Offspring

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Summary

(Link x Mipha) - Divine Beast Vah Ruta is causing trouble in eastern Lanayru, and the Zoras need Link's help. After a century away in the Shrine of Resurrection, Link remembers nothing about the Zoras, and upon reaching the Domain, he is certain he's had nothing to do with them. That all changes, though, when two mysterious Zora women approach him, claiming to be his daughters.
Link reached for his face and brushed the water from his eyes for the umpteenth time in the last half an hour. He was completely soaked, his blue tunic and old Hylian pants clinging to his flesh like cold glue. His hair drooped stubbornly over his forehead, channeling the moisture on his head down onto his face even further. He did not shiver however, for he was quite used to being stuck in conditions like this. Rain was a normal feature of the weather in eastern Hyrule.

However, Link had surely not expected the rain to be this relentless. As soon as he had approached the Soh Kofi shrine at the mouth of the Zora River, a brutal, pounding rain had rapidly appeared to drown out the warm sun. It had taken him by surprise, he had to admit, and now he was trudging along the scarcely-marked pathway of the Zodobon Highlands on his way to Zora’s Domain, covered in his own weight’s worth of water. It had been like this for the last hour or two, and it still showed no signs of letting up. Would it ever?

Just earlier on Inogo Bridge, Link had been greeted by a mysterious Zora with a shark for a head, bearing a toned figure and a very straight smile. He went by the name of “Prince Sidon,” and he stood to be about twice Link’s height. Upon meeting this friendly figure, Link had been asked to travel to Zora’s Domain and provide assistance to the natives. Apparently, their ailment had something to do with all the rain, but Link was not given the specifics. All he knew was that the situation was dire, and that it might have something to do with a Divine Beast. After all, the Divine Beasts were his main goal, at least from what he had heard from Impa.

Link remembered a few minor things about the Zora people after leaving the Shrine of Resurrection, but much of his memory of them was still missing. He knew enough, at least, to be able to recognize Sidon as a Zora upon seeing him for the first time, and also that he thrived in water with the rest of his people. Beyond that, he was clueless. It made his adventure exciting, but it also kept him constantly on edge.

The mute hero’s boots were squishing like sponges by the time he reached what appeared to be a long, straight bridge. The bridge looked almost exactly like Inogo Bridge from a while earlier, but it was much longer, and it traversed a massive drop with a running river below. It almost seemed to glow with its smooth, eye-popping turquoise stone. According to the sheikah slate, it was called “Luto’s Crossing.”

The bridge, however, paled in comparison to the majesty of the rest of the Zoras’ architecture. As Link jogged ever onward across the bridge, Zora’s Domain became visible on the horizon to his left, through a gap in the surrounding cliffs, eclipsing a mighty waterfall of at least a hundred stories. The grand city, complete with only one large structure standing proudly above the water below, acted as a perfect compliment to its surroundings, with a matching turquoise color that seemed to shine life into the current, dead state of Hyrule. It appeared to Link as a warm, rejuvenating beacon to stand against the bitter rain and wind that soaked the landscape and tugged at his clothes. The wonders that awaited him there would surely make his trek through the soggy riverbanks worth the while.
“Hey, Link! Down here!” A voice called.

Link’s mind returned to the present as he heard the familiar voice call from far below in the waters of the river. He promptly stopped walking and turned toward the bridge’s side railing so he could address his visitor. Treading water in the river at the bottom of the chasm, in confirmation of Link’s suspicion, was Prince Sidon.

“I had a feeling you’d cross this bridge, so I came here to wait for you!” The Zora prince called up. “I wanted to alert you that you’re nearing Zora’s Domain. It’s just ahead along the wavy path. I shall swim ahead and meet you there!”

Something about that prince had been bothering Link. The déjà vu he had was very strong, but it was not enough for him to remember anything in his confused state. The way the Zora spoke and the way he composed himself reminded him of something… someone… but it was not coming to him. Perhaps, he thought, he’d be able to remember more details upon reaching the Domain and speaking to the natives. After all, it had taken less to jog his memory before.

Their meeting drew to a close when Sidon warned the hero of a Moblin sneaking up behind him on the bridge. Link looked over his shoulder to confirm the prince’s warning and drew his sword, spotting the large blue creature and its oversized club. A little more exercise couldn’t hurt, he thought, despite all the walking he had already been doing. Moblins, to someone as experienced as Link, were basically chew toys.

A short time later, after steamrolling his way through several more enemies along his path, Link was just beginning to reach the Great Zora Bridge at the entrance of the Domain. The electric wizzrobe had been a special challenge to him, since the constant rain had given the prancing thing an advantage. Electricity and water just… didn’t mix very well. The deed was finally done, though, and now Link stood before the most majestic settlement he had seen on his journey so far. He stopped on the small island before the bridge so he could quickly catch his breath, wiped more rainwater from his eyes, and stepped forward to begin crossing the bridge.

Suddenly, the very ground beneath him shook as a powerful and deafening roar exploded outwards from one of the nearby mountaintops. Link quickly widened his stance in order to maintain his balance as the vibrations were sent up his shins. In East Reservoir Lake, to the southeast of the Domain, a giant, mechanical monstrosity resembling an elephant stomped its massive legs and thrashed its trunk around, throwing water over the edges of the mountain and further contributing to the torrential rainfall plaguing the region. Ongoing streams of water jetted from the tip of the machine’s trunk. It would seem Link had found the Zoras’ problem.

On the other side of the bridge, Link was greeted by two Zora guards, each standing much taller than him with a spear in their scaly hands. They both stared directly at Link as he approached the entrance of the Domain, but despite the weapons and gear on his back, they oddly didn’t seem threatened by him. As he ascended the stairs onto the main platform of the Domain, they calmly watched him pass without priming their spears. He figured Prince Sidon must’ve informed them of his arrival.

Link gazed ahead of him at the landscape of Zora’s Domain. The calming, turquoise shade of the large structure’s chiseled stone filled his eyes from all directions, a complement to the
deeper, purplish hue spanning the surrounding cliff rocks. All was quiet in the Domain, save for the constant, droning hum of mist from the waterfalls all around the area. There didn’t seem to be much conversation or positive energy coming from the Zora natives, which Link assumed was because of the looming threat of the giant elephant monster sitting in East Reservoir Lake.

Before he had time to take in more of his environment, Prince Sidon once again caught his eye, the royal Zora’s red skin hue contrasting sharply to the Domain’s enveloping blue. The prince was jogging quickly towards Link from the left flight of stairs, looking rather exuberant. Ironically, even that seemed to contrast the rest of the Domain.

“Link, I’m so glad you’re here! You’re not a moment too soon, my friend. Come, I must introduce you to the king!” He beamed, taking Link’s hand. He turned back toward the stairs, practically pulling Link along behind him.

Link struggled to keep up with Sidon’s pace as he rushed up the stairs to the king’s chamber, his legs awkwardly tripping up the steps several times. On his way up, he glanced inward toward the rest of the Domain’s plaza, where several other Zoras could be seen going about their business, almost…lifelessly. Two of them, both female, he noticed, were standing at the foot of a large, elegant statue, holding hands. The statue was made of the same stone as the rest of the Domain, and it appeared to resemble another Zora, posed in an authoritative position with a downward-pointing spear. Who could the statue be commemorating?

Just before Sidon pulled him to the top of the stairs and out of the plaza’s view, one of the two Zoras standing by the statue seemed to look up at Link with a curious look on her face. She nudged the other Zora in the shoulder, causing her to also look up in Link’s direction. Link stared back down at the loitering duo, taking notice of their obvious interest in him. Something didn’t quite sit right with it in his head.

He was forced to shove the thoughts from his mind, however, when he suddenly found himself in the chamber of the Zora king, facing the giant entity on his throne. Sidon finally released his...eager grip on Link’s hand and walked over to the king’s side, where he stopped to turn and face Link. On the king’s other side, standing with his arms behind his back and an angry-looking glare on his face, was an elderly olive-green Zora with a head resembling a stingray. Link chose to ignore him for the moment, and instead looked up at the king, who in turn studied him closely after seeing him enter the chamber with Sidon.

“Ah, so this must be the Hylian you’ve been seeking.” He uttered in his deep, booming voice, cracking a calm smile. “You’ve done well to make it here! My name is King Dorephan. Tell me, who ar-”

He paused suddenly, taking an even closer look at Link. Link glanced over at Sidon, slightly uncomfortable of his visual judgement. Sidon nonchalantly flashed him a thumbs-up.

After rubbing his chin for a moment, the king broke into a hearty chuckle. “Ahh, yes, that object on your hip. It is the fabled sheikah slate, is it not?” He paused for another short moment while Link looked down at the thing dangling from his belt. “Yes, it is all too clear who you are now. You’re Link, the Hylian Champion!”

Sidon’s jaw dropped. “Wait...Champion Link? The Link from a hundred years ago?” He shook his head in disbelief. “No wonder your name seemed so familiar! What a remarkable
As the minutes went by, Link was starting to think that his calling to this place was, in fact, not a coincidence. Half the Zoras in the town seemed to know who he was, and it was starting to creep him out considerably. He had no recollection of them himself, so seeing such familiar…and mixed…reactions from everyone was not doing his confusion any favors. The stingray Zora to his left was probably the least comforting of them all, as his seemingly-unwarranted death glare was eating holes in Link’s psyche, and he didn’t even have a clue what was wrong.

The king continued addressing the flustered Hylian visitor. “Link, you remember me, don’t you?”

Link was quick to shake his head, causing the king to sit back thoughtfully in his throne. He hummed in understanding. “Well…surely you must remember my precious daughter, Mipha? You two were so close back then.”

Again, Link shook his head. He took a moment to think upon the king’s question, though, but no one came to mind when he tried to recall. The name “Mipha” might’ve sounded slightly familiar to the amnesiac hero, but as with seeing Sidon, the spark it generated was far too weak to rekindle his memory. Regardless, Link had no doubt in his mind that his involvement with Zora’s Domain had been substantial. The evidence was clear in nearly every Zora he had interacted with so far.

“I see…” King Dorephan mumbled, rubbing his chin again. “…so it would seem gazing upon Mipha’s immortalized form out in the plaza was not enough to remind you.”

Ah, so the statue out in the plaza was apparently modeled after Mipha. Link made the connection that she must’ve been a brave warrior who died in battle, the revealing clue having been the spear seen in the statue’s pose. Mipha’s princess status also explained the excessive amounts of decorative adornments appearing on her figure in the stone depiction. The two Zoras staring at the statue earlier still confused him, however, since that statue had supposedly been there in the plaza for many years, and everyone had already seen it plenty of times before. What about it had had them so interested?

“Well then…” The king shrugged. “…perhaps you will retrieve your memory in due time. For now, though, I must ask that you hear my plea.” Link glanced to his left in time to see the stingray Zora scowl bitterly at this sentence. The king continued. “Divine Beast Vah Ruta, situated in the East Reservoir as we speak, has our fair Domain in danger of destruction. It spews water relentlessly, causing these unstoppable rains. At the rate it’s going, the reservoir will overflow and flood the continent before long.”

Link nodded in understanding at the king’s words. Apparently, the giant beast that had roared earlier on the mountain was known as “Vah Ruta.” In addition, Vah Ruta was apparently the culprit of the Domain’s collective agony and lifelessness. Being a water-dwelling species, Link figured the Zora would’ve liked rain, but admittedly, constant fear of extinction wasn’t exactly a favorable condition to be in.

The king, reaching the end of his exposition, finally stated the reason for summoning Link to the Domain in the first place. “Young hero…I, a species terribly vulnerable to the power of electricity, cannot stop this beast alone. Therefore, I ask humbly for you to lend us your strength.”
Link wasn’t sure if the king had more to say or not, but no more could be said by him as the stingray Zora standing to the side finally ended his own silence by cutting in angrily. “King Dorephan, my liege, you mustn’t speak so! You simply cannot resort to asking the likes of him for help in this hour!”

The king brought a hand up to his forehead, shaking his head tiredly. The gesture put Link under the impression that this agitated character of a Zora had been a recurring problem for the king. “Muzu, I really thought this wasn’t going to be a problem today.”

Muzu, as his name apparently was, clenched his fists. “And under normal circumstances it wouldn’t be, my liege, but you see, siding with Hylians is something I can forgive.” He extended his arm and pointed a bony finger at Link. “This man, however, shouldn’t have even returned to our Domain, let alone been asked for partnership!” He growled in his judgmental, raspy voice. “Have you forgotten what he did to dear Mipha?!”

The king became visibly aggravated. “Muzu, lower your voice! Calm yourself!” Muzu’s words had put a terrified expression on Link’s face, but it had gone unnoticed by the king. “Link had only good intentions with my daughter! You know the rest was left to fate! I order you to banish your prejudices!”

Without another word, nor an acknowledgement of the king’s words, Muzu turned around and stormed out of the chamber. Prince Sidon and the king watched with disappointment as the upset elder descended the grand staircase and exited their sight. An awkward silence ensued among the remaining three chamber occupants.

Prince Sidon scratched the back of his neck through the silver collar. “He, um…he was the only one who knew where to find shock arrows…”

King Dorephan sighed, the sound of exhaustion present in his tone. “There is no reason to worry. We’ll give him some time to cool down, and then we’ll consult him again.”

Link shook his head in response to this. He dug around in his adventure pack and, after a few seconds, pulled out a bundle of shock arrows for the king and the prince to see. A look of relief appeared on the two onlookers’ faces.

“Oh, it would appear you’re already prepared, then.” The king chuckled. “Splendid. What you’ll need to do next is…wait, where are you going?”

Before he could finish speaking, Link had followed in Muzu’s footsteps by turning around and walking out of the chamber, leaving the stunned royal duo behind to stare on in confusion. Muzu’s words had been the final nail in the coffin for Link’s boggled mind, and now, he was too mentally contorted to be able to focus on shutting down Vah Ruta’s waterflow. Zora’s Domain had already lasted this long with all the rainfall, so he knew it would be able to hold out at least a few more days while he tried to sort this mess out. Tensions were obviously still high in many places, so he needed to figure out what had happened a hundred years ago with the Zora princess before he put his hand forward to further entwine himself with the aquatic people.
After reaching the bottom of the stairs, Link stumbled his way over to the inn that was built into the left edge of the Domain. Buried in an overcast room directly below the king’s chamber, the orange glow of an uncharted shrine caught the hero’s eye, but he deliberately chose to ignore it. It was honestly the last thing he wanted to think about at the moment.

Behind the front desk of the modest inn, next to a small bookshelf chiseled into the wall, a tall, worn-out-looking Zora with a deep blue hue stared out the glassless window. Upon turning and seeing Link walk into the little room, his face seemed to light up.

“Oh wow, look who it is! I didn’t think I’d ever see you around here again, to be honest!” The Zora beamed.

The innkeeper’s happiness only added to Link’s confusion and discomfort. With a look of fright and unease, he silently handed the smiling Zora twenty rupees for a standard bed before leaving the desk and heading to one of the beds. The innkeeper seemed to notice Link’s troubled expression, but he decided not to question it. After all, heroes had much bigger problems than a lowly businessowner like himself could understand, right?

All the beds were vacant, so Link chose the one located farthest from the entrance. He yanked his sword, shield, and bow off his back and set them in a lazy pile next to the foot of the bed. Then, in a slow, defeated motion, he climbed onto the squishy water mattress and laid down, letting his head sink into the material. He let out a long, drawn-out sigh as his thoughts immediately began racing through his mind.

How did everyone in the Domain know him so well? Why were some bystanders giving him curious glances? How was he so acquainted with the king? Why was Muzu so upset with him? Who was this…“Mipha,” and what had he done to her before forgetting everything?

Those last two questions had become the most central in Link’s mind after Muzu stormed off earlier. Link was a warrior, not a detective, and his frustration was only made worse by the fact that he was the subject of his own case. He knew after awaking from the Shrine of Resurrection that he’d have some catching up to do, but he had no idea he’d have to unravel so many wrongdoings. If only he had someone with which to communicate…

“Um…hello?” A voice stuttered quietly, as if on cue.

Link’s eyes shot open. He hadn’t even had two minutes on the bed, and already someone was standing over him. He immediately recognized the voice as that of a female, so he knew it couldn’t have been Muzu nor the prince. He raised his head from the mattress ever slightly so he could get a glimpse of his unexpected visitor.

Upon doing so, he was shocked, in fact, when he recognized the figure standing before him at the foot of the bed. It was one of the two Zoras that had been staring at him earlier from the foot of the big Mipha statue out in the plaza. Link had deemed her unusual when he noticed the genuine curiosity and interest in her face while she had been staring at him before, almost as if she had recognized him from a specific event in the past. And now, here she stood, at the foot of his rented bed, giving him the exact same look.

She was incredibly short for a Zora, standing about two inches taller than Link would’ve been standing up. Unique to the other Zoras living amongst the Domain, she bore a light shade of
red on her skin, falling somewhere between Sidon’s shade and pink. Her eyes were hazel, glittering beautifully like orbs of woven gold. The tailfin on the back of her head fell surprisingly short compared to other Zoras, extending only to about the middle of her neck. Standing timidly before him, she seemed to be shaking a little bit with anxiety.

“Are…are you…um…” She paused and took a deep breath. “Is your name Link?”

Link raised an eyebrow. Sitting up on the mattress, he looked the mysterious Zora in the eye for a few moments, watching her quiver. He nodded in response to her question.

As he did so, her complexion seemed to grow even less relaxed. Her quivering intensified a little bit, and she began taking several more long breaths to try and keep herself calm. She put both her hands on her chest.

“Oh Hylia…” She whispered excitedly. Link’s confused expression became even more evident as his skepticism increased. He wondered if he would need to stand up in case his visitor fainted.

She turned toward the inn entrance and called in a louder voice. “Lani, I found him! It’s really him! Come inside, hurry!”

Link followed her gaze toward the inn’s entrance and watched as another Zora came stepping in from around the corner. Sure enough, true to his suspicions, the other Zora was indeed the second one of the duo that had been watching him from the statue earlier that day. She came walking in with her right hand out in front of her, staring directly ahead with no apparent focus in her eyes. After getting through the entrance, she seemed to stop walking, standing awkwardly in place until the first visitor at the foot of his bed spoke again.

“I’m right here, Lani. Not too far away.”

The new visitor, who seemed to go by the name “Lani,” was shockingly even shorter than the first visitor was. Link estimated her to be about four whole inches shorter than her friend, which put her at two inches shorter than himself. She had the exact same skin tone as her friend as well, suggesting to Link that the two might’ve been related somehow. However, he couldn’t help but notice that the tailfin on her head was much longer by comparison, reaching down to her upper thighs when she stood directly upright. Her eyes were aqua blue, much like Link’s, in fact, but they appeared to be rather whitened and cloudy. The appearance of her eyes, coupled with her awkwardness trying to walk, led Link to believe that she was, in fact, blind.

Link looked at them both with sympathy and compassion in his heart. Before even getting to hear what they had to say, he already had the impression that they were a duo of many struggles, trying to make it through together in a world ravaged by Calamity Ganon. His first assumption was that they had heard of the Champions from a hundred years ago and were eager to meet their idol and talk about…hero things. He was fully ready to set aside his own mental insecurities and provide them with anything they needed.

This all changed, however, when Lani began to speak.

“D…D…Dad?”
Chapter End Notes

Off on another journey! Although this story will borrow many elements from my first one, One More Chance, I should note that they do not take place in the same universe. Anyway, I hope this one will tickle your heartstrings (or whatever the saying is)! By the way, a HUGE shoutout to nurplenurple on Tumblr for drawing an AWESOME picture of Mira and Lani! I've never seen such talent! https://nurplenurple.tumblr.com/post/172168228203/these-characters-do-not-belong-to-me-they-belong
The jolt in Link’s chest made him feel like he was going to have a heart attack. When King Rhoam, on the Great Plateau several days ago, explained Link’s role in the Great Calamity, he had at least been decent enough to do so gradually so as to give Link the chance to absorb everything after his hundred-year slumber. Information, especially in large quantities, took time to process for someone without a memory, and who, like him, had been sealed away in hibernation for over a century. Now, while he had been trying to sort things out in his head, a young-looking, blind Zora just walked into the room and called him “Dad.” Link was starting to think that, if some answers didn’t start coming soon, he really was going to have a heart attack.

While Link tried stomaching even more complicated information, Lani spoke some more. “M…May I touch your face? It’s been…a really long time…”

He looked with concern at the other Zora, who continued standing over his bed with a calm and gentle smile on her face. Seeming to read his confusion, she answered what she thought was his question. “That’s how she identifies people. It only takes a minute or so.”

Without waiting for an answer from Link, Lani took a few steps forward and placed both her soft, scaly hands on his cheeks, rubbing them tenderly. Despite the slight ticklishness of the sensation, Link did not laugh, nor even smile. He held is head perfectly still, his concerned expression remaining as the blind Zora moved her hands along his face, holding her breath. She felt along the crevices by his eyes, the curvature of his forehead, and even the points at the top of his ears. Not even his lips were spared.

She slowly let out the breath she had been holding as her lips curled into a loving smile. Link’s skepticism became as strong as ever as Lani, instead of lowering her hands, locked them together behind his neck. She kneeled down to meet his height on the bed…and pulled him into a hug. Link’s shock caused him to give a small cry as he was suddenly forced to lean forward. He did not return the gesture, for he was still trying to figure out what was going on.

The other Zora’s smile faded as she looked at Link, noticing that he still looked confused and uncomfortable, even after Lani put her arms around him. “You…you remember us, don’t you? We’re your daughters! Surely…even after all these years…you’d remember…?”

With Lani still attached to him, he turned to look deeply into the vast, golden ocean that was the yet-to-be-named Zora’s eyes. In them he saw…loyalty. Respect. Devotion and generosity. But most importantly, he felt like he could sense in her…leadership. She almost seemed like she’d be a worthy carrier of the Master Sword if she so chose. He found it funny that…despite not having any memory of having daughters, he could see a strong reflection of himself in the Zora’s hazel eyes.

Unfortunately, however, he could not remember a past with her, nor Lani. At this point, the fact made him feel a bit of guilt, since their whole world almost seemed to revolve around him in his century-long absence. So, to respond to her question, he shook his head. The Zora sighed, her hopeful expression turning to one of sadness.

“Ah…I was…afraid of that. I could see it in the way you looked back at me earlier from atop the grand staircase. I understand you’ve been through a lot, and you must still have much more ahead of you.” She stated, looking over at the pile of gear the hero had left on the ground.
Link continued looking directly at her, impressed with her deductive abilities. Their eyes met again when her gaze returned to him.

“So anyway...I hope your hibernation was...as restorative to your mind as it was to your body.” She uttered softly, her warm smile returning to her.

Link’s eyes widened, and his jaw dropped. By the goddess, how did she know about the Shrine of Resurrection? None of that information would’ve had any way to reach her. With so little information, she seemed able to draw accurate conclusions about several of his crucial aspects. Perhaps she’d be willing to elaborate?

Almost right away, she continued speaking. Lani, even at this moment, was still entwined with Link, her arms around his back and her head on his shoulder. “So, if you truly don’t remember, I’ll be happy to fill you in.” She put her hand on her chest. “My name’s Mira. It was the name you gave me, and I couldn’t love it more. Some pronounce it ‘Mee-rah,’ while others prefer to call me ‘My-rah.’” She explained, exaggerating the sounds with her lips. “Personally, I like the sound of both!”

Link really wanted to smile, but he was still having trouble getting there. He still had a plethora of problems to untangle in his mind before he’d be ready to jump in and accept his alleged daughters’ greeting. Judging by their first impressions, they seemed like the sweetest and most innocent pair he had ever met. All he needed...was some closure.

Mira, as her name was, continued. “My lovebug sister there is Noelani. Most of us Zoras at the Domain call her ‘Lani’ for short, but ‘Noelani’ was the full name given to her by our mother. It means ‘mist of heaven’ in a forgotten, ancient language.” She paused after saying this, letting out a long, dreamy sigh. “I figured you’d be able to tell by now, but she’s actually blind. She’s been that way since the day she hatched. She doesn’t know what it’s like to see, but she’s still the most supportive and loving thing I ever knew.” Again, she paused, giving Link a moment to absorb the information. “…She’s so much like our mother.”

Noelani giggled, causing Mira to do the same. She finally raised her head up from Link’s shoulder, but she kept her arms around him as she took a moment to face him. She looked like she wanted nothing more than to gaze directly into her father’s eyes, but alas, her cloudy irises remained unfocused, always staring an infinite distance behind him. At the same time, Link stared back at her, studying her cloudy blue eyes as he had done with Mira’s gold ones. In doing so, he saw...kindness. Innocence. Patience. At the same time, though, he also sensed in her...resolve. Passion. And most importantly...strength. Her blindness only seemed to contribute to the admirability of her character. Upon leaving the Shrine of Resurrection, Zelda had spoken to Link, referring to him as “the light that must shine upon Hyrule once again.” As he sat now, though, drifting through the boundless skies contained within Noelani’s eyes, it seemed to him like that description fit her better. She had all the qualities of an amazing young woman. He still couldn’t remember, however, who that reminded him of.

“Our attitudes may not show it,” Mira resumed, “but we were hatched at the same time. We’re your little twins.” She beamed.

Link was starting to find this all very heartwarming, but one thing still confused him regarding his alleged offspring...or rather, quite a few things. Who exactly was their mother? Had he really shared love for a Zora before the Great Calamity? Had he gotten married? Were these
children of his adopted, or had he really...conceived them on his own? Was their mother still around today? Would she be willing to speak with him, or had he hurt her in the past and couldn’t remember?

Again, Mira seemed to read his mind, like she had mysteriously been doing several times already. “Are you wondering about our mother? You seemed like you were curious, since, well...you hadn’t seemed to remember us either.”

Link looked back at Mira and expressed his answer with another nod. This was a rather huge matter, and getting his questions answered would perhaps also lead to the answering of his other concerns regarding Muzu and the king. It would seem to him that Mira and Noelani were the lights at the end of his tunnel.

Mira turned toward the inn’s exit, motioning with her head for him to follow her. “Come, I can show you to her.”

Noelani finally released her grip on Link and stood up to meet her sister. Mira instinctively reached out and gently took her blind sibling’s hand, as if she had been used to doing it on routine. Once they started walking away from the bed, Link scrambled to a standing position. He quickly went around to the other side of the bed to retrieve his belongings and, after shuffling awkwardly with them for a moment, jogged over anxiously to follow the two timid Zoras.

The pattering raindrops from the possessed Divine Beast on the mountain returned to Link as he followed his alleged daughters back out of the inn and onto the Domain’s main plaza. He had gotten used to the sound of the drops hitting the carved surface of the Domain, but he still found it to be a minor shock when the cold water found its way back onto his head and his clothes. They never really had a chance to dry in the short time he had been in the inn. In addition, the persistent, misty clouds dangling over the Domain made it difficult to tell the time of day. Zora’s Domain truly looked like it would be a beautiful location if it weren’t for the dreary overhang and the accompanying rain getting in the way.

Link wondered to himself what his supposed lover might’ve looked like a hundred years ago. It was already shocking enough to learn that he had supposedly settled down with a Zora, but now, as the possibilities started flowing of who exactly he chose, the hero’s mind was running as actively as ever. Was she the shy and timid type, like his daughters seemed to be? Was she short like him, or did she tower high like Prince Sidon? Had he fallen for her and confessed his love, or had she made the first move?

He figured that, given the hue of Mira and Noelani, their mother would’ve had to be some shade of red or pink, since Link didn’t really have any genes of that type to pass on. The whole concept of genetics, in fact, confused him in this case. How exactly had it been determined that his children wound up being Zoras and not Hylians? Why hadn’t there been a mixture? They were among the questions he would probably never have answered.

Still holding Noelani’s hand to keep her from unknowingly wandering off, Mira stopped at the base of the large Mipha statue where she and her sister had been standing earlier. She turned
around to face Link and stunned him with another spot-on answer to his mental question.

“You know, it’s a lesser-known fact in Hyrule that the Rito and us Zoras are the only races capable of marrying with Hylians and having children that are entirely of one race or the other.” She stated, trailing off idly. Link raised an eyebrow, his interest piqued as she continued. “Having a Hylian like you as a father always made me interested in learning about this kind of stuff. I asked my mother once how it all worked, and how…being that we were all Zoras, you could be a Hylian and still be a member of our family.” She giggled softly as she reflected on the small memory. “I remembered the loving grin on her face when she answered me. She told me that the race of the children always matches the race of the mother, since we and the Rito both lay eggs. Hylian mothers give live birth to Hylians, despite the race of their husbands. I, um…find it to be really fascinating!”

Link nodded in understanding, his hand placed on his chin as he listened to Mira’s explanation. He chose not to press the matter further and start wondering about conception, since Mira’s seemingly telepathic mind would’ve probably tried to answer that one too. Although, he had to admit…the goddesses worked in pretty mysterious ways. He wondered if Zelda or any of the castle’s scientists had researched genetics before the Great Calamity a hundred years ago. If they had, they probably would’ve made some interesting discoveries.

“So anyway, uh…back to our topic from earlier.” Mira announced. Link’s full attention returned to the shy Zora. “Since you don’t seem to remember, I’ll fill you in. Our mother, she’s……well, she’s no longer with us.” Link caught a glimpse of her hand squeezing Noelani’s a little harder than usual. “She passed away in the Great Calamity.”

Link’s heart sank at this news. Since the moment Mira and Noelani first approached him at the inn earlier, claiming to be his daughters, he had been afraid of this being the case. The Calamity had apparently left more scars in his life than he initially thought. Meeting his Zoran lover from a century ago would’ve been an incredible opportunity, but apparently Calamity Ganon had had other plans. He looked up into the eyes of the two sisters, expecting to see tears, but there were, in fact, none to be found.

“We’ve…learned to move on from our mother’s death during the last century. The first few years were…well…extremely tough for us, since, um…we sort of lost you too.” Mira uttered.

Link suddenly realized the truth of the Zora’s words. Remembering what the spirit of King Rhoam had told him on the Great Plateau, Link understood that he had also fallen to the Great Calamity, but the Shrine of Resurrection had preserved him and saved his life over the course of the century. As far as his daughters were concerned, however, he had basically died a warrior’s death. Young and defenseless at the time, Mira and Noelani had lost both their parents at once when Calamity Ganon had laid his siege on Hyrule. And now, here they stood before him, proud and strong, as independent Zora women in the prime of their lives. Surely, Link was beginning to feel a growing spark of acceptance and affection for the Zoras he could call his children.

Mira had left a long pause in her speech so Link could reminisce on these sentiments. Strangely enough, like all the times she had answered the exact question he was thinking, it was as if she knew exactly what was in his mind as he was thinking it. This fascinated and intrigued him, and he was determined to find out later how she did it. For now, though, he was intent on listening.

“Anyway, after the tragic events of the Calamity, we were suddenly without parents. It was
after our mother died and you didn’t come back that…Muzu offered to take us in. He’s been providing us with his care and guidance ever since those troubling times.” She explained, putting her free arm around Noelani as she nuzzled close to her sister.

Link’s jaw opened at this news. Their caregiver had been…Muzu? He couldn’t help but to remember the wild episode from earlier, inside the king’s chamber, when Muzu had outwardly expressed his contempt for Link before marching coldly out of the room. The elder seemed like a very bitter character, but his hatred seemed to stem from something specific. One sentence from the stingray Zora had stuck prominently in Link’s mind: “Have you forgotten what he did to dear Mipha?”

The more he thought about it, the more this seemed to point towards only one thing. After only a moment, though, his suspicion was confirmed by Mira, with yet more perfect timing.

“Yes, Dad…” She began, seeming to read his mind once again. “…our mother……is the one depicted in this great statue right here, immortalized for all of our people to appreciate.” She paused again, giving Link a chance to absorb the information. “You married her right here in the Domain, and you decided to have children shortly after. You fathered us with Princess Mipha.”

This was a curveball Link had not been expecting. Nonetheless, it now made perfect sense as to how the twins’ mother had died in the Calamity. After all, the princess in the statue fit the ideal description of a warrior, her spear an all-too-clear indicator. She must’ve died defending the Domain with other Zora guards, he figured. It did, however, seem like an odd choice that the princess of the Zoras be placed on the frontlines with common guards. Perhaps it wasn’t a relevant thought.

His jaw still slack, he turned from Mira’s solemn gaze to the carved face of the statue beneath which they stood. By staring into the empty, stone eyes of the statue, he was essentially staring into the eyes of his wife. For the first time since reaching the Domain, he took the time to drink in her features. Her flowing, shoulder-length side fins…her fragile, gentle fingers…her elegant, brilliant jewelry…

Studying the sculpted image of his past lover worked to kick Link’s brain into gear. He squinted at the statue as, gradually, a memory began to form in his head. A glimmer of joy appeared in Mira’s eyes as she sensed part of her father’s memory returning to him. A memory which would hopefully pave the way to the revival of their family. It seemed all had not been lost.

As the memory formed fully together in the dripping wet hero’s mind, his squinted eyes suddenly widened. He remembered one of his most notable encounters with Princess Mipha.

The air was warm and soft, with a very mild breeze to tickle at Link’s hair. Hylia had blessed Zora’s Domain with one of the sunniest days in its history, the golden beams of light streaming into the king’s chamber from all sides as the congregation waited. Standing to the left of the chamber, leading all the way down the grand staircase and into the plaza, was the entirety of the Domain’s Zoras, waiting patiently for the historical event to begin. At the foot of the throne, on the left side, Muzu and the baby prince, Sidon, stood with their hands folded in front of them.
The young prince held a small ring and a pair of silver wrist cuffs in his tiny hands. King Dorephan, as big as he was, sat overlooking the congregation from the comfort of his throne, his subjects sprawling all the way out of his sight. Link and the steadily-aging Zora priest, Kapson, stood proudly in front of the throne’s center.

Link also stood with his hands together in front of him, his eyes on the grand staircase in anticipation for the arrival of his bride. As per the Zora tradition, he wore on his body a sacred Zora chestplate, handmade specifically for him by his fiancée. Happiness could be seen in the smile on his face.

Finally, after a long several days in her absence, Link’s smile grew as his beloved Mipha appeared on the steps, ascending them quietly as the subjects in the throne room looked on admiringly. She wore a thin, white dress that dragged only slightly behind her, with an even thinner white veil covering her rose-tinted, dolphin-like head. It was incredibly modest attire for the occasion, especially given her royal status in the Domain. As she ascended the grand staircase, the Zoras she passed each bowed their heads, one by one.

Unlike Hylian weddings, Zoran weddings traditionally included no music, especially those of a royal nature. Therefore, as the young and radiant Zora princess made her way to the king’s chamber where they’d begin the ceremony, the only sounds that could be heard were the gentle pats of her feet on the chiseled stairs and the chirps of birds in the skies above.

When she reached the chamber and stopped at the foot of the throne next to Link and Kapson, the ceremony promptly began after a short moment of silence. The couple looked deeply into each other’s eyes, their admiration for their lover glowing brightly through the white veil that separated them.

“Dearly beloved members of Zora’s Domain…” Kapson exclaimed, loudly enough for the distant onlookers in the plaza to hear. “…we are gathered here today to celebrate the union of our dear princess, Mipha, and Link, the highly-esteemed Hylian knight, in sacred matrimony! The connection this fateful couple shares is undeniable!”

He lowered his head, turning to Mipha. Mipha glanced away from Link, taking the moment to look over at Kapson as he proceeded with the ceremony. “Mipha…princess of our people…it is now, on the day of your wedding, with your subjects as your witnesses, that you shall profess, as the eldest child of King Dorephan. Do you choose to accept your line of succession, or do you relinquish the throne on behalf of yourself and your groom?”

Mipha looked back at Link for a moment before glancing behind her at Prince Sidon. He had been blankly staring off in the distance, paying no attention to the ceremony. When he caught sight of his big sister looking at him, though, his bored expression turned into a wide smile. His pointy teeth glittered in the sunlight. She smiled back at him.

Turning back to Kapson and her fiancée, she gave her answer. “We relinquish the throne.”

Kapson nodded in acknowledgement. “On that note, do you, Princess Mipha of the Zoras, take Link to be your lawfully wedded husband, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and health, until death do you part?”
She looked directly into Link’s eyes, and without a moment’s hesitation, answered, “I do.”

Kapson then turned to Link. “Sir Link of Hyrule, do you take Mipha to be your lawfully wedded wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and health, until death do you part?”

Link took a moment to take in Mipha’s beauty. The gentle breeze blew the loose ends of her dress around, as well as the fins on her arms and her head. The sunlight that made it through her veil reflected off her eyes, causing them to sparkle their signature golden hue. The entire Domain continued to sit in complete silence as Link surveyed his soon-to-be wife, the lack of noise further allowing him to get lost in the moment. He felt like he was falling in love with her all over again.

He whispered, “…I do.”

Kapson grinned, raising both his hands above his head. “I now pronounce this couple… husband and wife!”

Link lifted the veil that covered Mipha’s face, but before he could lean in for the kiss, the lovestruck Zora princess jumped onto him and got him with it first. As the newlyweds shared each other’s lips at the foot of the throne, the crowd of Zora witnesses began to cheer and applaud. It was a joyful and momentous day at Zora’s Domain.

Link didn’t notice that his eyes had been shut until the moment he snapped them back open. He took one more look up at the statue, remembering completely his wedding with Mipha. It was then that he noticed the silver wrist cuffs that were securely fastened to the precisely-carved wrists of the statue. They were of their usual metallic color, shining separately from the aqua blue shade of the rest of the stone. He studied them curiously, noticing their striking resemblance to the pair of wrist cuffs he had put on Mipha himself during their wedding ceremony.

Mira examined Link’s curious expression, still looking rather satisfied with his revelation. “It looks like the statue must’ve stirred your memory a bit! Whatever you remembered…I hope it was a reminder of how much Mom loved you.”

Noelani nodded in agreement to her sister’s statement, her head still pressed against the taller sibling’s chest. Link glanced over at them, enchanted by the sight of the two sisters looking so close and connected with each other. Despite the dreary overhang and the drenching rain, Link caught a brief glint in Mira’s golden eyes…a picturesque resemblance to those of Mipha. At that moment, he felt any remaining doubt of his fatherhood to Mira and Noelani…begin to melt.

On top of Mipha’s wrist cuffs, Link also remembered the ring that Sidon had been holding during his flashback. It was easy to assume, given the context, that he had accepted the ring to mark his marriage a hundred years ago just as Mipha had accepted the cuffs. When he looked down at his pruny, dripping hands, however, he was dismayed to find that his century-old wedding ring was not there. Admittedly, he would’ve seen it sooner had it been on his finger where it belonged. It must’ve gotten lost during his skirmishes with the Great Calamity.
Mira connected her father’s thoughts in her own head as she watched him glance down at his hands. Putting his sequence of actions together, she formed a pretty good idea of what his memory must’ve been about. If she was right, it would’ve been a memory she was not around to witness herself. There were, however, some things of which she did have knowledge, and she was prepared to share them with him very soon. She took a few steps toward Link.

“Come on, Dad, let’s go on our own little adventure.” She cooed, smiling. “There are some more places I think you should see.”
Vah Ruta let out another powerful, trumpeting roar just as Link’s boots made contact with the grass off the eastern edge of Zora’s Domain. He was almost sure the rain had gotten stronger since heading in this direction, signaling their increasing proximity to the Divine Beast. Upon leaving the solid stone surface of the Domain, the soggy mud hiding beneath the grass seemed to grip his ankles as he tried to walk. Looking ahead of him, he noticed the same thing happening to Mira and Noelani’s feet.

The trio had passed by a Zora guard named Gaddison, who had been assigned to watch over the eastern bridge leading to the plateau just before Mikau Lake. She seemed to recognize Link from personal encounters before the Great Calamity, but unsurprisingly, Link did not share those memories. Mira and Noelani were well acquainted with her, though, having exchanged warm greetings on their way by. Link thought nothing of their brief meeting, as he figured most of the Zoras in the Domain knew each other on some sort of personal level. Nonetheless, he’d probably have to be filled in later.

With no idea of where his daughters were taking him, Link followed mindlessly as the siblings took a slight turn to the right and began heading toward the massive, stone-chiseled barricade that was situated in the rough rock of the cliffside. The smooth stone it was made of seemed identical to that of the Domain, its aqua hue seeming to glow against the surrounding rock. Something about Zora architecture just seemed...eyepopping to the curious hero.

It wasn’t until they further neared the wall-like structure that Link noticed a sideways flight of stairs leading up its face. The stairway continued upwards until it reached the other side of the structure, where it turned around and continued upwards even more. The climb, he admitted, looked rather treacherous. Mira didn’t seem intimidated by it, though. Wherever they were going, it must’ve been a place the siblings visited often. He noticed, however, that Noelani looked slightly uncomfortable.

“This large wall here is actually a dam.” Mira stated as the three of them reached the base of the stairs. They stopped walking, and Mira let go of Noelani’s trembling hand. “There’s nothing but water behind this thick layer of stone. Vah Ruta’s putting a lot of strain on it, though, and if it gives, the Domain will be, well…ruined, basically.”

Link realized rather awkwardly that he had forgotten why he had been summoned to Zora’s Domain in the first place. Meeting his children and getting wrapped up in his past had admittedly distracted him from his main objectives. If Calamity Ganon were to break free from Zelda’s grasp tomorrow, for instance, he’d be completely unprepared. He was too far along with Mira and Noelani to turn back now, though, especially since they were helping him remember a critical part of his past. On top of that, he was beginning to feel a growing, familiar connection to them, the likes of which were giving him some comfort after the icy blast that had described his reawakening.

“We’re...at...at the stairs, right?” Noelani murmured. Link noticed a bit of unease in the short Zora’s expression.

“Yes, Lani, we’re just standing at the base. Everything’s going to be fine.” Mira assured
her fragile sister.

Mira looked over at Link, who raised an eyebrow at the events unfolding before him. Considering her father’s broken memory, she interpreted the gesture as a silent, ‘what’s wrong?’ She sighed.

“Yeah…you see, Lani’s kind of…afraid of heights. She doesn’t do well with stairs as a result, and to be honest, I don’t blame her. She worries she might lose her footing and fall.” The short-finned Zora explained. “We don’t usually climb these stairs unless we’re with Uncle Sidon, because he’ll usually carry her so she doesn’t have to climb herself.”

“C…Could you…maybe go get Uncle Sidon for me?” Noelani asked quietly, playing with her incredibly long tailfin.

After running it through his head real fast, Link had to remind himself that Prince Sidon was, in fact, Mira and Noelani’s uncle. Hearing the prince’s name preceded by the word “uncle” sounded very weird to him at first, but then again, it did make sense. It also led to some other interesting family relationships that he didn’t bother pondering at the moment. Even now, he was still trying to wrap his head around the information.

Regardless of this, though, he was quickly learning a lot about his daughters’ personalities. The deepest parts of their character had already shown themselves to him in the Zoras’ eyes, words, and actions. It was more recently, with moments like this and with Gaddison a few minutes prior, that Link was beginning to learn about their mannerisms on the surface.

An obvious one was how introverted Noelani seemed to be. She had proven in the inn earlier that she was capable of powerfully expressing her affection, but in day-to-day scenarios, she seemed quite reserved. Mira seemed to be her voice when interacting publicly. Any sentence she spoke was rare, and as a result, the ones she did speak seemed to carry a lot of significance. That was a trait she must’ve directly inherited from him, since he knew very well he didn’t speak too much. The way she held her thigh-length tailfin in front of her, though, was adorable to him.

He glanced over at Mira, and then back to Noelani. He smirked. “…I’ll do you one better.”

He walked up to Noelani at the base of the stairs, who was shocked to hear her father speak for the first time in over a hundred years. After removing his gear from his back and handing it quickly to Mira, he bent forward in front of Noelani with his back facing her. He cupped his hands down by his hips. “…Hop on.”

She gasped, both surprised and delighted by her father’s offering. Without hesitation, the blind Zora held her hands out in front of her and stepped forward, placing her soft palms on Link’s shoulders. Then, starting with her right foot, she hoisted herself up onto Link’s lowered hands. Once she was elevated properly, she wrapped her legs around his torso and grappled onto his upper body with her arms. Link was now giving her a piggyback ride.

“Shall we ascend?” Noelani exclaimed with a big grin on her face. Mira couldn’t help but laugh, touched at Link’s generosity. Even with so little of his memory restored, he was already shaping up to be the great father she had always remembered.
The stairs weren’t that steep, but they did seem to go on for an incredibly long time. Before even reaching the turnaround point, Link found that his stamina was beginning to take a hit, his lungs heaving in order to keep up with his muscles. His legs trembled with each step he climbed. Had he visited more shrines before heading to Zora’s Domain, he probably would’ve had more endurance in carrying his blind daughter up the stairs. For a Zora as small as she was, Link had not expected Noelani to be so heavy. He thought, with a chuckle to himself, that perhaps it was due to her big heart.

He persevered, however, despite the rapidly growing pain in his thighs and chest. With Mira leading the way by a few paces, they reached the turnaround point of the long, sprawling staircase within a couple minutes. From the banister, at their current elevation, Zora’s Domain came into full view in the valley below, it’s sparkling beauty gracing the trio’s eyes. The waterfalls behind it were blocked from view, however, by the enveloping haze of rain that surrounded the region.

Mira sighed, taking a moment to set Link’s gear down, lean on the banister, and rest her head in her hands. “I really love our home. We don’t leave here very often, and whenever we do, we don’t go very far. I feel lucky that it’s so pretty here, because if it wasn’t, I’d probably start to resent being so cooped up.” She chuckled.

Noelani, still attached to Link’s back with her head on his shoulder, added to her sister’s statement. “Yeah…I don’t think we’ve ever traveled farther than our birthplace before.”

Link’s expression changed suddenly as he heard this. He glanced at Mira, who turned to meet his gaze at the same time. At this point, Link began to expect Mira to answer his questions without him having to ask them, since for some reason, she seemed to know everything he was thinking. Once again, he was right to do so.

“Yes, Dad, that’s another place I wanted to show you. Perhaps we’ll go there after I show you what’s atop these stairs. But anyway…Lani and I weren’t hatched here in Zora’s Domain. Our eggs were left quite far west of here, not too far from Hyrule Field. There’s a whole story about it that we had heard from Muzu. He told us he heard the story from Mom.” Mira explained.

Link was awestruck at this news. What had Mipha been doing so far away from Zora’s Domain at such a...critical time? Had he been with her? Had his daughters been in any danger? His mind ran wild with questions.

“We’ll go there together in a little bit, I promise. Hopefully I’ll be able to help you remember anything important. For now, though, I’m really excited to show you this place!” The radiant Zora beamed, bending over to pick Link’s gear back up.

Link nodded once, and Mira turned around with a swing in her step to continue climbing the rest of the stairs. He took a deep breath, preparing himself to finish the rest of the climb with his other daughter still clinging to his back. After hoisting her up further to make sure she didn’t slip, he proceeded up the stairs in pursuit of Mira.

The second set of stairs wasn’t as long as the first, which Link had to be thankful for. On top of
that, after having had a moment to rest, his energy had returned to him enough for the rest of the climb to flow fairly easily. Overall, exercise from the added weight was probably something that would make the rest of his journey not seem as difficult, given the large amount of gear he’d have to grow accustomed to carrying.

Upon reaching the top, Link leaned backwards and gently allowed Noelani to step off of him and back onto the solid ground. Before getting to turn and exit the stairwell, he felt his blind child’s arms envelop him again from behind. He heard her giggle.

“Thanks, Dad.”

For the first time since his reawakening, Link felt a true, genuine smile appear on his face. An indescribable feeling of peace and warmth filled his chest, a feeling left alienated for over a hundred years. Link was still missing the majority of his memory, and yet he felt almost like he wanted nothing more than the feeling he had now, spending quality time with his long-lost daughters. What more could he possibly learn that would kindle his fatherly heart any further?

Still smiling, he took Noelani’s gentle hand in his own, and the two of them stepped out from under the overhang and back into the pattering rain. They were now standing on a large platform at the top of the dam, a dock extending outward into a massive lake that was seemingly contained entirely by the mountain. Immediately to their right, nestled against the top of the stairwell at the center of the platform, was a small awning overshadowing a full-size waterbed and a collection of fine, Zora-themed beverage glasses.

Link let out a sharp gasp at the sight that had immediately appeared before him upon stepping onto the platform. There, situated out in the deepest part of the lake, was the Divine Beast…Vah Ruta. Its mechanical trunk was aimed directly in the air, spewing aimless sheets of water into the sky in unfathomable amounts. From its sides, in four distinct locations, gargantuan waterfalls of ridiculous proportions dumped even more water into the lake, the mist from the stirring liquid casting a hazy cloud over the entirety of the mountaintop. The beast’s energy pockets, indicated by the giant glowing points all over its body, flashed an eye-catching shade of pinkish-violet. The huge, towering machine raised its trunk even higher into the air and released another powerful, deafening roar that echoed throughout all of eastern Hyrule. The glasses under the awning shook vigorously.

“Welcome to the Eastern Reservoir.” Mira announced deeply, her words made eerie by the roar that had preceded them. The golden-eyed Zora stood with her back turned to her relatives, staring thoughtfully into the expanse of the lake where Vah Ruta dwelled. She stood on the edge of the platform at the lip of the lake, to the side of the dock that stretched farther away from the artificial shore.

Link led Noelani out to the platform’s edge so they could stand next to Mira. For a few silent moments, they stared out into the horizon at the mighty Divine Beast that had been, and still was, actively terrorizing Zora’s Domain. Noelani could only imagine to herself what Vah Ruta looked like, and, judging solely by sounds and by word of mouth, none of the images she could conjure up looked pleasant.

Mira sighed sadly. “You know…sometimes when I drift off to sleep at night…I wonder to myself if Mom’s spirit is still trapped in that cursed thing.”
Link’s face lit up in surprise at her words. More questions filled his mind, as they had been doing frequently in the last several hours. And, as had been also happening frequently, Mira immediately began to answer them by explaining herself.

“I’m not sure if I already managed to remember this or not, but…Vah Ruta out there is actually how Mom died in the Great Calamity.” Mira uttered, her words quiet and desolate, a stark contrast to those from earlier. “She was chosen to be a Champion and pilot that giant monster in the fight against Calamity Ganon. None of us knew her fate would take such an…unfortunate turn.”

Link looked with sadness and sympathy at the lamenting Zora, his instincts telling him he’d probably be needed for comforting in the next couple minutes. He noticed Mira lowering her head and closing her eyes, her thoughts shifting entirely to the tragedies of the past century. Noelani reached over and felt around at the air for a moment before putting her hand on her sister’s shoulder, once she had found it.

Mira continued, her eyes still closed. “I’ll never forget the day it happened. The Hylian princess showed up with three other Champions one afternoon, asking for you and Mom. Noelani and I were used to you being gone often on lots of important missions, so I remember not feeling too worried when you had to leave again.” She paused for a moment as she started to choke on a few of her words. “…But later that evening……we…we were playing with Muzu and uncle Sidon on this very platform…overlooking the lake……when the very ground beneath us suddenly shook like an earthquake. Just twenty minutes later, Mom came rushing up the stairs with her trident in her hands.”

At this point, Link noticed Noelani put both her arms around Mira, who had put a hand up to her chest. Her eyes opened very slightly, allowing Link to see the onset of tears in the Zora’s hazel irises. The hero bit his bottom lip, a feeling of dread falling over him as her story progressed.

“She looked so…urgent……with her trident in both hands and her blue Champion’s cloth around her shoulder. We…we got so scared!” She turned her head to Link suddenly, her moist, reflective eyes looking directly into his own as she spoke. “She sounded so serious…so authoritative…..I…I had never heard anything like it from her before.”

Link felt very concerned for Mira at this point. From what he had learned about her during their short time together the past evening, it seemed unlike her to be showing such powerful, negative emotions. To see the quiet, timid, fragile Noelani comforting her sister from the side without a single sign of fracture on her face was, to Link, a new angle of his children’s relationship he had never seen before. Not even the holy power of the elusive Triforce could grant a bond as powerful as the one these Zoras seemed to share. Had they really even needed a caregiver?

Mira approached the end of her retelling. “Our mom, she…she ordered all of us to head back to the Domain immediately…and not to come back here until we saw her return from the East Reservoir. We barely managed to see her sprint towards the Divine Beast before Muzu quickly ushered us down the stairs.”

A single tear fell from the distraught Zora’s face and landed on the chiseled surface of the platform, where it immediately washed away among the rainwater from the Divine Beast. Mira looked back up at Link a second time, the whites of her eyes looking slightly pink from her mourning.

“Do you want to know something funny?” She sniffed behind her tears. “If we were still following Mom’s orders, I would not have taken you up here today. She…she still hasn’t come back yet, after all.”
She managed a small, wheezy chuckle, which descended quickly into an onslaught of sobbing. Her head fell back towards the ground as she brought her hands up to her face to conceal her outburst. Link gave a long sigh, watching with great sadness as Noelani squeezed her crying sister in her thin, trembling arms.

Link thought the two had come to terms with their mother’s death many years ago, but apparently, for Mira, that had not yet been the case, even after a hundred long years. Her words back at the Domain about having learned to move on from the tragedy…well, they had apparently been lies. He wasn’t quite sure about Noelani, but he could now see clearly that Mira’s demons had not yet left her.

The emotional distress she was currently displaying was, in essence, a hundred years in the making. A hundred years of living without parents, every single day. A hundred years of remembering the couple that had loved them most, united also by their love for each other. A hundred years of laying awake at night, wondering what could have been. A hundred years of asking the question…why?

Link took a few steps toward his collapsed daughter. Noelani, still holding Mira tightly from the side, looked up at him. In her blindness, she wasn’t quite looking in the right direction, but he knew she was trying to share his gaze. Even still, at this moment, there were no tears in her eyes. Link had to wonder just how the young, sightless Zora was able to conceal sadness so well. Did she even feel sorrow? Was she only able to express happiness and love? What went through her mind in times like this?

Link, feeling too hurt to be able to listen to any more crying from his broken child, knelt down on one knee to help Noelani in comforting Mira. Before he could extend his arms, however, Mira threw hers around him first, her head cradling the surprised hero’s neck. Noelani held her grip on her sister’s waist, and the three of them shared a lasting group hug under Vah Ruta’s torrential downpour.

Link felt the warmth of Mira’s tears pressing against the shoulder of his tunic, a meaningful contrast to the biting cold of the rain that had already drenched it. He could hear Mira struggling to form words through her shallow, sporadic breaths. “Dad, I…I can’t tell you how…g…glad I am that you’re finally back. I...I love you s…so much…”

The moment never seemed to end, and to Link, that didn’t seem so bad. He couldn’t shake the odd feeling of déjà vu, kneeling there in the rain with a distraught soul wrapped in his arms, but at the moment, it didn’t matter. He was finally fulfilling his proper role as a father, a responsibility of which he had been completely unaware just hours ago.

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Link had lost track of time, but he was pretty sure it had taken fifteen minutes or so for Mira to finally calm down. She looked back and forth at Link and Noelani, a very small smile appearing on her face. Her eyes were the same color as her skin at this point, and her cheeks felt rather tender from her episode.
“Are you going to be okay?” Noelani whispered gently, stroking the top of her sister’s head.

Mira nodded her head. “Y…Yeah, I should be fine. It really does help having you both here. I still just can’t thank Hylia enough for allowing Dad to survive the Great Calamity.”

Link smiled a bit, but he couldn’t help but feel a bit guilty about Mipha. Sure, it had been the grace of Hylia for him to be alive and well today, but why did Mipha have to suffer the cruel fate? If not for himself, Mira and Noelani still deserved to at least have their mother with them during the last century.

Mira sighed. “I think I just need to go for a quick swim. Sometimes that helps me clear my head.”

The still-shaky Zora stood up from the wet ground and walked calmly toward the dock at the center of the platform. Noelani, without turning around, called after her. “Just be careful of the big monster, sis! Uncle Sidon said it’s electric or something!”

“I’ll be fine, Lani!” Mira called back. Link watched as his daughter, poised at the edge of the dock, jumped a solid six feet into the air, twirling gracefully as she slid into the water of the East Reservoir. Such were the ways of the water-dwelling species.

With Mira gone, Link and Noelani were left alone with each other on the platform, sitting together by the water’s edge on the stone’s saturated surface. The sound of the pattering rain on the stone continued to fill their ears, but beyond that, everything was quiet. He was certain Noelani had inherited her social habits from him, being the silent and thoughtful character that she was. Between the two of them, then, no words were spoken.

Link studied his daughter as she glanced around in random directions, her cloudy eyes unable to focus on any specific object. He wondered if…for once…he’d have to be the one to initiate a conversation. After all, without words, he was essentially invisible to the poor Zora. If he wanted, he could stand up and tiptoe away, and she would have no idea. It also didn’t help that, without Mira, he had no way to get his thoughts out without speaking them himself. So…he took a deep breath…and gave it a try.

“So…um…” He stammered. Before even having to say anything else, he noticed Noelani’s face illuminate in a beaming smile. She looked in his direction with excitement, his exact position pinpointed by the sound of his voice.

“Oh, I just love it when you talk!” She squealed.

Link chuckled and rubbed the back of his neck. “So…Mira seemed excited to take us up here, but when she did, it only seemed to stir up bad memories.” He began, his underused voice cracking several times. “…What exactly does she like about this lake?”

Noelani didn’t seem to have to think about this question, as her answer came out rather quickly. “Well…why wouldn’t she? This place was our childhood home!”

Link gasped in shock. “You’re kidding…?”
Noelani shook her head, her smile growing wider. “Nope, it really was. Hylians like you usually live in houses with roofs over your heads, but us Zoras can settle wherever it feels comfortable. After all, we thrive in rainfall.”

Link nodded in thoughtful understanding. “So, you…well, we…chose to live near Vah Ruta on the East Reservoir? Away from the Domain?” He asked, raising an eyebrow. “Why?”

Noelani clenched her fists and shook her arms eagerly. “Ooh, am I going to get to tell you a story? How exciting! Here, let’s head over to the awning just over there. I think it’s behind me.”

Link was delightfully impressed with how quickly Noelani had opened up to him. Up until this point, she had seemed like the kind who would bottle up all her feelings and speak only to Mira when they were alone. And, even then, she didn’t seem like the kind who would speak in long phrases. Now, here she was, talking to him enthusiastically as if she were one of the girls in the Prince Sidon fan club. He was her father, after all, and opening his mouth to hold a conversation for the first time in over a century must’ve unlocked something in her thick shell.

The two of them stood up, and Link reached out to take her hand again. The awning was only a few paces away, but he felt it was still necessary to guide her so she didn’t walk off the platform into the water or anything. Noelani couldn’t get enough of being ushered around by the father she had missed so dearly over the last hundred years.

Reaching the small structure in just a couple seconds, Link looked over at the waterbed that was situated in its center and noticed that Mira had set his gear there earlier upon reaching the top of the stairs. Spread around the bed, on the surrounding miniature countertops, were a varying assortment of glossy drink cups.

The two of them stepped under the awning and into the small, dry oasis it created. Link grabbed his pile of gear and set it on the ground at the foot of the bed, not yet wanting to return the heavy items to his back.

“You know, Dad…” Noelani began, flashing a fuzzy grin. “…you were the one who shared all this information with me a hundred years ago. I think it’s really cool that I get to tell it back to you like this.”

Link let out a dreamy sigh, the irony of the situation tickling his mind. He opened his ears, ready to hear more about his past.

“Even before meeting you, this place had always been Mom’s sanctuary. You told me she’d come here all the time when she was either lonely, upset, or overwhelmed at life. She loved staring out at the waters of the lake and going for swims in solitude, just as Mira is doing right now.” Noelani explained.

Link had never actually let go of Noelani’s hand after reaching the awning, and even now, as he listened to her describe Mipha and her ties to the East Reservoir, he found himself gripping her hand even tighter. “…I see.”

Noelani continued. “The bed here had not always been a part of this platform. After all, when this lake was constructed thousands of years ago, it had not been intended as a place to rest.”
She paused again, letting Link absorb the information just as her sister had done when she explained things to him. “Well, after the Divine Beast was discovered, Mom started spending many nights out here without returning to the Domain. There was something about Vah Ruta that you said she was drawn to. Well anyway, as a result, she used her authority as a princess to order a waterbed in this very spot. She’d sleep here all the time…by herself…while everyone else slept in each other’s company back at the Domain.” She paused again for a quick moment, sighing. “…I never got to learn what was on her mind while she was out here all alone.”

Link shrugged, his eyes fixated on the waterbed. “I’m in the same boat you are.”

“Well hopefully I’m able to help you recover a memory just like my sister did at the Domain earlier.” Noelani added, giggling slightly. “The parts I remember most about this place are from after you got involved in Mom’s life. These are things Mom had actually talked to me about.”

Link led Noelani over to the waterbed so the two of them could sit down. His interest piqued at this point, he gave his daughter his full, undivided attention. He looked directly into her cloudy eyes while she stared off at the floor, lost in her thoughts.

“She was never afraid to tell me how much she cared about you, even before your relationship got serious. She told me she would always look for ways to drag you up here by the lake so she could spend some quality time alone with you. You didn’t seem to catch on right away, but eventually you opened up to her more. Despite this platform being her place of privacy and solitude, she told me she had wanted nothing more in this world than to share it with you.” She sighed again, leaning over to rest her head on Link’s hip. She picked up the end of her long, dangling tailfin, which had been resting just next to her thigh on the bed, and hugged it in her arms. “…I just thought that was really sweet when I heard it.”

Link had to be strong, for both of their sakes. After Mira’s emotional shattering a few minutes ago, he didn’t want to put an even bigger burden on Noelani by having one himself. His first question to himself was…how had he managed to forget about Mipha? It sounded to him like she would’ve given her life for him, and now, a hundred years later, after she had done exactly that, he couldn’t even remember the connection they had shared. Heck, he hadn’t even remembered what she looked like before viewing the statue back in the plaza!

“Yes…” He sniffled, fighting the fluid building up in his sinuses. “…that’s very sweet.”

Noelani heard his sniffle, but she oddly didn’t seem to suspect his emotional state. Either that, or she knew about it…and had seen it coming. She continued. “Eventually, this place became your haven. On your wedding day, Mom had an awning built over the waterbed so the two of you could be together every night, since we know that Hylians can’t really sleep in the rain. Once we came along, this became the perfect place for us to be a family in peace, away from the responsibilities of the royal bloodline.”

Things started making sense in Link’s head as Noelani continued with her story. Having just remembered it in the plaza earlier, he thought back on his wedding day, when Mipha had announced that she would relinquish the throne. He couldn’t recall when they had discussed it, but the evidence he was hearing proved that his Zoran wife had had children in mind at the time of marrying him. At this point, he was glad they had had the opportunity to do so before the Great Calamity took her life.
Noelani tried to meet Link’s gaze again. “Nowadays, we still come up here time to time when Uncle Sidon is around to carry me up the stairs. It feels good to escape the world and continue being a family up here by the lake every once in a while, even without parents. We think it’s what Mom would’ve wanted.”

Link sniffled again, a small tear escaping his eye. “…I see.”

“It was also here on the shore of the lake that Mom taught us how to swim. She was always the kind to push lessons at an early age. She also did it with Uncle Sidon when he was really young.” Noelani giggled for a moment before her face became serious again. “We lost her to the Great Calamity before we got old enough to learn about climbing waterfalls, though. We had to learn that from Muzu.”

Link put his hand to his chin and rubbed it thoughtfully. “So…” He stuttered. “…sorry to change the subject, but since Miph-” He stopped. “…well, your mother…was the princess of the Domain, how do your neighbors see you and Mira?”

Noelani bit her lip, taking a moment to think about her answer. “Well…nowadays, we’re treated like any other members of Zora’s Domain, because it was the wish of both Mom and ourselves. Mom didn’t want us to lead a life full of pressing responsibilities, and after seeing what it was like for Uncle Sidon growing up, we came to agree with her. Back then, though, when we were very little, we were treated like the next generation of Zoran princesses. After all, we do share the royal blood of King Dorephan.”

Link shook his head, his mind streamlining his thoughts in an organized manner. “That kind of reminds me of someone. The Hylian princess. She was forced in her childhood to be something she wasn’t.” He muttered idly. “Then again, I’m still learning a lot about her as well.”

“Noelani was certainly right about that. They looked exactly like Mipha’s headpiece. They each had the familiar rhombus-shaped chain designs along the top that arched downward to a shining aquamarine at the forehead. Dangling down the sides where their flowing temple-fins
would be, the signature symbol of Nayru was molded delicately out of fine silver. Link held one in each hand, their shapes indistinguishable from each other.

Noelani heard her father’s fascinated gasps as he studied the adornments, his mind connecting them to Mipha’s appearance. She shrugged. “Mira and I decide not to wear those anymore, so we keep them under the bed up here where they won’t get discovered by anybody. They symbolize a status we want to avoid.”

Link looked up at his daughter. “May I see you with it on?”

She laughed heartily, her hand coming up to her mouth. “Of course, Dad. Anything for you.”

He took a step towards her and set the other headpiece on the bed. Then, with the other one held at the ready, he reached around the blind Zora’s head and, with his rough, calloused hands, worked as gently as possible to fasten the Zoran crown to its place. Noelani closed her eyes and breathed quietly, sitting perfectly still as he let him figure the thing out.

“There…I think I got it.” He murmured, swishing his hand across her left temple-fin to test the crown’s fit. He backed up a few paces. “Look this way.”

Noelani turned her head in the direction of Link’s voice, a shy grin appearing on her face. Again, her cloudy eyes seemed to stare straight through him into the distance. He looked at her, really gazing at the sparkling headpiece that seemed to even further complete her appearance. If not for her blue eyes and light-colored skin, she’d look like a splitting image of her mother. Her abnormally long tailfin also made her stand out, but with everything else, it looked beautiful. She…looked beautiful.

“I…I don’t believe it…” He stuttered.

Noelani giggled slightly. “It looks tacky, doesn’t it?”

“No, not at all.” He answered quickly, shaking his head. “It’s just…wow.”

Suddenly, the two were surprised when a familiar voice called to them from the dock. “Lani, I’m back!”

“Oh, it’s Mira. We should go meet her.” Noelani suggested, standing up from the bed. The Nayru-symbol ornaments on her temple-fins swayed back and forth with each of the Zora’s subtle movements.

Link took her hand again, and the pair stepped eagerly out from under the awning to greet Mira, who had returned from her restorative swim.

Well….mostly restorative. Link noticed as they drew closer that Mira was walking with a slight limp in her step, her arm clutching the outer portion of her thigh. Her face was tense, grimacing as though she was in a considerable deal of pain.

Noelani, as usual, could not see this. “Did everything go well, sis? Are you feeling
Mira grunted through her teeth. “I’m fine. Vah Ruta got me a little bit, but I was still able to easily swim back to shore. It was just a small spark.” Noelani gasped when she heard the news, her hands clenching into fists.

“Mira, I told you to be careful!” she cried, bringing her clenched hands to her hips in a scolding manner. “What if it had been more than just ‘a small spark?’”

Mira chuckled. “And I thought I was the stern one.” Link also laughed a bit.

“No when you’re out there putting yourself in danger, sis. I don’t ever want to see…er…witness something bad happen to you! Not on my watch!” Noelani chided, her face full of serious concern. “Now sit down on the dock here, and show me where it hurts.”

Link watched the exchange going on in front of him, curious as to where it was headed. Noelani was responding very strangely to Mira’s injury, her mannerism changing to one of a protective mother, rather than of a supportive sister. Again, it just seemed like a highly unusual role for her to play in their relationship. In addition, he was confused by her order for Mira to “show her where it hurts.” Did Noelani have some sort of medical training she had not bothered to share with him?

He observed with genuine interest as Mira followed her sister’s demand, sitting down in a cross-legged position on the dock’s cold surface. She lifted her hand from her outer thigh, revealing a gnarly-looking patch of burned flesh right on the line where her skin changed from white to red. Although Link had suffered far worse injuries himself as recently as his reawakening, the wound still looked bad enough to make him grimace.

The next action, though, caused his eyes to widen in pure awe-stricken amazement. After revealing her burn to the open air, Mira took Noelani’s extended hand and positioned it just above the patch. Without even needing a signal from her sister, Noelani slowly closed her eyes and exhaled deeply. Within a few seconds, her outstretched palm began to emit a powerful, cyan glow, its light pushing against the darkness of the rainy haze around them. Link watched with mesmerized shock.

Mira moaned softly as relief cascaded through her. Steadily, as the light from Noelani’s palm enveloped her thigh, the scorching pain in her burned skin began to subside. Over the course of several minutes, the damaged skin layers on her thigh showed visible signs of repair, the evidence of a burn erasing entirely.

As Link watched Noelani heal her sister with some kind of mysterious magic, the headpiece he had put on her earlier twinkled in his eye. He squinted at it for a moment, taking notice of its appearance on her during her healing process. It was at that moment that, suddenly, like a switch being flipped on, a connection was made in his head, causing a spill of memories to flood his mind.

Mipha had used healing magic! She had used it to heal him countless times during his many battles with monsters and clansmen! It was some kind of goddess-given gift that she inherited from her mother, and it was her most trademark of features! He remembered her telling him on the trunk of the Divine Beast one fateful evening that she would always heal him, no matter the cost, if anyone were to ever try and do him harm. He gasped sharply when these
memories hit him. Noelani had inherited Mipha’s sacred healing ability!

It was also then, while watching Noelani heal Mira on the dock of East Reservoir Lake, with the traditional headpiece of the Zoran royal family on her head, that another powerful memory struck the hero. His eyes closed involuntarily again, as they had done back in the plaza, and the memory began to play through in his head.

When the enchanting glow of Mipha’s hand finally subsided, Link stared down at his newly-repaired fingertip. He flexed his fingers, feeling the minor jab in his knuckle having been completely eradicated. He shook his head and scoffed.

Mipha smiled warmly. “I know it seems a little excessive for me to waste my healing powers on splinters, but I feel like it’s worth it for you. I love using my abilities to take away your pain, no matter how minor it may be. Consider it…an addiction of mine.”

He laughed at her remark. He found it admirable that the Zoran princess, now his wife as of the last couple days, made it her goal to keep him in tip-top shape around the clock. It must’ve been a tiring thing to obsess over, but she did it just for him, her motivation being nothing but his health and happiness. If the couple were ever in a freak accident, with only an ounce of her healing magic left, he would undoubtedly be the one she’d choose to save.

The two of them laid comfortably on the waterbed by East Reservoir Lake, the awning above them protecting them from the howling rainstorm that was expected to plague the Domain until the following morning. The air carried a slight chill due to the biting winds and hanging overcast. This did not bother the couple, however, as they were laying on the bed beneath a large, woven blanket that Mipha had “borrowed” from her father before the rain had started hours ago at sundown.

“I just wish I could always be with you to heal you if the time comes. Whenever you’re forced away to protect Zelda, I feel threatened. I’m…I’m afraid something might happen to you when I’m not there to make it better.” She quivered.

He sighed. “You needn’t worry, Mipha. I promise, I’ll never take on a challenge I know I can’t handle.”

Mipha bit her lip, her hands fiddling nervously. “But…you take on every challenge! Your courage is deserving of great commendation, my love, honest…but dear Hylia, it just makes you so reckless! How am I to know for sure you’ll come back every time you leave…?”

Link looked deeply into his wife’s eyes, analyzing the intensity of her concern. Her golden eyes…shimmering with a beauty that knew no bounds…reflecting nothing but an endless universe of compassion, kindness, and mortal sacrifice. She valued her own life at almost nothing, and she would be willing to move mountains for the ones she cared about. For Link, that meant throwing herself at Calamity Ganon if need be. The value he held to her…could not be expressed with any form of mortal language.
“I’ll tell you how. It’s because I know I will walk away from every battle I face. Recklessness is not the key to courage, nor is it a result. Courage is the ability to believe you can face the impossible. That is why I take on every challenge.” He stated, a strong sense of resolve in his voice. “I would never throw myself at an enemy I know I cannot defeat. I would never risk putting you through the pain of losing me.”

The love present in Mipha’s face only seemed to increase with Link’s powerful statement. She gazed at her Hylian husband with more love, admiration, and respect than she even knew what to do with. To be here with him, in her special place by the East Reservoir, toughing out the rain together under the freshly-built awning......it was more than she could’ve ever prayed for. She wished she could properly express her love to her significant other.

“You know, Link...a lot is about to change in our lives. We may be united as one in the eyes of the goddess now, but that doesn’t mean our mortal duties aren’t going to catch up to us soon. I’ve been hearing rumors that Zelda has been traveling the world recently, recruiting the chosen Champions to pilot the Divine Beasts.” She paused, glaring anxiously at the lake where Vah Ruta was sitting peacefully, its blue energy pockets barely managing to show through the thick haze of the storm. “And, well...I don’t know how to say this delicately, but I have a feeling I know who she’s going to consult when she gets here eventually.”

Link nodded thoughtfully, his eyes remaining fixated on those of his wife. “I see. So...what do you suggest we do about it?”

A strong, fiery blush developed on Mipha’s face, her complexion seeming to shift dramatically. She adjusted her body under the blanket. “Well...Link...do you remember my little proposal? The one I discussed with you before giving you my Zora armor?”

Link raised an eyebrow. “Your proposal?”

Mipha reached forward with her hand to softly caress Link’s cheek. She used her other hand to shyly play with her temple-fin as she waited for Link to catch on to her advances. “I know you remember, Link...”

It took him a moment to remember, but when he did, his confused expression morphed into a seductive smile. On that night, with the rain pouring down around their dry haven on the East Reservoir, Link reached out to take hold of his Zora. “You’re right, I think I do remember...”

He leaned his head in and, after closing his eyes, passionately locked lips with Mipha. The entranced Zora princess followed suit with her husband, wrapping her arms around him and bringing him closer. The couple intensely caressed each other’s backs, the heat of the moment quickly taking hold of them without giving any leeway. Their breathing rapidly strengthened in unison as adrenaline began filling their systems.

Mipha broke free from her lover’s lips for a moment, panting heavily through her mouth. “Do...Do you think...you’d be able to...to take on this challenge?”

Link smirked, sweat already collecting on his forehead. “Precious Mipha...I know I can take on this challenge.”
A wide, loving smile crossed Mipha’s lips at her husband’s confident answer. Subsequently, the couple wasted no time in resuming their energetic kissing and massaging. In a matter of minutes, as the storm raged on around the East Reservoir, their actions escalated until Link climbed on top of his wife under the blanket, and they began making passionate love under the awning, their moans concealed by the sounds of the rain.

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Link’s eyes snapped back open, his mind now overloaded with intimate thoughts of Mipha. His face had turned a bit red during his reminiscence, but he was not aware of it. When his mind had returned to reality, he noticed Mira staring directly at him, her face showing quite a bit of interest.

He noticed from looking at her that her wound had gotten fully healed, her stance having returned to normal. Noelani stood leaning up against her, her hand wrapped completely around her sister’s bicep.

“Are you doing okay, Dad? Did you…remember something else about Mom?” Mira asked.

Link shrugged awkwardly, his blush slowly subsiding. “Eh…sort of.”

Noelani gasped excitedly. She jumped up and down a couple times. “Ooh, what was it about this time? Tell us, tell us!”

He took a deep breath and bit his bottom lip as he tried to find a way out of his predicament.
Link’s eyes tiredly blinked open, the crust around them stinging his tear ducts. He quickly rubbed his eyes, followed by the rest of his face, the grogginess stubborn in his chest. The night had been long, but his rest had felt even longer, thankfully. After all, prior to coming across his daughters, he had been planning to go to sleep hours before at the inn. Walking all the way to Zora’s Domain had not been a treat for the legs.

He stared up at what appeared to be a chiseled turquoise ceiling supported by beams, and suddenly he remembered his whereabouts. He was still up on the mountain, laying on the waterbed on the dock of East Reservoir Lake. A part of him wished he’d turn on his side and see Mipha sleeping peacefully next to him, but obviously that was not the case. Even in his usual distant and dreamy morning mind state, Link knew the reality of the present.

His mind tended to run on its own in the early morning, unless he was on a specific mission with urgent timing. Even though he technically was in this case, nothing felt particularly urgent to the lethargic hero. He thought to himself that, despite Mipha’s absence in his life, Mira and Noelani gave him comfort and closure that helped to give his mission new meaning. He spent so much time and effort working to protect other people, but where had been the ones that mattered to him on a personal level? In the desolation that was the present Hyrule, everyone that mattered seemed to be either gone or missing. To find someone he could hold dear so early in his journey… well, it was the exact boost of motivation he needed. First, however, he wanted to spend more quality time with them and learn more about his past with the Zoras before moving on to travel farther across Hyrule.

With Mira and Noelani appearing in his mind, Link quickly asked himself the question…where are they? With a lazy groan, he leaned up in the bed, putting his elbows beneath him for support. The first thing he noticed was the ongoing curtain of rain that continued to pelt the horizon all around him, the sound having completely vanished from his mind due to its lasting persistence. In the rainy fog, not only could Link barely see Vah Ruta on the lake in the distance, but he still couldn’t even tell the time of day. Had he not just finished sleeping a good eight or nine hours, he’d be sure it was still nighttime. Most notably, though, he couldn’t see his daughters. They weren’t under the awning anywhere with him, and they didn’t appear to be on the dock.

Admittedly, it made sense to him that Mira and Noelani weren’t anywhere on the platform. After all, since they obviously weren’t sharing the bed with him, the only places to sleep would be on a hard, stone surface, and that would’ve been rather brutal for a pair of Zoras with soft, malleable skin. There was a chance they could’ve returned to the Domain to sleep out the night after Link had drifted off in the waterbed, but that also seemed unlikely, since Noelani wouldn’t have been able to descend the stairs without an escort.

Link sat fully up in the bed, allowing his fatigue to fully fade away as his eyes took further
focus of his surroundings. The last thing he wanted to do was step out into the rain so quickly after waking up, especially since his clothes had managed to dry so nicely while he was asleep. Upon scanning the platform, though, he failed to spot his daughters anywhere. He remembered having recovered his memory of Mipha the night before, and how he had weaseled out of having to tell his children, but after that, he forgot what had led to him sleeping on the waterbed with the Zora twins situated elsewhere.

He sighed, knowing he would have to climb out of bed and step into the drenching rain again to get his answer. Turning his body to the side so his feet would fall off the edge of the bed, he leaned himself forward and shifted onto his wobbly legs, his brain taking a moment to stabilize from the dizziness of waking up. He looked toward the ground at the foot of the bed and noticed that Noelani’s headpiece was sitting on top of his pile of gear. He figured she must’ve set it there so the silver wouldn’t tarnish in the rain.

After stepping out into the open from under the awning, Link immediately felt the crisp, cold rain from Vah Ruta’s trunk on his body again. In a matter of seconds, he would surely be soaked inside and out as he had been the previous night. He’d get used to it, as he always did. At the moment, though, he walked over to water’s edge, leaving his gear behind under the awning. The noise made by the rain changed distinctly as he approached the water of the lake, the droplets creating ripples as they repeatedly struck the surface. He couldn’t tell for sure, but the water level seemed to be at least an inch or two higher than it had been before he went to sleep. The Divine Beast was surely doing its work.

He scanned the area, checking for any signs of light red color amongst the endless smear of blue and turquoise that filled the horizon. His daughters, being as they were, should’ve stuck out like sore thumbs. He couldn’t imagine what being a Zoran parent would’ve been like with a child that had blue skin. Probably full of panic, he thought with a chuckle.

Just as he was about to span the length of the dock and check farther out in the lake, Link stopped when he caught a glimpse of the light red color he had been looking for. Stepping closer, he found the twins, sleeping soundly in the water right at the corner where the platform turned into the dock. Like other Zoras, they slept perfectly upright, their motionless bodies suspended in the water with the upper half of their faces floating just above the water level. They seemed to sleep in very close proximity to each other, with the lower half of Noelani’s long tailfin being held in Mira’s arms under the water. Why did they always have to act so adorable with each other?

The part that Link found the most fascinating was their breathing. Their mouths were clearly underwater, but through the prevalent ripples on the surface from the rain, he could see that their chests were still expanding and contracting rhythmically, suggesting they were breathing just fine. He also noticed that there were no bubbles emerging anywhere from their faces. He figured they must’ve been breathing water through their gills, existing just below their chests on both sides of their bodies. What an interesting feature to have.

While he was observing his daughters from the dock above, with almost perfect timing, Mira’s eyes began to flutter open. Her mouth still buried under the water, she glanced back and forth, looking groggily at her surroundings. When she peeked up at Link standing on the dock, she jumped very suddenly, a muffled “mmph” noise escaping her from under the water. Link jumped a little as well from her startled reaction.

She let go of her sister’s flowing tailfin and began treading water so the rest of her face
could emerge from the surface. “Oh, uh…good morning, Dad. You scared me a bit there!”

Link chuckled, awkwardly scratching the back of his neck. Mira continued to look up at her father from the water of the lake, her sister still asleep right next to her. “You seemed to fall asleep rather quickly last night after Noelani healed my burn. I could tell you had recovered a pretty major memory, but I didn’t want to pry like Noelani did.” She explained, giggling. “We came over here to rest after you had flopped over on the waterbed there.”

Link nodded in understanding. Changing the subject, he pointed curiously at Mira’s dozing sister. “So…are you guys able to sleep on land as well?”

Mira grinned. “Oh, of course! I don’t know if you’ve heard already from someone, but to us Zoras, air and water are basically interchangeable. We have lungs and gills, so if we can’t breathe with one of them, we can still use the other. It can be pretty uncomfortable if our lungs fill with water, though. Then we’re pretty much stuck having to keep our gills submerged while we try to get the water out.”

Link grimaced. “That sounds unpleasant.”

Mira nodded. “The funny thing is, all the other races of Hyrule will drown if their lungs fill up underwater, but the only way us Zoras can drown is if we flood our lungs and then step out into dry air. Then we’ll have lungs full of water, and gills full of air!”

Link put a finger to his chin, picturing the scenario in his mind. “Yeah, I suppose you’d be pretty screwed then.”

His daughter laughed, enchanted by the weird conversation they were having. During it all, Noelani still seemed to remain undisturbed, her body drifting around with the water’s gentle current. Link stared at her, watching as her tailfin floated around behind her like a piece of unattended rope. Mira took the moment to study her sister as well, seeing that Link had been doing the same.

“She’s a pretty heavy sleeper, you know.” Mira absently stated. “One time the entire Domain was in a panic when a Lizalfos had managed to sneak into the resting area from underneath the plaza, and during all the commotion, Lani hadn’t even moved. After she woke up, once the guards had taken care of the problem, she was unaware that anything had happened.”

Link laughed heartily at her story. On top of her eye color and quiet, reserved tendencies, Noelani seemed to have also inherited his sleeping habits. He could basically control when his sleep in a sense, and if he didn’t want to be awoken yet, he simply wouldn’t wake up. He could remember times he had slept through Zelda trying to warn him of Blood Moons. It was always obvious to him every time he awoke the next morning and found monsters he had just killed roaming the forests again.

His thoughts were paused as Mira continued. “Also, to be honest, I would really like to know what Lani dreams about. It’s one of those oddly specific things she doesn’t talk to me about much, and when I see her sleeping in the morning after I wake up, the curiosity sometimes drives me insane. I mean…what kinds of dreams could a blind Zora have?”

Link pondered Mira’s question, the curiosity beginning to affect him as well. Without the ability to see, what would things look like to the timid Zora? What sorts of thoughts ran through her head when she wasn’t talking? What sorts of aspirations did she have? After the way she
opened up to him so willingly the night before, he thought to himself, perhaps she’d be willing to share the answers to those questions with him next time they had some time alone together. Then, if Mira was interested, he could fill her in with the details of her dear sibling.

“Well, it’s not a big deal. One of these days I’ll find out.” She shrugged, changing the subject. “Anyway, today I was hoping we could take a walk away from the Domain and visit our birthplace. I feel like it’d be a touching place to share with you while you’re trying to recover your memories of Mom and us. What do you say?”

Link smiled. “Sounds perfect.”

His response caused Mira to share his smile, her face beaming with excitement. “Awesome! It’s quite a long walk, but you’re obviously used to long walks, so I’m not worried. Lani should be okay too. We’ll probably just pass through the Domain first and grab a quick bite from Marot’s general store.”

Link crouched down on the dock, bringing his arms closer to the water where they could reach Noelani’s motionless head. Extending his index finger, he brought his hand up to one of her temple-fins and poked it lightly a few times in an effort to wake her up. She stirred a little bit at first, groaning sleepily under the water’s surface. With enough poking, though, she seemed to begin the wakeup process.

She stretched her arms up over her head, loosening the tightness in her muscles that had settled during her long rest. Her eyes remained closed as she took her time ascending out of her deep slumber. With the lower half of her face still submerged in the water, her eyelids tightened, and she opened her mouth to let out a big yawn.

Suddenly, just as she did so, her eyes shot open rapidly. Mira and Link flinched backwards in surprise as Noelani’s body thrashed around violently for a moment. She swung her arms back down to her sides and pushed at the water so her head would rise above the water’s surface. Once her mouth was exposed to the air, she started hacking and coughing forcefully, causing lake water to dribble down her face.

“Ack…that always happens to me!” She sputtered, water still ejecting from her mouth.

“Are you okay?” Mira asked, trying to conceal an immature giggle.

“Yeah, yeah, I’m fine, sis. Is it time for breakfast, by the way? I’m starving.”

Carrying Noelani down the Reservoir’s steps had been much easier than carrying her up. With gravity and momentum on their side, the trip back to the base of the dam was quick and painless. Beyond there, by returning the way they came, the trio had returned to the plaza of the Domain in only a matter of minutes. Gaddison had not been at her post when they passed onto the bridge, which was apparently because she did not cover morning duty. That small detail had at least been enough to confirm the time of day for Link.

The three of them did not intend to hang around the Domain for long. After stopping at the
general store for some raw fish, they planned to stand around the cooking pot by the inn and partake in a small morning meal before making the long trek west from the mountains. Link admitted to feeling a little irked about having to follow the trail all the way down the Zora River again, after he had just made that trip the day before.

Mira, pondering over the choices of fish sitting in the tray, shrugged her shoulders. “Lani usually hangs onto my ankles when we swim together so she doesn’t get lost or run into stuff. Maybe somehow we could travel down the river faster that way instead of taking the trail?”

“Are you sure you have the strength for that, sis?” Noelani protested. “Dad’s probably pretty heavy with his hero gear and all, and I’m no treat either.”

“Yeah…I don’t swim much.” Link added.

Mira sighed, her brain working to form a suggestion as she picked up and inspected a piece of fish. Link watched his picky daughter sift through the fish selections like a Hylian woman strolling through a department store, even though Sizzlefins and Chillfins were the only specimens the general store seemed to sell. “I don’t know…” She muttered. “Lani and I are able to span the river in only a few minutes, since we’re naturally so adept at swimming. If it were just us, dodging the long walk would be no problem.”

“Do you have a horse, by any chance?” Noelani asked, contributing to the debate.

Link shook his head, his hand scratching his chin thoughtfully. “I keep getting winded trying to calm one down.” He squinted, trying to think of an easy solution. Suddenly, his face lit up. “Oh, but I do have something!”

He reached down to his hip, unhooked the sheikah slate from his belt, and held it up in front of the two Zoras. “I can teleport around with this thing here. If I’ve visited a shrine or climbed a tower in the area we’re heading to, I can be there in an instant.”

Noelani couldn’t see the sheikah slate he was holding, but when Mira caught a glimpse of it, her face seemed to also show excitement. “Hey, that’s great!” She paused. “But…if you teleport there ahead of us, we’d have to follow the river ourselves without protection, and…well…it’s being swarmed by Lizalfos with shock arrows.”

Link scoffed. “They’re all history. I had to clear through them all on my way here yesterday, so that path’s as clear as can be until the next Blood Moon.”

Mira laughed, loving her father’s growing enthusiasm around her and her sister. It seemed that, after a long century in isolation, he was finally beginning to open up to the way he used to be. “Impressing us as always, Dad. I love it.”

Noelani reached out with her arm, grabbing at the air. “May I see the…thing you were mentioning?”

Link handed it to her, and she took it curiously. He and Mira watched as Noelani caressed the sheikah slate with both her hands, her face in a focused state as she observed its rough edges and smooth screen. She took note of the strange warmth it seemed to give off. “Very interesting…
“what does it do?”

“It, uh…can magnetize things…freeze stuff…track my location…teleport me places…” Link listed, counting the features off with his fingers. “Oh, and it can recreate a perfect image of whatever I point it at. I can tell you more about it later.”

Noelani continued feeling the grainy device with her palms, her fingers wrapping around the handle on its top side. “That’s so cool…all of that. I…can feel this weird energy coming from it.”

Link chuckled. “Yeah, it’s, um…quite strange. Here, let me have it back so you don’t accidentally press something on it.”

She obediently handed the alienlike device back to her father, who reattached it to his belt for the time being. It was around that time that Mira finally decided what fish she wanted to buy, so the three of them turned to approach the cashier after she grabbed three specimens that looked as close to it as possible.

Link shook his head. “You don’t have to buy anything for me. I have some stuff in my adventure pack.”

Mira giggled. “The third fish isn’t for you, silly. It’s for Lani. I’m usually okay with eating just one, but she’s usually still hungry after eating two. I’m just getting us off to a modest start for the day.”

Link put his hands on his hips and looked over at Noelani. He huffed through his nose. “So you’re a glutton too, huh?”

Noelani took a step backward. “You’re…you’re not mad, are you?”

He grinned, folding his arms in front of him. “No…I’m proud.”

After Mira had paid the cashier, the trio exited the general store and crossed the short horizontal distance across the plaza to the entrance of the inn, where a small cooking pot sat over a lit fire. The tiny cooking apparatus was shielded from the rain by the overhead structure that shrouded the Domain’s open chambers. Due to having stayed up late the previous night, the three of them were gearing up to eat breakfast after most of the other residents had already eaten. As a result, there was nobody using the cooking pot.

Link pulled some stolen bird eggs out of his pack, along with some various mushrooms and herbs he had found on his journey up to that point. Without giving it a second thought, he tossed the random ingredients onto the pot to simmer. His hope was to make an omelet, but his cooking skills were…dicey, at best. His meals were usually scientific experiments.

Mira nodded her head a few times. “That smells pretty good.”

Link chuckled. “Thanks, I usually just…” He stopped suddenly as he looked up from the cooking pot at Mira, who had stuck half of her fish in her mouth completely raw. “…um…”

Mira bit down with her teeth, severing the entire upper half of the fish and leaving the lower half still dangling in her fingers. “Yes, Dad, we eat fish raw. I hope it’s not too gross for you.”
She mentioned jokingly through her garbled chewing.

He glanced over at Noelani, who had already cleaned through her entire first fish while he had not even been looking. She sloppily licked her fingers, her other hand still holding the second fish. “Cooking them ruins their flavor.” She murmured.

Link shook his head, clearing his mind of the images formed by watching his daughters’ messy eating. He could not deny it…they were definitely chips off the old block. He decided against telling them of the time he had eaten a dish full of seared Moblin guts after he had run out of wolf meat and apples.

Just as he was preparing to pull his creation off the cooking pot, he heard a manly voice say his name from behind. He froze in his tracks for a moment before turning around to face his addressor. Standing before him and the two sisters…was Prince Sidon, a concerned look on his face. Noelani waved playfully to him…but became very quiet. Link, in turn, became quiet as well.

“Link…after you marched out on us yesterday, you seemed to disappear for a while. My father and I were afraid you had left!” He stated, his arms crossing in front of his chest. “Where have you been?”

The four of them sat in awkward, uncomfortable silence as Link failed to form words. All of the confidence he had built up in order to speak with his daughters over the previous night seemed to vanish, and he was left acting like his usual, opaque, mute self. The prince waited patiently for Link to say something, but it seemed like it wasn’t going to happen. Eventually, having read into his thoughts, Mira attempted to answer for him.

“Uncle…he was with us. We took him up to the lake last night, and we spent the night there. We’re just helping him recover his memories.” She explained.

The prince sighed. “I see. That’s very kind of you, Mira, but I’m afraid our issue here with Vah Ruta is quite serious. The dams could give way any day now, and if they do…”

“We know, Uncle.” Mira grumbled, cutting him off. “We’ve been watching the water level very carefully, and we’re sure there’s still time to spare. Dad’s going to take care of it, we promise. Right, Dad?”

Link looked at the ground. He didn’t speak.

Prince Sidon scratched his head. “Well…I hope you’re right. My father and I will be waiting up in his chambers, ready to discuss the plans with you whenever you’re ready. All of us at the Domain…we’re really counting on your help, Link.”

Link simply nodded, his eerie silence remaining. Mira looked directly at him, intrigued by how quickly he had reverted back to his thick shell as soon as he was approached by someone else. Apparently, she figured, his extroversion had only redeveloped for her and her sister’s sake, being that they had started to reconnect so nicely. With someone less familiar in the equation, Link’s standard muteness seemed to fall right back into place. Upon closer inspection, in fact, she noticed that Noelani had done the same thing. Both of them had grown so comfortable with each other over the last twelve hours, and now they were as silent and reserved as ever.
She was shaken from her thoughts as Sidon turned to her. “Oh, also, Muzu’s been looking for you two. He wanted me to tell you that he’s very worried about you and Noelani, especially with Link around. He doesn’t want you getting too attached to him.”

Mira rolled her eyes. “Yeah, well…whatever. He’s going to have to deal with it. Next time you speak with him, tell him he should try living a hundred years of his life without parents, and then staying detached when his beloved father finally returns to the Domain!”

A saddened expression crossed the prince’s face. “Mira…I do believe Muzu’s only considering what’s best for you…”

Mira threw the other half of her partially-eaten fish on the ground. “I don’t care, Uncle! He doesn’t understand! Just tell him to stay out of this! I’m staying with Dad, and no one is changing my mind.”

Not wishing to upset his niece any further, Sidon put both his hands up. He backed away a few steps, preparing to return to the king’s chamber. “I understand, Mira. I…I will let him know the next time I see him. I hope you guys enjoy your reunion, but remember to consult me and my father soon so we can get this Divine Beast under control before it’s too late. Remember…I love you.”

Mira crossed her arms and mumbled under her breath. “…I love you too, Uncle.”

As the prince turned around and left the area, Link carefully removed his concoction from the cooking pot. It seemed to resemble an omelet of sorts, but regardless of if it was or not, it still looked edible to him. He looked up from his food and over to Mira, who still looked slightly annoyed.

“So…Muzu doesn’t want you going near me?” He asked, his comfort returning once the third party was gone.

Mira sighed. “Knowing Muzu, if I can guess, it’s probably because he doesn’t trust you. He still blames Hylians for pulling Mom into the Great Calamity, and what’s worse, he blames you for deciding to have children with her and then joining her in your hero mission. He’s told us many times how irresponsible he thinks it was.”

Link stood silent for a moment, staring at the ground as he pondered the information. “…That seems a little unfair.”

Mira bit her lip. “Well, you have to admit, it does make a bit of sense. He thinks, rather than both of you sticking your necks out like you did, one of you should’ve been ‘considerate’ enough to step down and protect us in case anything went wrong.” She paused. “Specifically, he wanted Mom to stay behind.”

Link’s mouth quivered. “Did…did I force Mipha to partake in the plan…?”

Almost before he could finish the question, Mira quickly shook her head. She stepped around the cooking pot to where Link was standing, and she laid her hand on his shoulder. “No, no, of course you didn’t. Mom insisted on piloting the Divine Beast after Zelda came to appoint her. She did it because she loved you, and she absolutely refused to stand by and let you face Calamity Ganon without her support.” She shrugged sadly. “Muzu just…doesn’t understand that. He doesn’t want to believe that Mom could’ve willingly risked her own life for a Hylian like you.
I think he finds it easier to lay blame on somebody else.”

Link looked up into Mira’s eyes again, as doing so seemed to help him connect with her on a deeper level during meaningful conversations. “So…it’s almost like…by stepping forward to pilot the Beast…she was already trying to ensure that at least one of us walked away to raise the two of you after the Calamity.”

“Well…” She trailed off, squinting her eyes as she reviewed one of the words he used in his sentence. “…yeah, basically. I guess she just…didn’t consider the possibility of the thing turning against her like it did.”

“What did he say? Raising the two of us?” Noelani asked curiously from a few feet away, her mouth full of half-chewed fish.

“I’ll talk about that later, Lani. Now’s probably not the best time.” Mira answered her sister. Noelani nodded in understanding.

Mira turned back to her father, patting his shoulder a few more times for comfort. “Don’t you worry, you had nothing to do with Mom’s death. Anyone with a bit of sense knows it was the fault of Calamity Ganon. I think Muzu just has this idea that you’ll abandon us again if we get too attached to you, but I know you’re not like that. Noelani and I, we’re…” She seemed to trail off again for a moment. “…we’re only victims of fate, not of a bad father.”

Link’s uneasy expression melted into a smile, his mind wrapping in closure once again. Despite the long, difficult century his daughters had faced, he felt relieved and content to finally be with them once again. He just couldn’t help but feel ridiculous for having forgotten about them in the first place after leaving the Shrine of Resurrection. At this moment, though, a mere couple weeks after his reawakening, Link felt like a life without his little Zora twins wasn’t a life worth living at all.

“Hey, sis?” Noelani called. Mira looked over at her sightless sibling. “Did you throw your fish on the floor earlier?”

Mira glanced over at her half-eaten morsel still sitting on the ground by her side of the cooking pot. “Uh…yeah.”

Noelani touched her fingers together sheepishly. “Were you, um…were you going to finish it?”

Mira scrunched her face up in minor disgust. Link shook his head awkwardly. She shrugged, rubbing her shoulder. “No, I guess. Turns out I’m not that hungry right now. Help yourself.”

As Noelani grinned happily, Mira walked over to the piece of food, bent down to pick it up, and dropped it in her sister’s outstretched palm. Before she could even step back to where she had been standing before, Noelani tossed the whole thing into her mouth at once.
Not too long later, after Link had had the chance to finish his own breakfast, Mira led him and Noelani to the front gates of Zora’s Domain, where Link had first stepped foot into the area the day before. The two Zora guards, which were different from the ones that had been on guard there the previous night, greeted Mira and Noelani on their way by. They didn’t seem to pay Link any mind.

The trio crossed the sprawling Great Zora Bridge, leading out of the Domain over Ruto Lake. The glowing, turquoise archways spanning the length of the bridge glittered over their heads from the rain that dripped off their surface. Upon passing through the Domain’s exit, the sound of the wide waterfall in the lake far beneath their feet eclipsed the sounds of the rain hitting the bridge around them. The theme of water was very elegantly emphasized in Zora’s Domain.

At the end of the bridge, the stone ground turned into a miniature oasis of grass and dirt, with a single tree off the edge of the path. The three of them were standing on a small, naturally-carved island that protruded high from the center of the lake below. Staring straight ahead, the massive horizontal bridge of Luto’s Crossing was seen connecting the two halves of the valley on the way to and from the Domain at the spot where the Zora River opened into Ruto Lake.

“Alright, Dad, over there to the right is where the river begins.” Mira announced, pointing to the mouth of the Zora River underneath Luto’s Crossing. “Lani and I are going to swim through the river once we manage to climb off this high cliff. The water’s actually deep enough to just jump right off from here, but for her, it’s a little risky. We’re just going to take our time.”

Link nodded. “And…we’re heading to see your birthplace, right? Where would that be?”

Mira smiled. “That is correct. It’s near Crenel Peak, so make sure to look for that on your little…slate thingy.”

Link took out the sheikah slate and fiddled with the screen until he got it to show the map. He put his finger up to the display, studying the landmarks and trying to find a label for “Crenel Peak.” There wasn’t much to see on his map at the moment, since he still had many towers he had to visit on his journey. Luckily, though, he had explored enough of eastern Hyrule to have a decent portrayal of what the land looked like near Zora’s Domain. With enough searching, he found the label he was looking for.

“Oh, wow…” He gasped. “That’s really far west of here. Once you cross the Hylia River from there, you’re basically in central Hyrule!”

Mira nodded solemnly. “Yep. I’ll tell you more about that when we get there. It was all just another interesting twist of fate for you and Mom.”

Link looked up from the slate at Mira, his face showing intrigue and excitement. Mira gazed back at him with a smile that could move mountains. Just behind her, Noelani continued staring out in the direction of Luto’s Crossing.

Glancing back down at the slate, Link studied the map further. “Alright, so…I’ve been to the Sheh Rata shrine, which is just east of Crenel Peak. It’s situated on a small island in a modest lake where the Zora River seems to branch off to the north and south. The shrine is an oddly-shaped black structure with blue lights scattered all over it. Pretty hard to miss.”
Mira nodded in understanding. “So shall we meet you there? It should only be a couple minutes for us to splash through the river.”

Link scratched his chin. “How about I meet you on the western shore of that lake, rather than on the island itself? I’ll have to swim there myself at some point anyway.”

Mira flashed him a thumbs-up. “Sounds good. So we’ll see you there soon?”

“Of course.” He paused, holding up his finger. “And by the way…right where the river begins to open up, you should find a large Lizalfos camp situated right over the water. Just bank to the right and swim right under it. I already killed off the inhabitants yesterday.”

Mira giggled. “Got it.”

Link held the slate up in front of him, and, with the map still open on the display, he tapped the Sheh Rata shrine. Mira watched with shock as a luminescent blue light began to emit from the slate, enveloping her father in its snake-like grasp. In a matter of moments, he seemed to dematerialize on a molecular level, his entire body disappearing with all of his belongings. The remains of his being, now looking like tiny blue strands, cascaded gently into the sky before vanishing from sight.

“Dear goddess…” Mira muttered.

“What is it? Did Dad do that weird teleport thing?” Noelani asked curiously.

“Yeah…he just…wow. That slate is really something else.” Mira mumbled, still watching the sky with great amazement. “Anyway, let’s get heading over there, Lani. While we’re there, if Dad still doesn’t remember, we can fill him in on Murdoch.”

When Link’s vision returned to him, the dark, dreary overcast of Zora’s Domain was replaced with the bright, inviting light of the sun. Few clouds dotted the sky in this area, and the air was much warmer. Behind him was the Sheh Rata shrine, its glowing blue highlights mostly overridden by the sun’s brilliant rays. At the base of the small hill on which the shrine was situated, the calm waters of the shallow pool lapped at the sands of the tiny island he was now standing on. The surface of the lake reflected the blue shroud of the sky.

Since Link had clearly been in this place before, he wasted no extra time admiring the scenery. Jogging right down the side of the hill and into the shallows of the lake on the western side, he began the short swim to the other side. He judged the distance to be only about fifty feet or so, and to add to this convenience, the water couldn’t have been deeper than seven or eight feet. The water still felt a bit cold, but after having been drenched in Vah Ruta’s rainwater for nearly twenty-four straight hours, Link barely noticed it.

Right on the shoreline, where the sand receded into the soil, a small apple tree stood out against the grass. Once Link made it across the small, watery passage, he trudged over to the tree and sat down underneath it, his back resting against the trunk. He took a deep, generous breath, allowing his muscles to relax after the quick swim. It was here, in the shade of the apple tree, that
he chose to wait for his daughters.

Immediately after arriving at the shrine just moments ago, the large, rocky hill that the slate labeled as “Crenel Peak” was visible on the shore to the west of the tiny island. It wasn’t exactly tall enough to be called a mountain, but nonetheless, it rose considerably high above the rest of the landscape. Link pulled out the sheikah slate again and studied the map around the peak.

The hill itself seemed to be mostly rocky, but to its left, a marked path seemed to span to the north and south. On the southwestern slope of the peak, an indentation seemed to exist with a bundle of trees and a tiny pond. South of the peak, there seemed to be a large expanse of relatively flat grass, with a few ruins scattered amongst the plains.

He had to ask himself...why were Mira and Noelani hatched way out here, so far away from Zora’s Domain? How did their eggs get so far west? Had it been Mipha’s idea to isolate herself from the rest of her people when the time came? Had it been his own? Had it been intentional in general, or had something gone wrong? Had the eggs maybe washed down the Zora River and been found by someone? The questions boiled furiously in his mind, causing him to become anxious for the twins to arrive so they could venture to the exact spot and have his questions answered.

Luckily, he didn’t have to wait too long. After only five minutes of playing with the sheikah slate under the apple tree, Link stood up eagerly when he saw a trail of splashing water appear on the horizon and begin to approach his location. He waved the hand holding the sheikah slate back and forth in the air, hoping to catch the figure’s attention, even though it was kind of hard to see at their current distance.

In a few more seconds, Link was able to distinguish Mira and Noelani, their individual forms linked together vertically. Just as she had described before, Mira was towing Noelani along behind her, her sister’s hands grappling firmly to her ankles as they both swam together. Without her sibling’s guidance, Noelani would’ve surely had a hard time making it here on her own. After all, the rocks on either edge of the Zora River were jagged and rough, and ramming into one would’ve been anything but pleasant.

As they approached the shore, Mira turned her body upright, signaling Noelani to let go. With Link in her sight, she allowed herself to drift freely the rest of the distance so as not to come crashing into the gritty sand at too high a speed. She gently turned so her front side could face her sister, who was still in the lake, staring the wrong way.

“I’m over here, Lani. Dad’s right here on the shore behind me.” Mira called. Once she provided Noelani with a voice she could follow, she giggled a bit as her sister turned towards her and began treading water in their direction. Once she got close enough to the shore, Link stepped forward, reached out, and took her hand. She stepped up onto the beach with the other two after the soles of her feet had found the earth beneath her.

“I hope that swim wasn’t too tiring for you two.” Link said.

“Nah, not in the slightest.” Mira answered, holding her hand up. “The current is always in your favor while leaving the Domain. We can swim up waterfalls, as you know, so when the
Noelani shivered. “It’s especially wild when you careen *down* a waterfall without seeing it coming first.”

Link grimaced at that thought, hoping his blind daughter wasn’t speaking from experience. Mira seemed to reel back a bit from that line as well. A brief, weird silence fell between the three, the look on Noelani’s face making the situation feel even more odd.

“Well, uh…” She laughed awkwardly. “Shall we get headed?”

Mira promised the walk wouldn’t take too long, and from their current location, it didn’t seem like it would be. After turning completely around towards the inland, the trio set out along the grassy path that caressed the southern side of Crenel Peak. Link’s mind was as fully awake as it could be, his eyes darting around the area in anticipation for their destination. His active mind sifted through the countless possibilities of Mira and Noelani’s birthplace, as he knew they were somewhere very close.

“The cliffside along here is too steep and rough for us to climb.” Mira explained. “I know it probably isn’t a problem for you, but for me and Lani, it’s a bit dangerous. We aren’t Gorons, and we sure weren’t built for earthy terrain! The grassy part here extends up the peak like a nice, smooth ramp farther down the path here, so that’s why we’re going this way.”

His one hand still holding Noelani’s to keep her tethered to the group, Link used his other hand to rub his chin. “Do you guys come here often? You seem to know a bit about this area.”

Before Mira could open her mouth, Noelani actually answered the question for her. “No, we’ve only been around a couple times in our whole life. Not counting the time we hatched out here in this area, the first time was when Muzu brought us out here while we were really young, shortly after we lost you and Mom to the Great Calamity. The second time was between fifteen and twenty years ago, when Uncle Sidon came with us on a fishing trip. We passed sort of close to this area, so he wanted to stop by and see the special place with us.”

“Was he curious or something?” Link asked.

Noelani and Mira both nodded. Mira remained quiet so her sister could continue speaking. “He had heard some stories about us hatching really far away from the Domain. I guess…when we were out in this area together…he just wanted to see for himself.” She explained, her face remaining aimed at the ground. “Like everyone else in the royal family, going back many generations, Uncle Sidon hatched right in the king’s chamber. He’s only about two decades older than us.”

Link had to remind himself again that twenty years to a Zora was like three or four years to a Hylian. Admittedly, he should’ve been fluent with that fact by now, since the very Zoras he had been spending time with over the last day and a half were over a hundred years old, and they were about as young and energetic as an athletic Hylian in his later teen years.

“That’s very interesting.” Link mused as Mira led them both to their right, up the grassy slope of Crenel Peak. They paid no mind to the sudden incline. “So do you guys hold the record for being hatched the farthest away from home?” He figured information like this was a bigger
deal to the Zoras and the Rito, since it was supposedly much more difficult to protect a group of eggs when the parents were far from home.

Noelani didn’t know the answer to this, so Mira stepped in. “For the royal family, yes, we do. We don’t like to count it, though, since we’re not exactly fans of the royal title. I’m assuming Lani already told you all that last night?”

Link and Noelani both nodded, accustomed to Mira’s ability to draw accurate conclusions from very few clues. With this response, she continued. “As for the general case, we do not hold the record. I don’t even think we come in second or third.”

“Didn’t Mei lay her eggs by Lake Hylia?” Noelani chimed in. “I thought I overheard that a while back.”

Link’s eyes widened at that idle mention. Lake Hylia was right next to the Great Plateau where he had emerged from the Shrine of Resurrection. It was incredibly far southwest of Zora’s Domain.

“Mei?” Mira asked.

“Yeah, I think she’s Fronk’s wife. She likes to catch fish in Lake Hylia all the time. I guess she got too caught up in the moment that one time.” She added, giggling slightly.

Their directionless conversation had done a good job of distracting Link long enough for their upwards trek to reach its end. Eventually, roughly halfway up the southwest side of Crenel Peak, the incline they had been following gave way into a pit that was full of evergreen trees. The pit was deep enough in the side of the hill that the tops of the evergreens didn’t reach the trio’s current elevation. To the far left of the pit relative to their position, nestled against the rocky wall, was a very still and shallow pond. From where they currently stood, Link could see an abundance of gnats and other insects freely roaming in the air amongst the miniature forest below.

“This is it. Right down in there.” Mira declared, her arms folding in front of her.

Link’s gaze shot over to Mira very quickly, his eyes wide with shock. “What? Are you serious?”

“Yep, totally.” Mira assured with a nod. “That tiny wooded meadow in there on the side of Crenel Peak is where Noelani and I opened our eyes for the very first time. It’s pretty peaceful, don’t you think?”

Link looked back at the modest slice of nature carved out before them on the slope of the rocky hill. He shook his head in disbelief. “It’s just…so simple. So quiet and…humble.”

“It’s the perfect venue for the start of new life, in my opinion.” Mira added. “Jump down in there and have a look around. I’m going to take Noelani around to the other side where there’s a level entrance. She’s not fit to go trying any parkour.”

Following his daughter’s invitation, Link wasted no time in jumping right off the small cliff and into the pit. He deployed his paraglider at the apex of his jump so he wouldn’t sustain any damage from the fall. After landing gently in the tall, wavy grass below, he looked around in all directions, viewing his children’s birthplace from a level viewpoint.
Now that he was standing down in the pit itself, Link noticed a vast collection of colorful flowers dotting the grass that coated the ground. Amongst even those, Link could see the blooming tips of hearty radishes and Hyrule herbs swaying in the gentle breeze. Tucked away in the farthest area of the pit, the clear waters of the shallow pond sat motionless, almost invisible to the fleeting eye. The pond, in essence, was barely deep enough to not be called a puddle. On all sides of the meadow, protruding a daunting distance upwards, were the rocky cliffs that defined the edges of the pit. Despite the closed-in feeling they created, the open sky above still shone its natural radiance on the plants below.

“This place…” He whispered to himself. “…it’s so secluded…”

After a few minutes of gazing at his surroundings, Mira came walking into the meadow with Noelani right next to her. They had come from the other direction, where the slope of the peak led straight into the meadow through an opening in the cliffside. She watched her father look with fascination upon the place where she had first entered the world. It looked almost like a safe-haven to them, a place shielded from the storms of Calamity Ganon by its hidden depth within the side of the hill.

“Isn’t it beautiful?” She asked.

Link couldn’t even respond right away. His mind ran wild with thoughts of how he and Mipha could’ve found a place like this in the first place, let alone pursue it for a spot to have their children. It was tranquil and admirable, and most of all, it was private, but…it was just so far away from Zora’s Domain. Why hadn’t she left her eggs by the East Reservoir?

“Yeah, it is…” He sighed, trailing off.

“Here, come over here. This is really cool.” Mira requested, pulling Noelani along behind her as she headed over to the shallow pond. Link obeyed her request, walking with them to the edge of the pit where the water sat. The water was cradled directly against the tall, rocky cliff, its entire body shaded from the sun. The soil beneath it was rather sandy and grainy, a product of the water that had always covered it over the many years.

Mira stared down solemnly at the water, her face showing signs of thoughtfulness and reflection. Link couldn’t tell from looking at her what she was feeling at this point, but he had a feeling he knew where she was going with it. After a short minute in silence, the next time she opened her mouth, Link’s suspicion was confirmed.

“This is the spot, Dad. Our eggs hatched right here in this water, over a hundred years ago. This tiny pond is our birthplace.” She whispered.

Link, awestruck at the fact, stared with fascinated intrigue at the unmoving waters sitting right by their feet. A part of him didn’t even want to touch the waters of the pond out of respect for the history born…or rather…hatched from them. He felt almost like an enchanted power was dangling over them, fueled by the presence of his two daughters standing with him at the place where they were brought into Hyrule. A power…that he couldn’t deny.

He closed his eyes, allowing his mind to clear as the pond greeted him with another
captivating memory. Mira grinned as she sensed the connections forming in her father’s mind.

“Do you think they’re going to blame me?” Mipha asked nervously.

“Nah, there’s no way. I’m sure the other Champions have been having problems too.” Link answered nonchalantly.

“Well, perhaps, but…Vah Ruta has already passed all of the functionality tests. For him to malfunction so soon after entering my care, well…I just feel so responsible!”

Link found interest in the way Mipha referred to the Divine Beast as “him,” rather than “it.” His wife certainly had an affectionate way of going about things, and now that he thought about it, being selected as Vah Ruta’s master must’ve been a huge deal to her. He had to wonder…did the Divine Beasts really have feelings, and were the Champions the only ones capable of sensing them? On what level could they communicate?

“Hey there, don’t beat yourself up over it. If Daruk can learn to handle his Beast after so much struggle, then I’m sure you can. You control that machine with so much grace and elegance.” Link cooed, plunging the depths of his vocabulary in an attempt to sound romantic.

Mipha blushed. “Oh…you’re too kind to me, Link. Besides, I suppose now…” She paused, caressing her slightly distended abdomen with both her hands. “…I have other things I should be worrying about.”

The couple walked calmly together along the path by Crenel Peak, their goal being to reach Hyrule Castle by sundown so they could inform the council of Vah Ruta’s malfunction. The mighty Divine Beast did not appear significantly damaged, but whatever had been ailing the large device seemed serious enough to report. Upon inspection, Link could not see anything wrong himself, but as had been the case with Mipha and the other Champions, only the Beast’s master could apparently sense issues within the machinery. It’s almost like they were connected on a higher plane or something.

With Mipha’s official Champion Trials approaching just around the corner, she had found it critically necessary to address Vah Ruta’s issues as soon as she had felt them. Nothing, in her mind, could be allowed to interfere with the ancient prophecy. One slip-up, she reasoned, could very well spell the victory of Calamity Ganon and the utter destruction of Hyrule. It was for this reason, with their schedule boxing them further and further in with each passing day, that the pregnant Zora princess insisted on venturing immediately to Hyrule Castle to get the problems sorted out.

“You know, Link, you’re a Champion, too. Haven’t you had any responsibilities regarding your new role?” She asked, looking up from her belly to meet his gaze.
Link shrugged. “No, I haven’t. The Master Sword tested my strength enough already, so I’m assuming the council just left it at that. They don’t seem to need any further verification.”

Mipha giggled. She always did so in a way that seemed to make Link’s heart shudder. “Well why should they require verification from the Sword’s chosen hero? They’re already well aware of your talents.” She sighed. “I’m just surprised they haven’t tried to pull you away from the Domain any more than usual since the selection.”

“Well, I mean…we’re still okay, aren’t we? We’re still making it work.” He countered.

“Oh, of course! Of course…” She trailed off, her smile fading.

“Are you okay?” He asked, noticing her change in energy.

“I just…have this selfish feeling.” She explained, biting her lip. “A part of me…is almost impatient for Calamity Ganon’s return. I keep getting these yearning feelings…like I’m just waiting for him to appear…so we can perform our duties as Champions and get back to living our own lives. Does…does that make sense?”

Link nodded solemnly, his eyes fixed on those of his wife. “Yes, perfectly.”

“And you know…” She continued, her expression growing flustered. “…it’s not even like we know for sure if he’s going to return during our lifetime or not. It’s been ten thousand years since his last appearance, after all. To be honest…I’m genuinely afraid of that possibility. If Calamity Ganon doesn’t show up…we may have to spend the rest of our lives constantly watching…constantly on guard…constantly waiting…for an adversary that would never show his face.” Link glanced down as he noticed her rest her hand on her abdomen again. “A life like that…for our upcoming family…just sounds awful.”

A look of sadness crossed Link’s face as he rested his hand on his Zora’s shoulder. She gazed up at him, her eyes showing wariness, stress, and exhaustion. He couldn’t imagine what her thoughts could’ve been doing to her. After all, she had only first earned the title of “Champion” a couple short months ago, and she hadn’t even begun her trials yet. Her own psyche, though, as it seemed, was posing her most demanding trial yet. He couldn’t help but wonder…did she ever regret her decision to conceive with him?

Link stopped walking and, using the hand he had on her shoulder, pulled her into a tight embrace. Slightly surprised by his advance, but nonetheless accepting, Mipha returned the gesture. The couple stood quietly in each other’s arms for a few minutes, escaping almost entirely from the stresses of their lives. She closed her eyes, taking a deep, calm breath into the collar of her husband’s tunic.

“The signs are clear. Ganon will appear, and it will be soon. I’ve spoken very closely with Zelda lately, and she tells me she’s been getting omens from the goddess. If anything, I trust what she says.” He reached up with one of his hands and began smoothly stroking the length of her tailfin, causing her to hum into his shoulder. “I know it’s a weird thing to say to try and comfort you, but I promise, because of Calamity Ganon, we will get to have our family and be happy. I promise.”

Mipha smiled, looking up at him with that familiar display of love in her eyes. It was so
difficult to doubt Link when he gave a promise. His dependability and trustworthiness were two primary reasons she had fallen in love with him in the first place. “You know, Link...sometimes I feel...like the goddess wanted us to be together. Being with you...it just...makes me feel so safe...so secure...so complete. I could never imagine that...that......” She paused suddenly, her expression changing dramatically. “…that……”

Link raised an eyebrow. “That what?”

Mipha struggled to get the next words out, her voice stuttering incomprehensibly. Link looked at her with concern, his confusion growing at her abnormal behavior. He noticed that the content, loving expression on her face had begun to change into one of uncertainty and discomfort. His heart skipped a beat. “...Are you alright?”

The Zora princess quickly reached down with one hand, clutching her midsection. Link watched with worry as his wife’s eyes squinted, her jaw clenching as if she was being introduced to feelings of pain. Her legs began to buckle.

“L...Link...” She gasped, her limbs trembling. “The eggs...I think they’re coming...!”

A sinking feeling appeared in Link’s chest. The majority of his upper body went numb. “Wait...right now?”

“Y...Yes, right n...now!” She exclaimed, her breaths short and quick. Her mind running a-mile-a-minute, she attempted, in vain, to slow her breathing. “Okay, let’s just...just...just calm down. Just don’t p...panic.” She stuttered. “We just n...need to find a body of...still water.”

“Okay, I understand.” Link responded as calmly as possible, his face showing the same confidence and determination that, usually, could console Mipha. Undoubtedly, however, this time was different.

He took Mipha’s hand and began leading her further down the path they had already been traveling, en route to the Hylia River. He moved her along with considerable speed, but not faster than her legs were able to take her. Even then, with her muscle support weak from her delivery-in-progress, they were not able to move very fast.

Link stopped suddenly as his frazzled mind came to a realization. “Wait...did you say still water?”

“Yes...” She answered, her voice quiet and raspy. “…the eggs can’t sur...survive in moving c...current!”

“Well we can’t go to the river then!” He declared loudly, his mind racing to conjure up another solution. He looked around quickly in all directions, struggling to find a lake, or even a pond, where Mipha could spawn her eggs. From their current location on the junction of the path, nothing of such sorts could be seen nearby.

He did, on the other hand, notice a spot to their left where the path seemed to branch off into an alcove in the side of Crenel Peak, the pit within filled with evergreens and tall, flowing grass. Their options limited, he tightened his grip on his wife’s hand and made the turn, leading her into the grassy carving. “There’s a lot of flora in here! I bet something of value might turn up around the corner!”
Mipha did not respond to his exclamation, her face locked in concentration. Her eyes were tensely closed, and her grip on Link’s hand was very firm and rough. As Link ushered her into the secluded meadow, his eyes darted around rapidly in search of signs of water. The couple was visited by a few bugs, which Link effortlessly swatted away. The small insects did, however, prove to be a good sign.

At the far corner of the vegetated, hillside pit, a small reserve of clear, glittering water sat nestled against the rock. His face lighting up, he quickly led his Zora over to the reflective, liquid body. Once he had her standing at the lip of the pond, he pressed his hand to the back of her neck, and he began to lay her gently on her back in the water’s shallow depths, the entirety of her face, chest, and belly resting above the water’s surface. After he let go of her hand, Mipha immediately brought her palm down to her pulsating abdomen, where it had been a few minutes before.

With her body now laying down, the lightheadedness that had been plaguing the delivering Zora began to dissipate slightly. She was able to open her eyes once again, and her breathing began to slow to a more controlled, deliberate pace. She raised her head by an inch and glanced down at her husband, who had taken both her legs and parted them to the side.

“Link…?” She wheezed.

Link looked up at her, shifting his focus for a moment to meet her gaze. “Hm?”

“Th...Thank you. This...This is such a b...big deal for me.”

Link smiled. “Hey, you know, this is technically my fault anyway. You’re supposed to be screaming angrily at me, demanding why I did this to you.” He joked, chuckling. Mipha managed a small chuckle as well. He cleared his throat. “Now, just breathe slowly. We’ll do this one push at a time.”

Her labor went on for roughly a couple hours. The entire time, Link successfully managed to keep the situation under wraps as he coached Mipha’s breathing and the timing of her contractions. Eventually, later that afternoon, after the sun had begun to dip closer to the horizon, Mipha had finally managed to evict her second, cantaloupe-sized egg into Link’s outstretched hands. With the same tender, gentle care he had given the first egg, he reached around to his wife’s side, and deposited the squishy orb in the unmoving waters of the pond. He wiped away the beads of sweat from his forehead, his stress from the ordeal finally beginning to subside.

Mipha panted softly, the pressure in her pelvis feeling significantly less demanding. Her eyes remained locked on her Hylian husband, who had been kneeling consistently by the pond for the last couple short hours. A small smile appeared on her lips.

“Link?” He looked up at her, his expression showing relief and content. She felt a sudden wave of affection wash over her as she laid before him in the shallow pond, her chest still heaving slightly. “…I love you.”

Link shimmied around to her side on his knees, his shins too numb to allow him to stand up. Without a word, he leaned down toward her head, and kissed her firmly. Returning the favor without a moment’s hesitation, Mipha reached up with her arms and cradled the hero’s neck. During the minutes they shared together in that state, their lips stuck to each other like glue, time seemed to freeze. Nothing more could complete their moment together.
“So are you feeling good now?” Link asked, winking playfully.

Mipha nodded, giggling euphorically. “I think I do! Except, I get the feeling…that perhaps…” Her face became concentrated again, her hands slowly clenching into fists. “…Link…”

Link’s eyes widened. “Oh, are you not done yet? Are you having a third one?”

The Zora princess returned to her breathing regiment, her eyes closing a second time. “I… I think s…so…”

Link hurried back around to the foot of the pond. He used his hands to push apart his wife’s legs a second time, extending his arms in patient wait for their next visitor.

“Alright, Mipha, on my mark…”

Link’s eyes snapped back open as his memory ended. The first thing he saw after looking back up from the sparkling pond was Mira, her smile still there as her eyes focused on his.

“Was it pleasant?” She asked.

“Wh…what?” He stuttered, flabbergasted by what his mind had presented to him.

“Your memory. Was it sweet?”

He exhaled quickly, his mouth curling into an awkward smile. “Oh, it was sweet alright…”

Noelani spoke up from behind her sister, continuing with a line she must’ve been waiting to share with him. “You know, after our eggs were left here, Mom was unable to stay behind and attend to them during the following months, since her Champion Trials were already overdue. We heard from Muzu a long, long time ago that you had insisted on staying here in this place, day and night, to watch over us until the day we finally hatched.”

Link gasped slowly, his mind saturated with astounding information. “…Really?”

Mira nodded, continuing her sister’s story. “And once we finally hatched, you brought us back to the Domain completely by yourself. Being the tiny, tadpole-like things that we were, you carried us back to Mom and the rest of the Zoras in small glass jars you had filled with water from this pond. We obviously don’t remember the day it happened, but we’ll never forget the story.”

Link struggled with the tears that tried desperately to flow from his eyes. There was so
much his life had been leading to back then...so much he had built for himself and his wife, the late Zora Champion. To be sharing this moment with his offspring...was a feeling of pure, ecstatic joy, and the feeling was amplified by the romantic memory he had just recovered. There was one detail from his memory, however, that had him confused.

“You know...” He uttered. “...Mipha had laid three eggs in my memory just a moment ago. What, um...whatever happened to the third one?”

He noticed both Mira and Noelani biting their bottom lips. His eyes darted back and forth between them, scanning their peculiar responses with a raised eyebrow. Apparently, they had neglected to tell him something during their time together.

Mira cleared her throat. “Yeah, uh...that third egg would’ve been Murdoch.”

Link crossed his arms curiously. “…Murdoch?”

“Yeah...” Noelani added timidly. “…our brother.”
Condemnation

Link’s lips quivered. He blinked a few times in rapid succession. “Did…did you say…your brother?”

Both the siblings nodded at the same time. They seemed to have solemn, thoughtful looks on their faces, which were causing questions to form in Link’s mind. Every time he thought he had completed the picture of his past with his family, Mira and Noelani had more curveballs to throw at him. At this rate, he was beginning to feel like he would never truly understand how things had been before the tragic Calamity. More importantly, though, why had his daughters neglected to tell him about a third child for so long?

“Yes, Murdoch’s our brother.” Mira stated, answering her father’s winded-sounding question. “You and Mom picked his name together after thinking it over for…quite a long time.”

“So, you’re saying…I have a son?” He gasped, his mind still overflowing with shock. “And he’s…alive and well?”

“How does it feel?” Noelani asked curiously from behind her sister, her mouth showing a tiny smile.

“I just…I…” He stuttered. “…Why haven’t you guys told me about him before? All this time…I thought you two were all I had in this…this…desolate future.”

The siblings were intrigued by their father’s unusual choice of words. It seemed like, every day, they were digging deeper and deeper into Link’s true interior. His shell of silence, introversion, and secrecy was, at this point, a piece of history to Mira and Noelani. It had been too many years since they were last able to experience their beloved parent on such an emotional level. Every display of humanity he showed held massive significance to the young Zora pair, no matter its nature. In this case, however, its nature…strangely…did not seem positive.

“Dad, are…are you okay?” Noelani asked nervously. “We thought you’d be happy to hear this news!”

“Believe me, it’s good news…” Link sighed. “It’s just…well……” He seemed to trail off, biting his lip uncertainly.

“In case you’re worried, Murdoch is alive, just to let you know. We didn’t mean to make it sound like he passed away or anything.” Mira explained, holding her hand out to console Link. “Especially considering how rare it is for Zoras to have three eggs at one time. Most of them don’t tend to survive.”

“Well that’s good to know, but it’s not what I was thinking. Perhaps…I’ll just approach this differently. How’s Murdoch doing?” He asked, his expression showing a slight amount of worry.

Mira hummed awkwardly, causing Noelani to do the same. Link watched them as they both shifted their weight around uncomfortably. Noelani rubbed her shoulder. “…We’re not really sure.”

He raised an eyebrow in confusion. “Wh…what do you mean you’re not sure? Haven’t
you talked to him recently?"

Mira stepped forward. “Well…no. You see…he keeps to himself an awful lot.”

“Well so do I and Lani, but the three of us seem to be doing just fine together. What’s the deal exactly?” He prompted firmly.

Noelani blushed a little bit when her father said her name. It had been a long hundred years without him, that was for sure. The sisters noticed, though, that Link had been questioning them rather sternly about the brother they had neglected to mention over the last twenty-four hours. It was natural for him to be curious, of course, as he had been during their time together, since he was still trying to piece together the past as wholesomely as possible. His energized and needy mannerisms this time, however, were of notable importance to them. Obviously, he seemed to care very greatly about his son.

Mira tapped her fingers together shyly, slightly intimidated by Link’s urgent behavior. “Um…let’s just say he hasn’t been doing too well lately.”

Link looked concerned. He crossed his arms in front of him. “How ‘lately?’ Did something bad happen to him? Did he have his heart broken by someone? You have to tell me if they did, because if I find out who they are…”

Mira threw her arms forward, stopping her father mid-sentence. “No, no, no, Dad…it’s nothing like that, I swear. I’m pretty sure Murdoch could swing any girl he wanted, to be honest. He’s every bit of what the young Zoras want.” She assured, scratching her neck as she realized she had gone off topic. “But anyway…his problem is much deeper-rooted than that. Something…less like the sting of a breakup, and more like the dull ache of….” She hesitated, hiding her face from Link a little bit. “……an absent father…?”

The realization hit Link like a freight train. Exactly what he had been beginning to fear since hearing about his son…turned out to be the case. He figured, from what he was hearing, that Murdoch was emotionally afflicted from the loss of his parents after the Great Calamity. It was a brutal and wickedly unfortunate circumstance, and also one that he had initially feared for Mira and Noelani. The sisters had proved, though, during their interactions with him recently, that they had had an admirable abundance of emotional strength throughout their century as orphans. Because of it, they had seemed to grow into fine, independent young women during Link’s hibernation in the Shrine of Resurrection. Murdoch…on the other hand…must not have been as lucky, and the sudden guilt Link was feeling from this fact caused an internal uproar.

He looked towards the ground, suddenly losing his excited energy. “…I see.”

Noelani reached her arms out in front of her, holding them at full extension in the direction she thought Link was standing. Mira touched her sister’s wrist and gently nudged her towards their father, assisting her in going for a hug. She closed her arms around him as soon as she felt his shoulders in her grasp, squeezing him with all her might with the hopes that her tight embrace would suffocate his demons. She may have been able to heal physical wounds, but it was the emotional wounds she always strived to fix the most.

The quiet Zora opened her mouth to speak. “You see…this is why we haven’t told you about our brother until now. We were afraid you’d start to feel bad about leaving us. Even despite
the great things you did for Hyrule during the Calamity.”

“Does…does Murdoch still like me?” Link asked, seemingly disregarding Noelani’s encouraging remark.

Mira, from her spot a few feet away, seemed to shake her head sadly. Her face showed signs of intense sorrow. “I…I really doubt it. That’s the other reason we didn’t tell you about him right away, I’m afraid. He’s grown so…so bitter over the last hundred years. Ever since you and Mom disappeared in the Great Calamity…he hasn’t been the same.”

Hearing this news, Link finally returned Noelani’s affectionate hug. He did, indeed, find great comfort in the company of his loving daughters, but to learn of the existence of a resentful son? Such a discovery left a lingering bad taste in the Hylian hero’s mouth. He felt, rather quickly, that appeasing the Divine Beasts and saving Hyrule was suddenly unimportant. There was something he had to deal with first.

He took a deep, thoughtful breath. “Please…tell me what he’s like. Tell me about your brother.”

Noelani let go of Link and backed away a few steps until she was standing next to Mira again. Mira looked at her sister, unsure of who was going to answer him first. Having been distant from their third sibling for quite some time, neither of them had any recent specifics, but the deeper, more meaningful aspects of him were still ever present in their minds. They were aspects that could not be forgotten. Link watched the two of them patiently, his behavior having grown considerably more calm and focused.

Mira stepped forward to share some of her brother’s surface attributes. “Well…Murdoch’s a member of the Zora Guard. He has served amongst them for…countless years now, earning much respect from the rest of our people.”

Link nodded his head solemnly, an instinctual feeling of fatherly pride building in his chest. His son was a Zora guard? Certainly, he had managed to show great strength and resolve during the years of Link’s absence. He had to wonder, though…did Murdoch’s motivation come from him, or had it been just the opposite? Had it been out of spite?

Mira continued. “He had actually climbed the ranks pretty quickly, in fact. For the last half a decade or so, he’s been the guard team’s captain, answering only to our Uncle, who, well…runs a lot of things. He is the prince, after all.”

Link’s eyes widened. “Wait…so you’re telling me that your brother…my son…is the captain of the Zora guard?”

Mira stared directly into Link’s eyes and nodded. “That’s right.”

Link’s entire world was still tipping on a loose axis. The new information presented itself with so many angles…so many additional questions…and so many conflicting implications. He wanted to be proud of Murdoch…with every fiber of his being. However, many of his long-lost son’s motives were still mysterious to him, being that he had just learned of his existence a few short minutes ago. One of his first thoughts, for instance, was the fact that Mipha had desired a
stress-free life for her children, lacking in demanding responsibilities. For Murdoch to have gone and assumed authority in the Zora Guard……was it bravery, loyalty, or selflessness? Or was it……instead…an act of blatant disobedience?

He could only stutter as his mind flooded with confictions. “I…I…”

“Physically……” Mira resumed, cutting him off slightly. “…Murdoch’s rather slim. He makes up for it, though, with extraordinary fighting prowess, the likes of which no Zora has ever seen before. It came as no surprise when he managed to secure his place as captain of the guards. He has yet to lose a duel to anybody.”

“…Is that right?” Link uttered.

Noelani chimed in before he could say anything else. “Everyone knows he got it from you, Dad. We know Mom was pretty good with a spear and all, but even she knew that Murdoch’s skills came from you. It’s um…it’s pretty cool. He also has really quick judgment, and we’ve heard rumors that his sixth sense is so strong, he can predict the movements of Lizalfos all the way in Gerudo Desert.”

Mira rolled her eyes and giggled at her sister’s latter statement. “Those rumors come from his open admirers. As Murdoch’s sisters, we should be going around debunking those silly theories, but we don’t want to get in the way of our sibling’s thriving fan club.”

Link scratched the back of his head, glancing awkwardly at Mira. “Fan…club…?”

“Totally. Murdoch doesn’t have nearly as many admirers as our Uncle does, but he definitely has a few nutcases of his own.” Mira sighed. “Lani and I used to love hearing him tell his crazy stories about the girls that would approach him, but that was before he…well, sort of…shied away from us.”

Link pondered to himself over how Mipha would’ve felt knowing her son was attracting so much flirty attention. He decided to dismiss the thought. “So…how long ago did he stop talking to you?”

The twins bit their lips. Noelani shrugged her shoulders. “It’s hard to say, really. It sort of happened gradually, but if we had to guess……maybe between ten and fifteen years ago?”

Mira nodded, in agreement with her blind sister’s estimate. “Like I said, he never seemed to recover from the loss of you and Mom after the Great Calamity, but up until he joined the guards around fifteen years ago, he at least still hung around with us. Nowadays…it’s like he just wants to be alone all the time. We still see him almost every day, but we don’t really interact.”

“Well…why don’t we do something about that? Now that I know he exists, I believe I owe him a visit.” Link huffed. He had expected his daughters’ answer to be somewhere in the realm of a few months, not over a decade. With so much time isolated from his family, Murdoch was clearly in need of a heartwarming reunion.

Mira, however, spoke on the contrary. “Are you sure? I’m really worried he’s not going to want to see you.”

“How bad can he be?” Link shrugged nonchalantly. “His long century of suffering is about to come to an end. I’m sure he’ll be ecstatic.”
The two sisters both shuffled around nervously. Link raised an eyebrow as he watched Mira nod her head uncertainly. “Um…sure, I suppose.”

At this point, doubts were beginning to form at the back of Link’s mind. He decided, however, to shove those doubts aside and live in the moment for the time being. After all, he wasn’t getting any younger, and waiting for him back at the Domain was a strong, capable young Zora of a son he could finally reconnect with after a century in hibernation. For Murdoch, Link was prepared to give it a shot.

“Alright, so we shall head off for the Domain, then. Just to let you know, I forgot to visit the shrine in the plaza last night, so I don’t have a fast way to return there.” He explained awkwardly. “In that case, we’re going to have to walk together.”

A wide grin quickly appeared on Noelani’s face. She seemed to gain an exuberant spring in her step. “I’m okay with that!” She beamed. Her eager and affectionate attachment to her father made Link and Mira laugh a bit.

“We’ll leave in just a moment. First, though…I want to take a picture here.” Link whispered.

Mira gained a look of interest as she studied Link. “Take a picture? You wouldn’t happen to be referring to your little…slate thingy, would you?”

“That’s exactly what I’m referring to.” Link replied, smiling. “The slate somehow stores a true-to-life image of whatever I aim it at. It uses some kind of light-capture mechanic, but I have no way of understanding it.” He explained, glancing down at the strange, glowing device dangling from his hip. Mira followed his gaze and studied the object as well. “You see…I want to be able to remember this place in the best possible way, for as long as I am able, and the best way of doing that is to store an image of it on the slate that I’ll be carrying around everywhere. Now, lay down with me in the pond here.”

Not asking any more questions, Mira and Noelani followed their father’s directions. After extracting the sheikah slate from his belt, Link crouched down into the water and laid directly on his back, nestling himself between his two daughters. The calm pond water seeped into all his clothes, but, being that they were soon going to return to the rainy Domain, it did not matter to him. He took Mira’s hand and held it in his grasp, close to his hip, as his other hand held the sheikah slate straight upwards over their heads. In her classic, expressive sort of way, Noelani turned onto her side and brought her arms around Link’s neck, pulling his head very close to her own. In this state, surrounded tightly by tender love and undying loyalty, laying in the place where it had all started, Link took the picture.

“Perfect.” He sighed.
Being that Link had already defeated all the monsters leading down the Zora River trail, his walk back there with Mira and Noelani did not take long. Nonetheless, it had still managed to provide a sturdy amount of exercise for the trio, and especially for Link, since he was still carrying around his bulky weapons and gear. As expected, shortly after passing into the valley at the river’s exit, the rain once again began to start up around them. Subsequently, the eerie, dark cloud that had been visible above the region of the Domain began to block out the sun. During the entire trip along the wavy, twisted path, Link’s instincts as an explorer were pleading for him to use the cliffs to their sides to ascend to high ground and glide their way to the Domain, which would’ve saved them oodles of time. The rain, however, would obviously not allow for that, and neither would the Zoras’ meager climbing ability.

Throughout their journey, Link’s mind ran rampant with thoughts and conjectures of his mysterious son. There were so many possibilities as to how their meeting was going to go once he made it back to the Domain. For instance, he wondered, what was the depth of Murdoch’s resentment? Had he a certain level of annoyance and conflict with Link, or had his grievances managed to fester into a deeper level of contempt and disrespect? How great was his capacity for forgiveness? Link had to figure, unfortunately, that Murdoch’s displeasure with him was most likely of a higher order than simply “an annoyance or conflict.” It only made sense, given the situation Link had unintentionally put him in a hundred years ago.

Another topic that kept floating around in his head was that of Murdoch’s natural mannerisms. As a young adult Zora, how did Murdoch portray himself to others? Did he have a kinder interior that he only showed to close companions, or was he a more generally aloof type? Was he like his Uncle, always showing openness and patience to unfamiliar faces, or was he usually an enclosed, secretive character? Most importantly, in order for him to have secured his rank in the Zora Guard, how adept must his sense of leadership have been?

He had to admit, these uncertainties were making him rather nervous for his upcoming reunion with his son. The only scenarios he could picture were from the corners of his imagination, for in order to form an idea, he had to first know more about Murdoch. With each step closer to the Domain, Link could feel his unease rising.

On the Great Zora Bridge, leading back into the Domain, Link stared awkwardly at the guards standing by the entrance. They were the same ones that had been standing there before, being that Link and the twins had not been gone very long. This time, however, Link saw them in a new light. After all, he now had the ominous knowledge that those same guards received their orders from his own son. The thought almost seemed to give him a sense of importance, but he knew internally that it was an unwarranted feeling.

Upon stepping onto the platform, Mira and Noelani were greeted by the guards with the same politeness they had shown earlier that day. They grinned back at the guards, pleased with their second acquaintance.

“Do you know where we might be able to find our brother today?” Mira asked casually.

“Captain Murdoch?” The guard on the left responded. “Indeed. He’s posted on the perimeter bridge over at the western wing of the Domain.” She pointed her spear in the appropriate direction.

“Thank you!” Mira exclaimed cheerfully, a gesture Link suspected was a disguise.

“Certainly, Mira.”
As the three of them continued into the Domain, Link pondered over the guards’ interaction with his daughters. They seemed to be so familiar with Mira and Noelani, even to the point where they knew who Mira had been talking about when she mentioned “her brother.” With that kind of affiliation, he had to wonder, were the guards aware that he was their father? It seemed like they wouldn’t have any reason not to, being how well-connected all the Zoras in the Domain were with each other. If they did, though, why didn’t they seem to pay him any mind the same way they did with the twins? Link was Prince Sidon’s brother-in-law, after all, so technically, he was kind of a prince as well! Were they deliberately unmindful of this?

His thoughts were abruptly cut off by Mira. “Alright then, Dad, I guess you know where to find Murdoch now. He’s going to be up those stairs and off to the left on the way out the Domain’s western exit.” She explained, pointing up the grand stairway to their left. “I think you’ll know who he is as soon as you see him.”

Link raised an eyebrow. “Wait…you’re not coming with me?”

She shrugged. “Lani and I just think it’ll be best if you two get some time alone. We just don’t want to pressure him by confronting him all at once.” Link noticed Noelani nodding in agreement to her sister’s statement.

“…Are you sure?” He uttered.

Mira chuckled. “You’ll be fine, Dad. Murdoch’s got bark, but he surely won’t bite unless you’re like…his worst enemy. As his father, you’ll definitely see some of his nicer qualities.”

Link crossed his arms in front of him, glaring at his daughter. “You’re not making me feel any better about this. I still have no idea what Murdoch thinks of me.”

Noelani stepped forward to add her own input, much to the surprise of Link and Mira. “You know, Dad…don’t be afraid to show him some love and care. I promise…Murdoch is a sweet little thing under the hard shell he’s always wearing. “You should easily be able to find the real him. After all…back then…you were his absolute favorite person.”

Link swooned a little on the inside from Noelani’s words. The young, sightless Zora always had a way of speaking that truly moved the heart, should one choose to listen. Her statements just then were the most reassuring things he had heard regarding Murdoch since the moment he had first learned about him earlier that day.

“Do you really think so?” He asked hopefully.

Noelani grinned. “I know so. You and Murdoch were two peas in a pod back then. He should be able to look back on that and set aside his anger.”

“And remember, we’ll be hanging out right down here in the plaza, by the big statue of Mom. However it goes, we’ll always be here for you.” Mira finished, smiling warmly. The glitter in her golden eyes as she smiled was enough to set Link up with the confidence he needed.

“Alright then. I’ll, uh…I’ll see you guys soon, then.” Link concluded, his face showing strong emotion. He nodded in acknowledgement at his two daughters, turned towards the grand
staircase, and began his short trip to the Domain’s western outskirts to reunite with Murdoch.

At the top of the curved flight of stairs, the resting area could clearly be seen directly beneath the king’s chamber, hiding behind the second straight staircase that led up to it. Being the time of day that it was, there were few Zoras actually sleeping in the water. The rest of them were up and about, either conversing quietly or walking from one place to another. At the base of the second staircase, as well as in a few more places around the edges of the sleeping area, were more guards, keeping an ever-vigilant watch on their home.

Next to where a couple female Zoras were standing, off to the left, Link noticed a small path where the platform seemed to branch off towards the Domain’s outskirts. Assuming this path as his target, he began his steady march in its direction, approaching the two loitering Zoras in the process. As he passed within earshot of them, he overheard them talking about…as it would seem…Prince Sidon. They must’ve been part of his fan club, he figured.

Stepping up the shallow stairs that led onto the western bridge, Link’s excited nerves began nipping at his complexion. He tried with all his might to maintain a stable composure as he walked along the unfamiliar path…towards an unfamiliar future. The same questions that had been bothering him before remained ever-present in his mind. That wasn’t to say that Noelani’s words hadn’t worked to soothe him, but the uncertainties he had with his distant son were doomed to remain until he could actually have the chance to speak with him. Perhaps, once they got talking, he would have a chance to calm down a bit.

The bridge passed under a small gazebo containing a wooden crate and a couple of small barrels. The storage units probably contained some apples and loose arrows, as many of them did, but Link did not concern himself with these things at the moment. Beyond the gazebo, the bridge seemed to open up over a much longer archway, its flat surface extending all the way out to the cliffs at the edge of the valley. The entire overpass was nearly identical to the one he and his daughters had traversed earlier that morning on the way back from the East Reservoir, on the opposite side of the Domain.

With the bridge as straight as it was, and nothing blocking one side from the other, Link could clearly make out a rather tall figure standing near its other end, just shy of the grassy outcropping. From through the hazy rain, the figure had the recognizable form of a Zora guard, its unique-looking trident positioned upright against the ground in one hand like all the others. It was facing away from Link. With no other guards visible in the area, and the location matching the description perfectly, Link could only assume that the ominous figure was, in fact, Murdoch. Taking a deep breath to steady his thoughts, the hero proceeded forward.

As he crossed the bridge through the pouring rain, Link could begin to see more detailed features of Murdoch on the other side of the crossing. With each step he took closer to his son, more and more features became readable to him. The first thing he noticed was Murdoch’s color, which, unlike that of his sisters, was an incredibly dark shade of red. If his Uncle’s color could be described as blood, then Murdoch’s color would be described as a clot. At night, the young Zora would probably appear to be completely black.
He was also quite tall, dwarfing Link, Mira, and Noelani completely. To other Zoras, however, he appeared to stand at a rather average height for a male of his build. Seeing this made Link slightly relieved, as shortness was certainly not a becoming feature for male Zoras looking to uphold a reputation in the Domain. Mira and Noelani were able to get away with it, of course, especially with their insatiably cute behavior to accompany it.

Once Link reached a conversational distance from Murdoch, one last defining feature became available to him. With his back still turned to him, Murdoch’s tailfin was flowing in clear display to his father. The sight of it made Link internally gasp. It looked…almost exactly like Prince Sidon’s, with shark-like dorsal-fin extensions protruding from its two sides, as well as its top. Unlike Mira’s abnormally short tailfin, and Noelani’s inexplicably long one, Murdoch’s tailfin reached a relatively normal length, extending roughly to the center of his spine. The shark-like bonus features of Murdoch’s tailfin were a thrilling complement to the rest of his figure, Link thought, and he hadn’t even gotten to see his son turn around yet!

The anxious hero cleared his throat and, before thinking of something proper to say, opened his mouth to speak. “M…Murdoch…?”

The slender Zora’s response was immediate, his voice gruff and deliberate. “Hello, Father.” He did not even turn around to face Link, nor did he move a muscle in any way that Link could notice. “You should not have come here.”

Link blinked a few times, blown completely away by his son’s immensely authoritative greeting. The lack of remorse in his tone, movement in his body, or surprise in his words had sent chills down the hero’s spine. The stark contrast of this introduction to that of Mira and Noelani the day before was immediately noticeable. After all, while they had seemed ready to faint from meeting their century-old father back at the inn, Murdoch acted now almost as if Link’s arrival was a predictable nuisance. Already, things were taking a wild turn.

“Um…c…come again?” He stuttered, shocked to the core by his son’s statement.

Once again, with almost no pause to signify any hesitation, Murdoch spoke in his deep, yet adolescent, voice. “I said you should not have come here.”

Link took another deep breath, preparing his mind for what he perceived to be a very delicate situation. He could only hope that Mipha’s spirit had been watching over him at this moment. He folded his hands down in front of himself. “Your people are in need of help, Murdoch, and I…” He was forced to pause as he involuntarily swallowed. “…I am here to provide.”

“You are too late.” Murdoch grumbled, his back still turned to his father. Link noticed his free hand clench into a fist. “Your help is not needed.”

Taking notice of Murdoch’s overall disinterest with him, Link turned up his focus in order to better suit himself for the task at hand. He inhaled deeply a third time to sate his eager instincts. “Your Uncle and your Grandfather do not seem to think so. They were the ones who invited me here.”

Murdoch scoffed. “I suppose I have them to thank, then.”
“How so?” Link queried.

“How without their invitation, you would undoubtedly be wandering in northern Akkala by now. I have no reason to believe you would’ve devoted your time here otherwise.” Murdoch answered promptly. Every reply he had given so far had been swift, unwavering, and aptly delivered. The guard captain’s verbal capabilities, to Link’s amazement, were utterly extraordinary.

His first objective, he figured, was to gather some information. Then, perhaps, he’d be able to work from there to console the troubled Zora. “What gives you that impression? Surely, fate would’ve pulled me back to you guys eventually.”


The way Murdoch addressed Link as “Father” was rather chilling. It sounded so empty…so careless…so devoid of affection. He seemed to use the term more as a formality and less as a heartfelt endearment. It was a cold, bitter contrast to the feeling Link got when Mira and Noelani called him “Dad.” In fact, judging by the Zora’s signals, he found himself lucky that Murdoch wasn’t instead calling him by his first name.

Link could only stammer awkwardly in response to Murdoch’s accurate prediction. “I, um…well…”

“Save yourself the effort of answering, Father. It’s obvious that your presence here is nothing more than another one of your ‘missions.’ I can only be appalled that you haven’t already made that clear to my sisters.” The glowering Zora rasped.

Link was taken aback by his son’s accusatory remarks. More so, though, he was shocked at Murdoch’s deductive capabilities. It reminded him of Mira. He raised an eyebrow, as he always did when he was curious. “Wait…how do you know I’ve been speaking to your sisters?”

Murdoch continued to face the other direction during their conversation, which was beginning to chew at Link a bit. More than anything, in this moment, Link wanted to see what his accomplished son’s face looked like. Despite his impatience, he had the feeling he would soon get the chance.

“I am the captain of the Zora Guard.” Murdoch stated boldly. “There is nothing that happens in this Domain that I am not aware of. Gaddison, my youngest recruit, had reported your presence to me last night as she was leaving her post. She told me you were heading to the East Reservoir with my sisters.”

Link nodded his head, satisfied temporarily by Murdoch’s clear and direct answer. Perhaps he would be able to get somewhere with him today. “You know, Murdoch…I’ve been having a really emotional and reconstructive time with Mira and Noelani this past couple days. I’m hoping that…maybe…you could allow me to spend some time with you, as well.” He paused for a moment, thankful that he was able to properly communicate his feelings. “Please…help me to recover the things I’ve lost.”

For the first time since the start of their meeting, Link observed a pause between their
exchange. For once, Murdoch hadn’t had an immediate response. When he did finally speak, however, his reply was rather unforgiving. “Father…you should’ve thought about these things a hundred years ago…before betraying us all. I could not have achieved my level of success today by allowing second chances. Your concerns have been noted, but you are dismissed.”

Well, apparently Link had been wrong. It turns out he wouldn’t be reaching Murdoch’s soft side that easily. He refused, however, to let their reunion end so quickly, and on such a terrible note. There had to be some way to reach his son’s true interior. He tried using a bit of Noelani’s advice.

“Murdoch, you’re my son. I want to do whatever it takes to make things right between us again. You matter more to me than any cursed Divine Beast ever could.” He pleaded, putting his folded hands up to his face.

“Father, I said you are dismissed.” Murdoch repeated, louder this time.

“Murdoch, please…”

“I dismiss you, do you hear me?!” The livid Zora yelled threateningly. His head snapped to the side as he gave this order, his eyes focusing to glare directly at Link.

Time seemed to stop. Link gasped strongly as Murdoch finally revealed his face to him with his…furious outburst. His eyes were aqua blue…just like Link’s. In them, however…Link could see the anger. He could see the betrayal…the pain…the contempt…and finally, the confusion…all within Murdoch’s splayed, cerulean irises. These unsettling qualities seemed to blur out any semblance of the Zora’s true character. Link was stuck wondering… who was Murdoch? Even standing right before him, he could not be sure.

He shook his head and exclaimed, deeply hurt by the ongoing circumstances. “Just tell me what I did wrong, Murdoch! Tell me how I messed up!”

Link already sort of knew the answer to this plea, but he desperately wanted to hear Murdoch’s perspective on it. With a little bit of insight, he was sure he’d still be able to turn things around. After all, he knew with confidence that Murdoch’s resentment was operating off a misunderstanding. There was no way Link could’ve intended any harm prior to, and leading up to, the Great Calamity. It was merely an unfortunate twist of events.

Upon asking him this, Link was surprised to see Murdoch’s expression change slightly. His infuriated expression seemed to relax a bit, and his stance seemed to loosen. He seemed to study Link with a…more thoughtful gleam in his eye. He still looked greatly displeased with his father, but as of this change, he seemed less likely to behead him right on the spot. He turned around completely and faced Link with his entire front side. The first thing Link noticed was his lack of body armor, which was unusual for a Zora guard.

“…I see.” The Zora muttered, his voice having returned to its usual calm, collected state. “You want to hear me open up? You want me to pour over my troubles?”

Link nodded solemnly, amazed internally with his son’s glorious figure. “It would mean everything to me.”

Murdoch’s face became concentrated. Taking his trident in both hands, the Zora guard
widened his legs and bent his knees, positioning the trident so its triple-pointed sharp end was facing Link. Link took a step back, recognizing his son’s positioning as a battle stance. He put his hands up to the sides of his head.

Murdoch’s face showed seriousness on a level that Link found intimidating. In his prepped state, he spoke two measly words. “Duel me.”

“What?!” Link interjected.

“If you wish to hear any more from me, you must duel me. Show me what you’re made of.” Murdoch ordered, his readied stance unchanging.

Link shook his head. “Murdoch, this is crazy. I’m not going to fight you.”

“If not, you are permitted to turn around now and walk back to my sisters. If you wish to talk, however, I am requesting a duel. First blood rules.” He stated.

“Listen, there has to be another way…”

“Are you in, or not?” He demanded, cutting Link off. Link stared up at him, trapped for how to answer. Murdoch finished his ultimatum. “No shields, no projectiles, no armor. Only spears. First one to draw opponent’s blood wins. Fight me, and I’ll talk.”

Link bit his lip. Settling the issues with his son was his number one priority, and the way things were turning out, it looked like he was going to have to draw a weapon on him. He asked himself again…who was Murdoch on the inside? Why did he act so mysteriously? Was he honor-driven? Envy-driven? Vengeance-driven? Why did he desire to duel his father?

He noticed Murdoch’s growing impatience. He sighed in exasperation. “Okay, I’ll do it. If it’s really what you want.”

Murdoch watched in his ongoing battle stance as Link began to remove all of his heavy gear. One by one, the Hylian hero did away with his shield, his bow, and his melee weapons. The last thing he removed was his sheikah slate. The only spear-type weapon he had had on him upon reaching the Domain the day before was a rusty traveler’s spear, but it was good enough for the occasion. Murdoch’s elegant trident, in contrast, looked deathly familiar.

Link kicked the large pile of stuff behind him, freeing a space for his clash with Murdoch. He hoped, deep in his mind, that the duel would not last long. After all, fighting his only son was not something he ever had in mind. If he didn’t try his best, though, what would Murdoch think of him? On top of how he already felt? Link owed his child his best effort.

Link began to initiate his battle stance. “Alright, Murdoch, I’m rea…”

His eyes widened as he saw Murdoch suddenly charge at him, his trident aimed directly forward. Without the chance to finish his statement, Link’s instincts took control of the sudden threat. Whipping his old, chipped spear into his second hand, Link reacted quickly by lashing the horizontal bar it created directly upwards, catching the end of the advancing trident and forcing it over his head. He quickly expelled the breath that had been caught in his lungs.

Murdoch reacted to the rapid deflection by swinging the trident clockwise at his side,
working off the momentum of Link’s upward force. In a blinding second, using the weapon’s natural inertia, Murdoch caught the trident in his second hand at the end of the twirl and sent it forward for another strike, a mere half a second after the first one. Still caught off guard from Murdoch’s immediate attack and trained speed, Link was too slow to recover from the initial deflection he had made with his choppy spear. To compensate, he jumped backwards sharply, narrowly avoiding the pointed tip of Murdoch’s shiny trident.

Murdoch advanced on him quickly, not giving him a moment to breathe. He shot the trident outward in several more places, trying to find a weak point in Link’s flexibility. Each time, Link was able to throw his body to one side or the other, dodging the strikes before Murdoch could reel backwards for the next one. In the cases when his balance was not quite primed, he deflected the strikes using the handle of his spear. He didn’t use as much force each time as he did with the first deflection, so as to ensure Murdoch wouldn’t have the necessary momentum to twirl his trident around again. It was a calculation he had had seconds to make.

At the instant Link anticipated a strike from the left, he tossed his body to the right in order to avoid the attack, and in doing so, he returned his spear to a forward-facing position. In the same swiping motion, he lashed his spear outwards to Murdoch’s left, marking his first actual counterattack in the duel. Murdoch responded promptly, bringing his left foot behind him and rotating the front half of his body to bypass the strike. This occurred before Murdoch was able to recover from his initial leftward attack, and the skilled Zora guard, recognizing the brief opening in his defenses, answered to the circumstance by letting go of the trident with his left hand and grabbing onto Link’s spear.

Link gasped, his control on the spear lost by Murdoch’s vicious grip. He sharply yanked his arms backward in an attempt to jar the weapon from his son’s one-handed grasp. Unfortunately, he did so just as Murdoch thrust the butt end of the spear back at Link, and the combined force from the two opponents sent the dull handle of the spear barreling into Link’s abdomen. He stumbled backwards, coughing bitterly from the jolt given to his organs. He looked upwards at Murdoch just in time to see him launch forward with another attack.

Just like that, after an offensive streak lasting only thrust, Link was back on the defensive. This time, having quickly learned from his previous methods, Murdoch came at Link with the butt end of his trident, using his non-dominant hand to whip its dull tip in Link’s direction. Link was able to deflect each of these strikes the same way he deflected Murdoch’s direct stabs, but the attack angles felt disturbingly awkward this way, making each parry of his lanky spear ripple through his arms. It felt like Murdoch was trying to disarm him.

Eventually, with one final backwards shove of his trident, Murdoch managed to bust Link’s spear free from his non-dominant hand. The front end of his spear dropped to the ground, its rusted tip clanging on the wet, chiseled stone of the bridge. Before he could reach with his other hand to return to the spear to its proper position, Murdoch darted forward with another series of attacks.

With his spear poised in only one hand, Link was unable to deflect any of Murdoch’s second wave of attacks. As a result, he was forced to be light on his feet, dancing around like a woodland creature in order to dodge his son’s rapid strikes. Luckily, Murdoch had made the mistake of attacking in the same pattern he had used the moment before, making his thrusts easy to predict. Using this prior knowledge, Link found it easier to control the flow of his center of gravity, which translated into a nearly seamless ballet of movements that managed to miss every one of Murdoch’s lashes.
The moment Link had an opening, he used his one hand to swing his spear around behind him, catching it in his other hand. With his weapon back in a comfortable position, Link closed the advantage gap that had been created in Murdoch’s favor. He poised the spear for a calculated assault, expecting Murdoch to enter a defensive stance after his failed flurry of attacks.

Suddenly, however, completely to Link’s surprise, Murdoch instead threw his trident forward in one additional, forceful thrust. Judging instantaneously by the strength he was putting into the strike, Link deduced that an attempt to deflect the trident would result in either the destruction of his subpar weapon or another shot of vertical momentum that would cause the Zora guard to swing his weapon clockwise again and come at him while he was unbalanced. He reacted, then, in the instant he was given, by jumping entirely to the side, completely in the air.

Having nailed the timing of his jump perfectly, Link’s focus reached its peak. All around him, time seemed to slow to a near halt. He was fully prepared, with his spear in both hands, to come at Murdoch like a thunderbolt while he was still in the midst of extending his trident. He aimed his spear forward in this state of hyper-awareness, ready to leap forward at Murdoch as soon as his body hit the ground. It was time to end this duel and work on closing their wounds, rather than opening more of them.

As Link cashed in his slow-motion advantage by bursting forward with an attack flurry, Murdoch somehow managed to whip his trident back into a defending position, seemingly at the speed of light. To Link’s utter shock and disappointment, as his two arms worked to rapidly stab his spear forward with unholy speed, Murdoch’s horizontally-positioned trident was fluttering around at the same speed, deflecting every one of Link’s thrusts with cutthroat precision. At the end of Link’s combo, his stamina having diminished, Murdoch butted his trident forward with one last parry, tossing Link backward and into another defensive position. The Zora guard laughed maniacally.

“Ah, it would appear that a century of hibernation has made you as rusty as your weapon! Your ability to counter your opponents’ attacks with a flurry of lashes has rubbed off on me quite nicely!” He taunted.

Link’s chest was heaving greatly as he worked to stomach the adrenaline his body was giving him. He stared up at his son as he struggled to catch his breath. “How…do you know…about the Shrine of Resurrection…?”

Murdoch returned to his fighting stance, a cocky grin smeared on his face. “I’m not inclined to answer that, Father. This duel is not over yet.”

As Murdoch stepped forward with another series of strikes, Link found another memory beginning to form in his head. Standing there on the edge of Zora’s Domain, locked in steady combat with his own son, against a trident that looked annoyingly familiar to him, Link had begun to remember an integral part of his past with Murdoch, Mipha, and the rest of his family. The memory began to play out in his head as Murdoch continued to flash him with a multitude of attacks.
Link’s eyes sparkled with joy as he sat cross-legged on the extended stone dock of East Reservoir Lake. He had one arm wrapped around the shoulder of his dear Mipha, who was sitting right beside him with her head cradled in his neck. Beyond the dock where they resided, out in the lake where it had always been, was the gentle majesty of Vah Ruta, casting the shadow of the moon upon the glittering waters around it. The air was still and quiet.

They sat watching their little child, Murdoch, swinging around a tree branch that Link had brought back to the Domain from his most recent mission with Zelda. He practiced with very little deliberation in his movements, as his toddler-like energy often got the better of him. He would try to concentrate at times, but usually, his efforts at seriousness would devolve into fits of playful giggling. He enjoyed pretending to be a soldier.

Link always took the time to coach his son whenever he was around, teaching him the art of melee fighting while allowing him to have fun in the process. He had begun doing this shortly after their little Zora could first speak, when it had become clear to him and Mipha that Murdoch was interested in fighting. It didn’t come as much of a surprise to them, being that he was the offspring of a graceful warrior trained in spear combat and the chosen wielder of the sword that seals the darkness.

“Now, Murdoch, remember to wield your weapon with both hands.” Link instructed nicely. “As a future spearmen, it is important to know that your spear’s center of gravity must be an extension of your own. If you wield it with only one hand, you let its weight rob you of your balance.”

Murdoch gawked at his father, trying for a moment to understand what he was telling him. He looked down at the stick he was holding and, after staring blankly at it for a few seconds, brought his other hand up to grip it. Then, with both hands on his imaginary spear, he began to swing it sideways in front of him like a baseball bat. He giggled again.

Mipha giggled too. “Link, you mustn’t confuse him with too much information. He needs a chance to mess around a little bit. He’s still very young and curious.” The gentle Zora princess touched her hand to Link’s cheek and softly caressed his face. “He’s just like you were when I first met you. You were such an adventurous little spirit.”

Link blushed. He scratched the back of his neck with his free hand. “Mipha…not in front of our son!” He murmured sheepishly.

“A little romance won’t hurt him, you know.” She replied feistily. She leaned over and reached her face up to give him a quick peck on his nose.

Lately, the elephant-in-the-room for the couple had been Zelda’s upcoming seventeenth birthday. The Hylian princess had tried, and failed, to access her sacred sealing powers in both the Spring of Power and the Spring of Courage in the recent months since the hatching of Link and Mipha’s children. Link had had to follow her on those missions and witness her struggles, all while dealing with the struggles of being away from his new family. Forcing Mipha to tend to her son and two daughters alone during those times was…a guilt he hated bearing.
However, once Zelda turned seventeen, her immediate plan was to scale Mt. Lanayru and pray in the Spring of Wisdom in a final attempt to unlock her hidden abilities. For this, she had requested the presence of all four Champions, including Link and Mipha. For the first time since their children’s hatching, the inseparable couple would have to leave them behind on a mission... at the same time.

This, in itself, was not the end of the world, since Muzu had volunteered to watch his student’s children in the absence of her and Link. Nonetheless, the thought of it had left a bad taste in both their mouths. After all, Zelda had been growing extremely wary of Calamity Ganon’s return in recent weeks, and the uncertainty of embarking on a mission for a few days left them quite nervous. There was no telling when...nor how...the freakish abomination would appear, and the last place they wanted to be in a crisis was far away from their children.

Link sighed, trying to wipe anxious thoughts from his mind. He wondered to himself if Mipha had been growing troubled as well, for the same reasons as him. He looked back over at his zestful son.

“You know...Murdoch...I think you’re going to be a fine fighter one day. I can see it in that little determined face of yours.” He cooed, grinning.

The little Zora gazed up at his parents with a look of uncontrollable love, admiration, and trust in his eyes. Mipha also found herself grinning as she looked down at him from Link’s shoulder, overjoyed at the purity of the life she and Link had created. Murdoch, as well as his two sisters, were truly monuments of the next level she and Link had taken in their relationship. The five of them, held together by their unbreakable familial bonds, stood as testaments against the growing bleakness of Hyrule’s future.

Their moment with Murdoch was interrupted when a familiar voice spoke up quietly from behind them. “…Mommy?”

Mipha raised her head up from Link’s shoulder and turned herself around, recognizing the voice as that of Noelani. “Yes, sweetie?”

The blind, foot-and-a-half-tall Zora youngster toddled up behind her parents on the dock, having followed the sound of her brother’s giggling. Her insanely long tailfin dragged on the ground behind her, extending farther outwards than the rest of her body even was standing up. She walked almost like a zombie, with her hands out in front of her to avoid crashing into anything.

“Mommy...I...I can’t find sis.” She babbled. “I can’t find her anywhere!”

Mipha looked up from her small daughter, her eyes darting to the platform at the base of the dock where the awning and the bed were. There, standing guiltily against the side of the awning in plain sight, was little Mira, her hands covering her face. Her light red body made her stand out easily against the deep turquoise of the rest of the platform. Mipha spotted her in an instant.

She glared at her from a distance. “Mira, are you hiding from your sister again?”

Mira shook her head, refusing to make a sound. Mipha crossed her arms disapprovingly, and she responded to her daughter’s defiance.
“Mira, you know it isn’t nice to hide from Noelani! We’ve gone over this before. What have we talked about?” She asked calmly.

Mira remained silent.

“Mira?”

“…Always use our voices around Noelani…” The golden-eyed Zora muttered awkwardly.

“That’s right.” Mipha finished, giving a nod. “Now I’m going to bring her over there to get you two to bed, and you’re going to apologize to her.”

In accordance with her words, Mipha scooched her body the other way so it was facing Noelani, and she bent forward with her arms in front of her. “Over here, Lani. Come to Mommy.”

Noelani waddled over to her mother, her arms still held out in front of her for insurance. Just as she stepped into the princess’s outstretched arms, Mipha scooped her up off the ground, tucking her gargantuan tailfin under her tiny body for comfort. Once she had her daughter settled in her arms, she turned back to face Link.

“Well, I’m going to head over and get the girls to sleep. Mira’s usually better-behaved when she’s not tired.” She explained to him.

“When do you think it’ll be safe to let them sleep here in the lake?” Link asked curiously.

“Technically, they can sleep in deep water right away. The thing is, the children are all so small right now, I’m afraid they might drift far away from the dock and get lost.” She answered idly.

“Ah, I see. That would not be good.” He chuckled.

As Mipha disappeared to go settle Mira and Noelani for the night, Link turned back to Murdoch, who still didn’t seem the least bit tired. He noticed, with pleasant surprise, that the little Zora had adjusted his grip on the stick and was now holding it with his hands separated further down the object’s length. He now seemed to be holding it with proper spear-etiquette.

“Hey, you’re learning very quickly!” Link exclaimed happily. Murdoch looked up at him with a proud grin on his tiny, pudgy face.

Link got an idea. He thought of a silly way to have fun with his enthusiastic, infant son. “Want to have a duel?”

Murdoch giggled, clapping his hands together. “Duel! Duel! Duel!”

Sharing in his son’s laughter, Link gently took the stick from his hands. He gripped the brittle object on both ends while Murdoch watched, and he snapped it in half down the middle. Then, he handed half of it to him. “Here’s your weapon. Take it proudly.”

Murdoch took the stick excitedly, holding it out in front of him like a one-handed sword. Link took the other half of the stick and held it in front of him the same way, facing his pretend
opponent.

“Begin!” He announced.

Right away, Murdoch hopped forward and began wildly swinging his half of the stick at Link. Link answered back to his son’s advance by deflecting his whiplashes with the other half of the stick. Murdoch looked very concentrated, determined to beat his father for the sake of honor and glory. Link absolutely loved how adorable his little Zora looked, trying his hardest to unleash hell with his tiny little twig. Mipha was right...Murdoch was just like him when he was younger.

After a few minutes of sparring with Murdoch, Link decided it was time to give his son the victory he had been waiting for. He stopped trying to deflect the blows with his stick, making it seem like he had made a fatal mistake. Murdoch saw the opening and gave one last thrust with his “weapon,” jabbing Link right in the chest. Link quickly brought his hand up to the spot on his chest where the stick had made contact, clutching with all his might. He brought his other hand up to his neck and made artificial gasping noises, as if he had actually been stabbed. Then, finally, he fell backwards onto his back, pretending to die dramatically.

Murdoch exploded in a fit of cheerful giggling, enchanted by his father’s silly antics. He dropped his stick on the ground and jumped on top of Link, hugging him as tightly as he could. Link laughed as well, bringing his arms up to return his son’s loving embrace. The two of them laid happily on the surface of the dock, laughing together under the subtle glow of the moonlight by East Reservoir Lake. Yes, there was no doubt about it, he thought.

Nothing would ever get between him and his son.

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As the memory wrapped up in Link’s head, he felt a wave of sadness wash over him. Noelani had been correct in her words earlier. He and Murdoch really were best friends back in the day. The Zora that was now an embittered, ruthless guard captain used to look up to his father in every way, back before the past was ruined by the Great Calamity. Now, here he stood, determined to prove his superiority over the same man...the one he was certain had taken everything from him. Again, Link thought...how could he have gone so wrong?

As Murdoch brought his trident forward for another strike, Link returned his makeshift spear to its defensive position, crossing it horizontally in front of him. Just as he had done at the start of the duel, when the tip of the trident entered his reach, he jerked the bar upwards, tossing the trident’s momentum into another clockwise rotation. Exactly as Link had expected, instead of cutting his attack short, Murdoch followed through with the motion and twirled the weapon around for a rapid counter to Link’s parry.

This time, though, Link was ready. Instead of returning his spear to its initial position, he held it horizontally at eye level, where it had been after his deflection. When Murdoch’s trident finished its rotation and shot forward for a second attack, Link jerked the bar downwards, forcing the trident’s momentum into a counter-clockwise spin. It was too long, however, to clear the
ground beneath Link and Murdoch, and its pointed end slammed into the smooth stone with an ear-
piercing clang. The shock from the impact rippled up Murdoch’s arm and stunned him for a brief
instant.

Using the split-second window he had created for himself, Link whipped his spear back
into the offensive position, extended his arms, and thrust the spear right up to Murdoch’s neck. He
held the tip of it just beneath his son’s chin, with its jagged, rusty tip barely touching the Zora’s
scaly skin. Murdoch froze completely in place, realizing that he was entirely at his father’s
mercy. Link held his position as well, and the two of them fell into utter silence, the only noises
around them being the pattering of the rain and the heaving of their overworked lungs.

Murdoch became intensely dissatisfied, his expression turning annoyed. “Well, what are
you waiting for? Make the cut.”

Link shook his head. “I said it before, and I’ll say it again, Murdoch. You’re my son. I’m
not going to hurt you.”

The Hylian hero, having won the hard-fought duel, lowered his weapon. Murdoch scoffed
and turned his back on his father, disgusted with the irony of his words.
**Consternation**

There was so much that Link wanted to say to his son. Now that their duel was complete, he’d hopefully be able to share a deep and engaging conversation with the one he had wronged so deeply…apparently. While Mira and Noelani had basically thrown themselves right at him the day before, Murdoch’s unwillingness to come clean was causing the hero lots of genuine stress. He and his sisters were the only pieces Link had left of his deceased wife, so in order to move past her death more easily, he absolutely needed to reconcile with him. Wronging Murdoch…almost felt like wronging Mipha.

The guard captain, having just lost his very first duel, stood motionlessly with his back facing his father. Link dumped his spear on the ground next to the rest of his gear and walked sympathetically up to his silent Zora, who stood completely still with his trident held in one hand. He really gazed at him…the way he stood…the way he poised his weapon…the way the Divine Beast’s raindrops slid down his fins and dripped onto the ground. It was not enough, though, to see what his son held on the inside.

Link reached up to rest his palm on Murdoch’s back, a gesture that would’ve marked their first physical contact in over a hundred years. Just before he could do so, however, Murdoch’s fist tightened around the handle of his trident. Link flinched backwards as his son lifted the weapon high above his head using his one hand…and hurled it at the ground as hard as he could, giving a loud, frustrated cry in the process. The elegant trident’s impact with the tough stone made a shrill clattering noise that tore through the Hylian’s unprepared eardrums.

“Murdoch, what…” Link began, before Murdoch loudly cut him off.

“I’ve wasted so much time!” The distressed Zora howled, his face aimed toward the ground.

Link took the risk of stepping around to Murdoch’s other side so he could view his son’s face during his…fretful moment. His expression could only be described as one of intense, burning irritation…and a fair share of regret. Link looked directly up at his face, trying hard to see into his eyes and decipher what was truly ailing him. Despite his concerned father standing in the corner of his vision, Murdoch refused to make eye contact. Without a chance to connect with him through a shared gaze, Link was unable to see past the grueling frustration and suffocating confusion that was enveloping the towering Zora.

“Wasted time?” What do you mean by that?” He asked calmly, bringing his hand forward to caress Murdoch’s forearm.

Murdoch swatted his father’s hand away, a cold response to a caring gesture. “I’m talking about my training! My preparation! It was all for nothing! It’s taken me a century to reach my current standing, and this loss shows that I’ve proven nothing!”

Link’s interest grew. This was something he had not heard before. On top of this, it was greatly intriguing to find Murdoch’s calm, professional stature in a state of total decay. “What do you feel like you need to prove? You should understand that I don’t mi…”
Murdoch cut him off again, his irritation remaining at a relatively hostile level. “I need to prove my worth, Father. Someone had to step forward and avenge Mother after the Great Calamity, and I would’ve been damned if I was going to stand by and let the deed go unfulfilled!”

Link raised an eyebrow. “What does that have to do with our duel? Why are you so sure your efforts were in vain?”

Over time, Link began to discover a new quality buried within Murdoch’s behavior. He had not seen it before, but in the moments following their duel, and in the conversation they were currently having, he began to see a rise of it in his son’s eyes. It almost looked like…humiliation.

“Father, it’s because…” The mighty Zora paused, an expression of hidden weakness to the observant Hylian. “…it’s because I’m not good enough. Ever since the Calamity, I’ve dedicated my life to reaching your level as a warrior…to ensure I’d be ready one day to charge into Vah Ruta and rescue Mother myself…from the clutches of that horrid monster’s curse. I was ready to devote my entire existence to bringing our family together again…after you betrayed us!”

Link took a step back, startled by Murdoch’s accusatory remark. “Hey, hold on…” His son cut him off once again, transitioning his response into a short story. “It’s not like my noble intentions were relevant anyway.” He scoffed. “One day, only a few years after the disaster, Muzu approached me with two cloaked Hylians by his side. He presented me with Mother’s Lightscale Trident, telling me that the Hylians…he called them ‘sheikah’……had recovered it from within the Beast’s interior.” He paused for a long moment, closing his eyes and taking a raspy breath. “It was right then…staring up at my caregiver and accepting the trident from his outstretched hands…that I knew. …I knew that my Mother was gone.”

Link continued to stare at his distraught Zora with great empathy and sorrow. His son…the mighty Murdoch…continued to stand motionless on the bridge, his eyes still fixated on the ground. Despite the crackling that had developed in the guard captain’s voice, Link did not observe any tears in his eyes. His strength, surely, was not to be questioned. However, was it right to classify the substitution of sadness with anger as…strength?

As Link pondered over his son’s confessions, he turned his gaze over to Murdoch’s trident, or rather…Mipha’s trident, as it remained sitting on the bridge’s hard surface. Before speaking, though, he returned his attention back to Murdoch. “Listen…I want you to know…that you are beyond good enough for your aspirations. Had your mother still been alive those many years ago, I have no doubt that you would’ve succeeded in returning her to safety. I promise you.”

Murdoch shook his head disapprovingly, his eyes squinting shut again. “Father, forgive my bluntness, but your promise holds no merit to me. After learning of Mother’s death, I continued my training with the hopes of at least avenging her horrid death. Once I had defeated my comrade, Bazz, for the captain’s rank, I truly thought I had attained equal status with you as a warrior, and therefore the minimal skill level necessary to plan my assault. My utter failure against you today has proven otherwise, however.”

“Murdoch, you don’t need to be better than me to be an adept warrior.” Link countered, his face showing his best rendition of understanding. “You are officially the toughest opponent I’ve ever had to face throughout my life. I can guarantee you that.”
Murdoch basked briefly in the compliment he had received from his father, but his grievances were quick to return to the surface. So quick, in fact, that he hadn’t even managed to show a small grin. “Father, perhaps if you were aware of the past, you’d see why your statements are irrelevant. You see, I need to be better than you in order to fulfill my wishes. After all, how am I supposed to be able to avenge Mother’s death at my current skill level…when you weren’t even able to protect her at yours?”

Ouch. As that last statement rolled off Murdoch’s cold and unforgiving tongue, Link felt a jagged and lasting stab to his heart. As Murdoch had given that final, fatal blow, he finally turned to look directly at his father, his eyes piercing terribly through Link’s. In the quick moment their eyes finally met, Link was overwhelmed with a sickening sense of hatred in his son’s gaze…a quality he figured had been hidden the times before. As a result, he quickly broke off the connection, turning his face shamefully to the ground beneath him. The truth, he found, was too hard to stomach.

“Murdoch…I feel like you misunderstand…” He murmured.

“Oh, I wish that were the case, Father. Tell me something.” The guard captain began boldly, eyeing Link with his smoldering gaze. “That day, at the base of Mt. Lanayru, when the ground shook beneath you and the sky began to darken…which way did you run?”

Link shrugged. He bit the bullet and looked up to return his son’s gaze again, prepared to fend against the intense guilt the Zora was trying to inflict in him. “I followed Zelda to Hyrule Castle. I stuck to the plan and pursued the enemy head-on. At least…that’s what I was told on the Great Plateau…”

Murdoch, for the moment, ignored the glaring evidence that his father had lost his memories. Instead, he proceeded with his prosecution. “So you headed to Hyrule Castle? When Calamity Ganon arrived to put us all in danger, and Mother rushed to the East Reservoir to board Vah Ruta, you ran to Hyrule Castle?”

“Yes, Murdoch, of course I did. I was adhering to my responsibilities as a Champion! Do you understand how much was hanging in the balance?” Link countered, finding confidence in his morals. At this point, he figured Murdoch had to be misunderstood.

“Your responsibilities, you say?” Murdoch scoffed. “What about your responsibilities to Mother? Your promise to always be by her side until the separation of death?”

Link put his hand to his forehead, shaking his head in exasperation. He sighed, muttering Murdoch’s name under his breath. “You know…that is hardly a fair point to make. I couldn’t just turn my back on the duties I had to Hyrule! Mipha and I knew that when we made those vows in the first place!”

Murdoch didn’t give a moment of pause between his counterarguments. Before Link could even properly finish his own defense, the judgmental guard captain was on top of him again. “Then why did you turn your back on us, Father? What was so important about your ‘duties to Hyrule’ that you allowed Mother to die…alone, I may add…in that possessed machine while my sisters and I sat helplessly back in the Domain?” He demanded, his finger pointing up in the direction of the East Reservoir, where Vah Ruta sat.
“What was I supposed to do, Murdoch? Mipha was chosen for the Divine Beast, and I was the keeper of the Sword! The survival of this entire land was dependent on the roles we had to play! There was…there was nothing else we could’ve done.” Link explained solemnly.

Murdoch shook his head. “If what you say is true, Father, then your decision to spawn my sisters and I into this world was an irresponsible mistake. It boggles me that you’d opt to have children despite the conscious knowledge of Calamity Ganon’s inevitable return. I spent my earliest days putting you before anything else in the world, and the day you didn’t come back after the Great Calamity, I discovered that the feeling was not mutual. Need I explain any more?”

“I’m telling you, Murdoch, you don’t understand…!”

“There is nothing else to say on this matter.” Murdoch jabbed, cutting Link off. “You had a lot of nerve returning to Zora’s Domain. I have exhausted my will to speak with you any further.”

As Murdoch picked up the Lightscale Trident and returned his back to his father, Link tried desperately to get his attention. His son, however, wouldn’t budge. After a few minutes spent in vain, Link sighed in defeat. He trudged over to his pile of gear on the wet surface of the bridge and returned the heavy items to his back.

The encounter with Murdoch had been a crushing and heartbreaking experience for the burdened hero. Murdoch’s pains were so deep…so rigid…so seemingly irreparable, and yet they were based on such huge misunderstandings! On top of that, how would he be able to properly explain the true nature of his actions to his aggrieved son without even fully understanding what had happened himself? He was still missing so many details of his life before and during the Calamity…that he found himself unsure of how to correct the angry Zora’s misinterpretations. He knew, though, with utmost certainty, that Murdoch was upset for all the wrong reasons. Unfortunately, he was not allowing any further discussion.

There was one thing Link knew, however, and as he turned to walk off the bridge and leave his son to his guard post, he stopped upon remembering. He turned around and gave one last look in Murdoch’s direction.

“Before I go, there’s one thing you must know.” He announced.

Murdoch turned his head slightly, humoring his father with a brief gaze. Link was relieved to see this action from his son. “State it.”

Link took a deep breath and let it out slowly. “Having you children was your mother’s idea, not mine. Despite my many doubts, I followed through with her wish because I loved her, and I was prepared to do everything I could to make us happy in the face of our increasing burdens. I know I may have lost my memories, but I still love you, Mira, and Noelani to the greatest extent possible, and I always will. Don’t you ever forget about that.”

Without waiting to see his son’s reaction, Link turned back around and marched back to the Domain’s plaza. Murdoch stood there with his head still turned, dazed at his father’s parting statement.
As Link stepped off the bridge and turned to descend the grand staircase, he thought deeply to himself about the events that had just transpired with his stubborn son. He could always try again with Murdoch in the future, right? At this point, after learning what he had about his history with Mipha and the Zoras, he knew exactly where he was planning to go after eventually defeating Calamity Ganon. Without a doubt, his main intention after slaying the beast and recovering the princess was to return to the Domain and live out the foreseeable future with his children. Perhaps then, he’d have a shot at regaining Murdoch’s respect.

This raised a question in Link’s head. What would Zelda think of Mira, Noelani, and Murdoch? He couldn’t remember if Zelda had been aware of his marriage to Mipha a hundred years ago, nor if she would’ve been upset about it or not. He sure didn’t talk to her that much, so there was no way of knowing if she had deduced the truth, or if it had been left to mere suspicion. On top of that, if she had been aware of his relationship with the Zora princess, had she known about their family? Did he ever tell her? Had she found out after traveling to the Domain to recruit them for the Mt. Lanayru mission?

Despite his ever-present uncertainties, one thing was sure to the troubled hero. If Zelda were to return to the Domain with him after Calamity Ganon’s defeat, Murdoch would probably not treat her very politely. After all, she had been the one swiping his father away from him on those many missions, and it was her that dropped by to appoint his mother to the Champion’s title and the control of the Divine Beast shortly before he and his sisters hatched by Crenel Peak. In essence, as far as he was concerned, she had been the one to steal his entire life away. Link knew that none of the unfortunate events of the past had been Zelda’s fault, and he was sure that she’d be undeserving of whatever Murdoch would probably dish out upon meeting her. It only made him feel more urgent in fixing what Murdoch had deemed wrong.

As Link descended the staircase, he glanced down to his left toward the main plaza. It didn’t take him long to spot Mira and Noelani, standing right at the base of the Mipha statue, just like they had promised. Link gave a relaxed sigh upon seeing them again, even though he had only been gone for a half hour or so. After the way his “reunion” with Murdoch had gone, his loving and gleeful daughters were most definitely a sight for sore eyes.

However, upon closer inspection, Link noticed that another Zora was standing with the twins at the base of the statue. They were turned to him, apparently having a discussion with him about something. Judging by their faces, they did not look too thrilled, and after Link took a further moment to study the Zora they were speaking with, he started to get annoyed as well. Apparently…they were talking to Muzu.

Seeing the olive green Zora speaking with Link’s daughters, the Hylian hero picked up the pace on his descent. He reached the surface of the plaza within a couple seconds, and once he did, he rushed over to the statue where the three were standing. Mira noticed him immediately as he jogged up behind Muzu, whose hands were joined behind his back. She pointed her father out to Muzu with a relieved grin on her face, causing him to turn around and spot Link on his approach.
Noelani gasped hopefully. “Oh, is Dad back?”

Muzu’s face turned bleak. He sighed. “Yes…it would appear he is.”

The saddened look on Noelani’s face seemed to evaporate suddenly. She folded her hands in front of her chest and hopped excitedly in place a couple times. “Hi, Dad! How was your alone-time with Murdoch? Are you guys besties again?”

Before Link could answer, Muzu suddenly emitted a dry, raspy chuckle. Link and the sisters looked at him with confusion as he cut in. “Surely, you are joking! Could Murdoch actually have wanted to speak with you earlier?”

Link tried, for the moment, to swallow his grievances with the aged and disagreeable Zora. He shook his head. “Never mind that right now. What’s, uh…what’s going on here?”

Muzu kept his pose upright and regal, although he lowered his head for a moment to clear his throat. He provided ongoing, direct eye contact with Link. “I was merely ensuring that my pupils here maintained level heads. I did not want them to get too…how should I say…swept up in all the excitement as of late.”

The first thing that stuck out to Link in an unsettling way was Muzu’s composed, professional stature. The day before, in the king’s chamber, Muzu had been rather unraveled in his behavior, his passionate opposition to Link’s presence having been obvious in his uncompromising statements and exaggerated body language. Now, while standing before Link and his daughters in the absence of the king and the prince, the elder Zora seemed to command a suspicious amount of control over his emotions. It made Link immediately wary.

Before he could say anything, however, Mira responded to her caregiver with a roll of her eyes. “We’re not getting ‘swept up’ in anything, Muzu. Lani and I are sensible adults now, and whether you like to think so or not, we’re perfectly capable of following our emotions!”

“At your current age, I’d say you two are more like…adolescents.” Muzu countered with a stern glance. “You may not realize how prone you still are to infatuation.”

Mira put her hands on her hips and glared at Muzu. “Infatuation? You think we’re infatuated with our own father?”

“Now hold on a minute.” Link interrupted, his hand raising to prevent any further hostile contributions. He turned calmly to the elder Zora. “Muzu, I think Mira and Lani are aware of their desires at this point in their life. I mean a lot to them, and they mean even more to me, so why don’t we just…”

“You may have your young ones fooled, but you will never convince me with such words, Hylian.” Muzu spat, softly, yet firmly, his eyes squinting wickedly in his gaze. “I’ve always had my doubts about your kind, but I was willing to trust you out of respect for Mipha’s sacred heart. That was a mistake I won’t make again.” He continued blasting his electric glare at Link, the disapproval in his eyes as strong as that of Murdoch’s a few minutes before. Today was certainly not Link’s day.

“Muzu, out of everyone here in the Domain, I expected you to understand how important Mipha was to me.” Link stated, his eyes closing solemnly. “Save for the king, of course.”
“I’ll be honest, ‘hero.’” Muzu replied, his fiery gaze unrelenting. “For the majority of the time, you had me believing that was the case. However, when the Hylian princess arrived with her guards to recruit you to the Champion’s title, the elder council and I begged you to ignore their call. After you refused our pleas, however, I knew where your heart truly sat. Your actions in the past still speak louder than your words today.”

Since Muzu was facing Link, he did not see the growing skepticism present in Mira and Noelani’s faces. By glancing behind the prejudiced elder at the twins, Link could clearly see the lack of agreement they had with their caregiver’s words. He was at least glad for this, since the unfortunate loss of Murdoch’s respect earlier had been a tough blow for the hero this day already. If his daughters were to buy into Muzu’s misguided interpretations, he would lose them as well, and the resulting pain would be enough to drive him to insanity. The Calamity had already cost him enough!

Link opened his mouth to answer to Muzu’s accusatory statements, but before he could begin speaking, he was shocked to hear Noelani beat him to the punch. He swerved his gaze over to his blind daughter, swayed immediately by her sudden will to speak out and defend her father. Muzu, though, did not turn around to face her.

“Mom accepted the Champion’s title too, didn’t she?” She blurted, her face looking slightly agitated. It was the angriest expression Link had ever seen her use. “Are you also doubting Mom’s love for Dad, or are you not telling us something?”

Muzu stood silent for a brief moment, the pause in the argument sending a chill down Link and Mira’s spines. Noelani kept her gaze fixed directly at Muzu, or, at least…the horizon just above him. She hadn’t quite pinpointed his exact height based solely on the source of his voice. They patiently awaited the elder Zora’s response to her brilliant counter.

He inhaled deeply. “Noelani…this does not concern you. You were too young to understand your mother’s true feelings back then.”

Noelani put her hands on her hips, exactly as her sister had done just moments ago. The two of them were cutely identical in many of the ways they did things. “I understand them now, Muzu! I’m mature enough now to actually comprehend the extent of my parents’ relationship! I know Mom and Dad better than you do, in fact.”

Link was awestruck at Noelani’s arguments. Never before, in his limited memory, at least, had he witnessed this side of his daughter. Underneath her giddy and lighthearted exterior, she seemed to hide a determined and uncompromising will, backed by an unprecedented wealth of intelligence and formal reasoning. He had witnessed a bit of her deeper emotional complexity back at the East Reservoir during their short time alone together, but even then, as they had not been in disagreement, her tougher side had not presented itself. Interestingly, he found that Noelani and Mira seemed to switch personalities in the face of verbal conflicts.

“Really?” Muzu chuckled, his body still turned away from Noelani. “Dear Mipha had been my student since the day she could first walk. I doubt there’s anybody alive today that knows her better than me.”
Noelani did not pause. “‘Personality’ and ‘character’ are very different terms, Muzu. Sis and I are essentially living extensions of Mom, and as such, I feel like our emotions are as well. If I feel like Mom would’ve thought a certain way, then I know that I am right.” She explained, her resolve being emphasized by her off-centered glare. “I can feel Mom’s spirit living within me, and I am confident that you can’t say the same.”

Muzu’s expression seemed to change a bit at the end of Noelani’s thesis. Neither of the sisters could see it, since the elder Zora was still facing Link. Link, however, took interest in the bitter character’s perceived change of thought. His squinted eyes seemed to relax a bit, and his curled frown appeared to morph into a slightly-reformed, thoughtful position. He finally turned his head a bit in Noelani’s direction.

 “…Are you sure?” He mumbled with genuine curiosity.

Noelani nodded her head solemnly, her expression still showing disapproval. “Muzu… sometimes I wonder if I’m really the blind one here.”

He scoffed, his previous, dismissive expression returning to his old, wrinkly face. “I see. It’s not like I haven’t heard that one from you before.”

With that statement, he turned back away from the sisters and began to walk away from the statue, his patience with the trio exhausted. Mira and Link watched him as he marched off toward the grand staircase with his clenched hands swinging at his sides. Judging by everyone’s expression, it seemed like a reconciliation wouldn’t be taking place anytime soon. Reconciliation with Muzu, however, was not exactly on Link’s to-do list yet, and quite frankly, it wouldn’t be for a while.

Before Link could turn around and return his attention to his loyal and supportive daughters, Muzu stopped to address him one more time. “By the way, this little discussion has not swayed me at all. The only way you may prove to me that your ways have truly changed is by relinquishing your petty ‘missions’ and devoting your life exclusively to your family. That includes both your children and all of us here at the Domain.”

Mira cut in to respond to his demand. “What about the Divine Beast, Muzu? Dad is here to save us all from Vah Ruta’s destructive rainfall! Doesn’t it mean anything that he returned to help us in our time of need?”

“We do not need his ‘help.’” Muzu hissed. “We are already covered on that front. After Seggin’s failed attempt on the Beast with the prince last week, Murdoch stepped forward with a plan to attack Vah Ruta tomorrow with shock arrows and a Lynel’s bow. He informed us that he has developed his resistance.”

Mira, Noelani, and Link all cried out simultaneously, their shock at Muzu’s statement made immediately known. Muzu flinched slightly at the trio’s unexpectedly sudden response.

“Did you say Murdoch was planning to confront the Divine Beast?!” Link exclaimed with disbelief.

“That’s right.” Muzu answered boldly. “Last week, he killed the Lynel that’s been terrorizing our people on Ploymus Mountain, and he provided us with an abundance of the
monster’s shock arrows, along with a bow that can shoot them three-at-a-time. To be honest, it makes no sense to me that Prince Sidon and the king were insistent on finding a Hylian to help us. We have the situation under control.”

Mira shook her head in staunch disapproval. “Muzu, three-times the arrows means three-times the electricity! Combining shock arrows with that Lynel bow would undoubtedly be enough to kill any Zora that attempts it! Have you not considered this?!”

“Yeah, I may be able to repair electric burns, but I can’t bring anyone back from the dead! Not even Mom could do that, and she was the expert!” Noelani added with a slight shiver in her tone. “Has anyone tried talking him out of it?!”

The elder Zora shook his head in disagreement. Unlike Murdoch’s concerned family, he did not seem fazed by the guard captain’s suicidal plan. “When Murdoch promises us something, I always trust him. Unlike you three, he actually has his head on straight. He is a loyal and valuable asset to the Domain, and for his commitment, he has my respect.”

Muzu did not give any of them the chance to protest further. Before any responses could be made, he turned back around and resumed his exit towards the grand staircase. Link and his daughters continued to stare in utter shock and horror at the news they had just received. As Muzu turned his back on them and left, they allowed their terrified silence to hang in the air for a good minute or two.

“…I take it Murdoch didn’t tell you about his plan earlier?” Mira finally muttered.

“…No, he didn’t.” Link responded quietly.

“Murdoch’s so smart…” Noelani stammered worriedly, touching her fingers together. “…He must understand the consequences of trying to take on Vah Ruta by himself with shock arrows and a Lynel bow…”

The trio could not figure out which aspect of the scenario was more disturbing: the fact that Murdoch had been planning such a suicidal mission, or the fact that he hadn’t told Link about it earlier. Although it was true that he didn’t currently hold his father in high regards, neglecting to mention a plan of such high stakes seemed a little…alarming, to say the least. Boldness did, admittedly, appear to be present in the Zora’s blood, but Murdoch didn’t seem like the type to make rash decisions without first calculating their weight. Why had he jumped so quickly to such a dangerous tactic?

Mira shuffled nervously. “You…you don’t think that he…knows what it’ll do to him…do you?”

“No, no, of course not.” Link answered quickly, hoping to console his daughter. “Murdoch may be a little misguided, but he seems like a righteous character to me. There’s no way he would take on a challenge he knows he can’t handle.”

He stopped for a moment, remembering the memory he had recovered the previous night. He remembered what he had said to Mipha under their awning on the East Reservoir, shortly before they…got busy. He remembered his sworn promise…to never throw himself at the void in the name of his heroism. However, he had not always been that way, of course. Mipha always
told him, almost every time she was healing him, about his brashness and recklessness as a young child. Reminiscing on these things, Link had to wonder to himself... exactly how much of him had Murdoch inherited? And how far had his decisions matured since his youngest days?

Noelani interrupted his thoughts with an added worry. “Are you sure Murdoch’s idea of ‘righteousness’ isn’t... self-sacrifice? We haven’t talked to him in a really long time, but... I don’t know... I can’t shake the feeling that he would realistically do something like that. Especially considering how he’s been feeling lately.”

Link anxiously rubbed the back of neck, his stature becoming less calm. He had only met his son, for the first time in a century, less than an hour ago, so he was clueless as far as Murdoch’s hidden motivations. “I... I don’t know. Mira, what do you think?”

Mira stood quietly for a moment, sighing. She glanced back and forth between Link and Noelani. Her eyes settled intently on her father. “…I think we need to talk to him.”

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Once again, not too long after he had scurried back down it, Link was climbing the grand staircase on the way to Murdoch’s post. He had literally just spoken to him, and in the short break the guard captain had gotten from his seemingly pesky father, he wouldn’t have even had the time to eat a quick lunch if he had wanted to. Surely, Link figured, his son would not receive his reappearance too invitingly.

This time, however, Link was accompanied by Mira and Noelani... Murdoch’s sisters. While earlier had been Murdoch’s first time interacting with his involuntarily estranged father in over a century, now was going to be his first interaction with his voluntarily estranged siblings in over a decade-and-a-half. That was an unbelievably long time, especially considering the limited space of Zora’s Domain. Staying apart from his sisters in a place like the Domain for so many years, in reality, must’ve taken a great deal of deliberate effort.

Upon reaching the gazebo at the beginning of the long bridge on which Murdoch stood, Mira halted Link and Noelani. Itching to go hopefully set his son in the right direction, Link was impatient for being stopped.

“There’s no time to waste, Mira. We need to speak to him right away!” He urged, looking to push past his daughter’s outstretched palm.

“Dad, wait.” Mira pleaded. “I... I think Lani and I should go by ourselves.”

“Wha... What do you mean?” He stammered.

“Well...” She bit her lip. “… you already spoke with my brother earlier, and I could tell from looking at you that it hadn’t gone well. If we approached him alone, I think we’ll have a better shot at negotiating.”
Link sighed worriedly. He glanced back and forth at his daughters, his anxiety struggling to stay contained. He had faced a multitude of horrific adversaries in his long, demanding career, all with undeniable confidence, but this issue was apparently above the paygrade of his emotional capacity. He trusted Mira and Noelani…that much was certain. However…to leave something so major out of his control…well, it went against his very nature.

“A…Are you sure?”

“Yes, I agree.” Noelani chimed in. “Even though Murdoch loves all three of us, he’s had no reason to lose his respect for me and sis. It’s been a super long time…but I think we’d be able to reach him.”

Mira nodded in support of her sister’s added statement. “It’s for the best, Dad. Murdoch’s life could be on the line here.” Seeing Link’s petrified expression, she sighed. “I know it’s a dramatic thing to be saying so quickly, especially after learning of all of this so recently, but…I’d rather overreact and see our brother stay in one piece than take it with a grain of salt and watch him die. We’re doing the right thing here.”

Link continued to stare at his children in silence, his mind struggling with a big decision. He wished, more than anything, that he could have something to offer that would help defuse the situation with Murdoch, but unfortunately, nothing was coming to mind. The way things seemed, Mira’s suggestion was looking like the only valid one. At the same time, though, he didn’t want to just…walk away!

He sighed. “O…Okay. I trust you both. I’m going to keep an eye from back here under the gazebo using the sheikah slate.” He removed the slate from his belt and held it up for Mira to see. “And just like you told me earlier…I’ll be here for you if it doesn’t go well.”

The sisters smiled. Noelani reached forward to hug her father again, while Mira put her hand on his shoulder. “Thank you. I promise this won’t take long.”

Link took a deep breath as his daughters separated from him, turned around, and began their trek down the bridge on the way to their brother. Mira reached out and took Noelani’s hand to lead her along their path as usual. As the siblings walked farther away from the gazebo, Link turned up the scope on the sheikah slate and aimed it at Murdoch in the distance. From his current vantage point, he was too far away to hear any conversations they would be having, but by seeing them through the device, he would get a somewhat adequate idea of what would be going on. After several long years of isolation from his family, today was turning into quite the busy day for Murdoch.

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Just like he had been earlier when Link had approached him, Murdoch stood professionally on the center of the bridge with his back facing his sisters. The Lightscale Trident he had inherited from his late mother, now noticeably dented and scratched from his loss of temper before, stood directly upright next to him in the grasp of his left hand. He did not seem to hear Mira and Noelani
as they stepped up behind him, likely due to the continuous pounding of the rain.

“H…Hey there…Murdoch. It’s been…uh…quite a while.” Mira uttered awkwardly.

His head seemed to move slightly, but his back remained turned. “Oh, Mira. Greetings. If Father sent you here, I advise you to leave me to my musings. I will not accept speeches made on his behalf.”

She shook her head. “Um…no, actually…that’s not why we’re here. It’s more of…well…a personal matter, if you will.”

Noelani stepped forward. “We’ve been speaking to Muzu lately, Murdoch. This is about you.”

Upon hearing Noelani’s voice accompanying Mira’s, Murdoch actually turned around completely. He lifted his beaten trident an inch off the ground and brought it around to his other side, making a full transition to face his sisters directly. It was the first time he had addressed them with his full attention in over fifteen years. In addition, it was the first time he had willingly engaged in a conversation with them since joining the Zora Guard. Normally, he would’ve gently dismissed his quiet siblings with the request to be left alone to his thoughts, but with the recent arrival of his disliked father and the looming threat of Vah Ruta, this meeting seemed more important.

“Noelani…you’re here as well. I see.” He murmured, on the edge of a whisper.

“Hello, Murdoch.” The blind Zora replied, adding a warm, heartfelt grin to her slightly off-targeted gaze.

Mira waited to cut to the chase, since she had not gotten the opportunity to connect with her distant brother in an incredibly long time. Every time they had tried approaching him in the recent past, he had found some excuse to nudge them away. This time, though, he seemed to come right out and answer their call. This moment was one she found herself wanting to cherish. “First of all…how have you been recently? It’s been so long…even your voice sounds different.”

Murdoch sighed sadly, bringing his downtrodden trident into his second hand. He shook his head. “You know, Mira…” He paused, seeming to hesitate. “…I’ve seen better days. Being in the Zora Guard, while being able to help our people, has helped me to finally take my mind off the past and live more in the moment. But…with Vah Ruta putting us in danger again the last few weeks…I…I just can’t stop thinking about Mother.”

The sisters reflected on their sibling’s confession. It was a lot to take in, surely, considering their lack of interaction in such a long time. It had struck them as greatly unusual when he had stopped talking to them those many years ago. This was because he usually loved talking to his siblings. After the loss of their parents in the Calamity, the sisters were the only ones to which Murdoch could vent his feelings, while the rest of the Domain had expected him to remain tough and emotionally staunch. Even though Muzu had provided them with great care over the years, the resentment he retained for their father had made him difficult to approach in times of weakness. Mira and Noelani were the only ones he had had left, and it was only after his father had returned to the Domain that he finally acknowledged that.
“It’s okay, Murdoch.” Noelani cooed quietly. “Sis and I haven’t quite moved on from Mom’s death either. It got really bad for her last night on the East Reservoir.”

Murdoch glanced sympathetically at Mira. “…You guys visited the East Reservoir last night?”

Mira nodded. “That’s right. We were just reliving some old memories. We had Dad with us, though, so…I doubt you’d have wanted to be with us.” She explained sheepishly.

“Ah, I see.” He responded, turning his head away toward the ground. He stood in silence for a few moments, staring intently at the surface of the dripping wet bridge as if he were trying to figure out how to word his next sentence. “The thing about Father is……well…”

“Dad really wants to make it up to you, I hope you know.” Noelani mentioned, her hand reaching out to try and find her brother’s shoulder. “He’s made that very clear to us during our time together. I don’t think he even realizes what he did to hurt you.”

“That’s quite a fanciful thing for him to have told you, I must say.” Murdoch answered, rolling his eyes in exasperation. “You see…I really wish things could be like they were when I was young. Father, he was…such a great role-model back then.”

Mira stepped forward. “Well, you know, things don’t have to remain the way they are now. Dad wants nothing more than your forgiveness, Murdoch, and I’m sure if you just look deep inside…”

“It’s not that simple, sister.” Murdoch cut in with a small scoff. “Mother’s death was very preventable, you see, and Father showed no regard for the dangers she was getting into. Besides…” He paused, eyeing them suspiciously. “…I thought you two didn’t intend to bring this up any further?”

Noelani shook her head quickly, not looking to escalate the situation any more. “No, no, we weren’t, Murdoch. You, um…you kind of brought it up, actually.”

“Did I?” The guard captain stopped to think back a couple minutes, scratching the back of his neck awkwardly. In all honesty, he did not want to spend his first returning conversation with his sisters talking about his father. “…Apologies. What exactly have you come to talk to me about, then?”

Mira did not hesitate to give her response, on her, Noelani’s, and, unknown to Murdoch, Link’s behalf. “We wanted to talk to you about Vah Ruta.”

Murdoch already began to feel like he knew where the conversation was going. “Yes, go on.”

She bit her lip. “Well, Muzu came to talk to Lani and I about Dad earlier. Most of it was unimportant, but while he was leaving, he said something that concerned us greatly. He, well…he told us about your plan to attack the Divine Beast.”

The sisters waited for a response from their sibling, but at the same time, he was waiting for them to continue. He stared at them impatiently. “…And?”
They were taken aback at his uncaring response. Clearly, he knew the potential consequences of his reckless plan, but he shockingly did not seem bothered, hesitant, nor remorseful. What if his plan really was just a spectacular, heroic suicide attempt? Did he know that there were alternatives?

“Murdoch…your plan is dangerous!” Noelani pleaded. “We really care for your well-being, and we’re not sure you’d walk away alive if you go through with what you’re planning!”

“Exactly.” Mira added, her face showing the same concern as her sister. “Shooting shock arrows from a Lynel bow would be like trying to fire a cannon with too much gunpowder! None of us Zora can withstand a shock dosage that high.”

“I am aware of that.” Murdoch replied with a chillingly monotone voice. “But I am extremely committed to avenging Mother, and I am prepared to go to any length to achieve that goal.”

“You’re our brother, Murdoch! It’s been difficult enough on us to have to live separately from you for so many years…” Mira exclaimed, clasping her hands together in front of her. “…but we can’t just stand by and let you stick your neck out for some silly reason! We need to stick together at all times!”

“It’s funny you should say that, sister.” Murdoch answered, chuckling coldly. “If Father hadn’t done the exact same thing a hundred years ago, we wouldn’t be in this mess in the first place!”

Mira looked down at the ground, stuttering incomprehensibly. He was technically correct, but at the same time, he really wasn’t, in a way. She had not the time, nor the readiness, to formulate a proper response, however. “Well, uh…that…um…”

Murdoch continued before she could find the words to respond. “Now Mira, I have no quarrel with you…and neither with you, Noelani. I’ll admit, I have forgotten over the years how nice it is to talk to you both and regather my thoughts. But this is something to which I have dedicated myself, and I would hate for you to make it more difficult than it has to be. I’m sorry.”

Despite Murdoch’s ultimatum attempt, the conversation was not over yet, as Noelani would not let her beloved brother escape so easily. Again, as she had done against Muzu, she stepped forward to defend her sister’s disintegrating argument. She squinted her cloudy eyes ever so slightly in his direction. “Are you sure you have Mom’s best interests in mind?”

Murdoch stopped and looked at his blind sister, surprised by her sudden input. “Wh…What do you mean?”

“Think about it.” She began, her gaze unwavering. “What would Mom have wanted more? To be ‘avenged’ by her only son at the cost of his life, or to see her family happily thriving together after her tragic passing?”

Murdoch seemed to freeze in place, his rigid resolve collapsing slightly. “Um…well…I hardly think…”
“Shh…just think about it.” The blind Zora ordered quietly. She raised her index finger in front of her brother. “If you remember, Mom went through an abundance of stressful trials and suffered many shortcomings to her demanding schedule…just so we, her children, could lead normal, stress-free lives.” She stopped for a moment while Murdoch looked directly at her. “By putting yourself and all of us through this…wouldn’t you be amounting her efforts to nothing?”

Murdoch put his hand on his forehead. Noelani continued to stare in his direction as he shook his head, plagued by a sudden cloud of frazzled thoughts. He backed up a step, groaning uncomfortably. “Ugh…why does everything have to feel so confusing? It’s just…so…irritating!”

Mira finally spoke up from the other side. After Noelani had saved the situation, she regained her confidence. “It’s okay, Murdoch. We understand completely. Each of us has to come to our realizations a different way, and if the streams ever get difficult, we can always traverse them together. Right, Lani?”

Noelani nodded her head in agreement with her sister. She allowed a small smile to appear on her face, which Murdoch did not share upon seeing. With his hand still on his forehead, he directed his gaze to the horizon. From studying him, Mira could clearly read the conflict going on in his head. She had never seen her brother so…unsure of himself before. It was a sign to her that, despite the troubles he had endured, his kinder self was still trying to show its face.

“I don’t know…nothing has been making sense to me lately.” He sighed. “I just feel like……like…”

Murdoch’s voice trailed off as his eyes seemed to lock onto something in the distance. The abrupt end of his statement was accompanied by a noticeable change in his expression as something he was looking at seemed to catch his attention. Mira curiously turned in the direction he was facing, which was toward the gazebo and the rest of the Domain.

Near one of the wooden crates that sat under the gazebo near the railing, Murdoch had been distracted by a small, reflective glint. Being a seasoned member of the royal guard, he was highly trained in his basic senses, and as soon as a small amount of movement had occurred in his vision, his mind was immediately on top of it. He couldn’t tell for sure, but the glint seemed to come from a familiar object.

“What in Hylia’s name…?” He muttered curiously. He returned the trident to his two-handed grip and began walking toward the gazebo, suspicious of what he had seen.

Watching her brother walk past her toward the gazebo, where Link had been watching from, Mira put her hand to her mouth. “Oh no…”

Kneeling behind the wooden crate under the gazebo, through the sheikah slate’s zoomed vision, Link noticed Murdoch heading towards him. He quickly lowered the device and began desperately tapping on the screen, trying to access the map so he could hopefully teleport out of that spot before his son could catch him. He broke out in a cold sweat.
“Come on, come on…” He whispered nervously.

“Father?!” A familiar voice exclaimed, causing Link to jump out of his skin. Murdoch had approached Link faster than he realized, apparently. “What are you doing here?”

Link quickly stuck the slate behind his back, his nerves looking a little more than obvious. “I… I just got a little worried, and I came here to see if everything was alright!” The guilty Hylian fibbed. “I hid out here, since I knew you didn’t want to see me…”

“Lies!” Murdoch cried, pointing his trident angrily at Link. He turned his livid glare in Mira’s direction, as she had been standing behind him after following him to the gazebo. “You told me you had not come on Father’s behalf!”

Mira threw her hands in the air, intimidated greatly by her brother’s sudden rage. “I didn’t, Murdoch, I swear! I can explain!”

“Spare yourself the trouble, sister.” Murdoch spat. His voice seemed to display a renewing seed of betrayal, budding rapidly from the discovery he believed himself to be making. He whipped his gaze back to his father, whom his trident was still aimed at. “You… just who the hell do you think you are?! Using my sisters to get through to me after I made it clear I didn’t want to listen to you?”

Link’s hands were still stuck upright at the sides of his head from the threatening position of Murdoch’s trident. He closed his eyes and let out a huff. “For goddesses’ sake, Murdoch, that’s not what’s going on here! Just let us explain!”

“Can it!” Murdoch barked, thrusting his trident forward a bit to startle Link some more. “I don’t know what you’ve led my sisters into believing, but I won’t conform! Why can’t you just leave me alone?!”

Link, along with his daughters, watched in horror as his troubled son seemed to descend into minor insanity. Judging by the pace of things, however, he had to wonder… had Murdoch already been insane? After all, it surely had not taken him long to reach this point. Was it really even possible to lose touch with reality this quickly? It made more sense for him to have already been lost long ago… and for his father’s return to have been his final breaking point. Those nights alone… void of the purpose his lost father had given him… for one hundred years…… what had they done to him?

“Can’t you see we’ve been looking out for your well-being?” Link asked desperately. “We want you to be happy with us again!”

Murdoch’s breathing grew intense, his breaths hissing through clenched teeth. His grip tightened around his trident. “Then why won’t you stop torturing me?!”

As he yelled this painfully, he reeled his trident back for an unwarned swing.

Link’s eyes widened as his warrior’s instincts suddenly kicked in again. He had sensed an incoming strike from the motions of Murdoch’s body and the positioning of his weapon, and, in a fraction of a second, he reacted to his angry son’s subsequent follow-up. Murdoch lashed his
trident outward and let go of the handle, sending it through the air towards Link like a javelin.
With less than an eye’s blink to react, Link extended his legs to the side and propelled himself off
the wooden crate to his right, tossing his body to the left in a hasty attempt to dodge the airborne projectile.

Narrowly missing the Hylian hero’s boot at the end of its short flight, the expertly-crafted trident slammed into the railing of the gazebo and broke, its triple-pointed head snapping right off its hilt. The sharp end of the now-destroyed weapon remained embedded in the railing while the disconnected handle-stick clattered onto the stone floor. The weapon that had once belonged to Mipha had taken many hits under Murdoch’s care, but the strike that had just about sent her husband to an early grave had been its last. The sisters flinched in utter terror when the trident made contact with the railing in this manner.

By the time Link could pick himself up off the ground after almost losing his life to Murdoch’s crazed outburst, the guard captain had already taken off. Link raised his head in the direction of the Domain and saw his son marching furiously away from the gazebo. He watched him make a left toward the grand staircase before disappearing from sight. He then turned to his daughters, who were standing before the scene with complete shock on their faces.

Noelani knew from what she had heard that Murdoch had thrown his trident, but naturally, she was unable to see that Link had almost been impaled by it. She sighed.

“Man…we were so close to changing his mind.”
Compunction

Murdoch’s behavior did not make sense to Link. He could not even figure out how his actions in the past could’ve hurt his son badly enough to burn the bridges between them in the first place, but a violent outburst like what had just occurred? He could not even begin to piece together the reasons behind that. He had only first met the guard captain a couple hours ago at most, but regardless, an action like that did not seem like him in the slightest. Had that sudden, enraged strike been a product of overwhelming grievances in the last couple weeks, or had it been a hundred years in the making?

He didn’t know how, but he had to further understand his son’s feelings. The problem was…after their encounter, when he believed that his sisters were sent to him by Link, his trust in them seemed to evaporate completely. At this rate, who would he trust enough to speak with anymore?

The handle of the Lightscale Trident, now forced apart from its head by the shockwave it had endured upon crashing into the railing, sat motionless on the ground by Link’s feet. Its head, with its three sharp points, remained embedded about an inch within the railing. Considering the hard stone that made up the entirety of the bridge, this was an impressive feat. It was unknown to the trio whether Murdoch had been intentionally aiming for his father when he hurled the weapon forward earlier, but undoubtedly, a direct hit to Link’s flesh would’ve spelled disaster. Now, as Link stood up and brushed himself off, he reached for the trident’s broken neck and tried to yank it out of the railing.

Mira stood a couple feet away at the edge of the gazebo, still quivering intensely from the scene that had just played out before her and her sister. “I…I…always knew Murdoch was a…bold character, but I never thought he would’ve done something like that.”

“That makes two of us.” Link muttered in response as he wrapped his second hand around the trident’s embedded head. Even with the full weight of his body tugging against the object, he was failing to remove it from the stone. “I just wish I knew where I had messed up.”

“I mean…I know he’s always been upset that you left us behind in the Great Calamity.” Mira continued, her voice cracking repeatedly. “But it doesn’t seem like him to just go ballistic and attack you like that!”

Noelani gasped suddenly. “Wait…Murdoch attacked Dad? He didn’t just throw his trident on the ground or anything?”

“Yes, Lani, that’s what happened. Murdoch’s gone now, but before he left, he launched his trident right at Dad. We’re all lucky Dad’s reflexes are so good.” Mira answered with a chill upon turning to her sister. “I still can’t believe that just happened…”

It had come as a shock to everybody. While they were still recovering from that shock, however, Murdoch was heading off somewhere beyond their knowledge, his rage still likely boiling over. They didn’t know if he would simply be running away to cool off, or if he planned to do something rash from his somewhat demented emotions. At the moment, though, there were other things they needed to be worrying about.
“It’s okay, Mira, it’s in the past now. The question now is…” Link paused for a moment while he grunted in his attempts to remove the busted weapon from the tough stone. “…what are we going to do with Mipha’s trident? I’m sure this thing was considered sacred before Murdoch destroyed it.”

“Oh, right…um…” Mira stuttered, eyeing the two pieces of the broken trident sadly as her father tried in vain to excavate the head from the side of the bridge. “…to tell you the truth, I don’t know how our grandfather would respond to seeing that thing in the, uh…condition it’s in.”

Link halted his attempts for a moment and turned to look at the twins. “What do you mean? Is it actually sacred?”

The sisters both bit their lips. Link raised his eyebrow at them as he observed their evident discomfort and awkward mannerisms from receiving his question. He was beginning to realize, judging by their composure, that there was more to this little incident than he had originally thought. Once again, there would be more for him to hear about his children’s past. The realization came with both positive anticipation…and fearful dread. After all, Mira and Noelani’s faces didn’t exactly look excited at the moment.

Noelani brought her hand to her chest and took a deep breath. “So…um…do you mind if we tell you a little story? It’s not too long, I promise.”

Link did not hesitate to shake his head. “No, of course not. Take all the time you need.”

“Okay, well…” She let out a huff as she briefly contemplated a way to begin her explanation. Link had turned his attention completely away from the smashed trident and stood facing his timid daughter as she opened her mouth to speak. “…Sis, our grandfather, Muzu, and I were the only ones aware of the fact that Murdoch wielded Mom’s trident. Everyone else in the Domain has been led to believe that he only used a replica.”

Link’s eyes widened, his interest in her speech already growing rapidly. He automatically deduced, from the measly amount of information he had received so far, that something major was bound to emerge from the upcoming revelation. It was amazing how much he still didn’t know, despite having exclusively listened to his daughters for the last entire day! Was there a certain significance to their decision to deliberately hold off crucial story bits for later times?

He crossed his arms in front of him. “…Really?”

The blind Zora nodded her head. “No one sympathized the loss of our parents more than our grandfather. After all…you and Mom were his children.”

Mira stepped forward to add a bit to her sister’s monologue. “Yeah, King Dorephan may not admit it, but he sees you as one of his own, just like Mom and Uncle Sidon. Although we haven’t talked to him recently, he’s probably very glad to see you back home.”

Link had to smile a bit at that heartwarming statement, but it did not remain for long. He was currently in the process of fitting more pieces into the puzzle, and as such, he kept his attention focused. His eyes remained fixed on Noelani as he waited patiently for her to resume her explanation.

She sighed. “Well, because of that sympathy, our grandfather ordered that Mom’s trident
be handed down to us…rather than stored away for safekeeping. Since Murdoch, sis, and I are Mom’s descendants, it only seemed to make sense.” She shrugged her shoulders and aimed her misty eyes toward the ground. “However, Muzu decided to grant it specifically to Murdoch, since…well…he’s always had more of a warrior’s spirit than us.”

“…Were you ever upset about that?” Link asked curiously.

“I mean…not too much.” Noelani answered dismissively. “But…now that he went and destroyed it, I guess…maybe I am a tiny bit. The Lightscale Trident was one of Mom’s few remaining heirlooms. And, also…without the trident…the Champion’s Festivals are going to be a bit awkward now.”

Link was intrigued by her last statement. “Champion’s…Festivals?”

Mira spoke up to answer the question before Noelani could have the chance to respond. “It’s a ceremony our people perform every year to honor Mom’s life and venerate the Lightscale Trident. Trello, a…um…member of the elder council, was the one to lead the ceremony each year when we and Murdoch were really young, but once Murdoch came of age, he was deemed to be its rightful administrator.”

Link put a hand to his chin and rubbed it thoughtfully. “So you’re saying Murdoch leads the Champion’s Festival every year now? To honor Mipha with the rest of the Domain?”

“That’s right.” Noelani answered, reestablishing control of her explanation. “The trident is a big part of the ceremony, though, and now……it just wouldn’t be the same. He could use a ceremonial replica, but it would only be for the purpose of venerating a weapon that he broke himself. It might stain his reputation if anyone found out.”

To be honest, Link wasn’t sure if his son even cared about his reputation anymore. The encounters that had occurred this day seemed to mark a major turning point in the young, distressed Zora’s mind. At this point, he wasn’t sure if Murdoch would ever be the same again, and he was even less sure if that change would be for better or for worse. His immediate intention was to seek out the guard captain and try once again to straighten things out, but for the time being, dealing with the ruined trident seemed to be a better choice, judging by the sisters’ apparent tone.

“Oh, okay, well…what about that craftsman you told me about last night? The one that made your headpieces?” Link suggested.

The twins’ faces seemed to light up a bit. “Oh, you mean Dento?” Mira remarked.

“Yeah, that guy. Can’t he fix the trident?”

“Well yeah, he’s the one who made it in the first place, back when Mom was a little hatchling!” Mira mentioned excitedly, her hands clasping in front of her chest. “That’s a really good idea!”

Gee, he had made the trident during Mipha’s youth? Dento must’ve been extremely old, Link thought. In order for Mipha to have looked her age at the time she married Link, she would’ve had to be about eighteen or nineteen in Hylian years. In Zora years, though, that equated
in his head to just over a century old or so. Coupled with the century that had gone by since the Great Calamity, as well as Dento’s golden years before Mipha’s conception, how long could the Zora craftsman have been alive? Was he an official member of the elder council, and if so, would he be upset to learn of the trident’s destruction?

“Alright, we can go see Dento, then.” Link concluded. He put his hands around the base of the trident’s head and gave one last attempt in trying to pry the points from the chiseled bridge. “But first…I can’t get this out of here!”

Noelani stepped toward him. “Here, Dad, let me help. I think I can get it.”

Link chuckled a bit. “I appreciate the offer, Lani, but this is really stuck in here. I don’t think you have the strength to get it out.”

The blind Zora ignored his line of skepticism and held out her hand in front of her. “Show me where it is.”

Link let out a sigh, but he decided to humor his daughter for a moment. He gently grabbed her extended wrist and began to guide it towards the spot where the trident’s head jutted from the banister. “You know…I doubt your healing magic is going to work on that either.”

Noelani giggled. “I know, Dad.”

Once her hand was rested upon the curvy surface of the trident’s head, she softly caressed her fingers up the length of the weapon’s spokes until she felt the area where the points entered the rigid stone. Then, much to Link’s confusion, she leaned in and brought her face very close to the weapon, making sure to position her chin near the region where her fingers sat. As Mira and her father watched, she breathed in, puckered her mouth, and spat a large, slimy glob of saliva at the banister, directly onto the contact point of the trident. Mira didn’t seem fazed by her sister’s unexpected, unladylike action, while Link, in contrast, grimaced slightly.

Her mouth now curled into a smug grin, she stood back upright, gripped the base of the lodged piece with one hand, and yanked it right out of the banister with almost no effort. Link stared at the piece of the trident with minor distaste, having been thoroughly caught off guard by his daughter’s…unorthodox method. He continued to stare as she bent over and spent a few moments brushing her other hand along the ground in search of the trident’s missing handle-stick. Once she had it in her grip, she stood back up once more, and proudly held the two pieces out in front of her father.

“Here you go!” She beamed, smiling profusely.

Link eyed the oily, dripping object for a moment before reaching forward and taking it reluctantly, along with the handle-stick. Upon having it in his hand, he quickly noticed a lingering smell of raw fish on the trident’s slippery head, which had likely been a product of Noelani’s breakfast earlier that day. He swallowed the lump that had formed in his throat.

“Um…thank you.” He muttered.

Mira was unable to contain her laughter after seeing the spectacle play out before her.
“Don’t worry, Dad, it’ll wash off in the rain!”

Link chuckled a bit as well. “Alright then, good to know, I suppose.”

After handing the two pieces of the trident to her father, Noelani began to excitedly gesture toward the Domain with her hands. “Come on, now, let’s go talk to Dento!”

On the way to the workshop, which was on the first level on the other side of the plaza, Link could very well distinguish the difference between his daughters and the rest of the Domain. With the brightening radiance of the sun eclipsed by Vah Ruta’s relentless onslaught, the Zoras seemed to maintain their glum, quiet behavior. Mira and Noelani, on the other hand, were always cheerful and energetic around him, made all the more so by their relief from him surviving Murdoch’s attack earlier. At times, when he was with his twins, he tended to forget that there was a giant elephant-shaped machine pouring down rain and threatening the Zoras’ entire existence. After all, Mira and Noelani always acted as if nothing was wrong when they were with their father.

Link was well aware that the chances of Murdoch being in the Domain were low. After a breakdown like what had just happened, there was almost no way he would decide to remain in the populated area where his upset thoughts could be interrupted. Despite this fact, though, Link still kept his eye out for his son as he and the twins descended the grand staircase on the way to the plaza. Internally, he was hoping Murdoch would be somewhere nearby, and he was also hoping Prince Sidon would not be. He was feeling no less distracted from his mission now than he was the day before when he was approached by his daughters in the first place.

As they passed the center of the plaza on their way into the front entrance of the general store, Link noticed a couple of young Zora children running circles around the large Mipha statue. They must’ve been playing tag to pass the time, the Hylian hero figured. It must’ve been nice for them…getting to be blissfully unaware of the countless dangers and stresses that surrounded their playful, carefree oasis. They were also lucky, he thought, to have a closely-knit family that didn’t consist of two overburdened Champions and their countless responsibilities. In fact, he could’ve sworn that Mira, Noelani, and Murdoch were younger than those Zoras at the time they had lost him and Mipha as their parents. That recurring thought did not do his inner guilt any favors.

Marot, who remained standing just outside the entrance to the general store as she had that morning, greeted the twins with a friendly wave as they passed by. As Link entered in behind them with the broken pieces of the Lightscale Trident in both his hands, he received a kind and acknowledging smile from the young shopkeeper. This was enough to make him feel accepted for the time being.

At the back of the main store, the platform continued into a second chamber, where an assortment of glittery tools and jewel-pieces hung from the walls by crystal nails. Display cases containing various full-sized weapons hugged the walls of the small room to complement the smaller decorations. Similar to the inn on the other side of the plaza, the entire inner side of the chamber was supported by beams rather than being covered by a wall. As a result, the room felt less like a confining space and more like a roofed extension of the plaza itself. The grandeur of the Domain and its surrounding waterfalls showed clearly through the chamber’s open side.
back of the room, sitting at a chiseled desk with a tool in each hand, was an old, wrinkly Zora with navy-blue scales. Link automatically assumed that Zora to be Dento.

“Hey there, Dento!” Mira greeted as casually as possible.

Dento jumped in his seat a bit at the sudden sound of Mira’s voice, his chisel dropping out of his shaky, bony hand. Mira put a hand up to her mouth when she realized she had startled the Zora elder with her eager introduction.

“Oh…terribly sorry.” She uttered sheepishly. “Here, let me get that for you.”

As the young Zora let go of her sister’s hand and stepped forward to return Dento’s chisel to him, the elder craftsman turned in his seat slowly to look at his visitor. He received a regular supply of visitors from time to time, especially from Hylian and Goron tourists, so Mira’s voice had not been enough to distinguish her to him.

“Ah, Mira.” He began in his tired, raspy voice. “It is no problem. I have suffered worse. If you’re here to see me today, I’m assuming your sister is here as well?”

“Right over here, Dento.” Noelani chimed in with a small grin.

“Excellent.” The craftsman stated with a small grin of his own. “Are you two faring well?”

Mira folded her arms in front of her and answered nonchalantly, attempting to keep the situation casual so as not to raise Dento’s suspicion. They needed the Lightscale Trident repaired, but they did not want him to know that it had been in Murdoch’s possession. Surely, there was no chance the elder craftsman would’ve approved of such a scenario.

“They’re doing pretty well…” She hummed. “We’ve been catching up with Dad lately…”

Dento’s eyes widened a bit. “Your father is back?”

The aged Zora turned around slowly in his seat upon hearing Mira’s statement. He rested one of his skinny arms on the edge of his desk for support as he stood himself up slightly and shifted around so he could face the entrance of his shop. Once he managed it, Noelani and Link came into his view. Noelani looked lovely to him as usual, but it was Link that immediately caught his attention. His small smile evaporated instantly.

“Oh… it’s you.”

Yep, Dento must’ve been a member of the elder council. The moment that cold statement had rolled off his tongue, Link was completely sure of the fact. His alleged “abandonment” of Mipha and his family set him in very low standing with the elder council, and as a result, everyone with its affiliations seemed to automatically hate him. Apparently, Dento was going to be no exception. Therefore, he could only hope that, once again, Mira and Noelani would be able to bail their father out.

Noelani was the next one to speak, but she didn’t seem to get very far. “Dento, we only
“What happened to the Lightscale Trident?!” The craftsman exclaimed, cutting the blind Zora off abruptly after noticing the weapon pieces in Link’s hands. He stopped to cough into his fist a few times, since his hardened vocal cords were not accustomed to sudden loud use.

“Um…how can you tell it’s not just a ceremonial trident?” Mira asked unsurely.

“Mira, please.” Dento turned his glare to Mira for a moment as he addressed her attempted excuse. “I can sense the very aura of the Lightscale Trident. It was my gift to Mipha the day she had first emerged from her egg. I have no doubt that it is present right here in front of me, split into two pieces! How did any of you get ahold of it?”

That was already one barrier down. Link’s initial hope was that Dento would mistake the Lightscale Trident for a replica, since several of those apparently existed within the Domain for various purposes. It seemed, though, that the Zora elder would not be fooled that easily. Being able to sense the essence of the actual weapon was a supernatural factor the three of them had not expected upon reaching the aging craftsman. What would he be more likely to believe?

“Our grandfather let us have it.” Noelani blurted quickly, her eyes glancing off in a random direction. “He thought it would be better off in the hands of Mom’s children, rather than…collecting dust. I guess trusting sis and I had been a bad call.”

Link was impressed by Noelani’s rapid and cunning fib. He was impressed by its believability, its speedy delivery, and most importantly, the fact that it wasn’t entirely a lie. After all, King Dorephan had indeed granted the Lightscale Trident to his grandchildren, but it was Muzu who shifted its possession over to Murdoch. By playing that card, Noelani had managed to manipulate the blame over to herself and Mira, and by doing so, she had directed it away from both him and Murdoch. It’s almost as if Noelani’s blindness made it easier for her to focus rigidly on the words in a conversation…and to respond accordingly. What would he and Mira do without her?

However, Dento still seemed a bit skeptical. “Hmm…that’s rather odd. Why would King Dorephan pass along the Lightscale Trident so…spontaneously? He had supposedly been keeping it safe for so long…that…it just doesn’t make sense.”

“Oh, no.” Noelani sent back. “He had given it to us a long time ago, shortly after Mom passed in the Great Calamity. We had just…accidentally tampered with it too much while showing it to Dad earlier today.”

Dento looked at the sightless youngling with suspicion, his skepticism growing. “That’s highly improbable. The Lightscale Trident is my most durable creation, you see. In order for the head to split off the handle like that, a great deal of force would’ve been required. If, by ‘tampering,’ you mean you were throwing it off bridges, that would make more sense.”

Noelani’s seemingly airtight defense started to crumple a bit. “Well…uh…we…”

“And if you’ve supposedly had your mother’s trident in your possession for all these years…” Dento continued, his glare unavering. “…why haven’t I seen you with it before? Where have you kept it?”
“It’s been up on the mountain by the East Reservoir.” Mira covered for her sister by answering that last question. “We kept it there along with the headpieces you made us. The waterbed up there is the safest place we know of.”

After a moment of contemplation, Dento nodded his head once. Judging by his altered expression, it seemed to them like he was buying into their false explanation. It was helpful that Mira and Noelani were surprisingly good at mixing their lies with the actual truth, which made their explanations more believable. Everything Link was learning about his history with the Zoras was coming from these two young twins, so basically, he simply had to trust that they were telling him the truth each time. After all, with their stunning lying abilities, he would’ve bought into just about any lie they’d try to lay on him. Of course, he had recovered a few memories of Mipha and his family with her on his own, so he would know what was true and what wasn’t.

Dento’s face grew very solemn. “Now listen, I need you two to understand something. That trident has become a holy symbol to our people. It is a hallowed object that represents your mother’s honorable legacy.” He paused for a moment as he watched Mira and Noelani nod in understanding. “Its destruction could entail…very serious consequences.”

“We understand, Dento.” Noelani assured in response. “That’s why…we were hoping you could repair it for us. And maybe…not…tell anybody…?”

The old craftsman sighed. “That’s a lot to ask of me, you know. What does your father have to say about your actions?”

Suddenly, the atmosphere of the room seemed to change. As Dento asked that last question, he turned his gaze over to Link with an intense expression. Mira and Noelani also turned in his direction at this point, staring at him hopefully. As Link stared blankly back at Dento’s piercing, expecting eyes, he started to realize what the Zora elder was attempting to do with that question. It seemed…like he was testing him.

Dento must’ve been somewhat unlike the others. As a member of the elder council, he did indeed seem to hold the same contempt for Link that Muzu did. However, contrary to the latter figure, Dento appeared to be reasonably civil about his convictions. In fact, as his question seemed to imply, those “convictions” may not have actually been convictions at all, but rather…suggestive observations. By asking for Link’s opinion regarding his daughters’ alleged destruction of the Lightscale Trident, it almost seemed like the elder craftsman was…giving him a second chance. It was as if he was allowing Link the chance to retake responsibility for his family. His chance…to reclaim his fatherhood.

With everyone in the room staring in his direction, Link took a deep, firm breath, and he gave his verdict. “I will ensure that they, who have destroyed Mipha’s trident, will understand the severity of their actions. You have my word.”

A few silent, tense moments passed within the small chamber after Link’s authoritative words. Mira set her gaze back at Dento, who seemed to be studying Link with a fiercely observant glare. Noelani’s head was still turned in Link’s direction, and when he glanced over at her for a brief moment, he could see her trying to hold back a smile. Admittedly, he was a bit confused by that.

Eventually, Dento’s expression seemed to relax. He sat back in his seat a bit and nodded
his head at Link. “That’s what I like to hear.” As Mira and Noelani tried to contain their happiness, Dento motioned for Link to step forward. “Now, hand me that trident. I shall have it finished for you within a day’s time.”

Link stepped between his daughters and walked the few steps toward the craftsman with the two pieces of Mipha’s historic weapon in each hand. As he stood directly before the Zora elder, the two of them stared directly into each other’s eyes. Without averting his gaze, Link reached his hands forward and handed the pieces of the weapon to Dento, who, in turn, took hold of them for the first time in over two hundred years. As the seconds went by in this state, Mira and Noelani waited in anticipation for words to be said.

“…I can still see good in you, Link.” Dento stated quietly, finally breaking the silence. “You still have a ways to go to show it to me, but I still have faith.”

“…Thank you. I won’t let any of you down again.” Link answered even more quietly.

Later, in the heart of the plaza, Link conversed calmly with Mira and Noelani about the events that had just transpired within Dento’s workshop. Had Murdoch been exposed as the keeper, and destroyer, of Mipha’s trident, an unfortunate series of condemnations and pointed fingers would’ve likely taken place. Luckily, the Hylian hero and his cunning daughters had managed to divert the craftsman’s suspicions away from the highly-respected guard captain, but even so, Dento still seemed reluctant of the trident being outside of King Dorephan’s possession. Hopefully the elder’s skepticism wouldn’t bud into a bigger issue down the road.

There was one thing, however, that remained stuck in Link’s head. After failing twice to break through his son’s tough shell, he was adamant about bouncing back and trying again. He had tried to convince himself before that he’d eventually be able to do it with patience and perseverance, but recently, his trademark determination and stubborn willpower had been gnawing him to the bone about Murdoch. For some reason, he felt fixated on reconciling with the Zora guard before leaving the Domain to take on the other Divine Beasts. Now that he and the twins had dealt with the issue regarding the Lightscale Trident, Link intended to let them know about his ambitions with their other problem.

“Listen…” He began, changing the subject over from Dento and the trident. “…we need to find Murdoch. I think it’s important that we keep trying with him.”

Mira was quick and confident with her response. “I…don’t agree, Dad. Couldn’t you see how unstable he was acting? Lani and I have never seen him act like that before.” Judging by their shared expressions, Link could sense that she was also speaking on her sister’s behalf. “Murdoch’s very frustrated and confused, and to be blunt…seeing you again is probably going to make him worse.”

Noelani added to her Mira’s statement. “Yeah…your courage and persistence are amazing, really…but…it’s not the kind of thing that’ll work on our brother.”
“But…we don’t even know where he is! H…How do we know if he’s okay?” He asked anxiously with an awkward stutter.

Mira giggled at that response, which greatly confused her father. Noelani giggled a bit as well upon hearing it from her sister. “Dad, he’s Murdoch! He killed the Lynel on Ploymus Mountain completely by himself. No monster out there could possibly pose a threat to him.”

Again, Noelani added support to her sister’s statement. “Exactly. Your fatherly instincts must be making you worry!”

His daughters’ giggles, while cute, did not amuse him. They may have known Murdoch more than him after his memory wipe in the Shrine of Resurrection, but Link felt he was justified in worrying about his misguided son. After all, there were a couple crucial things that they forgot to consider. It was unlike them to forget important details, but at least, if they were going to be the forgetful ones this time around, he would be able to fill the gaps for them.

“…Okay, well my ‘fatherly instincts’ are reminding me that Murdoch doesn’t have a weapon right now. We literally just handed it to Dento for repair.” He paused as watched the twins’ expressions change a bit. “And also, you’re telling me that no monster can pose a threat to Murdoch? Have you ever wondered if maybe…the way he is right now…he could be posing a threat to himself?”

Mira and Noelani’s grins seemed to disappear after he had made that point. Noelani put a finger up to her mouth, and Mira reached around to awkwardly scratch the side of her tailfin. Link eyed the two of them strongly with a rigid and judgmental glare. Their realization of the error they had made was evident to him in their fidgety behavior.

“Well…I suppose that may be true…” Noelani murmured sheepishly.

Link nodded his head once, satisfied with the point he had made. With that small triumph in the discussion, he felt like he had constructed his reasons to venture off and find his son. He adjusted his belt and turned to face the front exit of the Domain. “Now, if you two would like to join me, you’re welcome to do so. We must go find your brother.”

He followed his confident and declarative statement with a forward foot motion as he immediately began his trek in search of Murdoch. To his sheer surprise, however, despite having been one-upped in their short disagreement, Mira leapt forward and stopped him in his tracks by pressing her hands to his shoulders. He turned his gaze to her in slight annoyance.

“Dad, don’t go to him! I’m being serious!” She pleaded desperately. “You may have had a good point just then, but we’re the ones who escalated his condition in the first place! We need to give him the space he deserves!”

“Then what do you suggest we do next? Stand around and daydream of what could happen to him?” Link answered loudly. It was the highest he had raised his voice in…well…over a century. He almost reminded himself of Murdoch for a short moment.

“Come with us.” Mira urged in response, her voice having quickly calmed down. Her hope was to calm him down as well. “There’s one more place Lani and I have been wanting to show
you. We all just need a chance to cool down and continue enjoying each other’s company, and this place is mystically good at doing just that.”

“Where? Where is it?” He demanded, his voice still slightly overbearing.

Noelani grinned from behind him as she sensed where her sister had been suggesting.

“Ooh, we’re going to Veiled Falls, aren’t we?”

“Yes, Lani, that’s where we’re going. And Dad’s coming with us.” Mira answered. Her hands were still firmly positioned on Link’s shoulders, and she showed no signs of removing them for the next few moments. Link needed a moment to calm down from his overactive concerns before they could turn the other way and embark on a healing journey, rather than an aggressive one. In all honesty…it was for everyone’s sake.

According to the sheikah slate, Veiled Falls was located along the western cliffside of Zora’s Domain. It could easily be seen, right from the plaza, towering up along the horizon in the general direction of Hyrule Castle. From down in the Domain, Veiled Falls would be the body that blocks out the sunsets. From their starting point at the center of the plaza, the structure appeared clearly to them, even through the misty fog of Vah Ruta’s downpour. It seemed, from what he could see, that the waterfall was, in fact, made by Zora hands. Its downward stream looked very smooth and controlled.

The trek was not difficult, by any means. They were required to re-ascend the grand staircase, for the umpteenth time that day, toward the sleeping quarters. Then, they had to make a left and cross the very same bridge that Murdoch had stood guard on earlier, en route to the grassy ledge at the Domain’s west. On their way onto the bridge through the gazebo, Link couldn’t help but to glance over at the railing where his son had hurled his trident not too long ago. Sure enough, right where the entry had been made, a sizable gash was present on the rounded surface of the banister. It sat as a stark interruption to the rest of the Domain’s smooth, subtle chisel-work. Frankly, it looked kind of ugly.

From the end of the bridge, once the trio’s feet made contact with the wet, wavy grass, they took a gentle left along at the top of the ensuing hill that spanned the cliffside on the way to the base of the falls. The entire time, Link’s mind remained trapped with thoughts of Murdoch’s well-being. He wondered if, perhaps, the elder council had had an influence on Murdoch’s feelings, since their opinions seemed to be very similar. With Muzu as his caregiver, it would seem to make sense. It would also make sense that, being as young and vibrant as he was, he could’ve amplified those feelings on his own and turned them into something they didn’t have to be. Surely, he had to be at least somewhat remorseful that he almost killed his old man, right?

Eventually, beyond the evergreens and loose ferns scattered along the wide ledge, the brush gave way to a small, passive meadow. Tucked away in an indent on the rocky cliffside to their right, the base of the majestic, artificial waterfall spread its mist among the surrounding region, the roaring sound of the pounding water drowning out the dull rain patters everywhere else. While all the water filling the air around them had caused Link’s hair and clothes to mat to his skin like spongey velcro, Mira and Noelani’s smooth, scaly flesh caused the abundant droplets of water to
As they got a little closer, Link could see a decently-sized pond nestled at the base of the waterfall. It seemed to be surprisingly shallow at their end near the shore, but it appeared to get rapidly deeper the closer it got to the fall’s base. At the shallow end of the pond, near the grass in which the trio stood, a stunning variety of plant and animal life existed among the calm ripples of the water. It was rather impressive, he noticed, how gentle the water’s ripples could be near the pond’s shore, considering the booming disturbance the waterfall continued to cause on its other end.

“Well, here we are.” Mira announced. “This is Veiled Falls.”

The first thing Link noticed after surveying the region’s natural scenery was the sheikah-designed pedestal that sat just under the water’s surface at the other end of the pond. Its presence there was a clear indicator of a shrine somewhere nearby, but he chose to ignore that for the time being. It was rather unimportant to him. Instead, he focused on arresting his troubled thoughts about Murdoch and engaging properly with his daughters while they introduced him to their last significant childhood location.

“There’s a lot of natural beauty here.” He commented thoughtfully.

“Oh, I know.” Noelani replied with a happy grin. “The peaceful sounds here are just heavenly. I can’t imagine what it must look like.”

By analyzing Link’s face, Mira could predict what he was most likely wondering as he scanned their surroundings. It made the most sense to her that he’d be curious about the fall’s significance, since, after all, the other locations they had visited before were for relevant reasons. Not only that, neither she nor Noelani had elected to share the details on Veiled Falls with him up to this point. Naturally, he would’ve been curious, and with his mind likely still on Murdoch, he would need some explanation to justify his distracting presence at this spot.

“So, Dad, in case you were wondering…” She began, holding her hands behind her back. “…This is where Mom brought us to introduce us to climbing waterfalls.”

Link nodded his head pensively at his daughter’s words as his eyes stared at the sizable boulder that jutted out of the center of the pond. He thought back to the day before when he was conversing with Noelani under the awning by the East Reservoir. She had mentioned Mipha’s passing in the Great Calamity, and how it affected their learning of waterfalls. “…You don’t say…?”

Mira nodded. “Yep. We haven’t actually been here too often, but while we were, we never really got anything done.”

Link found himself chuckling a bit, despite his small amount of lingering stress. “And why was that? Was your mother not a very good teacher?”

“Oh, she was a great teacher, don’t get me wrong!” Mira replied with widened eyes and an embarrassed grin. “It’s just that we had so much fun at this place! Mom wanted us to learn, but we always just wanted to mess around. Muzu had to eventually help us with our training after Mom disappeared in the Calamity.”
“Yeah…” Noelani added with a dreamy drawl in her voice. “…this place always felt more like a playground than a learning setting. I remember you would always come here with us and hang out while Mom tried to teach us the basics. I think she even urged you to leave a few times before.” She giggled.

“Oh yeah, I remember that too!” Mira piped excitedly with a giggle of her own. They seemed to be really getting into their old memories this time.

“Wait…why would she do that?” Link asked, confused.

Mira turned to her father after relaxing from her laughter, though her face still showed a giddy smile. “Well…because you were distracting to Murdoch while Mom was trying to get him on track. He wouldn’t leave you alone.”

“…Oh…” He muttered.

Apparently, Veiled Falls was going to unintentionally serve as another monument to Link’s crumbling relationship with his son. Mira and Noelani seemed to look back on their time here with great fondness, but surely, they couldn’t have understood what those happy memories were slowly doing to him. At first, when their visits and discussions were related only to themselves and their mother, Link had been happy to partake in their jolly old memory trips, and he even shared in many of their laughs. Now, however, after seeing Murdoch in his dilapidated state, Link’s recalls were only causing him to compare his current lament with his past happiness. The more joyful his times with Murdoch seemed to be, the more discouraged it made him feel right now. Unfortunately, he was getting a bad feeling about where this visitation was headed.

Neither Mira nor Noelani seemed to realize these effects, however. As Link sighed sorrowfully, Mira naively continued. “I could tell that Mom had a lot of faith in my ability because of how much she focused on me during our short learning sessions. She often struggled with helping Lani learn the basics, though, since her blindness made waterfalls sort of dangerous in general. Murdoch, though…was her special challenge.” She and her sister laughed a bit again, enjoying what they were remembering.

Link glared bemusedly at Mira with his arms folded in front of him. “What was challenging about him?”

She turned again to address his question. “Oh, has it not come to you yet?” She paused for another moment to continue her silly laughing. “You used to sit on that big boulder right there in the middle of the pond to watch us, and Murdoch would always stick to you like glue. He’d show you things, tell you about stuff…that kind of thing. Sometimes he even tried to climb up there with you.”

Link’s face turned bleak. He glanced over at the large rock, and as he did so, he felt more sadness welling up inside. Where had Murdoch’s overflowing wellspring of childhood love gone? Why did he take his parents’ loss so harshly that he had to allow his affections to completely evaporate?

“Mom used to say his name so many times while we were here.” Noelani added with more chuckling.
Inevitably, Link found his gaze stuck on the rock. As he studied the backdrop of Veiled Falls and the carefree environment it apparently promoted, coupled with the detailed reminiscence of Mira and Noelani, his memory of the spot began to return to him. He felt like it was going to be funny. He felt like it was going to be cute. He felt like it was going to be happy. And he absolutely hated it.

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Once again, the weather felt sort of nice. The clouds were few and far between, and the air didn’t feel too terribly humid. There was a breeze just mild enough to remind everyone that it existed, without being disturbing. Admittedly, it was bit hot out when poised directly in the sun, but luckily, the mist created by the forceful waters of Veiled Falls were adept at beating the heat as its fine particles drifted across Link’s skin. With weather like this, he found it easy to forget about his upcoming responsibilities with Zelda and the other Champions.

Mipha seemed to have pushed them out of her mind herself, since she clearly had other things she was focusing on. Her little ones were being especially rambunctious today, and it wasn’t particularly making it easy for her to teach them what they needed to know. Ritos needed to know how to fly, Gorons needed to know how to roll, and Zoras, well…they needed to know how to swim. Up waterfalls, more specifically. Perhaps their energy was also being fueled by the Domain’s nice climate.

The frazzled Zora princess stood waist-deep in the midsection of the pond, between the shallow and deep ends, with one daughter on each side of her. Noelani was clinging to her mother’s hip as she floated in the water, while Mira tried to chase her from her other side. While Mipha, even in her short height, could stand upright in the water, her young twins were still too small to touch the pond’s bottom from the surface of the water. Mira was a surprisingly fast swimmer for her age, but regardless, every time she bolted around to one side of her mother’s hip to nab her blind sister, Noelani would hear her movements and dart around to the other side.

“Mira, stop trying to scare your sister.” Mipha scolded while shielding Noelani with her other hand. She had tried several times to halt Mira’s playful actions in this manner, but each time, the young toddler’s giggles would drown out her orders. “I mean it, Mira, it’s your turn to practice your strokes!”

Eventually, Mipha reached out with both her hands and tried to gently grab Mira so she could lift her out of the water. The little hazel-eyed Zora must’ve seen it coming, however, because she bolted outwards towards the waterfall once her mother made the gesture to reach for her. Link smiled stupidly from the rock near the center of the pond as he watched his wife try to chase their daughter around the depths of the fall’s base. Mipha was a faster and more powerful swimmer overall, but Mira’s tiny size and unlimited energy gave her a slippery advantage.

Noelani floated silently in place, having gone completely still as soon as she felt her mother swim away for a moment. It seemed as if she did so by instinct, since her lack of visual awareness must’ve threatened her in the absence of a guardian. Link saw this from where he was sitting, and so he decided to do something about it to make her feel more comfortable. He slid down the side of
the rock and planted his feet in the pond, making a small splash. Then, he walked quietly through the water’s shallow depths to where Noelani was floating, and he scooped her into his arms.

The little Zora jumped a little when she felt the arms close around her, but soon after feeling their signature warmth, she recognized them as her father’s. As Link lifted her out of the water and carried her back to the rock where he had been sitting, she turned inward towards his chest and pressed her tiny hand against his tunic. Link, remembering what he had seen Mipha do several times in the past, lifted his daughter’s long, dangling tailfin and tucked it underneath her body to keep her skinny neck from being pulled backwards by its weight.

“I got you, Lani. It’s okay.” He cooed quietly.

“…Daddy?” She murmured. “Wh…Why is sis so mean to me?”

Link chuckled very calmly. “Oh, Lani, Mira’s just playing around! She’s not trying to be mean, I promise. She just likes playing with you!”

He stopped for a moment and looked up when he heard Mipha’s voice calling him from the other side of the pond. She seemed to have caught Mira after a short and minor scuffle, and at the moment, she was treading water directly below the waterfall with the squirmy Zora wrapped tightly in her arm. The foamy water of the mighty fall pounded right onto her head, but as usual, neither she nor Mira seemed even slightly affected by it.

“Have you seen Murdoch?” She called to him.

“Yeah!” He answered back, loudly enough for her to hear. “He’s hanging out behind me over here in the plants!”

As he answered his wife’s question, Link turned around on the rock to get a good look at his son. Accurate to what he had told her, kneeling behind him in the marshy shallows of the pond was Murdoch. He was concentrating on what appeared to be…frog-catching. Hot-footed frogs had a special fondness of the waters of Veiled Falls, and as such, many of them were often found skidding the surface around the plants near the pond’s shore. They had undoubtedly captured Murdoch’s interest.

Despite how cute it looked, frog-catching was certainly not the lesson Mipha intended to teach when bringing her family to the falls. Upon receiving her answer from Link, she called to her son next from over by the waterfall’s base. “Murdoch, swim over here, if you would! I promise, we will play later!”

Murdoch gave no response. He appeared to have just as much excited, pent-up energy as Mira, but by looking at him, it seemed he was channeling it into a different cause. His gaze remained focused on the surface of the water around the swampy plants. His eyes darted around rapidly in search of any signs of movement. He looked like an expert hunter, but swimming… apparently wasn’t his interest.

Mipha let out an exasperated sigh after being ignored by her son. With Mira still gripped in her one arm, she lowered herself in the water and began to swim in Link’s direction so she could grab Murdoch and take him back to the deeper area. One way or another, she wanted to ensure
that her dark-red Zora got some proper swimming in before the end of the day. Link eyed her as she neared the rock on which he was sitting and stood back up to walk upon reaching shallower water.

Once she got close, he stopped her with some words. “Hey, wait a second.”

Mipha halted her approach and turned to look at Link. “What’s wrong?”

“Perhaps we should give Murdoch a bit of time to be himself. He seems to be training his reflexes a bit, which I think is good for him if he wants to be a warrior down the road.” He explained.

Mipha sighed at this response. “Link…if I give Murdoch any leeway during our training, then I have to give the girls leeway as well. At some point, don’t you think we have to double down on them?”

Link sat silent for a brief moment as he analyzed his wife. Recently, while they had been at Veiled Falls, he noticed a peculiar twist in his young princess’s behavior. Something about her seemed more urgent…more uneasy…and less relaxed. For some reason, she made it seem imperative that their waterfall training go exactly as planned, even though they both knew that their children were too young for it anyway. She almost looked…stressed. And more so than usual.

“Mipha…are you okay?” He asked with a tilt of his head. “Something seems to be bothering you.”

“I’m fine.” She answered briefly. “I just feel like we should get the young ones learning about important things as early as possible. You know…before it’s too late.”

This response caught the Hylian hero’s interest. Perhaps his wife had not forgotten about their important mission with Princess Zelda. On top of that, it seemed the two of them were, in fact, on the same page regarding their duties. However, on the contrary, Link was not quite as worried as Mipha about their upcoming departure. Zelda only needed their presence for the day, and during that time, their little ones would be kept in good hands. He couldn’t help but adore Mipha’s motherly worries, but in this case, he was certain they were merely being overactive.

“Listen, I know it’s tough leaving the kids behind, but I promise you…everything’s going to be okay.” He whispered lovingly. “Besides, I’ve been guarding Zelda for months now, and never have her travels lasted more than a single day. I’m always home to spend the nights with you, right?”

Mipha did not seem convinced by his assurance. “Link…doesn’t it bother you at all that the princess is requesting the presence of the other Champions this time? She has…never done that before. I fear…I fear she may know something we don’t!”

“She’s probably just taking some extra precautions. It’s just the kind of thing she would do, you know. Or, it’s also possible that her father forced the decision on her for an extra degree of safety. For now, let’s just try to take it easy so we don’t burden the little ones too much.” He explained with a nod.
Still not convinced, Mipha opened her mouth to protest again. Before any words could escape, however, the two of them were startled by a sudden snapping noise. Link turned to his side just in time to see Murdoch, hunched over in the marsh, having just lashed his arms out at the water’s surface. An abundance of fast ripples emanated out into the pond from the spot where his hands made contact with the water. After a small, awkward pause amongst the entire group, the little Zora exploded in a fit of manic laughter.

“I caught one! I caught one!” He chanted triumphantly. Wasting no time, he skipped around through the water towards his parents.

Mipha began to acknowledge her son’s small victory, but a tiny amount of impatience remained evident in her voice. “That’s wonderful, Murdoch, but…”

“Dad, look at this!” Murdoch exclaimed, completely cutting his mother off mid-sentence. He had marched over to the spot directly between his parents, but he turned his body so his back was facing Mipha. His interest seemed focused, instead, on only his father.

Link, careful not to disturb Noelani in his arms, looked down from his perch at Murdoch as the tiny, eager Zora raised his hands above his head. Sitting right in his son’s cupped palms was a fully-grown hot-footed frog. Murdoch wore an immensely excited grin on his face as he presented his trophy to his father. Mipha, standing in the dust behind him with Mira by her shoulder, frowned unhappily.

“That’s very cool, Murdoch! It requires fast thinking to catch a frog like that!” Link answered his son with an approving grin.

Mipha let out a huff. “Murdoch, I really think we should…”

“Oh, oh, Dad, look what else I can do!” Murdoch blurted, cutting off his mother a second time. It started to seem like he was doing it on purpose.

Link watched his son as he flattened his palms, giving the frog more freedom to move around. As soon as he did so, the frog did as one would expect, and it leapt out of Murdoch’s hands by extending its back legs. In the split second the frog was in the air, at the top of its arch, Murdoch snapped his arms out a second time and caught it before it could fall back into the pond. Link blinked for a moment, impressed by Murdoch’s speed and precision.

“Whoa, nice one!”

Murdoch giggled joyfully at his father’s apparent approval. Mipha sighed quietly from behind him, but she chose not to say anything. Murdoch’s happiness seemed to come from what his father thought of him, and as such, he seemed to be on cloud nine at the moment. She wasn’t usually the type to exercise too much authority, and, despite her great stress, this case was no exception.

As it would seem, Murdoch’s entire motivation for catching the frog had been…to impress his father. Such was the way he did many things in his innocent youth.
Link’s eyes sadly fluttered open as his memory faded back into his mind. Once the imagery of the sunny afternoon on the rock at Veiled Falls melted away, his vision returned to the imagery of the same rock as it was now, slightly eroded and drenched in Vah Ruta’s rain. He noticed a certain symbolism to the way the weather was in his memory, versus…how it was now. There were many depressing elements in his life now that…had led to the way things are.

Upon glancing to his side, he noticed that Mira’s bubbly attitude had seemingly diminished. She stared back at him with a certain sorrow in her expression. “Did you…remember something? You, um…you don’t look too happy.”

“…Yeah…” He uttered, his voice trailing off.

“Was it about Murdoch?” Noelani asked from a few feet away.

Link nodded in response, but Noelani couldn’t see the gesture. Instead, she received her answer from his following words. “I just wish I could set things right with him…”

Mira wanted to say a few things to console her father, but it took her a moment to think of what to say. Before she could think of the proper response to give, though, the three of them were distracted by the sound of footsteps approaching the falls from behind them. It sounded as if they were running, with each step squishing in the muddy grass. Mira and Link turned toward the direction of the mysterious steps.

Due to the hazy rain, it wasn’t immediately obvious who was approaching them, but after enough time, a familiar figure came into view. Their visitor was tall, red, and…rather prince-like. And he seemed to be terribly urgent about something.

“Uncle Sidon?!” Mira exclaimed with confusion. “What are you doing here?”

The prince stopped running when he reached Link and his daughters. He doubled over for a moment as he struggled to catch his breath. Assuming he ran here all the way from the Domain, it made sense that he had to take a moment to recover his stamina.

Prince Sidon spoke in a raspy manner between large, gulping breaths. “Link…Mira…thank Hylia I found you guys here!”

Mira stamped her foot on the ground, unpleased with her uncle’s arrival. “Uncle, if this is about Vah Ruta, we already told you…Dad has it under control!”

“No…it’s not that…” He responded. He continued struggling with his lungs. “…It’s…about Murdoch…!”

Everyone’s eyes widened at this statement, especially Link’s. He turned his attention directly to the prince’s face and stared at him with a newly piqued interest. It seemed, rather mysteriously, that he had showed up at the perfect time. After all, Murdoch had been the topic of discussion just as he was heading up on the horizon.
Noelani put her hand to her chest. “Wh…What’s wrong with Murdoch?”

“T’m not sure…” Sidon answered with worry in his tone. “…I was hoping one of you would know. My father and I tried to say something to him, but he wouldn’t listen!”

“Whoa, whoa, what do you mean? Did he do something?” Mira asked demandingly. Her uncle was not giving good omens.

“He walked into my father’s chamber and took the Lynel bow he had stored there!”

Suddenly, Link spoke with outgoing shock and dismay. “Wait, he did what?” It was the first time he had spoken to Sidon since arriving at Zora’s Domain.

The worried prince repeated himself. “He grabbed the Lynel bow, along with the stash of shock arrows! I think he’s heading to the Eastern Reservoir!”
So…Link was right. He had been right in his thoughts about Murdoch. He had been right in his skepticism regarding Murdoch’s activities. He had been right in his worry when it came to Murdoch’s safety. He had been right in his insistence to seek out Murdoch after consulting Dento for the trident repair. He had been right to assume that Murdoch’s stability was falling…or, at least…that it might’ve been low in the first place. Sometimes…it sucked to be right.

Link was a very humble character, and as such, he rarely acknowledged his own physical and instinctual superiority. However, he had to admit that he was, indeed, considerably observational. He had an unprecedented ability to read the opinions and motivations of others based solely on their tone and body language, as well as exterior context. Those factors had feverishly swirled together with Murdoch over the course of their acquaintance the last few hours, and, combined with Murdoch’s natural, inherited display of some of Link’s character traits, they had been sending strong, alarming signals to him prior to his retreat to Veiled Falls.

On the other hand, he couldn’t shake the feeling that his nagging desire to go locate his son had involved a bit of…divine intervention. Recently, his mind had been wandering back to Mipha from time to time, especially earlier, during the recovery of his latest memory. Although Mipha had had no prioritized connections to any one of her particular children, Link was sure from his memories that she had undoubtedly had an undying and passionate commitment to the safety and well-being of all three of them individually. Therefore, he thought that, perhaps, his intentions to find and protect Murdoch had not been formed by merely his own lone thoughts. Perhaps…a bit of Mipha’s spirit was acting within him.

Link stared at Prince Sidon with an intense look on his face. Sidon didn’t directly return the favor, as his own gaze was blinking between him and the twins. He waited impatiently for any of the three of them to respond to his urgent announcement. The unsettling silence hung amongst them all for a disturbingly long time as each of them thought differently about the new information. Eventually, something was finally said.

Mira stepped forward with a sad expression, which was also akin to Noelani’s at the moment. “Oh, Dad…I’m so sorry. Lani and I…we…we didn’t think that Murdoch…would…”

Link put his hand up to silence her mid-sentence. “Don’t worry about that now. That’s not our concern at the moment.”

Her attempted apology was actually well-deserved, Link thought to himself. After all, Murdoch was now on the brink of doing something irreversible, and if it hadn’t been for Mira’s insistence on ignoring him earlier, Link would’ve surely hunted him down and stopped him before this point could’ve been reached. He had trusted her judgment based on the assumption that her greater amount of time with Murdoch would’ve translated to a greater understanding of him compared to Link’s. However, in choosing to trust her judgment, he had also chosen to ignore his own gut, and by doing so, perhaps he had also ignored Mipha’s subtle signals…in a way.

That needed to wait until later, however. At the moment, there were more important things at hand.
“How long ago did he leave?” Link asked bluntly.

“Just a couple minutes ago.” Sidon answered quickly. “I ran over here as soon as he left my father’s chamber.”

Link nodded his head once as his thoughts seemed to run completely uninterrupted. “Then we still have time to stop him. We might have to be fast.”

“…But how will we catch him in time?” Mira asked with a great deal of worry in her tone. “It’s such a long way to the East Reservoir from here!”

As Mira made that point, Link turned and walked quickly to the edge of the cliff behind Sidon. Down below, off the sprawling ledge of the perch on which the base of the falls sat, was the entirety of Zora’s Domain, glowing dimly behind the cloudy rain. Directly at the foot of the cliff, separating the falls from the Domain itself, was a lengthy, perilous drop that led to nothing but raging rapids. Upon reaching the cliff’s edge, he peered over the side into the waters below, and then out to the Domain in the distance.

“I have a shortcut.” He declared, responding confidently to her interjection. “I’ll be able to take one of you, and the other two of you will have to go the long way…”

Noelani immediately shot her hand up, nearly cutting Link off in the process. “I’ll go with you, Dad.”

Startled by his blind daughter’s swift and uncompromising answer, Link turned to her in confusion. “Oh…Lani? I’m…not sure you’re going to want to join me here.”

Noelani looked in his direction to address him, but with her distance, her gaze ended up falling on Prince Sidon instead. “Well…why not?”

Link bit his lip. “Because…it’s not really suited for you well. You see…it kind of involves…”

Lost in her sudden, surefire boost of confidence, Noelani completely cut him off. “Forget about that. I’m sticking by you no matter what. I want to be right by your side when you go to appease my brother, every step of the way.”

Link was certain he was going to traumatize the poor, unknowing Zora with what he was about to do, but if she was confident enough in her decision, that was good enough for him. Time was of the essence, after all. With a brief sigh, he turned his body around to face the edge of the cliff, and he bent his legs slightly to prep for a jump. Noelani took a few steps toward him.

“Okay, now grab onto my shoulders.” He instructed.

Suddenly skeptical by her father’s odd command, Noelani cautiously inched forward a few steps with her arms out in front of her until she could feel Link’s back. She ran her hands along his wet tunic for a moment before shifting her grip to the hero’s shoulders. Both Mira and the prince watched Link with confusion, unsure of what exactly he was planning to do. Link glanced back at them.

“You guys need to get moving. There’s no time to waste.” With this order, he turned back
to Noelani, who was now gently grasping his shoulders from behind. He bent his knees even further. “Alright, Lani, hang on tight.”

“Where exactly is this ‘shortcut?’” The nervous Zora objected. “I’m not really sure if...AAAAAAEEEEEEEEEEDDFGGG!!”

Noelani screamed at the top of her lungs as Link jerked his legs forward and leapt right off the side of the cliff. Mira gasped sharply from behind them as she observed the shocking spectacle. Noelani couldn’t see exactly what was going on, but once she felt her feet suddenly leave the ground, she knew she was airborne. She didn’t have the chance to fall, however, as Link quickly deployed his paraglider above their heads at the top of his arch, causing them to glide gracefully through the skies on the way to the Domain.

His blind daughter did not feel very graceful, though. As Link felt the cold, wet air of the valley brushing past his face during their flight, he also felt Noelani’s shallow, panicked breaths tickling the back of his neck. While already clutching her father’s shoulders with vise-like strength, she tried several times to grab at Link’s chest in an effort to fortify her grip around his neck. Her encapsulating fear of heights was causing her to jitter violently against his back.

“Dad...” She gasped weakly between her ill-controlled, sporadic breaths.

“Just hang on.” He replied calmly. “This isn’t going to take long.”

Back at Veiled Falls, still standing on the edge of the cliff with awe and wonder present on her face, was Mira, dumbfounded at the sight of her father flying her sister over to the Domain. Her jaw hung open.

“...I didn’t know Dad had a paraglider...” She mumbled.

“Mira, let’s go!” Sidon called from down the hill to her side. He had already begun running back to the bridge before getting to catch his breath from earlier. “We have to catch Murdoch before something bad happens to him!”

She shook herself from her weird trance. “Coming, Uncle!”

The lateral distance between the falls and the Domain was not too great, so just as Link had promised, their flight did not take long. His neck and shoulders had quickly become sore during the glide, since Noelani’s grip on them had been overbearing the entire time. He couldn’t blame her, really, since she had not been given the chance to prepare herself for a sudden meeting with one of her greatest fears. He did try to warn her, but there was also something to be said about her impressive display of resoluteness. She would be fine, really.

Once Link’s feet made contact with the stone ground of the plaza, he lowered his paraglider to give his arms a rest. They landed right on the main level, just twenty feet or so from the Mipha statue. A couple of the Zoras that had been idly wandering around the plaza stepped back a few
steps in surprise as the Hylian hero and his trembling daughter descended into the middle of the square. From their landing point at the center of the Domain, the remaining distance to the Eastern Reservoir consisted only of the perimeter bridge and the stairs along the dam.

Since Noelani could not tell where the ground was, her feet dragged sloppily against the stone beneath her as her terrifying flight unexpectedly came to a close. It didn’t take her long to regain her balance, but despite her return to solid ground, her grip on her father’s shoulders did not loosen. In addition, her shaking did not seem to stop. Link tried, in vain, to jar himself free from her embrace.

“Lani, it’s okay. We landed.” He sighed.

“D-D…Don’t ever d-d…do that again…” She jittered through her hyperventilating breaths.

Link reached around behind him and patted the traumatized Zora lightly on her hip. He expected her fidgety movements and tense breathing to endure for at least a few more minutes while she tried to reorient herself. At the moment, though, they had no time to stand around and wait for that to happen. He reached up to his shoulders and carefully pried her clenched hands from his muscles.

“Alright now, just try to keep your fluids in your body. You’ll be fine.” He told her nonchalantly, seemingly unconcerned with his daughter’s mild panic attack. “Now come along, we need to go find your brother.”

With her hands still in his own, he made a quick turn for the eastern perimeter bridge and hastily led her along. The end of that bridge had been where he and the twins met Gaddison the night before, and if she was there again, she’d surely be able to report on Murdoch’s whereabouts. That was assuming, of course, that Murdoch would’ve taken the traditional path from the king’s chamber to the Eastern Reservoir.

Mira and Prince Sidon were still back on the western bridge, but they were quickly gaining on Link and Noelani’s trail. While Link had to carefully watch his speed so as not to overwhelm his already-exerted blind daughter, the other two were in a full sprint. Given the time Sidon had estimated of Murdoch’s departure, it was very possible that the young and bold Zora guard was already up on the dock of the lake, ready to dive to his own demise. If they were too late to reach him, it would be very difficult to locate and rescue him.

There was something ominously familiar about Link’s urgency. He couldn’t exactly pinpoint a specific moment in the past when he had been pressured into hurrying…with so much on the line. Thinking about it, though, reminded him strongly of the Great Calamity. Surely, he figured, he would eventually remember a time from a century ago when he had felt such an imperative need. It wasn’t the most pleasant of thoughts from his past, but then again, outside of his romantic life with Mipha, what parts had been pleasant?

With Noelani stumbling close behind him, Link jogged along the flat, straight length of the eastern bridge that had led them to the cliffside by the dam the night before. Had he been alone, he would’ve sprinted a lot faster, but he instead maintained his average velocity out of courtesy for his
blind daughter. He may have been in a desperate hurry to stop Murdoch before he could endanger himself, but regardless, the safety and comfort of Mira and Noelani still mattered as well. After all, the three of them were all equally important to him.

Not surprisingly, Gaddison soon came into view at the end of the bridge, guarding the eastern perimeter as usual. Having gone through her normal routines that morning, nothing about her seemed any more stressed nor disheveled than it had the day before. It only made sense, really, since none of the concerning issues plaguing Link and his family were of any relevance to her. To her, it was merely another uninteresting day at Zora’s Domain, the only concern being the ever-present threat of Vah Ruta’s rainfall.

As Link and Noelani approached her post at the outskirts of the Domain, Gaddison turned her head to glance at them. “Oh, hello again, Link. Interesting seeing you back out here.”

Link was slightly out of breath, but not too considerably, since he had only been running half of his potential speed. “Did Murdoch…come through here…?”

Gaddison nodded her head with a hum. “You know, I had a feeling you were going to ask about him. He came through here on his way to the dam just a few minutes ago.”

Normally, Link was not one to open up to those he did not know very well. Although Gaddison had been a companion of his in his past before the Calamity, he had not recovered enough memories about her to consider her an acquaintance at the moment. This categorization was consistent with the silence he had given her the night before on his way up the dam the first time. However, given the stress of the situation, he could not afford to give anyone the silent treatment. His time with his children recently had gradually worked to increase his comfort with speaking to the other native Zoras, and now that he was in a rush to help Murdoch, his walls of silence were crumbling to dust.

In just a few short moments, Mira and Sidon came sprinting up behind the trio as they exchanged information on the edge of the bridge. They were noticeably more beat than both Link and Noelani…for obvious reasons. As soon as they came into sight, Gaddison began to understand…at least to an extent…what was at stake. As her superior officer, Murdoch was well-known to Gaddison, and as such, she understood him to be a very bold, uncompromising character. In order to have been accepted as a recruit to the Zora Guard, Gaddison had to have some observant qualities herself, and after seeing her captain marching by with a Lynel bow, followed shortly by his family and the prince…she was able to make a few connections.

“…I’m assuming something big is about to happen?” She muttered.

“Not…if we have anything…to do about it.” Mira responded confidently between heavy breaths.

“…That’s right.” Prince Sidon added, his chest heaving equally as much. He was getting quite the exercise this day. “Vah Ruta must…be appeased, but not…at this cost.”

“Well, you guys might want to get moving quickly, then.” Gaddison warned. “With how much time he’s had before you showed up, I’d say Captain Murdoch is already up on the platform by now.”
Without another word, nor any form of heads-up, Link immediately turned toward the dam and continued his mad dash. Noelani’s hand was still settled in his grip, however, and as soon as he took off from the rest of the group, she was violently yanked along with him. She let out a small yelp as she was caught off guard and forced to keep running behind him. Startled by Link’s sudden exit, Mira and Sidon kicked themselves into gear in order to keep up with him.

The trip from the Domain’s perimeter to the base of the dam was not long, luckily, but as Link had remembered from the previous evening, the dam had stairs that needed to be scaled. Even while tugging Noelani closely behind him, he was moving considerably quickly past the prevalent rocks and through the flowing grass of the eastern cliffside, with his destination firmly in his mind. Mira and Sidon, sprinting unimpeded in his wake, were still struggling to catch up to him, surprisingly. It seemed that the closer he was getting to the East Reservoir, the more his urgency was rising. He continued to experience an ever-increasing feeling of pressure as he kept reminding himself of what would happen to Murdoch if he shot that insane bow.

Reaching the base of the sprawling staircase in no more than twenty seconds, Link finally let go of Noelani’s hand. She panted softly after finally getting the chance to recompose herself, and in doing so, she found it necessary to double over a bit. Link did not take notice of his daughter’s mounting exhaustion, however, as he positioned his hands behind him impatiently.

“Only the stairs remain, Lani. Almost there.” He declared quietly. “Hop on.”

There was a pause before Noelani’s response, as her shortness of breath and racing heart were still overpowering her. “Dad…wait. I’m…going to let Uncle Sidon carry me up there…in a few moments.”

He raised an eyebrow skeptically at her unexpected response. “What? Why?”

She managed a small smile through her tired, feminine wheezes. “I could feel you struggling yesterday while trying to carry me up these stairs. I know I’m pretty heavy to you, despite my small size.”

“It’s not such a big deal.” He replied with a shrug of his shoulders. “I can easily do it again. We just need to hurry.”

She shook her head. “You go ahead, Dad. You can get there much faster without me. I’ll be right up behind you with sis and Uncle Sidon in just a few minutes.”

Even still, while Noelani kept trying to push her father along, he resisted. He had turned his whole body around at this point, and he looked at her with a bit of concern. Her behavior now seemed opposite of what it had been just earlier at the base of Veiled Falls. Now…she seemed more reserved again.

“But…didn’t you say you wanted to be right by my side during this? Every step?” Link stammered.

“I was just trying to look bold in front of Uncle Sidon.” She replied with a hearty chuckle. “I realized after landing in the plaza earlier that I was only slowing you down, and I don’t want to get in the way of you and my brother. Just go on ahead, and I’ll be right behind soon.” She paused for a moment to look up at her father, causing him to get another perfect view of her misty blue
eyes as she stared through him into her private darkness. “Murdoch’s more important than me, you know.”

Link began to realize just how much he could learn from his own daughter. Her maturity, selflessness, and humility were surely unable to go unnoticed. Of course, Link had a special affinity for helping others, no matter the cost, but in his natural and unending silence outside the Domain, he always secretly…expected things in return. He expected rupees…rare gear…directions…et cetera. Noelani, however…seemed to acknowledge her smallness in the world, and in turn, she often seemed more than happy to set herself aside for the sake of others…for no reward. Her humility seemed to be her own reward to herself. Yet again, this was a trait that reminded him of Mipha. Out of all the traits he found in his children…why did his favorite ones always have to come from Mipha?

He said nothing. In reality…there really was nothing he could say. He knew he was wasting each second by not bolting up the stairs, but in this very moment, he couldn’t bring himself to move an inch. As Noelani’s thoughtful change of mind played out again in Link’s head, he began feeling a surge of emotion. Her willingness to look out for her brother, even after getting tossed aside by him, spoke large volumes to Link about their family dynamic. It may have only been a small sacrifice…her presence for his safety…but to Link, that selfless exchange symbolized so much more. As his daughter’s words sent these thoughts through his mind, coupled with the cascading ocean of honesty and affection in her eyes, Link found himself paralyzing as he began falling in love with Mipha and his family all over again. Truly…they were Hylia’s reward to him for his burdensome role as the chosen hero.

While still totally silent, Link took a step towards Noelani and put his arms around her. Noelani jumped a little when she felt his arms, as she had not expected such a gesture from her father. Without any hesitation in her mind, she returned the gesture by reaching around his upper body and grasping at the wet tunic covering his back. She was keen on giving him hugs, but receiving the initial advance from him this time held special significance to her. She wished the moment could last longer, but right now, there was an elephant in the room, and Link was still aware of it.

After only a few seconds of their embrace, Link separated himself from her, turned around, and began running up the stairs. Although Noelani couldn’t tell from just sound alone, he was skipping up two steps at a time. It was imperative to him that he reach Murdoch quickly so his separation from the rest of his family wouldn’t be in vain. It was unfathomable…how much they cared.

Just after Link disappeared up the stairs, Mira and Sidon arrived at the scene and stopped next to Noelani. Noelani could hear their approach, but her distant eyes remained fixed in the direction of the staircase. She didn’t say anything until Mira addressed her.

“Did Dad run up there without you?”

Her blind sister shook her head. “No, I told him to go without me. He can climb the stairs faster without the extra weight.”

A noble answer, they thought. Both Mira and the prince grinned at her remark.
Considering the speed at which Link launched himself up the stairs, it did not take him long to reach the top. As soon as the stone stairs beneath his feet flattened into the platform at the bank of East Reservoir Lake, he made the sharp turn right and stepped out into the open. The rain returned to him once again after his short period of coverage, and all of a sudden, it felt like it was coming down with great force. Standing ever closer to Vah Ruta and its storming power, Link found the atmospheric blockage all around the East Reservoir to be much uglier than it had been the night before.

The sky looked darker than it ever had before on top of the dam. The clouds formed by the Divine Beast’s skyward-ejecting water eclipsed almost all the sunlight over the lake, making the specific region around Vah Ruta much darker than the Domain and the surrounding mountains. This new level of darkness must’ve been incredibly recent, Link thought, since the sight had not occurred in the skies anytime previously. While observing the spectacle, he began to feel chafing on his head and shoulders from the sheer punch brought by the unusually large raindrops. He figured, at the rate it was going, this greater intensity would spread out from the Divine Beast and plague the rest of the Domain by the end of the day.

The last thing Link noticed upon returning to his family’s historical bonding place was… the lightning. With average frequency, cracks of light streaked across the sky through the clouds, illuminating the mighty Divine Beast for brief instances. The bolts of light cut through the thick haze created by the rain and gave images of the entire East Reservoir through the darkness. Following the flashes, unsettling cracks of thunder ripped across the horizon and swept through the hero’s shocked ears, stunning him each time they occurred. Why hadn’t he heard any of this at the bottom of the dam earlier? Had it just now started…right as he reached the platform?

During one of the quick flashes, Link quickly got a glimpse of the dock out at the center of the platform, sticking outward into the lake as it always had. However, in the short instant it had come into view, he spotted a familiar figure standing motionlessly on the end of the dock, just inches from the water’s edge. The figure’s back was turned to the platform as it seemed to stare out at the Divine Beast on the lake. The second Link caught sight of this, he sprinted toward the dock with all the speed he could muster. This is what it all seemed to come down to.

It was after reaching the center of the platform and turning onto the dock that Link actually noticed the water level in the lake. A quick glance to the left and right of the dock was enough for him to see the alarmingly dire shape the East Reservoir was in. The raging, active waters of the lake lapped up against the sides of the smooth, stone platform and splashed onto its surface, creating multiple patches of puddled water over the walking space. Some of the particularly high waves created splashes against the platform that billowed as high as Link’s thighs. The unimpeded portions of the waves themselves managed to rumble over the edge of the dock entirely, making the platform seem as if it were being swallowed by the lake. If given another day without attention, the Reservoir was sure to claim the likes of Link and Mipha’s special waterbed, and after that…the rest of the Domain.

Link’s sprint slowed to a jog as he approached behind the figure on the end of the dock. At this distance, the figure could clearly be seen as Murdoch, but this came as no surprise to Link. There was nobody else in all of Hyrule that would be standing at this spot at a time like this, with
Vah Ruta practically decimating the Eastern Reservoir. Another thing that came into view as Link came up behind his son was the Lynel Bow strapped to the Zora’s back. It was undoubtedly a metallic menace, with its sharp, jagged edges and thick, curved body reflecting Link’s image like a polished mirror. Tied around Murdoch’s waist was a modest-sized quiver, packed to its full capacity with shock arrows. The arrows seemed to give the quiver an ominous and discomforting yellow glow.

At the same instant Link came to a halt a few feet behind Murdoch, Vah Ruta let out another powerful, trumpeting roar. Link quickly covered his ears as the Beast’s cry echoed out into the air with earthshattering strength, causing the very ground beneath their feet to tremble. The overflowing waters of the Reservoir rippled violently from the intensity of the roar, licking at Link’s feet. Murdoch did not move, however, and the roar didn’t seem to faze him.

The guard captain sighed thoughtfully at the mighty noise. “It’s as if Mother is calling out to me…”

At this point, just like before on the western bridge, Murdoch seemed to know that Link was standing behind him. With that as the case, Link found it necessary to cut to the chase, rather than trying to catch his son’s attention. This mess needed to end.

“Murdoch, you’re making a big mistake!” He chided with a raised voice. He was forced to speak loudly so his voice could be heard over the pouring rain and streaking thunder. Murdoch still did not move, despite being addressed by Link once again.

“Ah, Father. You know…I found it unlikely that you’d have the decency to leave me alone in this endeavor.” He stated coldly. His calmness was chilling to Link, especially since he had been angry and yelling the last time they spoke.

“Listen, what you’re doing is insane! This is not your battle to fight!” Link cried.

Murdoch turned around suddenly and stared at Link. Once again, Link was able to see the anger and annoyance in his son’s face. “How would saving Zora’s Domain and putting my mother’s soul to rest not be my own business? Tell me, whose battle is it, then?”

Link sighed as he started to see where this confrontation would be headed. “Murdoch…this is my battle. Mipha may have been your mother, but…she was also my wife, you know. And this is not the kind of thing that would let her soul rest in peace.”

After Link suddenly toned his voice down to a more conversational level, Murdoch responded at a similar volume. For a while, it seemed like they would be able to talk calmly. “How would you know what Mother wanted? You barely remember her.”

“I think you would be surprised how much I’ve recovered since arriving here yesterday.” Link replied solemnly. “And I can tell you…Mipha wanted a life of peace and happiness for you and your sisters. She and I put ourselves on the line for all of us…not just for each other. Now, a hundred years later, I’ve been called to finally set things right in Hyrule. This is my mission.”

Murdoch’s face scrunched up in disgust. He scoffed in bitter disapproval of that statement. “Pfft, your ‘mission.’ Everything I’ve ever had to suffer in my life was because of your pretentious ‘missions.’ Your ‘high and mighty’ endeavors even caused Mother to suffer.”
Link was not backing down this time. It was time Murdoch understood what the past truly held, because his twisted interpretations were the very reason the two of them were in this mess right now. “You don’t seem to understand...Murdoch...that there was no one else who could’ve taken my place. I learned in my travels that the Master Sword chooses exactly one wielder, and that wielder is forever bound to the responsibilities of the hero of legend. I carried that burden with me every day, and to be honest, I couldn’t stand it.”

Murdoch crossed his arms in front of him. “Where exactly is that ‘legendary’ sword of yours? I don’t think I’ve ever seen you with it.”

Link glanced behind himself at the dull soldier’s sword that sat in the scabbard on his back, and he sighed. “I lost it. Ever since waking up in the Shrine of Resurrection, I haven’t had the slightest clue where it is. I know you’ve seen me with it before, though. You were just too young to remember.”

He watched his son shake his head dubiously. “Losing it doesn’t sound very responsible to me.”

“Look, that’s not the point!” Link jabbed with quick smack of his forehead. “The thing is, without that sword...neither you nor your sisters would’ve ever been born.” Murdoch began to interrupt again, but Link held up his hand to silence him. The misinterpretations were going to stop now. “I first met your mother in my earliest childhood years, back when I could barely walk straight. She felt more like a mother to me, if I had to be honest. She tended to my wounds, and she was always there to talk and laugh with me. But...it wasn’t until I claimed the Master Sword and set out on my missions that I got led back to the Domain to see her again after nearly fifteen years. She looked like she hadn’t aged a day in all that time.”

As Link was reaching a minor pause in his reflective monologue, Sidon and the twins finally reached the top of the stairs off behind him on the platform. Noelani, true to routine, was fastened to the prince’s back as they climbed the final steps, and upon reaching the top, the much larger Zora bent over to gently release her to a standing position. He and Mira gasped a little when they laid eyes on the dock and saw the distant silhouettes of Link and Murdoch through the thick, heavy rain. Behind all the rain and thunder, though, it was impossible to hear their conversation. Despite that, they decided to keep their distance so as to avoid disturbing the duo’s supposed talk of disarmament.

With his focus still on his father, Murdoch didn’t seem to notice the rest of his family standing off at the base of the platform. Therefore, he continued his argument with Link uninterrupted.

“What does any of that have to do with the Master Sword?” He sneered.

“Here’s the bottom line. I agree that my burdening role in the Great Calamity was a tragic and unfortunate fate for us to have gone through, especially for costing Mipha her life, but it’s the only way we ever could’ve been happy together in the first place.” Murdoch gave him a skeptical and confused glare as he said this, but regardless, he stood his ground and proceeded with the wrap-up to his explanation. “I know you may feel like my numerous missions were pulling me away from our family, but Murdoch...it was on one of my missions that your mother and I first
connected. Without my role as the chosen hero, Mipha would’ve merely been a distant childhood memory to me. A friend.”

Link expected his son to start opening up and realizing his misunderstandings at this point, but instead, he seemed to remain fixated on his prejudices. It was almost as if the loss of both his parents in the Great Calamity had scarred him so badly, he didn’t know how to understand. Link only hoped he’d be able to at least keep the troubled guard captain from going after the Divine Beast with his lethal shock-arrow shotgun. That, in itself, would be enough of a victory for the time being.

“That doesn’t change the fact that you tossed us all aside once you actually had us……all in favor of your damn ‘missions.’ I would’ve expected you to care about us enough to at least stop Mother from handing herself over to your awful activities, but instead, I’ll be having to clean up your mess for you.” Murdoch spat.

“You will not be sacrificing yourself to avenge your mother. Not while I can still do it safely myself. By the way, I’ll have you know that I hated having to leave all of you each time Zelda needed my assistance. If I had had the opportunity to lay down my duties and live out the rest of my life here with all of you, I would have done it in a heartbeat.” He sighed as he put his hand on his forehead. “…That’s not how Calamity Ganon works, though.”

Murdoch’s first response to that anecdote was not what Link expected. “How do you remember all this? According to my subordinates, you haven’t even been here for twenty-four hours.”

Link merely shrugged his shoulders. “Like I said, Murdoch, you’d be surprised by how much your sisters have helped me remember. I’ve managed to recover a few specific, descriptive moments from my past, but in between, I’ve been constantly remembering the feelings and emotions I’ve experienced from having Mipha as my wife and raising you children.” He stared up at his son’s face with the most serious face he could make, as this moment was one of his life’s most important. “Just listen to my voice. Twenty-four hours ago, I couldn’t even bring myself to speak with words. Now…I feel like a changed person because of you guys.”

There was a sudden silence when Link finished his speech as Murdoch put a hand on his chin thoughtfully. Link had completely drowned out the rain and the thunder during their heated conversation, and as a result, he essentially forgot that they were standing in a thunderstorm. His debates with Murdoch always seemed to deprive him of his environmental awareness, which, for a warrior of his stature, was quite noteworthy. Once the silence arose, however, the ambient noises of Vah Ruta’s tantrum returned to his conscience. From studying Murdoch’s pensive behavior in this moment, he hoped he was finally getting somewhere with the stubborn Zora.

“Here, I have one for you. If your memory is so absorbent as you so claim.” Murdoch proposed. “Do you remember the day Mother tried teaching us to climb waterfalls?”

Link’s face lit up at this initial prompt. “Why, yes. That was at Veiled Falls. I was just there earlier with Mira and Lani.”

“Do you remember any other details about that day? Anything else significant?” Murdoch queried. He had a confusingly judgmental tone in his voice while delivering that question.
“Other things?” Link repeated with a raised eyebrow. “Not really…”

Link was getting intrigued by whatever game Murdoch was suddenly playing. He had thought, for a moment, that he was finally getting his son to understand the reality of their past, but instead, it seemed almost like the cunning guard captain was steadily setting up another argument. The only choice he had, though…was to follow along and see what he had to say.

“After Mother’s lesson.” Murdoch continued. “Back home, right here, on the East Reservoir. There was a visitor.”

Link started to recover a few memory pieces from Murdoch’s description, but it was still too vague and hazy. He squinted his eyes as he tried to remember, but it wasn’t coming right away. More explanation would be needed. “I…can’t really…”

“I’m certain you remember the moment Calamity Ganon showed up. It was earlier that same day. Mother had had her waterfall lessons with us on the morning before the Great Calamity.” The guard captain added with a narrowing of his gaze. He eyed his father directly as he waited patiently for him to put two and two together.

Shockingly, the mentioning of Mipha’s waterfall lessons being on the day of the Calamity caused a click in Link’s mind. Suddenly, he was given a chronology through which he could organize the events in his head, and in doing so, he was able to make connections between that morning at Veiled Falls and the evening he experienced the arrival of Calamity Ganon next to Mipha and the other Champions at the foot of Mt. Lanayru. From there, the afternoon Murdoch was trying to get him to remember was able to fall into the puzzle between two larger, more discernible events.

It was with that click that Link remembered his final moments together with his family before the deadly occurrence that would tear them apart for the next one hundred years. He remembered the last things he would do and say before departing from the Domain for the remainder of his children’s adolescent lives. He remembered…the afternoon on the Eastern Reservoir, following Mipha’s waterfall lessons.

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“Oh, Link…I just wish I knew how to discipline them.” Mipha sighed distantly.

“What do you mean?” Link responded with a raised eyebrow.

“You know…teaching them obedience. I love encouraging them whenever they do nice things…” She sighed again and bit her lip. “…but……even if they do something bad, or they don’t listen to me, I don’t want to have to punish them. I just end up feeling bad.”

“Hey, now, I’ve seen you tell off Sidon a number of times when your father’s not around!” Link replied with a warm chuckle. “I think you’re pretty good at discipline.”
Mipha looked at her husband with a silly grin on her face before returning to her audible thinking. “Yeah, well, Sidon’s my brother, which is a different story entirely. Mira, Noelani, and Murdoch are my children, so…discouraging them just…doesn’t feel right, even if it’s for a good cause. Being a parent is something I’m still just not used to, I suppose.”

A couple hours prior, the family had wrapped up their fruitless waterfall lessons at Veiled Falls for the morning. After a considerable amount of time spent trying to get her younglings to focus, Mipha had given up and elected for the family to depart and return to their private home on the East Reservoir platform. The walk through the Domain was uneventful, save for the few Zoras that paused their activities to acknowledge their princess and admire her little toddlers. Link had gotten a few nods as well, but he had received considerably less attention than his wife.

At the moment, they were settled comfortably by the water on the Reservoir’s dock, enjoying more of the pristine weather. Link sat cross-legged with Murdoch hanging mischievously from the back of his shoulders like a chimpanzee. Mipha sat directly next to him in close proximity, with her legs dangling over the side into the water. Her daughters were positioned nicely on her lap, with Mira on her left thigh, and Noelani on her right. She kept her arms around them and held them close, both for protection and comfort. Mira seemed to be drifting off to sleep in her mother’s arm, likely due to her explosion of activity back at the falls.

Link shrugged nonchalantly. “They seem pretty well-behaved to me. I think you do a great job.”

Mipha, while appreciating her husband’s compliment, did not exactly agree with him. “The real problem is Mira. She’s always at her sister for some reason. I can tell her to stop, but without imposing any consequences, she always goes back at her again.” She leaned forward and gazed thoughtfully at the sleeping Zora’s face as it was buried in the softness of her mother’s midsection. “It’s only when she’s tired that Lani gets the chance to thrive and relax.”

Link took the chance to lean forward a bit and glance around Mira at Noelani’s face. Their blind daughter did not have any sort of identifiable expression on her face. Her eyelids were half-closed, and her cloudy irises seemed to stare blankly through her sister and into the distance beyond. “You know…Lani looks pretty sleepy, too.”

Mipha turned her head and followed Link’s gaze to their daughter’s ghostly-looking face. “Oh, she’s not tired. Not at all.”

Link raised an eyebrow. “Really?”

Mipha nodded her head solemnly as she turned back to look directly at her husband. “Certainly. As you know, you’re gone on your missions a lot, so you don’t often get to see her like this.” She explained softly, with a bit of worried emotion in her voice. “While you’re gone, when I’m alone up here with them, she seems to do that a lot. It almost looks like she’s…thinking about something. Her quietness and lack of energy…it just…really worries me sometimes. She should be acting more playful like her siblings.”

“…Do you think it has something to do with Mira? Like perhaps she’s more reserved because she’s afraid of her sister?” He suggested.

“I don’t know, maybe.” Mipha shrugged unsurely. “I’ve been planning to sit down with
little Lani one of these days and have a heartfelt one-on-one with her. I want to know what kind of things go through her head in times like this. I want to know if she’ll be okay.”

Link nodded his head in understanding. “That sounds like a good idea. I’ll have no issue watching Mira and Murdoch for you in the meantime.”

Mipha grinned at him, causing his heart to flutter for a quick moment. “Do you really think you can handle Murdoch and Mira at the same time? Murdoch alone can be quite a handful, you know.”

Just as she had said this, Murdoch yanked down really hard on Link’s shoulders and propelled himself upward, around the side of his father’s head. Landing square on Link’s crossed thighs after a graceful arc through the air, his eager son glanced up into his eyes with an abundant cache of energy that apparently seemed to outlast his rambunctious sister. After Link’s startled, wide eyes returned to normal, a smile appeared on his face.

“Hey Dad, Dad, lookit this!” He beamed. He held up one of his hands, and to Link’s complete surprise, a hot-footed frog was sitting in his outstretched palm. It looked an awful lot like the same one he had showed him back at the falls earlier.

Link gasped at this sight. “Murdoch, where did you get that? I thought I told you to put that frog back before we left Veiled Falls!”

Murdoch’s only response was a mischievous giggle. Mipha glared at him in slight disapproval, but just as before, she did not say anything. She glanced up at Link for a moment to see what his next move would be.

Link scratched the back of his head. “How did you even get that all the way here without me seeing it?”

Again, Murdoch did not answer with words. Instead, he opened his mouth as widely as he could, exposing his pointy, shark-like teeth to his father. Then, he reached up with his free hand, and he pointed inward towards the back of his throat. Link grimaced as he was shown this display. Mipha even cringed a little.

“Okay…that’s kind of nasty.” Link uttered. He reared his head back at the pungent smell of frog on his son’s breath. “…Not to mention dangerous. You don’t know where that frog has been.”

During one of his earlier trips with Princess Zelda, in a field just west of the castle, she had mentioned something to him about frogs causing special effects if ingested. The effects differed depending on the frog, obviously, but in this case, Link was unsure if Zoras could even be affected by such things. If they could, though, whatever effect it caused would wear off eventually. Whatever the deal was, it was probably best that his son discard the frog like he had been asked before.

Mipha finally decided to step in for him. “Alright, Murdoch, why don’t you let him go now? He needs to go back to the water where he belongs.”
Still, Murdoch decided not to say anything. In response to his mother’s gentle demand, he turned in place toward the lake, where Vah Ruta remained in its calm, dormant state, and he brought his frog hand back behind his head. Then, before either of his parents could realize what he was doing, he whipped his arm forward in an overhand swing and chucked the small amphibian as hard as he could toward the Divine Beast. It soared through the air in a rather sizable arc before plummeting downwards and splashing out in the deepest region of the water. Link and Mipha stared at the frog’s landing point with slacked jaws.

“Well…that’s one way to do it…” Link stammered awkwardly. Murdoch began giggling playfully again at his father’s response, as he seemed to find no fault in the thing he had just done.

Mipha shook her head as she looked over at Link with another relaxed grin. “Speaking of ‘discipline,’ Link…you might not be so good at it yourself.”

Link couldn’t hold back a hearty chuckle as he turned to look at his reckless and frisky son. “Hey, what can I say? Murdoch and I are best pals!” He made a funny face at Murdoch. “Isn’t that right?”

“Yeeeeeah!” Murdoch cheered. He threw both his arms in the air above his head before falling forward and letting them land on Link’s waist. “Best pals!”

Mipha was truly moved by what she was seeing. Her husband seemed connected on such a deep level with their son. For someone who constantly had to deal with a plethora of binding responsibilities, Link really had himself dedicated to the family he had agreed to have with her. She, along with the children she bore, seemed to truly be the light in his world. Despite their nagging and stressful roles as Hyrule’s Champions, it truly filled Mipha with peace to know that she and their family could give Link so much happiness. Surely, such perfection could never be forgotten.

Their moment together was interrupted, suddenly, as the sound of many footsteps began to reach their ears from the platform behind them. Judging by the quantity of them, they interpreted the steps as those of a large group, rather than of one or two visitors. Startled by the noise, Mipha turned around toward the base of the dock, followed shortly by Link.

Behind them, walking towards the dock from the top of the stairs, was Princess Zelda. Behind her, following in a loosely-knit bundle, were the other three Champions. Urbosa, the chief of the Gerudo, walked almost directly by Zelda’s side. Revali, principal warrior of the Rito, strolled carelessly behind the Hylian princess, unamused as usual. In the back, behind the other three, was the great Daruk, boss of the Goron people. Muzu was even amongst the group, walking next to Daruk behind the others, with Prince Sidon hoisted in his arms.

The princess greeted Link and Mipha with a warm, but stern, smile. “It’s good to see you two again. Mipha, it’s been a while, hasn’t it?”

Mipha chuckled nervously. “Yeah, um…I…I would say so. Happy seventeenth birthday, Princess.” Her back was still facing the group, along with Link’s, which shielded their children from the Champions’ view. She and Link had done a good job of keeping their family life secret from the rest of the Champions, and at this moment, she wondered if it’d really be the best time to reveal the truth to their unexpecting eyes.
Link, on the other hand, fell into complete and utter silence again. Even after being his spouse for many months now, Mipha still could not figure out what about him caused him to go mute whenever Zelda or the other Champions were around him. It was honestly like he was barring himself from the outside world, only revealing his true spirit to her and the children. It appeared she would have to draw some time to talk with him as well and figure out where his insecurities lay.

At the moment, however, she and Link were stuck looking back from the edge of the dock at the crowd of Champions with a deer-in-the-headlights look in their eyes. Undoubtedly, they had not expected the princess to come visit them so soon.

“What have you got there? Pardon my nosiness, but it looks like you’re each holding something.” Zelda asked politely.

Mipha looked over at Link, and he glanced back at her. They may not have been able to discuss this with each other aloud, but in reality, it was not really needed. From merely staring at each other, they could agree on how stranded they were in this situation. And so, after sharing each other’s gaze for a brief moment, they took their only option. She sighed, and the two of them reluctantly stood up and turned their bodies around. Once they did so, Mira, Noelani, and Murdoch entered the view of Zelda and the Champions. Mira was still asleep, and Noelani couldn’t see what was going on, but when Murdoch was revealed to the unfamiliar group standing before him, his smile faded, and he turned to hide his face in Link’s tunic.

A long and drawn-out gasp emanated from the group, save for Muzu and the young prince in his arms. Everyone’s eyes widened in utter shock and awe at the sight of the little Zora toddlers, and they engaged in a quiet flurry of amazed murmurs. Zelda accompanied her surprised reaction with a hand on her chest.

“Oh! Oh…Oh my…” She stuttered.

Urbosa’s shocked expression quickly faded into an intrigued smile as she put her hand on her hip. “Well, I’ll be…”

“So…you’ve been busy, eh?” Revali added with a disapproving scoff. “…Cute.”

Daruk nudged Revali in the back, causing him to lose his footing and stumble a bit. “Revali, be nice.” He ordered in his deep, booming voice. “I think they’re adorable, little guy.”

“They’re somewhere between four and five months old.” Muzu informed from behind the stunned Champions. “Their eggs all hatched at the same time, making them the third group of triplets born in recorded Zoran history. They have each developed maturity equal to that of a Hylian four-year-old.”

“That’s so fascinating…” Zelda whispered hypnotically. Her eyes were focused on the girls in Mipha’s arms, and as she and the other Champions listened to Muzu’s informative dialogue, she stepped closer to Mipha on the dock. “…So this is what you’ve been doing during your time off…”

She reached out with her soft, gentle hand to caress Noelani’s cheek as the tiny Zora stared obliviously in another direction. Before she could do so, however, Mipha took a step backward
and shifted Noelani out of the princess’s reach before shaking her head. Zelda retreated her hand back as she received the Zora Champion’s subtle rejection.

“Please excuse my bluntness, Princess, but I would advise against touching Noelani. You see…she was born blind, and as such, she’s…very easily startled.” Mipha explained timidly.

There was another gasp from the group as she said this. It was not immediately obvious what the Champions thought of Link and Mipha’s offspring…whether it was joy, confusion, envy, disgust…they couldn’t be sure. The thing that was obvious, though, was their sheer interest in the couple’s younglings. It seemed especially apparent in Zelda’s behavior.

“What are their names?” She asked eagerly.

Mipha took a deep breath. She’d answer the question, but neither she nor Link were in the mood to go sharing too many details to their sudden visitors. “The one I just mentioned is Noelani. The sleeping one next to her is Mira. And…over there in Link’s arms…is Murdoch.”

The two of them earned loving coos from Zelda, Urbosa, and Daruk as Mipha listed the children’s names. Revali merely crossed his feathery arms and refused to even smile. Muzu did not react, since he was obviously familiar with the Zora Champion’s family already. There was a small glimmer of recognition in Zelda’s eyes upon hearing their son’s name.

“Murdoch…that’s an extraordinary name. It means ‘protector of the sea,’ doesn’t it?” She asked with intrigue. Link answered her question with a simple nod of his head.

Muzu could tell how uncomfortable Zelda’s questions were making Link and Mipha, so he decided to cut to the chase for them. No one could really blame the princess for being curious, though. After all, this was her first time learning of an entire secret life held by her bodyguard and one of her selected Champions. Surely, such information would pass as a remarkable surprise to anyone. She seemed genuinely interested in the two of them and their three children, but beneath that, it was impossible for him to tell if her thoughts were positive or negative.

The elder Zora cleared his throat. “Zelda has arrived at our Domain today to request your accompaniment at Mt. Lanayru. I was informed that you’ll be needed as her usual bodyguard, and dear Mipha will be required to stand vigilantly with the other Champions in the event of an unexpected catastrophe.”

Zelda folded her hands in front of her and, while looking directly at Link and Mipha, nodded her head once to confirm Muzu’s description. Urbosa, Revali, and Daruk all stared at them as well in patient wait for their response. All four Champions, as well as Link and Zelda, knew the truth, and that was that there wouldn’t really be a choice. Hyrule’s priorities were the Champions’ priorities, and there weren’t going to be any questions about it. Therefore, the time Mipha had been dreading…was upon them.

“But…” She quivered. “…who will watch…the…?”

Muzu stepped forward and quietly cut her off. “I’ll watch the kids, Princess. It’s actually why I came up here with the other Champions in the first place. It’s really no trouble.”
With her head held down sorrowfully, Mipha began to walk slowly toward the Champions on her way to the awning, carrying her twins in each arm. Link followed closely behind her with Murdoch held firmly against his chest. As the couple approached the group, they all stepped aside and allowed them to pass through on their way to their bed under the awning. Muzu followed the two of them to the awning after they passed him.

“Do you know how to take care of them?” She asked uncertainly.

The elder let out a dry, raspy chuckle. “Of course. I took care of you in your infant years, didn’t I?”

Mipha managed a weak smile at Muzu’s assuring confidence. “I tell you, Mira and Murdoch can be really wild sometimes. The hardest part is keeping Noelani protected from her sister, and keeping Murdoch from…well…swallowing any frogs.”

“I’m an old master, Princess. It shall be no problem at all.” He repeated calmly. “Plus, it’s only until this evening, so even if they’re getting difficult, I know you’ll be able to handle them later tonight.”

Mipha nodded at his last statement as she leaned over the bed with her daughters. As carefully as possible, to avoid waking her up, she laid Mira down on the pillow, turned sideways so her short tailfin wouldn’t get tugged under her body. She then did the same thing with Noelani, but at the foot of the bed, and she was sure to position her so she was sitting up. The blind Zora’s eyes were still fixed on an unknown void object…as if she had barely been paying attention to anything going on around her.

After Mipha stepped away, Link stepped in to hand Murdoch directly to Muzu. Had he decided to set his son down on the bed or the ground, it probably wouldn’t have been long before he’d start tearing into the drink glasses on the banister or trying to wake up his napping sister. Muzu shifted Prince Sidon over to his right arm so he could reach out with his left and accept Link and Mipha’s jumpy son. Murdoch immediately unhid his face and turned to look at his parting father.

“Well…I suppose that covers everything.” Mipha stated sadly. “Murdoch, you be good to Muzu, alright?”

“What about Lani?” Murdoch pouted in response. “Doesn’t she have to be good?”

Mipha gave her son a stern glare. “Lani is always good. You could learn a thing or two from her, you know.”

The Champions all laughed wholesomely at Mipha’s clever, parental jab. She wanted to laugh herself, but on the inside, she was beginning to feel the pain of having to leave her children behind. It was the kind of thing the children were supposed to do to the parents when they were older, not the other way around just months after they’re first hatched. She instead took a deep breath and tried to push the thoughts from her mind. She was just overreacting. After all…it was just for the day………..

She turned to face Zelda and her fellow Champions after her brief internal struggle. “Okay…I think Link and I are ready to go. My Champion’s cloth is downstairs in my father’s
Muzu stayed up on the platform with Sidon and the kids while the newly-unified group of Champions began to exit on their way to the staircase. Link and Mipha were the last ones in the group to leave the platform, and on their way out, Link stopped as he heard a soft noise come from Noelani. It was the first time she spoke since returning to the East Reservoir that afternoon.

“Bye, Daddy…” She said quietly. “…I love you.”

Link stood in emotional silence for a moment as he tried to stomach those words. He may have only been leaving for the day, as he had done many times before, but something felt heavy about his daughter’s words as they were said. Something sat heavy in his heart.

“I love you, too.” He whispered back.

Murdoch suddenly added his own input, at a much higher volume. “Dad, don’t leave! I’ll miss you!” Muzu had to quietly shush the jittery Zora as he said this, in order to remind him of his sleeping sister.

“It’s only for the day, Murdoch!” Link called. “I promise, I’ll be back soon!”

But, the truth was…Link would not be back soon. As he turned back around and descended the stairs of the East Reservoir by Mipha’s side, he left his children behind for what would be a staggering one hundred years. Their kids would get the chance to briefly see their mother one last time before she entered the Divine Beast later that evening, but as for their father…

...He would not be returning anytime soon.

Link almost did not want to open his eyes. As his mind began to force him back to the present, his ears became filled with the familiar sound of the pounding rain and roaring thunder around him. He knew Murdoch would be staring at him judgmentally, and that thought did not exactly make him any more comfortable. Eventually, though, he figured, he had to take charge. When his eyelids slowly opened and got reintroduced to Vah Ruta’s howling wetness, his suspicion was confirmed.

“So.” Murdoch began coldly. Link was suddenly taken aback by how tall and intimidating his son was compared to his early childhood. “Was that enjoyable?”

“Murdoch, I…it…you know…” He stopped and took a deep breath. “…No, it wasn’t.”

“It shouldn’t have been.” The guard captain scowled. “That was the moment you broke my heart and betrayed us all.”

“I didn’t want to do it…” The defeated Hylian uttered. “…I would’ve given anything…”
Murdoch put his hand up. “You know, Father, don’t worry about it. It’s okay.”

Link’s eyes widened slightly. “R…Really?”

“Yes, it’s okay.” His son repeated as he reached behind his head and withdrew his stolen Lynel bow. “Because I’m about to finally make things right.”

Murdoch turned around on the dock and directed his focus at Vah Ruta, just in time for it to release another wind-piercing roar. Link was forced to cover his ears again, and with barely enough time to comprehend what his son was doing, he watched as Murdoch bent his knees and prepared for a jump.

“Wait, Murdoch…NO!!”

As the words escaped Link’s mouth, Murdoch leapt gracefully into the air and, with a twirl, dove into the sloshing waters of the East Reservoir. Link, along with Mira and Sidon on the platform, watched in utter dismay as the guard captain slithered underwater toward the Divine Beast.
Moments following Murdoch’s bold departure, Prince Sidon hurriedly separated himself from his nieces and began sprinting towards Link, who was standing in shocked paralysis on the edge of the dock. In the last hour or so, he had run all around the Domain in search of Link and his daughters, eventually finding them out at Veiled Falls. On top of that, he had run the long distance from the falls to the base of the dam on the other side of the entire valley, and he even carried Noelani up the stairs after her father had to reluctantly separate from her. Out of everyone in the family that day, the prince had attained the largest amount of exercise, but even so, he was not ready to be done yet.

As he stepped away from the frightened twins, he turned around to face them for a brief moment. “Mira, I need both of you to stay right here! I don’t know how things may get!” He paused and turned to glance at her sister. “And…Lani?”

Mira felt Noelani tighten her grip on her hand as she was suddenly addressed by the prince. “Y…Yes, Uncle?”

He sighed. “…We might need you soon. Be ready.”

A sinking feeling arose in Noelani’s chest upon hearing her uncle’s words. In a situation like this, there was only one thing she could possibly be needed for, and it honestly was not on her itinerary. She would do what she had to do, though, and if a dire scenario were to present itself to her…would she really have any other choice?

“…Okay.” She whispered.

Following a quick nod of acknowledgement, Sidon turned back around and resumed his rush to meet Link at the dock. It was common knowledge that Zoras could swim much faster than they could run, so for every moment they spent on the dock, he and Link were rapidly losing ground on Murdoch. There was no time for discussion.

Link was stuck, motionless, on the edge of the dock as he stared out at the lake in horror. His first instinct after watching his son dive into the water had been to jump in after him, but, being the Hylian that he was, he would obviously stand no chance in catching him. Currently, all he could do was hope Murdoch would return with his heart still beating.

When Sidon came up behind him, however, he was presented with an alternative. The prince hopped into the lake the same way Murdoch had just seconds before, and when he did, he leaned forward a bit at the surface. Link watched him with heavy breaths.

“Hurry, Link, hop on! We can still catch him if we work together!” The prince hollered.

The hero did not hesitate. As soon as the prince provided him with this offer, he leapt hastily into the water. Sidon was positioned only a couple feet from the dock, so almost immediately after entering the lake, Link was aptly distanced to grab the prince’s shoulders. Upon securing his grip on what was essentially his living jet-ski, he glanced behind him and took one final look at the twins. From what he could see, Noelani had her arm wrapped completely around that of her sister, and she was looking randomly off on the horizon. Mira, though, upon seeing him, waved her hand over her head.
He barely had time to wave back to her, however, before Sidon began prepping for departure. Something felt weird to him about separating from his daughters again, but obviously, this time would not be permanent. Of all the candidates likely to die this day, Link was… unfortunately…not at the top of the list. This thought remained stuck in his head as Sidon cleared his throat.

“Alright, Link, hang on. I don’t know how much the girls have shown you in the last twenty-four hours, but I can assure you that speed-swimming is not exactly a smooth experience.” He warned.

“I can handle it.” Link jabbed. “Let’s go get Murdoch.”

Link hadn’t changed a bit in the last century, Sidon thought to himself. None of the risks mattered to him when he had a goal in his mind. Of course, he clearly knew where his limits were, and he refused to accept challenges with no chance of success, but for this endeavor…the young Hylian obviously knew there was a chance. It was either that, or…he foresaw no success, and… Murdoch was merely an exception to his rule. Hopefully, given Link’s incredible forecasting ability, the former would be the case.

Answering right away to his passenger’s cue, Sidon promptly kicked his legs downward into the water and propelled the two of them forward in the lake. Over time, he turned his kicks into steady wavelike motions in his abdomen, mimicking the movements of a large fish. Eventually, after finding the momentum in his movements, the mighty prince expanded the mechanical energy to his entire body, and just like that, he and Link were rushing toward the Divine Beast with exceptional speed. Link took great interest in the phenomenal swimming power of the Zoras, and as it would seem, their prince was one of the best among their ranks.

Back on the platform, standing with a slight shiver in her frame, Mira watched Sidon carry her father out onto the horizon to hopefully rescue Murdoch before disaster could strike. Noelani seemed just as nervous as she was, if not more so, considering the role she would potentially be forced to play soon. They found a lot riding on what would occur in the next ten minutes, and whether or not they would see their brother alive again. Standing by and watching helplessly was about as torturous as it could be for the pair.

“Mira, what if…”

Mira hushed her sister. “Of course he’ll come back, Lani. If anything, Mom wouldn’t allow things to end like this for him. I promise.”

She did not require words to understand her sister’s thoughts.

Riding his brother-in-law’s back was one of the most unique physical experiences of Link’s life. As the prince followed through with the rhythmical, fishlike body movements needed to keep...
them hurdling forward, Link’s face was bombarded with a continuous stream of wind that was rich in spray from the lake around them. This added to the pouring rain that was already blanketing the atmosphere, and the resulting combination was enough to also chalk the moment up as one of the wettest in Link’s life.

It didn’t take long before Vah Ruta was upon them on the horizon, and as the mighty Divine Beast began to fill up their field of view, Prince Sidon made a sharp left and initiated a steady clockwise orbit in the lake. Link was sincerely blown away by the indescribable size of the ancient machine, now that he was close enough to appreciate it fully. Its majesty was undeniable even from the dock, but now that he was this close to it for the first time in his memory, it became obvious just how underproportioned it was before. The thought of little Mipha, who was barely five feet tall, piloting this titanic monster… was almost hard to believe.

“Did you see where he went?” Link asked, loudly enough for the prince to hear. The rushing water and billowing rain made it difficult for the duo to hear each other, even with Link grappling right to the prince’s back.

“I might have an idea!” Sidon called back. “Wait here for me!”

Without any warning, the prince suddenly dove beneath the surface and cut off Link’s grip. Before he knew it, Link was treading water by himself in the middle of the lake, with Vah Ruta towering into the sky next to him. The mechanical creature was anything but tranquil, he found, and being this close to it felt surprisingly unsettling. He felt a certain irony in how hostile the thing seemed, considering how connected to it Mipha had felt back in her days.

He didn’t have too much time to think about it, though. After only a few seconds of floating amongst the rocking waves, Link was picked up by the prince again, who emerged underneath him. Immediately after reappearing at the surface, with Link on his back once again, Sidon turned back around and began swimming the other direction. At this point, they were heading around to the Beast’s front end. Link, though confused, decided to trust the prince’s judgement.

“Sorry about that, it’s just far easier to see underwater.” He explained.

“Did you see him?” Link prompted, ignoring Sidon’s apology.

“Yes…” Sidon answered as he continued his hurried strokes toward the Divine Beast’s trunk. “…he’s orbiting Vah Ruta underwater, heading the same direction we were earlier! I turned us around so we could catch him head on!”

“So… why hasn’t he tried to attack the Beast yet? He had time, didn’t he?” Link asked. Vah Ruta was the first Divine Beast the Hylian hero had pursued since awakening from his hibernation, so his knowledge of the massive machines was still rather lacking, to say the least.

Sidon, who was already paddling his body at full speed in the opposite direction, shook his head in response against the water’s surface. He continued to answer Link with a raised voice so he could be heard through the numerous noises clouding their environment. Everything around them was loud in general, it seemed. Since awakening, this was Link’s first real experience as far as intensity was concerned.
“Ol’ Murdoch’s just looking for an opening right now!” The prince exclaimed. “Vah Ruta is protected by an impenetrable barrier, and it only dissipates if the Beast detects a hostile presence in the lake! It does that so it can lay down ice attacks!”

Link raised an eyebrow as he quickly readjusted his grip on Sidon’s slick, wet shoulders. He had a constant need to wipe bands of water from his eyes, but he was traveling too fast to risk letting go of the prince. “But…why hasn’t he been detected yet? He’s been out here for quite a while already!”

“That’s a good question, my friend!” Sidon chuckled. “I took this thing on with Seggin a couple weeks ago, and it was all over us as soon as we entered the lake!”

It did seem like an intriguing question, the more Link thought of it. He had encountered a very large Guardian in the wetlands on his way to Zora’s Domain a few days ago, and it was almost immediately locked onto his presence as soon as he entered a hundred-foot radius. He hadn’t admitted it yet, but he had come out of that situation practically gasping for life. As he was already informed, Guardians were of ancient sheikah design, and of course, the Divine Beasts were as well. There was no doubt that the sheikah of ancient legend were basically limitless in their technological abilities, and the fact clearly showed in the living remnants of their timeless trinkets and doohickeys. So…how was Vah Ruta acting so blind to Murdoch’s presence…especially considering the guard captain’s intent to incapacitate it?

Whatever the cause, Link and the prince had to take what they could get. After all, the Divine Beast’s tardiness was buying them a decent amount of time to catch their target.

Shortly after rounding the Beast’s front side, Sidon addressed Link urgently. “Look alive! We’re coming up on him right now!”

Link frantically searched the water in front of them, but he was unable to see anything through the frustrating abundance of waves and ripples tainting the surface of the lake. The situation was made worse by the fact that Sidon was carrying him through the water at exhilarating speeds, so focusing on objects was next to impossible. The escalated storm Vah Ruta was causing was not doing Link’s vision any favors, especially since he was not trained in seeing things underwater.

“Where?!?” He yelled. “I don’t see him!”

Suddenly, just as Link made this exclamation, Murdoch ejected from the water, his body poised in a hydrodynamic form, right in front of him and the prince. Link ducked his head down with a shocked gasp as his son, with an elegant twirl, sailed directly over his head in the opposite direction. Murdoch’s bow was still gripped firmly in his right hand, though its positioning there did not seem to affect his swimming ability. The splash from his mighty leap was great enough to envelop both Link and the prince, but neither their speed nor direction were thrown off as a result.

Link turned his head behind him just in time to see Murdoch slide back into the water without so much as a tiny additional splash. They were now hurdling away from each other. At this point, Sidon was carrying Link toward the tail end of the Divine Beast along its opposite side, and Murdoch was approaching the trunk. Essentially, Murdoch had just managed to dodge the two
of them completely by leaping out of the water.

Through his ongoing body movements, Sidon seemed to shake his head again. “I had a feeling he would pull something like that.” Link was barely getting a chance to recover from his flinch as the prince prepped to regain ground on their rogue target. “Hang on!”

He gasped as Sidon suddenly lurched his body straight downwards into the water. In a single swift, fluid motion, his escort looped inwards under the water, causing them to rapidly change their direction at the expense of their orientation. Link struggled to hang onto the prince’s shoulders as he was quickly flipped upside down in the process, but Sidon corrected the issue by barrel-rolling his body before reaching the surface again.

Upon being reintroduced to the air, after only a brief second underwater, Link coughed and gagged until he hacked up the liquid that had gotten in his lungs. Sidon, who continued to swim full speed ahead, was obviously unaffected. He didn’t seem to acknowledge the discomfort his maneuver had caused his passenger.

“Your son may be agile, but I’m much faster than he is!” Sidon announced. “We’re in pursuit of him now…we’ll catch up to him soon!”

In the distance directly ahead of them, by the base of the Divine Beast’s trunk, Murdoch suddenly surprised the pair as he leapt directly upwards out of the water. His bow was still gripped in his hand, but this time, it looked like he was grabbing an arrow from his quiver. Link’s heart sank as he saw his son dock an arrow in the bow in the split second he was in the air. Upon closer inspection, however, he noticed that the arrow going into Murdoch’s bow was, in fact, a regular arrow, and not a glowing shock arrow. This observation gave him a rush of relief.

During the ever fast moment he was airborne, after having docked the arrow and set his aim at Vah Ruta’s trunk, Murdoch used his free hand to draw the string back and send the projectile flying. Sparks were emitted from the arrow’s point-of-release, and, like magic, three full-sized clones of the arrow were launched out from the bow. They each had a slight deviation in their flight path, but even so, they soared right at the Divine Beast as three parts to the same shot. They were set to hit the Beast’s tusks, located just below the trunk, but before they could get there, they were suddenly vaporized by a mysterious, translucent force. Murdoch had already fallen back into the water shortly after the shot was made, so he did not get to observe this spectacle.

As Link watched the destruction of the arrows from a distance, Vah Ruta suddenly ascended its trunk and released another long, melancholic roar that blasted across the waves and ripped at his unexpecting eardrums. He cringed against his shoulder in a vain attempt to shield one of his ears from the sturdy cry, but with his hands firmly attached to Sidon’s shoulders, he was forced to endure the paralyzing sensation of the Divine Beast’s apparent suffering. The forcefield that had caught the arrows became visible for a moment as a pulsing, pink bubble, but after a short time, it seemed to flicker and die out. Another bolt of lightning tore across the sky above, followed by a thunder crash that sounded weak…compared to what had just occurred.

“What just happened?!” Link yelled, hoping Sidon would hear him. “What did he do?!”

Sidon gave his legs a quick thrash to accelerate them a little faster. “He just alerted the Beast! Its defenses are down now!”
“So what’s going to happen now?” He asked as Sidon veered around the trunk in pursuit of Murdoch.

“Ice!” The prince responded. “The shield gets in the way of the Beast’s ice attacks, so it retires its defenses when it senses a threat! It’s going to fight back now!”

Link lowered his body down against the prince’s back as he swung to the side to sneak under the Divine Beast’s head. There was a considerable amount of space between the machine’s trunk and forelegs, but nonetheless, he felt like ducking down would be a little less reckless. Plus, he figured doing so would help Sidon by decreasing the amount of air resistance he’d have to fight. Now that Murdoch had managed to shut down the Beast’s shield, they were probably running out of time.

Back on the other side of the Beast, where they had been initially, Sidon caught a glimpse of Murdoch under the water, continuing just ahead of them in the same direction. All Link could see from above, through the bands of rain and lake water stinging at his eyes, was a distorted, reddish figure gliding through the water in front of them. To him, it was clearly Murdoch, and by the looks of it, Sidon was gaining on him fast. Apparently, he was right about being faster than the guard captain.

Before Link could ask the prince what their move would be to capture Murdoch, a minor shockwave emanated through the air from the Divine Beast, causing him to flinch. Just as this had happened, a bright, glowing shade of turquoise appeared in the hero’s vision in the direction of the Beast, and when he turned to address the phenomenon, he was met with a rather strange and daunting sight.

“I, uh…suppose that would be the ‘ice’ you were mentioning?” He uttered.

“What?” Sidon replied awkwardly, having not heard his passenger.

“Ice! Incoming!” Link howled.

Three large, illuminated cubes of ice had materialized in the air by the Divine Beast’s hip, bearing mysterious sheikah carvings on each of its faces. As far as Link was concerned, the blocks had basically appeared completely out of nowhere, and after only a couple seconds by the Divine Beast, they started flying outwards at their targets. The first one to go seemed to be flying straight at them, although somewhat slowly.

Sidon glanced briefly to his right at the body of the Beast and took notice of the ice block flying in their direction. He and Link were currently traveling perpendicular to the block at a higher speed than the thing was hurdling, so, halfway through its arc, it began to curve towards them with some kind of supernatural force. Clearly, sheikah technology appeared to transcend the physical dimension, as its Divine Beasts could demonstrate.

“Hang in there, Link!” Sidon ordered. “I’m going to try and lose this thing!”

Just as he had done before, the prince jerked his body downwards into the water as the ice block approached them from the right. At the speed they were moving, they were just starting to pass the strange, frozen entity horizontally, but that was doing nothing to stop it from homing in on
them. While still under the water’s surface, Sidon sensed the ice block curving inwards at them in a final stretch, so he reacted quickly by yanking his body to the right in the direction of the Divine Beast in order to cause a kink in the block’s path. Bubbles streamed out of Link’s mouth and floated to the surface as the hero was thrown around by the prince’s agile movements under the water.

True to Sidon’s hasty plan, due to its momentum, the ice block was unable to curve its path fast enough to make contact with him and Link, and it shattered upon reaching the water’s surface to their left. Once the block’s destruction became apparent, Sidon quickly returned to the surface in consideration of Link’s lack of gills. The Hylian took a deep, rejuvenating breath before lowering his body down against the prince once again. In the same moment the first block broke, the second one ejected from Vah Ruta’s hip and began careening in front of them towards Murdoch.

Link paid close attention to how his son was planning to evade the oncoming ice block. He still couldn’t see Murdoch well from his spot above the surface, but with the ice block zoning in on him, he could get a general idea of where the guard captain was located. He was still swimming closely in front of them in the same direction, judging by the curve of the ice block’s path. It wasn’t long, however, before the looming projectile changed its direction suddenly and began flying straight outwards toward the edge of the lake. By the looks of it, Murdoch must’ve darted away from the Beast to the left in an attempt to divert the block’s path.

The only thing Link could do with his limited vision was watch the ice block as it supposedly sped toward his son. He couldn’t tell whether the thing was getting close or not, since Murdoch couldn’t be seen by him on the opposite side of the water’s surface. He had no doubt that Murdoch would dodge the threat, since…well…his son hadn’t yet let him down in physical endeavors. Even Zoras had their limits in the water, though, so Link stayed on edge in case something were to suddenly go wrong.

He continued watching as the ice block shattered against the surface in the distance. Through the many elements clouding his vision, Link was pretty sure he couldn’t see Murdoch anywhere near the projectile’s landing point, so he found it pretty safe to assume that his son had successfully avoided the impact. Despite being faster, Sidon had admitted to being less agile than Murdoch, and even with Link on his back, he had managed to dodge an ice block. Therefore, it made sense that Murdoch would’ve been able to maneuver efficiently when presented with the crisis himself.

Link noticed something else about Murdoch’s move, however. By turning away from the Divine Beast toward the outer reaches of the lake like he did, he had also evaded Sidon’s line of sight and caused the two of them to pass him in their orbit. They would have to turn around again to meet him.

“Hey, I think Murdoch’s behind us now.” Link announced while patting Sidon’s neck.

The prince sighed. “Alright, hang on.”

Once more, Sidon dove underneath the water with Link still grabbing his shoulders. Following what he had done before, he looped down and then backwards in order to quickly flip himself and his passenger in the other direction. Lastly, he barrel-rolled his body to face Link upwards again, and then he ascended to the surface. With Murdoch supposedly closing back in
toward the Divine Beast from the outside, they would supposedly meet somewhere by one of the towering monster’s pouring waterfalls. The plan was for Sidon to reach out and grab either Murdoch or his bow.

However, the moment Sidon’s head and shoulders emerged from underneath the water, he and Link received a pounding face-full of ice. The third ice block, which they had neglected to track, had been following them for the last several moments, and when Sidon turned himself around to pursue Murdoch one last time, he had unknowingly directed himself right into the spinning cube. Before Sidon could even have a chance to react, he was forced to take the hit head-on.

The two of them gave a cry as they were flung backward by the impact, their momentum completely destroyed. Link’s grip on the prince was torn, and as his hands broke free from Sidon’s shoulders, he skidded along the water a few feet before reorienting himself. Sidon, on the other hand, was completely dazed from the impact, and when Link was tossed from his back, he pressed both his hands to his head and tried to banish his dizziness.

Link shook his head for a moment to clear up his own minor dizziness, and after doing so, he quickly swam over to the prince. “Are you okay?”

“Er…I…uh…I think so…” Sidon mumbled awkwardly. His eyes were darting around quickly as he worked to refocus himself after the tough impact he had taken.

While he was waiting for the prince to regain his composure, some distant movement caught Link’s eye. He worriedly shifted his head to the side so he could see past the prince, and when he did, his long-range vision became more clear. Once he could make out what he was seeing, he brought his hand to his forehead. It was Murdoch, traveling along the surface of the water, and he was headed straight for one of Vah Ruta’s waterfalls. With Sidon too dazed to move, and Link being the Hylian that he was, there was nothing he could do but watch helplessly.

Murdoch arched his body upwards as soon as he reached the foam at the base of the waterfall. Then, using the same, slithery movements that had propelled him through the lake, he ascended the length of the plummeting water with stunning ease. Link had never seen a Zora ascend a waterfall in his memory, and despite the tension of the situation, the sight of it was simply breathtaking. The fact that Murdoch was his son…made it all the more so. It filled him with grief to realize that he had missed the sight of his children doing it for the first time.

Murdoch, practiced as he was with climbing falling water, was at the apex of Vah Ruta’s spouting waterfall in a matter of seconds. With one last thrust of his legs and torso, he launched his entire body directly upwards and broke free of the water’s current, sending him an additional twenty feet in the air. From his new vantage point high in the sky, he could clearly see all four of the Divine Beast’s glowing, pink weak-points, each of which responsible for the spewing of its water. He was also visible to everyone at that height, and as he raised his bow and drew a shock arrow from his quiver, Link’s eyes were directly on him, as well as Mira’s from the dock.

The glowing, enchanted arrow stung a little bit at Murdoch’s fingertips as he wielded it in his hand, but he soldiered his way through the nagging sensation. He was just beginning to reach the top of his arc, so he needed to act quickly before gravity could suck him back down to the lake. It was time to take his stand. His time to finally, perhaps, prove his resolve. Prove his
He set the arrow in the massive bow. Immediately, the mythical, metal tool began to glow an eerie yellow, acting almost as an extension to the glowing aura of the arrow he was about to use. The painful stinging he was experiencing in his arrow hand was now in both of his hands, as if the bow itself was inheriting the electric properties of the arrow. He grimaced against the sensation. It didn’t feel comfortable, but it felt…powerful. His resolve ever steadfast, he pulled the bowstring back just as his ascent into the air was turning into a descent.

“Here I am, Mother…” He whispered with closed eyes.

He extended his fingers…and released the bowstring.

Back on the dock, Noelani was startled by a sudden shrill, petrified scream from Mira. She was still hugging her sister’s arm, and in doing so, she noticed an unexpected onset of fearful quaking in her body. It was then, after jumping a mile in her skin from her sibling’s shocked cry, that she knew what had happened…and what she would have to do. She thought to herself as she stared blankly off into the distance, that…perhaps there had been a bit of fate in her inheritance.

Just then, from their spot on the Reservoir platform, Mira had been nervously watching her brother out on the lake as he climbed the waterfall alongside Vah Ruta. She had also seen Link and Sidon take the direct hit from the last ice block, which had made it seem likely that they were going to fail their objective in the first place. All she could do as she watched Murdoch leap from the top of the waterfall and draw back his bow was hold her breath and pray.

Her scream had come, however, upon observing Murdoch’s firing of the shock arrow. As soon as the tension in the bowstring had been released, the electric buildup that had accumulated in the bow suddenly discharged, resulting in a blindingly bright burst of light that blinked through the hazy rain like a camera flash. The quick blink had been accompanied by a loud popping noise, similar to the snap of a giant’s fingers. In the same instant the discharge had occurred, like a fly hitting a bug zapper, Murdoch was seen falling lifelessly out of the sky.

Link saw this happen from the lake at the same time as Mira. Sidon had just managed to shake off the stars in his vision, and when he did, he also caught a glimpse of the catastrophe. Both their eyes widened at the spectacle, but while Sidon gasped in horror, Link just stared in silence. His mouth hadn’t even opened at the sight…even as his eyes slowly followed Murdoch’s unconscious descent back to the lake. The stricken Zora’s bow had left his grasp after the blast, and at the moment, it fell separately from its former wielder. The sounds of the wind and rain seemed to disappear during the terrible moments of his fall.

Eventually, after the longest few seconds of his life, Link blinked as Murdoch’s body, alive or dead as it might’ve been, smacked the surface of the lake back-first, a powerful splash erupting on all sides. He seemed to float for a moment, but his ragdoll-like limbs eventually began to sag.
and pull the rest of his body under. His bow landed in the water a second later, and it immediately began sinking to the bottom of the lake. No one had any plans to recover it.

The prince did not waste a second. As soon as Murdoch hit the water, he began swimming over to him at full speed in order to check for vitals. Link followed him as quickly as he could, but it obviously took him much longer to reach the site of his son’s impact. By the time he got there, Sidon had already gripped Murdoch’s wrist and pulled him back to the water’s surface.

The mighty guard captain looked dreadful. Zoras were typically unable to withstand the electric force of one shock arrow, and he had taken on the brunt of three in a single instant. Because of this, his entire body was covered in blackened streaks that, from the looks of it, seemed to follow his nerve endings. They congregated right at his chest, forming a large, black mass right where his heart was supposedly located. The thinner parts of his body, including the fins dangling from his arms and the sides of his head, were charred halfway off. Overall, the blackened areas of his body seemed larger in areas where his nerves were to converge.

The parts of his ravaged son that truly disturbed Link, however, were the blast wounds. In many places, typically where the blackened channels met, Murdoch’s skin was either worn down several layers or missing entirely. The areas that were lucky enough to be spared looked heavily burned, as if they had been briefly torched. Most notable to the distraught hero was Murdoch’s left hand, which had been used to pull back and release the bowstring. It now only had three fingers… a thumb, half a ring finger, and a pinky.

Sidon leaned over and pressed the side of his head to Murdoch’s singed chest. He waited patiently for a moment, but over time, his face grew increasingly grim.

“…He has no pulse.” He whispered.

“Well we can’t just sit here!” Link spat loudly. “Bring him to Noelani!”

Sidon responded immediately and obediently to Link’s demand. While continuing to tread water, he did his best to wrap his arms under Murdoch’s body and hoist him out of the lake and onto his back. The two of them had the same relative height and weight, so carrying Murdoch proved to be a far greater challenge for the prince than carrying Link. Time was of the essence, however, so he did not let the difficulty get to him. He felt Link swim up to his side and grab onto his wrist, which, for the sake of keeping up with his naturally fast swimming, he allowed.

Once everything seemed in order, the prince took off for the dock. He and Link could faintly see the twins standing on the platform through the billowing rain, and, despite their distance, they could clearly see a lack of calm in Mira’s body language.

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With Murdoch slung over his shoulders, Prince Sidon jogged quickly up the length of the dock toward the sisters, who were standing in the exact same spot they had been in before his initial departure. Link was following closely behind him at the same speed, with the same sense of urgency on his face. Mira looked close to having a complete mental breakdown, but Noelani
seemed to be eerily calm and solemn as her relatives arrived with her technically-deceased brother. She turned her head in their direction.

“Lani, I hope you’re ready to bring your A-game!” Sidon exclaimed anxiously. He knelt down in front of the sisters, reached over his shoulder, and deposited their charred, mangled sibling on the ground with gentle care.

“Oh, dear Hylia…” Mira choked, getting a long, brutal look at what was left of Murdoch. She clamped her hand over her mouth and turned her head away.

Sidon and Link stood over Murdoch’s body expectantly as Noelani quietly got on her knees. Her nonfunctional eyes fell on the ground beneath her, and at the same time, she leaned forward and reached out with her left hand. She couldn’t tell where she was reaching, but from the sounds of her surroundings, she assumed she was in the ballpark as far as finding Murdoch on the ground. Her expression remained entirely unrevealing.

True to her estimation, after leaning far enough forward, her hand came to rest on Murdoch’s upper hip, right over his gills. Her expression changed a bit, and she reached out with her other hand to feel more of Murdoch’s motionless body. She moved her hands around and softly caressed the tissue surrounding her brother’s gills, chest, and abdomen. In doing so, she felt the burns, the gashes, and the mound of char over his heart. At this point, she could finally see, in her own way, how dire Murdoch’s condition was.

“Ohhh……” She moaned. “…ohh my……”

“His heart’s not beating, Lani.” Link urged. “You need to do something fast!”

Noelani nodded her head once, her focus remaining rock-steady. “I think I can save him. I just…need some time to think…some time to feel…”

Link’s son was laying dead on the ground in front of him, and his only chance of seeing said son alive again was being too patient about it. Naturally, this was making him quite the opposite. “Time to think? Noelani, it’s now or never on Murdoch’s life!”

Noelani loudly shushed her father, who was acting rather desperate, understandably. She shifted her hands to a new position on Murdoch’s chest. “Mom should’ve told you how this healing magic works! It’s not easy! Just let me focus, before it’s too late!”

Link had an immense urge to bark something else at his blind daughter, but at the same time, he had never heard her use such direct language at him before. He had already figured out many of Noelani’s hidden, fierce character aspects from their time together recently, but never before had she felt the need to use them on him. Before he could even realize it, he found himself swallowing his pride and keeping his mouth shut. He was probably the most capable living being in all of Hyrule in this age, so feeling hopeless in a time like this was torture beyond all measure for him. Regardless, Noelani was Murdoch’s only hope, and Link had to acknowledge that.

Mira was still facing away from Murdoch and the others, and in the corner of Link’s eye, he could see her put both hands up to her face. The continuous rain made it impossible to hear subtle noises, but from this gesture, he could tell she was beginning to cry. The gentle, rhythmical
convulsions of her body added to that evidence. Mira was a very emotional and dedicated individual, and this was anything but a casual moment in which to be standing. Not even twenty-four hours prior, she had broken down in that exact same spot with thoughts about her mother. Losing her sibling as well…was a frightening possibility for such a young mind to comprehend.

Sidon seemed to pick up on his niece’s emotional instability shortly after Link did. He walked around Murdoch’s sprawled body and reached out to take her softly by the shoulders.

“Come, Mira. I think it would be healthy for you to remove yourself from this mess for a while and go see Muzu. There’s nothing left to do to help Murdoch, so we need to just leave your sister alone while she…does her thing.” He instructed. He tried to lead her towards the platform stairs, but she resisted.

“I don’t want to go back to Muzu.” She pouted.

Sidon sighed. “Okay, we’ll go visit your grandfather in his chamber. Would that be any better?”

Mira stood in silence for a moment as she pondered over her uncle’s proposal. In all honesty, she didn’t want to leave Link and Murdoch’s side, but at the same time, she had to admit that the recent events had been heavily weighing on her. Muzu, having been in support of Murdoch’s reckless actions, was most certainly not the face she wanted to return to, however. Her relaxed and unconditionally loving grandfather, though? Perhaps he deserved to know what had happened.

She reached up with her arm to wipe the tears from her face, even though it made no difference in the pouring rain. “…Alright.”

With that answer, she held her head down as she turned to exit down the stairs of the dam. Sidon, hoping to comfort her in her time of distress, walked alongside her in close proximity and kept his hands on her shoulders. Link watched them both as they took their leave, and before long, they were down the first few steps and out of sight. At this point, he was once again alone with Noelani as she continued her prep work to supposedly heal Murdoch.

He fixated his gaze on her just as she was beginning to focus her attention on Murdoch’s heart. Prior to this point, most of her work seemed to consist of moving her hands around and feeling different areas. Usually, someone would be able to guide her hand to the spot of a specific wound, and she’d be able to start healing it right away. She was dealing with an entire broken body this time, however, so she found it necessary to personally analyze the severity of the damage in different places. Link thought it would’ve been better to hold off this part until Murdoch’s blood was at least pumping again, but after her outburst, he found it best to leave it to her judgement.

She placed both her hands just above the large, charred mass on Murdoch’s chest, and she closed her eyes. Just as Link had seen with Mira’s burned thigh the day before, a mystic blue aura formulated around Noelani’s palms, and it began to brighten gradually over time. The sight was still fascinating to him, even though he had been a witness to it several times before. From the blurry bits that he could remember, Mipha had even used the healing ability on him plenty of times in their past.

“This…might take a while.” Noelani murmured. “I…haven’t exactly had to heal on this
kind of scale before.”

“How have you managed to be so calm?” Link replied with a look of intrigue. “How does witnessing your brother this injured not send you into a panic?”

She sighed. “Because I can’t heal when I’m panicking. I had to accept the possibility of this happening as soon as we reached the lake…so I could be ready in case Murdoch needed me. If I can’t control my thoughts, I can’t control the ability.”

“Are…Are you sure you’re even able to save him still? He’s been out for…quite a long time…” He stammered.

“No, I’m not sure. He could’ve been long gone before you even brought him to me earlier.” She answered with a saddened shrug. “But I’m not going to cloud myself with those worries, because again…my healing wouldn’t work.”

Link hadn’t remembered too much about the details surrounding Noelani’s mysterious healing ability. He knew she had gotten it from Mipha, obviously, but as far as the functionality behind it…he was nearly clueless. On top of that, he was curious to learn how Noelani’s early history with the healing power would’ve played out. He couldn’t remember any moments with her in the past where she had used the ability around him, and because of that, he wasn’t sure whether or not she had discovered it before the Great Calamity. He wondered if talking about it a little bit with her would distract her too much from working on Murdoch, even though…it felt like an odd time for it.

He sat down on the wet surface of the platform and crossed his legs. Noelani’s head shifted a bit as she faintly heard the noise of his clothes shuffling. It took her a moment to put two and two together, but when she realized he had sat down, her mouth curled into a weak smile, which then disappeared again quickly. It was difficult for him to tell, but from her subtle behavior, it seemed like she was trying to conceal an ungodly amount of stress.

“Are we about to talk again?” She let out a long, drawn sigh. Despite all his efforts, Link could not tell if it was one of relief, or exasperation. “A comforting conversation sounds…heavenly right now.”

Link shrugged. If she was being serious, then he’d at least be glad to give one of them some solace. She more than deserved it for her efforts. “It’s just that I realized I never asked you about your healing ability. I know Mipha has demonstrated it to me before, but that’s not in my memory right now.”

“It may seem like it’d be a burdening responsibility…” She began solemnly. “…but I think it’s more of a blessing. It’s almost like the gift of life, and I feel honored to have inherited it from Mom. I think it more than makes up for being blind.”

She always had some interesting perspectives. She was quite secret to others about many of her innermost feelings, but to him, she was happy to be a complete open book. And this, her healing powers, seemed to be one of her most personal topics. She must’ve felt, from what he could figure, that the ability to heal others was the most direct, living piece of her mother out there today. He’d most likely return to that theory, but there were other pressing matters that held his interest.
“So…I have to know…” He continued, changing the subject. “…how do you do it? What do you have to do to unlock this power?”

She sat silently as she pondered the question, her hands still locked firmly above her brother’s chest. “I felt like you were going to ask that question at some point. The answer, as of now, is quite simple, but it wasn’t always so obvious to me.”

“Did Mipha teach you?” He cut in.

She nodded slowly. “She’d teach me every day while you were gone on your missions. I remember how happy and loving she sounded when she first learned I could do it. Ever since then, she would dedicate lots of time to showing me how it worked, and what powerful things it could do. Our connection grew so much stronger.”

“I see.” He whispered. “So she was really glad to see her power passed on in the family.”

“That’s right, and with good reason, too. I don’t think she expected herself to live through the Great Calamity, and she probably liked the comfort of knowing that that specific part of her legacy would live on.” Noelani explained distantly.

“That’s…wow. I never thought of that.” He muttered, putting a hand to his chin.

“To answer your question, though?” She glanced in his general direction. “It’s powered by emotion. More specifically…emotion toward someone else. That’s the main principle that Mom passed on to me, and I’ve been following it ever since.”

“You don’t say…” Link trailed off thoughtfully.

“Yep. Uncle had even called upon me a couple weeks ago after he and Seggin attacked Vah Ruta. Seggin had suffered a few injuries from the shock arrow he used, which I was easily able to heal. His condition was obviously not as…serious as…Murdoch’s, though.” She sighed.

Link took another look down at Murdoch, whose face hadn’t changed since his downfall. His eyes were still closed, and his mouth was still partway open, revealing his dense row of pointy teeth. Not even his head had been spared of the blackened streaks that covered his body. It looked as if his entire nervous system had been charged like a battery at the time of releasing the bowstring, but there had been nowhere for the electricity to go. He probably hadn’t even felt any pain when the discharge occurred, which was oddly the most chilling part of it.

“I really hope you can fix him…” Link stated. He wasn’t usually the kind to show helplessness like this, but at the same time…he wasn’t usually the kind to be helpless. He was powerless to save his son. All he could do was wait.

“I can finally feel the condition of his heart.” Noelani answered with a hint of triumph in her voice. “It took me a while to work down to it, but I can feel it now.”

His eyes lit up. “You…can feel his heart? Without having to physically touch him?”

She nodded and closed her eyes. “It’s sort of like being able to extend my hands beyond where they physically reach. Damaged tissue acts like a barrier to what I can see. In order to get down to his heart, I had to first heal the burnt flesh and muscle that was layered in front if it.”
“That’s amazing…” He gasped. He leaned forward and rested his chin on his hands. “So…what’s going on in there?”

Noelani took a deep breath and let it out slowly. She opened her eyes again and turned to her father. “He’s not dead.”

He gasped again, much louder this time. He struggled to contain his joy and relief from hearing those three words. “Really? Are you sure?”

She nodded a third time. “His heartbeat is very, very weak, which is probably why it seems like he has no pulse. On top of that, it seems like it had been shocked out of rhythm by the electricity. It’s very chaotic and…sporadic. I’m sure we would’ve lost him if you hadn’t brought him to me.”

“Well…what can you do about it?” He asked hopefully.

Noelani kept her right hand positioned directly over her brother’s heart, being very careful not to move it. She began moving her left hand, though, raising it further above his chest to allow more space. Then, she began making slow, circular movements with her left hand around her right, similar to an orbit. Occasionally, she would raise her still hand up a little bit before lowering back down, almost as if she were feeling for a sufficient orientation. It was quite an odd, but nonetheless pensive, looking ritual.

“With a bit of time, I’m sure I can get his heartbeat back on track. Sort of like healing it back into rhythm, if you will.” She explained. “Then, I’ll start working on the rest of his body. I’m…not sure how long it’ll take.”

“Man, Lani…it’s amazing how much I’ve missed. It’s almost hard to believe how good you are at this!” Link exclaimed.

Noelani smiled shyly with a minor added blush. She looked just as relieved about the turn of events as he was. “Mom was a very good teacher, you know. I owe everything to her.”

Link reached over to his daughter and rested his hand on her shoulder, causing her to jump a little bit again. The aura around her hands flickered slightly, but they kept their strength. Once she felt her father gently caress the top portion of her back, the auras appeared to get exponentially brighter. Link sighed as he stared at the hypnotizing light that was actively resuscitating his one and only son.

“I think we all owe something to Mipha.”
Confession

The process was taking hours. Granted, due to the rain, there was still no reliable way to tell the time without checking the sheikah slate, but regardless, the hours could clearly be felt dragging by. The most Link had moved that day beyond trying to rescue Murdoch was his trip to Crenel Peak that morning with the sisters, and even so, fatigue had begun slowly creeping up on him during the wait. With each passing moment, though, however long they began to feel, Noelani remained vigilant in her task. Her cloudy eyes almost never moved from where they were supposedly focused, and her hands continued working on her brother’s body.

Murdoch did not wake up after she had successfully restored his proper heartbeat, but his breathing seemed to grow deeper and more relaxed. Once she had felt the correct rhythm pulsing within his chest, she shifted her attention to the other locations on his body where the electric blast had blown away portions of his skin. Likewise, with Murdoch’s life no longer dangling perilously on the edge, she and Link had finally felt their stress diminish. After feeling her brother’s missing fingers, though, she wasn’t sure if she’d be able to restore them completely.

It had been a tough battle…leading up to the restoration of their precious guard captain’s heartbeat. By staying next to her and keeping calm conversation with her, Link had tried to keep her feeling safe and supported during her period of immense pressure. He himself could not find comfort during the ordeal, but nonetheless, he kept a steady composure for his daughter. The last thing she ever needed to feel was urgency. He had failed to keep her from it at first, but it hadn’t been long before he found his way. And now…it was beginning to pay off.

He had not been slow to notice the change in Noelani’s behavior after she announced the recovery of Murdoch’s pulse. Her posture seemed to relax considerably, her breathing seemed to slow down, and her voice seemed to become less…shaky. It was obvious that her quiet, steady tone before had been a well-constructed disguise, designed to mask the true, unstable nature of her emotions at the time. On the other hand, after the change, she seemed a lot more collected, and her tone seemed to reflect a clear sign of gladness and relief. Noelani’s optimism was quite a virtue, and Link had no idea who she inherited it from, but even in the face of the death of a loved one, it had the power to persevere.

At the moment, Link was poised up against the side of the waterbed under the awning, drifting back and forth between sleep and wakefulness. Just a few feet away, out in the ongoing rain, Noelani continued her work on Murdoch in silence. It was hardly noticeable to the average observer, but the young Zora’s eyes were slowly beginning to develop dark circles from her prolonged efforts. Her head bobbed a few times, and each time it did, the aura around her hands would flicker slightly. Even in her youth, lasting concentration like her own was difficult to achieve.

The sky had been growing darker the past hour, and if Link had to guess, he figured the sun was probably creeping toward the western horizon at this point. He only had a small portion of his conscious mind left to make this assumption, however. It had been a momentously eventful day, he had to admit, and the exhaustion was finally beginning to overtake him. Despite having only been earlier that morning, it felt like ages to the hero since he had awoken to his daughters sleeping in the waters of the East Reservoir. It was funny how, at that time…just hours ago…he hadn’t even been aware that he had a son. Now, with everything that had happened…it was just startling. Startling…how much could one’s life could change in such a short time.
He shifted a little bit with a lethargic groan as his ears caught a tiny blip of Noelani’s gentle voice. It sounded on the edge of a whisper, and it most certainly was not being carried enough to be directed at him. He lowered his hands to his sides and pushed himself to a more upright position.

“Hello…” She seemed to mutter. The rain made it difficult for Link to pick up her voice. “…come back to me…”

He sat himself up further as his eyes began to flutter open. He had barely distinguished Noelani’s voice as real, since his mind was teetering on the edge of a dream, and nothing seemed to be real at the time. Now that his daughter’s voice was clear to him, though, he was quick to begin forcing himself awake so he could listen in on any important updates. He rubbed his eyes with his fists.

“Come back to us…we’re here for you…” She cooed supportively. Link squinted in her direction and saw her with her head down and her hands, still glowing, against Murdoch’s cheeks. “Come back, Murdie…”

Link shook his head a few times. “…Murdie…?”

As he struggled to focus his groggy vision, Link began to notice some small movements in Murdoch’s body. His head seemed to roll over a bit on the ground, and as this happened, his arms seemed to come up from his sides. As the guard captain struggled to make use of his weakened muscles, Link saw Noelani reach forward to kindly keep him restrained.

“You must relax for a bit…” She softly informed. “…You’re still in recovery…”

Link was simply blown away by how similar Noelani sounded to Mipha right then. He could recall some small moments here and there when his late wife would tend to his battle wounds, and the most noteworthy feature of those moments was always her motherly concern and polite scolding. She had always treated him like her own child when he was young, and once he had grown up and gotten more serious with her in their relationship, she still seemed to preside over him like his guardian angel. Seeing Noelani, one of Mipha’s actual children, acting this way towards her brother sent the memories rippling through Link’s head.

“Mmm…ugh…” A deeper voice muttered. “Nng…L…Lani?”

Suddenly, upon hearing Murdoch’s actual voice, Link was wide awake. His drifting eyes widened in an instant, and as they did, his vision found its focus. Murdoch had obeyed his sister and stayed laying on the ground with his arms at his sides, but…his eyes were open! And he was speaking again!

“You’re okay.” Noelani hummed. “Everything’s going to be okay.”

Link picked himself up off the ground and jogged quickly to their position, stepping back into the rain in the process. He felt an unimaginable amount of relief, but for Murdoch’s sake, he decided to contain it. For some reason, he didn’t want his son thinking he had caused a major ruckus, even though he had, in reality. Had his pulse been stopped right off the bat, rather than losing its rhythm, he surely wouldn’t have made it. But…perhaps he didn’t need to know that.
“Lani…” The hero breathed between stutters. “I just…I…can’t…thank you enough! I’m amazed you managed to patch him up so…cleanly. You know…your brother owes you his life!”

Noelani kept her empty gaze aimed straight ahead as she shrugged. “You know…was there ever really a choice? There’s no way I would’ve let Murdoch die. Not a chance in Hyrule.”

Murdoch stared directly up at the sky in complete silence. He seemed to have nothing to say regarding his folks’ words. His expression did not change as Link looked down at his body, studying the many former wounds that had gradually been repaired over the last few hours. The guard captain’s eyes did not even blink when they were hit by the raindrops.

“I wish you could see this, Lani.” Link sighed. “You made him look as if nothing had ever happened.”

Noelani bit her lip at her father’s complimentary statement. “Well…that’s not entirely true. Mom’s healing abilities weren’t perfect, you know.”

Link raised an eyebrow as Noelani leaned forward over her brother’s body. She felt around for a few seconds as she tried to locate his arm. Once she found it, she clasped her hand around his wrist and held his hand up for Link to see. Link recognized it as the hand Murdoch used to pull back the bowstring, and on it…were still only three fingers.

“His ring finger was stripped away a lot, but it still had its crucial joints, so I was able to mostly fix it up.” She explained timidly. “His index and middle fingers, though…weren’t even there when you gave him to me, so…there was nothing I could do. I’m afraid he’ll have to live without them.”

“It’s okay…” Murdoch grunted, continually fighting the pain he was still feeling in some places. “…it was my fault anyway.”

Link looked down at him. “Wh…What did you just say?”

The guard captain glanced over at his sister, temporarily ignoring Link’s question. “Lani…thank you for healing me, and…for being there for me when I needed it. I…I am truly in your debt.”

Noelani shook her head. She seemed to be fighting back a tear or two, but the wetness of the rain was making it hard to tell. “No, don’t say that. You’ll never owe me anything.”

There was more that Murdoch wanted to say to her, but he kept it back for the time being. After hearing her choked, emotional response, he turned his gaze back over to Link, who was looking down at him just as intently. Before even hearing him talk, Link could see something different in his eyes. He seemed so much less…cold than he had been during the last day. There was something in this new expression of his that gave Link some unexplained closure. It was…almost reminiscent of his son’s innocent past.

“Father…could you lead my dear sister over to the waterbed, please? I’d like to speak to you privately for a while.” He requested.

Link swallowed as he felt a minor jump in his chest. A lot had just transpired in such a short time, and he wasn’t sure if Murdoch would have something positive or negative to say.
Whatever it was, though, clearly it was major. He’d only have as long as it took to walk Noelani away to prepare himself for what was coming.

He was also quite caught off guard by the request. “Um…sure.” He stood up and reached for Noelani’s shoulder. “Come, Lani. You could probably use some rest anyway.”

When Link’s pruny hand came to rest on her shoulder, Noelani stood up next to him. He gently used his grasp to guide her in an arc around Murdoch’s head so she wouldn’t accidentally step on him. Murdoch followed them with his gaze as they walked slowly toward the awning. Unbeknownst to the pair, as Murdoch watched them walk together, his lips curled into a tiny grin that lasted as long as they were approaching the bed. The action, genuine as it was this time, almost felt weird to him.

With a hand on her long, glistening tailfin, Link assisted Noelani in laying down on the bed. He figured she was capable of doing it on her own, but he helped her anyway as a gesture of courtesy, especially considering the hard work she had put into saving her brother. She found the moment too precious to pass up, even though she also knew she could do things like this herself. She was essentially a young woman, well into her independent years, but she still looked forward to every time Link would baby her like the toddler she used to be…before Calamity Ganon sabotaged her childhood. She only hoped the future ahead would be filled with moments like this one.

It was only brief, however, as Link removed his hand from underneath her head after laying her down. Her eyes stared straight upwards through the ceiling of the awning, but Link knew that…in her mind…she was staring right at him. He saw the smile on her face, and he thought that, perhaps, she could see the one on his as well…in a way.

He sighed. “They’ve always called me the hero, you know. But…compared to you…I feel like I should be nothing.” He saw Noelani’s expression change during his short pause. “You give me the same inspiration your mother always did. If I were to share in your blindness…I probably wouldn’t be able to tell you apart from Mipha.”

There was nothing else he wanted to say on the matter. He didn’t consider himself to be a wizard of words, but for his most cherished beings in Hyrule, he made it an obligation to properly express how they made him feel. After what he put them through the last century, they deserved the absolute best of his affection. He would ensure they’d never have to suffer again.

He turned around and walked quietly out from the awning, leaving his daughter to herself per Murdoch’s request. Stepping back into the rain felt no different than being dry anymore, he found. If he spent any more time lingering around Zora’s Domain in the condition it was currently in, he felt like he’d probably turn into a Zora himself. It was impossible to not be hydrated in such unrelenting rain.

Murdoch was staring into the sky again when Link made his way over to him. Approaching his son like this felt to Link like the march of the century…literally speaking. He had no idea what Murdoch had to say, and he had no idea how he was going to say it. More importantly, he had no idea what the guard captain was feeling after having his life saved. He figured, though, that the best way to prepare himself was to go in expecting the worst.
“…I’m here.” He declared softly. He once again got down and sat cross-legged on the platform next to Murdoch, whose head turned upon hearing the statement.

“Ah, Father. Is Noelani faring well?” He began. Link was intrigued that Murdoch would choose to begin a conversation with a question about someone else, especially someone he was supposedly upset with.

“She’s doing great.” Link answered calmly. “Surprisingly so. She can handle trauma pretty well.”

“That’s good to hear. I’m relieved to have not caused her too much trouble.”

Link raised an eyebrow. “But…weren’t you unhappy with her? I thought you felt like she and Mira had betrayed your trust.”

Referencing the past seemed to make Murdoch pause for a moment. A saddened expression seemed to form on his face. It was something Link could not remember ever seeing on the Zora’s face before. He realized, then, that this conversation would be taking a much…different turn. A much better one, in fact.

“You see…that’s what I wanted to talk to you about.” Murdoch explained sheepishly…another first for him, as far as Link could tell. “I… I wanted to apologize.”

Despite having seen it coming, Link felt stunned as he heard the words escape his son’s mouth. As desperate as he was for this moment, he still found it to be…a little sudden, to say the least, especially after Murdoch’s insistence on…resistance. Having a near-death experience was one thing, but it was interesting to think that his mindset could’ve changed so quickly after a single incident. Perhaps it was the electricity, he thought.

“…I see.” Link whispered.

Murdoch took his father’s lackluster response as an invitation to keep going. “Yes, I, um… I…experienced something up there earlier with…with that bow, you see. I don’t think I’ll ever forget it.”

Link leaned forward a bit, the suspense nipping at his heels. “And…what?”

Murdoch still didn’t answer for a few more seconds. It seemed almost like he was taking a moment to comprehend what he himself had experienced before sharing the details with his father. His gaze appeared to go absent during the time he was reminiscing on the event. His eyes locked right back onto Link, though, just before he finished his sentence.

“And…I think she answered me.”
Link’s eyes widened. He put his folded hands back up to his mouth and leaned back to his previous position. Such a twist…but how could he interpret it? Had Mipha truly spoken to Murdoch from beyond, the way he claimed? If that really were the case, would that mean her spirit was still present in the Divine Beast?

“Mipha…spoke to you?” He gasped. “Wh…What did she say?”

“I’m…not really sure. It sounded less like words I could understand, and more like…white noise. But somehow, I could distinguish her voice, and…before I blacked out after the blast…I felt like I had my eyes opened.” He stared upwards even more blankly than before, clearly lost in thought on what had just happened to him that evening. “I know that sounds a little ironic, but…”

“No, no, I get what you mean.” Link replied, cutting off his awkward babble at the end. “So…were you aware of the danger you had put yourself in?”

He noticed a sunken look appear on Murdoch’s face, which only served to build a bit of dread within him. Failing to consider the consequences of his bold attack would’ve indicated pride and stubborn confidence, which Link decided he could deal with in a son that was going through his young adult years. Understanding those consequences, however, and choosing to undergo the attack anyway, was a far more frightening possibility, because it was a sign of a much deeper problem. It was beginning to look clear which scenario he was facing.

“There’s no way to put this nicely, Father, but…” He closed his eyes. “…yes, I knew I was unlikely to survive the attack. I might’ve been counting on that a little. I guess Mother just…wouldn’t let it happen, though.”

Link let out a long breath and buried his face in his hands. If Mipha could really communicate with the living somehow, he was really wishing she could give him some parenting advice from beyond the grave. He certainly didn’t expect suicide therapy to be on his parental itinerary.

“Murdoch…why?” The hero choked on the words as he worked to hold back his negative emotions. “Why would you try to put us all through that? Did you not see how much we care about you?”

The guard captain started to lift his arms, but he lowered them back to the ground after remembering Noelani’s orders. He sighed guiltily. “I…I…It’s just so complicated…”

“I’m listening. I’ve always been listening, and I’ll listen again. Take all the time you need.” Link declared bluntly. Even after talking like this for a couple minutes, he was still blown away by Murdoch’s sudden weakness and uncertainty. He was stuttering more often, and he was using much less regal vocabulary.

“I don’t even know where to begin…” The defeated captain sighed as he tried to reset his brain to a point where he could lay out his confession. It was a perfect storm of circumstances that had led to his condition there, on the ground, in the rain. After an awkward moment of thought, he decided, perhaps, that starting at the very beginning would be the best choice.

Link sat back a little further as Murdoch began what would potentially be a very long
monologue. This was where the sparks would finally fly between them, they both hoped.

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He began speaking, using an intro Link had not expected.

“Well, you see…I loved my childhood. I remember Mother telling me one day that you both would always work to make sure our lives were as happy and fulfilling as possible, and every day since, I’d think about how good of a job you both were doing. We always had the best meals together…my sisters and I had the best laughs…and, well…you always gave us so much attention. You made it so obvious how much you loved us, and the feeling was…just so good. I have some subordinates today who’ve had some more distant parents, and it always makes me think about how lucky I was to have you and Mother as my own.”

Link could see how much Murdoch wanted to use hand gestures as he spoke, but the whole time, he was clearly trying to keep himself restrained as Noelani had suggested. It was a moving explanation, and it had only just begun. He knew he was going to be a complete sucker for it by the end. His concern remained, though, for how the story would somehow lead to an attempted suicide.

Murdoch continued. “Calamity Ganon had always been a looming threat at the time, but I and my sisters never really understood it entirely. We certainly understood the reason behind your countless missions, as Mother would always be there to explain it to us. We knew you were the Hylian princess’s chosen knight, and we knew you had some kind of important role with that special sword on your back.”

Link nodded in quiet understanding after taking a quick glance at his sword, which was still settled in the scabbard on his back. He had always begun to resent that sword…more and more with each passing day. Throughout the many legends of the mythical hero, going back hundreds of thousands of years, no one ever seemed to ask the chosen one whether or not they wanted to take on the lifetime burden…and unfortunately, his life was apparently no exception. It was tough to think that he owed his wife and his family to that sword, because without it, he could’ve lived much happier with them. Was it just…the hero’s curse?

Murdoch continued again with little to no pause. “The thing is…and this is a lot to admit, but…I looked up to you a lot. Probably with every fiber of my being, in fact. I wanted to be like you in every way, and I often showed it by trying to impress you with various things. I still remember some funny ones…”

“I remember you swallowed a frog one time.” Link cut in. “You somehow managed to hack it back up later after using your stomach to hide it from us.”

Murdoch looked over at him with a small smirk. “Really? I don’t remember that one.”

Link smirked back. “Don’t worry, Murdoch. I’ll remember for you.”

Murdoch chuckled a bit, a sound which resonated pleasantly in Link’s ears. They may
have been sharing a solemn moment, but hearing a bit of happiness from his son was enough to make his day. Murdoch’s laughter had been filling his memories lately, and in turn, it filled him with grief each time when he returned to reality and remembered how his son currently was in contrast. Like this, though, he could feel more like there was still a chance for the past to return in glory.

Allowing seriousness to return to the moment, Murdoch straightened his face and proceeded. “The point of that is, despite knowing why you were leaving and where you were going, I still never wanted you to leave. Mother taught us not to fret whenever you’d depart, because, according to her, you wouldn’t want to be distracted thinking sadly about us during your absence. Somehow, though, I could never shake the feeling that she was fretting on the inside…just as much as me…”

Link thought a bit on that statement. Now, thinking back a hundred years later, it was easy to see the supposed truth in that last bit. Back then, however, it probably would’ve come as a bit of a surprise. It wasn’t that he ever doubted the love she had for him, but he just…never would’ve guessed his missions could put her through so much. He found it stunning, then, how much strength she must’ve had to keep herself reliably composed…for their family’s sake…while he was gone.

“Anyway…” Murdoch continued. “…believe it or not, I loved you and Mother. I loved my sisters. I loved our family…more than I can even put into words. And so…when the word finally spilled to us that Mother was a Champion…a protector of Hyrule just like you……I just…I couldn’t handle it. I felt like my world was going to fall apart. I felt like Calamity Ganon was going to pull you both under and leave nothing behind for me, Mira, and Lani. And I guess…I was sort of right.”

The hero was speechless. He had an immediate urge to say something in response to his son’s heartbreaking words, but…nothing was coming to mind. He didn’t know how to express his shared grief for the tragedy. Leaving behind his family to take on the Calamity was his biggest regret, doomed to plague his mind to the grave, and he wished deeply for a way to properly let Murdoch know that. What he got instead was one pathetic utterance.

“…Oh…”

“The thing is, I thought you had had something to do with Mother’s role as the pilot of the Divine Beast. I had known my whole short life that you were an esteemed warrior, destined to combat the apocalypse, but…I always thought Mother was just…a princess, and nothing more. I had the security of knowing that…at least…if we would have to suffer through your death in the Great Calamity, we’d have her to help us stay together. When we discovered that she would be playing an equally important role in everything, my first assumption was that you had somehow coaxed her into it. After all…husband and wife were supposed to do everything together…” Murdoch explained, trailing off in his last sentences.

“Listen, I want you to know that I never…”

“Yes, I know, Father. After hearing Mother’s voice in the lake earlier, I understood everything. She was appointed for the job by the royal council, and she accepted the task by her own free will. It happened before we were born, too.”

“It happened while she was pregnant with the eggs, in fact.” Link added with a point of his finger. “Luckily it wasn’t noticeable to Zelda at the time she dropped by, or the royal council
would’ve possibly selected a different candidate.”

“Is that so?” Murdoch hummed. “Interesting…”

“Mipha had wanted a family from the moment we got married.” Link explained. “She knew in her gut that the royal council would select her as the Zora Champion, so she came to me about her wish before they could get the chance to consult her. We wanted to have some time with children like you to love…before things could get complicated.”

Even with his rise in extroverted behavior since arriving at the Domain, Link noticed he was being rather talkative at this point. It was quite unlike him to be sharing such intimate details on the past. Now was an interesting time, though, he had to admit, and Murdoch deserved to know every bit of information Link could muster. Every bit, of course, that wasn’t…inappropriate to share.

“I see.” Murdoch uttered. “And…how do you remember all this? The Shrine didn’t completely wipe all your memories?”

“Well, it did, but Mira and Lani have been helping me to remember many things. I’m also remembering much more as I spend time with you in general. Your mother was a big part of my life, you know.” Link stated.

“I suppose that makes sense.” Murdoch had left quite a bit of information untouched as of yet, so with the conclusion of that tangent, he geared up to get the subject back on track. His father still needed to know why he had nearly taken his own life. There wasn’t too much more to explain, anyway.

He continued. “So…after Muzu had to take over caring for us, I grew up thinking you and your hero role were responsible for Mother’s involvement in the Calamity.” He stopped to hold his breath for a moment before letting it out in a long sigh. “I was so hurt by the loss of you both…and…I just didn’t know how to deal with it. I couldn’t sleep at night, but…I never told anyone. Mira and Lani were very open with their grief, but I kept it all in. Eventually…” He paused a second time. “…I put the two together, and I guess…I just…directed my emotions at you. After all…it seemed to me like Mother’s death was your fault, and Muzu was seconding that assumption pretty adamantly. I suppose…I felt like you had betrayed our family.”

The information came at Link like a tidal wave. Just as Murdoch had had his eyes opened by Mipha’s spirit on the lake, Link was experiencing an epiphany of understanding as his son was finally able to come clean about his grievances in a calm, collected manner. It seemed that, for once, the two of them were on the same page. It only took a nearly lethal electric discharge to reach that point. He still didn’t seem like he was finished, though, so Link remained silent while he continued.

“Jump to a couple weeks ago, and obviously my sorrow hadn’t diminished. I had moved on with my life…at least mostly…with my acquisition of the captain’s position and my brief courtship with a few lovely Zoras over the years, but…I was never able to rid myself of the trauma from losing my parents. I retained the anger I had developed at you for everything that had happened, and when evidence started mounting that you were still alive and would be arriving at the Domain soon, I was…not willing to see you. Somehow, you being still alive was more upsetting to me than if you had simply been killed in the Calamity along with Mother.”
Link jumped in with a query. “So…what made you decide to take on the Divine Beast? Was the thought of having to face me after everything just…too gruesome?”

“Well…in a way,” Murdoch answered. “But mostly…I guess…it was to set an example…if that makes sense.” He stared sheepishly at Link, who looked back at him with a bit of confusion. “Shortly after the Divine Beast mysteriously awoke a couple weeks ago, and I started hearing of the possibility of your return, I planned to make an attack after you got here. I knew that…after you arrived…it would only be a matter of time before you went seeking me out, so I planned to use the Divine Beast as…sort of…a lesson to you, if you will. I wanted to show what it really meant to put your family before yourself, and to be honest…I felt like it would be the only way to finally be at peace. I wanted to see Mother again.”

“I…I, uh…I…wow.” Link stuttered stupidly. “I just…I had…no idea…”

“It’s okay, Father.” Murdoch gently cut him off. “Even after death, Mother apparently never stopped protecting me. She helped me see things the right way, and now…I feel such great relief. I only wish she had come to me sooner. You know…to keep me from developing those bad emotions.”

Link shook off his trance. “You know what that means?”

“What?”

“It means your mother’s spirit must still be tied to Vah Ruta. She was only able to reach out to you while you were in its vicinity.” Link explained.

“You think so?”

Just then, Vah Ruta released another bloodcurdling roar into the atmosphere, causing the two of them to jump and chilling them to the bone. They looked off in the direction of the Divine Beast and saw its trunk raised in the air once again, proclaiming its lamentation to the heavens above. Each recurring blast from the mighty mechanical creature seemed louder than the last. They both wondered, internally, whether there was something symbolized in the timing of that roar.

Murdoch turned back to Link. “Well…now you know just about everything. That’s the best way I could describe it to you.”

Link looked back at him with a blank expression. “Yeah…I suppose so.”

“I figure I should take this opportunity to apologize again. I’m…truly sorry for everything I put you through today. I was…very…very misguided, and luckily, I see that now.” Finally defying his sister’s order, Murdoch lifted his arm up to rest his hand on his father’s shoulder. “The truth is…I’m so glad you’re finally home. I only got that way in the first place because of how grief-stricken I was that I had lost you. I do still love you, Father.”

Still without words, Link leaned down and tenderly hugged his now-humbled son. He still managed to resist the tears, as only he could, despite their nagging influence on his sinuses. Although it was quite delayed, this moment was the one he could finally mark as his true reunion.
with Murdoch. He was an authoritative and somewhat intimidating character when crossed, but deep inside, he still had pieces of the innocent child that had fallen crazy for his father back in the good old days. With time, the two of them could hopefully recover their relationship to its fullest caliber, and nothing would seem out of place from their glorious past.

The two of them felt wonderfully rejuvenated after separating from each other. They shared satisfied smiles that, together, contrasted the melancholic hell that enveloped the Eastern Reservoir. Things would be different now, they could tell.

“So…was there anything I missed? Anything you were still curious to know?” Murdoch asked.

Link rubbed his chin. “Yes, actually, there was one thing that had confused me since earlier today.”

“Yes?”

“Well, it’s a couple things in one, actually. How did you know about the Shrine of Resurrection? And also, what ‘evidence,’ as you said, was predicting my return? My arrival came as a surprise to the entire Domain, so I’m just confused as to how you knew about it weeks before I got here. I would’ve still been in hibernation at that time.”

Murdoch did not even hesitate when giving his answer. It was an answer that struck Link completely off guard, and it only raised his confusion even more.

“It was Mira. Mira was the evidence.” He stated bluntly.

Link raised an eyebrow upon hearing him. “Um…I’m sorry…did you say Mira?”

“Indeed. Mira had been talking a lot about your return in the years leading up to it actually happening.” Murdoch replied. “I just couldn’t ignore it. I knew it would happen soon once the Divine Beasts reactivated.”

“Wait, so…Mira knew I’d come back? And that much ahead of time?” Link stammered.

Murdoch nodded his head, causing Link to sit back and ponder curiously for a moment. “Of course she did. Mira never truly believed you had died in the Calamity. I mean…obviously she was just as upset as the rest of us when you didn’t come back, but she knew it was because you were either lost or locked away somewhere. We all thought she was just experiencing denial from her grief, but she strangely seemed to acknowledge Mother’s death normally. With you, however, she always wanted to share her faith that, one day, you’d return. Because of that, I had to be prepared as well.”

For the umpteenth time since his arrival, Link thought he had learned every important detail about his children, and also for the umpteenth time, he was wrong. At the rate he was going, he could expect to be learning new things about them until the day he died. He had to figure, though…wasn’t that part of the adventure of being a parent? The only difference was in the magnitude of the things he was learning.

“But…how? How did she know about the Shrine of Resurrection? How did she know I would come back? How…” He blabbed haphazardly before Murdoch cut him off.
“It’s her mind.” The Zora whispered.

Link stopped in his tracks. “Wha…Her mind? What do you mean?”

“Well, let’s put it this way.” Murdoch proposed. “Has Mira ever finished a sentence for you? Or answered a question you were thinking about, but never asked? Did she ever seem to know what you were thinking to yourself, almost as if you shared the same brain?”

Link’s jaw dropped slightly as his mind quickly clicked to the countless moments in which that had happened over the last couple days. Exactly as Murdoch had described, there had been multiple recent occasions of Mira answering his unasked questions, reading his idle thoughts, and watching his personal memories like a home movie. He always found it to be a little weird, but he never would’ve guessed her tendencies would hold such significance.

“Actually, yes, that has happened a lot…” He mumbled.

“Exactly.” Murdoch smirked. “It’s her mind. I’ve clearly inherited your hero’s instinct, and because of it, I’m probably one of the most skilled warriors in all of Hyrule. Noelani was gifted with Mother’s sacred healing ability, making her the true carrier of her royal legacy. But Mira…well, Mira’s something else. Mira’s connected to you and Mother on a level I don’t think any of us can really comprehend.”

“Is that so…” Link muttered, trailing off pensively. “Do...Do you think she’s aware of it?”

Murdoch shook his head. “I doubt it. She always chalks her weird predictions up as ‘just a hunch.’ She’s been a bit jealous of Noelani’s healing power throughout the past, but to be honest, I think her abilities are just as remarkable. When you leave to continue your quest later, she’ll probably know where you are every step of the way…and not even realize it. I could only imagine what she’d be like if she knew what she could do.”

“You’re right…” Link gasped. “…That’s amazing.”

Murdoch chuckled softly. “You should talk to her about that sometime. I think she’d have a lot to gain from it.”

“Sounds like a plan.” Link responded with a small grin.

With that, Murdoch began slowly picking himself up off the ground, grimacing as he did so. He put his shaky arms beneath him for support as he tried with much effort to get himself standing for the first time after the incident. Link, surprised by Murdoch’s sudden attempt, reached forward and tried to keep him restrained.

“Whoa, whoa, you need to stay laying down! Remember what Lani said!” He warned.

“Ah, to hell with that.” Murdoch defiantly jabbed as he worked to get his knees under him. “This Zora needs to move again. I feel fine anyway, and the puddle I was laying in was getting
kind of annoying.”

“Wait…puddle?” Link raised an eyebrow in suspicion. “We didn’t lay you in a puddle…”

It was then that he glanced down at the platform on which he had been kneeling…and was shocked at what he saw. The chiseled ground all throughout the dock, including the area surrounding the awning, was about a centimeter underwater. The Reservoir’s rippling surface seemed to flow straight inwards from the Divine Beast, no longer impeded by the raised edge of the platform. By being as soaked as he already was from the rain, coupled with his distracting conversation with Murdoch, Link must’ve completely failed to notice the growing phenomenon happening just beneath him.

“Oh no…” He groaned. “This is getting out of hand…”

Murdoch wobbled for a moment after standing up, but he had no trouble quickly regaining his balance. He followed Link’s gaze to the stone ground beneath them, and his expression grew just as concerned. The gravity of the situation was beginning to reach them.

“At the rate this is going, the Reservoir dam will be overflowing by sundown!” Murdoch announced. “What are we going to do?”

Amidst of flurry of thoughts running through his head, Link turned to the awning to make sure Noelani was okay. The water, although reaching the bed she was on, was not high enough to disturb her in any way. By the looks of it, she was fully asleep, which, considering the violent roar recently emitted by the Divine Beast, was an impressive feat. One important thing he did notice, though, was the underside of the bed, which was where Mira and Noelani kept their headpieces. Without giving a response to Murdoch’s question, he rushed over to the awning to rescue the precious items as the water proceeded to lap at the floor of the resting area.

Careful not to awaken his sleeping daughter, Link got on his hands and knees in the shallow plane of water. Murdoch watched from behind as he felt around under the bed for a moment before extracting the glittery, historic objects and holding them up. They dripped with a little bit of rainwater, but it wasn’t anything that couldn’t quickly be wiped off. Had they been forgotten, they likely would’ve been washed away in Vah Ruta’s storm.

He carefully set them on the small shelf next to the banister, where Mipha’s old wine glasses were kept. They wouldn’t be able to stay there forever, but at least on a raised surface like that, they weren’t going to get claimed by the Divine Beast. He stepped back out from under the awning, taking care not to make large splashes with his footsteps around Noelani.

“By the way…” He mentioned, facing Murdoch. “…what ever happened to your headpiece? The princely one with the feather? Dento must’ve made one for you too.”

“I keep it in my grandfather’s chamber. I still wear it sometimes.” He answered absently. He subsequently shook his head. “But that doesn’t matter right now. How are we going to deal with this water? I can’t risk shooting another shock arrow at Vah Ruta, and you can’t climb waterfalls without your armor!”

“You’re right.” Link responded. He paused for a moment. “Wait…did you say armor?
What armor?”

“The Zora armor that Mother made for you! You wore it on your wedding day, right? It’s a Zora tradition!” Murdoch urgently informed.

Link put a hand on his head, the stress of a pressurized situation returning to him after a pleasant and relaxing conversation. “Th…The Zora armor lets me climb waterfalls? Seriously?”

“Did Mother never tell you that?”

“Well, I don’t know! Maybe? I didn’t remember any of that!”

Murdoch pointed a finger toward the stairs of the platform. “You need to hurry down there and retrieve that armor. Time is of the essence. I’ll remain up here and make sure Lani stays okay. Mother’s calling out to us, and it’s finally time we answer her…the right way.”

Link nodded his head once, and he obeyed his newly reformed son by making a break for the stairs. Once he got halfway down, he planned to jump over the banister and deploy his glider on the way to the Domain. He had spent a great deal of time reconnecting with his long-lost family after a terrible century of isolation, but now, he was being beckoned by the quest he had set out for in the first place. He had waited way too long with the assumption that the Divine Beast would hold out, and now his shenanigans would need to stop if he wanted to save his family’s home.

The loose ends with his son had finally been tied, and now, it was time for a larger challenge. Murdoch was right. It was time to avenge Mipha.
Consecration

A hundred years was a long time to be out of the loop. It was a long time to be stored away, separate from the universe, in a dreamlike state while the land he knew as home wasted away under Ganon’s influence. It was a long time to leave Mira, Noelani, and Murdoch without a father. It was a long time to leave Zora’s Domain in fear of an infected machine…that was supposed to be their protector. It was a long time, in general, to be absent.

However, a hundred years was also a long time for that same infected machine to lay dormant while the impending return of the Calamity sat locked in Hyrule Castle. Because of this, Link figured, rather foolishly, that the thing would at least be able to hold off its catastrophic flood powers for a few more days…until he could sort out some pressing personal matters. After all, a hundred years was a long time, and Zora’s Domain had turned out to house some serious baggage concerning his past. Reuniting with his precious descendants did not seem like much to ask for, but, quite frankly…Vah Ruta did not answer to the will of mortals.

After allowing the Divine Beast too much time to fill the Eastern Reservoir, Link and Murdoch had realized the severity of the threat to the Zoras and the entire Lanayru Bay. No farther could the water levels rise, or the entire ancient legacy of the Zoras would be lost to the roaring tides. The days they had been allotted were reduced to a couple hours, and so, time could not be wasted reaching the king’s chamber on foot. Therefore, as Link’s scattered thoughts ran through the potentially disastrous events of the future, he glided along freely through the air on his way back to the grand staircase.

It wasn’t until he landed on the halfway point of the connecting bridge, unfortunately, that he realized he didn’t have a fast way back up the dam. Gliding down to the Domain was easy, but now that he was landing near the body of the Domain itself, he would have to make another lengthy trek across the bridge and up the stairs to return to the Reservoir. Sidon would certainly have to make the trip as well, since Link would need an escort to move him quickly through the lake, and Murdoch was technically still in recovery. Had they the time for such a route, with Vah Ruta rapidly closing in on the entire valley?

He was about to get some crucial answers, while also hopefully obtaining his century-old Zora armor from either Sidon or King Dorephan. It definitely would’ve been a useful thing to have sooner.

He barreled his way along the bridge and up the slippery steps of his father-in-law’s chamber the moment his feet touched the ground. He passed by the two guards that stood resolutely at the sides of the staircase’s base, and as usual, they paid him no mind. It seemed almost spooky that they, along with the rest of the Zoras in the Domain, weren’t yet aware of the condition of the East Reservoir. He figured that, hopefully, they wouldn’t ever have to find out.

After rushing up the rain-blanketed stairs, slipping a few times in the process, Link stumbled haphazardly into King Dorephan’s chamber. True to his expectations, Mira and Prince Sidon were standing in there alongside their elder. Their backs were turned to Link, but as soon as his spongey footsteps could be heard summing the stairs, they turned around to look at him. Mira reacted swiftly to his presence, with a question he completely expected.
“Dad!” She gasped. “M…Murdoch’s okay…right?”

He wasted no time in nodding his head. “Yes, he is. Lani said tha…”

“Yes! Yes yes yes yes yes!” She beamed, cutting Link off abruptly. She looked over at Sidon. “See, Uncle, I told you he’d be okay! D’oh…I’m so glad!”

Link managed a small smile. A lot was at stake at the moment, but seeing such radiant happiness coming from one of his children, considering the way things had been, was always a pleasant experience. “Alright, Mira, calm down a bit.”

King Dorephan chuckled wholesomely at his granddaughter’s gleeful outburst. The room seemed to quiver just slightly from the booming power of the king’s laugh, despite its relaxed nature. He narrowed his gaze to Link, his smile still showing.

“By the way, I am surprised to hear you speaking, Link!” He bellowed in his deep voice. “I can’t remember the last time I heard that lively voice of yours!”

“I’d say…Mira and her siblings helped break me out of my silence a bit.” Link replied with a small shrug. “I’ll admit…they’ve helped separate me from the pressures of venturing to revive Hyrule.” The king seemed satisfied with this answer, but he followed up with another question.

“Also…why did you take off on us yesterday? You had me believing you had departed in our hour of need!” He queried with a bit of concern.

Link glanced absently to the side. “I was just confused. Muzu wasn’t being very welcoming, and I…guess I didn’t know what I had done wrong. Since then, I’ve just been trying to recover my memories of the Domain after Mira and Lani addressed me at the inn.”

The king nodded slowly in acknowledgement, but his face seemed to show something more. A mixture of things, perhaps. “That’s perfectly understandable, Link, but…you really had some of us worried. Sidon and I were beginning to wonder if you had possibly abandoned any plans to help us appease Vah Ruta.”

“The thought never crossed my mind.” Link assured. “In fact, with Mira, Lani, and Murdoch having helped me with my memories, my insistence on saving this Domain is as strong as ever. I now know it as my home, and I would never sit by and watch it flood under Vah Ruta’s might.”

King Dorephan seemed greatly pleased with Link’s promise, but his worry rightfully remained. Nonetheless, a large deal had transpired in the time since their last meeting, and now, the conditions of their consultation were much more desirable. Now that they were on the same page, proper coordinating could be done to ensure the Divine Beast’s defeat and the safety of the Zora people. Murdoch’s eager plunge into the lake was certainly a notable attempt, but it was executed in all the wrong ways…and for all the wrong reasons. With Link and Sidon working together, though, the king found victory to be well within reach. It was better late than never.

He nodded his head and folded his large, clammy hands together. “That is good to hear, Link. I am ever grateful that my daughter was able to find a spouse like you.”

Link genuinely wanted to smile a second time after that compliment was handed, but in
reality, the reminder of Mipha’s passing just…didn’t feel too good. Of course, once the entire matter of Calamity Ganon and the Divine Beasts was handled, he would be able to return to his offspring and continue living in Zora’s Domain the way he had intended a hundred years before. Without Mipha, though…it just wouldn’t feel the same. There would always be that void to fill…nagging as ever.

Wait…what was he thinking? Now was not the time for this.

“So, uh…I came down here from the Reservoir platform to warn you guys.” He declared, leaving the king’s compliment awkwardly hanging. “The lake is about to flood.”

An atmosphere of shock filled the chamber at Link’s announcement as all three recipients of the information reacted differently. Mira made a sharp gasp while bringing her hand up to her mouth. Prince Sidon’s eyes widened in concern and…what seemed to be…a miniscule amount of surprise. The king’s response was the least external, as his only visible motions were the closing of his eyes and the leaning back of his gargantuan body in his throne.

“So it is, I see.” He mumbled solemnly.

“Yes.” Link continued with a static expression. “Shortly after Murdoch’s revival, we discovered water flowing above the edge of the platform. As we speak, it is dripping down the first few steps of the dam. Murdoch estimates our remaining time at…a few hours, at best.”

“I was afraid of this.” Prince Sidon added with a shake of his head. “Therefore…I am rather surprised I was not able to notice this trend earlier on the lake. Perhaps…I was merely distracted by the dire condition of my nephew.”

“An understandable mistake, my son.” The king assured. He continued to look directly at Link with further intent. “Now, Link, regarding this looming threat…there was something I meant to give you yesterday before you left my quarters…”

“My ceremonial armor, correct? The one made for me by Mipha?” Link guessed, cutting the king off.

Rather than getting annoyed, the king merely smirked. “Indeed. You’ve been catching up on your memories quite well, I assume?”

“Murdoch helped me remember. It’s actually what I came back down here for.” Link quickly explained.

Sidon stepped around behind his father’s throne for a moment, disappearing from sight as he did so. Link and Mira continued to stand side by side before the king, their tiny frames dwarfed by his in the confining chamber. There was a certain atmosphere to the moment…given the rise of their current circumstances…but Link couldn’t really describe it. Something mutually eerie could be felt in the silence they shared.

With the way Mira was staring at him, though, he had a feeling she was having similar thoughts, and she probably had a better adjective to use.
Regardless, it wasn’t long before Sidon reappeared with what could obviously be seen as Link’s custom armor. Its glittery ornaments jingled as the prince carried it over to him. The main structure of it was woven with a pliable, waterproof material that reflected a surprising amount of light coming at it. The ensemble was equipped with a sturdy pair of shiny shoulder pads, able to deflect even the sharpest of arrows, he figured. A thin chain, designed to securely wrap around the shoulder and down to his hip, was included with the set, and it could be seen glinting in his eye with a polished symbol of Nayru...exactly like the one worn on Mipha’s and the twins’ headpieces. Its entire backside was reinforced with a layer of brownish scales, stitched together in a neat pattern with organized overlaps.

“Wow…” He uttered stupidly as Sidon held the set out to him. Mira smirked at the sight of her mother’s expert handiwork.

“Since us Zora cannot handle electricity, as you saw with your son, our hope was that you would use Mipha’s armor to ascend Vah Ruta’s waterfalls and charge its energy outlets with shock arrows.” The king explained. “We see no other way to deal with this Beast.”

“Muzu sure had an idea…” Mira mumbled irritably. No one seemed to hear her.

As Link carefully took the armor and began looking through its pieces, Prince Sidon addressed him on some of its properties.

“That rhomboidal neckpiece with the aquamarines on its sides is actually a sealed locket.” He informed with a very serious look on his face. “I ask that you please be extremely careful with it, for it contains the last existing scale of my sister.”

Link’s eyes widened as he was overwhelmed with amazement. “Really? One of Mipha’s scales is in here?”

The prince nodded his head and sighed. “Indeed. Whenever a Zora princess crafts armor for her chosen husband, she always includes one of her own scales in the ensemble as a protective offering to the one she loves. It’s been a tradition of our people for many generations.”

Link was suddenly overcome with an enchanting…but somehow melancholic…feeling as he held the treasure in his hands. Frankly, he had absolutely no clue how such an armor set, with its simple, worldly materials, could allow a Hylian like him to ascend waterfalls like a Zora. It felt almost as if...some kind of magic had to be involved. What mattered more to him, though, was the scale supposedly contained within the shiny neckpiece. It was in perfect condition, along with the rest of the ensemble, which was incredible, given its age. On the other hand, being that the precious armor contained a piece of Mipha herself, perhaps Sidon and the king had felt obligated to keep it all as wear-free as possible.

He felt a strong urge to put the armor on right away and see how it fit after a long century in isolation. His body hadn’t changed much, to be honest, so he didn’t actually expect it to fit poorly at all. Regardless, he was also eager to once again bear the scale of Mipha around his neck. He felt like doing so would help him feel more closure...

…the closure of being able to fight by his wife’s side once more.
He was stopped from doing so, however, as Prince Sidon took a step forward and cleared his throat.

“Um…Link, there’s actually one more thing we’d like to give you.” He declared.

Link looked up from the neckpiece at which he was staring. He settled his gaze on the prince without a word to reply.

Prince Sidon held up his hand with a fully extended arm, presenting something to Link. It was something small, judging by the intricate curling of his fingers. Link took a couple steps forward and examined the prince’s hand, and as he did so, the object held within became clearer to see. Once he determined what it was, he immediately recognized it.

“It’s your wedding ring.” Prince Sidon stated in a hushed voice. “The proof of our brotherhood. My father and I recovered it after the Great Calamity.”

For the first time in the last twenty-four hours, Link was speechless. He remembered having briefly lamented over the loss of his wedding ring the day before, shortly after recovering the memory of his marriage to Mipha. Now, it was sitting right here before him, in the palm of Sidon’s outstretched hand. Like the necklace on his armor containing Mipha’s scale, the ring seemed polished beautifully, its smooth, gold finish reflecting the blue light of the chamber into Link’s eyes.

He took a few slow steps forward, staring hypnotically at his misplaced ring. The gaze of everyone else in the room remained on him as he moved gradually toward his reunion with one of his most precious belongings. The moment, to him, was on par with the wish-granting powers of the Triforce. It almost seemed too good to be true.

“How did you get this…” He uttered, his eyes still fixed on the object.

“Apparently, it was lost in a grassy meadow not too far from Kakariko Village on the day of the Calamity.” The prince explained solemnly. “Neither my father nor I have ever been near that location, so I don’t know how difficult it would’ve been to find it.”

Link had not yet recovered the memory of his defeat in the Great Calamity, so he also could not picture the location. It made sense that he’d lose his ring in the heat of battle…of all things…especially while fending off the likes of Ganon. However, something immediately struck him as strange upon hearing the prince’s explanation.

“Wait…if you’ve never been there…” He looked up at Sidon. “…how did you recover my ring?”

Prince Sidon smiled a little, which caught Link by surprise. “Princess Zelda returned it to us.”

Link stopped everything in his head and blinked a few times. “Er…what?”

Before speaking, Sidon grabbed Link’s wrist with his free hand, held it out, and dropped the ring into his palm. Link aptly took the ring in his other hand and steadily slipped it onto his finger. The metal was cold, but it didn’t take long to reheat to his body temperature. It felt…right.
“She showed up to my father’s chamber the night after the disaster with two sheikah men by her side.” The prince began. “She wore her same flowing, white dress, but at that point, it had looked deeply tattered and dirty. Mira, Lani, and Murdoch were all there too, along with Muzu, as he and my father were trying to figure out who was going to care for your little ones after the loss of you and my sister.”

“Did she say anything about me?” Link asked curiously.

The prince shook his head with closed eyes. “She only said two sentences the entire time she was in our presence. As she presented the ring to my father and prepared to make her departure, she said…’I’m sorry. I will try to make things right.’” He paused with an intensely pensive look on his face. “When she turned around and began to descend the grand staircase, we all saw your sword fastened to her back. It looked…beaten and rusty.”

Link glanced over at Mira as he tried to imagine that moment from her perspective. Being visited by the Hylian princess, after both your parents didn’t make it home…well, it must’ve been pretty hard to endure. It would’ve been the equivalent of a pair of royal knights showing up at your doorstep with the folded flag of the royal family…except…with two of them. Ouch. And…seeing her father’s dilapidated sword at the same time…

He drew in a deep breath. “I…I see.”

Prince Sidon rested a hand on his brother-in-law’s shoulder, seeing the anguish running through his head. “It’s okay now. In these troubling times, you have returned to us, and now, we have your support in putting that Beast to rest. The spirit of my sister will live on in all our hearts, and with that fact, there is nothing we won’t be able to endure together.”

Mira took a few giddy steps toward Link and threw her arms around him, catching him and the prince slightly off guard. King Dorephan sat back in his throne and grinned, satisfied deeply with his son’s short, but moving, speech. All the details of the story were there, told in every bit of their dreadfulness, but from the ashes, they knew that new life was always born. Mipha would still always be there from the spirit world, and in the real world, her and Link’s children were there to carry on her life and legacy. All was not lost. Was it ever, really?

“I must remember to thank Zelda once I deal with Ganon.” Link mentioned. “For saving my ring. Assuming it had fallen off, it must’ve been impossible to find.”

The king hummed in response to this. “Ah, but before you deal with Calamity Ganon…you must dispense with the Divine Beasts.”

“This is true.” Prince Sidon added with a suggesting glance in Link’s direction. “Given the news you provided us with just now, I think I know of a good place to start.”

“Oh…right.” Link blurted. He shook off his entranced thoughts as he was brought back to the topic he had urgently arrived for in the first place. Murdoch was probably standing up to his ankles in water at the East Reservoir by this point. Something had to be done.

“Indeed.” The king declared. “Sidon, you go with Link up to the lake to face Vah Ruta. Link showed us yesterday that he is in possession of shock arrows, so there is no reason for
concern on that front. I shall send for Muzu to ensure the town’s Zoras do not grow panicked in
the event of a negative turnout. And…as for Mira…?”

“I’m going up there with Dad.” She answered confidently, slightly cutting him off. “My
siblings are up there as well, and this is…you know…very important to us.”

He grinned. “Very well. I will see you all down here again when the moonlight finally
shines on our humble Domain. May you have the best of luck.”

Link bowed his head briefly to acknowledge the king’s farewell. He then turned around
and briskly bounded toward the grand staircase on what would soon be his way back up to the
Eastern Reservoir to contend with the Divine Beast. Sidon and Mira followed closely behind him,
struggling initially to match his pace. The king watched in calm thought as his gracious kin left his
presence to go save their home…and the home of his subjects.

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“Mom…” He yawned.

“Hmm?” She responded intently. She shook off her absent thoughts and gave him her full
attention.

“…Why is Dad gone so often?”

Murdoch and Mipha were the last active souls still present on the Reservoir platform that
night. It had been an exciting and eventful day, filled with splashing and playing in the shallow
waters of Mikau Lake, and the drowsy little Zora’s sisters were already fast asleep on the two sides
of the waterbed behind him. On top of that, Link was gone at the moment, as he was
accompanying Zelda at the Spring of Power near North Akkala Valley. He was not expected to
return until the wee hours of the morning, at least.

Normally, Mipha would’ve laid him down next to his siblings at their normal bedtime so
they could all sleep together, but…tonight seemed different. She had been so tied up trying to keep
Noelani comfortable lately, that…she realized she had not taken much time to sit and share
connections with her son. After Link had departed for Akkala with Zelda earlier that evening, and
the girls had started drifting off, Murdoch was the only one still standing. So…she decided she’d
stay up with him and share a little alone time by the water. He seemed to be…especially
thoughtful tonight.

“Well, your dad…he’s…very busy, you know. He does a lot for the princess and the
kingdom of Hyrule.” She explained passively.

“But…you’re a princess, too.” He mentioned.

She smiled down at him warmly. “That’s right.”

He continued staring out at the lake, seemingly detached from his surroundings. “So…why
can’t he stay here and do stuff for you?”
At this, she had to chuckle a little bit. It was clear he missed his father, and with the somewhat sound logic of his childhood innocence, it seemed to show rather clearly. It was also pretty cute the way he made hasty connections like that...as with the tendencies of children his age. However, she felt perfect empathy toward his longing. She wished her husband could be with her always...at all times of the day, but...other things had to come first.

“Oh, Murdoch...he does stuff for me constantly. More than you'd ever know. He tries to be here for us all.” She assured.

“That...” He mumbled. “...why is he always so busy? Can't he be here with us instead of with the princess?”

She sighed very deeply at his lonely questions, turning her head and fixing her gaze on the Divine Beast, which was still sitting in complete silence in the center of the lake. “Because...life is a little tough right now. Strange things are happening, and...your father and I just want to make sure you children are safe and happy. Zelda is trying to help us, too.”

“St...Strange things? What things?” He stuttered nervously.

“Just...” She paused for a moment as she tried to conjure a proper euphemism. “...some changes. Old legends tell of some special changes throughout the land, and we just don't know what to expect. We always want to be careful.”

She hoped her loving, gentle voice would be enough to soothe him, and for the time being, it seemed like it might've been working. Worry had a tendency to spread, and if she allowed her precious son to catch a glimpse of the Hylian princess’s omens, his chances of comfort and happiness might be at stake, as well as those of his siblings. There was no telling when, or even if, Calamity Ganon would return, so she wanted to do her best to keep the worries out of their heads. They were only children, after all, so they didn't deserve to share in her constant fear.

He put his tiny hands on his hips and puffed his chest out slightly. “Well, if I were a big, strong knight like Dad, I would...always try to protect you. I’d never leave you, Mom.”

Mipha’s heart swelled a little bit at his young and powerful words, but something still stuck uncomfortably in her mind. He obviously loved his dad...very, very much...but because of that love, his impressions of him seemed to be a bit...unstable. So much so...that Link’s absence seemed to be brewing resentment in their son. It was only slight, of course, and it was always common for young children to feel very strongly in their emotions, but...

...she wished Murdoch would give his father more credit where credit was due.

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Murdoch shook his head and blinked a few times, and his quick memory vanished. Staring at the Divine Beast out on the lake just...always seemed to make his mind wander. Sure, everything looked significantly less tranquil now, but the basic sight still implanted the same recollections in his head. He missed the times when Vah Ruta didn’t look so...threatening.
He could’ve sworn that, during that brief fragment of the past, he was able to read into his mother’s feelings a few times. It was a strange phenomenon…almost as if he shared the same mind with her. It was now, standing upon the Divine Beast’s territory as a grown adult, one hundred years later, that he could begin to see the error in his childhood ways. He had held Link on such a godly pedestal that he let it affect him negatively when his father couldn’t meet his expectations. And then when he didn’t return…after promising he’d be back…

Yes, it all made sense now. The gentle and nudging voice he had heard at the apex of his attack earlier, on one hand, had helped him to realize the impurities in his behavior as a bitter and judgmental adult. But now…on the other hand…his recent memory, structured oddly with the internal emotions of his mother, was helping him to see his issues as a child. He could suddenly dive into a sense of self-awareness and make the connections between his hidden feelings as a child and his budding loneliness and anger as an adolescent.

Murdoch knew he was intelligent. That much was certain. But it also occurred to him that…self-revelations like this were not typical of his behavior. He never really took the time to step back and reflect on himself, due to feeling so strongly in his convictions. This, amongst other thoughts, swirled about in his head as he stared curiously at the Divine Beast, the overflowing rainwater nipping at his feet, and his sister resting in the bed behind him. Truly, this was an unusual time for him, and, being the second time that day, he got a familiar, dwelling feeling. It felt…almost like…she was speaking to him again.

He finally mustered up the intrigue to speak out loud, albeit in a tiny, weak whisper. “M…Mother? Is…Is that you?”

“Murdoch!” A vibrant, familiar voice called, cutting off his supernatural mind trip.

He jumped a bit, startled at the sudden call. Turning toward the dripping staircase, which was the source of the noise, he spotted Mira just reaching the top alongside Link and Sidon. She looked absurdly ecstatic, as if the greatest thing ever had just happened to her. In a way, that was probably an accurate description, and he could easily figure what that greatest thing was.

As soon as he met her gaze, she began running eagerly towards him, her feet making small splashes in the floodwater beneath. Before he had a chance to react in any way, she jumped onto him and tackled him to the ground, causing a much larger splash against the platform’s surface, and a small, surprised cry on his part. This confirmed his hypothesis.

“Well…hello, Mira…” He sputtered as she squeezed his chest. “…this is, uh…quite unlike you, I must say.”

Her eyes widened as her brother’s words caused her to ease back into reality. “Oh, right…um…” She quickly lifted herself up off the watery ground and imitated the gesture of brushing herself off, which, being entirely wet already from the rain, was rather pointless. “…sorry about that. I’m just…very happy you’re alive.”

“It’s alright.” He put his hands beneath him and followed suit in returning himself to a standing position. He grimaced slightly as he did so, thanks to some nerve regions that were still producing unpleasant sensations. “I’m happy to be alive as well.”

He held his arms out in front of him and invited his sister for another embrace. Mira stood
perfectly still for a moment, looking greatly surprised by his action. The tackle she hit him with a moment ago had been an outward burst of relief and emotion, and after doing it, she had expected a hint of rejection and ridicule from him. This, however?

She stepped forward slowly and accepted Murdoch’s offer. Almost immediately, upon feeling the rough patches of partially healed skin on his chest against the side of her head, she was washed over by a wave of nostalgia. They hadn’t made any physical contact in countless years, nor have they even communicated much, in fact. Doing so in this moment reminded her of the times they got along in their childhood: laughing, running around, winning hide-and-seek with Noelani, and generally making the days more difficult for Mipha. For a brief time, she could finally recognize her sibling.

“Murdoch, you seem…different. Is everything alright?” She asked quietly, contrasting greatly from her previously euphoric demeanor.

“I feel great.” He answered calmly. “My arms and my ribcage have seen better days, but emotionally, I’m…feeling much better. I’ve been realizing things since that attack.”

She grinned. “That’s interesting, considering you were unconscious most of the time since then. I wonder if…..wait…” She paused suddenly as she was hit by an unexplained feeling in her gut. Her smile vanished, and she got very quiet and secretive. Standing on her webbed toes, she leaned up near the side of Murdoch’s head. “Did…Did Mom talk to you out there? By Vah Ruta?”

Sidon cut in from the sidelines before Murdoch could answer her. “Alright, guys, Link and I don’t have time to be standing around. All of this water has been flowing uncontrollably down the staircase, and I don’t want to think about what’ll happen if the dam eventually decides it’s had enough.”

Murdoch appeared to have been gawking at Mira in shock, but when Sidon spoke up, he returned to focus. The two of them turned their attention to both Sidon and Link, the latter of which had removed his tunic and was trying awkwardly to wrestle his Zora armor on in the rain. Sidon glanced over at the waterbed, where Noelani was still sound asleep.

“We might need Lani again. Shall we wake her and ensure she’s ready to handle one of us if something goes wrong?” He requested.

Mira bit her lip as she followed his gaze to the awning. “I…really think we should let Lani sleep. The healing magic takes a lot out of her sometimes, and she did…you know…just bring Murdoch back from the brink of death.”

Murdoch stepped forward to add his own bit. “And also, Uncle, with all due respect…I have decided I will be taking it from here with Father.”

Prince Sidon seemed taken aback by his nephew’s unexpected declaration. “You plan to help Link with Vah Ruta? You have only just recovered from your last attempt! Surely, you must consider…”

“I am aware of that fact, Uncle.” Murdoch jabbed, interrupting the prince. “I appreciate your concern, and I understand you are only watching out for me, but I am adamant in this
decision. I feel it is something I must do.”

“Murdoch...it’s good to see that you’ve changed your...disagreeable ways as of late. But...I don’t want to be a witness to any more terrible disasters.” The prince stated.

“I owe it to my father to assist him in correcting a great wrong in our family. We know I am a skilled and agile swimmer, and most importantly, I won’t be the one shooting any shock arrows this time. I made a promise, and I won’t soon be breaking it because of a mistake I made earlier.” Murdoch demanded firmly. He stood his ground with a rational composure.

Sidon paused. “A...promise?”

“Yes. You wouldn’t understand. It was...a long time ago.” He sighed.

The prince took a deep, pensive breath, and he let it out slowly. Murdoch’s and Mira’s eyes were fixated on him, and he could feel their hopeful thoughts. He thought every day about how much he missed his sister, but truly, Link and his kids were on a completely different level. They were an unstoppable force together, and right now, Mipha was on their minds, more than ever.

“...Okay. I’ll let you take the reigns on this. Just please don’t overextend yourselves. It’s for everyone’s sake.” The prince ordered worriedly.

Murdoch nodded his head once. “Thank you, Uncle. With our combined skills, I know Vah Ruta will pose us no issues.”

“Be careful, guys.” Mira added. “I don’t want to have to put any more pressure on Lani. She’s done a lot today as it is.”

“Mira, you have nothing to worry about. Trust me this time.” Murdoch assured. He winked at her with a small smirk. His confidence did make her feel a bit better, but there was nothing that would completely mitigate the natural worry she had for the safety of her loved ones.

Murdoch turned back to Link as he began walking toward the dock. “Are you ready, Father?”

Link looked up from his chest as he was finally pulling the last bits of the skintight armor over his body. The shoulder guards fastened on quite easily, given their flawless dimensions, and after that, he was finally looking worthy of Zora royalty. He let out a huff and jogged to meet up with his son.

“It’s now or never.”

Mira waved goodbye to the duo as they prepared for their follow-up attack. Link double checked to make sure his shock arrows were properly stowed in his quiver, and also that he was using his ideal knight’s bow. He wouldn’t have minded having the advantage of using a large, killer apparatus of death like Murdoch’s Lynel bow, but that was now sitting at the bottom of the East Reservoir...after he had dropped it in the incident. Oh well.

Murdoch leapt into the deeper area of the water with the same majestic twirl he had done
the first time. Once he was positioned readily in the water, Link stepped cautiously off the side of the dock and plopped into the water, albeit much less stunningly. Murdoch waited patiently for Link to swim over to him and rest his hands on his shoulders, and once he did, the two of them immediately took off toward the Divine Beast for the second time that evening.

This time, they knew…they would return with clear skies.

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Catching his breath was proving to be a struggle. He had climbed mountains before, traversed deserts, lifted heavy things, and even helped build a house in Hateno Village one time, but this was an entirely new challenge he had not prepared for. And it definitely did not help that he had chosen against wearing his marriage armor for it.

“Mipha…slow down just a bit…” He wheezed.

She turned around in a quick motion and flashed him a playful smile. “Come now, you said you’d be able to handle this!”

“I know, but…apparently I was wrong.” He panted.

“You mean the Great Chosen Protector of Hyrule can’t swim a short distance without losing his breath?” She tried her best to imitate a harsh drill sergeant. “I want to see a better hustle from you!”

He managed a small smile through his laboring movements. “I wouldn’t call Vah Ruta a ‘short distance’ from the dock, you know. I’m not a Zora like you.”

“Well this Zora’s carrying a great deal of extra weight, and she can still outswim you without breaking a sweat!”

Mipha had been subtly bugging Link lately about spending time together inside the Divine Beast, and every time, he had been stuck having to assist Zelda on some kind of excursion. They weren’t unpleasant, of course, as Zelda was a cultured individual who shared a surprising amount of interests with him. However, in his eerie silence, he always longed to return to the company of his Zora wife. After all, he was entirely unsure when she was due to lay her eggs, and he absolutely did not want to miss it. Now that they finally had a day to spend together, he was quick to oblige to her numerous requests.

He did not anticipate the difficulty he would have in swimming to the Beast, though. They were almost there, having covered at least three-quarters of the distance, but at this point, he was putting up with searing fire in both his lungs and his lanky ligaments. All the while, Mipha seemed to be living up the experience, taking every opportunity to poke fun at him and nag him to pick up the pace. She was usually a much more gentle and reserved character, so this type of behavior was not in her nature, but he still found it to be kind of fun. Perhaps she was just excited that they were finally going to visit Vah Ruta.
He scoffed. “First of all, I don’t even think Zoras can sweat. Mainly, though, I want to remind you to be very careful with that ‘extra weight’ you speak of. You, of all beings, ought to know how fragile your cargo is.”

She giggled slightly, feeling somewhat lovestruck all over again. She shimmied over to him in the water and pecked him softly on the forehead. “You know I’m responsible, my love. All my subjects can testify for me.”

It felt like such a blessing to see Mipha in such a good mood, he had to admit. Various unexpected occurrences had been keeping her from setting out on her Champion’s Trials recently, one of which was…well…being pregnant. Therefore, she was rather behind on those. Also, the ever-loomimg threat of Calamity Ganon was ensuring that she never had the opportunity to relax and live life with Link in the slow lane. It felt like there was always something they needed to do. Therefore, when she was happy, it just…made his troubles seem to melt away.

Her playful comments continued on tap for the next couple minutes until, finally, they came up on the Divine Beast. Link couldn’t tell if his exhaustion from swimming was making his eyes play tricks on him, but it seemed almost like the blue highlights dotting the giant machine began to glow brighter as Mipha swam closer to it. They made it look sort of like Vah Ruta was responding to its master’s presence.

She stopped just short of the Beast’s trunk, and she held her hand out in front of Link to halt him as well. “Pardon me for just a moment, Link. There is something I’ve always wanted to try…now that Vah Ruta answers to me.”

“Just…please be careful.” Link urged through thick breaths.

As he held back a safe distance, Mipha turned her body to face the Divine Beast directly, and she closed her eyes. While using her wavelike body movements to keep herself suspended at the water’s surface, she raised her arms to her chest and, with flattened palms, lowered them gradually until they came to rest on her distended abdomen. In tandem with her gentle movements, Vah Ruta’s trunk began to magically lower until it formed a hook-like curl against the surface of the lake.

Well…perhaps it wasn’t appropriate to call it “magic.” There was obviously some kind of interplanar communication going on between the machine and his wife, causing it to respond mechanically to her specific inputs. Regardless, he still found it mystic how she could get it to assume certain poses simply by doing what seemed like yoga imitations. She must’ve had the poses present in her mind when she did the moves, or else…there seemed like no way to get the detailed formations out of such vague instructions.

Once the Beast’s trunk was positioned to her liking, she followed up with a quick snap of her fingers. Link flinched backward as, immediately, a pounding current of water began pouring out of the end of the machine’s trunk, ascending a few dozen feet into the air. His ears were rocked to the core as Mipha’s giant pet released a mighty, powerful roar, causing jittery ripples in the water of the East Reservoir. The airborne water from the trunk’s jet stream fell back to the lake just as the roar subsided, and an arch of misty current was left visible from the Beast’s front end. The rainbows it created, Link admitted, were beautiful.

Mipha wasn’t done yet, though. After the descending half of the Beast’s water jet made
contact with the rest of the lake, the resulting arch formed a perfect makeshift waterfall for her to climb. She brought her hands down by her sides, dove headfirst into the falling water, and began to ascend against its downward direction. She was now miraculously using the Divine Beast to gain altitude.

Link was greatly impressed as he watched the athletic spectacle from his petty spot down in the lake. He couldn’t help but notice, though, that the water arch topped off at only the Beast’s forehead, so he didn’t know what Mipha was going to do once she reached the top of the current. He braced himself for some sort of spectacular midair twirl, or perhaps a daring nosedive. He hoped it wouldn’t be the latter, in all honesty, since we worried constantly for the soft, vulnerable eggs she was developing inside her.

Instead, before reaching the top, she seemed to gradually raise her arms above her head. While she did so, her rhythmical shimmying kept her body traveling upward. Link never understood how Zoras were able to swim powerfully enough to defy the laws of physics, but it sure looked amazing. Once he got around to fighting a waterfall in his Zora armor, he’d supposedly know what it felt like.

He could see Mipha’s hands come together at full extension above her head, and as soon as they did, Vah Ruta’s trunk began to raise. It seemed to maintain its hook shape, but its tip continued facing the sky as the rest of the mechanical appendage moved to slowly elevate it. Naturally, the water ejecting from the trunk began to raise as well, adjusting the size of the arch over time in the process. Mipha continued climbing the current, and now that Vah Ruta’s trunk was moving to accommodate a larger arch of water, she was able to ascend past her previous limit.

Link almost forgot he was treading water as he looked on in awe at his talented wife. She seemed to have the entire assembly of Vah Ruta down to a science. The way she moved her body... the way she utilized its movements with impeccable timing...the way she predicted its effects...it was as if the two of them were one body. He had caught minor glimpses of the other Champions using their Divine Beasts, but never before had he seen it done with such unflinching grace and mastery. He simply couldn’t take his eyes off.

At the new apex formed by the raised trunk, Mipha tore through the top of the stream of water and ascended into the air above with a signature Zora twirl. She snapped her fingers again at the moment her upward momentum began to diminish, and in its obedience, Vah Ruta immediately cut the water flow from its trunk. Mipha oriented herself upwards as she completed her twirl, and she planted her feet firmly on the end of the Beast’s trunk, which was held perfectly upright to act as an effective platform. She was now standing an impressive height above the waters of the East Reservoir, having used the abilities of the Divine Beast to get herself there.

Link let out the breath that he had been holding as he stared in disbelief. After a moment in shocked silence, he saw the tiny, distant figure of his wife step to the edge of the elevated trunk and look down at him.

“Amazing!” He yelled up at her.

He couldn’t hear her very well, due to their distance, but he faintly caught a response from her from her dizzying perch. “Swim around this way! I’ll open the entrance for you!”
“Father? Father!”

Link’s eyes jolted open as he was jarred from his sudden memory. He blinked his eyes a few times to rid them of the rushing rain in his face. “Huh? What?”

“You didn’t fall asleep on me, did you?” His son asked curiously.

“Oh, uh…no, no I didn’t. It was…nothing.” He replied.

“Good, because we’re getting close to the Divine Beast. I’m going to bring you right up to the first waterfall on its front-right side. Do you have your materials ready?”

“Yeah, I checked all that back at the…”

Vah Ruta roared again suddenly, catching the hero completely off guard. He lowered his head by the back of Murdoch’s neck, since he was unable to cover his ears to block the noise. His vision went blurry, and his thoughts were shattered like glass. It sounded so desperate…so lonely. It was a painful sound, differing significantly from the roar he recognized in his memories. All he could imagine was Mipha, crying out through the machine’s echoing roars, for all the Zoras of the Domain to hear. Somehow, it would have to be stopped.

“Alright, I’m not wasting any time!” Murdoch exclaimed. “Get that bow out, and prepare to dismount! I’m going in!”

Link had to quickly wipe his distracting jumble of thoughts out of his mind as Murdoch made a sharp left and began hurdling himself right up along the right side of the Beast. They were positioned to skim right along the base of the two waterfalls, and from the looks of it, he would have to leap off his back and swim up the waterfall…for the first time…at a moment’s notice.

He let go of Murdoch’s shoulders with both his hands, and he used his right one to reach around and grab his bow. With his hands freed, and his bow in hand, he geared himself up for an experience that he himself would probably never understand. Murdoch was coming up on the waterfall rather quickly.

When the timing felt right, Murdoch leapt a few feet out of the water, propelling Link into the midst of the waterfall’s rushing current. It all happened too quickly, with large quantities of water pounding down on Link’s head before he even had a chance to calculate his movements. As a result, he fell back down into the lake without so much as a mite of resistance. Murdoch took his time circling back around to the waterfall, as he expected Link to have already been making his ascent.

He shook his head a few times to clear his mind. He was not looking to disappoint his son this time, with a task that, to him, probably seemed elementary. Therefore, before Murdoch could return to the waterfall’s base, Link reoriented himself vertically and tried to focus on the water plummeting down on him.

Mipha had been able to maneuver herself upwards in the opposing current without her
arms, he remembered. Often times, in his memories, she would have an object in her hand, and she’d still be able to climb vertical drops with almost no effort. He recalled briefly, as Vah Ruta’s waters descended all around him, Mipha’s snakelike maneuvers when climbing the Divine Beast herself. The way her torso shimmied back and forth…aligning with her legs and her chest to form fluidlike motions…

He grasped his bow in both hands and drew in another breath. It was worth a shot. If there had been anyone in Hyrule with this kind of expertise, it was Mipha. Remembering her techniques, he figured, was his best strategy for accomplishing this task. It just didn’t seem like it would work, with him being a Hylian and all, but he had to trust the armor he was wearing. Certainly, they stood nothing to gain in lying to him about it.

Throwing all doubts from his mind, he kicked his legs downward for a starting boost, and he subsequently began mimicking Mipha’s movements from his memory. Elongated shimmy movements, similar to the flowing waves of water itself, seemed like the way to go. It must’ve looked a little weird, he thought, but then again, Zoras used that kind of swimming technique on a regular basis. He was probably just overthinking it.

However, much to his shock and disbelief, he actually began to gain elevation…rather quickly, in fact. He kept his head completely straight and let the top of his skull take the impact of the current. All of a sudden, the falling water all around him, which should’ve been pulling him down, felt to him like a curtain through which he could push upwards. In a way, he felt almost…weightless. It was a feeling he couldn’t describe, and in trying, he was merely getting tangled in his own mind. One thing was certain, though, and that was the fact that this ability would definitely come in handy down the road.

At the top of the waterfall, by the shoulder of the Beast, Link busted free of the current and sailed another few yards into the air. His view from this height was breathtaking, but unfortunately, he didn’t have time to sightsee. As soon as he felt his ascent changing direction, he quickly reached into his arrow quiver and pulled out a shock arrow.

For a moment, Link couldn’t tell what he was supposed to be shooting, as the Beast seemed to be similarly colored all along its head and back. Its pink highlights, though, appeared to stick out very sorely against the blandness of the background, so he figured they’d be a good place to start. From there, it wasn’t a stretch to locate the four large, pulsating pressure points on the ballpoints of the Beast’s limbs, each one positioned near a pouring waterfall.

While still at the top of his arc, Link docked the yellow, glowing arrow, and he aimed his bow outwards. He only had a second to react, but given his level of focus, that was more than enough time. His bow began to glow slightly and give off small sparks as he drew the arrow back, but it wasn’t enough to distract him. Then, when he released the arrow and sent the small bundle of energy hurdling towards Vah Ruta’s first limb, his bow reacted with a minor discharge, traveling through his fingers and giving his nerves a small tickle. Compared to the blast that nearly took out his son, it was nothing at all.

He could see from the trajectory of the arrow that he was going to hit his mark, so in the last fraction of a moment he had before falling back down to the lake, he pivoted his body to the side and whipped another arrow out of the quiver. Vah Ruta had another glowing pressure point on Link’s side, so he decided to go for a shot before falling back down in order to save time. He would surely have to land back down and catch his breath before heading around to the other side.
for the other two targets.

With much more haste than his first shot, he docked the arrow, pulled back, and released the shot in one quick move. As he was doing so, he felt the effects of gravity steadily yanking him back down to the waters below, where Murdoch was probably waiting. The arrow had way more velocity than he did, though, so he was able to see it make its landing before he fell too far. The projectile impacted the very center of the glowing region, impaling it with a shot of electricity from the enchanted shock arrow. The pressure point flickered to a brilliant yellow shade.

Link’s focus diminished after seeing that he had hit his second target. He took satisfaction in his accuracy, but at the same time, he came to expect nothing but perfection from himself. It was his no-tolerance policy that allowed him to achieve the prowess he currently held. There was natural talent in there, of course, but even the best of the best could only get so far without determination. He knew that.

The wind flying past him as he fell provided a similar rush to his crazy ascent just moments prior. It was hard for even himself to wrap his head around the caliber of the acrobatics he was performing. Hopefully the rest of his journey would prove to be this exciting.

He landed feet-first in the lake after a quick plummet, kicking up a large splash. Murdoch was waiting in a prepped orientation in the water directly next to Link’s landing point, and when Link resurfaced and rubbed his eyes, he could see approval in his son’s expression. Going for that second pressure point had acted as killing the second bird with his stone, and in doing so, they were gearing up to complete their task in half the time. All he’d have to do is repeat the process on the Beast’s other side.

“You ready?” Murdoch asked.

Link climbed onto his back and returned his grip to his shoulders. He lowered his head to reduce their wind resistance. “Onward!”

“Wow, it’s…really spacious in here.” Link commented.

“I would say so too. It’s really quite fascinating…when you consider what this machine can do. Most of it is just empty space.” Mipha replied.

Mipha had given the signal for Vah Ruta to lower its trunk shortly after guiding Link to the entrance, making it perfectly straight and parallel to the earth so she could walk across it and join her husband in the interior of the Divine Beast. It was on the lower level that they now resided, right through the main archway and into the first room, where a bridge through a small artificial pond led to a guidance stone. To the right of the entrance, another connecting archway led to the sanctum of the Beast, where the main control unit was held. Sounds within the chambers of the Beast seemed to echo in an eerie fashion.
“What can it do?” Link asked with delightful curiosity. “I don’t believe you’ve ever told me.”

Mipha looked over at him. He stopped walking when he noticed her gaze, and the two of them stared at each other in blissful silence for a few moments. It was a genuine and meaningful question, in his mind, and with the way she was building up for the answer, he felt like it was going to be either really stupid, or absolutely extraordinary. The Divine Beasts were practically works of art, and because of that fact, he’d come to believe any answer she gave him.

The suspenseful tension created by her silent stare melted away completely as she gave him a cute and inspiring smile. “He can create an endless supply of water...completely from nothing.”

Link was blown away. It was visible in his now-widened eyes. “Are you serious?”

She nodded, her smile still going strong. “Indeed. The water I climbed earlier from Vah Ruta’s trunk was not sucked from the Reservoir, but, rather, formed completely anew! The water level of the Reservoir is actually higher now than it was before.”

He scratched his head. “But...how does that work?”

Mipha’s smile only seemed to grow. She continued looking at Link with what was now the face of a true Divine-Beast-enthusiast, her sharp, fanglike teeth showing through her parted lips. “Your guess is as good as mine!”

The couple resumed their walk, which took them through the opening on the other side of the room. This led them back outside along the Beast’s other hip, on a ramp that sloped upward to the next floor. Link could still feel the bits of cool mist in the air from the stream Mipha had summoned from the trunk just minutes ago. It felt nice in contrast to the rays of the sun.

Link could tell how much Mipha seemed to enjoy talking about the Divine Beast, so he decided to please her by striking up more conversation. After all, she had been waiting forever to go visit Vah Ruta with him, so now that they were finally doing it, he wanted to make the trip worthwhile for her.

“So...Zelda talks about the Divine Beasts having been used to defeat Ganon some ten thousand years ago. What exactly can Vah Ruta do that’s...you know...weaponized?”

“Vah Ruta has both an offensive and a defensive mechanism.” Mipha explained in response, without hesitating. “His offensive weapon is a special beam that fires from the tusks. It supposedly locks onto Calamity Ganon’s aura and works to drain his power. I haven’t been told this, but I think it’d make sense to assume that all four Divine Beasts have that feature.”

“So that would’ve made it easier for the hero of that time to deal the fatal blow using the Master Sword...” Link thought aloud. The sheikah sure knew how to cover all bases.

Mipha sighed pensively as the two of them summited the ramp and turned back into the Divine Beast’s upper floor. The first thing to catch Link’s eye was a sizable pair of cogwheels, one significantly larger than the other. A terminal sat on the inner circumference of the larger wheel, but it was upside down and inaccessible at the moment. Not that it mattered, he figured, since Mipha already had Vah Ruta active and under her control.
“I take it these wheels turn when the Beast is moving?” He asked.

“When he’s producing water, actually.” She corrected him politely. “That’s why the wheels aren’t turning now.” She took a long pause and stopped to look around at their surroundings. She seemed to be reflecting deeply about something, judging by the solemnity in her expression. “You know...back during my childhood...when I used to escape to the East Reservoir to be with my own thoughts, Vah Ruta hadn’t been discovered yet. I thought that...nothing could beat the peace and solitude the lake provided me, and now...I sometimes wish I could live my life in here. The connections I feel to this creature make me feel comfortable when I’m around it. It’s...hard to understand.”

Link remained quiet for another moment after she finished talking, just in case she had more to say. After a moment of continued silence between them, when it seemed like she had finished, he asked the question that had arisen in his mind.

“What about the children? Did you ever plan to introduce them to the Beast?”

Mipha, with another loving grin, glanced down at her enlarged abdomen. She reached inward and rubbed over the white skin of her midsection with her one hand, thinking deeply on her husband’s question. Vah Ruta, for all intents and purposes, was an extension of herself, but whether it should be a big part of her upcoming offspring’s life was a plausible query. She had had a few past ideas on the topic, but she wanted to wait for a better moment to bring them up.

“Maybe we’ll talk about that later.”

Link chuckled a little. “Alright then, let me shoot you another one. What was Vah Ruta’s defensive mechanism again?”

Her face lit up. “Oh, right! I forgot to bring that one up. Well, I haven’t gotten it to work yet, but I heard from the sheikah scientists that the Beast can defend itself with...”

“...Ice!”

Link was startled out of his second memory by another loud call from Murdoch. Once again, the sidetracked hero was forced to refocus his mind as their current mission was slammed back on him. It was easy to mix up the past and the present, assuming he let his mind wander for a long enough time. He was starting to realize the importance in keeping his head in check.

“What? Ice?”

“Don’t be so distracted, Father! Vah Ruta is fighting back on us!” Murdoch cried.

Against the dark, blending colors of the horizon, Link had absolutely no trouble spotting the upcoming blocks of ice once Murdoch had pointed them out. Their sky-blue, luminescent appearance, by comparison, almost made the rest of the lake seem like it wasn’t even there.
Murdoch would obviously be able to dodge the obstacles on their way in, but they were sure to pursue until they hit a target. Therefore, the two of them were in agreement that the mysterious entities needed to be destroyed.

Link immediately reached for his bow again after spotting the threat. He’d unfortunately have to sacrifice a few shock arrows to deal with the blocks, as they were the only things in his quiver at the moment, and he certainly didn’t have time to rummage in his pack and swap them out. He hadn’t kept track of his stash during his adventure thus far, so he hoped he had enough to carry out the mission. If he happened to run out, they’d probably have to start all over after restocking.

He quickly drew an arrow, docked it in the bow, and pulled back the string. But then…he stopped. His aim was centered right on the closest ice block, but as he focused his vision on his target, something about it seemed to strike him funny. Almost…familiar. He lowered his bow and took another close look.

“I hope you’re preparing to take those things out!” Murdoch called from below. “I won’t hesitate to make evasive maneuvers!”

Link ignored his son’s remarks as he took the moment to study Vah Ruta’s incoming, frozen projectiles. They each had an interesting pattern of wavy lines perforating their surfaces, mimicking the typical trademark designs of ancient sheikah technology. He remembered seeing the exact same design on the ice blocks that had been thrown at him and Sidon earlier that afternoon. They reminded him of…his sheikah slate.

One of the runes he had accumulated for his slate back on the Great Plateau was labeled “cryonis.” It granted him the ability to create and destroy small pillars of ice over surfaces of water, primarily with the intent of crossing hazardous rivers or providing cover from enemy sight. He hadn’t really used it much outside of the shrine he had found it in, but luckily, he could still remember some of the key details about it. One of those details being…the design of the ice pillars, which looked identical to the ice being used by the Divine Beast. It had all been created by the same sheikah tribe, so the same principles had to apply, right?

Link hastily exchanged his bow for the sheikah slate, and he set the rune to cryonis just as the attacking ice block reached a dangerous distance from Murdoch’s heels. Hoping for the best, he aimed the device behind him at the giant mass, and he tapped the screen.

He blinked as the ice block instantly shattered, leaving nothing behind but a cloud of fine particulates that settled over the lake’s surface after a few seconds. Ah, what a convenient little turnout. Having acquired this new, useful knowledge, Link aimed the miniature tablet at the other approaching masses and, with a smirk, tapped the screen again on each one, watching them disintegrate with a satisfying smashing sound. Despite what he had reasoned earlier, he really wanted to call this phenomenon…magic.

“What did you just do?” Murdoch blurted in surprise.

“I’ll tell you later!” Link answered back, trying to hold in his childish laughter. “Just turn in now! You have a clear shot!”

Murdoch obeyed right away. Link lowered his body closer to Murdoch’s back again for
better balance as he swerved to the right and directed himself at the other side of Vah Ruta’s vulnerable body. Link took out his bow one last time as he prepared to take the final two shots that would supposedly stop the waterflow and save Zora’s Domain. He knew, though, from his various sources, that accomplishing this task would not be the end of his work with the Divine Beast.

He waited patiently as the waterfalls cascading down Vah Ruta’s left hip got ever closer to him and Murdoch. Being the efficient adapter he was, he was more prepared to handle the maneuvers necessary to climb the falls in ample time. Every ounce of his brainpower was focused on this upcoming task. His success was for the sake of every Zora in the Domain, including the ones no longer inhabiting the physical world. Peace had to endure.

Murdoch zipped up on the waterfall’s base at full speed, and as soon as his body lined up with the mist, he copied his previous action by thrusting out of the water and tossing his passenger into the falling current. Link timed the extension of his legs perfectly to get the biggest boost out of his son’s jump. Then, with cutthroat precision, he initiated his swimming movements on contact with the waterfall. He was already halfway up the side of the Divine Beast before Murdoch could even arc away from the drop-off point.

Two shock arrows were all he needed. His bow was already equipped in one hand, and an arrow was already being held in the other. He didn’t need his hands to ascend the waterfall, as he had learned a few minutes prior, so he figured he could only benefit by using them ahead of time in his preparation. Two shots, it was. And their nightmare would be over.

He broke free from the sliding current of the water much faster than he had expected at first. With his budding familiarity, his climbing speed must’ve increased, amongst other things. That was not something to dwell on, though, for he now had to initiate the second phase.

As his body was still gaining elevation, Link docked the arrow in his bow right away, and he pulled back the string. He was more than familiar with the exterior layout of Vah Ruta at this point, so aiming his bow at the proper location was nothing short of a cakewalk. Unlike his last pair of shots, he did not even need to draw in a breath this time. He released the arrow, grabbing the next one from his quiver before even watching the first one hit its mark.

Ah, how he never felt more alive. Being there, facing the odds, fighting the good fight, etcetera, especially for the sake of ones he held dear…there was nothing quite like it. This moment, leading up to his planned invasion of the possessed Beast, was about to act as his first major accomplishment since his reawakening. It was time to finally show Ganon that he was back, and he was going to go down swinging before he’d let him attack his family any longer.

“My turn…” He whispered menacingly. He sucked a quick breath in through his nose, aimed his weapon at the last remaining pressure point…and took the shot.

This felt like the right place to be. Something about it held a certain, unmatched charm,
and for the moment, it was basically the most enchanting place to spend time with her. The spiraling elevation of their perch also held its own lure. They felt more...private. More so than they could’ve felt in their usual place down on the platform. Of course, it also had its classic déjà vu effect, since it wasn’t the first time they had been up here.

“Remember the first time you took me here?” Link mentioned. “You healed a wound I had from a Moblin hit.”

Mipha giggled. “Of course I remember. It was shortly after that special night we had together. Before I looked...like this.” She glanced goofily at her rounded belly, which made Link share in a smile. “I promised you I would heal you at every given opportunity, no matter the cost. I hope you will always remember that promise.”

Link loved these kinds of moments. The two of them, together, felt like the only thing that mattered in the world around them. In the recent months, it was kind of rare to have that relaxing feeling. After all, everything seemed to matter...all the time. Additionally, being able to reminisce on their past often helped them feel more connected. They were essential times to share. Just listening to her talk made him feel...perfect.

“I could never forget.” He assured. “Simply looking at Vah Ruta reminds me of you in every way.”

“And rightfully so!” Mipha replied with a wide grin. “I feel like Vah Ruta...just...makes me my best self. He was discovered only a couple years after your first appearance here in the Domain, back when you were only as big as Sidon!” They both chuckled quietly. “But since then, much has changed. Now that he and I share an official connection, I sometimes feel like there’s nowhere I’d rather be. Being up here, with you...”

“If only it could last forever, right?” Link chimed.

“Ah, Link, if only.” She sighed wishfully. She rested both her hands on her abdomen again. “You know, regarding your question earlier...I’d raise our kids here if I could. The water down in the main control room is the perfect depth for the eggs.”

His eyes widened. “Oh, really? That’d be quite a bold decision.”

“Yes, but...I mustn’t think of only myself.” She stated sadly. Link noticed her begin to steadily rub her belly as she spoke. “At the end of the day, Vah Ruta is a weapon, not a playground. And not only that, our children are going to require an environment where they can more openly interact with my fellow Zoras. We’re not much different from Hylians, as you know, and therefore, we can be fairly social creatures. The little ones will need regular access to the Domain if they’re going to thrive.”

Mipha seemed to have her entire parenting deal already sorted out, which, to Link, was more than admirable. There weren’t many who could dedicate so much thought to unborn children while the rest of their life was practically crashing down on them. His wife’s selflessness, surely, knew no limits. Discussions like these always reminded him of how flawless she really was.

“You make a good point.” He responded. “So...where were you thinking of laying them, then?”
She was surprisingly quick to answer. “The tradition has always been for the eggs of the royal family to hatch in the king’s chamber. Both I and Sidon were born in there, as well as my father, and so on. But…I don’t want our young ones to inherit the responsibilities of the royal title, for reasons we already discussed. I spoke to my father very delicately about it, and he reluctantly agreed that I may have my spawn in the shallows of the East Reservoir’s secondary shores. Over…that way.” She pointed somewhere east of their location.

Link sat silently for a moment as he pondered her description. He didn’t remember ever traveling to that side of the East Reservoir, but regardless, he trusted her judgment in picking a good spot for such an…important event. He just hoped he wouldn’t have to be out somewhere helping Zelda when the big moment came around.

“I will try to be there for you when the time comes.” He declared solemnly.

Mipha leaned forward and embraced her husband without another word. Vah Ruta tended to host some pretty touching moments, it seemed. It served as a haven for the Zora people, but more secretly, as a haven for Mipha, and also for her and Link’s relationship. It could’ve been debated whether the other Divine Beasts served as such epicenters of importance as Vah Ruta did for the Zoras. It would hopefully stand as a symbol of Mipha’s love…for ages to come.

“Oh, Link?”

“Hmm?”

She pulled away from him for a moment. “Apologies for this, but I regret to inform you of an errand that I must run tomorrow. Will you be free?”

He raised an eyebrow. “What is it?”

“Well, earlier, in the Beast’s chest, I sensed a bit of an……imperfection. Something appears to be wrong with Vah Ruta’s laser beam. It will need to be fixed soon, should it be needed for something unexpectedly.” She explained sheepishly.

“Um…I see. So…what will be done about it?”

“We’ll need to travel to Hyrule Castle to report the problem to the royal council. The sheikah scientists there should know how to deal with malfunctions concerning the Divine Beasts. It pains me that we have to do this, but none of us are experts at fixing these kinds of issues.”

He let out a huff. “I see. Well, the way I figure, I can stay here with you tonight, and then tomorrow afternoon, we can travel to the castle along the quickened route. It’ll take us around the base of Crenel Peak and over the Hylia River. Does that sound okay?”

She nodded once, still looking a bit awkward at her own request. “That sounds wonderful. Thank you.”
One last thundering roar escaped from Vah Ruta as Link began falling back down to the lake below. The young hero was hit with many sensations at once, involving his memory, his successful shots, and the physical feeling of water splashing all around him a second time. What a way to begin the night, he thought.

Murdoch swam up beside him in the water. After wiping the wetness away from his eyes, Link could see his son looking visibly pleased.

“Nice shots, Father! You finally stopped the Divine Beast’s waterfall!” He exclaimed.

As with his other two mental derailments, Link needed a moment to reorganize his thoughts before he could analyze his surroundings. Each time, though, Murdoch had been there to help him get back on track, and this time was no different. Hearing the good news from him, Link turned around in the water and looked toward the sky.

While the waterfalls pouring from Vah Ruta’s sides were just beginning to shut off at that point, the Beast’s upward-facing trunk had indeed stopped its torrential onslaught, from what the two of them could see. That very trunk had been responsible for the depressing haze hanging over Zora’s Domain during the last several weeks, and as Link looked up at it, it seemed to have gone dormant. With the water spout finally quiet, the thick clouds over the Lanayru region were expected to dissipate and give way to warm, clear skies. Obviously, that would not happen right away, though. They did observe, however, the Divine Beast lower its trunk and lift slowly out of the water, revealing an entrance platform to their right.

“You know, I’ve done it myself now, and…” Link shook off his wet hair as he floated in the water. “…I still don’t understand how you Zoras climb waterfalls.”

Murdoch laughed heartily at his father’s joke. Overall, he seemed noticeably overjoyed that the threat to his home had finally been addressed, and even more so that a step had been taken to achieve his lifelong goal of giving back to Mipha. As Link swam around behind Murdoch and climbed onto his back, he smiled. After the events of the last twenty-four hours, he’d probably never get sick of seeing his son so happy.

“Alright, Father, let’s get you back to the Domain so we can tell everyone the good news.” He announced.

Link bit his lip. “Actually, Murdoch, wait. I need you to take me the other way, toward the Divine Beast’s entrance platform.”

His shocking words caused the guard captain to freeze in place. “What? Are you saying you plan to enter Vah Ruta?”

Link nodded, though he realized Murdoch wasn’t able to see it. “Yes. The water may have stopped, but this machine is still under Calamity Ganon’s control. It’s part of my new mission to free the Beasts and use them to save Hyrule. Zelda is fighting tooth-and-nail in the castle to make sure I have enough time for this task.”

Murdoch gritted his teeth upon hearing his father use the word “mission” again. Dark thoughts, similar to the pain and vengefulness he had felt as a child, welled to the surface for a
moment as he imagined the possibility of Ganon taking Link’s life during his endeavors. He suddenly remembered his mother’s words to him, however, and he began to calm himself down. He took a few deep breaths to help himself with this process.

“Okay. I understand.”

He turned around slowly in the water and began carrying Link to the newly-accessible entrance platform of the Divine Beast. They were already on Vah Ruta’s right side, so it was not a long trip in the slightest. The giant machine waited patiently in its current position, almost as if it were expecting Link’s arrival. He found that to be quite luring, but at the same time, unsettling.

Link hopped onto the platform after being aligned with its side by Murdoch. Once he was there, he turned around to face his son in the water.

“Well…I suppose this is it, then.” Murdoch sighed. “I can’t express how much I want you to make it out of this.”

“If your mother has told you anything, it’s that you can count on me to avoid imbalanced confrontations. Just be sure to tell Mira and Lani that I’m alright.” Link requested. “I don’t want them to begin freaking out when you return to them by yourself.”

“Naturally.” Murdoch replied with a nod. “And, lastly…if you happen to see or hear from Mother…don’t keep it secret from us.”

“You know I won’t. I miss her just as much as you guys do.”

A small smile appeared on Murdoch’s face, which Link copied. It was a bit of a tough farewell, but deep inside, Murdoch knew it wouldn’t be for long. He had trusted that it wouldn’t be long the first time this sort of thing happened, and the result of those events had haunted him for the entire following century. This time, however, despite those painful occurrences, he had no doubts that it would be okay.

“I’ll see you soon, Father. Good luck in there.”

As Murdoch turned around and swam away, Link directed his attention to his new directive. A guidance stone was present on the entrance platform with him, and it was looking like a good place to start his trek. He had no idea what to expect.

He drew his sword alongside his sheikah slate as a safety measure. Then, he stepped cautiously over to the ancient pedestal and pressed the sheikah slate to it. Almost right away, a bright blue flash cascaded from the carvings in the stone’s face as it reacted to his device’s aura. He stepped to the side as the large carving on the ground followed suit, lighting up the entire platform in the same brilliant shade. His work on the Divine Beast had officially begun.

What happened next, though, shook him to the core. A voice…speaking to him from all directions at once. It sounded…otherworldly, as if it were everywhere and nowhere at the same time. It must’ve been unlocked through the tiny bit of the Divine Beast Link had freed, and…it sounded familiar. Hell, he recognized it immediately. There was no one else it could’ve been.
“You’re......here...”
Link suddenly felt lightheaded. He had encountered many strange, supernatural phenomena during his journey so far, but this one was still a lot to process. He was unable to identify his feelings on the voice he was hearing—the voice of his deceased wife. Here she was, communicating with him from beyond, after a hundred years of silence and deprivation! But...at the same time...her gentle and loving voice, distant and abstract as it was, served as a reminder for the awful things that had occurred to put them in their current position. She was present, but...she also wasn't, and because of that distinction...it just didn't feel the same.

He took deep, gasping breaths to try and ease his airy focus. “M...Mipha?”

“Now...Ruta can be freed...of Ganon’s control.........and our family...can finally live in peace...”

He was getting chills just listening to her. Since the last time he had seen her during the onset of the Great Calamity, the only record he had had of her voice was in his fragmented memories. Her live voice, however...was exactly as he had remembered it. And hearing it after so long...it just seemed to set his senses on fire.

“Mipha, I...you have no idea...” He stuttered stupidly. “…I just wish I could tell you...”

“In case you’ve forgotten...about Ruta...” Her ghostly words seemed to cut him off completely. “...you’ll need a map...to prevent you from getting lost...”

He sighed sadly. She didn’t seem to be responsive to his advances. With the current circumstances, there was only one sensible reason for that, and it was that she couldn’t hear him. It must’ve taken a lot of her energy to speak with him as it was, being that the vessel through which her soul was attached was still under Calamity Ganon’s possession. Therefore, she could most likely sense his presence, but they couldn’t communicate both ways. He brought himself to accept that fact.

Despite her physical absence, Mipha’s coaxing made Link ever more determined to carry out his destined task and press on within the Divine Beast. It was a necessary venture, for the sake of Mipha, his family, the Zoras, and all of Hyrule. With her by his side, as it had been in the glory days, he would be able to take on the hardship with unparalleled persistence. Ganon didn’t stand a chance.

He didn’t think he’d require a map, though. After all, he believed stubbornly in his
memories, and in them, he had a somewhat decent image of Vah Ruta’s layout. After swiftly laying waste to the eye of malice that had been blocking the entrance, he stopped at the top of the ramp and surveyed the first floor of the titanic machine, and sure enough, it looked exactly as he had pictured it from a hundred years prior. Ganon’s malice had corrupted many parts of the poor structure, its presence indicated by the thick blobs of pinkish slime plaguing areas of the ground, walls, and ceiling. Some of the larger masses contained additional eyes at their epicenters.

It wasn’t until he took a few steps in the direction of the arch at the opposite end of the room that he realized he had no idea what he was doing. He noticed the guidance stone sitting behind the vertical bars to his left, on the far side of the water pool, but beyond that, his knowledge of the Beast’s inner workings was completely nonexistent. Without said knowledge, he’d stand no chance of dealing with Ganon’s crippling veil over the device.

There was one mind out there with perfect knowledge of Vah Ruta, however, and that was Mipha. With the weakened essence of Mipha’s soul looming around him, perhaps she’d be able to help him accomplish his goal. He could only hope that she knew the answers to his predicaments. After all, one could only get so far with a puzzle-solving mind like his.

Her first, and so far, only suggestion had been to obtain a map of the Divine Beast. He reasoned, perhaps, that more instructions would follow if he succeeded in obeying that task. It was the only thing that made sense, so he forced himself to banish the confidence he had in his memories and humor his wife. Regarding said map, the only thing that came to his mind was the guidance stone he had seen on his left, so he figured it would be a good place to start. Starting was always the most difficult part.

He remembered seeing the mysterious guidance stone during his visit with Mipha those many years ago, but he could not recall the bars blocking the way to it. Likewise, he could not remember when or why the pedestal had to be blocked off in the first place. The gate-like barrier could’ve been jarred shut by Ganon’s influence, he guessed, or it could’ve been closed manually by Mipha before the events of the Calamity. Either way, it needed to be opened before he could progress.

Prior to his awakening in the Shrine, Link had never been forced to deal with brain-wracking scenarios like the ones that seemed to loom ahead. All of his challenges, at least the ones he could recall, had been related to quick thinking and even quicker reflexes. However, despite this fact, he felt like he was no stranger to puzzles. Even more, he felt a strong familiarity with the sort of environments presented to him by Vah Ruta in its possessed state…large, unwelcoming, twisted, dungeon-like places with an important milestone hidden at the end. It was a familiarity that felt almost…inherited.

So, naturally, when he was presented with the issue of opening the cell-like gate blocking his target, Link’s mind automatically raced through his list of available options. Every problem he encountered, if solvable, was only done so through his finite catalogue of abilities, and in this case, that included his weapons and his sheikah slate. From there, it wasn’t a stretch to make the connections between the sheikah slate, the cryonis rune, and the water beneath the gate. His brain, although weak with processing emotions, functioned like clockwork against logic and puzzles.

With the gate opened, propped up by an ice pillar summoned from the slate, Link strolled up to the guidance stone and pressed the device to it without wasting a second. Doing so was like a routine motion at this point, like breathing, reinforced by the sheer number of times he had had to
do it already. He got the usual response, consisting of a blue flash of light on the pedestal and a satisfying confirmation noise. It tended to trigger the reward mechanism in his head, interestingly enough.

The screen came to life, as it normally did, capturing Link’s attention as usual. He already knew what to expect from the shrines and the towers, since every one of them behaved the same way on the little tablet, but this was an entirely new reaction to him. The second he observed the blue light appear on the pedestal, he turned the slate around and examined the screen.

The map of Hyrule that he had been gradually building over the limited course of his journey was present on the screen for a brief moment before switching to a completely new and unfamiliar interface. The screen had gone blank, and in its place appeared a three-dimensional, transparent cross-section of Vah Ruta, with arrow markings along its trunk and a series of glowing points scattered throughout its interior. It was a fascinating sight, made all the more intriguing when Link swiped his finger along the screen and watched the cross-section interact accordingly. When would sheikah technology ever cease to amaze him?

“Good…you’ve obtained the map…!” Mipha’s voice chimed. “On it…you’ll find five glowing points…each representing a terminal. Take Ruta back…by activating all of the terminals. I…believe in you…”

What really interested Link were the arrows lining the Divine Beast’s trunk on his sheikah slate. He had certainly halted his inspection when Mipha began speaking to him again, but once she was done, he returned his attention to those odd-looking arrows. In his entranced curiosity, he reached for the screen with his free hand to tap one of them. His slate was obviously connected to Vah Ruta, but…to what extent…?

Murdoch’s hawkish gaze darted quickly to the Divine Beast as soon as he noticed a movement. Without the constant spew of water spraying mist into the sky, he found it much easier to inspect the lake and make out details without a need to even squint. From his spot on the Reservoir platform, he observed what appeared to be Vah Ruta’s trunk lowering and straightening out. He put a hand to his chin as he watched the Beast’s massive, mechanical appendage become parallel to the lake without any sort of visible stimulus.

When the trunk locked in place, the machine released another loud, echoing roar. Unlike the noises it had made previously, this thundering wail was more elongated, while being less…aimless in nature. With his father in there, Murdoch thought, the Divine Beast was finally given a noble purpose once again. The future began to look bright.

Mira had been tending to her sleeping sister on the bed, but when the roar went off, she was startled into turning her head toward the lake. She now shared Murdoch’s gaze, her mind sharing also in his curiosity. Given her natural insights, however, she had some unique ideas as to what
was going on in Vah Ruta. She couldn’t help but wonder…if he knew as well. He was pretty clever, after all.

“He has gotten it to move.” Her brother declared with a stiff expression. “Impressive.”

“‘Impressive,’ I might agree, but probably not by his standards.” Mira mentioned. “Dad’s just amazing that way.”

Murdoch raised a brow at her. “You think so? I don’t know, I guess I just…don’t see it as much anymore. I see him more at eye level now, if you will.”

Mira sighed sadly. As with others she held dear, the gold-eyed Zora was able to read her brother like an open textbook. And he was quite the story of tragedy. “That’s unfortunate. It seems as though you’ve climbed so high in your skills, and in your career……that you’ve run out of figures to look up to. Even Dad…and he was your idol back then.”

“I admit that I have been strikingly unreasonable lately, and I have since come to terms with my grievances and made amends with Father.” Murdoch began, urging the topic along another path. “But I must ask you, Sister…how do you remain so faithful to our father? I understand you know more about him and Mother than the rest of us, and why he has made the decisions he has, but…have you not retained even a hint of disharmony from our unfortunate upbringing? Our century as orphans?”

There was not even a breath of hesitation in Mira’s voice as she jumped right into her answer. Her certainty spoke volumes to Murdoch. “Dad’s a hero. I know he only left us those many times because he wanted to protect us, and I know that he aspires to stay true to his godly responsibilities. He lives his entire life at his own expense in order to give others a comfortable existence free from evil. I just respect him so much for everything he does…and I try every day to follow in his example. I tend to feel like he’s too good to be our father. And I guess…I always want to let him know how important he is to me, and to everyone else.”

“Your words make so much sense…” Murdoch mumbled with a hand on his forehead. “So why…why is it so hard for me to share in your mindset…?”

Mira grinned playfully. “You just need to stop thinking so selfishly, Murdie.”

During Mira’s inspiring explanation, Noelani had begun to shuffle groggily awake on the waterbed. Neither of her siblings noticed her at first, having been wrapped up in their rather personal conversation. She moaned a few times as she struggled her way out of the snares of her fatigue, and the first things she noticed were the sounds of her conversing siblings and…the lack thereof from the skies above. With a few more seconds of transition time, she was able to peel open her eyelids and reveal her faded, dysfunctional eyes to the moonlight.

“G…Good morning, you two…” She purred passively.

Mira and Murdoch turned away from the lake to glance at Noelani as soon as they heard her voice. Mira’s face lit up when she saw her sister stirring on the bed, and she knelt back down by her side.

“Wow, Lani, you don’t usually wake up this quickly!” She chuckled. “It’s still not even midnight!”
Noelani’s eyes widened. “Not even midnight? H…How long was I out?”

“About two hours, Lani.” Murdoch stated bluntly. “Probably not even that.”

Noelani was usually an exceptionally heavy sleeper. Taking after Link, she was the only one of her family capable of sleeping through both a hurricane and an earthquake. Mira, after growing up alongside her blind sibling since infancy, was well aware of this tendency, and she would often sit alone by the resting pools each morning to keep watch over Noelani while she slept. It was part of her protective duty. Therefore, among all others in the world, she found it hardest to believe that the small, quiet Zora could’ve gotten a restful nap just recently.

“Only two hours?” She stuttered.

Mira leaned forward and rested her hand on Noelani’s cheek, making her jitter for a moment. She was known for being sensitive to touch. “Are you feeling okay? Under the weather at all?”

“Well…I don’t feel perfect, but if you say I only slept a couple hours, then I…guess it makes sense. Speaking of weather, though…” She pondered. “…has the rain stopped? I don’t hear it anymore.”

“Indeed, it has.” Murdoch cut in. “While you slept, Father and I managed to finally put an end to Vah Ruta’s torment. Come tomorrow, our Domain should once again be bathed in the valiant glow of sunlight.”

Mira glanced at him with a silly scoff. “You speak like a storybook sometimes, you know. You don’t have to speak to us like we’re the elder council.”

Murdoch shrugged. “Eloquence gives me comfort. Especially when I’m in a thoughtful mood.”

Mira grinned and shook her head. She did a terrible job of pretending to be annoyed in a time like this. She felt great pride in Noelani for accomplishing the successful revival of their brother, and even more, she felt relief that said brother was speaking peacefully to them again. He seemed so tranquil and relaxed…for him, of course…and that made it seem like all was improving in the world. With him finally feeling better after all these years, everything else seemed sure to come together in due time. All she needed was for her dad to emerge from the Divine Beast with good news to share, and she had a gut feeling that that would soon be the case.

She turned back to Noelani again. “So…are you sure everything’s okay? You weren’t awoken by a nightmare or anything? If you’d prefer to drift back off, I can stay here and cradle your tailfin while you sleep. I know that usually helps you with bad dreams.”

Her sister giggled. “No, that’s quite alright. I think I might need to stay awake for the time being. Is…Is Dad inside Vah Ruta right now?”

“…Yeah, he is, actually.” Mira answered with a bit of interest. “How did you know?”

“Something weird woke me up.” Noelani explained in a hushed voice. “I…I think Mom
Link smiled as he realized he could control the Divine Beast to a certain degree. That was an ability that would surely come in handy at some point. He remembered the terminals from his recent memories with Mipha inside Vah Ruta, and he had the distinct location of two of them nailed, but...according to her, there were actually five. It seemed like he would have some searching to do. Vah Ruta wasn’t entirely alien to him at this point, so hopefully, the only challenge would be in clearing the obstacles from the terminals. The less he’d have to scavenge, the happier he would be. Even up to this milestone in his journey, he had done enough scavenging.

The first terminal posed no issue for him. Having just recovered the prominent memory of his tour with Mipha, he remembered seeing the first glowing, blue pillar right on the first floor, where he was, near the archway on the opposite side. They were unique apparatuses, consisting of a guidance stone at its base and a tall, vertical pillar resembling a stalagmite. As such, despite their blending color, they stood out to the hero like a Yiga assassin in the middle of a Bokoblin camp.

His target was submerged in another small water pool, and by the looks of it, the pillar that defined it was not glowing at all. This was to be expected, since he found the color blue to be associated with sheikah technology that was…not corrupted. Naturally, the terminals would only appear blue if the Divine Beast was in its standard functioning state, and obviously, that was not the case. It would be his job to turn that around.

While the terminal was submerged, it was out of Link’s reach. In order to reactivate it, the glaring solution would be to either drain the water or lift the terminal out of it. Link had dealt with a number of similar problems throughout his short journey so far, and he had always managed to deal with them accordingly. If there was one thing his puzzle-solving mind loved, it was repetition. Divine Beasts, he observed, were great at repetition.

His first instinct was to present his sheikah slate and utilize its abilities to solve the problem. Being that it was designed in tandem with the puzzles he was dealing with, it made perfect sense that the slate would be his ticket to each and every one of the terminals ahead. All he needed was the patience to try each rune, one at a time.

Magnesis was always his first choice, especially with things that were beneath the water’s surface. For them, cryonis proved to be useless. Using magnesis throughout his journey, Link had been lucky to find metal treasure chests and rusted weapons at the bottom of lakes and streams. The rune quickly grew to be one of his favorites, second only to the bombs for obvious reasons. Once again, in this situation, magnesis proved to be the answer to the problem.

By activating the mystical function on his sheikah slate, Link discovered a strange contraption under the water to the right of the terminal. The slate illuminated before him, in an eyepopping pinkish halo, the shape of a circular crank. The rest of the contraption could still not be seen, as the magnesis rune was only capable of highlighting metal objects, and apparently, only the crank was made of metal. His solution was now glaring him in the face, though, so the rest of
what he could see did not matter.

He aimed the sheikah slate at the crank and shot the beam from the rune. In an instant, the little device was connected to the giant handle-like figure through means not understandable to him. He did understand how to operate the rune, however, and once he had the opportunity, he began swinging the slate around in slow circles to magnetically turn the crank. His life was made easy when the puzzles had simple solutions.

He turned his head slightly to the left and observed as the terminal began to rise eerily from the water, driven by the rotation of the metallic crank. It looked exactly the way he remembered, with its beacon-like structure, stony makeup, and ancient, curly engravings. It wasn’t lit, though, but he was just moments away from fixing that. In doing so, he’d be one step closer to giving his dear wife the service she deserved.

He kept the sheikah slate out in his left hand as he locked the crank in its furthest position and turned off the rune. As his gaze remained fixed on the newly-emerged terminal, his mind ran with thoughts of Mipha. How had she managed to activate the terminals a hundred years ago? Did they turn on automatically whenever she snapped her fingers? Exactly how connected had she been with the ancient machine before her death?

These idle questions occupied his conscious mind, so it was his subconscious that absentmindedly led the hero to the guidance stone to activate the terminal. It responded just like every other such stone in Hyrule, with a vibrant, blue flash. He waited patiently for something new and weird to happen as a result, but all he saw was the illuminating of the terminal pillar. The deep, glistening shade of blue it now produced sent him immediately back to his moments with Mipha inside the Divine Beast those many years ago. Slowly…he would return the giant to its former state of glory.

“Your memories…seem to be returning, my love…”

He stopped in his tracks as the ever-resounding voice returned to him. All thoughts in his head halted immediately. His memories…thickening, as they were…were all he had of Mipha’s wonderful, sweet voice. Her appearance was forever immortalized in the Domain’s plaza, sure, but…her voice was something he kept longing to hear. Every time she mustered the ability to speak to him, his mind practically went numb. Her presence was evident, but he just…needed more.

“I could never forget you…” He whispered weakly.

“There are…four terminals remaining…” She hummed in her ghostly, siren-like voice. “…I believe in you. Go…save our family……save our children…”

It was the second time she had said, “I believe in you.” It did not strike him as redundant, however. In hearing those four words, ever-powerful from their speaker, a second time, it was solidified in his head just how important this mission was to her, to himself, and to the entire
Domain. His wife’s gentle coaching increased his urgency to set her free.

Murdoch turned around and looked at his sister with fascination. If she was hearing her too, then something extraordinary must’ve been in the works. What forces were pulling their mother back to them?

“Wait…you heard her too?” Mira gasped, surprised also by their blind sibling’s claim.

Noelani shrugged. Her gaze was set absently toward the lake, an infinite distance away, as usual. “I…I think. It sounded like her, I guess.”

Mira reached forward and took hold of Noelani’s hands. Noelani jumped a little bit again, startled every time by unanticipated physical contact. She looked up in Mira’s direction, but her gaze was off by a bit. Mira stared intensely into her eyes, trying to find answers of her encounter through the cloudy veils they provided.

“What did she say?” She whispered.

“I…don’t…I don’t know.” Noelani stammered. She looked as if she was trying to find the right emotion to feel. “It sounded…more like…wind. It sounded just like her…somehow…but I couldn’t make out any words.”

Murdoch folded his arms in front of him and nodded his head. He had been listening for certain aspects in her description, and that there was the key detail he was expecting.

“That’s exactly what happened to me.” He stated. “Mother’s presence, it’s…rather uncanny in nature. You know she’s there, but…your mind can’t quite envelop it.”

Mira tried to hold back a giggle, but she failed miserably, resulting in an awkward cackle that properly portrayed her excitement. “So…we’ve all heard from Mom now! She’s not completely gone! She lives on!”

Murdoch glanced over at her with shock. “Hold on, she’s spoken to you too? At what point?”

She turned around to face him, beaming at him with ongoing, giddy enthusiasm. “Around the time Dad showed up! I couldn’t tell what it was at first, but it just sounded to me like her voice, in a way…despite the lack of words. Now that you guys have heard it too, it suddenly makes sense to me!”

Noelani gained a new level of interest in Mira with that statement. She tightened her grip on her sister’s hands and looked up at her with big, soulful eyes. “Wh…What did she say to you?”

“You know…I’m not really sure. I got a feeling on the inside like she was informing me of Dad’s upcoming arrival, but…I couldn’t really make much of it. Like I said, it…wasn’t really
clear to me…what I was experiencing at first.” Mira explained, having returned her attention to Noelani. She realized she was currently the center of interest for both of her siblings.

It came as no surprise to Murdoch that Mira had been hearing from their mother before himself and Noelani. Her spiritual connections just seemed to transcend the familiar dimension a lot of times. It wasn’t obvious just how supernatural her ability was, nor how far it truly reached, but it was obviously above normal levels, nonetheless. He still felt that Link should be the one to discuss her gift with her…even though the urge to reveal it himself was growing ever stronger. He wondered if Mipha had been trying to tell her during her brief callings from beyond the grave…however, he couldn’t be sure. Either way, it was currently being wasted. He saw in Mira the ability to act as a medium between them and their beloved, deceased mother for many years to come…if she could only hone her natural insights.

For the time being, all he could do was shake his head and return his attention to the Divine Beast. His father mattered most at the moment, after all. The fate of his own life, their mother’s spirit, and the rest of their people rested in his success. He may have still felt small fragments of resentment from his bitter past, but…they were irrelevant compared to the magnitude of the issue at hand. Therefore, from his spot on the Reservoir dock, if he happened to find anything going wrong inside Vah Ruta, he’d quickly swim over there to help his entrapped parent. The last parent he had left.

“It’s quite simple, actually. Watch my movements.” Mipha instructed.

The loving smile on her face made it hard for Link to look away. He was just so lost in her beauty, that…paying attention was proving to be quite a challenge. He was hearing her words, but not necessarily applying his attention to them. Nonetheless, he blindly played along with her actions, as the two of them absorbed the evening air on the tip of Vah Ruta’s trunk.

Mipha brought her hands out in front of her, her arms wide apart and her palms facing directly upward. She resembled the appearance of holding a large bowl in her hands. Then, she brought them slowly down to her thighs while rotating her palms to face outward to both sides. In the process, she also bent her knees and craned her body forward slightly, further emphasizing the roundness in her belly. Link tried to copy her motions to the best of his ability, but his eyes were still drifting to his wife’s many attractive features.

Lastly, in a defined, but fluidlike motion, she reextended her legs, brought her hands around to another upright position, and raised them to the sky. She looked as if she was performing a ritual to raise a dead soul from the depths of the earth. In reality, though, she was demonstrating to Link how she commanded Vah Ruta to raise its trunk. In following these movements, Link observed, in her form, the very essence of water…and fluidity. She seemed to control an unprecedented amount of discipline in keeping her body flowing like the liquids of the lake, absent of any jerky, cusp-like fractures. In doing so, she got the Divine Beast to respond to her like clockwork.
Now, of course, Ruta’s trunk is already in its upright position, so nothing will happen when I do that.” She mentioned with a slight giggle. “If I were to do this, however…”

Link watched her with amazement as she centered her body in a full, taut, upright position to begin her next demonstration. The bloated, turgid lump in her lower midsection made him think constantly about their future together, and as such, he couldn’t help but wonder if their unborn children would ever inherit Mipha’s godlike abilities. He could just picture it in his mind…one of his offspring, poised on Vah Ruta’s trunk, controlling the Beast with the same elegant grace of their mother this very evening. The experts back at the Domain estimated that she’d lay two eggs, based on her size, and that also brought the question as to which of them would have the power. Both, perhaps?

Mipha raised her hands high above her head before wrapping her palms around to a downward-facing position. She left only a short pause at the peak of her stance, and then she followed up with a steady return to her original, relaxed pose. As the muscles in her legs and back settled again, she exhaled, and lowered her hands out in front of her like she had done earlier that day in the water. It looked similar to the technique of re-centering one’s energy.

Promptly, Vah Ruta’s trunk, on which they were standing, began to lower. Link lost his balance and stumbled as his weight suddenly seemed to decrease on the descending platform. Mipha seemed entirely unfazed by the motion. As the trunk fell to a different position, the front face of Vah Ruta rose ever higher next to them in comparison, receiving greater light from the western, setting sun.

When their descent slowed to a gentle stop roughly halfway down to the water’s surface, Mipha stopped and opened her eyes. The trunk now appeared to be fully straightened, sticking directly outwards, parallel to the lake. Only the tip on which they were perched was curved upward. Link glanced back at her as she smiled at him cutely.

“What do you think?” She beamed.

He was too caught up in her adorable expression to respond immediately. “Oh, uh…it’s amazing. That…That was amazing.”

She tilted her head a little bit, sensing his slight distraction. Her smile remained as she reached up with her left hand and brushed her temple fin to the side. She was already acquainted with Link quite a bit at this point, obviously, but dwelling by his side among the Divine Beast had a way of making her appreciate his company even more. She sometimes felt, while he was here guarding her as his princess for the evening, like her love for him would never stop renewing. As such, she thought of a clever way to sneak some intimacy into their time together.

She chuckled through her closed lips. “Do you think you’d be able to do it?”

He jittered his head a few times, clearly trying to shake off his trance. “Huh? Do what?”

“Make Vah Ruta move. I already showed you the techniques, now do you think you can recite them?” She hummed curiously with a suggestive look in her eye.

“I…doubt it!” He babbled, bringing his hand up to scratch the back of his neck. “You’re Vah Ruta’s master, so it should only respond to you, I thought.”
“Aw, that’s quitter-talk, my love! Here, I’ll help you. You might just be surprised!” She exclaimed.

Never before in their relationship had Link heard Mipha act so outgoing. Her emotions were so genuine and pure...and he could tell that without having to hear from her much. He just...felt them in her presence. They were both quiet creatures, and despite the stereotypes, they got along very well like that. Now, though, she was basically acting like his foil, and he found it to be quite interesting. He remembered how excited she had been to show him Vah Ruta, since their last visit had been brief and uneventful, and the way he saw it, that was the perfect explanation for her radiant energy since arriving. He and Vah Ruta were two massive parts of Mipha’s very being, he deduced, and as such, accompanying her there must’ve been causing her a perfect day.

He stood completely still as these thoughts ran through his mind. In the meantime, Mipha walked around behind him and reached forward under his armpits to take hold of his wrists. In doing so, she had to lean into his body, causing her pregnant belly to press firmly against the base of his back. He shivered as he felt this, his mind going from a light jog to a full sprint. What could she be up to?

“Okay now, first I’ll show you the trunk movements again. Are you ready?” She asked.

“Sure.” He replied nonchalantly.

Mipha promptly tightened her grip on Link’s wrists, and with a gentle motion, she guided them upwards above his head. Link consciously kept his arm muscles limp so his wife could easily drag his limbs around to her heart’s content. She was noticeably shorter than him, however, so to get his hands to clasp together at their full, upright extension, she was forced to stretch onto her tip-toes. He felt her balance falter because of this, and he struggled to keep from grinning stupidly at it.

The two of them felt a jerk in the platform beneath them as Vah Ruta’s trunk slowly began to rise once again. At this, his awkward smile turned into a bit of chuckling. He was delighted to see the machine answering to his movements, even though, deep down, he knew it was really Mipha doing all the work. After all, by helping along his motions, she was indeed making them herself as well. Nonetheless, it was an amusing act of cute entertainment she was displaying for him, and he quickly began to enjoy it.

“Vah Ruta is a creature of water.” She explained lively. “Therefore, he responds primarily to body movements that resemble fluid. You must always remember to discipline your every joint into moving in tandem with each other so as to not break the rippling pattern.”

He smirked. “You Zoras must be naturals at this.”

“Of course we are! It is why the ancient sheikah designed Ruta to be piloted by a Zoran Champion. In order to control him, you must behave like a Zora!” She informed eagerly.

At the trunk’s apex position, Mipha pulled Link’s wrists back down to his sides. She did not let go of them, though, so Link made sure to maintain his submissive stance. He’d let her play with him as long as she wanted. He wanted this to be her time, because to him, she deserved it more.
than anything.

“Ready to see how to make him turn?” She prompted.

“Ooh, well…” He craned his neck a bit until her heard the bone crack. “…whenever you are.”

She was practically already in the process of moving his body along for him as he was still finishing his response. Her excitement and enthusiasm were more than apparent here this evening, in both the flare of her words and the dominance of her actions. He was in the midst of her beloved territory, and she was making it known to him. He could tell they would be spending a lot of time with the Divine Beast together in the future. For her enjoyment, the time would always be worth it.

With her hands still grasped tightly around his wrists, Mipha pulled both of his arms back into an upright position. Rather than pressing his hands together to form a point like last time, she waved both of them to the right side as if he were stretching his left hip. The maneuver forced his spine to curve accordingly, along with his head, making his vision turn slightly sideways. He felt like he was receiving a yoga lesson, and the entire time, he felt Mipha’s smooth, soft skin moving against his back. It was a surreal sensation.

As he anticipated, the platform beneath them began to rumble dubiously. Link felt his balance shift strongly as a horizontal movement suddenly ensued, bringing them around in a sluggish, clockwise direction. Mipha pushed her body against him more firmly as the phenomenon occurred in order to keep him from stumbling or falling over. In doing so, she forced her belly into his back a little further, and he aptly hoped she was being considerate of her eggs. Even a Hylian like him knew that, as far as durability was concerned, Zora eggs were nothing like Cucco eggs.

The shifting of the Divine Beast occurred in short bursts, which Mipha was quick to explain.

“Ruta actually achieves this movement by lifting and lowering his legs under the water, much like the way an actual four-legged creature moves on land!” She exclaimed from behind his neck. She spoke rather loudly to overcome the noise of the Beast’s mechanical parts. “It kicks up a lot of waves in the lake, though, so…”

To punctuate her sentence, she brought Link’s hands back up to their previous position, which also straightened his back. Then, she lowered them to his sides once more before finally letting go of his wrists. The Divine Beast halted its movement after turning only thirty degrees or so. When the platform stabilized, Mipha took a step back to allow Link to turn around and face her again. She flashed him another shy, cute grin.

“Isn’t he just…fascinating?” She sighed.

He smirked. “Well, you know…I’ve been to a lot of places with Zelda lately, and I don’t know…” He shrugged his shoulders and pretended to look disinterested. “…maybe Vah Medoh is better.”

She glared at him, trying hard not to laugh. She didn’t want to give him the satisfaction of hearing her laugh to that one, even though he already seemed to be patting himself on the back. “Very funny, love. You and your secret sense of humor.”
Link’s entire life had operated on a constant fuel tank of stress, no matter how dense his responsibilities were at a given time. Long ago, he had reached a point where he’d always feel needed somewhere, even when he had some time off, and that played as a jammed vice on his conscience. He found that, over time, the persistent standard by which he was forced to live became commonplace in his mind, and before he knew it, he had forgotten what relaxation even was. Here, though, with Mipha, he actually felt…home. The Divine Beast…the Eastern Reservoir…the Domain…it all felt like his oasis, backed by the Zora people, who cared about him, and their princess, who loved him to the very end. Here, his family was all that concerned him, and at this moment, they were all standing right before him, on Mipha’s two legs. She was the only being that was capable of healing the pressure on his psyche.

“You know…I’m glad you took me up here.” He stated quietly. He returned to her a gentle, content grin that just seemed to make her heart melt for a moment.

Mipha opened her arms in front of her and approached her husband for a hug. Knowing well what her intentions were, he copied her action while leaning forward. At the growing peak of their moment together, Link suddenly took notice of how excellent the weather was around them. A flowing, refreshing breeze brushed through them as they entwined together on the trunk of the Divine Beast, their arms weaving through each other in a perfect lock. They, as Hyrule’s most unbreakable couple, were formed by the labyrinth tests of fate, and they couldn’t have been more grateful. All doubt…was gone.

With her head still buried in his shoulder, she briefly opened her eyes. “Oh, Link…?”

“Hmm?” He murmured.

“Could you clap your hands for me? Just once?” She asked randomly.

“Clap my hands? Why?”

“…Just do it.”

He raised his eyebrow, curious as to why she was asking him this. He separated from her and took a step back, and when he did so, he saw a weird, poorly-concealed smile on her face. At that point, he knew something was up. Knowing her, though, he figured it couldn’t be anything dangerous or otherwise serious, so he set his skepticism aside. As his suspicious look remained, he brought his hands about two feet apart in front of him, and he slapped them together.

Immediately, a powerful, earthshattering roar emanated from Vah Ruta, sending Link’s entire nervous system into a frenzy. His eyes suddenly went wide as he stumbled backward and fell on his bottom. The roar went on for a moment, continuing to ripple through every inch of the two of them while escaping miles away into the atmosphere. All of eastern Hyrule would now be aware of their shenanigans.

Mipha giggled generously while Link tried to pick himself up off the ground. He looked her straight in the eye as he made it to his feet and brushed off his backside. Her tickled attitude was, admittedly, kind of contagious to him.
“I guess you’re right.” He babbled. “Vah Ruta is pretty fascinating.”

Mipha’s kind, massaging voice had been working wonders on Link’s memory during his time in the Divine Beast. Her supernatural presence had been there to soothe him after each and every terminal he activated, encouraging him and telling him how many targets he had left to find. Without her physical form walking alongside him in these cavernous, echoing chambers, however, he felt very…alone. The place where he remembered spending his brightest moments with his wife…now…felt like a vacuum on his sanity. When she wasn’t there, it was dark, quiet, creepy, and…empty. The sooner he could free this mechanical monster, the sooner he could return to the ones that mattered in the current day and age, and the sooner he’d be able to move on and leave Vah Ruta to his memories.

As his most recent recollection faded away from his mind, he opened his eyes and returned to the bleakness of the present. He was now standing on the trunk of the Beast, perched high above the sloshing waters of the Reservoir. The sky, after having been blanketed in Vah Ruta’s thick mist for the past several weeks, was finally becoming noticeably clear. For the first time since arriving at the Domain, Link could see the moon. The water below reflected a near perfect image of the sky above, at least from the height at which he was standing. The undulating curves of the giant fish sculpture at the crest of the Domain could be seen clearly as well, and in its smoothness, it also shared in the reflection of the moon’s light.

By standing on the edge of the platform, Link was able to look down and see the Reservoir dock. There, he could just barely see Mira and Murdoch, standing near the awning with their attention evidently on each other. They looked about as big as mini figurines from this distance, and by the looks of it, they did not notice his presence on the Divine Beast’s trunk. Noelani was still on the bed under the awning, he figured, and was therefore out of his view from this angle.

Something about seeing his children from such a distance, in a setting where they were not in direct contact, dawned on him an interesting perspective. He could see how they behaved in his absence, including their interactions with each other. He could form some ideas of their mannerisms before having experienced his return a couple days ago, be it in the caliber of their passing conversations, their attitudes, and their level of openness with each other as siblings. Of course, things were different now than they were before he found his way to the Domain, but since his arrival, he had been with them basically every moment. From his perch on Vah Ruta’s trunk, he could briefly observe how they carried themselves independently.

The whole experience really got his mind thinking about them. They were indeed a tragic trio, unfortunately. It meant wonders to him to see them bounce back so well, at least mostly, from the misfortunes of their past. They seemed to find an everlasting shield of strength in their commitment to their family, whether its members were alive or dead. With him and Mipha gone for so long, they seemed to make up for their lack of parents by feeding their comfort off of each other. To carry on like that for a hundred years, and still be dependable, well-adjusted young adults upon his return……it was an undying resilience that was clearly inherited from himself and Mipha. Chips off the old block, they were called, and he found himself proud of the distinction.

They were more than enough for him to get over Mipha’s passing. It would take a bit of
time, but he would have no problem living out the remainder of his life with those three. He wouldn’t care if they *never* outgrew their attachment to him.

He took a quiet moment to clear his head before returning to his mission. The one good thing about being so distracted in his thoughts lately was that he at least had something to actually *think* about during his adventure, as opposed to the confused blankness he was suffering from previously. Of all the memories he was to recover on his journey, he was glad Zora’s Domain was the first. Hyrule actually held *critical meaning* to him now, and he hadn’t even set out to find the other Divine Beasts yet. It felt like having a newfound level of sanity to actually have some purpose behind his efforts.

He turned around toward the middle of the trunk on which he was standing. He shared the platform with a terminal. It was, in fact, the last terminal he had not activated. According to Mipha, once he acquired this terminal, the only thing standing between him and the revival of Vah Ruta was the main control unit in the back chamber. And once he touched his sheikah slate to the pedestal on that control unit…his mission in Zora’s Domain would be over. At least…the *hero* part of his mission.

A lot was going to be riding on the next thirty minutes or so. He didn’t know what to expect at this point, or whether it was going to be a simple process, but it was going to be the first major milestone in his quest to retake Hyrule from the clutches of the one who took his wife from him. He would at least have the peace of knowing that he set the Zoras of the Domain on a path of peace and safety from the Divine Beast, and he would have critical leverage in the upcoming confrontation at Hyrule Castle.

With a carefully silenced mind, Link drew the sheikah slate from his belt and walked toward the guidance stone. He knew Mipha was excitedly watching *over* him, waiting eagerly for the moment her beloved Beast could be free once again. Seeing her husband *alone* must’ve also been a relief for her, as losing the children to the Divine Beast would be too catastrophic for either of them to bear. What else could her spirit’s conscience have been thinking?

A deep breath ushered Link’s confidence to press the slate to the pedestal. Like with all the other terminals, the device responded with a pulse of blue light, accompanied by a confirmation beep. The pillar before him lit up with the same blue light, and at that moment, control was his. All he had to do now was activate the main control unit, and that task was restated to him when Mipha’s voice appeared again to dance on his ears.

“That…was the final terminal…” Her spirit chimed. “Now…you can access the main control unit. You’re getting…so close…”

“If only you could hear me…” Link muttered woefully.

“Please, my love…” She continued desperately, her voice teetering on the edge of reality. “…be careful not to let your guard down.”
For Mipha, Link was fully prepared to take on challenges bordering reckless. He remembered the promises he had made her during their night together down on the dock, but…that was before he had lost her to the Calamity. Her paranormal presence among him this evening was awakening levels in his emotions he, as an amnesiac, didn’t even know he had. He had to consider his children, though, since they still depended on him just as much as the rest of their people. If anything, they needed him more than the rest. Without him, they’d officially have nobody left, except maybe Sidon and the king.

Because of that, he settled prominently on following Mipha’s advice. She always knew what was best, after all. She had presided over him with her motherly watch even since his own childhood, and that said a lot about her experience in wisdom. With that in mind, if she was telling him to proceed carefully…it must’ve signaled an upcoming danger. Perhaps he would definitely have to follow her advice.

The finale was on its way. Link found it unfortunate that Murdoch and the girls couldn’t be around to witness Vah Ruta’s emancipation in person, even though their safety on the dock was obviously more important. It was coming time to do his wife a great service…the service she had always deserved. An action, whether quick or complicated, that would end a century-long era of disharmony among the Zoras and their Divine Beast. It’s what Mipha would’ve wanted, and he was on the brink of providing it for her. Get to the main control unit.

He had no trouble remembering its location in Vah Ruta, so the map on his sheikah slate wasn’t necessary. With a series of bold, marching steps toward the edge of the trunk, Link readied his paraglider, and he jumped off to begin sailing to the other end of his and Mipha’s historical haven. Hopefully, within the next hour, he’d have Vah Ruta back to being exactly that once again, for all eternity. This time, he’d intend to pass the Divine Beast on to his children, as well.

It all just depended on how the next moments went.
Counteraction

The chamber containing the main control unit was quiet. Vah Ruta sat perfectly still in the lake following Link’s last command, which had been the final lowering of its mighty trunk. Therefore, the Beast made no sound whatsoever, and, coupled with the new lack of rain, there existed no ambient noise to accompany Link’s surging thoughts. Chills scurried up his spine when his feet descended into the chamber’s shallow water, breaking the eerie silence with a light splash. The next sound to be heard was his paraglider being stowed back with the rest of his gear.

If there was anything he had learned during his travels, it was that major accomplishments never came easily. Now that he was standing face-to-face with the main control unit, looming on the other side of the room, a mere sixty feet from the liberation of the Divine Beast and the Zora people, his alertness grew ever stronger. Walking forward and placing the sheikah slate to the pedestal would be too easy. There had to be something more. And as such, the silence surrounding him began to feel like…the calm before the storm.

Each step he took towards the unit, and the splashes they created in the water, rang through his ears with their own unique weight. Mipha and the denizens of Zora’s Domain were counting on his success. Hearing the cloud-like voice of Zelda describe his importance back on the Great Plateau had not quite given him the sense of urgency he had now, with a critical turning point now inches in front of him. The legends were quickly becoming all too real.

He couldn’t be sure if he could feel Mipha’s presence in the chamber with him, since she had gone deathly silent after her last encouraging statements. He figured, one way or another, he’d find out soon. As he made it to the foot of the main control unit, which towered above him much higher than he had originally thought it would, he drew the sheikah slate from his belt and brought it forward slowly. He kept his other hand steady over the hilt of his weapon, ready to lash out at anything that might attempt to sneak up behind him.

With a stony scraping noise, the slate made contact with the guidance stone. Link held his breath, unsure if the device would respond to the action or not. The sheer amount of memories and heartache that had led him to this point over the last couple days was staggering, and now, it was time to bring all of it to a close. All he needed was for the glowing, orange lights decorating the pedestal to flash their hypnotizing, ocean-like shade of blue, and his family’s ongoing nightmare would be over. Any second now…

In a timespan too short to properly address, a powerful, ghastly cloud of purple vapor shot out of the control unit, forcing Link to stumble backwards. He nearly dropped the sheikah slate in the motion, but he managed to secure his grip and stow the device back on his belt before glancing up at the infected apparatus in front of him.

The control unit, including the guidance stone attached to it, had become shrouded in a thick, wispy fog of Malice immediately following the attack on Link. It looked almost like a living, dark flame, lapping at the ancient machine like a hungry tiger. With its presence came the deactivation of the control unit, meaning he would not be able to regain dominion over the Divine Beast while it was still there, much to his dismay. It seemed Ganon was still conscious in these Beasts after all.
This was not the only occurring phenomenon, however. Link only had a brief moment to survey the damage on the control unit before an illuminating glow began to amass behind him in the chamber. At this point, every instinct in his body was already declaring danger, and when the blue light appeared against the walls of the chamber in his vision, he immediately drew his rusted spear and turned around, expecting to see a possessed Guardian of some sort.

Instead, he was surprised to see an indistinguishable ball of formless energy, hovering above the watery floor of the chamber and pulsing with a loose rhythm. He didn’t dare approach the mass in consideration of its mysterious nature. As he watched, though, he noticed the entity begin to take a certain shape. Its central volume elongated into a thin, twisted body with no legs. It grew two long, frail arms with sheikah-themed enhancements. Its right arm developed a clawed hand on its end, while its left arm came to end at an angled shaft that quickly ionized into an oversized Guardian spear, reaching up to what must’ve been twenty or thirty feet in length. Lastly, its head formed on top of the body, sporting a wild frenzy of maroon hair and a hideous tri-pointed faceplate, engraved with corrupted sheikah designs.

Link took several steps back as the last bits of the wicked creature took its form. Its head was down at first, but once it finished materializing before the hero, it looked up to face him with expressionless contempt. The single blue eye at the center of its faceplate flashed brightly with an accompanied blinking sound, and before Link knew it, he was facing Waterblight Ganon. The monster reared its body back and released a sickening screech that rippled across the lake from the Divine Beast.

Back on the dock, Mira, Murdoch, and Noelani waited in agonizing uncertainty for the next turn of events. It was a blessing to all be together again under the clearing sky, after such a long period of separation and chaos. Their father was gone again, though, and now that they knew where he was this time, the fact was somehow even more unsettling.

Noelani suddenly turned her head a little. “You…You guys heard that, right?”

Her siblings turned toward her. She kept her head locked in place while the two of them looked on with a bit of confusion. Her foggy eyes were fixed on the lake directly before her, a very unusual state, given her naturally lackadaisical optical acuity. Mira could see this.

“Hear what?” She cooed. She took a couple steps toward her evidently disturbed sister.

“It sounded like…like…some kind of wail. Like scraping a sword along a stone slab.” The blind Zora shivered. “…It came from the Divine Beast.”

Murdoch crossed his arms and eyed Noelani with a curious gaze. “Are you sure? I didn’t hear anything.”

“Lani’s really good at hearing sometimes, you know.” Mira assured him. “It could be something important related to Dad.”
“I’m positive.” Noelani added. “I could’ve sworn I heard that sound only one other time in my life.”

When the three of them were together, no secrets existed. Their minds, physically separate, as they were, operated as one. It was known to be that way in the carefree days of their childhood, as well as the years immediately following the Great Calamity. Mira and Noelani had never left each other’s side throughout the century, so the fact applied to them especially, but Murdoch had fallen a little behind over time. Regardless, their psyches were returning to their original unity, and as a result, their bond together was finding its way back to its strength from the good old days. With Link’s life potentially on the line, it was as if their childhood was returning to them all over again.

“Wait…Lani…you’ve heard this noise before?” Mira asked.

“When, exactly?” Murdoch chimed uncertainly.

“It was on the night of the Calamity.” Noelani quivered as a chill found its way down her spine. “I heard it shortly after Mom entered the Divine Beast.”

Never in his life, at least from what he could remember, had Link seen something so heinous. The ghostly remnants of a similar abomination had been visible lurking outside of Hyrule Castle for the last couple weeks, but that did not compare to the completed form that was staring him down in the control chamber of Vah Ruta. The creature looked like a servant sent from the Devil himself, programmed to maim anyone who tried to break its hold on the Divine Beast. It was ugly, it was disgusting, it was menacing…and Link was determined to kill it.

“Please, take care!” Mipha’s spectral voice urged. “That thing is one of Ganon’s creations!”

He had a feeling that was the case, since it had been Ganon that wrenched the Divine Beasts away from the Champions in the first place. If it was one of Ganon’s creations, however, then the real Calamity Ganon must’ve been encased entirely within Hyrule Castle, biding his time until he would be strong enough to break free of Zelda’s grasp. Killing whatever this thing was would not do anything to weaken Link’s primary adversary.

“I put up as much of a fight as I could, but it proved to be my demise one hundred years ago…”
Ah, so this really was the culprit. This mangey, pulsing propagation of darkness and hatred, that which had commandeered the great Vah Ruta, incarnate of Calamity Ganon, was the thing that yanked Link’s family life out from under him a century in the past. His children’s tragic adolescence of confusion and isolation, fueled by loneliness and trauma, was the result of the figure writhing before him. But most importantly… it had Mipha’s blood on its hands. And that would not stand without a price.

“You must finally set things right for our family…” She breathed resonantly. “…Save our children, Link…..save our people……save us all………..I have faith in you!”

Just as Mipha’s ghostly spirit was finishing its encouraging message, the monster twisted its torso sideways and brought its illuminant, blue spear backwards for a frontward strike. Link had taken on Murdoch, his own son, in a duel just earlier that day, and succeeded brilliantly. Therefore, his reflexes were still as trained as ever to deal with a spear battle, as the corresponding mechanics were largely the same across all opponents. However, there were a few…obvious differences between Murdoch and his current opponent, one being the debilitating length of his opponent’s weapon. It could blow through him like a toothpick stabbing a grape, and the creature wouldn’t even have to leave that spot.

Link recognized this danger, and when the lesser-Ganon-clone thrust its spear out at him, he reacted with a swift jump to the side. It took every bit of his energy to clear the distance without getting impaled, considering the shin-deep pool of water in which he was trapped. His slightly airborne enemy did not have the same disadvantage.

He was forced to catch his breath for a brief moment, but before he could recover and assume a proper, defensive stance, his savage attacker withdrew the spear and lashed it out again for another blow. Unable to obtain the footing for another jump, Link let his legs collapse beneath him, dropping his head and the rest of his extremities to the floor just as the spear whipped at him from overhead. Its sharp, burning hot edge sliced through a fraction of his hair.

The thing fought viciously. Link was momentarily reminded of Murdoch’s intense, offensive, unrelenting style of fighting that had given him difficulties back in the Domain earlier that morning, and he began to reform his strategy in the few moments he had before he was assaulted again. The differences lay in his opponent’s size, the length of the weapon he was dealing with, and the water covering the playing field. Oh, and lastly, he couldn’t forget that this duel was to the death, not the first blood.

He picked his now soaking wet body up off the ground and armed his own spear forward. He also had a sword packed on his back from when he first arrived at the Domain, but it was of much higher quality than some of his other weapons, so he was looking to preserve it until it was needed the most. This time, he was prepared to take on another frontward thrust, and maybe attempt to advance forward after dodging to the side again. Counterattacks would have to be made eventually, or he would ultimately find himself sharing a tomb with his wife.
“Mipha…I’m home.” He whispered, stepping up onto the Eastern Reservoir platform for the first time in two and a half months.

The first response he got was a loud and hugely excited gasp, followed by the sight of her face as she raised her head and turned around. There she was, gorgeous as ever, sitting absently on their special waterbed under the awning, completely alone. He had not gotten to lay eyes on her during all that time away. Visits would’ve surely been in order, but…her Champion’s Trials had tied her up hopelessly, away from her husband and her eggs.

Now that he was finally standing before her again, with nothing but fifty feet of distance separating them, Mipha quickly stood up from the bed and hurried over to reunite with Link. Their trip to Hyrule Castle had been timed so terribly, for under the planned circumstances, their unhatched offspring could’ve been watched right on the home-front, requiring no extended leave-of-absence on either of their parts. He was finally back now, though, after roughly ten weeks holed up in a spring near the Hylia River to watch her eggs, and in his arms sat something of unfathomable significance.

“Oh, sweet goddess, Link…” She swooned, gazing lovingly at the object poised carefully in his two hands. “…they’re just…beautiful…”

He was carrying three sizable glass jars directly in front of his waist. They were each filled to the brim with fresh water from the spring, and swimming around in the water, contained individually by each jar…were his and Mipha’s newborn children. They looked like tiny little tadpoles, no bigger than the palms of Link’s hands, and lacking any sort of bodily shape. Their tailfins, which Zoras were known to have hanging down the backs of their heads, were actually the babies’ entire body mass, and also their mode of locomotion through the water. They swam exactly like regular fish.

Two of them were nearly pink, sporting an amazingly light shade of red along the upper strip of their teeny, wavy bodies. The third one was red as well, but unlike its siblings, it was as dark as could be. To their astonishment, the dark one had shark-like dorsal and pectoral fins sticking out of the center length of its tail, much like those seen on the young Prince Sidon. Clearly, they were a genetic feature exclusive to the royal family of Zoras. As for the other two, one’s tail was somewhat short and stubby, and the other one’s tail stretched to be as long as the two others’ combined. For triplets, they were charmingly diverse.

“Do you know what their genders are? I…can’t really tell.” Link confessed. The gender of Hylian infants was much more easily determined than that of Zoran infants, to a Hylian, at least.

Mipha sighed dreamily as she watched her brand new offspring scurry around in their respective jars. She wished she could pop the lids off their jars and hold each of them tightly against her chest, but alas, she knew they needed to be kept safe inside a contained body of water until their limbs and lungs could develop. The Domain had many accommodations for new younglings such as theirs.

“The dark one is male, and his pinkish siblings are both female.” She explained to him
briefly. “I can tell by the shape of their foreheads. As you can see, the dark one’s forehead is pointier than that of the others, which is a primary characteristic of a male Zora. He also seems to have some extra endowments on his tailfin, which is something only males of the royal family have.”

“That’s…actually very interesting.” He hummed.

As they watched, the sibling with the extra long tailfin swam right into the side of her jar, bumping into the glass with a silent thud. The couple gasped a little at the spectacle, Link feeling the jerk in his hands from the tiny impact. Their little fishlike infant floated in place for a moment before turning around and swimming the other way.

The next thing Link noticed was an incoming sideways swing. The creature brought the arm containing the spear out to the side in a circular arc, which signaled to him that it was reeling back to swing the weapon like a baseball bat. His foe may have been big, but its spear was disproportionately long compared to the rest of its body, making inertia-intensive actions difficult to execute quickly. A swing like that would take it more than a moment to recover from, and in that time gap, Link saw his chance.

The odd, solid light that made up the spear blinked quickly, and in the following instant, the monster sent it flying towards Link from the side. Link wasn’t sure how blunt or sharp the sides of the spear were, but for the sake of not being either thrown against the wall or cut cleanly in half, he decided he was not going to take the chance. With timing only he could perfect, as the spear skidded towards him along the surface of the water, he bent his knees and vaulted into the air, entering a backflip he hadn’t entirely intended.

Time once again seemed to slow down in his perspective, much like it had while fighting Murdoch that morning. He always got an unexplained burst of energy whenever he performed a perfectly timed jump. It was as if his adrenaline had increased tenfold. In such a heightened state, he could look down and see the glowing, blue blade breeze past him beneath his feet, taking ripples of water with it. In front of him, his opponent continued the whiplashing motion in slow motion as well, trapped by the normal passage of time. Now Link had plenty of time to work with.

As soon as he landed back on the ground, he charged forward furiously with his small, inferior spear pointed directly in front of him. As far as his attacker was concerned, he was still standing back in his original position, taking what would hopefully be a deadly hit from the swing. Link had unknowingly retained the knowledge of his past lives, and they urged him that patience was the key to defeating threats that trumped you in size and might. This moment was one of the few that he would get during this battle, but truthfully, they were all he needed.

He sprinted up beneath the floating base of the pulsating menace, and he quickly began lashing his spear out at it with signature speed and intensity. In real time, the blows were almost too fast to track, and in achieving them, he was cutting into the beast’s slimy base and destabilizing its balance.
Each stab had so much meaning to it. He was actively getting revenge for the loss of his loved one all those years ago. Link was never historically a vengeful person, but never before had he also been so attacked, on levels deeper than physical. Each thrust of his weapon into the dark essence of his enemy was a redeeming grace for Mipha and his children. In doing this, he was closing the damaging gashes left by his hundred-year absence. Similar progress had certainly been made in his accomplished actions leading up to this point, but none of them came close in magnitude.

He cleared away the last of his adrenaline rush with one final, forceful lash of his weapon, and in doing so, he finally toppled the tower that was Waterblight Ganon. The predatory being let out a pained shriek and collapsed from the air, falling into a crumpled lump in the pool below. Its spear fell to the ground as well, landing horizontally behind Link. Once he had his enemy temporarily incapacitated on the ground, he took advantage by running around to its face plate, reeling his weapon back again, and stabbing it clean in the eye.

The action sent a shockwave throughout the room. Link was unexpectedly thrown backwards as the thing jolted back upright to its initial position, reacting harshly to the blow he had delivered. For a moment, Link thought he would have to return to his original standoff and repeat the action again, but instead, he watched as Waterblight shifted around in an odd way, forming back into the blue ball of energy it had been before.

The ball hovered away from Link and towards the center of the chamber, directly above the main control unit. It hung in place there for a couple moments, leaving Link to wonder if he had won the battle yet or not. Nothing with this behavior existed naturally, nor had he encountered it on his travels, so he was playing his responses by reaction only.

He couldn’t help but feel curious about Mipha’s fateful encounter with this beast a hundred years ago. From the memories he had recovered so far, he knew her as a graceful and agile character, both of which would’ve been incredible traits to have in the battle. However, he had doubts concerning her reaction time. While some of Waterblight’s attacks were slowly executed and easily predictable, others seemed to fly out at him unexpectedly, and in a similar situation, Mipha probably would’ve faltered. It was a painful thought to cross his mind. The memories stung, but standing in the same room as his wife during her death, fighting the same being that had killed her…it tended to amplify his lament.

He reset his focus as the glowing ball reformed back into the figure of Waterblight Ganon above the main control unit. It happened right away this time, sparing Link the anticipation of watching his horrific enemy slowly come into being a second time. He widened his stance in preparation for an incoming strike, but what happened instead was nothing short of surprising.

His adversary extended its free hand, in Link’s direction, and raised it skyward. Link’s first assumption was that Waterblight would conjure up some kind of energy sphere and throw it at him, as Ganon himself had been keen on doing many times in his past lives. However, instead of attacking directly, the mysterious action caused the water level in the chamber around them to rise. Link stumbled in shock as the water overtook him rapidly, forcing him to stow his spear and free his arms to swim. It took him a moment to surface himself above the water level, and as he did so, coughing and sputtering all the while, he could barely make out the appearance of his enemy ahead of him.
Waterblight repositioned itself in its place, adjusting to the new atmosphere it had created in the room. Its base swung upward and appeared to grapple to an invisible location just short of the ceiling, anchoring the rest of the monster’s form in an upside-down orientation overlooking the battlefield. In the meantime, Link was slow to notice the four square platforms that had been left amongst the pool, and by the time he was frantically swimming towards one of them, Waterblight had begun hurling large ice blocks in his direction.

“Careful…” The tensed voice of Mipha warned. “Not much room to operate.”

It was only early morning, and the sun was just barely finishing its imperial ascent over the Domain’s eastern horizon. It came as a surprise to him that Mipha was already awake and active, considering her recent plethora of responsibilities as Vah Ruta’s new Champion. On the days she was free, today included, he expected her to sleep in as long as possible. In addition, it was odd of her to be up on the Reservoir platform by her lonesome, away from Sidon and her father, on what was seemingly an unremarkable morning. It left him to wonder if, maybe…she had somehow predicted the day her eggs would hatch?

“Have you thought of any names?” She asked him suddenly, cutting off his idle glare into the glistening eyes of his tiny offspring.

“Oh, names?” He stuttered. “I…um…no. I didn’t think too deeply on it.”

His wife cocked her head to the side and shot him a judgmental glance. “Link, you’ve supposedly been staying back at Crenel Peak to watch our eggs for an entire couple of months! While I’m thinking about it, actually, I’d like to know how that went…but seriously, how could you not have thought at least once about a name?”

“I don’t know…” He babbled, rubbing the back of his head sheepishly. “…I guess the time just got away from me. I was thinking a lot about this business with you, the other Champions, and Zelda. There’s just…a lot going on in the world right now.”

Mipha looked down sadly at their little swimming tadpoles. They didn’t even seem to notice they were being watched, let alone having awareness of the state of the world in which they had just been born. Life to them, at least at the moment, was nothing more than a constant state of confusion and strange optimism. They swim to the left and take in their surroundings, then they swim to the right and take in their surroundings, and finally, they turn back around behind them and…take in their surroundings. It was a type of freedom and innocence that just…haunted the young Zora princess.

“Yeah…” She sighed. “…I guess there’s something to be said about that.”
“There’s a silver lining, though.” Link added. Upon looking at him, Mipha could see a small, content grin on his face. “I may not have taken the time to think about names during my time at the creek, but that doesn’t mean I can’t come up with a few nice ideas.”

Mipha reached up and put a hand on her shoulder, sliding her fingers shyly under the series of thin fins she had there. “I see. So…what ideas were you thinking of?”

“Well…I picked up some things during my time as a knight. Little things.” Link explained. “For instance…” Mipha followed his finger as he brought it forward and pointed at the jar containing the female sibling with the golden eyes. “…whenever I look at this one, I think of…’Mira.’”

“‘Mira?’ Is that…a term for something?” She asked curiously.

“I remember it means ‘ocean.’” Link answered with a light nod of his head. “It’s translated from an ancient language. Some usages of the phrase were dug up in some ruins during the past few years, and I overheard Zelda talking about it one time on a mission.”

By the look on her face, Mipha seemed to like the sound of that phrase. Almost too much. She shot him a suspicious glare. “You know, that sounds awfully convenient, Link.”

Link defensively put his right hand on his chest. “I swear it is true. Zelda has always been the type to appreciate ancient history, so she tends to ramble about these things while she’s out doing research. She only knew a few words from the translations, but one of the ones she mentioned was ‘Mira.’”

Mipha nodded her head slowly as she seemed to ponder the possibility of using such a phrase as a name. “And…you’re sure it means ‘ocean?’”

“I’m certain.” He replied confidently. “And whenever I look at our daughter here, it’s the phrase I keep thinking of.”

There was another pause as Mipha continued to think over his choice. He stared at her intently, unsure of whether she’d settle for it or not. She did seem to like it, but often, she had a tendency to scrap her own personal choices in consideration of others. It was obviously one of her most admirable traits, but if she found ‘Mira’ to be a name unfitting for the living, breathing, opinion-having creature that would inherit it, that same trait would cause his proposal to promptly hit the trash bin.

“…I think it sounds beautiful.” She finally stated. “Okay, we shall name her…Mira.”

As Link’s lips curled into a delighted smile, the two of them looked down at Mira’s jar. They watched as she continued to swim around her confined space, taking short breaks every few seconds to breathe and observe her new home. She had just been given the name that she would have and cherish for the rest of her life, and she didn’t even know it. As far as she was concerned, the only thing that mattered was the measly square foot of space in which she rode out her new, freshly-gifted existence.

Link sighed lovingly. “She has your eyes, you know.”
An ice block had clipped Link’s leg on his way to the nearest platform, and in doing so, it slightly crippled his ability to swim. The rest of his retreat had turned into an awkward, twisted paddle-stroke as he used his arms to reach the ledge and yank himself up. Waterblight was not finished with him yet, though, as evidenced by the second wave of ice blocks it sent his way immediately thereafter.

His opponent was fast, but he, himself, was faster. The two primary things on his mind were the riveting feelings of pain shooting up his leg, and the new cluster of ice blocks barreling towards him. He knew which of the two conundrums could be ignored at the moment, and in turn, which one needed immediate attention. Once he had that decision nailed in his head, he was struck with an idea that he had drawn from his encounter with Vah Ruta’s wrath earlier that evening. After all, the ice blocks he was about to forcefully receive looked...strikingly familiar.

Just as he had done on Murdoch’s back not too long ago, Link quickly grabbed the sheikah slate from his hip, and he cycled through the runes it had available. It was to his advantage to know the interface of the slate as well as he did, because time was obviously of the essence. Spending extra time to awkwardly learn his way around the little device would’ve surely resulted in a swift mule-kick by the incoming ice.

Cryonis was his target, and in a matter of less than a second, he had found it. He figured it was worth a shot, and if he was wrong on the assumption, he’d take the hit like a warrior and try to get back up. Despite acting as quickly as he did, he was still too short on time to react differently if the rune didn’t work. Time analysis was a crucial element of direct combat, and in the process of doing so, Link realized he was taking a major risk here.

He aimed the slate at the closest of the ice blocks as it was approaching just a few feet away from his face. Taking a deep breath and clenching his eyes shut, he tapped the screen.

Like a popping balloon, the ice block suddenly vaporized with a loud shattering sound. Tiny shards of ice fell to the ground all around him, clattering on the platform like little fallen pennies. Hearing this noise signaled to Link the success of his plan, and without hesitation, he returned from his flinching stance, opened his eyes, aimed the sheikah slate at the other ice blocks, and repeated the motion. One by one, the projectiles vanished, becoming nothing more than a chiller for the water in the pool around him. Again, as it was before the flooding, Link came face-to-face with his adversary, unimpeded by waves of solid objects.

His reaction times were extraordinary, he knew, so a bit of him began to feel optimistic about the upcoming results of this fight. Overall, despite Waterblight’s attacks holding a deadly amount of weight, everything about them was slow. Murdoch had tested Link’s abilities far more gruesomely back at the Domain, and he still came out on top. For a detestable beast that had killed his wife and assisted in the imbalance hovering around Zora’s Domain, Link expected Waterblight to pose a bit more of a challenge. After putting his sheikah slate back on his hip, he reached around, grabbed his spear again, and—
Suddenly, searing hot pain tore up his spine and annihilated his senses. His head jerked forward, and his arm lashed outward, dropping his spear in the water. Every process in his head stopped as he was unexpectedly overwhelmed with confusion and torment. His entire body froze...or...could he even move his body?

Apparently, in the moments immediately following the destruction of its last ice block, Waterblight Ganon had thrown its spear at him like a javelin, and by the look and feel of it, the beast had hit its mark. Link did not expect an attack like that, especially so quickly after the thing finished with its sluggish ice attack. Now, he stood crookedly on the small platform, completely impaled by the glowing spear and pinned to the ground hopelessly. As each movement of his torso sent new sensations of unbearable pain shooting through his every limb, he found escape to be impossible.

The spear had ripped through his abdomen, exiting completely out of his lower back and sticking into the tough stone of the platform. A generous and rather unsettling amount of blood began to collect on the Zora armor and drip down to the ground, and to him, it was a sight...a little more than concerning. His opponent may have been without a spear now, but Link himself was now paralyzed, critically injured, and worsening rapidly. The tides had changed, certainly for the worst, in practically an instant.

In the tense moments following Noelani’s unusual disturbance, Mira and Murdoch remained vigilantly watchful. There was little to be known from their measly vantage point back on the dock, with a significant amount of distance and ancient stone separating them from their father. No being in Hyrule ever took comfort from the unknown, and the hopeful siblings were not about to let themselves succumb to helplessness.

While it was hard to notice, Mira and Murdoch had recently become aware of a movement in the Divine Beast’s back end. The entire structure, roughly a few minutes after the alleged shriek that had caught Noelani’s attention, had lowered slightly down into the lake on its gargantuan, pillar-like legs, allowing water to slip into the interior chamber from a few slits in the back of its design. Their father had somehow been manipulating the Beast from the inside shortly after arriving there off Murdoch’s back, so the trio did not pay the movement any mind. It was an occurrence that was easily lumped together with the movements of the creature’s trunk.

The entire time he had been observing the Beast from afar, since returning to the dock, Murdoch had been ravenously biting at his long, pointy fingernails and spitting the pieces into the lake. Mira had bugged at him to stop a few times, for his own sake, but to no avail. Murdoch portrayed himself as a steadfast, refined individual on the outside, but in times like this, his nerves liked to gnaw at his sanity...ever so slowly. He may have apologized to his father before dropping him off in that death trap earlier, but even so...he felt like it wasn’t enough. Losing him now would surely cause irreversible damage to his psyche, and the simple thought of it wore him down to the core. It was beginning to show in his stubby fingernails.

Mira, for that matter, wasn’t perfect either. Luckily, she hadn’t developed a destructive habit for dealing with stress, since she almost never wandered more than five feet away from her sister, and with her, she rarely felt an unhealthy buildup of it. Link’s departure into the realm
inhabited by darkness, however…the same darkness that had consumed their mother…sent
different vibes running through her. Her orphaned feelings, kept locked beneath the panel set by
her siblings and her people, wouldn’t stop thrashing at their bonds. For her, it only showed
conservatively, at least for the moment, in a rapid tapping of her foot.

Noelani was the only one sitting completely still. She herself was also not feeling
comfortable with the current circumstances, but her way of expressing emotions was sometimes
enigmatic. She was always either incredibly reserved and unspoken, or, particularly with her
closest companions, eager and straightforward. Lately, she had shied a bit towards the latter,
mostly because she found happiness and good fortune in the return of her father. For that reason,
her mysterious, complete lack of energy concerning the worrisome condition of her dearest
parent…required no diagnosis.

Their uneasy wait only began to grow more tense as Mira suddenly produced a strange
reaction to something. As she and Murdoch stood staring intently at the lake, she flinched
unexpectedly. Her arms came out in front of her slightly, and her head darted to the side in a swift
motion. She squeezed her eyes shut and tensed several other muscles in her face.

Murdoch glanced over at her, sporting a curious look. “Are you…okay?”

“Yes, I…I think so.” She mumbled awkwardly. “I just…I don’t know. I got a weird
feeling all of a sudden.”

Her brother put a hand on his chin. He was familiar with the undeveloped abilities of his
sister’s mind. “A weird feeling you say……what do you mean?”

She shook her head a few times to rid herself of the unpleasant shroud. The fins dangling
from the top of her head whiplashed back and forth with the motion. “Well, um…you know that
feeling you get when you watch someone stub their toe? How you kind of…I don’t know…
cringe? Almost like you can feel the pain yourself?”

His eyes widened as the realization toppled down upon him. Mira may not have been
aware of it yet, but her twinge of empathy could’ve only meant one thing. Bad news.

“Mira, I want you and Lani to stay right here under the awning. Do not go anywhere.” He
urged. Without waiting for a response, he turned towards the lake and began to sprint towards the
water at full speed.

This sudden behavior caught Mira completely off guard. “Wait! Murdie, where are you
going?!”

Her words did nothing. Murdoch had already reached the edge of the dock, and before she
could even finish her interjection, he had extended his arms and jumped into the rippling waters of
the East Reservoir. She and Noelani were now alone to weather the fear once again.
“I’ve always wondered...do you still remember your days as a little tadpole? Not having arms or legs?” Link asked.

Mipha looked away from the children for a moment to glance at Link. A sarcastic smirk appeared on her face. “Do you remember your days as an infant? Having little to no hair?”

He sighed. “Alright, you got me.”

“Truthfully, I don’t even remember much from when I was Sidon’s age. It must’ve been...somewhere around a hundred years ago, give or take a decade.” She guessed, putting a finger to her lip.

Link still had a hard time wrapping his head around the Zora lifespan. Entire years passed like months to them, and for the royal family, that span usually went even longer. He and Mipha hadn’t talked about her father much in a while, but from what he could remember hearing, the Zora king was currently somewhere between six and seven hundred years old, and even so, he still had a youthful, hearty laugh. With this in mind, Link knew his wife would be outliving him, well into Prince Sidon’s eventual kinghood. It was tragic, but...at the same time, from a selfish perspective...he at least wouldn’t have to live as a widower.

His gaze returned to the three jars while Mipha continued to ponder the past a little bit. One of the things he had considered while watching over their eggs at Crenel Peak was the comparative lifespan of him and his offspring. By the time he’s old, retired from knighthood, and unable to climb the steps to reach the Eastern Reservoir, they’ll barely be reaching their peak years of adolescence. They’ll be old enough to always recognize him as their father for the rest of their lives, but they’ll have to live out the vast majority of them without him. They’ll have their mother, of course, and even their uncle to preside over the Domain for them, but...there will always be that nagging void. Something about that made him feel guilty, despite lacking the control to do anything about it.

A familiar sound plucked him from his thoughts, causing him to look down at the source. It came from one of the jars. He had heard the sound before, not too long ago, when he was still holding the jars in his arms. Mipha seemed to look down too, drawn equally to the tiny noise.

Yes, it seemed the long one had swum into the glass again. In the quiet, tranquil state of the Reservoir, small sounds like that were more audible, and in this case, it was enough for them to hear the thud made by the jar as its wall was impacted a second time. Their small, fragile Zora infant sat still in the water for a moment, stunned from her little unexpected mistake, as she had done the first time. After twice hitting her head, she now seemed hesitant to continue swimming again.

“It’s rather interesting that this one keeps bumping into the side of her jar.” Mipha observed aloud.

“I agree.” Link responded. “Could it be that she’s...just...easily disoriented? A bit of a balance problem, perhaps?”
This suggestion elicited a brief silence from his wife. He had always turned to her for practical knowledge on the anatomy and behavior of Zoras, and he would be continuing to turn to her for advice on how to raise their new children in the upcoming years. After all, she was the expert on her own species, and he, well...his only experience with them came from his recent intimacies with her. Because of this, when the odd behavior of one of their daughters was throwing her for a loop, it signaled a lot of uncertainty to him. Perhaps...whatever was wrong with their tiny newborn...was unique.

Finally, she mumbled with a shrug. “...I don’t know.”

The infant’s eyes glimmered with a remarkable abundance of eager, but cautious, curiosity. She was still learning that she was confined in a small space, and as a result, she had the continuing urge to keep swimming around and exploring her surroundings. Still, she moved around less energetically than her siblings...after being the first to feel a bit of pain a couple times. There weren’t enough words in all the dictionaries in Hyrule to describe the amount of purity and innocence that could be seen in her blue, snowy eyes. Looking at her, in particular, gave Mipha an overwhelming feeling of motherly affection.

“You know, Link…” She began shyly, pausing until she saw Link divert his attention to her. “...as a member of the royal family, there are some things I’ve learned during my younger years in Muzu’s care.”

Link began to wonder where Mipha was taking the conversation. “I see?”

“It’s actually...an amusing coincidence that you brought up an ancient language earlier.” She explained. “Because...you see...there exists fragments of another old language, tied to eastern Hyrule, that remained closely connected to Zoran culture over hundreds of generations.”

He nodded his head in understanding. With their long-finned daughter having been the most recent topic of discussion before the current digression, Link had a feeling he now knew what Mipha was beginning to get at. A proposal.

She continued, almost dreamily. “Of the few things I remember from my childhood, I know my father used to sprinkle some of those old language phrases in with my every-day life. He’d greet my sleepy eyes in the morning with, ‘Aloha kakahiaka,’ or he’d refer to the moon at night as, ‘ka mahina.’” When she noticed Link giving her an odd glare, she giggled sheepishly. “I know it sounds rather unusual, but since I was the king’s only child at that time, the phrases really helped me get further in touch with the culture buried deep in the history of my people. I still remember many of them to this day, including a few favorites.”

Link loved learning new things about Mipha, especially if those things coincided with the very essence of the Zora tribe itself. It felt right for him to get involved in her people’s culture. After all, it was only fair. Being the princess of the species’ tribe, Mipha also served as her father’s chief diplomat, alongside Muzu and a couple additional members of the elder council. Therefore, she already knew many crucial things about Hylian culture, and for that, it was an obligation for him, as her husband, to return the favor. These were the moments worth cherishing.

“So...do you have a specific favorite?” He asked with genuine curiosity.
She grinned excitedly. “Yes, I do, in fact. It’s actually the reason I brought all this up.”

“I’m listening.” He declared. He folded his hands in front of him to signal his undivided attention. Her explanation was already impressively fascinating, and as it seemed, it would serve a lasting purpose.

“Well…my favorite phrase has always been the term my father used to describe the sparkling droplets of rain that danced through the air in the Domain after a major storm. They were often accompanied by rainbows, and even…an enchanting feeling of peace and purity.” She closed her eyes and took a deep breath, and upon doing so, an emotional smile melted across her lips. “My dad referred to the phenomenon as…the mists of heaven.”

Link found himself sharing in the hypnotic atmosphere created by his wife’s words. “And…what did that mean in the old language?”

Her eyes remained closed as her trance continued. “‘Mists of heaven…’” She sighed.

“…‘Noelani.’”

Link was struggling to remain conscious. He had resorted to gripping the sheath of the ionic spear and trying to pull himself off of its length, as he was currently still punctured by it like a human kebab. However, given the mysterious energy that composed the weapon, its material burned at the flesh of his hands like a hot branding iron. He grimaced in unfathomable pain as he tried, and failed, repeatedly to free himself of his unfortunate position.

Without a weapon at the moment, Waterblight Ganon continued to hold its position above the main control unit, waiting patiently for the slow process of Link’s death to take its course. The blood puddle collecting beneath the hero on the ground had already reached a critical mass, and as its area grew, Link’s connection to the material world continued to fade. The grunts he produced as he tried desperately to remove himself from his situation were growing weaker.

The one thing he couldn’t shake from his mind in this moment…was, of course, Mipha. His approaching defeat at the hands of Ganon’s deranged lackey seemed…eerily synonymous with that of hers, one hundred years ago. Similarly to her, he’d be unfairly leaving his children behind to fend for themselves, only this time…their hope would finally be sealed. Noble intentions…foiled by dark opposition. Again.

“I didn’t think I’d be m…meeting you like this…” He thought aloud, through choking gasps. He glanced upwards with some of his last remaining bits of energy to stare down the monster responsible for this…now seemingly endless…tragedy. With his last words, if he could, he’d curse Ganon to an eternity of hellish imprisonment for continuously tearing life away from the only beings he held dear. Sending him off himself would’ve been more preferable, but…that apparently wasn’t always how the world worked.
As he felt his vision begin to fall to darkness, a spectacular sight whisked the waters between him and his murderer. A dark red, familiar figure, brandishing what appeared to be an equally familiar bow, leapt up from beneath the waves in extraordinary fashion, cutting the line of sight Link had with Waterblight Ganon. Splashes of water lashed upwards around the figure, along with a fine, glittery mist above its head and around its shoulders. Link’s blood-deprived brain saw the figure as something of a guardian angel, but inside, he knew who it was. It was Murdoch, drawing back the string of his Lynel bow—with the fingers he still had.

A quiet noise, like a grass seed exiting a blowpipe, sounded through Link’s ears as his son released the bowstring. The docked arrow, thankfully not charged like the last one, was split in three, the fragments of which darted swiftly towards the target, who was slow to capture the event unfolding. The noise was followed by one more of a similar volume as the arrow segments pierced through the air, and finally, the signature loud, eruptive howl of Waterblight Ganon as the projectiles hit their mark. The chiseled flint on the tip of the objects had rammed right through the beast’s eye, neck, and chest, respectively, at least from what Link could see through the blackening blurriness.

The creature went down as it took the direct hits, plummeting from the ceiling and splashing thunderously in the water below. It lay there, stunned, unmoving, and unlikely to get back up for a few minutes. It was at this moment that Murdoch landed from his graceful surfacing, on the platform, with a cautious bend of his knees. He raced over to the spot where Link was standing nailed to the floor, trying not to slip on the expanding puddle of his father’s blood.

“Don’t worry, Father, I’m here.” He huffed. “I’m going to get you out of this.”

He dropped his bow on the platform and began to reach for the spear that was still actively cauterizing Link’s internal organs, but Link weakly reached up with his hand to stop him. Murdoch ignored his father’s gestures, however, determined to jar the spear out of him. He would sooner impale himself than let his other parent die the same way he had lost the first.

“D…D…Don’t…touch it…” Link gasped. “It…burns…” His breathing was deep and rapid, and his eyes were glued to the ceiling. He had a lack of focus in his vision comparable to Noelani, leading Murdoch to realize he was quickly running out of time.

“I can handle a burn, Father!” Murdoch blurted. “But I will not let this be the end!”

Link took a few more quick breaths as he tried to muster up the strength to address the guard captain a second time. “M…My…My pack……Ch…Check my…p…pack…”

The frantic Zora responded immediately to his wheezy request by stepping around behind him and tearing open his adventure pack. Luckily, the shaft of the spear exiting through Link’s back had punctured at an angle that missed the pack entirely, preserving the many items Link had stored in there. It was here, amongst the stacks of random plants, monster parts, and captured reptiles, that Murdoch expected to find something useful to save his father.

“What, Father, what?” He demanded. “What am I looking for?!”
Link did not answer right away. Instead, he continued breathing heavily for a few moments, as it seemed to take every ounce of his focus to do so. His arms fell limp at his sides, and Murdoch could feel the Hylian’s muscles begin to relax. He had to check several times if his beloved parent was still alive, since...at this point...he could’ve passed at any time.

“Gl...Gl...” He finally uttered. “...Glass...bottle...” More breaths, getting shallower by the second. “...Red...liquid...”

Murdoch resorted to grabbing fistfuls of items from Link’s pack and throwing them behind him at the water. It amazed him just how much stuff his father managed to cram in such a small space, but that observation was anything but important at the moment. The time was ticking, and each second was quickly carrying more and more weight. His dad’s undying resilience was about the only thing keeping him alive at this point.

Eventually, after a period spanning what felt like hours, Murdoch found a jar that seemed to fit Link’s description. A rose-red, viscous fluid shone its glossy hue through the glass of the jar, lighting up the Zora’s eyes and reigniting his hope. This was the substance that would supposedly determine their future. If it failed, neither he nor his sisters would know what to do with themselves anymore.

He desperately clawed the lid off the jar with whatever pointiness still remained in his fingernails. A tiny bit of the elixir splashed out of the bottle in the process, but he figured it wouldn’t make a difference. Anything that could be done now, even if seemingly ineffective, was enough for him.

After discarding the lid, Murdoch grabbed Link’s chin with his three-fingered hand and tilted his head upwards, and, using his other hand, he poured the strange potion down the hero’s throat. Despite Link clearly not having the ability to swallow on his own anymore, Murdoch ensured the fluid reached his destination by gripping his jaw in a certain fashion and keeping his head tilted towards the ceiling. It took about a full minute and a half for Link to down the entire jar.

Now, all he could do was wait.

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“Now this guy...this guy here...” Link pointed to the last remaining jar, containing their dark red, shark-finned son. “I’m excited about him.”

Mipha’s first reaction was to giggle softly. “And why is that?”

“He’s going to be just like me. I’m going to make sure he grows up a true warrior. When I’m gone, and he’s reaching his prime years, he’s going to carry on my legacy.” He stated boldly.

“Your legacy as the legendary hero of Hyrule?” She mentioned skeptically, while maintaining her lighthearted smile. “Your standards are quite high!”
“Well…” Link suddenly changed his tone a little bit, growing slightly less prideful and more solemn. “…I guess it may seem that way. The thing is…I’m hoping that…by the time these three grow up, Hyrule won’t need a hero anymore. I just want him to be someone his people can rely on. The same way everyone seems to rely on me right now.”

A lot of realizations seemed to strike Mipha as she heard those words from her husband. As far as their children went, and as easy as it was to forget about the world when they were with them, nothing was different now from the time before the eggs were laid. The world was still calling upon them constantly, and the threat of Calamity Ganon was continuing to grow more ominous with each passing day. Would their children survive an impending apocalypse, and, if they did, would they be able to carry on? Who would they depend on?

Her thoughts were rendered through complete silence. Link could tell, from her lack of immediate response, that his statement must’ve been thought-provoking for her. At that moment, they both realized they had struck an accord concerning the role of their newborn son. They could only hope…with everything they had…that he’d be up to the task.

“Yes, I see.” She finally answered, albeit sadly. “I did not think about it like that at first.”

“He still needs a name.” Link declared, changing the subject a bit. “I think it should be something powerful, for with the name…comes the confidence.”

Mipha managed another smile at this, after having her spirits tanked by the dark reminder from earlier. “I agree. Are we ruling out ‘Link Jr.’?”

She said it jokingly, of course, and Link was quick to catch on. Still, he answered with dignified clarity. “Yes, if we could. I can have pride sometimes, but not that much pride. Our son deserves an honorary distinction that he can call his own.”

“A respectable ordinance.” She replied with a playful tone. “What did you have in mind?”

He answered promptly, proving that he knew precisely what he wanted. “It has to have meaning. After all, the girls both have names with hidden meanings. His name has to invoke the feeling of strength.”

“Like…a fighter?” She suggested.

“Yeah, or…a defender.”

“A protector?”

That one resonated with him. A protector. He paused for a moment as he let the sound of the word ring in his head. It defined all the qualities he had in mind: strength, bravery, dependability, righteousness......it was perfect. Yet again, his wife had read his mind.

“Yes…” He whispered. “…a protector.”

The emotional, motherly smile that Link had come to recognize appeared on Mipha’s lips
“I think I have a name you’ll love.” She professed. “It calls back to that ancient language I was telling you about earlier.”

Link’s face lit up with another wave of renewed excitement. He leaned forward and, for a second time, provided her with all his attention. “Do share.”

She put her right hand on her chest and closed her eyes, taking a deep, pensive breath before continuing. Yes, this was the right choice. She had no doubt he would agree.

“How does...’protector of the sea’ sound?”

His expression seemed to change immediately. As he struggled to vocalize his response to her suggestion, her confidence seemed to grow. Her assumption was now clearly correct. “I... ju...wow...”

“So, it shall be ‘Murdoch,’ then.” She declared with satisfied grin. “‘Protector of the sea.’”

The first that Murdoch noticed was the opening of Link’s eyes. They had begun to close steadily since his arrival, and by the time he had retrieved the jar of potion to feed to him, his eyes were practically dead already. Now, though, after about ten seconds of waiting in excruciating anticipation, Murdoch got to watch as Link’s eyes shot back open. His father’s breathing returned to him, albeit quickly and...in a panicked manner. The spear was still stuck entirely through his midsection, but...the bleeding began to go away. Slowly, the ravaged areas of his flesh began to form back into place around the spear.

“Murdoch!” He suddenly blurted, causing the Zora to jump a bit. “Wh...When did you get here? How did you get in the Divine Beast?”

Murdoch was taken aback by this reaction. “You mean...you don’t remember?”

Link’s wounds continued to heal around the crucifying spear as they began to exchange words with each other. “I remember coming in here and fighting that...thing, and I remember getting impaled by this...this giant spear. I...assumed I had died.”

“You were talking to me, Father. You actually told me where to find the healing potion I just gave to you.” He added skeptically.

“That’s...amazing.” Link breathed. “So...I guess you saved my life, then?”
Murdoch nodded. “Indeed. I’m just glad I listened to Mira’s hunch. If it weren’t for her, I
never would’ve realized you were in trouble.” He paused for a brief moment of reflection, as he
and Link were given a few more moments of relaxation in which to do so. “You know, Father…I
think we’re all very lucky.”

Just then, the last bit of Link’s gouging wounds closed back off, and the drizzling onslaught
of blood came to a halt. Underneath his punctured and bloodied tunic, his body retrieved its
natural state. Once the last segment of abdominal skin, on both his front and back ends, formed
back together, the spear that had torn it open was sliced directly in half. The pointed end of the
spear remained jammed in the platform behind him, while the butt end of the spear fell to the
ground with an ominous droning sound. It didn’t take long before the butt end of the spear
vaporized completely, likely from having been detached from its other end. The small part of the
spear that would’ve remained in his body, at least from what he could feel, seemed to suffer the
same fate.

With his freedom returned to him, Link unbent his knees and stood straight up. He looked
as good as new, freshly rejuvenated by the life-giving effects of the hearty elixir he had been smart
enough to brew in his adventure pack. His Zora armor, of course…Mipha’s wedding gift to him…
looked absolutely mangled. The material was somewhat water-resistant, he knew, so washing the
blood off of it most likely wouldn’t be an issue, but there still remained the massive, ripped gash in
both sides of the garment that would forever remind him of his near-failure against Waterblight
Ganon.

Once Link regained the ability to move his entire body, the first thing he wound up noticing
was Murdoch’s Lynel bow, sitting obediently on the platform beneath his feet. Come to think of it,
he may have remembered seeing his son using that bow just a few moments ago, during his first
appearance inside the chamber. His fuzziness regarding the few moments before being revived
must’ve resulted from the ever-decreasing amount of blood in his head at the time, or…maybe
something worse. He’d probably never know.

Nonetheless, the bow was still a startling sight to him. “Wait, Murdoch…that’s the Lynel
bow you used earlier today…when you attempted to stall Vah Ruta!”

Murdoch didn’t even follow his gaze. “Yes, it is.”

“But…I thought it sunk to the bottom of the lake. How did you manage to retrieve it?
And…how did you shoot it without getting shocked again?” He asked with a puzzled expression.

Murdoch tried to avoid being sarcastic, out of respect, because he found both of those
questions to have obvious answers. “Well, first of all, Father, I’m a Zora. While it’s true that not
all of us are keen on deep water diving, like my sisters, for example, I had to be rather trained in the
extremes in order to achieve the position I have in the Zora Guard. I simply dove back to the
bottom of the Reservoir to grab the bow before shooting up here to stop your enemy for you.”

Link didn’t say anything right away, which led Murdoch to wonder whether he had zoned
out during his explanation or not. His father deserved the benefit of the doubt, since he had just
recovered from death itself a few moments ago, and the effects of the potion he had just received
were probably not well documented.
“That’s quite something.” Link babbled, sighing quickly afterward. “I just wish I could’ve learned these amazing things about you…you know…sooner after coming to the Domain.”

Murdoch said nothing to address that line, and instead, he continued with his original answer. “As for the lack of shock effect, well…I didn’t use any shock arrows. I was lucky enough to find a standard arrow lodged in the wall near Vah Ruta’s entrance. If that had not been the case, however…I do not know what I would’ve done.”

Link chuckled slightly. “I guess that means you’re right.”

“Right about what?” Murdoch asked curiously.

“…We are all…very lucky.”

Suddenly, their reunion was cut short as Waterblight Ganon finally began to stir. Splashes and deep rumbling noises came billowing from the other side of the room where the beast had been laying, practically knocked out from Murdoch’s incredible shot. The two of them had admittedly forgotten about the beast’s presence amidst the panicked flurry that had been going on in the meantime, and when the sounds came ringing, their heads darted quickly to the source. Neither of them were worried this time, however. Waterblight was now outnumbered, and by two of Hyrule’s most accomplished warriors, no less.

The heroes stood their ground as the deplorable creature rose back out of the water and resumed its previous stance. Link may have been miraculously revived by Murdoch’s last-minute save, but the battle was not over yet.

“I have a way we can end this quickly, but we must act fast.” Murdoch declared as he bent over to pick up his bow. Waterblight placed a hand next to its shattered eye and primed a beeping laser on the Zora’s chest, preparing to blast him with a Guardian beam in a last-ditch effort to kill its intruders. “Do you have any fire arrows in that quiver?”

“Fire arrows? From the Lynel bow?” Link spat. He reached around behind him and grabbed his replacement for the rusty spear: the knight’s broadsword. “You saw what the shock arrows did, Murdoch. It’s too dangerous.”

“These are not like the shock arrows, Father! I told you I can handle a burn!”

Link reached into his quiver. “No, no fire arrows. I got something better.” He shifted his hand around in the quiver for a brief moment before extracting a pair of arrows that had odd-looking, orange pouches strung to the tip. “I got bomb arrows.”

Murdoch’s eyes gleamed with an untouched, childlike sense of wonder. He didn’t seem to notice the beeping from Waterblight begin to increase in frequency. “Alright, those will do.”

Link tossed the arrows to his son, who promptly docked both of them in the bowstring at the same time. The action elicited a brief protest from Link, but his opposition was quickly suppressed. His son had changed since his unfortunate near-death with the shock arrows. Deep down, he felt that Murdoch knew what he was doing this time. Bomb arrows weren’t known to explode until hitting their target, after all, so in this case, docking two at once would supposedly be...
Waterblight’s laser beep was getting faster, and also louder, as its end remained locked directly on Murdoch’s chest. Murdoch had to speak up to make his voice heard through the alarming sound. “When the arrows hit their mark, charge forward and take him out!”

Link did not need to be told twice, and Murdoch, after realizing how close he was to getting blasted into oblivion by Waterblight Ganon, did not plan on waiting to carry out the plan. Immediately following his callout to Link, he aimed down his shot with one eye closed. In that very moment, standing ready to blast their foe with a barrage of puncturing explosions, he was hit with the realization. He was here, facing the being that had killed his mother, and his bowstring was currently drawn back in the ready position. All he had to do was release the tension in the bowstring, and he’d close out a hundred years of suffering. Never before had an opportunity like this arisen, and now, he was finally going to get to take it. Victory…victory was too damn sweet sometimes.

With a satisfying ‘pwing’ sound, he released the newly-ignited arrows, which each split into their respective fragments upon leaving the bow. The resulting six arrows zipped through the air almost too quickly to see, but once they made contact with Waterblight Ganon, their power immediately became realized.

Neither Link nor Murdoch could tell which noise was more exhilarating: the combined sound of six simultaneous explosions in a confined space, or the mind-bendingly shrill sound of their enemy’s excruciating screech. Perhaps, rather, the most exhilarating element of the spectacle was the shockwave that radiated through the pair’s bones after the major air pressure disturbance caused by the blast. The explosive impacts came at precisely the right time, for at almost the same moment Murdoch had released the bowstring, the beast had begun to fire its laser beam.

While the smoke hadn’t even cleared yet, it was still easy enough to see when Waterblight fell back into the water with a second rippling splash. Link didn’t waste a second on his opportunity, jumping right into the water and swimming furiously toward the downed creature in the moments he now had. He could see that his adversary had fallen just behind another one of the platforms, providing him with adequate leverage from which to launch his finishing strike. Now was finally the time, after several occurrences when that theory had been wrong. He knew it in every fiber of his heroic being.

It was a swimming distance of about fifteen feet. At the speed he swam, using his freshly-empowered arms and legs, he bridged the gap in only a few seconds. Waterblight Ganon had already begun to stir once he stepped up onto the adjacent platform, as it seemed the monster would not tolerate being downed twice. Even still, it was not going to escape in time. Link made sure, at least, that the beast would not escape in time.

Waterblight’s head turned towards him in the water as he drew his sword, charged across the platform, and, with a mighty leap, descended onto its face for one final stab to the eye. The fury of his heart, welled up through the loss of his wife, the orphaning of his children, and the unraveling of Zora’s Domain, was contained in the steel tip of the blade as it riveted into the ghastly fiend’s eye for the first, and last, time. An unbelievable amount of emotional tension had built up in the hero since his arrival in this great valley, and with the strike, it was all finally
cascading away. His journey across Hyrule was officially a quarter of the way complete, punctuated by his action of removing the weapon from Waterblight’s eye and returning it to the scabbard on his back.

At first, nothing happened. Link stood triumphantly on the platform, with Murdoch watching from behind, waiting for the spectacular scene of the monster’s death to play out. It just laid there for a moment, looking dead, and after a couple seconds of this, Link and Murdoch began to assume that would be all there was to see.

However, all of a sudden, something very different occurred. Just as Link had let his guard down, another roaring shriek emitted from the crippled abomination laying defeated in the water. He put his hands over his ears as soon as it happened, reflexively trying to protect himself from the unbearable sound. It seemed like this time, it didn’t plan on stopping.

On top of that, he was hit by several splashes of water as the beast began thrashing around violently in the pool. Its massive, pulsating arms and mangey torso twisted and spasmed in every conceivable direction, almost as if the entire creature was being tangled in marionette strings. The shrieking continued, causing even Murdoch to cover his head from the platform in the back. Eventually, cracks began appearing in Waterblight’s armor, through which great beams of purple light began to shine and grow brighter.

Link had been hoping for a grand showcase to top off their victory over the beast, and now it seemed he was getting it. The last time he had witnessed such an exaggerated defeat was when he had killed that one Guardian on the Great Plateau with a lucky shield parry. It had also gone down with large beams of light, and according to his memory, what followed the beams of light, was…

…an explosion. Link and Murdoch both turned away from the scene as the beams of light grew too bright to look at, and after one more moment of blinding luminosity, Waterblight Ganon detonated at its core. Both the heroes flinched as they, and the rest of the chamber, were splatted with thick globs of quivering Malice. Luckily, with their foe defeated, the writhing and sickening substance would quickly dissolve away, leaving only the lasting impression of what the stuff felt like on their skin. Throughout the room, the remaining remnants of Ganon’s influence were also beginning to quietly fade away. This included the blackened, wispy fog that had previously been coating the main control unit.

Lastly, the water level in the chamber began to drop to its original level, and with it, the platforms on which they were standing lowered as well. By the time sixty seconds had passed since the defeat of Waterblight Ganon, everything in the chamber looked exactly as it had before Link had even entered. The threat to the Zoras…had been eradicated.

Murdoch took a deep breath, and in doing so, was the first one to break the silence.

“A commendable strike, Father. Never seen anything like it.” He stated calmly.

Link turned around to face him. “I could say the same for you. That bow shot was nothing to scoff at. It was quite bold to use both the bomb arrows at once, and in a Lynel bow, no less!”

Murdoch smiled in acceptance of the compliment. He grasped the bow in both hands and held it high above his head, stretching his arms. “You should know I merely inherited my boldness
from you. It should come as no surprise.”

For a moment this meaningful, neither of them desired to say much to the other. There was a certain atmosphere that now hung in the room, unsurmountable by any further words. Now was a happy time. Now was a time of victory.

There was still one more thing Link knew he had to do. Now that the dark, evil presence had been permanently banished from the Reservoir, Vah Ruta was without a master. In order to fix that, Link needed to take the Beast back. He needed to accomplish what he had entered the chamber to do in the first place. He needed…to activate the main control unit. Only then would Mipha’s spirit be free.

Their silence continued as Link began stepping toward the unit to do what needed to be done. Murdoch closed the distance between them followed directly behind, curious to see the effects of the machine that had entombed his mother. It was a historic time for both of them, and in just moments, it would become a piece of Hyrule’s new legend.

With the sheikah slate in hand, Link stopped in front of the guidance stone and, after a brief moment of reflection, pressed the device to the pedestal. He didn’t expect any resistance this time, but even if more were to show up, he now had Murdoch by his side to take on the threat. Now there would be no doubt.

The response he had been hoping for occurred. Promptly, upon contact with the screen of the sheikah slate, the guidance stone reacted exactly as the dozens of others had in the past…with a soothing flash of blue and a confirmation beep. The main control unit, essentially the heart of Divine Beast Vah Ruta, reacted to Link’s sheikah slate like clockwork, and just like that, the titanic machine was back under the control of the great Hylia’s servants. Link was reminded, yet again, of the power he truly held in the tiny tablet device.

Following the flashing reaction to the sheikah slate, both Link and Murdoch were impressed to see the entire control unit apparatus turn from orange to blue. It was an alien sight to Murdoch, who had not seen any form of sheikah technology in the works. He and his fellow Zoras were aware of the shrine buried in the chamber beneath the king’s quarters, as well as the significance behind the sheikah symbol on its front, but never before had he witnessed the activation of a sheikah device. He was mesmerized by…the way the pedestal seemed to form wisps of light in the air around it…

At the same moment, Link felt the effects of the control unit on his body. He had conquered the Beast in the name of good once again by wrenching it out of Ganon’s dark influence, and now that he was actively setting Vah Ruta back to its rightful state, he experienced a strange surge of vital, lifelike energy. He was immediately able to identify this feeling, for he had encountered it several times before at the foot of goddess statues after visiting enough shrines around the area. He found that, after visiting said shrines and praying at the goddess statues, the strength-giving feelings they granted usually lasted permanently, allowing him to either exert his body for longer periods of time, or absorb more hits without as many injuries. By banishing one of Ganon’s minions from the face of Hyrule, it seemed the goddess Hylia was granting him another similar influx of strength.
“Is everything okay, Father?” Murdoch queried worriedly. “You seemed to react... somewhat unusually to the blue light.”

“Don’t worry, I’m alright. Better than alright, in fact.” Link answered with an idle flex of his arm. There was always something special about feeling the increase in resilience in his flesh and bones after receiving one of Hylia’s blessings.

Murdoch, in the meantime, was already starting to feel in over his head with all of his father’s hero business. What he found most unsettling about it was just how long it had been going on. Even when he was just a young, naïve child, his dad had always been caught up in the antics of the ancient sheikah. Of course, he was aware of his father being a “legendary hero” of sorts, but that was always where the knowledge stopped. He never understood the implications behind being the hero, the supernatural phenomena surrounding the hero’s role, nor even the need for a hero in general. All his life, his father had been involved in such a web of powerful influence…and the entire time…he merely chalked it up as a masquerade. The being they just finished fighting was a hideous and terrifying apparition of death, nonetheless, and after standing face-to-face with such a traumatic figure, the not-so-humble guard captain was, indeed, humbled by his old man. Would his family really be going down in Hyrulean history for these events?

Just then, the lighting in the chamber changed slightly, becoming darker and more centralized around certain parts of the room. Link took a few steps back from the control unit as he observed the event with mounting skepticism. It always paid to be prepared, and after what they had just dealt with, he was ready to take on any new incoming threats at a moment’s notice. Murdoch shared in the tension.

Instead, they were greeted by something...or someone...much more pleasant. It all started with a voice, of course. It was the same voice Link had been hearing during his time within the Divine Beast, and in his numerous memories since returning to the Domain. It was the voice unmistakably tied to the two warriors in the strings of time, tugging lovingly at them with every word it said. It was a disarming voice. And instead of coming from all directions at once, like it had before, it was coming from somewhere within the room. More specifically, the wall behind them.

“Hello, Link. Murdoch.”

Link and Murdoch both froze in place and exchanged glances with each other. Their faces became plastered with indescribable shock as they looked into each other’s eyes, realizing who they were hearing in the room.

Murdoch shook his head slowly. “No...it can’t be...”

They simultaneously turned around where they stood and looked toward the source of the ghostly greeting. Sure enough, true to their nagging suspicion, their eyes fell on the spectral, pristine form of Mipha herself, staring back at them with the same bottomless love and affection of
which she was always known. Every thought in Murdoch’s head fell away as his senses were
overwhelmed with incredible amazement and disbelief.

“It’s been a long century.” She hummed. Her voice, while centered on her presence the
way one would expect, echoed around the entire room with infinite endurance, lapping at their
eardrums several times with every word she delivered. “I’ve been waiting tirelessly to see my
babies again.”
The only sounds that managed to escape Link and Murdoch’s throats were incomprehensible murmurs. Staring back at their dearly departed loved one, in her full form, sparked emotions that couldn’t be defined by either of them. Her presence was surreal…almost dreamlike, and yet…in a way, sensible. They had just defeated the creature that had been imprisoning their beloved Zora princess for two Hylian generations, so naturally, her soul could finally be free upon its demise. However, neither of them expected her to manifest in a form with which they could see and communicate.

One thing was certain in their minds, though. They had missed her fiercely. And now that she was here, even if it was for a short time, they didn’t know how to process their resulting feelings.

For starters, they couldn’t move. The many fibers of their subconscious screamed at them to run to their dear Mipha, whom they had suffered insanely without, but alas, they could not get their legs to respond. The sheer shock of the moment held its grip, locking them in place while the long-missing link of their family glanced between them with a growing, motherly smile.

“You’ve both done quite a lot for your people, haven’t you?” She cooed, breaking the silence that had been dwelling amongst them. “Oh, the adventures you’ve had together…in such a short amount of time!”

“Mother, I…” Murdoch paused at the beginning of his opening statement to release the awkward chuckle that had been collecting in his throat. “…I’m sorry…I still can’t believe I’m saying ‘Mother’ directly to you…”

Mipha was delighted to hear the deep, commanding voice of her son, as a young adult, for the first time. She had been persistently watching over him and his sisters for years, of course, but…certain sensory details were always lost between the physical and spectral worlds. It was now, in the main control room of Vah Ruta, final resting place of her physical self, that she finally received the pleasure of meeting her son in his full, developed glory. Therefore, upon hearing his sheepish, stuttering reaction to her appearance, she couldn’t help but to share in his chuckle. All the while, she took gentle steps toward him and Link, drawn to the sound of her thriving offspring.

“No matter how old you may grow to be, Murdoch…” She hummed playfully. “…you will never be too manly to call me ‘Mom.’”

“Right, right, of course…um…M…Mom.” He floundered. “I just…I still can’t believe it’s really you! After…so long! Truly, I thought…this…this day would never come!”

Despite his own share of exhilarating amazement, Link took notice in the complete disarmament of Murdoch’s tone. He couldn’t recall a point during their reunion when the powerful Zora behaved so submissively. It appeared as if his son was genuinely humbled by his mother’s appearance, pulled back into the innocence of his childhood simply by her presence. He was like a totally different individual. In all honesty, Link was reminded of the Murdoch that had appeared in his flashbacks.
Mipha continued with the grand statement that had been due the moment she was rescued by her family. “I must thank both of you. Because of your sacrifices for each other, my spirit is now free! And as such, I am now allowed, by this freedom, to finally be with you once again.”

Link took a step forward as he was eventually able to speak. “You shouldn’t have to thank us. Seeing you…is a greater reward than I ever could’ve imagined. I, too, never thought I’d see the day of your return.”

Murdoch nodded in agreement. At their mutual sentiment, Mipha smiled another time. It seemed like she had been smiling perpetually since her arrival, and it was evident that she’d be continuing to do so until the moment she left. A hundred years was enough time for the birth and passing of an entire Hylian life, after all, and after such time…their grand reunion was just too much to withhold the smiles.

Murdoch jumped in again with continuous stutters. “S…So…what was it like these past countless years? Did you ever…you know…worry about us? Were you even…able to worry about us? How did…”

Mipha raised up her ghostly hand, silencing her frantic son mid-sentence. Her calmness was quite entrancing to the two of them, even as their minds raced with the many thoughts, emotions, and curiosities of the moment. She acted as if their reunion with her was inevitable…like she had been patiently waiting for it all this time. She seemed to want to take her time with their moment together.

“I bet you have many questions for me, my dear.” She paused for a moment as Link and Murdoch both eagerly nodded their heads. “I will share whatever I can with you in the short time we have together. But, first…I feel like our family is missing a few members!”

She was clearly talking about the…rather evident absence of Mira and Noelani in the control room. With them having been brought up, Link suddenly realized the unfairness of Mipha’s return here, without the sisters sharing in the reunion. How would they fare, knowing their mother had appeared from the dead outside their knowledge? He couldn’t imagine the pain…the disappointment…the envy. Surely, they needed to know of Mipha’s arrival.

“Right…the sisters.” Link mumbled. “I’m not sure how we’d lead them here safely, especially with Lani’s condition and all…”

Mipha raised her hand again, silencing him as she had done with Murdoch a moment ago. Once again, she did not look concerned. “You needn’t worry. I’ve had a lot of time in solitude to ponder my situation here over the years, and I’ve found there are a few things I can do with my limited power, now that I’m free of Ganon’s shackles. I can take us to our daughters.”

Link’s face perked up at this. Murdoch put a hand on his chin, intrigued by his mother’s claim. He had never experienced supernatural power before, so the implications of her promise were interesting to him. He did, however, just get done facing an abomination of darkness and
evil, manifested out of nothing but Ganon’s seething hatred for Hyrule, and as such, he kept an open mind.

Neither of them gave a response as she commenced their exodus from the Divine Beast. She closed her eyes and lowered her head, and in the seconds that followed, as the two of them looked to her with fascination, they felt themselves become gradually lighter. Murdoch glanced down at himself in time to feel his body lift completely off the wet floor of the chamber and become enveloped in a strange, warm energy. Glancing over to his right, he noticed the same thing happening to Link, who was looking around with the same curiosity.

It felt as if they were slowly losing their senses, one by one. Starting with their feet and creeping upwards, numbness consumed their bodies until, eventually, nothing could be felt. Their sense of sight, hearing, smell, and taste were not far behind as, finally, their heads were lapped away by the numbness. Before blacking out, the last thing they could see was the evaporation of their physical forms, replaced tenderly by golden, glittering dust. The dust followed an invisible stream that carried it, and the two of them within, up to the ceiling of the chamber and out one of its many carved windows.

Mipha followed right behind them. As the essence of her husband and her son floated out into the night, she faded silently away, leaving the wispy green flames around her to die in the same manner. In just moments, the control room was quiet once again, left as if it had not been entered in the first place. The room shared a bloody history with the rest of Hyrule, and now, it sat in peaceful tranquility, as Hyrule hopefully would as well…in the coming weeks, at least.

Mira did not like the circumstances. Vah Ruta was supposed to be a symbol of protection and hope for her and her people, and yet, throughout her life, she had associated the thing with…death. And right now, two more of her precious family members were trapped up inside it. The loss of her mother had done a lot to shape her into what she was today, after all, and…she just didn’t think she could take two more tragedies at this stage of her life. For the sake of her permanent well-being…she needed some good news.

Noelani, on the other hand, didn’t seem to be showing any signs of nerves. She could be seen sitting perfectly still on the waterbed, her back directly upright, staring blankly in the direction of the lake, as she had been doing for the last ten or fifteen minutes. Mira was usually great at feeling the emotions of her sister without having to talk, of course, but there were still some times…times like this…when her sibling acted like quite the enigma. She never liked to talk too deeply about her innermost thoughts, and it was because of this that Mira still couldn’t figure out what filled the mind of a young one without sight.

She cleared her throat awkwardly. “You, um…you doing okay there, Lani?”

Noelani’s eyes widened a bit. “Hmm? Oh, I’m fine.”

She just seemed so distracted. It was emphasized in the fact that she didn’t immediately
pick up on Mira’s question. Something was occupying her mind, and Mira just wished she could understand what it was. Her natural hunch told her it was something to do with the past…perhaps reminiscing on the good times with their mom still alive. At the same time, though, that was something they had done together all the time throughout the years, and it had never usually involved her being so quiet. A few times, even, she wondered if—

“How are you feeling?” Noelani blurted, cutting off her thoughts.

“How am I feeling? Well, I…uh…” She did not expect the sudden rebuttal. Noelani wasn’t usually keen on that type of action.

“Don’t worry, sis. I think Murdoch’s going to be okay. Same with Dad.” She finished,ironically being the one to weasel into Mira’s head. One of them always had to be predictable. If not her, then her sister, of course.

She chuckled. “I guess I’m kind of easy to read, huh?”

“Not really.” Noelani answered with a shake of her head. Her long tailfin wobbled around with the motion. “I can just hear you tapping your foot. You sound very nervous.”

Oh. That explained it nicely. She already seemed to forget how well Noelani could hear and interpret her surroundings. And at that, Mira hadn’t realized how bad her jitteriness had become. Her nerves had only gotten worse after watching Murdoch depart for the Divine Beast, since it had essentially doubled up on the potential losses she and her sister could be facing. It would mean the world for her to see her father and her brother return safely from the lake, as a repeated childhood trauma would certainly destroy her over her many remaining years.

Slowly, as she pondered over these feelings, the space in front of her began to grow brighter. Despite the disturbance, she continued looking toward the Divine Beast as she had been doing before, albeit with a gradually growing squint. Over time, it was getting more difficult to discern the distant figure’s details through the light. It was easy to brush the effect off as reflected moonlight at first, given the water from the Reservoir covering the dock by over three inches, but eventually, it started getting too bright to ignore.

Before long, the mysterious light seemed to condense on a couple of distinct points about ten feet in front of the awning, forcing Mira to cover her eyes with her hand. The light was also accompanied by a soft tinkly sound akin to bell chimes, the lure of which was picked up by Noelani a few feet behind. Mira was greatly confused by these phenomena, above all, and quite frankly, she was concerned for what the strange occurrences were foreshadowing. Noelani, on the other hand, practically stared directly into the light, fazed only by the sounds she was hearing.

It only felt like a brief moment to her before the light suddenly vanished. For a moment, even with her hand shielding her face, the light had seemed almost infinitely bright, like staring straight at the sun. It was gone now, though, returning the dock to the same dim embrace of the moon’s light. Mira’s eyes had to adjust after the strange event, a process she tried to hasten by rapidly blinking. She lowered her hand back down to her side.
She gasped quickly, nearly choking on her tongue. “Whoa! Wh…huh?!”

The dock became visible to her again after her hand returned to her side, and the first thing she saw was Link and Murdoch, standing before her on the platform with perplexed looks on their faces. They were standing exactly where the orbs of light had been shining just seconds ago, with no trace of how they got there so suddenly. Mira was only able to assume that they had come from the light sources themselves, despite the craziness of that concept. When their eyes met, she could tell their confusion was shared.

“How did you guys get here so fast? Did you fix Vah Ruta?” She blurted.

Link answered her as he and Murdoch began wading through the water on the dock to meet her and her sister under the awning. “See for yourself.”

He pointed his thumb toward the lake behind him, causing Mira to glance over his shoulder at the Divine Beast. Aside from the obvious lack of water spewing from its trunk, of which everyone was already aware, the giant entity didn’t seem very different as before. However, one other feature stuck out, and it was the glowing, colored patterns covering the Beast’s surface. For the past century, they had kept the glaring, putrid purple color of Calamity Ganon for all on the Reservoir to see, and they served as another constant reminder of the Calamity’s many hardships during their childhood.

Now, though, upon Link and Murdoch’s return, the Beast’s colors were…blue. They were blue. The same color they were when Mipha entered the machine for the last time. It was a sight she had not seen on the lake in over a hundred years.

“Oh my…wow…” She sighed in exasperation. “How did I miss that…?”

“It’s incredible, isn’t it?” Murdoch chimed. “It’s a sight we haven’t seen from our home since we were little kids.”

Link took a glance at Noelani, who continued to sit on the waterbed in complete silence. She seemed neither sad nor happy. Almost…indifferent, in fact. She probably didn’t have any doubt that he and Murdoch would be returning, given the great amount of trust she was often known for having. Another day in the life, supposedly.

“It really is amazing, now that you point it out.” Mira continued. “It really helps me feel a bit at peace after everything that has happened in there.” A shiver ran down her spine at the thought, which Link and the others had no trouble noticing. Those wounds would probably never heal. “I’m still curious to know how you guys got back here, though! I’m glad to see you both safe, of course, but…”

She trailed off as Murdoch cut her off. It seemed like he began to…laugh. It started as a mellow chuckle, then it escalated into a deep, genuine, wholehearted episode that seemed for a moment like it would go on all night. He sounded…not sarcastic, not upset, not condescending, but…excited. It was a laugh of pure ecstasy, like his world had been freed of all burdens. Mira cocked her head to the side at the sight and sound of her brother’s sudden expression of bliss.
“What is it?” She murmured sheepishly.

“You’re not going to believe how we got here so fast!” Murdoch raved. The sisters gave him their full attention, lured by his unusual display of eagerness. “Mira, Lani, I need you to prepare yourselves for this.”

Noelani shrugged. “I’d like to think I’m pretty prepared. Right, Mira?”

Mira looked back at her with a quick glance, adding a swift nod to express her agreement. She turned back to eye her brother curiously. “Yeah, I mean…what’s this about? And where did that light come from a moment ago?”

Her mind had to take a moment to catch up, which, for her, happened occasionally. Sure, she had the ability to share in the thoughts and feelings of her family members at times, but…the ability itself was untrained. If she were only aware of her subtle connections, she’d be able to apply herself in a way that would most likely rob her siblings of their privacy, in all honesty. Until then, though, there would be times when she just wasn’t in her prime. However, in this case, that didn’t stop her from eventually feeling the spark.

“Wait a minute…” She paused with widening eyes as the feeling came to her. “…you don’t mean…?”

Right away, to punctuate Mira’s suspicion, the wind briefly picked up on the dock next to them. It wasn’t very strong, but it was noticeably out of pattern with the calm, clear weather that had been blessing the Reservoir since Vah Ruta’s appeasement. Link and Murdoch were standing nearest to the location where a visible cloud began to form from the wind, gaining opacity as its strength picked up. The cloud was just about as tall as Noelani.

A grin appeared on the faces of Link and Murdoch as Mira observed the phenomenon with an ever-widening jaw. Her outward expression of disbelief only grew more apparent as small, aquamarine flames began dotting into existence around the center of the cloud. There was a distinct change in the atmosphere around them as the dock was becoming occupied by a familiar spectral presence. Noelani, from the waterbed behind Mira, was sitting the farthest away from the phenomenon, but even she began to feel the mysterious changes.

Finally, in a manner similar to its formation, the cloud rapidly proceeded to dissipate. The winds slowed to a gradual halt, while the dancing flames surrounding the former cloud’s center continued to burn dimly. The entire event only took about ten seconds to occur, but the events occurring afterward would last forever in the minds and hearts of Link and his children.

Right where the apex of the winds had previously been, a new figure was now standing…or, rather, hovering, above the flooded waters of the Reservoir platform. The figure’s only connection to the physical world was through its visibility and its audibility. Beyond those things, it held very little power to displace physical objects by touch, especially after spending so much of it to send Link and Murdoch away from the Divine Beast.

Mira couldn’t believe her eyes. The figure, of course, was the condensed spirit of Mipha…her mother. Years…so many years…had passed since their last time together. So many years…of
remembering the childhood she gave her. So many years...of standing by the foot of her statue, talking to it alone with Noelani’s hand in hers...hoping the words were reaching her on the other side. So many years...and it was now, finally...that her mother could actually look back at her, with eyes that were not merely chiseled.

“M...Mom...” She whispered weakly. A wave of emotion crashed heavily over her, and she commenced another fight with her tear ducts.

The smile, of which Link and Murdoch had already seen so much back in the Divine Beast, returned to Mipha’s face with full gusto. This time, in fact, a little bit of her impassioned energy boiled over into a soft giggle that caused a brief fluttering in everyone’s chest. Her presence amongst them ignited unbelievable emotions in the hearts of the entire group, including herself.

“Ah...I’m home at last. It would seem our family is finally back together.” She sighed, raising her arms at her sides to draw in the significance of the moment. “It almost feels like we can pick up where we left off.”

Once her spirit actually spoke, Noelani was able to catch on to what was going on. She was the next one to react after her mother’s opening statement, causing her and the others to look in her direction. The young Zora’s expression told novels of her shock at the sound of the voice she could never forget, but inside, she still hadn’t succumbed to the belief a hundred percent.

“Mom?” She breathed. “Is...Is that you?”

“Oh, Lani...it’s so refreshing to see you and your sister again. You both look like the beautiful, caring adults I had always envisioned. It’s hard to imagine that you could fit into my arms the last time I saw you!” Mipha responded, using the continuing sound of her voice to indirectly answer Noelani’s question.

“H...How...How are you here? What’s happening?” She stuttered uncertainly. Mira could see that her sister was indeed thrilled to be in the presence of her mother again, but on the surface, it was masked by the confusion of the circumstances. In time, she would understand.

“It’s her spirit, Lani.” Murdoch explained from the side. “Mother— erm...Mom’s spirit was freed from the Calamity after Father and I killed the being that was holding her hostage all this time.”

Link chuckled playfully. “So you’re going to keep calling me ‘Father,’ then?”

“Well, I...you...I—” He stopped, folding his arms awkwardly at his chest. “…I’m getting there, Dad. Let me get used to things.”

Link and the others had a short laugh, while Noelani continued to stare straight forward with the same mesmerized expression on her face. It was as if she stood in the presence of Hylia herself, her mannerism communicating nothing but awe and wonder at the sound of Mipha’s voice before her. She yearned for more.

“I missed you...” She babbled sadly. “…I want to hear you talk more...”
Mipha’s smile dissolved for a moment at her daughter’s flickering sorrow. Words could not describe the joy she felt from getting to spend precious moments with her family again, of course, but she still wished, more than anything beyond life and death, that she could be alive again to hold her sleeping girl just one last time. She could see, in the grown-up, womanly form of her little Lani, the persisting dependence and innocence of the child she had tragically left behind all those years ago. She very clearly still craved her mother’s touch. If only…

“Do not worry. There’s something that deserves to be said to each and every one of you before I depart this evening.” Mipha assured. “When it’s your turn, my dear, everything will become clear. I promise.”

Noelani’s mind ran at a hundred miles an hour. She wasn’t Mira, of course, so her mother’s intentions behind that line were not clear to her. She could’ve been coming up on a major turning point in her life, assuming this moment didn’t already count as one. There was no one in Hyrule she trusted more, though, so she remained steadfast that Mipha would help her see, whatever she needed to see, clearly.

At this point, Mipha commenced what she had wanted to accomplish for countless decades. She was now united with the most precious people in her life after a century in isolation, and she wanted to exchange meaningful words with them…with what little time she had. She started with Murdoch, who didn’t expect to be chosen first.

“Murdoch. First of all, I’m impressed with how you’ve grown!” She mused.

“Oh, yes, well…” He grinned slightly as he tried to retain his composure. His regal mannerisms tended to suffer in Mipha’s presence. “…I got it from you, of course.”

“You’ve truly made something of yourself during your adolescence, and it shows wonderfully in the handsome form you have now.” She enunciated her words carefully, making sure her message was driven into her son’s heart the way it deserved. “Your courage in saving your father’s life on my behalf was also fantastically commendable. Murdoch, I’m very proud of you.”

He nodded. “Th…Thank you…M…Mom. That means a lot, coming from you.”

A hug would’ve been in order right then, but the mother and son knew the reality of their situation. However, it didn’t change the significance of their exchange thus far. The entire family shared a moment of silence as he continued to gaze into her eyes, and she into his. His entire childhood, leading up to the Calamity, had been bent towards impressing his parents with enthusiastic tricks and daring stunts, some more reckless than others. Now his mom was passing the line right to him in a discrete sentence, in acknowledgment of his recent deeds concerning the Divine Beast.

On the other hand, she was not about to miss addressing the elephant in the room. With her solemnity on the rise, she transitioned to the other tone that was often entailed by parenting.

“Now, that doesn’t mean you haven’t had some struggles in recent years.” She mentioned, changing to the grimmer subject. “Under Ganon’s terrible influence, I’ve still been able to keep a
subtle watch over you on occasion, and I’ve seen the effects of our cruel fates on your juvenile heart.”

The atmosphere shifted a little as Murdoch lowered his head and accepted his incoming evaluation. “Yes……I agree. It’s been…difficult.”

She continued, with carefully-selected words that reflected the amount of time she had had to herself before this fateful evening. “I understand what a loss of that nature can do to a young person. A few manage to remain hopeful, but many tend to grow up unable to love…or to trust…or to otherwise thrive emotionally.”

She left another pause in her speech to allow her family to reflect on the points she was making. Link looked around at Noelani and Mira to see them with their heads down, deep in thought over their mother’s words. He had glanced over at them in time to see Mira reach for her sister’s hand and grasp it tightly. They knew, and he knew that they knew, how lucky they were to have had each other, and how much luckier they were to still have each other going forward. It was a shame Murdoch hadn’t connected more with them in the recent years, when his pain had only seemed to elevate.

“Sometimes, it can be easier to place blame on a particular person…rather than accepting such tragedies as merely the work of fate. I understand that.” She looked unto him with a bit of sympathy, and an equal ration of guilt. “You’ve always had a lot of your father in you. When your natural instinct tells you to charge threats head-on in the name of protecting your loved ones, well…it can be hard to conceptualize a threat that is bigger than your capabilities.”

It took a moment for Murdoch to conjure up a response. He had redeemed much of himself by rescuing Link back in the control room, but that didn’t manage to completely erase the shame he felt from his prior mistakes. “I don’t know, I guess…I just felt like your missions meant more to you than we did. And…when neither of you came back from the Calamity…I thought the possibility of orphaning us was only a secondary concern of yours. I felt betrayed.”

Grief can do many haunting things to us. If I had been the one to lose you children, instead of the other way around…I just…I don’t know what I would’ve done with myself. I probably would’ve spent every day I had left in the world upset at myself, unable to get over the lack of things I could’ve done to protect you.” She took another quick pause as she, herself, reminisced on her descriptions. “You, Murdoch, are one of the many who find it easier to respond to pain with anger…rather than sadness. Sometimes, it can be a blessing, but more often, it hurts the loved ones you still have. The advice I wish I could’ve given you sooner…before any of this could’ve happened…was to allow yourself to be weak when there is nowhere else to turn. Only then…can your family break through your walls to heal your pain.”

Even in death…nay, especially in death, Mipha’s wisdom knew no bounds. Murdoch had nothing to say about her speech, for she clearly had him nailed to a point in her analysis. He had to wonder, in fact, just how many of his misguided antics she had witnessed in recent years. Her brief contact with him before his shock arrow mistake had made it obvious that she knew about that plan in particular, but…did she know about the unkind words he had said to his father? Did she know about the duel he had instigated?

He decided not to bring any of that up. “Don’t worry…you needn’t blame yourself. Knowing myself as a child, I probably wouldn’t have listened to that advice very well anyway.”
“Nonetheless…” She rebutted solemnly. “…it would’ve given you something to think about. Out of the three of you, you were the toughest one to contact from my place beyond the grave. It was only at the peak of your ascent by Vah Ruta, with the shock arrow drawn in your bow, that you had the necessary proximity for me to reach you. Surely, then, you could hear me trying to make you understand.”

She spoke with a slightly scolding tone, as parents normally did when their children acted wrongly. Murdoch had been quick to brush away Link during his earlier attempts at stringency back at the Domain. Mipha, however, exacted full control over him with the authoritative elements of her voice. He associated his childhood with his mother rather heavily, and as such, he was found to have reverted back to the obedience of his juniority while listening to her talk directly to him.

“…Indeed, I did, and…I’m…I’m sorry. About…everything.”

She grinned again, allowing the tone of the exchange to end on a lighter note. “You don’t need to apologize. I can already see the remorse deep inside you. The Calamity did a lot to bring out your most negative emotions, Murdoch, but it never changed the resilient and fun-loving spirit you were meant to be.”

Link and the sisters smiled widely as they turned to look at Murdoch, who timidly put his hand to the back of his neck. This kind of attention had become…rather new to him after the years he had spent away from his family. The first impulse in his mind was to say something, anything, in response to Mipha’s words. However, nothing came to mind. He needed time to absorb what would certainly be the new thing on his mind for the next hundred years.

Next, Mipha turned to Mira. Mira glanced over from Murdoch to meet her mother’s gaze, and in doing so, she immediately knew she was about to receive her share of affection. As of just twenty minutes ago, she never would’ve expected a moment like this. She almost didn’t know how to prepare herself.

“Now, Mira…” She began, looking as if she was about to say something funny. Her titillating change of behavior got Mira’s mind running. “…you’ve turned out to be rather surprising to me.”

Mira chuckled, albeit a bit nervously. “Surprising? How so?”

Mipha folded her hands in front of her with the same pregnant smile on her face. “Having mentioned earlier…that I’ve tried communicating with you all as a trapped spirit…”

“Oh, so that was you talking to me the last few years?” She interjected with a sharp gasp, entirely cutting Mipha off. “I knew it!”

Her mother couldn’t help but to laugh at her enthusiasm. She was deeply charmed by the evident, familiar qualities her children still showed, after the long series of wildly unfortunate events that, in most cases, would rob younglings of their light. “Hear me out, now. I’ve found that…reaching you, and talking to you…was as easy as could be. It came as such a pleasant relief when I learned of that fact.”
“You really think so?” The young Zora beamed, eyes glittering with curiosity. “So… easier…how?”

“My mind…your essence…has a fascinating link to all of us, I’ve found.” Mipha actually seemed to be equally as intrigued by this statement as Mira, since her discovery of the fact had only been within the last few weeks, around the time Link had awoken from the Shrine of Resurrection. “There’s something strong about your spirit, Mira. Something so strong…that I can sense it from the other side. I wish I knew how to describe it.”

This was a lot of information to process at one time. Mira never really felt very extraordinary throughout her life. She never heard any weird voices from anyone, nor had she ever felt any strange psychic connections to her family. The most she could remember were the repeated hunches she’d get in the middle of normal conversations, telling her of things that her acquaintances might’ve been thinking. However, without any proof, she had also held out the certainty that her father never died, even just shortly after the Calamity itself. Interestingly, the common denominator between these abilities was their exclusivity to her relatives. She could never really tell what Dento, Muzu, or any of the other Zoras of the Domain were thinking the same way she could with her siblings and her grandfather.

“I…I guess I don’t know what to say.” She uttered.

Mipha continued. “I feel…that if you apply yourself to these abilities…marvelous things could come about. I may never have to be apart from any of you. My thoughts could very well be expressed right through you.”

Link took notice in his wife’s words. He and Murdoch had mused, not too long ago, in fact, that Mira’s predictive mind could open new doors for their family down the road. He remembered Murdoch saying that only the training was standing in the way, after having to initially inform her of the power, of course. Mipha was doing that for them, it seemed. Even with the possibilities in mind, though, they never expected her to be able to eventually communicate with her mother the way it was being described. Perhaps she’d be able to act as the medium for their missing link and allow their family to chat wholly again.

“Wow, I…” She couldn’t keep from passing a chuckle, which evolved into a gentle cough into her fist. “…I wish I knew where to start. This is…uh…a lot to absorb.”

“You’ve been experiencing remnants of this ability all throughout your life, Mira. I trust enough in that prior knowledge to have confidence in your potential.” Mipha said with another proud smile. “Nonetheless, if you’re feeling unsure, you can try talking to Kapson. He orchestrated me and your father’s wedding, and he definitely knows a thing or two about spirituality. If anyone in the Domain today can help you down this path, it’d be him.”

Mira giggled a bit. “I was just thinking of Kapson! Guess that’s…not…a coincidence?”

Mipha put her hands together in front of her chest. “You’re beginning to understand.”

The emotions invoked by this stage of the conversation where significantly different than they were during Murdoch’s portion. Murdoch was acknowledged by his mother as a powerful, righteous warrior, worthy of her and Link’s praise. That positive message, however, had also been infused with mortal reminders. It was a grim exchange, surely, but…it was also hopeful, as
Murdoch’s character was still seen to be far from tarnished. Mira, on the other hand, instilled a lighthearted and pleasantly surprised vibe in her mother. She had surely grown more mature in her adolescence, jarred from her excessively rampant and teasing childhood behavior by the slap of the Great Calamity. Mipha saw this in her, and with the thrilling implications of her spirit coming to light, she made for a shining beacon of hope for her dearly departed parent.

“I’m excited to see what you make of yourself with this, as I am already greatly impressed with how you’ve turned out so far.” She added, beaming brightly. “Now, Mira… on a final note…”

Mira held up a finger to cut off Mipha’s sentence. “Wait, wait, is it…” She took a brief moment to let her mind run as she placed her raised hand on her chin. “…is it a thank-you? Are you going to thank me for something?”

Mipha put a hand on her forehead. Indeed, she knew, Mira would not be having any troubles with her newfound identity anytime soon. “Very impressive, my dear. Yes, I was going to express my appreciation. I wanted to thank you for watching over your sister during these many years. It seems you two have been truly inseparable since my passing, and for that, I am relieved.”

Mira blushed a little bit, but she was slightly confused by her mother’s last statement. “You’re… relieved? How come?”

“Oh, Mira… don’t you remember your toddler years? You used to pick on Lani relentlessly. You and Murdoch.”

“Did we?” She felt a little taken aback, but she couldn’t deny that the memories were there… once she took the moment to think back on them. They weren’t so pleasant, in hindsight. “…Oh. I guess we did.”

Her mother didn’t seem upset by that fact, as it tied well into how she wanted to continue. “You see, I’m relieved because of how that changed. Before the Calamity, when I was still around, you and your brother were tremendously rambunctious. You each had such an overwhelming abundance of energy, and often, it melted into a potential for mischief. Your father and I worked constantly to keep you grounded.” Everyone except for Mipha and Noelani chuckled impishly, remembering the fun times on the Reservoir when peace and silence were uncommon. Mipha allowed this pause, but immediately after, she continued. “The thing is, Mira, your sister never shared in your electric behavior. She grew up very differently, as blindness often does to a young individual. She was often very scared of the things she didn’t understand, you see, and as a result, she had formed a rather fragile, emotional shell. Your father and I had to constantly make sure she felt safe, in hopes that she wouldn’t grow up to be too timid to function. It’s a very delicate matter.”

There was a long silence at the end of her last sentence as Mira and the others expected her to continue right away. When that didn’t happen, Mira gestured her mother along by acknowledging her explanation. “…I… I see.”

“Once my desperate battle against Ganon’s henchman began to turn against me, there came a catastrophic moment when I knew I wasn’t going to make it.” She held her head down for a moment as she briefly relived the horrid feeling another time. However, she didn’t let it manage to slow down her speech. “In that moment, there were a few things that went through my mind, most of which I cannot share. One of them, though, was about this very thing. At the moment that
I realized that my time amongst the living was nearing its end, I hoped...with everything I had...that Lani would receive the care she needed. Without me or your father, I feared deeply for her...a life without trust...security...or warmth.”

Behind the group, on the waterbed, Noelani nodded pensively. No one saw the action, though, since their eyes were all locked on Mipha’s wispy figure. Her mother’s words were hitting her on an emotional level, as if they were tailored specifically for her. In particular, the accuracy of her descriptions struck a special chord with the sightless Zora. Noelani may have been quite young in those days, but she could still remember all too well...the feelings of perpetual fear and doubt. Locking her gaze on the horizon, forming false images the only way her naïve brain could know how, was sometimes the only comfort she would get in the face of a crumbling reality. She often wondered if anyone besides Mira knew about that...until now.

Mira sensed a small snippet of Noelani’s thoughts in her head, but she was currently too distracted to assign any attention to it. She was still fully dedicated to hearing out what could’ve been the last direct statement she would ever receive from her mother. “So...you’re saying you’re glad I stepped in and provided Lani with the care you were hoping for?”

Mipha nodded. “Exactly. When Ganon attacked, and everything in your lives changed, you set aside the isolating tendencies of your childhood and stepped up to support your sister when your parents couldn’t return to her. Lani has you to thank for the fine womanhood into which she grew, and for that, I will thank you again. I can’t even begin to describe how proud you make me for this reason, and I hope that, because of it, you can allow yourself to be proud as well.”

Mira could feel the same rush coming back to her from the night before—the emotional tsunami. It pushed at her throat first, and eventually, it made its way into the back of her eyes. She thought she had been doing so good since last night at keeping her emotions in check, considering the fact that her dark past had been one of the only topics of discussion during the entirety of the last forty-eight hours. There was little that needed to be said to explain the tears that inevitably began flowing out of her eyes at the end of her departed mother’s monologue. To be among both of her parents in this time, and to hear the words that every child wanted to hear, from the figure she had missed so terribly, well...it was enough. More so than anything.

She sniffled. “I’m j...just proud to...to be your daughter...”

Once again, a hug would’ve been the perfect action to punctuate the moment. The best Mipha could do, though, was provide Mira with her usual, affectionate smile. Silence was in order, at the very least, to allow her to ride out the wave in peace. It was understandable, and more prominently, it was permitted by her nature. It was the only time they would get, after all, so its preservation was in everyone’s best interest.

It was with good patience, then, after allowing her the remainder of her allotted time to properly grieve, that Mipha finally turned to Noelani. She had been building up to this moment for too many years, and now, as it was her chance to give her young one something she’d certainly never forget. It was going to be the final piece that would make her return as special as possible. She needed to do something for her that would last forever, and in her time alone throughout the ages, she had found the perfect solution.
She began with a simple sigh. It could only be described as one of admiration. “Noelani.”

Noelani raised her head a little to address the sound of her name. “Mom?”

“You’re something of a hero yourself, aren’t you, my dear? You must know…that your family owes its enduring survival to you.”

This was a grandiose way to start her exchange, Noelani thought. Such large statements, and yet…they felt a little undeserved. She didn’t feel comfortable being compared to the marvelous likes of her father and her brother. “Mom…please…I didn’t do that much. Dad and Murdie, they…they deserve a lot more credit.”

“There is no need for modesty, Lani. The goddess, in all her omnipotence, chose you to inherit my healing power amongst your siblings for a very good reason. I noticed you revived your brother with stunning grace, especially knowing his condition before you reached him. That takes a remarkable amount of…focus…and dexterity.”

“Well, I…thanks, but…I’m only responsible for saving Murdoch, nothing more. Really…Mom…I’m just glad to be with you again. I don’t need all the praise.” She further evidenced her humility by grabbing her long tailfin and stroking it shyly.

Mipha knew her daughter well, and a response like this was something she had expected as a result. Praise was always nice, as almost everyone could agree, but Noelani was never one to enjoy hogging any spotlight. She still felt her daughter needed to know just how valuable she was, though…and how appreciative she made those around her. She knew the young Zora would reflect on her words privately for the next couple days, and in time, she’d accept the compliments and receive the inner warmth she was intending her to have. There was something else she wanted to do for Noelani, however, and she was steadily approaching that glorious moment with patience.

“It is fine if you don’t want to be shrouded in attention. I can understand that. Still, I just want you to understand the significance of the things you have done for all of us. Without Murdoch, you see, Link would have suffered the same fate as me, at the hands of the demon that had been haunting Vah Ruta. And in turn, without Link, my spirit would still be trapped under its oppressive influence.” She paused to see if she would get any kind of response from her daughter, but there appeared to be none, so she added her conclusion. “Thank you, Lani. It’s funny to see your father and I become so dependent on our little girl—the same one that had been so dependent on us to begin with.”

Noelani didn’t really know how to feel about these statements. She felt such a mixture of things inside…from the joy of listening to Mipha’s echoey, soothing voice, through the slight pressure of being the topic of discussion, all the way to the deep sadness of her mom’s inevitable departure. Overall, she felt no different than her siblings did. Her childhood insecurities returned to her in full strength, locking her feelings behind her veil of introversion. It felt just like the old days, and in the old days, she barely ever talked. So…she said nothing.

Mipha gently cocked her head to the side. Noelani was sometimes tough to read when she was silent. One could never know whether her feelings were positive, negative, or…indifferent. Of course, in good times, she was usually somewhat vocal, even if her words remained soft and
cautious. However, this particular good time must’ve been…confusing. She was meeting her mother again for the first time in a generation, but…perhaps it wasn’t the same to her. Perhaps she wanted more…to be able to feel her again, be held by her again, or…

Luckily for her, Mipha thought, she would be getting more very soon. Hylia seemed ready to grant her one more miracle.

“Come towards me, Lani.” She whispered. “I want to show you something.”

Link and the others assumed a slight bit of curiosity at the impending direction of their reunion. They turned to look at Noelani as, slowly, she took a few steps forward to obey her mother’s luring command. Curiosity had her as imprisoned as everyone else standing on the platform.

Naturally, she had very little to go off of as far as where exactly Mipha was standing. Her voice had indeed emanated from a distinct position not too far beyond the edge of the awning, but her exact position was going to be a guess. Was her mother a solid form…able to be impacted if she stepped too far? Was she merely a wispy figure of fog floating through the air? Or…was she just a trick of their minds? Noelani was far too captivated by her presence, but…she was dead, wasn’t she?

With her head aimed straight ahead, she carefully approached her mother. One step…two steps…three. Eventually, as she reached the spot directly in front of Mipha, she was instructed to stop, thankfully. She would’ve otherwise kept taking steps until she plunged into the lake.

“You seem to be about eye-level with me now! I almost feel like I’m looking at a mirror.” Her mother took a loving breath, letting it out in a gentle sigh. Noelani shut her eyes as she actually felt a cool rush of air flow along her face from the sigh. How was it possible?

“C…Can I…touch you?” She asked sheepishly. Her amazement was growing along with her curiosity.

Mipha shook her head with dismay, though the action was not seen by Noelani. “I would love to allow you to see me again the way you are able, but alas, my form is not physical. I have but a spectral existence in this world.”

Noelani looked toward the ground. “…Right. Got it.”

“No way, my dear. Though you may not be able to feel my presence with your flesh, I am able to feel yours. I want you to close your eyes again.”

Noelani was about to say something briefly, but Mipha hushed her. The only thing she had left to do was obey again. She closed her eyes as slowly as she was able, severing the sight Mipha had of her feathery, clouded irises. Not knowing how else to act, she clamped her arms to her sides and stood completely still. She remained completely at the mercy of what was yet to come.

Mipha, in the meantime, promptly raised both of her hands and rested them tenderly on her daughter’s cheeks. Noelani shivered as, much to her surprise, a tingling sensation greeted the regions of her cheeks whereupon her mother’s ghostly hands had made contact. It lingered in those spots while retaining its radius on each of her cheeks, matching the approximate size of Mipha’s hands. As Mipha rubbed her hands back to the sides of Noelani’s neck, and then up into the
undersides of her ear-fins, the tingling sensations on her daughter’s face shifted around to follow the areas she felt. The others watched the event unfold in continuing silence, assuming her actions to be some sort of bonding exercise.

“Your youth is still as strong as ever. I can see it…not only in your complexion, but in your heart. You seem to have aged exactly like your siblings.”

“That’s…good…right?” She failed to keep herself from moaning quietly at the tingly sensation beneath her fins.

Mipha grinned. “Do you not look up to your siblings? I couldn’t be more proud of how they’ve developed into their age. And…you should know…they do look up to you. Very much.”

“Well…I don’t think they do tha…tha…that much.” She stuttered stupidly as her mother’s right hand drifted down the side of her extensive tailfin, causing a good portion of it to go numb for a moment.

“I know I do.” Mira chimed in. “I call you my little lovebug for a reason. Sometimes…you know…I just want to be like you.”

Murdoch raised a hand as well. “I should say that I do too. You know exactly when to be assertive over that fragile frame of yours, and you always do it in a way that can just…stun a whole room. You have guts, Lani. I love that about you.”

Link merely stood silent and watched, his smile growing gradually. He could still notice a bit of discomfort in the amount of direct attention Noelani was getting from everyone at once, despite the audience being only her family members. Therefore, he decided to hold off before adding his two cents. He remembered having already said many things to boost the little one’s confidence in the past, but that didn’t mean he was going to refrain from doing so many more times in the coming years. His children would have a long time to be with him after he completed his journey in the coming weeks, after all. Tonight, though, was their time to be with their mom, and he allowed that. They seemed to need her more than anything after the last couple days.

Eventually, Mipha’s hands trailed back up the length of Noelani’s tailfin and converged to the center of her forehead. Noelani shuddered one last time at the gliding tingles, and as her mother’s illuminant hands came to a stop on her forehead, she drew in a deep breath. She still didn’t open her eyes, as she had not been instructed to do so.

“Would you say you feel properly relaxed, my dear?” She did not move her hands as she said this.

Noelani let the breath out in a long sigh. Her shoulders seemed to drop an inch or two, releasing the nervous tension that had built up in them. “Yes, um…I’d say so. That felt…nice.”

“The healing touch is a sacred thing. It’s Hylia’s unique gift to our royal family as a token of her subject Nayru’s wisdom. The one who inherits its power is always one of great compassion and selflessness. Noelani…I hope you see these things in yourself.”

“I suppose I do…” She chuckled awkwardly. “I mean…others tell me a lot that I do.”
She still didn’t seem too certain with herself, but Mipha did not pay it any mind. If anything, it seemed Noelani was trying to be humble in the face of all the praise. After all, humility was something she and Link had always made sure to teach their kids back then. It hadn’t rubbed off too well on Murdoch, though he did have a lot to brag about with his prestigious position in the Zora Guard. On the other hand, Noelani seemed pretty adamant on maintaining the doctrine she was taught, which was respectable.

“The truth is, you appear to have more potential in wielding this power than I ever had when I was your age. I was almost exactly as old as you are now when I married your father, and at that time, the most I could heal at once was a compound fracture.” She giggled a bit to lighten the mood as she spoke, causing Noelani and the others to do so a bit as well.

“Well…Mom…you are the expert. A compound fracture is a pretty serious injury.” Noelani countered.

“Though it may be, Lani, it is nothing compared to your brother’s injuries. I witnessed the shock he took as it was happening, and if I had to be honest…I, too, thought we were going to lose him. An explosion like that would’ve been enough to fry every nerve in his body, along with a few vital organs. To have him back as he was, healthy and mobile as if nothing had happened, takes incredible skill and focus. You must realize that.”

Murdoch and Noelani both looked at the ground again, feeling a bit of weight settled on their heads. They just hoped that they’d eventually be able to forget about that disturbing event. “Right…he was pretty beat up…”

Mipha’s hands were still pressed to Noelani’s forehead as this exchange was going on. Noelani felt no physical pressure on her forehead, of course, and as such, she continued standing still with her eyes closed. The tingling, however, was still there, and the more pressure Mipha would apply with her hands, the stronger the sensation would become. She was merely too distracted by the conversation at the moment to acknowledge the tingling anymore.

It did return to the forefront of her mind, however, as Mipha shifted her hands around to her temples again, with her thumbs positioned by the sides of her eyes. She shuddered again at the sudden feeling. “The thing I wanted to bring to light, Lani…was your blindness. I feel like your inability to see with your eyes has given you a marvelous advantage over me and your ancestors in using the power you were given. It’s almost as if…when you heal…your hands can do the seeing for you, exactly the way they do when you feel someone’s face.”

Noelani perked up a little bit. “That’s…actually exactly what happens. It’s kind of like…being able to see down into their skin, and…when there’s damaged tissue hidden in there somewhere…it’s like a wall that…sort of…blocks my vision. If…that makes sense, you know?”

Mipha grinned again. “Extraordinary, indeed.”

The time was now, she thought to herself. Since birth, her daughter had built her life around her incomplete interpretation of the world. An interpretation that was…unfortunately…lacking as a result. It was all she understood, but compared to the reality of her peers, it was only a slice of the true universe around her. The time was now…to give her a taste of reality, and how
beautiful it could be.

“Little Lani...I think you are ready to receive payment for your deeds. I want you to open your eyes.” She directed calmly.

Noelani obeyed, and her foggy eyes were shone to her mother once again. Her expression, and the expressions of those watching, turned curious. “Payment? What...kind of...payment?

Mipha strengthened her grip on Noelani’s temples, causing her tingling sensation to grow more intense. As she did so, she raised her thumbs outward so they were poised in front of her daughter’s face, an inch or so from her eyes. Noelani did not flinch nor squint, of course. She remained completely unaware of what was about to happen.

“I can only do this for you temporarily...but Lani, you are ready...to finally see the world like the rest of us.”

Without further warning, she pinched her hands inward, plunging her spectral thumbs directly into Noelani’s eyes. Noelani gave a startled yelp and threw her arms forward as her eyes suddenly went completely numb. She began blinking rapidly in a reflexive attempt to purge the perceived object from her corneas, but alas, her mother’s thumbs were not physical. Each rapid flutter of her eyelids only managed to send the thin layer of silky flesh phasing right through Mipha’s ghostly appendages. The tingling, meanwhile, gradually grew stronger.

Link’s, Murdoch’s, and Mira’s jaws dropped as they tried to absorb the events happening before them. Mipha held her stance perfectly still, and the areas surrounding Noelani’s eyes started glowing with soothing, blue light. It was the same light phenomenon that occurred whenever she or Noelani used the healing power on someone, which led the three others to believe that Mipha’s spirit was actually...healing Noelani’s eyes somehow. Such a thing wasn’t even supposed to be possible...right?

Several gasping noises were heard from Noelani during the process. No one knew what exactly the treatment felt like to her, but from the sounds she was making, it seemed like it wasn’t painful. These thoughts occupied the short amount of time there was before Mipha was finished with the mysterious procedure. Toward the end of her thumbs’ contact, the glowing regions around Noelani’s eyes seemed to grow wider until they nearly encompassed her head, and then, when she finally removed her hands from her face, the auras completely vanished. Noelani was left standing, still in a stunned position, with her eyes clamped shut. The onlookers held their breaths.

Mipha lowered her hands back to her sides and took a few light steps backwards. She raised her head to look at Noelani, whose eyes were still shut, face-to-face. Mira felt a bit like she was going to faint.

“Once more, Lani...open your eyes. I promise, this time...things will be different when you do. ...Open your eyes.”

Noelani kept her eyes shut for another moment. The suspense building in the onlookers’ chests was becoming unbearable. Mira raised one of her hands to her head and began fanning her face anxiously. Link and Murdoch, from the other side of the circle, just stood in dumbfounded
The seconds went by in this state, and finally, her lids were parted once more. To everyone’s amazement, the creamy haze that had always occupied Noelani’s irises quickly vanished as soon as her eyes were exposed to the moonlight, like wind blowing away a cloud. What remained...were two clear, sparkling irises, radiating a vibrant, ocean-blue shade that matched the likes of Link and Murdoch and reflected the pure colors of the now-purified Eastern Reservoir. Her entire form seemed to be altered with this change. She looked more...alive.

“OoooOOOOOH…” A curious hum drizzled out of Noelani’s mouth before suddenly gaining volume and ending in a loud interjection. “Whoa...whoa...whoa whoa whoa whoa WHOA...!”

Link and Mipha had to try and stifle a good laugh as they watched their daughter become powerfully overwhelmed by the new sensation. Her voice cracked several times in her reaction, resulting clearly from the incredible volume she was reaching in her tone. It had only been a moment, and they could both already figure that this was the loudest the little one had ever been. She had good reason, though.

Noelani did not know how to handle the information with which she had suddenly been presented. The blankness…the complete lack of sight in any conceivable form...had suddenly been replaced with perfect vision. Thanks to her mother, she could truly see, for the first time in her life! But...since it was the first time, she didn’t know what anything was. Every other process in her brain melted down as it struggled to process the incoming wealth of details from the world around her...through her now working eyes.

She saw a large, flat expanse of rippling blue against a dark, dotted sky, with a towering beige structure sitting within its depths. Behind the exppanse were rolling oscillations of brown that, from their distance, seemed to vary in height by hundreds or thousands of feet. In front of the exppanse was a perfectly flat layer of smoothness, more turquoise in color, with an extension of the ripples covering over its top. And...directly in front of her, standing all around her on both sides, were...figures. One of them looked distinctly different from the others, with a tan, wispy bush on its top and a body of a very white-orangish color. The others had variations of red in their hues, with front ends that shone perfect white against the red, and long, wavy extensions off the back of their tops. The one standing closest to her wasn’t standing at all, but...rather...floating, almost, with green flames dancing around its wind-like appearance. The only problem was...she didn’t know what any of these colors were. All she could tell was that they were obvious in their differences, in a way that couldn’t be described.

“Wh...Wha...What...What is all this...?! I don’t even...I don’t...I don’t even...know what to think!” She stuttered. Her legs began shaking.

Mipha put her hands by her chest and put on another motherly smile. She gently coaxed her daughter to silence. “Shh...just relax. Do not fret. I have temporarily cured you of your blindness.”

Noelani sucked in massive breaths as her thoughts jetted by at the speed of light. She did happen to notice that, as she moved her head and utilized her eye muscles, the image she received would change accordingly. “No...No blindness? So...I’m seeing right now? I can...I can see? This is seeing?!”
“Indeed, it is. But it will only last as long as my spirit dwells within this world. When I eventually move on into the afterlife...when my duty as a Champion is finally fulfilled...your blindness will unfortunately return to you. It is all I am able to do.” Her smile faltered a bit, but she did well to maintain it so as not to bring Noelani down. She remembered, though, that Noelani didn’t exactly know what a smile looked like anyway.

Noelani, on the other hand, started making conjectures as she coordinated between her acute hearing and her newfound sense of sight. When hearing the familiar sound of her mother’s voice as she talked, she could also see a part of the wispy figure’s “face” move a bit in conjunction. She obviously couldn’t connect lip movement to sound, since she didn’t even know what lips looked like, but nonetheless, she figured she could put two and two together. It could only mean one thing.

She aimed her eyes directly at Mipha and pointed her finger at her curiously. “So...wait. Is this, er...are you...my mother? Are...Are you Mom?”

Since she could see everything now, it would seem, on the surface, like she would already know this information. However, being that her eyes had not worked from the moment she emerged from her egg, seeing itself was an alien concept to her. Nothing she saw registered as anything of comprehensible value. Nothing at all. She didn’t even have a reliable way of relating the things she saw to the things she had felt before with her own hands.

Mipha cocked her head to the side and chuckled lovingly. “Oh, Lani...you're going to be meeting your family all over again, wouldn’t it seem?”
Culmination

The world of Hyrule contained quite an untapped wealth of divine beauty. Most of its inhabitants knew, at least in part, of this beauty, due to growing up and settling down within its reaches. The descendants of the sheikah took for granted the majestic valley in which lay Kakariko Village. The Gerudo were more than familiar with the daunting, arid landscape of the southwestern desert. The Zoras were blown away every day by the waterfalls, flowing streams, and turquoise marble of the Domain they were given by their ancestors. Before Ganon’s most recent uprising, the denizens of Hyrule Castle Town spent each day of their lives before the powerful view of the castle itself, surrounded by thousands of acres of rolling, flowery plains.

Link knew of Hyrule’s stunning grace more than just about anyone, even after having to familiarize himself with it a second time since his awakening. His journey, while still vastly incomplete, brought him across many regions along the southern and eastern shores of the kingdom. He could surely testify for beauty, and most certainly, it was found to be all around them…in the lake, the valley of the Domain, and the horizons beyond.

Noelani, however…understood none of it. How does one feel any emotion, whether fondness or disgust, at the sensations of an entirely new sense? She only just began to see for the first time, after a lifetime of believing that the world existed entirely…at only the ears and the fingertips. She could choose to categorize her newly visible surroundings as anything she wanted: charming…surreal…unsettling…disgusting. Naturally, she chose to view them exactly as countless other subjects of the kingdom did. She saw everything as beautiful.

“I can’t believe…” She laid a hand on her chest, and the other hand on her cheek. “…that this had been here all this time. All of this…all of you. I’m…I’m part of all this.”

With that realization, she took a glance down at herself. Her eyes were greeted with the sight of her own snow-white bosom and abdomen, her carnation-pink arms and legs, and the elegant fins on her elbows and torso that fluttered in the midnight breeze. She also took special note of the sparkling, sterling silver jewelry that hung around her neck, its jade implants reflecting the glow of the moon out before her with a greenish tint. She didn’t understand any of it…but she loved it. She loved it dearly.

“I look so…so…so pretty. I look…almost like…a lovely ocarina lullaby.” She cooed hypnotically.

The group shared a calm chuckle. They could see that music and sounds were the only ways she could really describe her surroundings, as…well…everything she knew was mounted on such a basis. Link thought this was just…an adorable quality.

“Well then, my sweet Lani…” Mipha hummed in her ghostly, echoing voice. “…how do you feel?”

Noelani almost seemed to ignore the question. “I feel like…I must…I must know all of you. I must match my family to how I knew them before I could look into their eyes.” She spoke in such a mesmerizing way, as if the restoration of her sight had brought about new emotions she had not yet experienced. “Don’t any of you make a sound.”
This was becoming more precious by the moment, Link thought. His daughter had a fiercely curious mind. Now that she could see things, she was hungry for details. He was bound to be delighted by her little observations, as he saw when she marched definitively up to Mira on her right. He and Murdoch were standing off on the other side of the semicircle, so assuming she went in order from right to left, he would be the last one to be evaluated.

They watched with patient interest as Noelani stopped in front of Mira and looked up into her golden eyes. She could now truly see how short she was compared to her sister, but at the moment, she couldn’t quite make the connection between height differences in sound and sight. She was getting there, though, and as she stared up at Mira, Mira returning the favor without so much as a smirk, she easily narrowed down the possibilities of whom she was addressing. With a slow and initially hesitant movement, she brought her healing hands up to her sister’s face and tenderly caressed her cheeks, taking the extra time to flick playfully at her temple fins like she had done several times in the past. From there, she knew almost instantly, and she evidenced it by taking a deep breath.

“Hey, sis.” She whispered.

At that point, Mira couldn’t contain her grin any longer. She giggled rather dramatically in front of Noelani and threw both arms around her shoulders. “This is…amazing.”

Noelani had to giggle too, since Mira’s mood had a historic effect of being contagious to her. The sisters, while inseparable in nature, had their slight differences in emotion in times of stress or uncertainty, with one of them often hung on trying to swing the other. In happiness, however, they were one and the same. Their joy ricocheted off each other like an infinite battle of mirrors. Seeing was Noelani’s new ecstasy, and her ecstasy was Mira’s ecstasy. This night was the start of a new era, one in which their bond together would be solidified by much more than just mutual feelings.

“Wow, sis, you look…so much like me! We have the same…color…I think.” Her words caused Mira to let go and give her space again.

“Yeah, Lani, we do. That’s why everyone calls us twins.” Mira explained with an ongoing smile. “We’re two separate Zoras, but we look very much like each other. Our height, our eye color, and our tailfin length are about the only things that can tell us apart.”

“My tailfin…” She murmured curiously. She stretched her arm behind herself and took hold of her tailfin, which had been a subject of her interest at many mundane points in her life. She pulled it around to her side and inspected it, an action not possible by either of her siblings, thanks to their endowments’ shorter lengths. As usual, it felt remarkably smooth and squishy, like an elongated tube of gelatin. The only difference was that she could now see the qualities of this feeling, along with the pristine details in color. She was particularly impressed with both the seam separating the pink from the white along the appendage’s side and the row of spots highlighting the pink side of said seam. The overall shades of her floppy fin glistened in her eyes the glossy blue glow of the moon. They were patterns she was simply incapable of imagining before.

“Don’t you worry, Lani, I’m going to spend as much time as I can after Dad leaves showing you everything the Domain has to offer.” Mira assured, putting a hand back on her sister’s
shoulder. “Then, when it’s all over, and Calamity Ganon is finally put to death, you’ll never forget the things you saw in your home. You’ll feel things and finally be able to understand how they look.”

Noelani released her tailfin, allowing it to swing back to its usual position behind her head. She looked up at her sister again and took a moment to inspect her eyes a second time. There was complexity in them, or…a certain glint, as if they contained within them another similar face…one with…different color eyes. What was that?

She grinned cutely. “I can’t wait.”

Mira shared in their moment with a returned look of affection. They had much to look forward to, with the next few weeks holding more revisits to familiar places. She planned to tour her sister around the Reservoir and the Domain, followed by the other locations of their childhood. The most special spot would either be Crenel Peak or Veiled Falls, where perhaps Noelani would finally be able to climb the waterfall without a chaperone. These visits may have already been done with Link during the last couple days, but she was more than happy to do it all again for the next important figure of her family. Time was of the essence for her. More than anything, they were both going to miss Noelani’s vision when it was gone.

She ushered her sister along to her next family member. “Go on, now…the big, strong men of the family are yearning for your attention!”

This earned a delightful round of laughter from the group, especially from Link and Murdoch. Their instincts and their reflexes were certainly on point, but they did not really see themselves as physically endowed. In fact, Link had been rather prone to windedness lately, even from actions as simple as spinning a club around for a few seconds. It was a flattering sentiment, though.

Noelani took a quiet step in the other direction and aimed herself toward Murdoch. She was perfectly oriented for once, which was still very strange for her siblings to see. She walked to the other side of the semicircle, her steps exemplifying the new confidence her vision gave her. Gone, or…suspended, at least, were the days of her dependence on her neighbors for guidance. She had it in her own mind that she wanted to walk towards her brother, and she did it. Without a sound from him nor anybody else, she knew exactly where he was.

Murdoch traced her approach with his eyes as she stepped up to the edge of his personal space, much like Mira had when it was her turn. He always considered him and his sister to be polar opposites on the inside, ever since their childhood, in more ways than he could try to list. Some of the primary differences he felt were in their approachability; mainly…their intimidation factor. Today, though, he greatly admired the deliberation in her behavior. She no longer demonstrated the shy, yielding mannerisms that had set her apart from him so severely in their history. He admired the sudden change quite a bit.

She looked up at him. Doing so required her to crane her neck quite a bit, thanks to their height difference, which was something very unfamiliar to her. The weight of her long tailfin pulling her head back seemed to increase at the downward angle. She first checked his eyes, just as she had done with Mira, but she was also quick to notice his impressive build and fantastical features. That was…she could at least gather that they looked impressive and fantastical.
“You look a lot different than sis, that’s for sure.” She muttered. “Your look reminds me of…of a…a menacing growl.”

Murdoch smirked a bit, feeling slightly embarrassed. Mipha and Mira giggled. He and Link, however, both remained silent, as they were both interested in hearing more of Noelani’s observations. There was a certain type of poetic feel to hearing a formerly blind young woman talk about the things she sees. So many adjectives were simply impossible.

The moment of truth came, of course, when she reached up to his face with her hands and began to feel around his chin and cheeks for details, prodding the crevices in his bones and stroking the floppy lengths of his temple fins. Murdoch managed to keep a straight face while receiving this treatment, despite Noelani’s concentrated glare seeping into his retinas like that of an angry teacher during detention. It helped that he knew his sister, at least enough, and if he held anything with certainty, it was that she loved him.

“Oh wow, M…Murdie. It’s you. I have to admit…I almost forgot what your face felt like.”

Murdoch sighed thoughtfully. “You saved my life, though, did you not? You spent at least a couple hours on me just earlier this evening.”

“Well yes, of course, but…that had been my only physical contact with you since you first joined the Zora Guard.” She glanced down at his webbed feet for a moment before looking up to meet his gaze again. Something had begun brewing inside her as she absorbed her brother’s facial features for the first time, for it was at these moments, so much later, that she was tying the physical looks to the figure whom she had deeply idolized in her youth. The figure that had…not often been present. “Until now…I’ve never been able to look around and see what you were up to in the Domain. So, because of that, I’ve always asked myself…‘where are you?’”

“I’ve always been home, among you. Among Mira. Among our people.” He answered without hesitation, but Noelani’s trained ear could sense the hidden guilt in his tone. “I never planned to leave any of you. I’m also here on the Reservoir with you, Mira, and our parents right now, and…there’s nowhere else I’d rather be.”

She had no reason not to believe him. He had surely undergone a genuine transformation this fateful evening…there was no doubt about that. Her questions, shared likely by her parents and her sister, had still not all been answered yet, however. And most likely of all…they probably never would. It would take a great deal of dedication to let her past go and revel in the guarantee that Murdoch’s youth was indeed restored, and that their future was looking as bright as the sun that would finally bless the Domain tomorrow. His motives had been just…so dark, though. Too dark to just…forget.

“It’s just that…that’s not how it’s always felt…I guess.” She babbled sadly. “You were home, yes, but…but you just felt so…so far away. It was difficult to…I suppose…not feel like part of the problem, somehow. When you distance yourself from me, and I have no vision…it’s like you’re choosing to disappear from me completely.”

Murdoch couldn’t tell if she had more to say in her short monologue, but he stepped in to deliver his response anyway. He placed his three-fingered left hand on her shoulder, which, for once, didn’t cause her to flinch. “Look, I…I don’t want you to see me with your incredible new vision and…and associate my appearance with hatred or…anger. Or apathy. I was just going
through so much grief in those times, and……I just want to prove in any way I can just how much I love this family. And how much I’d endure to defend it from further disaster.”

There was a weighted silence after his declaration. Noelani continued to look straight up at her brother’s eyes, mesmerized by his aspects. Oh, how incredibly tall he was compared to her. She always knew the difference through their contact, but seeing it herself through her crystal clear irises still provided her with a great deal of interest in him. She couldn’t quite define the churning sort of intensity she felt watching him stare back down at her with such a stern expression. His appearance reflected the deeply immovable spirit she always saw in him before she could actually see him. He looked exactly like he could easily uphold his bold promise.

She carefully reached forward with her right hand, her face still trained on that of her brother. Murdoch stood completely still, awaiting the next move she was going to take. It was still unclear to him whether or not she believed his promise, though he knew he felt genuine in his sorrow, and his sister was one of the best at detecting feelings in others. He allowed himself to relax in these thoughts as Noelani gently took hold of his mutilated left hand and brought it out in front of them both as if she were going to do a palm reading.

She directed her gaze to his hand as she gripped it tenderly within her own. Her deductions were primitive, of course, and yet…she could tell how different his hand looked. For one thing, it was rather massive compared to hers, so wrapping her fingers all the way around his palm proved to be a surprising challenge. Despite this size, however, his remaining fingers were quite smooth and slender. He may have been a warrior, but in his hand, she merely saw a larger version of her own womanly, fluttery fingers. She could only look over at Mipha, their departed mother, and imagine how many more hidden traits of hers he had inherited.

She masked her thoughts with a heavy sigh, bringing forth her other hand as she did so. Murdoch continued to lose a bit more tension in his muscles as he watched and felt his sister’s two hands clasp around the entirety of his battle-scarred palm. His gaze remained fixed directly on her as she raised her head back up to meet his eyes. Had they ever actually shared a moment like this before? Even back then? He couldn’t remember.

“Murdie?” She did not stutter this time.

“Yes?” He did not either. Their exchange had lost all restraint.

“Will you spend more time with us soon? With me and sis?” She tightened her grip on his hand a little bit. “I want us to spend more time together…the three of us. I want to hear your stories from the Zora Guard.”

Link and Mipha smiled warmly. As far as the last time Murdoch had connected personally with Noelani, well…they couldn’t remember either. It’s not exactly like they had been around to witness their growth together in the Domain, after all. During their time with their children, before Ganon’s rise, Murdoch and Lani just seemed so distant…as if they dwelled on separate planes. Now, Mipha could feel a great deal of relief knowing the conditions under which she was leaving her offspring. It seemed…inaarguably…like they were going to continue growing stronger with each other each passing day. This thought ushered in her a cascading peace of mind.
Murdoch shared a deeply interlocking gaze with his sister for the first time in history. One in which her spiritual presence was made as clear to him as her sparkling irises. Her eyes were like an amplifier for her soul, he could see. She observed more…understood more…responded more. He felt as if he now needed to meet Noelani for the first time again. He certainly owed her…and himself…the attention.

He nodded once. “Of course, Lani. I’ll let Uncle know as soon as all is said and done at the Domain. I’ll accompany you and Mira wherever you wish to go. With Vah Ruta tamed now, after all…the Zora Guard could use the relief.”

His response caused her to grin before even realizing it. She had been hoping for such a response. Things were going to be different from now on.

She contained the urge to fall forward and throw her arms around her sympathetic brother. Instead, she did so slowly and lovingly, with two careful steps forward to precede the action. Murdoch reciprocated her advance by enveloping the top of her shoulders in his arms. He was much taller and mightier than her, of course, and thus, his arms didn’t go around her as gracefully as hers did with his waist. He chuckled a bit awkwardly at that.

“That’s great news.” She sighed admiringly.

All in all, there was still much to be shared between her and Murdoch, but she decided those things should be saved for their time together after Link’s departure. They both still had a lot of life ahead of them…filled with peace, tranquility, and blissful togetherness. There would be even more to enjoy when Link eventually returned to the Domain. If anything, the knowledge of his thriving children while on his journey would help to accelerate that occurrence.

On that note, with her father in mind, Noelani released Murdoch and took a sidestep in Link’s direction. She already knew who he was by process of elimination, but she still wanted to feel his face again to compare his likeness to her new fifth sense. She could easily tell how different he looked, as she had been told all her life. Rather fittingly, he, her father, was the first Hylian she would ever lay her working eyes on. Her first thought, with that, was just how striking he looked.

Even he, who, hailing from a race traditionally much shorter than Zoras, was incredibly meek-looking compared to her brother, stood taller than she did. Her eyes just about lined up with his chin, or at least what she could assume was his chin. His appearance, after all, was something of an entirely new variety to her. His flesh reflected less moonlight. His limbs lacked the fluttery, silky fins that she observed hanging from the forearms of herself and her other family members. Unlike that of her mother and her siblings, his body was covered up by various types of materials. She assumed them to be clothes.

Link welcomed her approach with open arms. Having never seen such an action before, it took her a moment to understand the gesture he was making. As she stepped within his reach, though, he closed his arms around her and pulled her into a hug, the feeling of which she was more than familiar. A surprised smile appeared on her face, and she returned the favor. As the spectacle was seen by Mipha from a few feet away, she knew…she knew it was a sight that would never perish from her heart.
His head still over her shoulder, Link spoke gently near Noelani’s temple-fin. “So, what do you think? Handsome, right?”

Noelani reared her head back and giggled loudly. “Dad, don’t be weird!” A hearty laugh spilled out of her siblings as she glared at her father. She couldn’t hold her straight face for very long, though. “But…yes. Yes, you…you really are.”

The emotional momentum of the moment continued as Noelani studied the features of Link’s face. She took notice of his ears and his toned cheekbones, features which were not present on Zoras like herself and her siblings. She also noticed the remarkable symmetry of these features, though…she didn’t exactly know how to describe it. Symmetry was a word she had heard before, of course, but it was an alien concept to her. All the while, Link admired her the same way he had admired Mipha during their earliest times together. There couldn’t have been any missing memories left in his head at this point…concerning the Zoras, that was.

The last thing she did was reach forward and run her hand lightly through her father’s hair, feeling the bushy, shaggy strands slip through the gaps between her fingers. She made a satisfying humming noise as she did so. It reminded her of the tall, wavy grass she’d lay in with Mira on the days they’d wander off to the fields near Veiled Falls. That stuff…that grassy stuff…really stood out to her.

She broke the momentary silence that had accumulated on the dock. “You know…I’ve always wondered what this stuff was. And…now that I can actually see it…it’s making me even more curious.” She stopped stroking with her hand and began to ruffle it around and play with it.

“That’s my hair.” Link smirked. “We Hylians have hair on our heads.”

She brought her other hand forward and started putting forth a major effort to screw up her father’s careful hairdo. “Why, though? It’s really nice, but…how come?”

“Well…” He shrugged. “…to stay warm, probably. We also aren’t big water-dwellers like you are, so…that probably has something to do with it.”

That aspect of the discussion got Noelani curious. She had held a very subconscious question in her mind for the majority of her childhood years, based solely on the things she had heard regarding her mother and her father’s physical differences. It was actually now, seeing her Hylian father standing side-by-side with her Zoran brother, mother, and sister, that the question surfaced to the forefront of her thoughts.

“Dad…I’ve always kind of wondered something, I guess…without realizing it.” She stuttered shyly, knowing the delicacy of the topic. “You look so much different than the rest of us.”

“I would say that’s true.” Link uttered thoughtfully. He waited patiently to answer her query.

“So…why did you decide to make our Domain your home? What made you choose to marry Mom instead of a Hylian girl? One that would be more like you?” She withdrew her hands from Link’s head and folded them softly in front of her.

Link could reasonably figure that such a question as that had been boiling in his children’s
minds for decades. In fact, it probably wasn’t just them, even. His few friends from the past, his superiors, the other Zoras, and even Zelda, he imagined…all probably had that question in their minds at some point. He glanced over at Mipha, who shared his gaze with a content smile.

He held his attention on his wife’s spectral manifestation during the beginning of his response. “You know, Lani, even for someone like me, not everything has an answer that can easily be rationalized.” He then turned his eyes back to her before continuing. “When you meet the right partner in life, it just...hits you. You tend to stop seeing physical differences, and instead…you just…want to be with them all the time.” His frequent pauses exemplified the obvious reflection he was conducting within himself. “I’ve known your mother since I was small enough to fit in her arms, and even up to today…there is no one I’ve ever met that has moved me more than her. The fact that she’s a Zora…just becomes irrelevant.”

“If you want a gauge, Lani…” Mipha spoke up from behind her, causing her to turn around and glance at her mother. “…your dad was practically a mute when I first met him. For being as fierce a fighter as he is...he’s one of the most introverted creatures I’ve ever known.”

“Really?” Noelani gawked at her, seeing her nod solemnly in response.

“Did you notice how silent he probably was when he first arrived at the Domain? It was only after reuniting with you and your siblings…and remembering his past with us...that he emerged from his shell. I’m sure this is the most he has talked since awakening from his restoration.”

Link chuckled. Noelani looked back at him, taking in the warm visual image of his laughter against the dark sky behind him. “It’s true. I truly feel at home being with all of you. If I were still unsure that you were my family, what other proof would I need?”

Noelani grinned slightly. She still wanted to understand more about her father. She was confident in the amount she already knew, of course, but as her eyes scanned his physical features for the first time, she felt a new element to him that had since been veiled. She felt this way about all her family members. Link, though...her dad...he was a very special case.

“It’s just that you’re so courageous, and...reliable.” She murmured. “It’s so easy to talk to you and depend on you. And...to be honest...” An awkward giggle escaped her mouth, cutting her off briefly. “…you’re very nice to look at. I can’t really explain how.”

Mira raised her hand from behind the two of them. “You’re saying he’s ‘handsome,’ then! You know now what ‘handsome’ means.”

Noelani pointed a finger at her sister without turning around. “Yeah...what she said. I guess, what I’m trying to say is...you could’ve probably gotten any girl in Hyrule to be with you. What...in particular...drew you to Mom?”

Link was moved by his formerly blind daughter’s choice of discussion after finally receiving eyesight. There were so many things she could have asked, specifically about his appearance, and yet she chose to elaborate on her deepest curiosities...ones that didn’t require vision to formulate. At this, he pretended to think the question over deeply, but in reality, he already knew the answer by heart. It had only taken forty-eight hours...an extremely eventful forty-eight hours...for the answer to her question to reemerge within him. He almost felt silly for
having ever forgotten.

“Do you not think your mother is beautiful enough for me?” He began jokingly. Silent chuckles trickled out of Mipha and the others before he commenced his proper response. “To be honest, though…I don’t think your mom really differs much from me. She sacrificed a lot to be with me, and if she were still physical, standing right next to us here on the platform like she is, she would still be willing to give every fin on her body for our well-being. This, I know, Lani, and you should never doubt it yourself. I understand you were too young to know her intimately before the Calamity, but if you were to forget absolutely everything, like I did, you should always at least remember that aspect of her.”

Noelani glanced around at her family members, all standing around that spot on the Reservoir dock in a loose semicircle. Their attention was still trained on her, and through their eyes, she could just start to see deep traces of their respective, unique characters. Having lacked the eyesight before, she was already quite familiar with the aspects of her parents’ and siblings’ personalities, but now, she was starting to make out the proof in their faces. As she reveled in their silence and their company, something she couldn’t explain just…made sense somehow.

“I’m…really lucky, aren’t I?” She babbled.

“Lani…I think we’re all very lucky.” Link whispered. He brought his hands up in the direction of the family he created, acknowledging each of his children, alongside the misty specter of his beloved wife. The gang was all back together for once, and its bliss could truly be felt in the air. Calamity Ganon had already failed his objective, as far as they were concerned.

Mipha broke her out of her trance by addressing the bigger picture. “So, Lani…I’m really hoping the time you get with your vision allows you to further understand the world we share. It is the goddesses’ greatest gift to us, so I found it suitable to at least grant you its beauty with one of the last physical gestures of which I am capable.”

“I don’t even know what to say.” Noelani replied. She stepped away from Link and faced the apparition of her mother once more. She felt such a strong significance in their exchange, as if Mipha’s spirit was taking hold of a spot in her mind. The sight she now had, even if temporary, was like an extension of her mother. “Is a ‘thank you’ even enough?”

“You don’t need to say anything. I’ll be keeping a close watch over you and the Domain from the Divine Beast. Even when you can’t see me anymore, I’ll always be sensing your delight and feeling it within myself. That…is all I will need in return.” She hummed. The eerie echo in her voice was the most beautiful sound to them.

A wave of emotion washed over Noelani, but again, she managed to keep from crying. The stinging definitely reached her eyeballs, but she bit back at the sensation the way only she could. “I love you, Mom.”

Mipha smiled. It was warmest smile she had produced all evening, among the many that there were. “I love you too, Lani.”

Another silence fell for a moment. No one in the group felt like anything needed to be said
during the short period. Under the now-clear skies of the East Hyrulean night, the only thing that could be heard was the gentle rippling of the Reservoir waters at their feet. Only a couple seconds were spent in this state, but it was a pensive couple of seconds for everybody. Mipha had allowed this couple of seconds despite not being done talking yet.

“That goes for all of you. I don’t ever want any of you thinking I won’t always be by your side, in both good times and bad. You must know...that we all share a powerful connection with each other. Try not to interpret my departure tonight as a final goodbye.”

“I’ve thought about you almost every day since the Calamity.” Murdoch mentioned. “With you finally free from the Divine Beast...I think we’d all be able to feel your presence.”

“Yeah, I agree.” Mira added. “We’ve all been through a lot together. Much has changed in our lives the last couple days, after all. I probably speak for everyone when I say that your freedom is a huge weight off my chest.”

“I still can’t believe I can actually see you now...” Noelani muttered.

“With that...” Mipha continued, her head turning downward to stare at the ground. “…I think it is time for you all to depart for the Domain. My father and the rest of our people are probably looking to meet with you after seeing the clearing skies.”

“Wait, you mean...you have to go already?” Mira breathed.

“Oh, Mira...I’m afraid so. I’ve already expended a lot of my energy to be with you here this evening. If I could, I would stay here with you and your dad forever and never let any of you go. But...as it is now...my place is with Vah Ruta. I must conserve my power to guide the Beast when Calamity Ganon returns.”

Noelani sighed. “It doesn’t feel like you were here long enough...”

“Always keep your loved ones close, my dear. Your father is a dedicated, caring individual, and he’d take on any abomination to keep you and your siblings safe. Stay ever loyal to him and to your family, and I will never be far away. Even when it may not seem like it, you live an incredibly blessed existence. Remember this.”

“Al...Alright.” She responded sheepishly. She glanced to her side and saw her sister succumbing to quiet tears again. It was difficult for all of them, having to leave their mother for a second time. However, Mira tended to take these kinds of things the hardest.

“Please, everyone...do not mourn for me. You all worked valiantly as a united force to get me out of Ganon’s clutches. For this, you should feel proud. I will surely rest in peace upon Ganon’s final death, knowing my family developed such strong bonds. It’s all I could’ve ever hoped for.” She put a hand on her chest to punctuate her statement.

“We’ll never go quietly.” Murdoch declared. “I, Dad, Mira, Lani...we all owe our strength to you.”

“And I to you, my noble son.” Mipha giggled softly, the sound of which caused Mira to cry a little harder. “Now, go. Your people hunger for your return.”
The group hung around the spot for a little longer, but it wasn’t long before they decided they should honor their deceased loved one’s wish. Murdoch was the first to turn around, beginning the slow march toward the steps of the Reservoir platform. A heavy weight sat on his heart as he realized he would not be seeing his mother again after this moment. His life had been building up to the moment of her return without him even realizing it, and now…it was already ending. He couldn’t describe the mix of feelings it created.

On the other hand, Noelani took quick notice of Mira’s struggling emotions. When it became their turn to step off the dock and resign to the stairs to descend with their brother, she took her sister’s hand and led her dutifully across the platform. Mira held onto Noelani’s hand with one hand, and she used her other to shield her face as her tears kept streaming down her cheeks. She was experiencing the same cascade of emotion as the night before. However, she was at least somewhat consoled by her sister, who, after years of aimlessly following behind her, was now firmly grasping her hand and leading her along their path forward. The changes in having her vision seemed immediate.

“Will you need me to carry you down the stairs again, Lani?” Murdoch called from the other end of the platform.

Noelani proudly shook her head as she approached him with Mira close behind. “You know, I think I’m good. I’m going to do it myself this time.”

As the three of them congregated by the top of the stairs, they each turned around and looked at their mother one last time. Mipha looked back at them from her distance away on the dock, and she waved. With that wave, there sat the culmination of everything they had experienced together, down to the first time their primitive flesh had felt her touch. Every one of them felt its gravity.

Murdoch and Noelani waved back. Mira, however, turned her head down and buried her face against Noelani’s shoulder to further conceal her ongoing sobbing. Noelani felt another increase in the intensity of her sister’s crying, and as such, she made an effort to keep her close as they began to follow Murdoch down the stairs. For them, the evening was quite bittersweet.

With that, Link finally turned around and began to trace his children’s steps toward the back of the platform. He had been waiting until the very end to avoid interfering with their goodbyes, and now that it was said and done, he was preparing to take his leave as well. However, as he took his first step away from his wife, she stopped him.

“Link, wait. You didn’t think I’d forget about you, did you?”

He halted in his tracks upon hearing her address him. He then turned around to face her once more. “Oh, well…no. I just didn’t think you had anything you wanted to say to me.”

She cocked her head to the side and gave him a slightly scolding glare. “Link, that’s silly of you to think. Of course I want to talk to you. We’ve endured an entire century apart, in case you didn’t remember.”

“Hey, that’s alright with me.” He chuckled awkwardly. “Sorry about that. I’m all ears.”
She grinned shyly at his sheepish response. “Well, firstly… I just wanted to tell you how much I’ve missed you. Spending years… decades… trapped in Ganon’s paralyzing darkness, with no one but you and the children to think about… well… it almost drove me mad.”

He nodded solemnly. “I understand. I may have recovered my memory of you just a couple days ago, but… I feel like I’ve missed you too, all this time. It’s been a difficult journey so far.”

Time seemed to slow down suddenly once he got talking with her. Link still hadn’t entirely allowed himself to believe in Mipha’s return, despite having stood amongst her for the last solid hour. She had existed only in his memories prior to this evening, so there still held a great amount of significance in talking to her face to face again. And, with Vah Ruta sitting out in the Reservoir sporting pure, unpossessed blue lights, the environment seemed exactly like the nights they had spent together before the laying of their eggs. It was like he had gone back in time.

“It was maybe only a week ago that I had nearly given up hope of ever seeing you again.” She uttered sadly. “The feeling was just… too immense.”

“I wish there had been a way for me to come help you sooner. So that… you wouldn’t have had to suffer for so long.” He mentioned quietly.

“Perish the thought. The important thing is that you survived the Calamity, and you’ve returned to keep our children’s hopes alive. However, I know you still have a lot ahead of you, assuming the other Champions had suffered the same fate as me.” She put a hand on her cheek as if deep in thought.

“Yes, I was assuming so. I couldn’t remember much of anything about the Divine Beasts when I woke up on the Great Plateau, but now that I’ve been through all of this with you, I know exactly what I’m up against. I intend to travel any distance I must to locate and free the other Champions.” He declared boldly.

Mipha flashed him a cute, loving smile. Through the look of admiration in her eyes, Link could tell she was having another crush-like moment for him. He couldn’t have realized how much he subconsciously missed seeing that look on her face. “That’s exactly what I fell in love with when I got to know you, Link. You’re the most selfless and dependable Hylian to ever walk these eastern cliffs. If only you knew how much you’ll always mean to me.”

Link felt a blush arise in his cheeks, which caused him a bit of embarrassment in front of his wife. “Surely, I think you give me a little too much credit!”

Mipha shook her head while maintaining her smile. “Hardly. I’d sing your praises all the way out to Naydra if I could. The fact that you endured Ganon’s wrath twice now and still managed to come out alive to be here with our children, well… it absolutely fills me with joy.”

“I’m just not ready to go yet. Not while there’s still work to be done.” He humbly explained. “I’d like to at least restore Hyrule so I can come back here and live among the Zoras in peace.”

She folded her hands in front of her with a gentle nod. “And that is a perfectly sensible plan of action, I must say. In fact, that actually leads me to the next thing I wanted to ask.”
At that, Link shifted his stance a little bit. He was prepared to stand in that spot and talk with his wife all night if she wanted to. After all, it was the last chance they would ever have together, so he wanted to make sure she felt content. “What’s on your mind?”

She took a deep breath, and at the same time, he noticed her bite her lip. She also took a moment to look down at the ground, almost as if she were trying to find a way to word the discussion. This only seemed to pique his curiosity, as it seemed like she had been waiting to unload this question for quite a long time.

“Do you think we did a good job?”

He raised an eyebrow. “What do you mean?”

“Raising our children. Now that they’re all grown up…do you think we did well at preparing them for where they’re at now? Did they turn out the way you had hoped?”

The power of her question took him by surprise. He never would’ve guessed, given the loving exchanges she had just experienced with their children just moments ago, that she’d be feeling insecure about her job as a parent. If anything, she seemed to be really proud of the way her son and her daughters grew up, and how they managed to come together when their Domain was in danger. He then figured, perhaps, that she wasn’t allowing herself to feel accomplished in her success until her husband felt satisfied too. If that were the case, he thought, then she really did put him before almost anything else.

He exhaled sharply. “I’ll tell you…I think they turned out way better than I had hoped.” He saw the timid uncertainty in her face whisk away as she heard him say that. “Granted, I don’t know how exactly I wanted them to turn out. Regardless, though…I feel very proud to have helped bring them into the world. In my opinion, they’re the brightest stars in the entire Domain.”

“It’s so relieving to hear you say that.” She beamed happily. “I was particularly worried about how you’d view Murdoch, to be honest. He has had so much trouble finding the light in our absence, as we’ve seen.”

Link hummed pensively. “While that’s true, he seems to have really pulled through this past evening. He’s a strong-spirited individual, I feel, and he has a big heart. He probably just had a hard time coping with the pain of losing both of us at such a young age.”

She seemed to adopt a guilty expression for a brief moment as she reminisced on the events that led to their absence. All three of them had indeed been way too young to be orphaned like they were. “Yes, I suppose that seems accurate. Like you said, though, he seems to be in a better state now, so there’s something to be said for that. Now…what about the girls?”

The girls…well…they were a different story. Mipha could almost predict Link’s response as he let out a sigh, almost dreamily. “The girls are just…phenomenal. I’ve spent time with them almost exclusively since arriving here the other day, and they are quite the sight to behold. They live and breathe almost as a single unit.”

“Don’t you just admire the way they’ve come together so nicely since the Calamity? I know I’ve mentioned it already with the kids still here, but…the two of them didn’t used to get along so well. To see how our absence has drawn them together…I just love it to death.” She seemed to
swoon so much at the thought of their daughters, he noticed.

He smirked. “I have no doubt they’re going to be okay. I still plan to come back and live with them after I complete my mission, of course, but even after I’m gone…they’ll get by with each other. For that, I feel thankful.”

“As do I, my dear.” She sang resonantly. “I’m glad we’re on the same page.”

Link got the feeling their meeting was going to be wrapping up soon. He could tell it was Mipha’s intent to talk briefly about their children, since, well…they had never gotten the chance to properly ride out the adventure together. It seemed important to her that, had he had any issues with the way their offspring were developing, she addressed and atoned for those mistakes. From the memories he had assembled, he saw her as the type to do stuff like that. If only things had not ended the way that they had…

“Link, before I return to the Divine Beast to set up for our big attack, there’s something I want to give you.” She continued.

“Oh, really? What more can you give me that you haven’t already?” He joked, chuckling lightheartedly.

“It’s not something you’d expect.” She assured. “You see, as a spirit, I no longer have any use for it, so I see it fit to grant it to you for your taxing journey.”

Link kept himself quiet while his interest grew. As he watched his wife inquisitively, she closed her eyes and clasped both her hands by her chest. In just a short moment, a pulsing orb of light began to materialize within her chest, behind her hands. Link observed the spectacle with awe and wonder, and above all, curiosity. In just a few seconds, the orb grew in brightness and intensity, until finally, Mipha opened her eyes and gestured her hands forward.

When she did so, the orb detached from her ghostly body and flew towards Link, where it collided with his own chest and dissolved into him. Immediately, without knowing what was going on, he was enveloped in a bottomless feeling of warmth and comfort while a dull glow wrapped itself around his figure. He felt himself become what he could only describe as weightless…for just a couple seconds. It was similar to the feeling he had gotten when accepting the goddess’s blessing, only…stronger. It was like his soul was being enchanted by an embodiment of light.

Suddenly, the sensation ended, and the glow ceased. His feet splashed in the inches of water as he dropped back to the ground. He shook off his daze and looked Mipha in the eye.

“Wow…what was that?” He stammered.

She giggled slightly. “It’s my sacred healing power. I figure, with so much lying ahead of you, the least I could do was grant it to you so that you may always have my help wherever you may need it.”

“That’s…amazing. I had no idea your power worked like that.”

“Well…it’s only because I am a spirit. Were I still among the living, I would not be able to part with my power in this manner. This is a much more practical way to ensure your safety than
having Lani follow you all over Hyrule.”

He laughed at her small joke. While Noelani would probably be interested in leaving the Domain to take in the views while she still has her eyesight, it would be unforgivable to put her in danger while crossing the Guardian-ridden plains of Hyrule’s mainland. Mira and Murdoch would certainly be helpful in allowing her to see the things she’d want to see.

“I guess…I don’t know what to say. Thank you for this!” He exclaimed. He held a certain level of enthusiasm for having a part of his wife physically live on within him.

Mipha stepped tenderly towards her husband before laying her hands on his shoulders. Just as Noelani had felt earlier, Link was promptly met with a numbing, tingly sensation on his shoulders where her translucent appendages contacted his mortal flesh. His expression changed as he entered a hypnotic state, and he looked down at her, taking in the same mesmerizing grace that he had come to admire during their first nights together under the awning. His mind seemed to shut down when feeling her contact.

“Link…you’ve been a marvelous husband. You’ve added a lasting meaning to my life that I won’t ever be able to forget.” She cooed seductively. He was taken aback by how quickly the direction of their meeting seemed to change, as it was apparently drawing to a close. “A living extension of us now gets to live on in Zora’s Domain for generations to come, and this…makes me truly happy. It’s why I didn’t want you nor the children mourning for me when it’s my time to pass on.”

He sighed against the unusual sensation of his wife’s hands on his body. “Anything for you…”

“I’ll say it again…you’ve been a perfect husband. And with that, I know you’ll continue to be a perfect father. Conceiving with you was the greatest decision of my life.”

The tingling sensation was extended to Link’s lips as Mipha leaned upward and kissed him with everything she had. Though he tried to return the gesture, there was no physical contact against which he could perch his mouth. The feeling was entirely from within, as Mipha’s presence was somewhat interdimensional. He still closed his eyes, however, feeling the same level of emotional depth he experienced when kissing her live body for the first time. A hundred years had done nothing to change his wife’s love.

With that, their last reunion was beginning to reach its end. He opened his eyes again and watched Mipha back away from him again. She gazed back at him with more affection than he even knew how to interpret. Her spiritual form seemed to grow dimmer suddenly.

“Farewell, Link. I love you.”

He breathed out sharply, wrestling the feelings that started to well up within him. “I love you too.”

It only took a few seconds, really. Before he could even fathom her departure, her dimming figure vanished entirely. The airy mist and the dotting green flames that had surrounded her apparition faded away as well. Only ten seconds or so since their kiss, she was completely gone.
The dock now sat silent...as if nothing had ever occurred there that evening. Link was left standing alone, staring out at the lake where Vah Ruta still sat.

He could only contemplate the feeling of her spirit’s lips against his. The numbness, the tingling...it was just so different. Knowing it was from Mipha, though...his wife...made it special nonetheless. The feeling was *almost* as special as the physical feeling he got when kissing her those times before the Calamity. Almost.
The walk down from the Reservoir dock was a slow one. Link’s mind was flooded with an encapsulating typhoon of thoughts and emotions following the events of that evening, ranging fully from relief and triumphant satisfaction…to painful grief and emptiness. He had absorbed more incredible, life-changing occurrences in the last thirty-six hours than he had in the entire few weeks following his awakening in the Shrine of Resurrection. It was now, descending from the dock on which he had made love to his wife all those years ago, for the last time in another long while…that he allowed himself to reflect on those occurrences as a whole.

The tranquility in the valley was rather surreal to him. In his peace, he thought he could hear birds chirping among the trees near the adjacent waterfall’s base. Crickets strung their chords in the grasses. Flowers and bushes rustled in the gentle breeze. Link’s own footsteps…transitioning from the stone stairway to the rain-soaked mud on their way to the Domain…cut through the subtle noises of nature. Link was sure the constant rain would’ve driven the creatures away. He was glad to be wrong.

Among the memories he now had from his visit to the Domain, he also found himself reflecting upon the supposed future of himself and his offspring. They had fared a hundred years together without parents, and on top of that, his daughters fared roughly a couple decades of that time without a brother. Link did not foresee the remainder of his journey taking more than a month, during which the three of them would certainly continue to thrive together without him. Perhaps their fellow Zoras would like to hear their stories from Vah Ruta and Mipha’s return as a spirit. After all…legends had to start somewhere.

The first thing he noticed as he reached the eastern bridge was the lack of Gaddison’s presence. Gaddison was adamant about steadfastly holding her position at the east perimeter of the Domain, so the fact was somewhat strange to him. Granted, Murdoch had walked in this direction on his way back to the Domain with his sisters, and in doing so, he would’ve certainly crossed paths with her. It would make sense if he had relieved her of her post for the time being. The defeat of Waterblight Ganon and the appeasement of the Divine Beast most likely served as enough of a special occasion to warrant such an action. If that were the case, then, Link wondered just how many other Zoras might’ve been pulled aside to share in the spirits as well.

The rainfall’s disappearance made a spectacular difference within the valley of the Domain, and Link noticed it vividly as he stepped onto the bridge to begin marching towards the main plaza. The sparkling beauty of the many waterfalls backdropping the Domain could be seen much clearer without the rain’s haze standing in the way. Their power and majesty were easily showcased now, the proof being in the mighty clouds of mist enveloping the atmosphere near the falls’ base. The Domain sat beneath an everlasting body of glistening water droplets, seen only under the now-clear skies of the East-Hyrulean night. The rain had made the horizon bleak and uniform for several weeks, but now…the sight of his children’s home among the dynamic elements of nature’s power filled his mind with serenity.

As he closed in on the main plaza, where the chiseled statue of Mipha stood, it became clear to him that something was different in the Domain. There were no Zoras to be seen. The stairs, the shops, the banisters, and even the front gates were completely deserted. Link looked
around curiously, dazzled by the strange phenomenon. Zora’s Domain was usually a bustling place, he found, so its sudden silence was quite intriguing. He had a guess as to what was going on, though.

This was because Noelani was standing right at the base of the Mipha statue, by herself for once, waiting eagerly for him to arrive. Link noticed her relatively quickly after trekking halfway down the bridge, as she was the only Zora to be seen from his location. He smiled as his eyes fell on her, and when she saw his smile, she smiled too. She skipped lightly in place with her hands folded in front of her. Her body language radiated a sort of ecstatic energy that he could feel rather potently.

They kept their eyes locked on each other as he approached. Though he still had more to learn, he knew quite a bit about Lani since his first arrival, and with that knowledge, he felt like she was waiting to tell him something important. Something she was excited to get off her chest. He had to ask anyway.

“So, uh…” He called to her with a slightly raised voice, as they were still a fair distance away from each other. “…where is everybody?”

It took her no time to answer. “Everyone’s upstairs in our grandfather’s chamber. Uncle gathered everyone together after noticing your victory over Vah Ruta a little bit earlier. They’re all really excited to see you!”

“Ah, attention.” He shook his head and grinned. “My favorite.”

It didn’t take much for her to detect his sarcasm. “I know you’re humble, Dad, and that’s one of your greatest features. Still, though…I think you really deserve the praises us Zoras have for you.” With the rest of her body standing completely still, she extended both her arms out in front of her with a sort of inviting lure. As Link’s steps on the bridge took him right up to his daughter at the foot of the statue, she closed her arms around him and hugged him once again. No matter how many times it occurred…the gesture never got old. “I think it’s easy for you to forget how meaningful your presence is to us…and how much it always has been.”

“Lani, don’t do this to me. I have to stand in front of a crowd of Zoras in a few minutes.”

His words made her giggle crazily over his shoulder. He smiled at the heartwarming sound. Her and her siblings’ eloquence moved him to no end. There was an element to their company, and the company of the Zoras, that wrapped him in the same feeling of peaceful bliss that Mipha had always given him. He felt it in their embrace, the same way he did with Mira and Murdoch, and the same way he had with their mother. He truly belonged here with them, and their people were waiting atop the grand staircase to show him why that was. That very night, having been filled with grief and pain, was about to end like Christmas morning.

Noelani withdrew her face from Link’s shoulder to gaze at him directly. He returned the favor, and in doing so, he once again saw her resemblance to her mother. Though, he just couldn’t get over how different her sparkly, clear blue eyes made her look compared to before. If only he’d get to see them more in their spectacular state after his eventual return to the Domain. The reality of her miraculous vision was…underneath…slightly disappointing in that respect.
“You know…our Domain truly is beautiful.” She beamed wondrously. “I never could’ve imagined I was living in the middle of all this. I just…I feel……I started feeling such insane happiness crossing the bridge next to sis and Murdoch, and…seeing it all. Seeing my fellow Zoras. Seeing Mom’s statue.”

Link had a realization from that mention. He eyed her seriously after allowing a short pause. “Have you seen your grandfather yet?”

It was an interesting query, and one she felt a bit sheepish about. She shook her head. “I haven’t been up to my grandfather’s chamber yet since coming back from the Reservoir. I told sis I’d stay down here to wait for you after Murdie and Uncle Sidon went around gathering everyone together, and this is where I’ve been standing ever since.”

Link kind of felt bad. She certainly didn’t have to wait there for him while the rest of her family was up in the king’s chamber. He would’ve had no problem figuring out where they all were had he shown up to an empty plaza. Unlike her brother, Noelani was the type that flourished in the presence of other supporting figures. She’d get her chance to be with him some more as it was.

“Well then, perhaps we should go up to meet him now, wouldn’t you think? I’m sure he’d love to see your new eyes.” He lowered his arms to his sides and stepped around her to begin ascending the grand staircase by her side. She giddily skipped up to him and took his hand, following closely behind him as he went. She didn’t actually require the guidance of his hand to climb the stairs, as she had proven just earlier while leaving the Reservoir, but she enjoyed holding it anyway. Having her next to him helped him feel better about approaching such a large, expectant crowd.

The steps they took toward the apex of the Domain were, of course, slow. There was certainly a resonating element of amazement still being felt by Noelani upon their climb, seeing as the glistening wet stone of the ground beneath them and the subtly glowing undertones of the nighttime atmosphere around them were among the young Zora’s first glimpses of her own home from her many years. He could tell she was making a deliberate effort to slow their pace down so she could get the chance to gawk at the things she hadn’t yet seen before. While she was definitely good at hiding it, her mind was obviously processing a lot more than Link’s, even considering the nearly fatal events of that evening.

A great deal had been endured by his family in the short amount of time since his arrival, and because of it, Link found there to be a certain charm in being led along to the victory celebration by his young one. None of the last forty-eight hours had probably been good therapy for the poor girls, and it especially couldn’t have been for Murdoch. Link’s late realization of his troubled son’s existence, well after meeting his daughters for the first time since the awakening, had been a sign of turbulent waters in their relationship. He knew there would be time to work on the remaining scars, however, and once he sent Ganon back to the depths from which he came, Link was prepared to make the endeavor his final mission. A mission that…perhaps…the embittered individuals of the Domain would come to appreciate.
Upon nearing the top of the stairs, the scale of the Domain’s celebration became clear to the weary hero. Starting at the king’s chamber, a mob of Zoras flooded the straight staircase, leading all the way down to the goddess statue at the bottom. The mob consisted of what must’ve been the entire population of the Domain, with colors ranging from orange to blue, and ages ranging from elders to hatchlings in their mother’s arms. Having remembered his wedding with Mipha shortly after reuniting with the girls, Link found it to be a very familiar sight. They all had their backs to the grand staircase atop which he and Noelani now stood, so they didn’t immediately notice their approach.

“Whoa…” He murmured. “I don’t remember seeing this many Zoras around lately.”

“You have to catch us at the right time.” She replied wittily. “The only times you’ve been hanging around the Domain with us were mostly at night, and when there were other Zoras around, you’ve been pretty much distracted by Murdoch. If you’d visit the sleeping pools under our grandfather’s chamber at night, you’d see us in much greater numbers.”

He sighed thoughtfully. “One of these days.”

He spent a moment in those thoughts, imagining what it’d be like to sleep upright in water the way the Zoras did, and if he had ever done it with Mipha in the past. Noelani, in her eagerness, however, opted to cut the small tangent short by silently tugging on Link’s arm. He stumbled forward with a weak exclamation as the gesture forced him to move from his spot and follow her towards the looming crowd. The subjects at the back of the congregation heard the sound of his shuffling footsteps, and they turned around. At that point, there was no more chance of turning back.

More and more Zoras took notice of the hero and his daughter as she led him into their midst and up the stairs. The grateful subjects were quick to step politely out of their way as they ventured further and further into the mass, approaching their place at the center of attention before Dorephan’s throne. Noelani seemed strangely unfazed by the large number of eyes settled on her and Link, while Link took in the scene with a bit of a strange feeling. It wasn’t common for him to be repaid for his duties on such a…massive scale. Her calmness was likely due to her unfamiliarity with the sight of other eyes.

King Dorephan, Link’s father-in-law, sat mighty and tall in his throne, and as such, he was visible to the pair well before they broke through the last of the crowd. They seemed to be visible to him as well, seeing that his gaze turned down to them as they pressed through to the top of the stairs. His expression quickly turned to display a beaming smile, one that contained a noticeable degree of satisfaction and delight. It was a heavy, encapsulating grin that made the grandeur of their triumph over the Divine Beast more than clear. Noelani grinned back at him upon stopping at the foot of his throne. Link stopped as well, though he continued to hold the youngling’s hand.

It didn’t take him long to notice Mira, Murdoch, and Sidon standing before them to the king’s left. Mira wore a smile herself, like her sister, but it was not of the same caliber. Rather, Link noticed a bit of melancholy in her expression, as if she were merely attempting to share in the same joy as the rest of her people. Perhaps, he thought, she had yet to fully get over their meeting with Mipha on the Reservoir just prior. It was likely, he at least hoped, that the general mood within the Domain would help brighten her up relatively quickly.

Murdoch and Sidon stood right next to her in a cluster, showing much different expressions
themselves. Murdoch held a very stiff, upright stance with his hands together at his waist, maintaining a straight, but relaxed, glare. With his grandfather right at his side, and his subordinates in the Zora Guard peppered throughout the crowd in front of him, he appeared to be maintaining a respectable image, which Link admired. Sidon, on the other hand, sported much looser posture, with his hands at his sides and a casual smirk on his face. He hadn’t just witnessed the passing ghost of his late loved one like his nieces and nephew had, and the difference was obvious.

On the other side of the chamber, standing to the king’s right, was a figure Link had already managed to forget about somehow. His spotty, olive-green scales, dry, pursed lips, and stingray-ish adornments jumped out at the hero against the youthful presence of the rest of his Zoran family members. He still seemed rather…disinterested in his mannerisms, to say the least, though he didn’t seem hostile like he was before. Link wondered if Muzu was aware of the events that had led to Vah Ruta’s taming, and if that awareness had had any effect on his harsh opinions. Perhaps he’d find out eventually.

His gaze snapped back forward, along with his thoughts, as King Dorephan’s thunderous voice cut into the quiet, nighttime air. Link hadn’t entirely realized that he and Noelani had reached the center of the chamber and were already standing in the prime position to begin what the entire Domain had gathered to witness. It was time to celebrate their big “mission-accomplished.”

“Link, it is good to see you back here so soon!” The king bellowed. “And after the successful cessation of all that terrible rain, no less!”

Link simply nodded once to acknowledge the king’s statement. It was still taking him a bit of time to drink in the amount of attention that was focused on him and his kids at the moment, and his ability to respond verbally was a bit stunted because of it. To compensate, the king left no silence before continuing his monologue.

“Yes, it seems the threat of a flood over our fair Domain has finally been diminished. Our young ones…they may once again sleep with comfort at night!”

A considerable deal of cheering and applause burst forth from the crowd of subjects at their ruler’s announcement, causing said ruler, along with Sidon and Noelani, to grin. Link managed a light smirk as well, but in general, he found himself with no outstanding urge to join in their festive attitude. To him, the task of shutting off Vah Ruta’s water flow had merely been a personal matter, splurged by the rocky history he had uncovered those last couple days with the machine and his kids. He could easily see Mira and Murdoch in the same situation, withholding their smiles from escaping the pensive shell around them.

The king continued. “As you can see, Link, our people extend our deepest gratitude for everything you’ve done here for us.” He raised one of his massive hands to his chest and, to the best of his ability from the confines of his throne, bowed before Link. “I am certain that…my daughter…holds your efforts in the same high esteem. Thanks to you, her spirit can now rest in peace.”

To Link, the king’s words were so incredibly grand. Almost…too much so. Link didn’t
feel too much like a hero for the things he had done, even though his accomplishments had effectively purged the Domain of the threat against its existence. His family needed closure, and so…he showed up. It felt as if destiny had drawn him back to his younglings after those many desolate years…not so much his own knowledge of them. And, once he was there, was he just going to turn back around and let the floodwaters perish them all, along with their pristine Domain? Of course not. He was merely doing his duty as the revived Hylian Champion, recovering the fragments of his prior settled life in the process. The worship…did not feel necessary.

However, it was difficult for him to vocalize these humble concerns. Now that he was back at the helm of the perilous journey lying ahead of him, his muteness began to creep back up to the surface. His expression did not change. His body did not move. He simply stood there, staring up at his royal father-in-law, his mind processing a dozen things at once. Regardless of his oddly silent mannerism, the king was not yet done.

“Sidon, Murdoch, Mira, and Noelani…” He uttered, slightly more quietly than before. “…these words apply to you too.”

Mira, Murdoch, and Sidon, who were currently facing the crowd by the king’s side, turned to look up at the mighty figure beside them upon hearing their names. None of them expected to be included in the commendation, considering the assumed insignificance of their roles in the whole ordeal. They remained silent, their lack of response fueled by both curiosity and respect.

He glanced down at Mira. “Mira, I hear it was your intuitive reasoning and superior sixth sense that alerted your brother of impending emergencies. Without your remarkable predictions, it’s uncertain whether your trials would’ve played out in our favor.”

Mira shrugged and reached up to the side of her head to twiddle her finger in her temple-fin. “Well…you know. Just doing whatever I can.” She seemed quick to deflect the attention away from herself, as her mood had not yet seemed to fall in tune with the joyous tone of the gathering.

Her grandfather, therefore, did not intend to egg her too much in front of all their subjects. Instead, he kept the pace moving along. “Murdoch, your valiance by Link’s side against the Divine Beast’s incredible might did not go unnoticed. Your hard work in the struggle, particularly in helping him to disable its water flow, is also greatly commendable.”

There was a moment of silence between the king’s remark and Murdoch’s response. For a moment, Murdoch continued to hold his position with perfect stillness as if he were at one of his guard-posts. Link and the others briefly wondered if the resilient captain ever planned to say anything, or if he was just going to accept the compliment in silence and usher the attention over to the next recipient. Finally, he answered.

“Thank you. I’m just glad I was able to play a part in keeping our Domain safe.” He seemed quite genuine in his words, despite his face failing yet to show any signs of emotion. Link knew they were there, but for the sake of his son’s image, he supposed, they remained effectively buried.

The king seemed to skip over Prince Sidon for the time being, and he instead turned frontward to face Noelani first. Link took a step back so his daughter could more properly revel in
her due credit. Any boost she could get was well deserved, in both his and her siblings’ opinions. She looked directly up at King Dorephan with a special gleam in her eyes. He paused with a peculiar change in approach when he studied her face.

“Young Noelani.” He breathed mindfully. “My, you…are looking quite different somehow. It’s as if you’re…full of life, in a way!”

She tried for a moment to remain regal in the presence of her entire tribe, but it wound up being quite a struggle for her. The incredible sensation of her new, albeit temporary, sense was still coursing through her mind. She beamed childishly at her grandfather.

“Is that the only thing that seems different to you?” She cooed deviously.

It definitely wasn’t. There was one major difference that stood out to the king rather quickly, considering the classic behaviors he and his subjects had come to expect from her. It was a behavior that he expected from his addressors without so much as a conscious thought, and yet, from her, it immediately stuck out as being remarkably unusual. It was that…she was looking directly up at him for once. Her pupils were focused on his own, suggesting that…she actually knew where to find them somehow.

He stammered, an action that didn’t occur often. “Y…You seem to be looking at me, young one. I say…can…can you see me? Or are my own eyes deceiving me?”

Noelani smirked slightly, and with a playful flutter of her eyelids, she nodded. “Yes, I can see you. You have a very lovely throne room by the way, grandpa.”

Shocked murmurs began to emanate from the crowd behind them. Link glanced behind himself for a moment to observe the onlookers and found them leaning close to each other and whispering. Despite there being such a large number of denizens in Zora’s Domain, their community was incredibly close-knit, and as a result, they all knew Noelani just as well as they knew each other. If she was ever seen around the Domain without Mira by her side, which was anything but common, bystanders near her would almost always step aside to grant her room in courtesy of her blindness. News of her newfound sight, therefore, rippled throughout the populace like a shockwave. Without the knowledge of what had happened on the Reservoir dock that night, they struggled to understand how such a miracle could be possible. The phenomenon affected King Dorephan, as well.

“That’s simply…amazing, my child. How has such a fantastically prodigious thing happened to you? Could it be a blessing of the goddess?” He uttered, stupefied.

“Mmm…in a way.” She answered briefly. “Sis and I will fill you in after Dad leaves the Domain.”

“Astounding. Simply…incredible.” He sighed in another display of pure, awestruck wonder. Noelani and her siblings had a feeling their grandfather would be absolutely over the moon when they told him of how she got her sight. The story would most likely overcome him with a great feeling relief and closure. It was going to be wonderful.

He certainly wasn’t finished yet, though. His granddaughter still needed a commendation for the part she had played. “As I was saying…regarding tonight’s hardships. I understand you
made good use of the healing power you had inherited from my daughter.”

Noelani returned to a serious stance that was more fitting of the changing subject. She cleared her throat. “Yes…I have used it.”

The king nodded once in acknowledgment. “You should know that your inheritance of that power was no coincidence. Your persistence…your unquenchable compassion…your determination…and your integrity…” He paused for a moment to take a deep breath. “…I see my dear Mipha in you. You wield her sacred power with the all tenacity it requires, as you have proven this night. I hope you understand the contribution you’ve made.”

All remnants of Noelani’s gleeful attitude were gone. On her face sat an expression more solemn than Link could remember ever seeing those past couple days. It took him back a bit to the moment that evening when Murdoch had arrived before her on the dock as nothing more than a charred body, when he could see the sorrowful effects of the event present on her face upon beginning her work. It was as if any reference to that moment revived in her the urgency of holding her sibling’s life in her hands. They prayed that the feeling would not return.

In essence, she seemed to share Murdoch’s rigid pose. She lowered her head slightly as she humbly accepted her acclaim. “I do. Thank you, grandpa.”

Finally, King Dorephan’s last target was Sidon, his own son. He hadn’t been able to observe much of his grandchildren’s experiences since Link’s return, thanks to many of them having occurred outside the Domain. Prince Sidon, on the other hand, had been running rampant around the entire valley lately, trying frantically to keep up with all the hectic events at the times of their unfolding. He had often lost track of his nieces while they were out showing Link his past, and when the issues with Murdoch and Vah Ruta rose to the surface, he had become locked in a manic game of cat and mouse while high stakes hung in the balance. All the while, the king had been kept in the loop of his struggle, and due to that, he knew very well the efforts his son had put forth in the struggle. None of that, in fact, was even counting the contributions he had made in his appeasement attempts with Seggin those couple weeks before.

“And you, Sidon…I must also extend my deepest gratitude to you…on behalf of your people, as well. As your father, I’m proud of you for stepping up and lending your fins to your niblings in their, and our Domain’s, time of need.” Sidon turned around and locked eyes with his father as his words were crossing the crowded chamber, and at the same time, the collective eyes of the entire Zora population were on him. “I’ve seen how much you’ve grown during our crisis: recruiting citizens to scout for help, assimilating Link to our cause, and vigilantly involving yourself with the ongoing phases of Vah Ruta’s disarmament. I know your sister…our dearly beloved Mipha…made a good choice in handing the succession of my crown down to you.”

Sidon hadn’t really been expecting such praise at this gathering. Surely, he expected Link to take all the credit for being the one to enter the Divine Beast and vanquish the vile foe hiding within. He would’ve been perfectly okay without any credit, of course, since, like Link’s children, he didn’t really feel like he deserved any praise. He felt just fine taking a supporting role in the ordeal and helping whenever he could, as long as the work would result in the safety and prosperity of the Domain. Though, he figured…perhaps that was all that was needed to prove his worthiness to his father. He had done a lot for his people those last couple weeks.

The surprise of receiving such a commendation was enough to hinder the legibility of his response. “Father, I…I don’t know what to say. Th…Thank you!”
The king raised his right hand slightly, as if he were preparing to say his closing words for the ceremony. Just then, however, shortly after Sidon finished giving his stuttered reply, an old-sounding voice piped up from somewhere within the crowd. The king was cut off slightly by the voice, but not enough to disrupt the flow of the ceremony.

“If I may!”

Almost every head that was in range of the source of the voice turned to survey the sound. The king patiently waited to continue where he left off while the caller gradually sifted through the crowd of Zoras on his way to the foot of the throne. Link and Noelani were turned completely around as well, scanning to see who would show their face through the large gathering.

Some of the Zoras standing near the front of the mass stepped aside in succession as the mystery figure stepped through them hurriedly. Eventually, he broke through into the chamber and looked around at everybody standing there. It was Dento, the elder craftsman they had visited earlier that afternoon. In his hands was Mipha’s Lightscale Trident, immediately recognizable to everyone in the chamber, and...to Link and his children’s shock…fully repaired. Dento appeared to have taken the time to polish it nicely after melding the two parts together, making the elegant weapon look as if it had never been used before. Its sparkling radiance dazzled the onlookers.

He marched regally up to Link and reached out with both his hands to present the pristine piece of equipment to him, in front of the entire congregation. “I have finished touching up the Lightscale Trident, per your request. Seeing as how you are their father, and the widower of our dearly departed Mipha, I will entrust you over your children with the decision of whom to which it shall return.”

Link, Mira, and Noelani were quite satisfied with how well Dento managed to keep the destruction of the Lightscale Trident under wraps, considering the fact that it was being returned to them in front of the entire Domain. Some of the onlookers, including Sidon, Muzu, and the king, were confused slightly with the craftsman’s choice to return the trident to Link instead of Murdoch, since Murdoch had inherited the right to wield it by Muzu’s discretion. It wasn’t enough skepticism, however, to generate any suspicion.

After receiving the trident from Dento’s humble gesture, Link was quick to take the route that Mira and Noelani had expected. He allowed enough time for Dento to step to the side a little closer to the crowd, and once he did, the hero walked straight up to where Murdoch was standing, looked up to meet his gaze, and reached out to hand him the weapon. He was the rightful owner of it, after all, at least the way he saw it. His son had made excellent use of the item as captain of the Zora Guard, and he would undoubtedly continue to do so in the future. Link could see that the purity within him had overpowered his demons.

Murdoch knew what his father was doing the moment he saw him begin to approach him with the trident. With him now standing right in front of him, arms outstretched with the trident laid delicately before his chest, Murdoch shook his head gently and reached out with one hand to push the weapon away.

“I’d like you to keep it, Father.” He declared in a solemn breath. “You were betrothed to Mother, the true owner of this trident, and as such, you deserve to wield it on your upcoming journey. You’d take much better care of it than me.”
Link lowered the item with uncertainty. While it was true that he was the husband of Mipha, to whom the trident belonged, it still didn’t feel right to take it with him and leave the rest of his family without it. Especially how close they still felt to their mother. He glanced back up at his son with a soulful look in his eyes as he mouthed the words, “Are you sure?”

Murdoch had no trouble reading the signal. He nodded firmly. “I think Mother would have peace knowing that her most signature possession is being used to aid you on your quest. Take it for her sake…if not for ours.”

Prince Sidon, who was still standing in close proximity to Murdoch, nodded his head as well. Mipha’s feelings trumped all others in the Domain, practically at all times. The trident, while certainly being a principal token of her legacy, was deemed rightfully bound to Link if it were to be Mipha’s wish. Link was intrigued to see that fact displayed in the prince’s shared reaction.

Having yet to say a word, the hero reluctantly accepted Murdoch’s offer and stowed the weapon on his back next to his other scavenged finds. He then walked quietly back to his spot in the chamber where Noelani was standing. The glittery jewels and polished metal on the Lightscale Trident looked almost out of place on Link’s back, thanks to sharing a space with the rusty, mediocre trinkets he had hoarded on his initial adventure. Hylians in some of the neighboring villages were probably going to think he was a thief.

The king even piped up from the throne next to them. “Indeed. I’d also like you to view Mipha’s trident, if anything, as a symbol of our people’s gratitude to you. I know that we here at our humble Domain have taken up a lot of your time already, and with so much still lying ahead of you…it’d seem silly not to show you that your actions had value. If you ever grow weak or weary on your trip, don’t hesitate to return here for a group of shoulders to lean on. Our Domain has always been yours.”

The constant reminders of what he still had yet to accomplish pressed down on Link’s conscience like a sack of bricks. He was only just starting to notice that he hadn’t said a single word since entering the king’s chamber, a behavior which fell shockingly in line with his first visit, prior to reuniting with the girls. The revival of the entire kingdom of Hyrule was nothing short of a monumental undertaking, and a simple bit of self-reflection brought him to the conclusion that such a burden had been responsible for his introverted tendencies. Reliving his peaceful past with his son and daughters in the Domain, however brief it was, had given him a temporary release from that crushing stress. Now that he was beginning to return to where he had left off, the silence was becoming an issue again.

The ceremony seemed to pause after the king’s most recent statement, and Link had a feeling it was because they were waiting for him to say something. He glanced back and forth between Muzu, his kids, and the king, and they all seemed to be looking back at him expectantly. He didn’t dare to turn around and peek at the crowd, for he had an itching feeling that they were all staring at him in a similar manner. They appeared to be awaiting for him to respond to their king’s gesture.

He stole another look at his kids while the silence of the chamber started to bear down on him. Mira gave him a slow wave, Murdoch broke his intimidating stance for a moment to flash him a gentle grin, and Noelani…well…Noelani still looked like the happiest Zora in Hyrule. She beamed at him cheek-to-cheek while poorly stifling a small giggle. She was likely still feeling
pretty high from being able to see her family for the first time, especially all together like they were at the apex of the grand staircase. It was truly adorable to see.

Their faces quickly reminded him of the things he had been through since arriving among them. He remembered his first look at the Eastern Reservoir dock, where Mira had broken down after thinking about Mipha’s death. He remembered their trek out to Crenel Peak, where he reflected on the kids’ birth, and where he was first reminded of Murdoch’s existence. He remembered his struggles with getting Murdoch to reciprocate his gentle advances. He remembered the sorrow he felt while visiting Veiled Falls during Murdoch’s absence. And finally, he remembered the hectic rush everyone had gone through after Vah Ruta’s rainwater surpassed the Reservoir’s threshold. He and his children had been through quite the adventure those last couple days, just within the valley of the Domain. He could only imagine the adventures they’d have in the future.

A wave of satisfaction rushed through him as he had those thoughts. There was relief to be had in knowing that he had such a family to fall back on during his journey, separated only by the touch of a button on his sheikah slate. It was as if…with them…he found a rhyme and a reason to go forward, even knowing how uncertain the path ahead remained. With that reminder, a smile crept onto his face, and he looked up to face King Dorephan.

“Thank you. I think I’ll be making frequent use of that offer.”

The king’s face lit up, along with those of everyone within Link’s sight in the chamber. His answer seemed to be the one they had all been hoping for, coupled with the delight of hearing him talk again. Even Muzu’s face reflected a bit of calm, which Link found quite interesting.

“Excellent!” The king bellowed gleefully. “Now…the torrential rains have stopped, the Reservoir no longer threatens to flood our Domain, and the Divine Beast is our ally once again!” He laughed with booming strength, shaking the very ground beneath his subjects. “Truly splendid!”

The crowd of Zoras jumped into their ruler’s triumphant celebration without delay. As the final, declarative words trumpeted off his tongue, the majority of the onlookers began to back his statement with a rapturous deal of applause. Link couldn’t keep from feeling even slightly in the moment…given the sheer amount of willing praise the Zoras were providing him. His thrill was enhanced further by the appreciative looks he got from Mira, Murdoch, and Sidon. Noelani had already put her arms around his shoulders and squeezed him until they ached. At that point, standing in the culmination of everything he, his daughters, and his warrior son had done for Zora’s Domain, everything was perfect to him.

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There was still so much to see in Zora’s Domain. The regions surrounding the valley still sat vastly unexplored, as well as the beautiful sights that likely resided atop Ploymus Mountain. Link had caught a brief glimpse of the autumn-like trails that stretched north of the Domain, referred to by both Murdoch and traveling Hylians as Akkala, and he wondered how much of it his
children had seen before. Even within the Domain itself, Link had practically not spoken to any of the natives during his stay, resulting in a gap he would be looking forward to filling. Some Hylian couples liked to spend their *honeymoons* in Zora’s Domain, and there he was, having yet to experience the last of its offerings. He had before, prior to the Calamity, he figured, but…it would’ve been nice to be able to remember those experiences again. He just didn’t have the time yet.

Following the ceremony, Link had elected to spend the last moments he had before departing on the rest of his journey wrapping up with his family. All three of them had flocked towards him like birds to a bread crumb after the ceremony’s closing remarks, and upon seeing them as a close-knit pack, the rest of the onlookers had respected their privacy and allowed them to talk amongst themselves until another time. They knew quite well from Link’s quick two sentences to the king that he would be back several more times during his adventure to recuperate, and it was at those times that they planned to catch up with him on all the lost years. It had been spectacular enough seeing him exploring the Domain during the last couple days, after all.

After descending the grand staircase, Link’s first destination was the chamber nestled underneath the Domain’s sleeping quarters, between the inn and the marketplace. Within that chamber sat another infamous sheikah shrine, shouting its presence ever prominently with its bright orange glow against the darkness. Mira, Noelani, and Murdoch followed him loyally the entire way there, from the moment he stepped onto the grand staircase from above. Naturally, the wavy structure had been a subject of confusion for the kids throughout their entire childhood, and it was only now that they were finally receiving an explanation.

“Wait…this thing was meant for *you*? Out of all the people in Hyrule?” Murdoch breathed in disbelief. “This shrine has been here for *thousands of years*! It predates at least fifteen generations of Zoras!”

Link nodded his head, albeit a bit awkwardly. “Yep, that would be correct.”

Mira glared up at her brother. “Dad is the chosen hero of Hyrule, you know. With all these nutty legends floating around, it kind of makes sense that something as ancient as this would be tied to him somehow.”

“Why haven’t you told us this before?” He blurted, utterly dumbfounded.

Link shrugged, his behavior remaining casually nonchalant. “It never seemed relevant. I didn’t even know about these shrines before the Great Calamity, as didn’t anyone else. The only time I could’ve even known in order to tell you was this past evening, and it certainly didn’t seem relevant at the time. At least…you know now, I suppose.”

“So…why are we standing here now? Are you…leaving us?” Noelani asked timidly, changing the subject on a dime.

Link turned his gaze over to her. The look he found on her face made him feel…a little sorrowful, to say the least. She clearly didn’t want their time together to end, despite the promise that he’d be returning in the future. Their short days together in Vah Ruta’s dreary rain had been the brightest of the girls’ young adulthood. It shouldn’t have had to end so soon.

He nodded slowly. “Calamity Ganon can’t be held back forever. I have to depart before he
breaks through Zelda’s seal.” He raised a hand to the side of her head and brushed it along her wavy temple-fin, sighing sadly. “Believe me…I’d like nothing more than to stay here with the three of you, but a lot hangs in the balance with this one. If you thought the original Calamity was bad, well…I wouldn’t like to think about how bad the sequel would be.”

“Why here, though?” Murdoch quipped. “If you’re heading out, wouldn’t you want to say your goodbyes over by the Domain’s front archway?”

“I’m actually just planning to teleport to the shrine in Kakariko Village so I can plan my next course from there, after I investigate some more shrines to the south of here.” Link replied dismissively. “But first, I need to activate this one here so I can make it back to the Domain more easily. I’ll worry about actually entering it later.”

A look of genuine puzzlement crept onto the guard captain’s face as he heard his father speak such ludicrous words. The most intriguing part was how freely he spoke about the subject, almost as if he had already done it hundreds of times, while Murdoch had never heard of such witchcraft before. There were more of these shrines around Hyrule? And his father could teleport to them?

Mira nudged his bicep while he was distracted with his thoughts. “It’s this weird slate thing he keeps on his belt. Lani and I will tell you about it later.”

While she was saying this, Link extracted the sheikah slate from his hip and shifted it into his right hand. He hadn’t exactly done it hundreds of times, but he had done it about a dozen or so, so the motion, to him, was already second-nature. Orange glows on the horizon were enough to catch his attention from a mile away as a result, while Murdoch and his siblings instead found it to be a unique and mesmerizing phenomenon. Perhaps they’d like the color blue a little bit more.

Steeping up to the pedestal in front of the entrance, Link touched the slate’s screen to the smooth stone on its surface, and immediately, the walls of the chamber around them reflected back the blue pulse of light. All three of his kids blinked when it happened. Having not seen him activate guidance stones before, even Mira and Noelani were surprised by the occurrence. Murdoch was silenced by the sight of the ancient structure, which was thousands of years old, reacting to the touch of a simple little object Link had pulled off his belt like a map scroll.

The interlocked panels covering up the shrine’s entrance swung open, revealing a small, circular elevator platform residing within. Link took a step back and stowed the slate back on his belt.

“There, now I can arrive back here at the Domain from anywhere in Hyrule at the touch of a button.” He declared proudly.

Just then, before Murdoch or the girls could say anything in response, a familiar, raspy voice caught the family’s attention from behind.

“Greetings, Link. Everyone.”

They each turned toward the entrance of the room to face Muzu, who had appeared before them not long after Link had activated the shrine. The Zora elder took a few steps down into the shallow water pool where they were standing, causing Mira to shuffle away from him the same
number of steps. Knowing how different his expressions had looked in the king’s chamber just earlier, Link was curious of his intentions with the encounter.

“Oh, Muzu.” Murdoch babbled. “I trust things are alright with you?”

“For a time, they had been. However, there has been something on my mind since the four of you returned from the Reservoir earlier this evening.” Muzu answered. He brought his hands forth from behind his back and folded them in front of him, an action which didn’t seem to suit his grumpy stature very well. His wrinkly eyes fell on Link.

“Link. When I heard about the circumstances behind Vah Ruta’s revival, I conducted a bit of…reflection on my opinions as of late.” He began. “I understand I’ve been rather harsh to you…since your return.”

Mira folded her arms in a scolding stance. She scoffed. “One way of saying it.”

Link and Muzu paid her annoyance no mind. Noelani rested her hand on her sister’s shoulder to calm her while Muzu continued his greeting.

“I shall start by being direct with you. I wish to apologize for the way I have treated you since your return. I held some…somewhat…misguided viewpoints on both you and your intentions.” He sighed. “Mipha’s loss was a major load for our hearts to bear, you see.”

Link gave a single, slow nod. He was no stranger to such an effect among the burdened Zora people. “Believe me…I get it.”

“When I heard that you broke into Vah Ruta to put an end to its corruption and risked your life to finish what our Mipha had started, well…it helped me to better see who you really are.” He explained. “You proved that you had a true dedication to the promise you had made to your family.”

Link’s understanding of Muzu was improving from his doleful confessions. He seemed to have fallen into the same snares as Murdoch had after the Great Calamity…in that he mistakenly found Link to be the root cause of Mipha’s death. More specifically, like Murdoch, his grief had led his mind to associate Link as reckless, bending Mipha’s will to assist him on a hopeless endeavor. At this point, he couldn’t really blame him.

“I just wish my fate had turned out differently.” Link commented. “Guilt started creeping up on me when I returned here and realized…not only that Mira, Lani, and Murdoch were my children, but…that I had left them behind for such a long time. I can see why it brewed such negative emotions among everyone.” He bit his lip slightly.

For the first time that Link could remember, Muzu’s mouth curled into a small smile. It was rather contagious, actually. “Don’t beat yourself up too much about it.” He paused as he took a special glance to his side at Mira and Noelani, who looked back at him curiously. “There were still many young hearts in the Domain that never gave up on you.”

Link glanced between Muzu and his daughters to see how they’d react to his statements. Since coming to the Domain, he had noticed a stringently cold and judgmental temperament in Muzu, one that he could only assume was permanent at the time. He was surprised, then, to see such an open and charming side to the seasoned elder. He seemed to share many parallels with
Murdoch, in that his loyal, steadfast, and dependable chassis was easily clouded over by bodies of emotional distress, especially when unexpectedly losing a loved one. He only wished he could’ve had time to share a heart-to-heart with the old Zora without the context of Mipha’s death tainting their relationship.

Mira shrugged. “He’s not wrong. And I mean…despite our differing feelings about you, we still got along well.”

“Yeah.” Noelani added. “I still think you nourished us well in our childhood. I felt like raising our mom back in her days kind of gave you an edge.”

Muzu and Link both chuckled a bit at that remark. He could honestly say he was a bit relieved to hear that his kids still reflected positively on their younger days. It let him know that Muzu had done a good job at helping to shape them into who they were today. Though a lot of their character had come from the Great Calamity, of course, Muzu’s contribution was still quite noteworthy.

“Still…you know…you didn’t exactly have to encourage Murdoch to go hurt himself like you did.” Mira blurted suddenly, letting out a huff. She had been acting a little disgruntled around Muzu recently, Link noticed, and now it was obvious why.

Muzu’s expression changed, as Link was not the only one to know what she was talking about. His stature fell to one of…defeat, almost. “Oh…right. The thing is, I…”

“To be honest, I don’t think my attack on Vah Ruta was Muzu’s fault.” Murdoch declared, cutting the elder off without warning. Link was surprised to see his son defending him. “Storming the Divine Beast and brandishing shock arrows was entirely my idea. The outcome of that endeavor had not at all been influenced by Muzu’s guidance.”

It took her a moment to think through his response. For a moment, she seemed genuinely surprised by it. “It…it hadn’t?”

Murdoch shook his head to reaffirm. “I explained a little earlier the reasons behind my choices. I had merely played the action off to Muzu like I had considered the danger and was prepared to bear the damage in a way that would not severely injure me. I know it sounds a little sensational to hear me claim I can take on three shock arrows at once and not get killed, but…historically, when I’ve said something, I’ve meant it. Muzu…technically…had no reason not to believe me.”

Muzu stood in silence for a moment, as if he had been expecting Murdoch to say more. During the silence, Mira looked between the two of them with a deeply contemplative look on her face. Link also felt like, somewhere, he had missed something in translation with Muzu and his opinions on Murdoch’s actions. It had seemed like a major hole in his credibility for a while, but as of now…it was shaping up to actually be quite an interesting fluke.

“Murdoch and I saw eye-to-eye on many things the last couple decades.” Muzu confessed. “Mipha’s passing had remained a central aspect of our thoughts, and much of the Calamity’s events had been interpreted poorly by the both of us. Murdoch already worked on mending the wounds with you recently, I understand, but until now, I have not. That’s why I’m hoping, Link, Mira, and Noelani—that you can find it in your hearts to forgive me.”
More than anything, he seemed to be directing his apology toward Mira. His words had hurt all three of them earlier that day, but it was Mira that appeared to internalize them the most. By contrast, Noelani was always quick to move past the negatives in the people she knew, and Link, well…Link didn’t really know what to think. At the very least, he could understand why Muzu felt the way he did. After all, he had heard a nearly identical explanation from Murdoch just hours before. Mira, though?

She continued glaring directly into Muzu’s eyes, searching for a reason not to believe him. She didn’t want to feel betrayed, of course, but…She also didn’t want to immediately assume the best. Muzu had raised her through the majority of her life, though, so what hidden atrocities could she possibly have been expecting? She knew he had a good side, buried merely by the circumstances. It was nothing out of the ordinary for older Zoras after the death of her mother.

“You seem like you mean it.” She sighed, looking drearily at the ground. Link watched her reaction intently. “…I’ll think about it.”

Muzu closed his eyes. “That is fine. Take all the time you need.”

Link walked over to her and put his arm around her shoulders. He had to reach up at an awkward angle to do so, thanks to the slight, natural height advantage she had over him. It was still, and always would be, a welcome gesture to her.

“Are you going to be okay?” He asked softly.

Between Mipha’s reappearance, the events in the king’s chamber, Muzu’s apology, and now the fact that her father was gearing to depart, Mira found herself fighting another emotional outburst. It felt like her night was never going to end. She reached out and took his free hand in her own.

“I should be.” There was a short pause as she looked up from the ground to face everyone else. “I got the rest of you here to help me feel better, right?”

“You can always count on it.” Murdoch promised. “Dad’s done a lot for us here. I think things are going to quickly start changing for the better.”

Link certainly didn’t fail to notice that Murdoch had called him “Dad” just then, without having to be prompted. That fact alone was enough evidence for him to believe his son’s latter statement. Things in Zora’s Domain were going to be much better soon. The rising sun that upcoming morning was going to be a joyous and wonderful sight for them all, ushering in a new age of peace like nothing that had ever been experienced after the Calamity. And in leaving to complete his quest, he was about to make sure that that age of peace would last forever.

“Come here, Mira. One more for your old man.” Link said jokingly. He drew the arm that was around his daughter towards him and pulled her in for a nice hug. She looked like she had been in need of one. She deserved to feel like a child again, even if the moment was brief.

She reciprocated the gesture tightly, in a manner that felt to Link like it contained all of the evening’s pent up emotion. The hidden strength of her arms was enough to straddle his breathing a bit, causing him to sputter his next words out. “I’m really glad to have come back to you guys.”

“Go easy on me with the goodbyes, Dad.” Mira sniffled. “I’m getting too sleepy to cry
anymore.”

He smirked over her shoulder. He had decided not to say anything a moment ago when he felt a wet drop fall onto his back after embracing her, so he knew she was crying already as it was. The tears should’ve been happy this time, hopefully, with her mother’s spirit freed, her sister’s sight in full bloom, and her people’s triumph ever present in the air. He’d be back this time as well, and he knew she was aware of it.

He pulled away from her and snagged a good, long look at her eyes. The gold in her irises was blurred by the reflective film of tears layered over them, shifting as each quiet tear fell from her cheek. They still stored so much beauty in their depths…the loyalty, the honesty, and the persistence. The same heroic spirit that the goddess had chosen him for…it was all there, given it was buried within a sea of youthful emotion. It all meant everything to him. She meant everything to him.

Noelani, knowing already what her father was doing, scuttled up to him and squeezed him like a pillow before he even got the chance to turn in her direction. The giddy gesture took him a bit by surprise, though he kind of expected it from her. It had been a long night for her as well, shortened mostly by the fantastical experience of getting to see her mother for the first time. Regardless, she bounced through it all and landed in his arms that moment at the end of it with her working eyes set on the future. The feat was nothing short of impressive.

“You know…your mother passed her sacred healing power onto me before she left.” He whispered over her shoulder.

Still keeping her arms locked around his neck, Noelani reacted by quickly pulling her face away from his and staring at him with shock. He got a brief chance to see her cloudless eyes up close, seeing far into the expanses of her shining pupils. “Really? You can heal too now?”

“Well…not the same way you can. Mipha’s spirit is tied to me in a way that…I sort of heal myself on a dying breath.” He chuckled. “It’s another way for your mom to always look out for me, you could say.”

His daughter was rather delighted by that fact. She grinned. “I’m glad some things never change around here.”

“Despite that, I would still like to come back here to you to be healed on occasion, if that’s alright. I’m pretty sure Mipha wouldn’t mind.” He winked playfully, which the timid Zora ate right up.

“Dad, if I ever turn down a proposal like that from you, I’ll need you to smite me down like the obvious imposter I am.” She declared lovingly. She hoped, perhaps, that he would decide to visit frequently even without needing to be healed. Maybe an evening or two between Divine Beasts when he doesn’t feel like eating monster guts for dinner in the middle of nowhere. She longed to share more meals and conversations with him soon, a desire ever amplified by the ability to see his expressions.

“Keep being strong, Lani. It’s in your blood.” He proclaimed, his voice having fallen to another gentle whisper. The response he got was a firm and dutiful nod. He knew she would accept the order religiously, as indeed, it was who she was at her core. That…he could count on.
After closing out his hug with Noelani, Link finally turned to Murdoch last, who shared his gaze with a confident flare. The difference to staring at one of the girls, he found, was immediate. His restored relationship with his son was evidenced by the way their eyes were locked. Murdoch communicated a degree of respect in his face, which, to Link, was a pleasant contrast to the contemptuous disgust he used to receive. He had always dreamed of interacting with his son as an equal one day, and in the moment…it truly felt like he had gotten that wish. After all, he was the only one with both the strength to rival him in combat and the will to take on his mission as his own. With those qualities intended for the greater good, he was Hylia’s unstoppable light. A true successor to the chosen hero.

“We’ve been through a lot, haven’t we?” Link began.

Murdoch crossed his arms. “It’s been quite an adventure. Twenty years ago, I wouldn’t have thought it possible.”

Link shrugged at the remark. “…Sorry it couldn’t have been sooner.”

At that, Murdoch shook his head right away. “Don’t bother apologizing, Dad. I know I spent a lot of your time here making you think the last hundred years were your fault. I understand how things are now, with you…Mom…Ganon. The past hurts, and…I realize I spent too much of my life feeling sorry for myself and my sisters instead of handling it maturely.”

“Still, the experience was insightful for me too. Likewise, I don’t want you thinking that every bit of these last couple days was your fault either.” Link rebutted.

Murdoch shifted stance a bit, raising one of his hands to his head as if to reflect. “I figure, the way we’ve been talking to each other, that we’re more well off with than we realize. A lot of effort has gone into making sure we understand each other’s feelings, and I think that’s excellent progress.”

Link nodded. “The important thing is wanting it. I’ve noticed recently that you’re more willing to take responsibility for yourself regarding our turbulent encounters together. It proves that you strive for peace just as much as I do.”

Murdoch chuckled for an extended moment as he pondered fondly over that fact. That had been an essential difference between then and now, in that he truly did still long to be with his father just as much as his sisters did. It was as if the grief had turned him into a different Zora entirely.

“It’s funny that you know me that well, even after losing your memory.” He jabbed, causing Link to join in his chuckling.

“Would you ladies just hurry up and hug already? The suspense is bothering me!” Noelani hollered suddenly. They turned to her with a bit of fright at her outburst, but the moment quickly melted into one of harmonious laughter. Even Muzu participated with a weak, raspy snicker.

“Alright, Dad. Bring it in.” He opened his arms to his father for the first time in his memory. His bridges were finally down.

Link stepped forward and accepted the invitation, noticing quickly how tall his son really was. Even with his arms up and over his head, his hands only came to rest near the back of Murdoch’s gills, which, like with any other Zora, were positioned a few inches below his armpits.
At the same time, Murdoch’s arms had to slump far downwards to even fall idly on Link’s shoulders. The guard captain still wasn’t quite as tall as Prince Sidon, but to Link, the size difference was indiscernible. He closed his eyes. Their moment together now was something he thought he’d never get to experience.

“I can’t believe how much you’ve grown.” He sighed.

Murdoch smirked. “Physically?”

“Well…yes, physically, of course, but…in all other ways as well.” He tilted his head far backwards in order to look up at his towering son’s blue eyes. “You’ve overcome a thicket of dependence and revealed your true colors. It’s no surprise to me how you earned your captain title. Did I ever mention how proud of you that made me?”

His son stared down at him for a moment with a look that could move mountains. A glimmer of youth returned to his eyes, displaying to Link exactly what he knew had been hidden there for countless decades. His aspirations as a child were finally met, in a time following what he knew clearly to be his lowest point. His conscious thoughts were suspended, and he became…almost…blissfully hypnotized. Something was unlocked there that night. Something both he and Link would never forget.

It only lasted for a few seconds, however, before Murdoch turned his life-changing display into a witty remark. His face twisted into a smirk. “I don’t think so, Dad. You’ve never really been the talkative type.”

The two of them chuckled again. Murdoch had played it off like a lighthearted moment, but he wasn’t fooling his father. Link knew what he saw in his son. His mission in the Domain was now properly complete.

“Always stay at it, Murdoch. Your Domain depends on your vigilance. That includes your closest family.” Link decreed. The guard captain released his father and assumed a straight stance, saluting like a soldier. It was all the affirmation he needed.

The Hylian Champion stepped backwards again so he could get a final look at all three of his triplets. Wow…had it been an eventful couple of days. None of his upcoming adventure was going to come close to the experiences he had had at Zora’s Domain, and he knew that…clearly…his kids were going to feel the same. Having the knowledge of their father’s ongoing presence in the world was going to make their lives change from the moment he left. As long as he was around, their hope would remain.

As he reached down to his belt and grabbed his sheikah slate one last time, he shared a glance with each pair of eyes. “I love you guys.”

Noelani was the one to respond, speaking on behalf of the three of them without so much as a single tear to communicate the tidal rush she was feeling. “We love you too, Daddy.”

He raised his hand up in front of him and, on the sheikah slate screen, tapped a shrine in the East Necluda region. There was a mysterious island nestled in the Necluda Sea beyond the reaches of the nearest beaches, and his next objective was to find a way to reach it. As he did so, the signature blue light that was sure to dissolve his figure and send him to his destination began to engulf him. In just a few seconds, his children were going to disappear from his sight.
“Be good to Muzu.” He ordered quietly. The three of them smiled weakly.

Murdoch flashed him a thumbs-up. “No promises.”

It only took a moment after that. Link’s vision faded to nothing as the light consumed his body, and once it recovered, he was looking at a completely different landscape. At the Domain, the offspring of Link and Mipha stood around the vanishing point, contemplating the time they had had with their father. Had it really been a couple days, or merely a couple hours? Whichever it was, it had gone by much faster than the last hundred years.

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“Are you sure you have everything?” Mipha nagged.

“Yeah, it’s all here.” Link replied impatiently. “It’s not like I need that much.”

“Still, it can’t hurt to be sure. I’d hate for a nasty encounter to arise while you don’t have a crucial item on you.”

“I’m sure I’ll be fine. It’s just a scouting mission to examine one of the sheikah structures near Rito Village. It’s only for the day, and Zelda will be with me.”

Mipha hated these moments. It didn’t help that she was currently feeding their triplets their breakfast, an action which left her basically immobilized until they were done. She’d be better off with him helping, obviously, but…that’s not how his life worked. He always had to be somewhere else.

“Can you promise me you’ll return home safely?” She chided.

He shot her a disapproving glare. “You ask me that almost every time I depart, you know. Of course I’ll be home safely.”

She couldn’t keep herself from cracking a smile. Even as spouses, she still retained some of her motherly treatment of him from when he was a toddler. It was funny, considering the actual little ones she had had with him all laid out before her. “It always helps for me to hear you say it.”

After sticking his second boot on and fastening his belt around his tunic, he stood up from the waterbed to head out on his assignment. Her smile faded as she watched him leave again, as she usually did at such a time. She knew what she had been getting herself into at the time she married him, and yet…something still hurt about it. She never wanted either of them to have to leave the Domain…ever. His absences often left her scatterbrained from the worry. It was her, him, and their children…against the world.

“Alright, Mipha, I’ll see you tonight.” He announced from across the platform. “I love you.”
“I love you too, Link. Be safe.” She called in reply. It wasn’t long after that she heard his footsteps descending the staircase, leaving her alone with their kids for the day.

In reality, she really couldn’t blame him, even if his constant absence did hurt her a bit. She knew him well enough to be sure that he’d never leave if he had the choice. He was merely a busy person, tied relentlessly to the burdens that befell the goddess’s chosen hero. He was out there keeping Hyrule secure, and through that…the Domain, as well. For that reason, if anything, despite the unpleasant loneliness and uncertainty she got from being away from him, his departures only made her love him more. Every time he left…her love for him would grow, because…if there was anything she knew about her dear husband, Link……

……it was that he always came back.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for sticking with me on this adventure. :) The epilogue follows.
Link’s presence in Zora’s Domain had ushered in good fortune that could be felt throughout the valley from the moment he left. No one in the Domain could’ve expected the sun to look as beautiful as it did the first time it rose after the fateful night of Vah Ruta’s appeasement. Its wonderful radiance had cast rays across the sky that following morning, bringing with it a degree of warmth and security that hadn’t existed in the valley for nearly a month. The Zoras had awoken bright and early to greet its arrival the moment it broke through the horizon, despite them having attended the late-night ceremony just hours before. The mood was especially quick to strike the triplets, naturally. Noelani, while known to be a heavy sleeper, was among the first of her people to jump to her feet and go see the sun that morning.

The gusto with which the Zoras regularly went about their day had taken no time to settle back in as well. While the Domain shone brightly under the sun’s nourishment, so too did the happy energy emitted by its people. They walked faster, they talked louder, and most importantly, they smiled more. More social interactions occurred, and ultimately, the morale throughout the population experienced a dramatic improvement. The Domain once again looked, and felt, as it had a hundred years ago.

In this state, the weeks went by quickly. Days and nights could actually be discerned from each other under the clear skies. Dinners were enjoyed by happy couples to pristine, glowing sunsets. Occasional treks were made to the Eastern Reservoir to observe and admire the Divine Beast in all its former glory from its new perch on the adjacent mountaintop. Aspiring Zoras departed from the Domain to travel to other places and meet nomadic Hylians. Gatherings were held in the plaza to mingle and talk recreation. Each day in this life was a new experience for Mira, Noelani, and Murdoch. It was as if Vah Ruta’s freedom…and Mipha’s freedom within…orchestrated the freedom of the entire Zora tribe. The uplifting nature of it all was nothing short of a constant blessing.

True to his word, in celebration of the big victory, Murdoch had granted the Zora Guard an entire month of time off, effective immediately after the ceremony. There had been a slight bit of concern from Prince Sidon about his nephew’s choice, particularly with unexpected threats, but Murdoch was adamant on his decision. His subordinates on the team needed some time to enjoy the Domain’s new, budding era of peace, and he himself needed some time to catch up with his sisters. It was in everyone’s best interest, he had reasoned, and the two of them were able to agree on his decision under the condition that his subordinates kept their weapons handy at all times during their vacation. In the wake of his decree, he spent the entirety of his free time accompanying his siblings.

The three of them got along like peas in a pod. Thanks to Murdoch’s natural, keen sense, Muzu was never worried about their whereabouts as long as he was with them with a spear in tow. Almost every day, whenever they had the energy to do so, they would venture out from the Domain together to spend time alone and introduce Noelani to the sights she had always missed during their childhood. Sometimes they’d be gone for a couple hours, and sometimes they wouldn’t be seen for the entire day. It mostly depended on where they were headed…and how much Noelani was enjoying the views. They certainly never had a curfew.
Among the curious Zora’s favorite destinations were Crenel Peak, the Eastern Reservoir, and the summit of Ploymus Mountain. She had already seen the Reservoir upon first gaining her sight, while their mother was still speaking to them in spirit form the night of the appeasement. Regardless, she found the sparkling waters of the lake and the elegant architecture of the awning to be beautiful, irreplaceable features of her childhood home, even after visiting it several times. She doubted she’d ever grow tired of the image.

Crenel Peak had been a long trek to make a second time, but when they had done it, she had the special benefit of traversing the Zora River without the help of her sis. For once, she actually found the slick, agile style of swimming associated with being a Zora to be seamless and fun, since she could finally feel independent while doing it. It was a deeply rewarding and satisfying trip, made ever more memorable by the sight of her birthplace within the peak. She was basically filling the role of her father from the time they had shown him the peak, only for her, the images held a type of significance that could never be explained. She knew she would sooner forget her own name before losing the sight of the pond in which she hatched.

Ploymus Mountain, on the other hand, was another story entirely. She hadn’t remembered going there as a youngling more than once or twice, so she didn’t know what to expect at all. They had chosen to ascend the mountain by waterfall, since the cliffsides had a series of waterfalls leading all the way to the top. She found there to be a certain rush to ascending waterfalls with working vision…a powerful, tantalizing sensation unlike anything she had ever felt in her life. She had actually led her siblings up the falls, controlling her movements with a level of meditated precision that had not been possible before. She even discovered that she could twirl through the air at the apex of her climbs, just like the rest of her family of royals, landing every time with the grace and beauty of her mother. And above it all, the experience had only been the precursor to a sight beyond anything comparable in the entire kingdom of Hyrule. With Mira and Murdoch by her side, she witnessed a vantage point that provided a view of, in essence, the entire world, stretching all the way from the Domain below to the ominous, bird-like Divine Beast on the distant horizon, behind the fields, the deserts, and the haunted Hyrule Castle that sat in between. It took her a great deal of time to comprehend the size of it all, and even more time to fathom the fact that her father was out there somewhere, tackling it all in the name of enduring peace. Needless to say, it was the trip that had kept the three of them away from the Domain the longest.

Tonight, Mira, Noelani, and Murdoch were once again absent from the Domain. Instead of settling into the sleeping pools with their neighbors for the night, they laid in the grass together beside the pond at the base of Veiled Falls, staring up at the heavens. The night carried a slight chill, but it was subtle enough to fly under their radar. Tonight was different from the other nights, in that they were not planning to return to the Domain until the next morning. The gentle grass and hum of the water crashing into the pond would be their company for the night. Here, they were truly children again.

“Sis, do you know why Nayru made the stars?” Noelani asked innocently, hugging Mira’s arm more tightly than before. “They’re very…hypnotizing.”

Mira took a moment to answer her question. She also found herself getting lost in the expanses of the great beyond, and therefore, her mind was prone to wandering. “I guess…just
because…they’re very pretty. Without the sun’s light to see the amazing features of the world around us, something has to step in to give the night beauty, am I right?"

Murdoch chuckled. He stretched for a moment, pushing his spear to the side to give him more space to relax. “That’s a clever way to put it, I’d say.”

Noelani smiled a bit, but with a subtlety that went unnoticed. She had had the extent of the past few weeks to see and observe the stars at night, and she always seemed different while doing so. Something about them got her head churning, as if she were spending every night beneath them trying to analyze their purpose. Mira and Murdoch never paid it any mind, since their nights were reserved for deep, relaxing exchanges as it was, and they didn’t find anything out of place with their sister’s pensive tendencies. Perhaps this was the night she’d put the pieces of her thoughts together, weaving her internal musings into a picture of reality, culminated over a mere month’s worth of working sight.

“They mean something to me.” She whispered. Mira turned her head in the grass to face her sister as she seemed to speak out of the silence again. “Out of all the amazing things I’ve gotten to see around here…there’s something about the sky that just…stands out to me.”

“Hmm…I see. Do you…know much about Nayru?” Mira queried. She gained some interest in the direction of Lani’s thoughts.

Noelani inhaled deeply and slowly, keeping her eyes fixated on the constellations above. It was evident she wouldn’t be sleeping anytime soon, since her mind seemed to be running very actively. She sighed and replied dreamily. “All I know is that she’s the Goddess of Wisdom. Beyond that…it’s mostly just stuff that I feel. Ever since Mom gave me my vision a while back, I’ve been reminded of Nayru whenever I look at the stars. I sort of feel…almost like…they’re a part of me, in a way.”

Murdoch turned his entire body to face his sister. He brought his elbow beneath him to help him sit up a bit as he listened to her words. Mira could tell from looking at him that he was also gaining a great deal of interest in Lani’s ramblings. Although Lani could hear the grass rustling from his movements beside her, she did not face him. The night sky continued to hold her undivided attention.

It seemed almost like he had had similar thoughts before, judging by the way he absorbed her explanations. Something was resurfacing in his own mind that sucked him more deeply into the subject. He cleared his throat for a brief moment.

“Legends have told that Nayru’s wisdom played a powerful role in the shaping of the very world around us.” He murmured, looking directly at his captivated sister. “What exactly do the stars…mean to you?”

Unlike with Mira’s question, Noelani did not stop to breathe before answering Murdoch. The moment the question rolled off his tongue, she responded, leaving no sort of gap for reflection. She clearly had been settled on her answer for a bit longer than he anticipated. “Order.”

The two of them took a moment to think over that answer. It had almost caught them off guard, thanks to being quickly delivered, and rather…to-the-point. Unlike her, they had had the privilege to see the stars every night for their entire lives, and they had never been so quick to
describe their symbolism with a single word like that. Noelani, though…only needed a month, it seemed, which, to them…was kind of astounding.

Murdoch smiled as he laid back down in the grass. Decades away from his sisters had left him in desperate need of a heart-to-heart, exactly like the one they were having now. They had had deep talks before, but only recently after the Great Calamity, and more often than not, they had been about mundane topics that were always forgotten the next morning. Tonight had been the first of its kind in *countless* years, he realized, and with it, a fantastic revelation had occurred within him. He wondered if Mira and Lani felt it too. To iterate his feelings, and to ensure they shared them as well, he spoke again.

“You know, Lani, of all things, it’s interesting that you were so quick to attach to the cosmos after gaining your sight.” He turned to look at her at the same time she looked at him, and the two of them locked eyes. “I don’t know if you’ve ever looked into the ancient legends, but…they say it was Nayru who created the skies. The heavens, along with the celestial bodies contained within, were made by her in junction with the laws that governed existence.” Neither of them blinked as they continued to stare into each other. “Hav…Haven’t you ever heard that before?”

Noelani took a moment to ponder, but she wound up shaking her head. She knew that Nayru created the stars, though…she hadn’t heard of the legend’s details regarding “governing laws.” However, they seemed remarkably in line with how she had just unknowingly described them. Murdoch turned his gaze to Mira, who, to his surprise, *also* shook her head. He thought, almost for sure, that she’d know what he was getting at, but apparently, she also hadn’t bridged the gap and looked into the history of the goddesses. They were quite a fascinating topic, after all.

He kept his gaze on Mira as he continued, an action which, by curiosity, forced her attention to remain on him. “Likewise, the legends say that Farore, the Goddess of Courage, created life in the world to uphold the law set forth by Nayru. And Din, the Goddess of Power, well…” He let out a scoff as he reflected on the grandeur of it all. He noticed his sisters begin to grin as well. “…she created the land and the sea. The canvas onto which everything was laid. The mountains…the valleys…the oceans. It is said that these three goddesses each granted a song to the first chosen hero to help him forge the Master Sword.”

Mira turned back toward the sky, where she and her sister had been staring for the majority of the night. Her smile remained on her face as she reminisced on the facts her brother had just shared with them. As Zoras, they had always lived a life centered around the Goddess of Wisdom, but rarely had they ever even *heard* of the other two deities. Now that Murdoch had introduced them to such secrets, she found that they shared more in common with them than they ever could’ve realized. There was a level of symbolism to the elements of the universe that her, Lani’s, and Murdoch’s humble selves would never fully understand.

“I wonder how much Dad knows about this stuff.” Mira pondered aloud. “Since he’s the current chosen hero, and he can wield the Master Sword…it makes me imagine the possibility of him hiding memories from his past lives.”

“Also…that gets me wondering something else.” Noelani chimed, reaching out with her other hand to pull Murdoch a little closer to herself and Mira. “What if…perhaps…”

Suddenly, the sound of an earthshattering explosion tore across the valley, cutting their
timid sister off before she could share her thought. They each jumped completely out of their skin at both the spontaneity and the volume of the noise. It sounded like it had come from the horizon on their right, where the Divine Beast had been perched for the last several weeks.

The sound was also accompanied by a blinding flash of bluish light that remained present after the initial blast. The light overpowered the stars and the moon and lit up the entire Domain like the sun itself at midday. Almost all the Zoras back in the chambers, they figured, had to be awake by now.

When the initial shock of the event dissipated in the trio, they held up their hands toward the light and glanced in its direction to observe the disruptive spectacle. To their amazement, they saw what appeared to be a massive, city-sized laser ejecting from Vah Ruta’s tusks, aimed away from the Domain in the direction of the Hyrulean plains. The sheer size and luminosity of the mighty blast made it look as though it had the power to level an entire mountain range. They had been around that Divine Beast their entire lives, and they never knew it was capable of such a feat.

“Oh my…” Mira whispered. “…Mom…”

“Incredible…” Murdoch added with a stunned breath.

A moment occurred within them where all thoughts and feelings just…stopped. The brilliant, blue light of the plasma beam that was firing out of their mother’s Divine Beast grabbed hold of their souls and held them in its angelic grasp. It was like Mipha’s entire legacy was pointed towards this very moment, evidenced by the riveting magnificence of the event. It sung to them as a powerful, melancholic display of…finality.

“Is…Is it…what I think it is?” Noelani quivered.

Mira nodded her head hypnotically, though she knew Noelani couldn’t see the gesture from behind her. None of them could pull their eyes away from Vah Ruta. “It is. Mom and Dad…they’re…they’re fighting Calamity Ganon together. It’s…It’s really happening.”

They wanted to feel, but they couldn’t. Something about the event as it played out caused their hearts and minds to go completely numb. It was truly a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

Noelani watched with the same awestruck wonder as her siblings, scanning the incomprehensibly bright phenomenon without so much as a blink of emotion. It felt kind of like she was feeling everything at once, and as a result, she couldn’t really feel anything at all. Right before her very eyes, her parents were finally taking control of their destiny. Ultimately, the satisfaction and relief of that fact were all she needed to feel in the moment, but…she found it difficult to settle on those emotions. They were too specific.

She continued to watch the light as, following a total of about thirty seconds, it began to quickly fade away. The strength of the laser faltered a bit for a second, and an instant later, it fizzled into nothing, returning the night sky to its previous, starry state. The triplets needed some time for their eyes to readjust to the darkness after their worlds had been rocked by the shine of their mother’s ferocity. It was going to take a bit of time before they fully grasped the gravity of what they had witnessed.

Noelani stared at the Divine Beast, which was now silent, for another couple seconds or so
before slumping back into the grass. She closed her eyes for a moment and took another deep, loaded breath. She could only hope that…in the moment that just flew by, her mother had accomplished what she wanted. It upset her that her mind worked too slowly to understand and think on what had happened until it was already over. It was a moment belonging to legends…and it had just passed her by in less than a minute.

She was getting tired of thinking. With her head laid back in the tall grass, she flicked her eyes back open to push the events of that evening to tomorrow and resume her position among the heavens. When she did, however…the stars of said heaven…were gone. There were no sparkly dots. No glittery trails. No luminescent moon. There was nothing. Nothing at all.

Her heart skipped a beat. She blinked a few times in disbelief, but with each one, the image…or lack thereof…did not change. The sky had gone dark.

She sat up quickly when this happened, continuing to blink several more times. To her dismay, everything…the sky, the grass, the Domain, the lakes, the mountains beyond, and even her siblings right in front of her…was completely and utterly gone. She held her hands out in front of her to inspect her fingers and her palms…but even they eluded her.

“S…Sis? Sis!” She trembled.

Mira quickly turned to face her sister after hearing her distressed call. Murdoch turned suddenly as well. “What is it?”

Noelani’s hands were still held out in front of her, though they began to shake rather intensely. Her fingers curled inwards. “Sis, I…I…I can’t see anything! My vision!”

Mira’s face fell, and her heart sank. “Oh no…Lani…”

As she scooted herself over to grab and embrace her loved one, Murdoch looked down at the ground. He idly traced his finger through the blades of grass nearest him, unsure of how to go about witnessing what they had known to be inevitable. “So…the time has come. Too soon…too soon.”

Noelani could not tell that Mira had begun to inch toward her until she felt her hands on her shoulders. When the physical contact was made, she jumped…albeit ever so slightly. She knew her siblings cared for her, and Mira…well, she owed a lot to Mira. As Mira’s hands settled on her shoulders, she clawed desperately at the air with her own hands until she felt Mira’s gills, at which point she extended her arms around her, yanked her sister inwards, and held her as tightly as she could. They were both major huggers, and have therefore hugged thousands of times in their lives, and yet…Mira never felt her sister squeeze so hard.

Her mom had returned that one night to give her the most significant gift possible, which was her sight. The same mom that did such a thing…had been the mom that stood by her with special love, care, and protection…since her first days as a hatchling in a jar. She held her almost constantly, keeping her safe from her rambunctious siblings and the frightening elements of the unknown around them. She protected her from strangers. Knowing of the fragility caused by her blindness, she dedicated a major piece of herself to keeping her daughter safe against all odds.
That same mom had promised her one last comfort-providing gesture that night, even from beyond the reaches of death. It was the ultimate extension of her power as a spirit, and she had reserved it just for her, so that she may be like the rest of her family and have confidence and stability on her own...at the cost of being a mere demo. They knew, even at the time, that her vision would not last forever. Though...that didn’t change the fact that she never wanted it to go.

That same mom was now gone. Her purpose as a spirit, to guide Vah Ruta and aid her husband in the destruction of Calamity Ganon, had now been fulfilled, and although Link’s fate within Hyrule Castle was not yet determined, she had done all she could. With that, she had certainly moved on, and with her final passing, Lani’s sight had faded away as well. She was now as blind as she had been before her father’s return.

Despite being past thinking for the night, she no longer had a choice. Without the starry sky nor the expansive horizon to get lost in, the only thing she could do was go back to thinking. Her mind raced through the glorious things she had seen during the last month, and how they were now locked in her head as mere memories. It raced through the experiences she had had with her sight, including the amazing bonding time she had with her brother. It raced through the memories of her mother, and...how she gave so much to allow her daughter to lead the best life possible in spite of the apocalyptic nightmare that had frightened her every day. She thought about these things, and, very quickly...for the first time ever...she began to cry.

Mira could feel it happening over her shoulder. First, there were small, individual tears, streaming down her sister’s cheeks and gently striking the middle of her back. Before long, though, those tears were joined by sounds of deep, passionate sobbing. Mira and Murdoch were utterly silenced by the haunting nature of the sound. They had never heard Noelani cry before. Not once. She was known for battling a constant storm of emotions, but every time, she’d absorb them flawlessly and move on with the current. Her capacity in the face of adversity just seemed bottomless throughout the years. However, like the Eastern Reservoir trying to absorb the Divine Beast’s downpour, it seemed she had finally hit her limit, and the effects were somewhat explosive.

It started to seem like she would never calm down. The seconds turned into minutes as Mira’s back channeled an ongoing stream of tears into the grass below. Likewise, the blind Zora’s grieving sobs had escalated into powerful wails, punctuated by occasional episodes of sporadic, shallow breathing. Her cries rang out into the night, echoing off the cliffsides around Veiled Falls. They carried with them the condensed essence of a hundred years without a mother to protect her...a hundred years of disguising her vulnerability. It truly broke her siblings’ hearts.

Mira patted her lamenting sister’s back with one hand, while she used the other to stroke her long, silky tailfin. She tried whatever she could to help ease Lani’s pain, despite lacking the experience. It was the first time she ever needed to try.

“Shh...shh...it’s going to be okay. We’re always here for you. Shhh......” She cooed quietly. She wasn’t entirely sure she could be heard over the maelstrom.

Murdoch, crushed by the sounds of her pain, decided to slide himself over to her and Mira in the grass. He scooched around to her other side, leaned forward, and joined Mira in grasping Noelani around her waist. The three of them were a single unit, both now, and always.

“Dad’s coming home, Lani. Dad’s coming home.” He whispered.
“That’s right, little lovebug.” Mira sighed. “Dad’s coming home.”

THE END

Chapter End Notes

This epilogue was inspired by “Nayru’s Wisdom,” from my all-time favorite Zelda game, Skyward Sword. I encourage all who are reading this to head to YouTube and give it a quick listen.

That is officially all for “Offspring.” I can’t properly express my gratitude to all of you for sticking with me during its development. I’m at a very active point in my life where projects like this often fall into the backseat, and seeing how popular this has gotten, it’s caused me a bit of stress at times. I’m deeply, genuinely glad this one gave you all so much joy, though. Your responses will always inspire me. ;)

Check out my Tumblr blog as well, since there’s some news there regarding my next project. >:
https://mikeanthony321.tumblr.com/

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