Muzu made a shooing motion at the pair of them so he could continue to walk down the stairs, still muttering under his breath.

“Well, my friend,” Sidon addressed Link, still perched on his shoulder, “now that we’ve thoroughly disturbed the peace, how about we go for a walk and catch up? It’s been a long time since I’ve seen you and no doubt you have some wonderful stories to tell!”

Link grinned making a so-so motion with his right hand while he leant back on his left but he noticed that Sidon was now staring cross-eyed and quizzically at his moving hand.

“Link, what happened to your hand?”

The Hylian froze. He had almost forgotten.

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Link had managed to hold off Sidon’s curiosity until they had walked some way away from the heart of the Domain. They waded into the lake at the base of the Veiled Falls and Link hopped up onto a large rock to sit and face the Prince. Once he was comfy, Link removed all of his armour leaving only his under-shorts and Sidon was able to clearly see his right arm.

The screech the Prince emitted was probably still heard by fellow Zora in the Domain and the nearby fauna scattered into the water or flew away in a flurry of feathers.

“YOUR ARM! LINK, HOW DID THIS HAPPEN TO YOU?! WHAT, WHY-“

With his eyes closed at the sudden explosion of sound and wincing against the volume, Link was unable to see Sidon flounder into silence as words abandoned him. He did, however, feel a very strong grip by a clawed hand on his left shoulder and he could feel the weight of Sidon’s hold on his right.

“Link.”

The Champion opened his eyes cautiously, his vision completely filled by a fretting Zora Prince. With both of his hands, Link gently patted Sidon’s forearms for him to let go and then indicated the space on the rock next to him.

“Sit down and I’ll tell you.”

Once the Prince had sat down obediently, like a child at story-time, the small Hylian divulged the story of his encounter with not one but two Guardians at the same time. Back when he was less Guardian destruction savvy. Once he was finished, Link predictably found that all of his energy from meeting Sidon had now drained from him.

“I see.”

The Prince settled into a thoughtful pose, facing forward as he gazed blankly ahead of him. When he
reached a conclusion to his thoughts, he turned to his Hylian friend.

“I take it you have not encountered similar Guardian troubles since?”

Blonde hair swished wildly as Link shook his head.

“And you are now better prepared for such confrontations?”

A nod this time.

Sidon clapped his hands once in approval, “then the only thing that can be done here is to take this as a learning experience. A rather harsh one, yes, but you were lucky enough to grow from this encounter and even improve your situation, perhaps?”

As Sidon clicked a claw against the slate-like surface of the inorganic limb and Link responded with an enthusiastic nod.

“Then once again, I can only be impressed with your perseverance and recovery!”

The Prince spread his arms wide in his signature motion for congratulations, while Link ducked his head, ears burning.

They continued to talk, with small Hylian’s clothes back on, discussing orders of business within the Domain, before their chat took a more personal turn. Sidon was hitting the age where suitors were becoming bolder in their intentions, and Link could only extend a sympathetic arm in response while the Zora deflated. King Dorephan was keeping out of his son’s business by the sounds of it, but the occasional suggestive comment was making Sidon want to crawl under a rock and stay there.

“I should just say I eloped with you. You have a lake by your house don’t you? I could just live there.”

Sidon was laughing to show he was joking but the subject had veered onto a track of thought Link had been subconsciously struggling with for a while. The lid he had closed earlier that day was re-opened, and now that Link was forced to examine the contents again the feeling of unease was back. He butted the side of his head against Sidon’s arm as he heaved a huge sigh, his shoulders dropping in defeat.

[I’m falling in love with Princess Zelda] He signed the letter ‘Z’ in place of ‘Zelda’, and winced as he shuffled against the Prince’s side to turn sideways and look at Mipha’s statue in the centre of Zora’s Domain. [But, I think I still love Mipha]

The Champion of Hyrule spelled out her name for Sidon, before following it up with the same motion that the Zora Princess had made with her hands to send Link her healing grace. He held his hands out before him for a moment before twisting forward again and burying his face in his hands.

If the Prince thought this was a sudden jump in the conversation he made no comment on it.

“This is … a problem?” Sidon asked, genuine confusion colouring his voice.

[Is it not?] Link asked, resurfacing from his palms so he could use his hands, a truly miserable and troubled expression on his face. [I thought you could only love one person at a time]

“Oh,” Sidon responded, sounding surprised. “Well, while I cannot speak for Princess Zelda, I doubt your situation would have been a problem from Mipha’s point of view. Polyamory is very common among the Zora.”
The blonde Hylian rolled his head back to look up at Sidon.

“What?”

“Mipha only wished for you to be happy,” Sidon said, emphatically. “The fact that you returned her love and wished the same happiness for her would have brought her great joy. But, if it would have made you uncomfortable being able to only love the one of them, I’m sure Mipha would have encouraged you to say something to Princess Zelda also. One cannot often help who they develop feelings for. You, of course, do not remember or perhaps you never knew, but the two were close friends. Both being Princesses of neighbouring regions and similar in growth stages they were often encouraged to socialise; less so once duties to their Kingdoms became an all absorbing factor. In their younger years, however, they drew great strengths from their companionship. Mipha’s spirit will not resent you for the way you have developed as a person, Link. She cared for you far too much for that.”

Sidon patted Link on the back delicately while the Hylian stared up at him, mouth open.

“Do you feel better?”

Link began to nod slowly before picking up in speed and signing out [Thank you] as his eyes became very watery and his jaw clenched shut.

“You are very welcome, my most treasured friend.”

Eventually, Link remembered why he was in the Domain. He loved Sidon, but he had a mission and he was currently on one hundred and nineteen shrines. There was a feeling that the Shrine he had left, by Veiled Falls, was the last one he needed. He just needed to find the damn Trident.

“You said he dropped it off the bridge?”

Link nodded as Sidon peered over the railing of the west bridge, down to the dark waters below. The Hylian had no chance of being able to find the Ceremonial Trident in the depths of those waters; his lung capacity was just abysmal. Sidon had offered to dive down and retrieve it for him, but Link argued that it could have been washed downstream by now. The excess currents caused by Vah Ruta’s rage would have dislodged it from the river bed and swept it off who knew where. Sidon could be looking for days.

The pair asked Gruve if he had spotted the ceremonial piece at any point during his diving ventures, but the blue Zora had been sad to say he hadn’t. So, they returned to the bridge to peer out over the water once more.

“If these Shrines were made over ten thousand years ago, why does this one need a trident that was made in the last century?”

Sidon agreed that Link made a good observation but pointed out that the Ceremonial Trident was based on Mipha’s Lightscale.

“It’s a weapon that once belonged to my mother in her youth, and her mother before her. Indeed, the Champion’s Festival is held at Veiled Falls due to that location’s history for various celebrations that utilise the pedestal there. As such, the Lightscale has always stayed with the Zora Princess who would lead the ceremonies,” Sidon informed his companion, a fond smile on his features as he reminisced on his people’s history.
“I’ll keep it safe until you have a daughter then, huh?” Link said, grinning a little too hard as Sidon choked in response.

The Champion could have just collected said Lightscale Trident from his house, and tried his luck with that but the Ceremonial version was clearly mocking him, wherever it was. He was determined to find it, not just because this was the final shrine but because the Zora’s needed it for their festival too. The Hylian also had the sneaking suspicion that the Monks were acutely aware of current events and changed the conditions needed to gain entry to the shrines to provide an extra challenge.

Just as Link was ready to take a swim all the way back down the river, Sidon tapped him gently on the shoulder. Link turned around and saw that Sidon looked unusually hesitant.

“I do not wish to infer that I doubt your intelligence, but the Trident is made of metal. Don’t you have the ability to find metal objects on that device of yours?” Sidon gestured to his friend’s hip with a solitary claw.

Link stared at the tentatively smiling Prince for several seconds, before leaning heavily against the bridge railing to stare at the river for yet more seconds, before he finally sagged to the floor.

*Of course. Magnesis.*

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After diving down to the waters below, and standing on the rocky base of the Domain, Link was able to locate a glowing trident shape in the water. He grabbed it and hauled it up to the surface where Sidon was able to confirm that it was in fact the Ceremonial Trident.

Relieved to finally have the weapon physically in his hands Link raced back up to the Veiled Falls, Sidon just managing to keep up with him. Now, the pair encountered another problem. Simply stabbing the orange glowing pedestal had done nothing, and Sidon allowed himself a moment to watch his friend repeatedly poke at the pedestal with the Trident from various angles before he mentioned it had to be done from a height.

“Oh, *now* you understand teasing.”

The next half an hour was spent launching Link into the air. Either the small Hylian jumped off from Sidon’s shoulders or the Prince threw his friend up. But even after landing several bull’s-eyes, Trident prongs very firmly in the centre of the pedestal, it still refused to light up blue.

*I have to jump off the waterfall, don’t I?*

While the height was not that intimidating, Link knew that jumping clean off it would hurt, especially landing on the hard and unforgiving pedestal. He would need to paraglide after a jump and then strike down with the Trident. He had made trickier shots before.

With a shrug, the Zora armour wearing Hylian charged up the waterfall and jettisoned himself into the air from the top. Flicking out the paraglider with a practiced motion, Link slowly steered himself over the rippling orange glow. He could see Sidon, out of the corner of his eye, waiting below him, his tail fin flicking back and forth in anticipation. When he was just behind the centre of the pedestal, Link collapsed the glider and swung the Ceremonial Trident from his back to bear it straight down.

The centre prong of the Trident rested directly in the centre of the ancient target beneath the water, and the Champion of Hyrule was rewarded by a blue glow.

Sidon was cheering loudly as Link fell to his knees and threw his arms up in joy, ignoring the
rumbling as the last Shrine in the kingdom unearthed itself by the side of the lake.

When Link finally got himself back to his feet he found Sidon eagerly inspecting the new structure that had appeared, tapping at the outer hull with his claws and peering at the writing on the closed off entry way. The Slate was placed against the Shrine reader with a clink and Link watched Sidon as the entry way opened up before them. The Prince looked absolutely enthralled.

*I’ll have to bring the Princess to meet him; they can get excited about this together.*

“I’ll only be gone a couple of minutes. Usually Shrines activated after a challenge will just have a Monk’s Blessing inside, and if this is the last one, that means no more traps or puzzles for me.” Link explained it with an air of cheeriness but he found that he was a little disappointed on the inside. He’d discovered that he quite enjoyed a good challenge.

With a small wave, Link disappeared down into the Shrine. Five minutes later, Link returned, noting that Sidon had not moved from his spot directly in front the entrance. He approached the patiently waiting shark Zora and flipped him a thumbs up, a smile accompanying the gesture.

“Are you all finished?” Sidon bent down to place his hands on Link’s shoulders, “I have no words for how impressed I am with you. You had to endure many trials, travel great distances, and exhibit such dedication to completing this goal. I really cannot … I’m getting embarrassing now, yes?”

Link nodded a little weakly, arms kept straight and rigid by his sides as he stood there uncomfortably.

“I recognise that you did this for a noble cause. I doubt there are many more noble quests than trying to save a Princess from a century of imprisonment, but … please, take a moment to be proud of yourself.”

Sidon looked at his friend imploringly, desperate for him to come to terms with the fact that these quests were not for those of an average calibre. Many times the Prince had watched his small friend simply brush off some of his most impressive feats, as if they were not worthy of note. Granted, such tasks had now become the norm for the blonde Hylian, which is why Sidon insisted on reminding him of how appreciated he was and how much he valued the Champion.

Link, as always, merely cocked his head to the side and then nodded in vague agreement. It was never that Link didn’t realise just how demanding his tasks were, or how he always seemed to be the only person that could do it. It was just that Link didn’t want to acknowledge how he was being singled out for these quests. He was just a regular blooded Hylian, and he would not be around forever. If people believed that the only reason he could do the things he did was because he was somehow ‘different’ or ‘special’, then no-one else would believe it possible for them to do the same. Admittedly, there were some things Link did that he didn’t want anyone else repeating, but overall, his skills came from experience and training.

As he put his hands on top of Sidon’s to gently remove them from his shoulders, he was once again unsure of how best to explain himself. So, he said nothing.

Concealing a small sigh through his gills the Prince decided to change the subject.

“Did the Monks have anything for you? You said there might be some sort of event to mark the completion of all the shrines?”

Clicking his fingers, Link recalled the message he received from the Monk in the Dagah Keek Shrine

[**I must go to the Forgotten Temple. They have something for me there**]
“I’ll wait here for you, my friend,” Sidon announced, forming determined fists in front of chest.

[It will take some time] Link signed, looking unsure.

“I shall be here when you return. The view up here is wonderful and I never truly get a chance to appreciate it from this view.” The Prince made a sweeping gesture with one arm at the returning wildlife and rain polished stone all around them that seemed to shift in colour from the sun.

The Hylian shook his head fondly before giving him the ‘ok’ signal and tapping the Sheikah Slate for the Forgotten Temple shrine.

Sidon stood there, waiting for his friend to return while he watched frogs start to sing at the edges of the water, herons walk carefully across the water logged grass, and listened to the wind blow in between the shard like edges of the cliffs.

He was admiring nature for about half an hour before he heard the whirring chime of Link materialising on the shrine platform behind him. Sidon turned around to face his friend but immediately took a couple of steps back as the small Hylian leapt off the shrine and splashed into the water in front of him.

“Look! Shorts!”

Link proceeded to then kick around in the water, his legs bare except for his leather boots and a pair of dark blue shorts that could be seen just past the end of the Champion’s Tunic. Once again, nature was disturbed as the frogs stopped singing and swam for cover while the herons took flight to escape the energetic blonde.

When Sidon finally gathered himself enough to take a hold of Link before he jettisoned himself off the cliff edge in his excitement, the Hylian was grinning but soaking wet. He explained that upon visiting the Goddess statue in the Forgotten Temple he was gifted with a green outfit that was referred to as clothes for the Hero of the Wild.

“Apparently, my past incarnations wore outfits similar to the one given to me, but…” Link pulled at his tunic, which was sticking to him, “I’ve grown quite attached to this. So, I’m debating the hat and keeping the shorts on.”

He stuck a leg out to revel in the feeling of freedom that came with having uncovered legs, before frowning.

“I did feel a bit guilty dying it blue though.”

Sidon observed his friend, realising that seeing Link so happy was quite a pleasing sight and felt honoured that the Champion was comfortable enough around him to be so emotive. However, there was something else that caught Sidon’s attention.

“My dear friend, I don’t mean to criticise the way you dress, but I can’t help but notice that you are gradually wearing less and less.”

The shirt that used to be worn under the blue tunic was nowhere to be seen, leaving his arms open to the elements, except for the wrapping and arm guard on his left forearm. His Shiekah built right arm clearly visible.

“Are you eventually going to arrive in our Domain in nothing but your under-shorts?”

“Why stop there? Also, you,” Link wiggled a finger up and down to indicate the appearance of the
Zora Prince, “have no room to talk.”

“Link, please.”

Chapter End Notes

Terminating at Zora’s Domain sounded so sinister, but it just means that Link’s shrine hunting quest has finally come to an end. This man is ready for a barbeque at Hyrule Castle folks.

I’d really appreciate it if people could let me know if they are enjoying this series so far and hopefully I’ll have Storming the Castle up before the end of the month. Any feedback would really help me as a creator so I can translate my ideas into a better format for people to enjoy, cheers!

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!