The certainty of chance.

by Bananas45

Summary

Link struggles to come to grips with a journey he doesn't know he's meant to go on. He knows he has to save her, even if who 'Her' is something he doesn't quite know. Unsure who to trust or how to act. Responsibility weighs heavy on his shoulders.

Character study of Link from the beginning of the game to the end.

Notes

This will be on going and I hoppeee, I pray, to update twice a week on it. It's pretty self indulgent. New pairings and ratings might pop up along the way. I basically wanted to make the whole thing feel kinda gritty? I don't know...It can't have been easy for Link. So everyone is kinda mean and I've taken some liberties with certain plot elements I think.
To the rescue

The fire crackles, soft and infallible. Sparks fly off into the night and dance through the air until they disappear. The more Link’s eyes focus on the flame the less he is able to see when he finally pulls his eyes out into the night. Link should be worried by that but he's too tired to be worried and too cold to fight. Besides, there is a deathly stillness to the forest and even the cracks of the dying fire seem too loud, like his presence here is a disturbance.
The cabin door opens and floods the night with warmth and light.
"It's too late for you to try again" The voice is gruff and weathered but there is a deep seated kindness hidden there. He gets to his feet and ignores the pain, the ache of his muscle over stretched after a century of disuse. The old man beckons him in. The old man who found him stumbling down that hillside shirtless and trembling. Who let him eat his apples and told him his own history. Who showed him how to use that thing sat on his hip. He's probably eternally indebted.
"Did you warm up? I said it would be cold" The man chides softly. Yes, Link overestimated his own endurance in these shrine things and that mountain had been cold. He wonders if he was that obstinate in the past. Probably explains a lot.
He walks past and plants himself on the warm bed and, Feet curled comfortably under himself, pulls his hair band out, letting the sweat slickened strands gather across his face. He takes a deep breath and tries to expel 100 years of fatigue out in one breath. He fails.
The chair creaks as the man sits forward. Staff helping him balance as he scratches his beard.
"She gave you that" He says. It sounds pained in the quiet of the night. Somewhere far off a wolf howls. He drops his leg down, feet not quite reaching the worn wood floor, bare toes scraping the dust under his toenail. He wishes he knew what the old man was talking about but he doesn't.
"The princess" He clarifies. Link lets his eyes drift up. The gravity of what that could mean is lost on Link but he understands its significance. Some princess liked him or something. He pulls the band between his index and thumb and nods with a soft 'hm' of understanding. He doesn't ask how the old man knows. Maybe it was a well known fact 100 years ago. Link doesn't care for the details.
"You remember nothing?" The old man sighs, Standing and closing the cabin door as a gust of wind blows it open.
Link just shakes his head and bites his lip. Leg kicking softly and hair dangling limply and eyes down cast like his head can't stay up.
"I remember how to fight" He says, his voice sounds immeasurably young and he almost regrets saying anything at all. "I know who I am." He ignores how the old man snorts "I know a bokoblin from a henox. I know the sky is blue and I know I have to rescue her" His voice wavers like the flames in that dying fire outside.
"Not everyone is like me" The old man says but again the meaning is lost. Link tilts his head like a untrained dog. "Don't trust anyone"
Link nods, the fire in his eyes is gone and that calmness is back.
The old man realises he won't get a response and stands.
"You must be tired" He says. Link shakes his head. Sleeping is the last thing he wants to do.
"Well I am. So shift of my bed" The old man says and the two swap places.
The old man blows out the candles lighting the place and Link stands in the cabin with the crickets for company and considers what to do.
He wonders briefly if he was a good person in the past and feels a shudder pass over him as he realises; probably not. He wouldn't be here, now, stood in this cozy cabin, weak and sore if he'd been good. He wonders how long he slept. He wonders how he came to be asleep. He wonders and wonders until it feels like a weight on his chest.
By the morning he's completed those shrines. Now he can point the little thing on his hip at stuff and things happen. It doesn't really feel like enough for his aching muscles and bleeding feet- He needs to find shoes- or his bleeding fingers. The morning sun is cool and low. It catches the mist that lies over the dew sweetened grass. It cools the burning in his feet and he almost drops to his knees to feel it against his rock bitten fingers.

The doublet he took is a little too big for him, it hangs a little awkwardly on his frame and he adjusts it against the weight of the bow he put across his back. In the space of a night he's gone through weapons like apples. His shield has a worryingly large crack down the middle now and he's got a grand total of two arrows left.

"You've been busy" The old man squints against the low sun as he sits by the fire. Link joins him. "Can't find a decent weapon" Link mutters, throwing another stick onto the fire.

"Or you're too talented at using them" The old man smiles and chuckles and Link smiles too, just a little pull up on his cheeks.

"I fear we will not be seeing much of each other after today," The old man says and hands a small pot of stew over to Link. His old hands, misshapen with calluses, tremble a little as Link takes the bowl and Link wonders how old the man must be.

"I see you're enjoying my doublet" The old man says with a chuckle. Link flushes. He had just taken it. "And I'm guessing you took my axe as well"

"It doesn't quite fit" Link says softly, bowl already empty he offers it out for hopeful seconds. He gets them.

"I know because it's mine!" The old man chuffs. Link looks ready to take it off but he waves a hand "You can have it, honestly, my mountain days are over."

Birds chirp happily above them and Link wonders how terrible the world off this little plateau is. How such horror can occur while the birds still sing. He wonders how long he can stay here, running errands for an old man.

"You look pensive" The old man says. "What's on your mind"

Link shrugs, unsure how to phrase his concern. One kind old man can't help him get over the fear of letting down an entire kingdom. Why he feels the need to even save this kingdom is infuriatingly illusive, like an itch he can't quite scratch.

"My arms hurt" Link murmurs, Shaking one out as he balances the little wooden bowl on his knee. The old man must have carved it.

"You also smell" The old man says casually, drinking the dregs of whatever was filling his cup. It smells strong. Link wonders if it's strong enough to disinfect his cuts.

He hadn't even considered it and he flushes as he sniffs his arm.

He finds a pond, quiet and warm. A few frogs dotted around and a dragonfly that buzzes past him and skids across the water. A breeze ripples the pond and Link lets it rush through his hair. The hairband sits on his wrist as he strips down, leaving the broken shield and bow on top of his folded clothes. He sinks into the water. It's not deep enough to swim in and he uses the bowl the old man gave him breakfast in to pour water over his hair and back. Scrubbing the dirt from between his toes and the grime off his arms. His fingers sting like hell in the water and he shudders when his neck twinges as he bends. The sun dries the droplets fast on his back and arms and he pulls his hair up to keep it out his face and in the heat of the mid-day sun he decides to tackle life like he tackles climbing; carefully and positively. Everything slow and considered, only rushing when you know for certain that the rock will hold you. Don't be flustered and don't get up upset. Come what may.
By nightfall he's off the plateau and understands wholeheartedly why the old man- The king rather, told him not to trust anyone. In hyrule any old punter could be some dead king in disguise. He feels betrayed, even though he shouldn't but his stupid plans to revisit that kindly old man have been dashed and it's pissing him off. His stomach growls in response but he plods on anyway. He found shoes and a change of trousers and these ones actually fit which is nice. The doublet still hangs lopsided off his collar, pulled by the weight of the armoury strapped to his back but he presumes this village he's been asked to head to will be well stocked. Then again, as he makes his way through ruins and along the dirt path he wonders if anywhere is nice. He's only met one person and that person turned out to be dead anyway so his hopes are not high. The silence of the night makes the world feel tilted and uneasy and a the small part of him that wants to run to the castle with two arrows and a damaged shield and try his luck grows a little louder.

He runs into at least 3 camps of Bokoblins but comes out rich in arrows and a shield that feels like it might actually deflect something. He sits beside their fire, eating the meat that was on their spit and feels less than human as he crouches amongst the bones and burnt ground. His hair shakes across his cheeks as he pulls the meat apart. It's barely cooked and takes some effort to tear into but it tastes good. It's nothing like the stew that he had for breakfast- gods that was only breakfast, it feels like days ago since then- but it will do. It starts to rain and it puts the fire out. He pulls himself up into standing and groans as his body protests. The night stretches on long ahead of him and as he trudges through the it, avoiding the howls and growls from around him, He comes across a stable by a river.

"Can I help you?" The man at the desk looks over him. He must look a state, small and covered in blood and dirt, clothes too big and weapons almost broken.

"I just need a bed"
"We're full" The man says, eyes narrowing. "Clean your shoes before you come in"
Link turns away, nose curling in annoyance and clicks his tongue before seating himself by the fire. A man, in armour, with his sword stuck deep in the ground behind him, is telling off escapades to a few other travellers. That sword, ornate and not rusty, is just sat there, buried in the ground and horribly under used. Link's fingers itch.
"You know in that region it's just littered with treasure. I just waltz right in and took" He rips a bit of chicken off the bone and his audience cackle heartedly. Link just snorts gently, more of a held back chuckle. It gets their attention.
"I'm sorry, do I know you?" The man says. Link glances up slowly, blue eyes on dirty brown.
"Nope" He murmurs, taking a bit of chicken out the pot they have over the fire. The man laughs, sharp and angered.
"I don't mean to sound rude- What're you some...lost boy? But this is a story for my friend" He pauses, voice patient but clearly annoyed "at my fire."
Link grits his teeth and empties his shoe off water from the storm. He ignores the man.
"You have cheek, boy" The man grins, yellowed teeth and pink nose glistening in the fire light. He just takes a bite out the chicken, eyes closed. They all look baffled by him, like he doesn't speak their language. They exchange a glance, unsure how to deal with him.
"Excuse me. We're asking you to leave" Another says, fat and round, little ears poking out his hat. Link bites his lip so hard it almost bleeds. Fuck this stable. Fuck this whole thing. He just wants to sleep.
"Where's Kakariko village?" He asks, aware how the chicken spits out this mouth. He's done being amicable.
"You're not from Kakariko" The first man snaps out a laugh. He slaps his hand of his knee, material threadbare and hands dirty.
"If I was from Kakariko I wouldn't be asking where it was" Link glares, patience at its tether.
"What sort of fuckwit can't get from the fields to Kakariko?" The fat one puffs out a laugh and his pals join in.
The kind who has no idea where anything is in relation to anything.
"Lost my horse" He mutters.
"Well just look inside your heart and pray to the goddess and I'm sure someone will lend you a hand. Not me though. So fuck off kid" The man spits. With a moment of hesitation Link gets up and backs away, ignoring the way they're talking about him.
“Where’s Kakariko” One is saying. “Maybe he was dumb”
He finds a dog, running circles on a little broken wooden pier. It comes up to him and he holds out his hand. It laps at his hand softly, gently and gives a keen. He scratches its’ ears, crouched down. It looks up with black eyes and Link smiles wide as it pants.
It looks kind, soft under his worn down fingers. He thinks on those men back there, laughing at him when he’s meant to be saving their kingdom. Not that they know that. Not that he knew that before about 12 hours ago now. He shakes his head. It's too much to think about.
Just like climbing. One step at a time.
Late night turns to early morning and he goes back to find those men asleep by the fire. Without a moment of hesitation he takes the first man’s sword out the ground and swings it once. The blade comes down close to the man's neck, silent and swift and stops within half an inch. The forest whispers around, crickets chirping and owls hooting. It doesn’t care if this man dies but he relents and steps back. Someone has to care.
With a satisfied grimace he leaves the stable without once looking back. The mountain that was pointed out to him, with the two peaks almost touching, is getting closer with every moment and as the sun rises above them, cutting them down the middle with a ray of yellow, tinged with red, he squints.
The path clearly leads through them and on the other side of the river is one of those towers like the one that old man- that the king- his stomach churns a little- Tricked him into activating. Tricked is a harsh word that Link doesn’t mean. Not really. Climbing it takes hours that he doesn’t have and when he gets the map- The map that has no landmarks so is practically as useless as what he had before. He sits at the top and huffs for breath, clicking the cramps out his fingers he shakes off that feeling of hopelessness he gets whenever he stops to think.
He stops in at another stable. The sun is half way down the sky, lazy and heavy like a bee that can’t get height. His stomach growls and a girl, hair in a tight ponytail, with sharp feature and hazel brown eyes glances over from where she’s packing her bag.
“I heard that, you know” She says, smirking as she looks over him. It’s a look that borders between admiration and pity and it’s oddly familiar.
“You look strong...If not a little lost. Which is it, traveller?” She grins, hand on her hip. Link isn’t sure how to answer and he shrugs.
“Both” He says, sounding cautious to his own ears.
A wind rustles through them both. “It’ll be a cold night” She says. “You should get a bed”
He shakes his head. Too much time has been wasted already. The sun is already climbing back down those mountains and he can’t afford to stop again.
“When was the last time you slept?” She clicks her tongue. “You need to look after yourself you know”
She talks like she knows him. It’s mildly unnerving but he supposes she must just be friendly. It's hauntingly familiar. That tone, friendly but stern.
’Have you eaten?’
‘Did you sleep last night?’
‘Don’t take them all at once, You idiot’

Golden hair and the smell of flowers. Glades of green and trees of autumn reds and yellows and
eyes deeper than any forest. His heart tightens in a way that is nothing like adrenaline or exhaustion or hunger or any of those things. It’s pure and emotional and he has to drag in a breath at how sudden it is.

When his vision re-focuses which takes a moment, when the warmth of whatever that was fades. He’s left standing, reality so viciously cold and jarring, with the brunet staring at him.

“I’m heading to Kakariko” He clears his throat and she smiles and shakes her head at his evasiveness.

“Head north” she smiles. “I’ll maybe see you around huh?” It sounds hopeful.

She’s blushing a little and Link presumes she must have caught the sun on her travels. She heads into the fields with a wave after pointing him over to a bridge. It’s strange, she’s the first person he’s talked to all day. This place is terrifyingly empty, it is noticeable, as he walks away from the hum of the stables and across the bridge, ruined and crumbling, how fast the silence sets in. He feels like an imposter in this place, like every foot fall ruins the peace that is delicately held in the balance in this world. These people, moving around the world that once was theirs and is now nothing but fresh, floral decay, do they feel as out of place as he does.

Night is well and truly falling and his vision is swimming. This is technically his third night without sleep and he can feel it now, a buzz that runs through his head and pinches at his temples like pincers. He hears something, footsteps maybe? He hadn’t realised anyone was behind him.

“Howdy, bud~”

It falls like a thunder clap on sleep deprived ears and Link has his sword drawn before he can help himself. It catches the boy under his chin and his hands go up in surrender with a hapless yelp.

“How! Woah! I’m not here to cause trouble” He says, voice trembling and frantic. “I was wondering~”

Link’s eye twitches and he doesn’t drop the sword. Wondering what? In the dead of night. He steps closer, tense with suspicion. Then he looks again, closer. It is a boy, maybe two years or so younger than Link is, only a boy. An unarmed one at that, with tears in his eyes as he swallows against the tip of the blade poking just a little into his throat.

“If you’d like to hear~”

“No” Link says, sheathing the sword and walking away. He rubs his eye with the back of his hand. He is too tired for this.

“Aw come on, just one minute~”

“I said no” He looks back to give the kid a firm and harsh glare but when he turns the boy is gone. Not just gone but absolutely vanished like he was never there to begin with. The wind whistles in between the mountains, bouncing along the pathways. The silence ticks on for one, two, three. Another pause and he keeps himself tense before realising he genuinely hallucinated another person. He turns back to the path ahead. His loneliness must be worse than he-

Something crashes into him at breakneck speed and it knocks him to the ground with enough force to wind him. He barely has time to sit up before it comes down on top of him. With a knee driven into his stomach, he only just manages to grab the two arms off his assailant before they drive a sickle down into his chest. The darkness and the shock make it’s features hard to discern.

He’s at a huge disadvantage here. The knee keeps him pinned and pushing up is so much harder than pushing down. The blade touches down on the material of his doublet. He can hear the rasps of breath behind the china mask of the boy- no, the creature and he grits his teeth to try and push it off him. He succeeded in pushing it a little further up and away. It’s arms are skeletal and it’s fingers curl around the sickle like it’s an extension of their arm and he struggles to regain purchase as it drives down for another shot. His shoulders are burning with the angle he’s forced to push back at and he shifts away with a second to spare as the blade embeds deep in his shoulder. He cries out, more in anger than anything else and his hand, one now free as the other pushes at the chest of this creature, comes across a rock, just within finger reach. The creature struggles to pull the blade back out- It’s hit the bone, Link can feel it. He’s trying especially hard not to pass out from the pain- and his arm is being uncooperative as it twitches from the rip at the joint. He manages to wrench it up off the ground and the rock makes contact with the creature’s skull with a
sickening crunch. It makes a sound, half way between a surprised gurgle and a bloodied howl and falls to the ground. It’s movements are jerky and uncoordinated now. Link supposes he must have done serious damage with that rock. It scrambles to get up and Link hauls the sickle out his shoulder with shuddery gasp and flicks it out to dispel the blood. It gets distance between them, firing off arrows that link dodges like childsplay. He gets closer and one grazes his cheek. He pulls the sickle back, balanced badly in his left hand he throws it and watches in amazement as it lands square in the creature head. It lets out a shriek and falls to the ground with a puff of smoke. The night falls silent and Link stumbles over to the place where it fell. The sickle is there and so is it’s bow. He takes them, they both feel better made than his own. Light and more durable.

His arm buzzes with pain and blood loss and he prays from the bottom of his heart that this village is close. Strangely, the pain clears his head a little and the sharpness of the genuine life-threatening danger makes everything feel more alive than it has since he woke up. The world around him feels less and less like some horrible muddled dream. The closer he get’s into the heart of these moments the more strongly a smell carries on the breeze, like incensed wood and worn fabric. It’s strangely comforting and in a even stranger way, feels a lot like coming home.

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