Following the events of Majora’s Mask, Link reunites with Navi and continues his adventures through time, travelling from world to world, helping the innocent defeat evil. However, after a while he finds himself getting bored with the hero routine and decides that after one final adventure he'll return to Hyrule and take a vacation. Too bad for him fate has other plans.
In a far away world a great and terrible evil had awoken, cursing the land with a never-ending blight of darkness. Upon this hellscape, the ancient sorcerer's tower loomed, casting its shadow of corruption ever further. The people of this land had lost all hope, resigned to their fate to suffer at the hands of the evil magics of the dark wizard. All hope save for one small green clad swordsman and his fairy companion who dared to stand defiant before the encroaching darkness. When the strange boy had first arrived, the down trodden people had met his claims of being a hero with doubt and derision. At best he was laughed and mocked for his claims of being a hero and at worst he was chased from the town and villages, a dangerous lunatic who risked bringing the evil wizard's wrath upon them with his shouts for resistance and freedom. The people had seen what had happened to those who dared to defy the ancient evil who ruled over the land, and they were quick to distance themselves from anyone who was foolish enough to stand against the evil one's terrible power.

To an outside observer it would have appeared to be a grim comedy. However, this boy was no simpleton or war orphaned child driven mad with grief as many had assumed. This was Link, the Hero of Time with his faithful companion Navi. Though at first, they were alone, hiding from the very people they had come to save, gradually stories of the duo's deeds began to circulate both amongst the oppressed and the evil lord's servants. A dark temple to the Master destroyed, its Guardian slain. A rampaging monster defeated, its hunting grounds reclaimed. Steadily word of Link's successes grew and for the first time in as long as anyone could remember, the overlord took direct action against this upstart.

At first it was his champions that strode forth, proclaiming that they would drag the child back to the cities and parade him in his suffering before the people, a reminder of the price of defiance. The people would hear these boasts and cast their eyes downward, what little hope they had left departing with those monsters. But they never returned. Enraged, the sorcerer turned to his fell magics. Terrible lightning would rend the sky and fireballs devastated the lands the hero moved through. Time and time again the landscape would shake with his power and the people would gather in secret and prematurely mourn the loss of their last hope only for the strange child to reappear and repeat his message of resistance.

Eventually the people's shackles had been so weakened that they stood up in open revolt. Spurned by their hero, the once defeated chattel took up arms against their oppressors. Armouries were looted, garrisons routed and destroyed and the tyrant's forces were driven out. The people had at long last united against their fears to challenge the evil mage.

When the final city was freed and the last dark guardian lay defeated, Link turned his attention to the source of the land's corruption, the sorcerer's tower.

The green clad swordsman and his tiny fairy companion stood before the jet black, obsidian laced tower of the evil wizard, the gargantuan skull shaped gateway tauntingly left open for them.

'Well Link, I reckon it's finally time.' Navi said hovering over the shoulder of her ward.

'Hep!'
Link squinted, trying to follow the tower to its peak but he lost the structure amongst the clouds. He shook his head and sighed. No doubt there was going to be a lot of stairs and ladders for him in that tower. There would probably be one elevator leading to the dark wizard himself but other than that he would be climbing the whole way.

'Alright Link, you know the drill. Let's do our pre-dungeon checklist, shall we?' said Navi, flying in front of him as he searched through his tunic. Link's green tunic was magically enchanted to allow him to weightlessly carry his gear. It couldn't carry heavy equipment, but it could carry all of his tools and weapons, transforming him into a walking armoury.

'Let's see…arrows?' asked Navi.

'Mmm!' he replied as he ran his hand over his full quiver.

'Bombs?'

'Mmm!'

'Milk?'

'Mmm!

'Slingshot? Hookshot? Boomerang?'

'Mmm!

'Lens of Truth?'

'Uh-huh! He lifted the bizarrely fashioned magnifying glass.

'Nuts, sticks, seeds, potions?'

'Uhnnnn...uh-huh.' He frowned slightly. Something was starting to smell in one of his pockets.

'How's your sword looking?'

In a single fluid motion, he unsheathed the gold laced sword he had forged for him in Termina and swiped the golden blade against some dry grass. Though barely pressed, it cut through the grass cleanly. He nodded in satisfaction before sheathing it. It was no Master Sword but it would do.

'I know you have your ocarina…'

He pulled the small blue instrument from his pocket and played a single high note before putting it back. The Ocarina of Time was an enchanted magical artifact given to him by none other than Princess Zelda herself. It was immensely powerful and not to be used lightly. Well, that's what Navi always said anyway. Link suspected she was just trying to keep him from having too much fun.

'Your shield looks nice and polished.' Navi said, flying behind him to look at the Mirror Shield slung over his back, 'Very nice, very nice. What else…'

He was silent while Navi went through her checklist. He used to think these pre-dungeon checks were a waste of time, but as of late he found himself enjoying these little moments. They helped calm his nerves and got him focused on the fight ahead.

'Oh yes, what about your masks? Do you still have them all?'
He felt around in his pockets, roughly shifting around his stuff. He could feel his prized Bunny Hood Mask (which doubled his speed), his Stone Face Mask (which made him as inconspicuous as a stone to the unaware), his transformation masks (including his Deku, Zora, and Goron Masks) and his other, more circumstantial masks.

He gave her a thumbs-up.

'Great, great. Hey Link, remind me to get your clothes washed before we head out again. I don't want to have to-'

A distant whiny interrupted Navi's chiding and he turned and walked over to his brown and white horse Epona. Reaching out, he stroked the nervous mare's mane. While he calmed her, Navi hovered overhead.

'Don't worry about her, Link. She'll still be here once we're finished.'

'…'

He kept stroking Epona. As a rule, he never took her with him into dungeons. She would only get claustrophobic and scared in the no doubt dimly lit hallways. Instead he would leave her to roam around outside until he was done. He only had to play her song for her to return to him. He wasn't worried about anything catching Epona, he just didn't like to be separated from his friends for too long. On his last major adventure, he had lost both Epona and Navi. He wouldn't let that happen again.

Before long, Epona calmed and nuzzled him affectionately. With a final pat, Link turned back towards the tower. The leering gateway of the wizard's fortress beckoned.

'Alright, let's do this!' Navi said eagerly as he cracked his knuckles.

*One dark wizard tyrant coming right up!* He thought as he strode beneath the metal portcullis and towards the blood thirsty howling of distant monsters.

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After several hours of dungeon crawling, Link finally stood before the dark magician in his massive throne room. The room was semicircular, with a raised dais in the middle upon which sat the wizard on a black throne. Lining the walls, great wooden pillars were set beneath a shadowy black vaulted ceiling. Link could barely make out a narrow scaffolding near the top of each wooden pillar, no doubt a remnant of the room's construction. At the base of each pillar was a skull adorned brazier filled with glowing hot coals. As far as boss rooms go, it was pretty nice.

'So, hero, you have come at last to your doom.' thundered the wizard in a magically amplified voice as he stood to loom over the green clothed intruder.

Link rolled his eyes. In contrast to the room, he was unimpressed with the mage. In the many statues of the wizard in the conquered lands far below (about a league's worth of stairs and ladders by his estimate) the overlord appeared as a brooding and darkly handsome, tall figure. In person, however, he was a somewhat plain looking, stooped over man of average height. His receding hairline was streaked with grey and his beard was not quite as magnificent as depicted in his temples.
'I do not deny you have courage, young one. But what use is a fool's courage before my power?' said the wizard as he flourished his robes, revealing an ornately carved staff which ended in a blue jewel that pulsed with energy.

'This staff,' began the Wizard, stroking its jeweled tip with a bony finger, 'Was gifted to me by the dark God Garouga. Have you heard the legends? Let me enlighten you…'

While the wizard started to monologue, Link felt his eyes glaze over. It was at times like these that he became aware of how homesick he was. Though it was his solemn duty as the Hero of Time to protect those in need, he couldn't help but feel burnt out. After he defeated Majora in Termina, every adventure he went on had become increasingly cliché and honestly kind of boring. He missed Hyrule and his friends Zelda, Maron, and Saria. On this adventure he didn't meet a single noteworthy person. Nobody he would call a friend anyway. Truth be told, he was tired of wandering around.

'…after all, who could have imagined that a mere boy could challenge…' continued the wizard. That does it, He thought, dimly aware of the wizard's grandiose posing and dramatic gesturing, As soon as I'm finished with what's-his-face here I'm going back to the Kokiri Forest. I haven't seen my treehouse in ages. Then, I'm going to go fishing, chase a few Cuckoo's. Maybe try and track down Shiek-

'Hey! Listen!' Navi shouted and he snapped back to reality.

'-now die, Hero!' screeched the mage as a powerful arc of electricity jumped from the gemstone at the end of the staff.

Link rolled forward as the lightning bolt flew towards him. With a crackling hiss, the bolt flew harmlessly over his head before striking the floor he had just been standing on, obliterating the tile in a violent blue explosion. Springing up to his feet, he raised his shield while his back was showered with shattered masonry. Raising his sword, he charged forward while the mage muttered some incantation. Before he could close the distance, the jewel at the end of the wizard's staff suddenly shone crimson and several fireballs materialized from the light and shot out towards him.

Link altered his path, running to the side so the fireballs flew past him, exploding violently where he had stood just moments before. Before the wizard could ready another spell, he leapt forward with his sword. However, as he slashed into the wizard his blade met only black smoke.

'Kyaaa!?'

Landing nimbly, Link rolled and quickly scanned the room. Near a brazier on the opposite wall, he noticed a cloud of black smoke which coalesced into the form of the now cackling mage.

'Fool!' shouted the mage, "What use is a sword against my arcane powers?" he said in what Link assumed was his most oily, smug tone.

'Link! This guy can teleport. You need to stun him or hit him with a ranged attack first. Then follow up with a sword strike!' Navi shouted over his shoulder.

'Hep!'

Link deftly drew his boomerang and chucked it at the mage. The boomerang had barely left his hands before the mage teleported away in a puff of smoke to the rear of the room. Before he could catch and rethrow his boomerang the mage raised his staff which now shone blue again. He rolled forward without thinking, dodging the crackling lightning by the smallest of margins.
This exchange continued another three times before Link got the sense that the mage always teleported himself far enough away as to be able to dodge his boomerang and counter attack while he was preparing to catch his weapon. Finally, after being grazed by one of the wizard's fireballs, he swapped out his boomerang for his bow and readied his hookshot. He had a plan.

'Your weapons will not avail you, boy! I have you now.'

As the wizard prepared another spell Link suddenly launched upwards. His hookshot had buried itself in one of the pillars above. The wizard stood in disbelief as Link sailed through the air above him landing in the dark recesses of the ceiling above.

Running across the wooden support beams, he readied his bow and fired. The wizard, unable to see in the dim light, cried in surprise as an arrow suddenly struck. Instantly the wizard poofed away across the room and the arrow which had been lodged in his chest clattered to the ground. As he rematerialized, another arrow lodged itself into the shocked and off-balance mage who stumbled and fell. Unfortunately for the wizard, he had materialized too close to Link's perch. Seeing his chance, Link ran along the edge of the wooden support structure and dove down with his sword at the still recovering magician below.

This time his sword found purchase. Diving downwards, he swung his blade, cutting from the black robed mages right shoulder through to his left hip. Link grimaced as he felt his arm shudder as the blade cleaved through flesh and bone. However, before he could follow through with a second strike to finish the wizard off, the wounded man teleported away again. Link rapidly turned and readied himself. Across the room stood the wizard. What he saw caused him to stop and stare. The wizard's nearly bisected body was pulling itself back together before his very eyes!

'Heh. Is-is that all you can manage, hero?' croaked the wizard as he steadied his feet, leaning against his staff which glowed a deep violet, 'This staff and I are bonded. So long as it lasts, I am... immortal.' The wizard placed a particular emphasis on the word "immortal". It was one of the mage's favourite words after all.

'New plan, Link. Break the staff!'

Link nodded and drew his quickshot. Firing it into the rafters above, he flew up to the support beams. However, the mage was ready for him this time and threw a great number of fireballs across the room. Before he could sight an arrow on the wizard, the indiscriminate volley of fireballs exploded across the beams. Tongues of flame spread across the dried timbers rapidly, forcing him to drop back down to the floor.

With his bow still in hand, he fired an arrow at the Mage who predictably teleported across the room. He was ready for the wizard's trickery though and immediately fired a second arrow at a nearby brazier which the mage teleported next to. The arrow struck the great brass platter that held the burning coals and sent them flying. As they flew, the hot coals exploded, dousing the area in flame and sparks.

Now engulfed in flames himself, the shrieking wizard vainly tried to smother himself with his strange, smoke like robes. While the wizard was distracted Link sprang forward, his speed enhanced by his Bunny Hood Mask, and thrust his blade directly into the pulsing gem of the sorcerer's staff.

'Noooo!' howled the sorcerer as the gem cracked and shattered.

Centred around Link's sword, a bright light powered out from the gem as it cracked in twain. As the crystal broke, the stored magical energy of the staff was explosively released. Before they
could react, Link and Navi found themselves enveloped in a blinding white light as the staff was destroyed, sending the two hurtling through time and space once again.
Link felt himself tumbling downwards while his body was buffeted by a cold, wet wind. As he fell, he rubbed his eyes to try to clear his vision but he couldn't recognize his surroundings, or lack thereof. He was falling through a dense, cold fog not unlike the mists in the Lost Woods.

'Ahhhhhh!' he screamed, flipping head over heels as he fell. He continued screaming until he ran out of breath. He was getting seriously worried now. Just how tall was that tower? He groaned. Why me? Every time! Why can't a guy catch a break around here?! Where is Navi? Is she here with me at least?

Shivering in the cold winds, he looked around as best he could, but he was unable to see anything through the dense mist.

Oh no, I hope I didn't lose her and Epona again!

Abruptly he exited the freezing cold mist and saw, to his horror, that he was far, far above the ground. He felt a wave of nausea roll through his stomach and his breath got caught in his chest as he realized he had been falling through a cloud. Link was no stranger to heights, and he had done some cliff diving back in the day, but nothing he had done even came close to this height.

Now panicking, he began to hyperventilate but no oxygen seemed to reach his lungs. The air was too thin and he felt as though he was choking. Fading from consciousness, he continued to somersault down to his death.

Link gasped as he felt oxygen fill his lungs. He took a few deep breaths before he managed to open his eyes. He was shocked to see he was still in the sky though the ground looked much closer now than before.

Still falling! How is this possible? I'm done for, there is no way I can possibly- 

Suddenly he noticed a growing warmth in his left hand.

The Triforce! The warmth spread from his arm and throughout his body and Link closed his eyes and cleared his mind. Ignoring the wind and cold moisture soaking through his tunic, he instead focused on the calming power of the Triforce of Courage. After a moment he began to reassess his situation.

I've come too far to let a simple fall kill me. I need to get my bearings, control my descent somehow.

He reopened his eyes. Fortunately, his relaxed posture during his blackout had stabilized his fall and he was no longer tumbling head over heels. Now he was falling with his chest pointing downwards such that he would impact the ground with his stomach.

He grimaced as he imagined what a belly flop into the ground would look like from this altitude. Pushing those thoughts aside, he concentrated on the features of the land below. From what he
could tell, he was no longer in the blighted lands of the dark sorcerer. Instead, he saw rolling fields of yellow grass, trees, and neatly parceled farmland. Almost directly beneath him there was a small village with thatched roofs and dirt streets while to the west of the village he could see a massive castle built on the shoreline of a lake. Surrounding the castle grounds was a large forest that extended for miles in every direction. As he looked at the castle, a shimmer caught his eye. Falling through the sky, he could make out something brightly shining. It was too far away to make out or really be of any use to him in his current situation but whatever it was it looked like it was going to fall somewhere close by.

Whatever, that's not important right now. Thought Link, forcing his gaze back to the ground How can I survive this fall? If I hit the ground at this speed I'm toast.

He considered his options. A simple roll after landing wasn't going to cut it this time. At the speed he was falling, he was confident he was going to be splattered across the ground as soon as he landed.

I need to slow myself down somehow! Think Link, think!

He rapidly considered all the spells and items he had on him. In his current state, he sensed he had about half of his magical stamina remaining. He could cast the protective spell "Nayru's Love" but he knew that momentum was not canceled by the spell and he would impact with full force against the inside of the spell's barrier. Between hitting the ground or hitting a forcefield, he decided the ground was a marginally better option.

He was now getting close enough to the ground that he could make out increasingly fine details on the houses in the village. A red painted fence surrounding one house, an open window on another. He wondered if any of the villagers were watching him fall.

Maybe they'll even see me hit the ground!

He shook his head. He had to stay focused. As he tried to centre his thoughts, he suddenly noticed the awkward flopping of his bunny ears in his hair. He was still wearing his bunny ear mask that he put on during his battle with the dark magician!

My masks! He almost shouted aloud. Do I have anything, ANYTHING, that can help me survive a massive fall?

He quickly ran through a list of his masks in his mind. The majority of the masks that he carried were circumstantial to put it lightly. To be honest, most of them were useless. He only kept them to accessorize his tunic. However, he did have three particularly powerful masks that could help him. These three masks each allowed him to transform himself into a different creature. One would transform him into a Deku Scrub, a diminutive forest monster that was basically a small, walking shrub. The second would transform him into a Goron, a large rock like humanoid with very hard skin and great strength. The third mask would transform him into a Zora, a mostly aquatic amphibian that could breathe underwater. At one time, he had a fourth transformation mask, but fearing its power, he had it sealed away. The transformation masks seemed like his only option.

As a Deku scrub, I can slow myself down, at least a little. He thought frantically, I mean how much does a Deku scrub weigh, like 40 pounds? How much do I weigh?

He suddenly became painfully aware of his shadow, gradually inching across the landscape beneath him, like a little bullseye.

No more time! Here goes nothing.
He reached up and pulled his bunny ear mask off his head. As soon as it was loosened though it was immediately ripped out of his fingertips and was sent flitting away from him.

No matter.

Without hesitating, he grabbed his Deku mask from his pocket and slapped it on his face. Immediately, he felt the magic of the mask pour into his body as his form was changed into that of a squat Deku scrub. Though it lasted only a second, to him it felt like an eternity. Spreading his now branchlike arms, he could actually feel himself start to deaccelerate.

It's working! It's working! Link thought with a sort of reckless glee. Angling his bark covered body, he aimed with his feet at what was hopefully a thick, freshly rained upon, springy, sweet grass covered knoll. He remembered tumbling around grass in the fields of Hyrule and it was so soft you could easily sleep in it if you wanted to.

Uh...hmmm...it's working...I-I think? Yes?

As his vision filled with the oncoming earth and his shadow aligned with him, he found that he couldn't shake the thought of a log getting smashed into splinters. Funny that. With a mighty crack, he smacked into the earth.

Meanwhile in the sleepy village of Hogsmeade, a local man peered out his window towards his wilted garden. Once his pride and joy, the vegetable patch had become a pathetic sight if there ever was one. His tomatoes, normally over two feet tall and loaded with fruit, appeared stunted and shrivelled. A deepening scowl lined his weathered face as he regarded them.

'Oy! Marge? Marge!' he shouted over his shoulder, crooked eyes still squinting at his wilted shrubbery.

'Eeeeeee...' came the crones reply from the shadowy recesses of the house's filthy kitchen.

'Marge! Ou' shrivelled ol' hag, when's the rain comin'!?' bellowed the old man, spittle flying from his cracked lips.

'Read th' paper you'self you illiterate pig!' screeched a woman's voice from the kitchen.

'Ack!' replied the man spitting out the window, more phlegm than anything else. The ground was like concrete. Hard as anything he had ever felt. Nearly all summer the drought had persisted. The grass, normally lush at this time of year, had become like thin, sharp needles. Prickling bare skin if you happened to lay in it (as this particular man was wont to do).

Briefly the man considered composing his thoughts enough to make a metaphor comparing the state of his yard and garden to his long since failed marriage but decided against it. Such things were labours for the sober mind after all.

Instead, he turned and walked away from his window.
Upon hitting the ground Link bounced once, as high as a foot, before settling on the ground. What he had presumed to be lush grass surrounded by yellow flowers was actually a nettle bush surrounded by dead weeds.

*Well, at least something broke my fall.* Link thought as he groaned. Suddenly he perked up *Wait. I'm alive!*

'Ahah!' he shouted raising his wooden fist in triumph, the Triforce of Courage briefly shining. All he could feel at the moment was a crippling pain running through his legs, though to be feeling anything at all was a miracle. Bracing himself for what he might see, he took a deep breath and looked down. What he saw wasn't pretty. Both of his legs had been nearly shattered. Fractures and cracks ran up both of his bark covered legs up to his knobbly knees which were oozing a deep purple sap that he recognized as Deku blood.

*As bad as it looks, at least I'm still breathing.*

He leaned back into the nettle bush and exhaled. It could have been a lot worse.

*I'm sure if I start shouting the locals will come help me. I just need to make sure I take off this mask first, don't know if there are Deku scrubs here but I'd rather not risk-*

'Link!' shouted a voice above.

'Eyah?'

Looking up, he saw Navi diving towards him. 'Link! You're alive!' cried the fairy. 'Woooooh…' he managed in mock triumph. The horrible pain in his legs had momentarily distracted him from the debilitating pain in his lower back and thighs. He could feel it now though.

'Ooh, Link' started Navi softly as she flew over his legs slowly 'It looks pretty bad. Do you have any potion or milk left on you?'

He reached into his tunic and pulled out a broken bottle, the few drops of potion it still held spilling between his fingers. He shook his head, grimacing. He moved his hands up to his mask. It would be easier to deal with his injuries in his normal form.

'Wait, Link! Don't!'

'H-Huh?'

'Don't put your body through the strain of another transformation. In your current state, it might make things much worse.'

He gasped and leaned back, nodding his head. It was true. Besides, transforming was painful enough as it was and he didn't think he could handle any more pain.

'Alright, okay, okay.' started Navi steeling herself as she examined his mangled body, 'Look Link, you just wait here for a bit. I'll go get help. Try not to move.'

He nodded and closed his eyes as he tried to focus on his breathing.
'D-don't worry. We've both seen worse. I'll be back before you know it.'

At that Navi took off at full speed towards the village.

Navi raced towards the closest house she saw and started banging on the window.

'Help! Help!' she cried, 'I need help! A little boy is hurt in the fields and-

Suddenly, a hideous face leered out the window and Navi recoiled in spite of herself. The wispy haired wretch that appeared in front of her had more groves and pits in her face than the late Great Deku Tree. Still, now was not the time to be picky.

'Um, please ma'am please! A little boy in the fields has broken legs and needs help-

Without warning, the woman threw open the window and sprayed Navi in the face with a foul-smelling gas. Caught off guard she flew backwards, spitting and coughing as the spray covered her. The smell was worse than a Goron's armpit.

'Gah! What gives lady?' she said angrily.

'Piss off you' little fairy freak!' bellowed the woman, froth flying from her lips. In her hands she held what looked like a can of bug spray.

'W-what?' sputtered Navi, 'Didn't you hear me? I said there-

'And I said piss off!' screeched the old hag, raising the can menacingly.

Navi looked at the can askance. The bright blue and yellow can featured a winged creature with little x's for eyes above a brand that read: "Borty Gobknott's Pixie, Doxy and Fairy Repellant".

'Aaah? Aaah!' puffed the witch, gesturing with her can of anti-fairy spray in a challenging manner.

'What?! You- Ugh!' 

She didn't have time to waste arguing with some wretched crone, Link needed immediate assistance. Flying away from the old witch, she flew to the next house on the street. Spotting an open window on the second floor, she arced herself gracefully over their brown lawn and flew inside. Entering, she found herself in a small child's room that was littered with toys and paper drawings. In the centre of the room, a little girl lay on her stomach playing with some dolls. Navi doubted this little girl could help Link, but she could at least get her parents.

'Excuse me. Hey, little girl!' 

The girl dropped her dolls and whipped her head around in confusion.

'Up here!' 

The girl looked up and spotted Navi, her mouth dropping open in surprise.

'Little girl, quick get your mom or dad! A boy fell and he needs help!'
'Ooh, preeeetty.' said the girl as she reached up for Navi.

'Hey! Listen!' said Navi sharply with practiced ease. 'Go to your parents and tell them a boy is hurt!'

'Mooooom!' called out the tiny girl. Navi heard creaking footsteps in the hallway outside and the door opened revealing a young woman.

Navi sighed, *Finally, some progress.*

'What is it sweetieEEEEEK! Oh, shoo! Shoo!' screamed the woman upon spotting Navi. She rushed forward putting herself between Navi and her child, hands raised.

'Hey! Stop! What're you-' began Navi while dodging the woman who started slapping at the air.

'Shoo!' shrieked the woman 'David! David, come quick!'

Navi heard heavy footfalls pounding up the stairs and alarmed shouting. *What was wrong with these people?*

'I didn't do anything!' cried Navi, alarmed at the woman's violent hysterics.

At that moment a large, wild eyed and out of breath man burst into the room. Upon seeing Navi, he raised what looked like a thin wooden stick.

'Stand back, stand back! I'll get it.' he panted, pointing the branch at Navi while the woman ducked down clutching her child.

'Listen I need your-Eep!'

Navi dove as a beam of red light shot out of the stick, barely missing her.

'Hold still you little…' began the man, waving his wand.

Without another word, Navi sped out the window at full speed, zig zagging as she went before diving for cover behind a mailbox in front of a house across the street. Out of sight, she took this opportunity to recover, eyes fixed on the house she had just came from. Thankfully, there was no sign of any pursuit.

'What kind of psycho world is this?' she managed under her breath, gulping down air.

*If fairy repellent was anything like bug repellent I've probably been poisoned!* She thought as she darted from the house mailbox up to the chimney. *If this is how they react to a fairy, I doubt they'll heal up Link in his Deku form. Looks like it's up to me.*

She flew up above the street to get a better view of the village. It wasn't a large town by any means, but this hamlet was as dangerous as any city she had ever been to. The streets were mostly deserted, but there was the odd, robed individual walking about.

*Wizards! Fairy hating wizards with magic wands!*

She abruptly coughed and spat. Besides the smell, her skin was starting to itch from the greasy chemical residue of the fairy repellent. Suddenly aware of how exposed she was hovering in the middle of the air, she dove down and glided over the rooftops of the houses she passed by.

*I just need to find some potion or milk or something.* she thought as she scanned the buildings to
either side of her. *An empty kitchen or a market or...or...*

At that moment she noticed an eye-catching pink painted building with violent pink windows and curtains. Flying closer, she dove into the gutter of the rooftop of the building across the street. Poking her head over the lip of the gutter, she examined the green sign in front of the building.

Written in pink lettering the sign read: "Madam Puddifoot's Tea Shop"

'That'll do.' she said, coughing into the back of her hand.

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Inside the tea house, an aging, pudgy witch was seated on a small pink, plush stool by the entrance to her pantry, a small scroll in her hand. She tutted as she went over the receipt. Prices had gone up, and during these summer months, business in Hogsmeade was slow.

"Two boxes of tea sweets, cherry – 1 galleon, 11 sickles.

Two boxes of tea sweets, lemon – 1 galleon, 11 sickles.

Two boxes of tea sweets, strawberry – 1 galleon, 11 sickles.

One bottle Elmond and Sons Private Reserve Firewhisky – 3 galleon(s), 5 sickles, 1 knut.

TOTAL: 8 galleons, four sickles, one knut."

Madam Puddifoot scowled slightly. As she reviewed her purchases, she absently reached over into one of the boxes and grabbed a tea sweet. In previous years she had been able to at least haggle the deliveryman down a few sickles but this new boy seemed immune to her "legendary" charms. Madam Puddifoot bit into the biscuit, crumbs falling all over her robe.

At that moment the bell to her shop chimed.

'Ooh!' started the plump shop keep as she hopped off her perch, 'Just a minute deari-ACK!'

She hacked. Bending over, she gripped the side of the counter, her face turning a deep shade of violet as she started pounding her chest.

'Ju-just a minute.' she wheezed, eyes watering. After a few tense moments of gargling, croaking, and clawing at the air, she spat out the errant tea biscuit chunk that had lodged itself in her throat.

She burped loudly before covering her mouth with a handkerchief.

*Not in front of the customers! I have an image to maintain.*

After taking a moment to wipe her mouth and straighten her hair, she burst into the dining area, 'S-Sorry for the wait, darlings, I was just…'

She stopped midstep. Her "parlour of delights" was empty. Frowning, she took a quick peek behind a curtained off booth but it was unoccupied.

'Hmph! Not classy enough for you? Well eeexxcuuuuu-’ *Crash*
Whirling around in alarm, she looked back at her curtained off backroom. It sounded like something heavy had just fallen in her pantry. Straining her ears, she thought she heard a furtive scratching sound and the tinkling of glass. Gritting her teeth, she drew her wand. A few months ago, she had a massive stink worm infestation. The horrible pests were everywhere. In the tea leaves, the coffee grounds, even the upholstery. The resulting health department scandal had nearly ended her. This time she would nip the problem in the bud.

Wand held in front of her, she slowly moved forward. Brushing past the curtain as carefully as she could, she peered into the dim, pink shaded lighting of the pantry. To her dismay, she saw several boxes overturned, their contents spilled all over the floor while her ice box was left wide open.

'How did that-

Before she could say another word a large jar of tea leaves fell from a shelf above and crashed down on her head, knocking her out cold. As she collapsed to the floor, Navi, overburdened with a bottle of cream as big as she was, flew overhead.

Success! Thought Navi as she whizzed away. Just a little while longer, Link.

Darting over the bushes, Navi dove down to where Link lay crooked on the ground. It had taken her much longer than she had expected to get the heavy bottle across town. Hopefully she wasn't too late.

'Link! I'm back and I brought some milk for you.'

He slowly sat up. Navi could tell he was mortally wounded. As a native spirit of the forest, she knew when a woodland creature was in peril and Link looked like he was on death's door.

'Here, drink this' she urged, pushing the bottle up to his mouth. He inclined himself over to the bottle and started to gulp down the now warm liquid. As he drank, Navi turned to look at his legs. It was difficult to tell what effect the milk was having as he was covered in now hardened purple sap.

'Gwah!' Link exclaimed as he finished the bottle.

'So, how do you feel?' asked Navi anxiously.

In response, Link lifted off his mask, and in a burst of magical energy, transformed once more into his usual green clad self.

'Ta-daa!' he shouted, jumping up from the nettle bush, almost as good as new. His legs were bruised a deep purple and his tunic was covered in blood from his previous injuries but at least he wasn't in mortal danger.

'Great job, Link! You survived!' cheered Navi, before she took on a serious tone. 'I mean, I did all the work. You just laid there while I flew all over town, getting sprayed with poison and getting attacked by wizards-

Before she could continue, Link suddenly leaned over and hugged her against his cheek, before smiling at her. She hovered speechless for a moment before she got over herself.
'Geez, Link you great baboon, don't you know how much smaller I am than you? How about a little common courtesy?' she stopped upon seeing his wide grin, 'Anyway, you're welcome.' she finished, somewhat lamely. She couldn't feign irritation now. She was just relieved he was okay. Link still grinning turned to look back at the village.

'So…welcome to the new world, Link. It sucks.'
Man About Town

Several hours later, the sun had fallen and Link and Navi huddled together in their makeshift campsite just beyond the treeline of the forest near the village. Link had built a small fire and the two were seated opposite of each other nursing their wounds. Link sat on a small log and was busy pulling the nettles from his hair and clothes while Navi was perched on a barren tree branch scrubbing herself down with moss in a desperate attempt to rid herself of Borty Gobknott's war crime concoction.

'I think I know why we're here Link.' said Navi, as she tossed a tiny clump of contaminated moss into the fire, which briefly flashed purple as the moss ignited.

'Ech.' Link grumbled as he pulled another nettle from his hair.

'When you defeated what's-his-face the dark or whatever by destroying the crystal on his staff you inadvertently released a huge amount of magical energy.' she said in a matter of fact tone as she reached for another clump of moss. 'This resulted in a resonance cascade scenario that sent us across time and space to this world.'

'Gah!' he snarled, a tuft of hair in his hand.

'Hmmm, that was a big one.' observed Navi. He glared at her, rubbing the back of his head.

'Before we leave this god forsaken planet, we'll need to track down those crystal pieces before they fall into the wrong hands. Who knows how much damage one of these wizards could cause if they got their hands on that kind of...kind of...Ugh!...power.' Navi scowled as she started scrubbing her back particularly hard.

She gave the now damp moss a disgusted look before tossing it into the fire which flashed green this time. While Navi continued muttering to herself, Link just sat there, staring into the fire as he thought about his new quest.

So much for taking a break. At least no one has gotten their hands on a crystal piece yet. I hope anyway. Maybe if I hurry, I can get this all sorted out before anyone even knows their out there. I remember seeing some glittery thing falling with me. It had to have been one of the crystal shards.

Stirring, he clapped his hands together for attention and Navi looked up at him. Holding up his hand, he made a fist then pointed at the sky, then pointed at the village.

She nodded before resuming her decontamination. 'You saw a crystal chunk falling too? Yeah, I saw one fall somewhere in the area. Not sure exactly where though.'

'Hmm.' he said, rubbing his chin.

Maybe it fell in the forest? I hope it didn't land in the village.

'I think I saw the other piece fell into the lake by that giant castle.' said Navi in between bouts of scrubbing.

'Oh?' he exclaimed in surprise, pointing in the direction of the deepening woods.
'Yeah, but we should search the village just in case. The last thing we need is for some mouth breathing peasant to stumble across it and try to stick it on the end of his wand.'

He nodded and patted himself down. At last he was nettle free. Once Navi was cleaned up they could head into town. The sooner the better after all.

'Just wait until the Great Fairy hears about this.' grumbled Navi as she reached for another tuft of moss 'Borty Gobknott will wish he'd never been born. What kind of a world is so...unwelcoming?'

Link sighed in acknowledgment. Their arrival could have went a lot smoother. Apart from losing his prized Bunny Hood Mask when he fell, he also discovered that his sword was missing. Navi claimed she saw it get destroyed in the blast when the wizards staff exploded so it was probably beyond any attempt at repair. It was unfortunate he returned the Fairy Greatsword after his adventure in Termina. Maybe there was a blacksmith in town where he could get a new weapon. Not that any shop would be open at this hour but still.

_Navi said they attacked her on sight, so it's possible no one will want to deal with an outsider._

He grimaced as he shifted his weight. His back was killing him. He wouldn't be conquering any dungeons any time soon, that was for sure. Not until he had some more milk or found some potion first anyway.

'Okay, Link,' said Navi. He snapped back to reality and looked over at her, 'I think I'm as clean as I can get without a fairy fountain. Are you ready to go?' she asked.

'Ahep!' he replied, rising to his feet somewhat shakily.

'Okay, I've come up with a plan. Listen up.' she said, crossing her legs.

Link rolled his eyes. Navi had another one of her bright ideas no doubt. Still he nodded all the same before attempting some warm up stretches. Her plans usually involved some acrobatics.

'As you're unarmed, and in no condition to fight, we'll have to be stealthy.'

He tried to touch his toes, but almost immediately his back flared up like hot knives were plunging into his spine. Stopping, he leaned upright, wincing in pain. He had managed to reach just short of his knees. His hips felt like they were on backwards it hurt so bad. No fighting was fine with him, though he hoped he wouldn't have to crawl around too much.

'This village contains an unknown number of potentially hostile wizards so you'll have to be extra careful. Stick to the shadows and don't approach anyone. If you find yourself in a tough spot, put on the Stone Mask.'

He nodded and pulled out the oddly shaped, dark grey mask. The mask looked as though someone had taken a rock, drilled two eye holes into it, and roughly chiselled a line across it for a mouth. It was ugly, uncomfortable to wear, and difficult to see out of. However, the Stone Mask was, apart from the Bunny Hood, his most useful mask. Whoever wore it would appear to be as uninteresting as a stone on the ground. This granted the wearer practical invisibility, though the illusion could be dispelled by powerful magic, such as the Lens of Truth, or if he attacked someone. The only drawback was that he needed to maintain the enchantment with his own magical energy. Under normal circumstances this wouldn't be a big deal, but he had yet to find a single mana potion in this new world. Until he found a way to replenish his magical energy, he would have to ration his mana consumption.

'Due to the attitude of the locals towards fairies, I'll stay hidden in your hat.'
'Mmm.'

'Keep your eyes and ears open for any useful information, but remember we're here for the crystal shard. Anything else is secondary.'

He nodded in agreement.

'Well,' she said, flying up to face him, 'I think that's about it. Any questions?'

_Aren't you forgetting something, Navi?_ Thought Link as the softly glowing blue fairy looked thoughtfully towards the village. _Something that will give me an overwhelming advantage?_

'…'

'What?'

'…'

'No, what? What, what is it?' she asked exasperatedly, putting her hands on her hips.

He drew the Ocarina of Time from his pocket.

'Arggh, no Link!' she said, scowling in annoyance, 'You can't just mess around with the time stream whenever it's convenient! This isn't Termina.'

'Hmmph!' he said indignantly, still holding the Ocarina in one hand and putting his hand on his belt with the other. _What's that supposed to mean?_

Back during his adventures in Termina while he and Navi were separated, he was faced with a no-win scenario. A skull kid (a sort of lost spirit) had become possessed by Majora's Mask, a powerful, evil artifact. Using the skull kid as his vessel, Majora called down the moon from the sky to destroy the local kingdom, known as Clock Town, and the world. In an act of desperation, Link had used the Ocarina of Time to defeat Majora and prevent the moon from crashing by creating a persistent seventy-two-hour time loop. Inside this time loop, he had also repeatedly manipulated the passage of time with the Song of Inverted Time (which slowed time to one third of its usual pace for everyone but him and his companions) and the Song of Double Time (which doubled the pace of time for everyone, including himself). When Navi learned that he had abused the time stream to such an extent, he thought she was going to have a heart attack. Even though he explained to her that it was the only way to save the world she still argued with him claiming that he probably just used most of his "extra" time to goof off.

The use of these songs remained a sore spot between the two. Link would stubbornly maintain that he had yet to see any negative side effects while Navi would dismiss his argument by saying he was just a foolish boy who had been led astray by the trickster fairy Tatl who was a "bad influence".

_Desperate times call for desperate measures. I already almost died once today and if I'm going to infiltrate a wizard stronghold I'll need all the help I can get!_ Thought Link, staring back at Navi stubbornly.

'Don't you do it…' she growled threateningly as he put the blue ocarina to his lips.

Taking a deep breath, he placed his other hand over the fingering.

'Link…' she said ominously flying closer until she was level with his face.
A slight wind blew over the campsite causing the fire to flicker. Before she could say another word, he began to play the Song of Inverted Time.

'No!' she cried rushing forward to interrupt, but he pressed on. From the first note he played, the magical energy in the ocarina began to surge, causing Navi to hesitate. The energy continued to build before coming to a crescendo with the song's end. The notes he played seemed to echo throughout the forest and Link felt the familiar muted stillness that the Song of Inverted Time created.

For a moment neither of them moved as the magical energy poured out into the land. Putting away the ocarina, Link grinned at Navi.

See? What do you know, the world didn't end.

Navi didn't look pleased. Instead, a harsh glare formed on her face and Link felt his own smile die on his face. She took a huge breath and he braced himself.

'What did you do!?'

'Uh-' he started but before he could say another word Navi darted straight to him, her wings buzzing angrily.

'What-did-you-do?' she hissed furiously, punctuating each word with a poke to his forehead.

'Ahh!' cried Link, trying his best to shield himself from her.

'Why am I even here? You tell ME, Link. Why am I here?! Oh, that's right! I'm the guardian! And it's my job to keep you from doing stupid things! You're supposed to LISTEN to me!' Navi said, throwing her arms up in frustration.

To say that she was displeased was an understatement. In situations like these, he learned long ago that it was best to just keep his head down.

'Well okay, you know what? Fine! I guess we'd better get going, huh?' she said in a mocking tone, vibrating with anger. Link tight lipped, turned and kicked a heap of dirt over into the fire, smothering it. As he turned towards the village she flew into his hat like an angry bee and continued her rant into his ear.

'Gee, should I listen to my millennia old guardian spirit? Ooh, I don't know. I'm just a kid. A foolish, foolish, foolish, kid who didn't even know how to lace up his boots properly until she found me. But hey, who cares?'

This continued for the entire journey back to the village and by the time he arrived at the town outskirts he was practically begging for some of the unfriendly locals Navi described to interrupt. If only so she would shut up for five minutes.

Currently, the quaint little village of Hogsmeade was practically a ghost town. Looking around, you could easily assume that the village was almost abandoned but that was only true for the summer. During the school year, every weekend the streets became packed with stressed out students looking to spend their parent's money on snacks and distractions. It was a seasonal gold
rush that allowed the village to survive. However, come July the whole village began to hibernate as business slowed. During this period, time seemed to move at a snail's pace and just about the only thing for the locals to do was to drink and gossip at "The Three Broomsticks" pub.

These conversations were a dull affair. Usually they would discuss the news, so-and-so's wedding, or Quidditch in typical small-town fashion before repeating it all over again the next evening. Tonight though, the tavern was abuzz with animated discussion. The village crackpot Mrs. Cobbles had come in with another of her crazy stories. Apparently, she had been assaulted by a fairy of all things and as usual she seemed dead set on everyone hearing about it.

'It tried to fly into my kitchen!' said the red-faced witch to her small audience of gathered patrons, 'Tried to lure me outside it did, talking about going into the fields, pro'ly to slit me throat.' she said off handily before taking a swig from her flagon of wine. The more sober patrons tisked; shaking their heads, but the drunter ones listened with rapt interest.

'Wot you do then?' asked a ruddy faced man in amazement, leaning in closer.

'Well, I grabbed me poison and sprayed it in the face.' she said, sweeping her flagon dismissively causing wine to spill cross the table, 'And I told it to come back if it wants sum' more.' she finished, burping under her breath.

There were mutterings of disbelief and some snickering's from the gathered locals. The bar owner, Madam Rosmerta, who was busy wiping down a nearby table, shook her head and smiled to herself. They had all heard Mrs. Cobbles stories before. One night it was a conspiring oven mitt the next it would be a centaur eating her cabbages. Pure nonsense. However, before anyone could question her further someone behind the crowd spoke up.

'I believe it.' said a woman's voice. All those gathered turned to look at the woman in surprise.

'Oh, Claire? A fairy try to lure you out into the fields too? Leaving David so soon?' said one of the bar patrons brashly to scattered laughter.

The young woman shrugged unperturbed and continued, 'He saw it, too. Damn thing tried to take my little girl out with her near as we can tell.'

The laughing quieted. Everyone was paying attention now.

'Really? Your daughter was attacked?'

'Yeah. I was too.' said the woman pausing to take another sip of beer. She was starting to enjoy the attention. 'No one was hurt, mind you, but we still had to chase the little blighter away with our wands. If we hadn't got there when we had, who knows what might've happened?'

The inn broke out into murmuring as they considered this new information. Old Mrs. Cobbles was inventive to say the least, especially after she had been drinking, but Claire was hardworking, dependable, and most importantly not an alcoholic whack job. What if something actually was going on?

'Oh, and I was attacked too!' said a simpering voice from the bar counter. Everyone looked over. It was Miss Puddifoot, sipping on some firewhisky and looking nonchalant. The effect was ruined somewhat by the goose egg sized lump on her forehead.

'Wot? You were attacked? I thought you just banged your nob while boozin'?' yelled one of the drunter men in the crowd, much to the crowd's amusement.
Puddifoot shot him a venomous glare that could crack glass.

'No, I was not "boozin", you low mannered swine! I was attacked while stocking my pantry. Something dropped a jar on my head. Something that could fly.'

Everyone turned back to their respective tables and started murmuring again. Now that they thought about it, last week hadn't they heard some strange noises at night? What if those odd scratches on the window wasn't the cat? Slowly, the pub started buzzing with the sort of animated conversation that only some real juicy gossip could bring.

'Why-' started Puddifoot and the bar fell silent again. 'If some gentleman were to buy me another drink, I'd be happy to provide more details.' she said in a slightly sing-song tone.

There were a few exchanged glances between tables before they resumed talking amongst themselves.

'Humph.' pouted Puddifoot as she turned back to her drink, 'The people in this town! Can't even take a hint...'

Madam Rosmerta rolled her eyes before patting the tea shop owners arm. 'There, there dear. They don't know a good thing when they see it.'

Now suitably tantalized, the villagers of Hogsmeade began speculating in earnest. A talking fairy was ridiculous, but stranger things had happened. Maybe there was a secret Animagus on the loose? Or was something darker, and more sinister at work? More drinks were ordered and soon the theories about what was happening started to become more and more outlandish. Wandering wraiths, shapeshifting monsters, and evil outsiders were all loudly (and drunkenly considered). Indeed, the people in the tavern were so engrossed in their conversation that no one noticed the blonde-haired child whose face was pressed against the glass of the front window.

Link ducked beneath the window sill and crouch walked underneath it before continuing down the deserted street. He gasped in pain as he straightened himself.

*No more crouching.* He thought as he gently rubbed his lower back.

'Attacked? Honestly.' grumbled Navi from beneath his cap, 'All these people are deranged.'

Link rounded the corner of the "Three Broomsticks" at a brisk walking pace. Well, brisk for a normal child. Normally he ran everywhere he went, but his legs were becoming increasingly sore as the night wore on.

Upon seeing the tavern, he had hoped he could buy himself something to drink so he could heal some more, but he decided against it after seeing how crowded the place was. Not to mention the state of his clothes. When he had transformed from a Deku Scrub back into a Kokiri, the sap that had covered his legs and clothes transformed with him back into blood. Although he was no longer bleeding, he didn't think the people of this village would just let him order a drink and be on his way in his current state.

The pair walked past some more seemingly empty houses. Either the people inside were asleep or there was nobody home. He paused in front of a brightly painted building which read "Hogsmeade
'Hogsmeade,' read Navi aloud, poking out under his cap. 'How charming. Let's keep moving.'

Link looked over his shoulder as he continued down the street.

_The whole town is at the inn tonight._ He thought, glancing up at some of the darkened windows as he walked past. _At least that means I can walk down the streets undisturbed. It sure is creepier though. Hmmm...I wonder if any of these houses have any milk I could "borrow"?

'Hey! To your right.' whispered Navi in his ear.

He stopped and looked. All the way at the end of a narrow side street was an unattractive, lopsided wooden building. Its filthy windows visible only by a glowing yellow light from within. A faded sign hung on rusty hinges in front of the doorway, just barely illuminated enough by a flickering lantern to read "Hog’s Head Inn".

Link slunk into the side street and observed the building. Most of the structures in this village looked like they were in danger of collapse, with oddly shaped extensions and strangely thinning roofs. However, given the quality of this particular building's construction, he was surprised it could stand up to the summer night's breeze let alone its own weight. While not very large, it was quite tall. Appearing to be at least four stories in height, it almost looked as though someone had taken a shack and just kept building on top of it.

He had been in enough cities to know a dive bar when he saw one. This was the kind of place where people don't like to ask questions, which was perfect for him. Still though, these sorts of places had a universal reputation for being dangerous. Under normal circumstances he wouldn't be too worried about a little tussle, but without a sword and him being as injured as he was, things might get tricky. Still though, the opportunity to heal up was hard to pass by and as sorry a state as the building looked they probably carried potion or milk.

'Scout out the place, Link. If it look's empty enough, I say go for it.' Navi encouraged, 'You need to drink something.' she said more softly.

He nodded before creeping towards the lit-up window.

Peering inside, he had to squint to see through the dirt covered glass. From what he could tell the tavern was empty save for three people. There was a white bearded man behind the bar counter who was absent mindedly cleaning a glass while two robed figures sat huddled together at a table in the corner. The room looked quite small, but there was probably a few nooks and crannies here and there he could settle in to.

_All things considered, it doesn't look too bad. A bit dirty maybe, but who cares? As long as the potion is good, I'd be happy to drink in the street._

Satisfied, he moved away from the window and went for the rusted door handle.

'The Song of Inverted Time?' reminded Navi dryly.

'Ah!' he exclaimed, snapping his fingers. If he went inside without reverting the flow of time back to normal, he would be moving way too quickly. Limping around into the alleyway of the bar, he pulled out the Ocarina of Time and softly played the Song of Inverted Time again to return time to its normal flow. As he played the last note he could feel the sudden stillness in the air vanish.

Walking back to the warped wooden door of the inn, he took a deep breath and reached for the iron
handle. Pulling it open, he stepped inside.
Stepping over the threshold of the Hog’s Head Tavern door, Link found himself in the dingy, poorly lit dining area of the tavern. The two masked individuals seated at the far table he had seen through the window paused their conversation and stared at him from across the dining area.

'Hiya!' Link called cheerfully, waving and smiling at the two ruffians.

The two thugs glanced at each other in confusion for a moment before turning back to their hushed conversation. Perhaps huddled together more closely than before.

Ignoring them, Link approached the bar counter where the elderly barkeep was busy clinking some glasses together around some shelves. Putting his elbows up on the filthy counter, Link cupped his head in his hands and waited for the barkeep to finish organizing. Humming merrily to himself, he looked over the bar's selection. There seemed to be a great variety of potion types on sale!

After he finished going over the bottles, he slowly turned around and took in his surroundings. The room was dimly lit by a variety of light sources including a torch that produced a thick, choking black smoke, flickering candles nearly drowning in wax, and a couple of sputtering oil lanterns. The corners and ceiling of the room were covered in cobwebs and everything was exceptionally dirty. The only furniture consisted of a few rickety bar stools, the dented and scorched bar counter, and perhaps a dozen tables with a random number of chairs scattered around each one. The room was small but had a few secretive alcoves here and there for privacy (like most places of this sort typically do). The only decoration was a massive stuffed hog head adorning the wall. Link grinned at the sight of it. He didn't like hogs.

As he appreciated the scenery, a large rat suddenly darted out from beneath the shelves where the ancient barkeep was cleaning. Shouting in fury, the old man swirled, trying to stomp on the madly squeaking rodent. He must have missed as the rodent skirted around the counter past Link and towards a hole in the wall. Quick as lightning, it scurried into its home just before a bottle impacted outside of its lair, exploding into wet shards all over the floor.

Upon seeing that he missed his chance, the barkeep started swearing and whipping his rag on the counter, splattering it with yet more filth. Link tsked, shaking his head.

Better luck next time!

At the sound of him, the old man stopped raging and glowered over at the still smiling Link. Stomping over, the scowling barkeep planted himself directly across the counter from him and loomed over menacingly. However, Link wasn't intimidated. He'd had his run ins with unfriendly villagers over the years and was used to being an outcast. No doubt as soon as he found this guy's missing Cuccos or something, they'd be the best of friends. For now though, he really needed some red potion.

'Hiya.' Link said with a grin. Dropping his hand from his chin, he tapped the bar counter twice. The barman's lined expression slackened in confusion.

'What? You want a drink?' he rasped and Link nodded eagerly.

'Sorry, I don't serve bleedin' pumpkin juice. Now piss off, runt!' snarled the old man, waving his wet rag towards the door.
Link shook his head and pointed at a bottle of red potion on the wall.

'What? Firewhisky?' said the barkeep incredulously, 'A little gnome puke like you wants firewhisky?'

'Hep!' 

*For off the shelf potion in a place like this I'm not paying more than twenty rupees.* Link mused as he reached for his Giant Wallet.

'Real cute kid. Listen, this isn't a candy store. Now before I lose my temper, I suggest you turn arou-' Before he could say another word, Link plopped a large, shiny red jewel on the counter and looked at the man expectantly.

The old man stared at the gemstone, then back at Link who mimed drinking a bottle. Without warning, he moved from behind the counter and Link stepped back towards the door.

'Just stay cool, Link.' whispered Navi under his hat.

The barkeep's bloodshot eyes scanned Link carefully. His eyes travelled from the boy's strange green cap and messy blonde hair, to his bloodstained matching green tunic, down to his deeply bruised knees and shins. The what looked like ten or twelve-year-old appeared to be carrying a mirror slung over his back with an empty scabbard. At any other bar, he would be a freakshow, but in the Hog’s Head he was a pretty typical customer, bit on the young side though.

'You working for one of the Magical Ministries lap dogs? Eh? Come to take my bar license away?' he growled, eyes narrowing in suspicion.

Link shook his head earnestly.

The man carefully considered him. After a tense minute of silence, he slapped his rag over his shoulder and headed back behind the counter. As he passed the rupee, the barkeep quickly snatched the jewel and slipped it into his pocket before grabbing a bottle off the top shelf. Grunting, he slid it down to Link who swiped the bottle before it slid off the countertop. Link gave the barkeep an appreciative nod in return, but if the barkeep saw the gesture he ignored it as he presently returned to shifting through his bar glasses.

'Nice job, Link!' praised Navi quietly. 'Grab us a booth.'

Humming in acknowledgment, he headed for a secluded spot in the corner closest to the door. Stepping through some broken glass, he gingerly sat down on the booth's cushioned seat. It was unpleasantly moist and sticky.

*Well, it's not like my clothes can get any dirtier anyway.*

Link lifted the bottle and took a sip. The liquid burned his mouth slightly, but he was pleased to find that it did not have as acrid an aftertaste as most red potion.

*Now's not the time to be picky. Bottoms up!*

Tilting the bottle back, he started to drink the firewhisky in the Kokiri cultural tradition. Which is to say, all at once.

'How is it?' asked Navi as he finished downing the bottle.
'Guwaugh!' he replied in satisfaction, slapping the now empty bottle down on the table with a loud smack. Wiping the back of his mouth with his left hand, he felt his cheeks start to redden as he leaned back in the booth that he suddenly found much more comfortable than before.

'So how are your legs feeling?' she asked with concern.

'Iss-cha.' he slurred contentedly, bobbing his head. His legs felt better than ever. In fact, he could barely feel them at all.

'That's great Link!' Navi said happily, 'That will make finding the crystal piece so much easier! Before we leave this dump, we should stock up on red potion. Who knows when we'll be back, you know?'

'Hic!' he said, putting his head in his hands.

_That was some…mighty fine red…potion._

At that moment the door creaked open and two fancily dressed men stepped inside the inn. The first was a tall, handsome man with a hard face. He had striking blue eyes, platinum blonde hair and sleek, jet black robes. The second man was shorter and pudgier and upon entering the bar immediately glanced around, nervously wringing his cap in his hands. Clearly, he was out of his element.

'Lucius, what's so important that we had to come here of all places? My word, if I was even seen in a place like this-' he was abruptly silenced by a look from the tall blonde man, who then motioned to a booth in the far corner of the room opposite of Link and Navi.

As they walked past their booth, Navi got a good look at the duo. She could tell they were up to something, though in a bar like this she supposed everyone was. She would have just ignored them until she heard the pudgy man say:

'Come on then Lucius, what is it you've found? I-

At this the blonde man turned and hissed "Quiet!" before gesturing back at the booth.

Navi's ears pricked up.

'Link!' she whispered directly into the slouched over boy's ear, 'Link, those two are talking about some discovery! It might be the crystal! Hey, what's wrong with you?'

'Hic! Hmm? Oh…er, uh…' he started, rubbing his eyes. 'Ah! Hey!' said Link suddenly sitting upright, rubbing his ear angrily.

_No pinching!_

'Link, Listen! Those two guys in the corner booth are talking about something they found! We have to get in close. Use the Stone Mask!'

He started grumbling. Glancing over at the bar, he saw that the bartender was still hidden beneath the counter wrestling with his glassware and the two thuggish patrons at the table were still engrossed in their conversation. Nobody would notice if he were to disappear.

'Quickly, Link!'

With an annoyed sigh, he slipped on the Stone Mask and stood up from the table. Swaying slightly,
he peered down the row of booths. The two men had already seated themselves and were deep in conversation.

*Never a dull-*Hic*-moment.* Link thought as he started to amble down towards the conspiratorial pair.

Lucius Malfoy did not like to leave things to chance, but tonight he was left with no choice. His esteemed colleague and fellow Hogwarts school board governor Jacob Kent had to be brought in line. For the past decade, Lucius had been carefully laying plans to have Dumbledore removed as headmaster and his plan was finally nearing its fruition. The amount of sacrifices he had to make, the fortunes he had spent, and the years of manipulation were all coming to a head this year. Finally, Dumbledore would be discredited and Hogwarts could return to its pureblood roots.

However, in order to ensure that his plan succeeded, he had to secure the support of at least six of the other twelve members of the board of governors. This had proved the most difficult part of his plan by far. Following the First Wizarding War, the Malfoy family reputation was ruined. Only blackmail of the most highly placed officials in the Ministry of Magic had kept him out of Azkaban. From there he was forced to scrounge and grovel before the mewling public to regain enough credibility to be appointed as chairman of the board of governors. This was no mean feat as there were many families that were sympathetic to mudbloods or even had mudblood family members themselves attending Hogwarts and they remembered all too well the name Malfoy during the First Wizarding War. Although most respectable wizarding families had aligned with his stance on mudbloods and the proliferation of Muggle culture privately, not many would openly support his views. At least, not until now.

There had been a resurgence in pureblood values and ideals as of late, and he had been able to capitalize on it extensively. Now, with five of the requisite six members under his influence, he only needed one more board member and Dumbledore was as good as gone. Jacob Kent would be that sixth member. Convincing him might prove difficult however. He had never spoken privately with Mr. Kent before tonight. There was nothing to blackmail him with and a bribe was too risky. He would have to rely on good old-fashioned deception to achieve his goals.

The board of governors met only twice in the interim period between the school years. Once at the end of June and again in the last week of August. The current school year was just around the corner and this was his last chance to secure his support. After the meeting at Hogwarts, he had been able to convince Mr. Kent to accompany him to Hogsmeade for a private meeting under the pretext that he had some critical information to share with him concerning the future of Hogwarts. Though he seemed skeptical, Mr. Kent had at least agreed to accompany him to the Hog’s Head Inn and hear what he had to say.

The two men walked side by side down the dark, empty streets of Hogsmeade. A tense awkwardness hung in the air as they moved together in silence.

*This whole situation is quite odd.* Thought Jacob Kent as he walked alongside his stern-faced
companion No, mad is a more accurate way to put it. I'm an educator not a spy. Why does he insist on such secrecy? What information could he possibly have that he couldn't bring it before the board? He's the chairman, for God's sake!

The two continued on, past the inviting lights and sounds of laughter of the Three Broomsticks and towards the outskirts of town. Before long, Jacob found that he couldn't help but say something, if only to end their wordless marching.

'Lucius, are you quite sure you shouldn't present your information to the entire board? If it is as damaging as you say-' began Jacob.

'No.' said his foreboding companion immediately, 'This matter cannot be trusted with the board.'

'But what then? What could be beyond the board in regards to the running of Hogwarts?'

'There is a conspiracy.' Lucius said in a voice barely above a whisper. The tone sent a shiver of unease running down his spine.

'But-but-' he began before Lucius cut him off again.

'Not here. I will explain everything when we arrive at the Hog’s Head.'

The two continued to walk together in silence for a few moments before his nervousness once again got the better of him.

'So…do you often go to the Hog’s Head?'

'Not unless I can avoid it.' replied Lucius coolly.

'Ahh. Yes, it has uh, quite the reputation, eh?'

'Yes, but it is nothing if not discreet. We won't be disturbed there.' Lucius said without turning his head. He kept his pale eyes fixed on the dark street ahead.

'Back when I was in Hogwarts I chanced a visit once, but I…well.'

Jacob trailed off weakly. Truth be told, he didn't like to think about the one time he braved the doorway of the Hog’s Head. In his final year at Hogwarts, Jacob's then girlfriend had dared him to enter. Much to his own amazement, he did. His moment of glory only lasted a second however as he was promptly thrown out by an exceptionally angry group of Siberian Warlocks. He grimaced at the memory. He remembered how his girlfriend and her friends had laughed at him as he landed in the muddy street.

By the time Jacob had collected his thoughts, he suddenly found himself standing in front of the old, familiar doorway to the Hog’s Head Inn. Lucius looked at him expectantly.

'Oh, Er, after you.' Jacob said, smiling weakly and moving aside. Lucius nodded and entered, holding the door open for him. Taking a deep breath, he stepped into the dingy inn.

For a split second he had hoped that his memories had been coloured by age, but the Hog’s Head was every bit as horrible as he remembered it. Broken glass littered the floor and the only occupants besides themselves and the aging bartender, who seemed to be swearing at his cups near as he could tell, were two masked cutthroats at a table by the bar and a strange looking hooded individual in the shadows of one of the booths.
Jacob was starting to feel as though whatever Lucius's information was, it wasn't worth it.

'Lucius, what's so important that we had to come here, of all places? My word, if I was even seen in a place like this…' he began before the words died in his throat. The look that Lucius Malfoy gave him was positively bone chilling.

Without saying a word, Lucius gestured towards a booth on the opposite side of the "dining" area and started to lead the way forward. As they walked, he chanced a peek at the occupant of the closest booth.

He was shocked to see what appeared to be a blood covered child drooling over an empty bottle of firewhisky. It was too much. If he was ever connected to a place like the Hog’s Head his entire career could be in jeopardy. He had to get out of this hellhole.

'Come on then Lucius, what is it you've found? I-

'Quiet!' Lucius growled in a cold fury that shocked the soft-spoken man. Again, he gestured towards the booth.

After a moment's hesitation, Jacob followed. A cold sweat breaking out across his body. He should have never agreed to this insanity.

Arriving at the booth, Lucius took his seat and motioned for him to do the same. Tentatively, he sat in the spongy, vomit coloured cushion, wincing as he felt his rear suddenly get damp from whatever fluids the booth had held captive.

'So, go on then. What's so important?' he started anxiously, his cap a crumbled mess in his hands.

'In a moment.' said Lucius calmly who gazed over at the bar. Catching the eye of the foul-mouthed barkeep, the man slowly shuffled over.

'What?' barked the elderly man abruptly as he neared their table.

'A bottle of dragon barrel and spare us your glasses.' said Lucius, flicking some crud off the table.

The barkeep turned to Jacob expectantly, but Jacob just smiled weakly. Rolling his eyes, the elderly bartender walked over behind his counter and grabbed a dusty bottle. Returning, he plonked it on their table and rudely thrust out his hand for payment. Once Lucius had dropped a few coins into his hand, he returned to his counter and resumed muttering to himself.

'So what do we, er-' a momentary thrill of fear gripped him as Lucius suddenly drew his wand. Before he could do anything, Lucius gave it a wave and two fine snifters appeared on the table. Lucius passed him his glass and smiled.

'Relax Mr. Kent, you look like you could use a drink.' He suddenly exhaled a deep breath he hadn't realized he had been holding.

'Why, yes actually. Thank you.' He took the glass and downed it in one gulp. Pinching his nose, he sat back in his squelching chair. Dragon Barrel was strong stuff.

'I am sorry to have brought you to this…' Lucius looked over his surroundings with disdain '…place, but this is a matter of utmost importance. It concerns the safety of all the students at Hogwarts, and perhaps even beyond.'
Jacob gulped. His mouth was suddenly quite dry.

'You see, it has recently come to my attention that a powerful dark artifact has been discovered and that it is going to be smuggled into Hogwarts.' said Lucius nonchalantly.

Jacob balked. A dark artifact smuggled into Hogwarts? Surely there had to have been some mistake. Hogwarts was an unparalleled fortress protected by the most powerful wizards and witches in the country. Who would attempt something so foolhardy?

'Wh-What? How do you know this? Come on man, if you're serious then now's not the time to be cryptic!'

'Oh, the threat is real, I assure you. I've heard from some…old acquaintances of mine-' Jacob felt his blood run cold, '-that a terrible evil has been unearthed by an unknown group. I don't know who they are precisely, but I know that they have deep ties to Hogwarts and perhaps the Ministry as well.'

'B-but how?' The students safety at Hogwarts has always been paramount-'

*Hic!*

'Excuse you.' Lucius said before taking a sip from his own glass.

'Oh, thank you.' Jacob said, feeling rather puzzled at the interruption 'Uh, were was I?'

'Security.'

'Right. The teachers at Hogwarts are all well qualified. And with Dumbledore himself at the school…' he shook his head in disbelief, 'I just don't see how this matter couldn't be resolved with the boards co-operation.'

'I have evidence to suggest that some members of the board may also be involved' said Lucius evenly. Jacob's mouth dropped open in shock. He needed a drink. Quickly pouring himself more brandy, he took a large gulp while Lucius watched him silently, his own glass in hand. After some consideration, Jacob spoke again in a more reasoned tone.

'But to what end? How would a dark artifact even find its way into Hogwarts? Only students and staff can enter the castle.'

'Yes, that is true. I think that a student may attempt to smuggle the artifact in with them.'

'But why though? sputtered Jacob, taking another drink.

'Who can say?' shrugged Lucius, 'Practitioners of the dark arts seem to arise where we least expect it.'

'We should alert Dumbledore. He'll-'

'No.' interrupted Lucius, leaning forward slightly, 'Or rather, I fear it will do little good. I have repeatedly stated to the board that Dumbledore does not take his position as headmaster seriously enough.'

'Well…yes, but these are extenuating circumstances. If Dumbledore was made aware-' he began before Lucius interrupted him again.

'Do you honestly believe he will-' started Lucius
'-listen to my recommendation that the school be temporarily closed so we can investigate the issue?' finished Lucius looking at his opposite skeptically.

'Well, you're talking about shutting down the most prestigious school in the country for a year. There will be an uproar.'

'And what do you think will happen when parents find that their children were put in danger? Maybe even killed? Do you not think there will be an uproar then, hmmm?' said Lucius, taking another small sip of brandy.

Jacob sat silently for a while, thinking through what he had just been told. It was true, Dumbledore had repeatedly overruled safety complaints lodged by parents in the past and there had been several high-profile incidents. After the troll attack last year, the board was subjected to many complaints that were forced to go unaddressed, largely due to Dumbledore's influence on some board members.

'Dumbledore is not a member of the board of governors and yet he is able to dictate the policies at Hogwarts with little to no accountability.'

Jacob said nothing.

'He is a popular man.' admitted Lucius. 'And was a great wizard in his day. But, mark my words, his recklessness will cost the lives of students. And when that happens, you have to ask yourself on whose side do you want to be on?'

'It's too late to do anything. The school year starts in five days, Lucius.' said Jacob grimly, 'If you had evidence you should have brought it before the board earlier.'

'I have tried, on many occasions, I have tried. Haven't I been saying for years that Dumbledore's eccentricities placed the students in harm's way? We have all just been very lucky. But luck always runs out eventually.'

Lucius Malfoy shrugged slightly and took another sip of his drink.

'Hopefully, my information is inaccurate and nothing happens. But should the unthinkable occur, I need to know that I can trust you to do the right thing. For the students…and for your career.'

'And that is…?' asked Jacob wearily.

'If there is another incident at the school this year, I will be calling for the headmaster's removal. Dumbledore has many friends on the board of governors, but with your help he can be held accountable for his irresponsibility. If a vote to remove him is triggered…well I hope you consider what I have told you tonight.'

Jacob Kent nodded, brow furrowed in thought as Lucius stood up, dusting himself off.

'Good evening, Mr. Kent.' said Lucius bowing slightly before he turned and walked out of the Hog’s Head. A few moments later, Jacob had one last drink before grabbing his hat off the table and following suit.
Outside the pub, Link and Navi watched from the shadows of the alleyway as the pudgy wizard walked away from the Hog’s Head Inn. After moving a short distance out of town, he suddenly disappeared with a pop. Link shook his head at the sight.

*Pop and gone! Pretty…neat…* He thought numbly as he leaned back up against the building behind him.

'Well we found out what we needed to know.' said Navi,’How much mana do you have left?'

'Nya.' he said casually, showing about an inch's length with his finger and thumb.

'Not much…' she said thoughtfully as he turned and jogged further down the alleyway, hiccuping occasionally. Coming upon a loose flagstone he stumbled slightly, grazing the lid of a metal trash can and loudly tipping it over with a crash.

'Careful Link! You'll get us spotted.' she urged but he just nodded and kept running. Turning around the corner, he headed for a distant tree on the outskirts of the village. As he ran, Navi started to review.

'That blonde guy said that the "dark artifact", is going to be smuggled into the Hogwarts School, possibly by a student. Hmm…and only students can enter. Do you think he was talking about the crystal piece?'

Link groaned. He may have been unwittingly drunk, but he was sober enough to see where this was going. Facing the village, he sat down heavily by the base of a tree and crossed his legs. While he relaxed, Navi flew out of his hat and turned to face him.

'The school year starts in five days. We don't have much time if we're going to get you into that school.'

He leaned against the tree awkwardly. Pulling out a piece of grass from the parched earth and rolling it between his teeth, he hummed and looked out over Hogsmeade.

*Can't I just storm the place or something?*

'Link, you won't need to stay at Hogwarts long, a week tops.' said Navi gently and he winced.

*A whole week?!!*

'All we have to do is find the student with the artifact, grab it, and get out.'

Link hiccupped in response and tapped his foot against the ground. Navi hovered there for a moment and stared at him, eyes searching his. After a moment’s consideration, she suddenly let out a loud, sad sigh.

'You know...' she started slowly, 'I realize that you hate school Link, but is a little discomfort really so much to ask when the fate of the world is at stake? I mean, if you think about it, I'm the one taking all the risk. You haven't seen how these people react to fairies.' she said forlornly, 'I'll be lucky if I get out alive…'
He frowned. It was a tone he knew all to well, she usually reserved it for those occasions when he had to do something really embarrassing. He still had nightmares about the Goron Village.

'If you don't want to go to school for a few days, that's fine I guess. I mean, countless people might die, but I don't want to force you to do something that you're uncomfortable with. Though I wonder what Zelda would say if she found out that the Hero of Time-'

'Mmhmm.' he said, scowling at the fairy. Does she always have to bring up Zelda? Or Malon, or Saria, or Ruto, or…

'-bearer of the Triforce of Courage, was too scared-'

'Ugh!' he threw up his hands and stood over her, hands on his hips.

'Oh? Does that mean you'll go?' asked Navi in a tone of feigned hopefulness.

Growling angrily, he spat out the grass stalk and nodded.

'Great! It won't be too bad, you might even have fun-' he snorted, '-and it will be over before you know it. Besides, I'll be there to keep you company.' she said cheerfully.

Fantastic. He thought sourly.

'But,' continued Navi,'we're getting ahead of ourselves. First we need to get you admitted. The man back at the Hog's Head said that school begins in less than a week…Come on Link. We need to find out where Hogwarts is and I think I know where to start our search.'

He hiccupped loudly as she flew back under his cap

'Head back to main street.'

'Hic!

Navi sighed, 'Link, you always drink too fast. Here; try holding your breath for ten seconds, then exhale, then…'

The Hogsmeade post office had long since closed for the evening, but the two outworlders had need of its services regardless. The polished brass doorknob on the windowed door rattled slightly then nudged forward, pushing against the locked deadbolt before halting. At first nothing happened, then suddenly a hand punched through the glass.

Link grunted as he reached his hand up, feeling for the deadbolt. Meanwhile Navi, who was standing watch on his shoulder, was keeping a careful eye on the quiet street behind him.

'Still clear.' she murmured.

After a few seconds of struggling with the door, he at last found the deadbolt handle. Sliding it unlocked, he quickly pushed open the door and entered. He winced as the store bell chimed, before closing the door gently behind him. Navi followed through the new hole in the door and glanced around the place.
Alright let's look for clues.' she said, flying over to the message board, 'In a village called Hogsmeade, with a pub called the Hog’s Head, it stands to reason that a place called Hogwarts isn't too far away.' she muttered as she flew from listing to listing.

Link's eyes traveled over the paper filled wall. It was littered with moving posters of broomstick riding men and women, vacation brochures, and advertisements. He watched as one of the people in the picture rode a flying broom through a ring of fire.

Huh. The pictures here move? That's pretty neat actually.

Scanning from poster to poster, he soon spotted a familiar looking castle on a foldout brochure. Picking it off the board, he opened it and read:

"Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry welcomes alumni between July third and fourth for a special reunion luncheon. Join us as we return to our magical roots for a guided tour through the vaunted halls of Hogwarts! Revisit your old house dorms, classrooms, and the school grounds again and relive the magic!"

Flipping through the pages, he saw plenty of moving pictures showing smiling black robed students walking into and out of a massive dining room and various classrooms as well as a travel itinerary and a mailable application form.

He flipped back to the front page of the brochure and studied the castle.

This looks exactly like the castle I saw while I was falling!

'Hey!' Link whispered loudly to Navi, holding up the packet and waving it at her. She flew over, shushing him.

'Quietly, Link. Did you find something?' she asked as she bobbed in front of the brochure. He showed her the cover before opening up the multipage ad for her to read.

'Mmmm.' said Navi as she finished reading 'It looks like Hogwarts is the huge castle by that lake? Interesting. Must be a pretty big school then.'

He nodded while she looked through the glossy pictures on the brochure.

'Hey, good news Link. Some of the people in these pictures look around your age. You shouldn't have any problems passing as a student.'

Great. He thought glumly as he continued to hold open the brochure for her.

'Okay, turn it over.' she said quietly. He dutifully flipped the brochure around as she started reading the mail-in information. After a while he let out an impatient sigh.

Why does she care about this? It's just shipping information for their luncheon thing. We should just walk over to the castle and…

'A-hah!' whispered Navi excitedly. Darting up over his head and towards the main counter, she came to a halt at the mail slot boxes before looking back at him expectantly. He gave her a confused look. Sighing, she flew back to him and started to whisper in his ear:

'According to that pamphlet, any letters that originate outside of "Magical Britain" must go through Hogsmeade first before being forwarded to Hogwarts. So I bet you that Hogwarts has a post office box here for international mail,' explained Navi matter-of-factly. 'So what I'm thinking is: if we
find their box, maybe we can get our hands on some useful paperwork or information. Clever, huh?’ she added, grinning smugly before fluttering back to the boxes.

‘Huh.’ he said, scratching his head.

*I must have missed that part of the brochure…*

Hopping over the counter, he joined Navi before the mailboxes and started to read their labels. Annoyingly, they weren’t in alphabetical order.

As he read, he heard Navi mumbling aloud some of the names under her breath, ‘Puddifoots, Three Broomsticks, Dominic Maestro’s Music Shop…’

‘Oh?’ He perked up.

‘The music shop? Yeah, we can check it out between dungeons. Maybe after we clear Hogwarts.’ she said absently as she continued to read 'Honeydukes…okay here we go, Hogwarts school of Witchcraft and Wiz.' she frowned, the person writing on the title card had run out of room 'Wiz…ardry? Wizardry? Makes sense.'

He shrugged. In his mind a male witch was a warlock, but whatever. They probably chose "wizard" for alliteration. Gripping the handle of the box he gave it a sharp pull but it was locked.

*Ah! Of course.*

Reaching into his tunic, he grabbed his Postman's Hat. This hat gave the wearer the rather nebulous ability of being able to open any post office box. Navi giggled at the sight of him, but she quickly silenced herself when he shot her a dirty look. Empowered with his newfound ability, he gripped the post box handle and pulled. This time the small metal box magically unlocked itself and opened to reveal a large sheaf of papers crammed inside.

Swiping them, he laid the papers on the front counter. Most of them were incomprehensible to him, but Navi glanced at each one, telling him when she was finished so she could look at the next.

While shuffling the papers for her, he kept alert for any sounds from above. The last thing they needed was to get run out of town now that they were making such good progress. After a few minutes she stopped and lifted a paper.

'Check it out!' she whispered excitedly, 'This is exactly what we're looking for.'

He leaned over the counter to see what she was talking about.

The page appeared to be a foreign exchange student application for Hogwarts. The form listed the students name, age, year of birth, country of origin, and any previous education, magical or otherwise. He noticed that beneath this page, there were several other transfer student sheets in the pile.

'We need to find an empty form exactly like this one. If this post office handles international mail for Hogwarts they should have a few spares…’ explained Navi softly as she flew towards a series of document trays near the mailboxes. After a short search she waved him over.

'Here Link, come help me.' she said flicking at a sheet of neatly stacked paper in a tray that read: "Hogwarts outbound requisites".

He walked over and flipped through the pages for her while she examined the paperwork.
'Hmm.' she murmured reading over the forms in the tray, 'Wait stop. This looks like a shopping list for new students at Hogwarts. Let's take it with us, we'll need it.'

He grabbed the shopping list and stuffed it in his pocket. After a few more pages they found what they were searching for; a blank application form. Taking it, he took it back to the main counter. Spotting a feather tipped signatory pen in an inkwell for costumers, he grabbed the quill and turned his attention to the form.

'Alright, what do you want your name to be?' asked Navi quietly, as she landed on his shoulder.

He paused and thought it over.

Decisions, decisions...

Suddenly he grinned. He knew exactly what he wanted them to call him. However, just as he went to write in the name on the application he caught sight of Navi's guarded expression and stopped himself.

Nah, Navi would never let me call myself something so obscene...hmmm...Screw it, I'll just call myself Link.

He wrote his own name.

'Keeping it simple? That's probably for the best, nobody will know who you are anyway. Next write your age.'

He paused, rubbing his chin.

My age? That's actually a good question. How old am I?

As far as he could tell, before he left the Kokiri Forest for adventure, time barely moved at all. Navi always bragged about how old she was, but he had no clue as to his own age. Plus did the time he spent in a time loop count?

Wait. Am I not the reincarnated Hero of Time across all timelines? Maybe my age is infinite across all the separate time streams of the universe. Or maybe-

'Link, just write down eleven.' He turned to her and opened his mouth to argue before she cut him off. 'You look eleven, so write down eleven.' she whispered exasperatedly, running a hand through her hair.

He shrugged and turned back to the form. Now wasn't the time for an argument on the mechanics of time travel. Writing in eleven, he looked at the next question which asked year of birth. Glancing at the other eleven-year-old applicants, he took the month of July 23rd from one student and the year of 1981 from another of the eleven-year old's.

Under country of origin, he looked over at the vacation brochures on the wall. One in particular caught his eye. It featured a swarm of monsters clawing at a man who was asleep in a tree. The slogan read: "Chad, an unforgettable experience awaits you! Do you have the courage?"

I like the sound of that!

"Chad" he wrote. Finally, they came to previous education. Over the course of his adventures he actually had accumulated a fair bit of training, but most of it was informal tutoring and probably wouldn't be of much interest to a school.
I should only put down the most official sounding places. Let me think...

He wrote: "Kokiri Forest School graduate, Termina Swordsman's School (expert level), proficient musician."

Setting the quill back into the inkwell, he looked over the form. Satisfied, he glanced at Navi for approval and she gave him a thumbs up.

'Okay, now you just need to shuffle it in with the other applicants forms and we'll hope for the best.'

Grabbing the sheaf of papers, he slid them back in the "Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wiz" drawer as gently as he could. Closing it softly, he looked around the now messy office and frowned.

'They're definitely going to know we were here.' Navi said looking over at the broken window and biting her lip, 'That might be a problem…'

He nodded.

We should cover our tracks with a little bit of diversionary destruction.

He reached into his tunic and grinned as he retrieved a Bombchu. The mechanical mouse was about the size of a soccer ball, dark metallic blue, and had an oddly cute pointed face. To the casual observer it could have been a children’s toy though its true purpose was far more sinister. Packed inside its metal chassis was enough explosive to blow a villager’s hut to smithereens. Naturally a Bombchu was the last thing you'd want a child to have – especially a troublemaker like Link. However, all attempts to confiscate his explosive arsenal failed. He sure did love blowing stuff up.

Navi's eyes grew wide as she saw him reach for the wind-up lever. He looked at her and smiled mischievously.

She shook her head, 'You might ruin the application.'

His smile faltered and he looked at her pleadingly.

'Next time, I promise. But right now, we've got to go.' she said, gesturing towards the doorway.

Pouting, he put away the bomb. This adventure sucks.

As he ran out of Hogsmeade and back towards the shelter of the forest, he began thinking of all the instances that Navi had said: "I'll let you blow it up next time".

Tatl would have let me blow up the post office. He pouted as they passed the village outskirts.
Running through the fields surrounding Hogsmeade, Link and Navi continued on into the forest. Entering the tree cover, Link quickly found himself in familiar territory as he ran along the dusty animal trails, dried brooks, and other passages available to a skilled woodsman. He'd grown up in the forest and he couldn't help but feel a measure of relief as he ducked, jumped, and rolled beneath the twisting branches. However as he made his way deeper into the woods he started to feel uneasy. The drought was bad. Very bad. Normally trees could survive with little rainfall for a year or two, but here it almost looked like the water was being leeched away.

Deciding to take a moment to get his bearings, he spotted a massive oak that towered above the other trees. Sprinting up to it, he jumped and grabbed hold of its trunk. Scurrying up the knotted bark with practiced ease, he quickly scaled up to the top of the branches giving him a sweeping view of the surrounding forest. Removing his shield and empty scabbard, he tucked them into a fork of branches and settled back into a comfortable looking bough. Laying on his stomach, he rested his head against his arm and relaxed. The rough bark of the tree didn't bother him. In fact, it reminded him of his tree house back in the Kokiri Forest, although this place was hardly the green sanctuary that his homeland was. Looking out over the tree tops, he could see the tell-tale sign of drought everywhere. What few leaves he could see were curled and wilted and many trees were barren completely.

*Why can't I ever go someplace where the landscape is normal?*

Sighing, he rolled over onto his back and put his hands behind his head. If he played the Song of Storms he could help end the drought and save many of the trees, but for perhaps a third of them, including the tree he was lying on, it would be too late. At that moment, he spotted a blinking light too bright and fast to be a star, zoom across the night sky. For a brief moment, he just watched in amazement as it sped by. Once it disappeared from view however, his worries returned.

*Better to save some lives than none at all I guess. For all the difference that makes to everything that's already died. I swear, why can't I ever arrive BEFORE the calamity strikes? How come evil always gets a head start? It's not fair...*

His thoughts were interrupted as Navi flew across his face. Fluttering down, she landed on his chest by his shoulder.

'Sheesh, what a day.' she said tiredly. Kneeling, she started clearing a small space for herself. Sweeping the fabric of his tunic clear of dust and bark, she sat down cross legged and looked up at the night sky with him.

It was a moonless night (thankfully, otherwise his mirror shield would have shone like a spotlight) and the usual sounds of the forest were muted by a constant, warm dry wind. Neither he or Navi spoke for a while, instead they just looked out over the forest. As they lay there, the evening breeze picked up, blowing dust and dead leaves through the branches. Snatching one of the leaves from the air, Link absenty rubbed it between his fingers.

*Dry as a bone. Even if I bring rain back to this land, it won't be enough to save this forest. The crystal pieces are out there somewhere and wherever dark magic festers, corruption of the land follows. It happened in Hyrule and it will again happen here. If it hasn't started already...*
Turning the leaf over, the gleaming symbol of the Triforce of Courage on the back of his hand caught his eye. The Triforce of Courage was an artifact of immense power, granting him the ability to face any challenge, master any skill and defeat any monster no matter how powerful. But he could only defeat evil if he could root it out. At the end of the day, he needed to rely on his wits and dumb luck to thwart evil more than anything else.

_In the previous world, the power of the crystal was enough to enslave an entire kingdom! I have to act before it's too late. A shard might have fallen somewhere in this forest. I should be searching for it right now, not wasting time._

Stirring, he made to stand back up. However before he could rise, Navi spoke.

'When we were teleported into the sky I thought you were done for.'

He stopped and looked down at her in surprise. She was still looking up at the sky.

'I was above you while you were falling. Did you notice me chasing you?' she turned to face him. She was smiling, but he could tell from her eyes that she was sad for some reason.

He shook his head.

'Oh. I'm sorry I left you alone up there. It wasn't very guardian like of me.'

He squirmed uncomfortably. He didn't blame her. The thought had never even crossed his mind. Before he could say anything however, she spoke again.

'Transforming into a Deku Scrub was some good fast thinking, Link. I couldn't have come up with anything better myself!' she said with sudden cheer, giving him a playful punch on the cheek.

In response he rolled his shoulder, causing her to lose her balance slightly. She gave him a faux angry look before smiling again.

'Let's try not to lose perspective,' she encouraged, 'This world isn't like the realm of the dark sorcerer, we have time. You don't need to worry about everything at once.'

His gaze fell to the dully shining Triforce again.

'I know; While we're taking a break, why don't we take a peek at that Hogwarts supplies letter? If we're going shopping, you might need to go pot hunting.'

Fishing through his pockets, he found and unfurled the scroll and the two started reading over the list of items.

'New clothes? Yours are getting pretty worn. I mean, I love the look don't get me wrong, but some fresh, unstained clothes would do you wonders. Some spell books…Ooh, a wand? Strange, I can't imagine you with a wand over a sword…Hmmm a cauldron. I wonder if they can teach you how to make your own green potion?'

He perked up at that, being able to make his own potions would make his life so much easier.

'Wait.' she said sharply, 'What's this? "All first years have to be at platform nine and three quarters at Kings Cross Railway Station, London, England to board the Hogwarts Express which departs at 11 o'clock sharp for Hogsmeade…" Her frown deepened with every word. She reread the letter, her eyes darting back and forth across the paper quickly.
'Where is London? Ugh, it's just one goose chase after another it seems.'

He was silent as she fumed. Eventually she stopped her angry muttering and turned to him.

'Okay. As I see it, we have two choices. You can ask someone back in Hogsmeade for help getting to London, or we can walk along the train tracks at the Hogsmeade station until we find London ourselves. Which do you prefer?'

'Mmm…' he hummed, rubbing his chin.

Asking for help will be tricky. Not many people can understand me as well as Navi can. Not only that, but the people here all seem to hate fairies so I can't rely on her to do the talking. If I'm unable to explain myself succinctly, people might start asking questions that I can't answer. Such as "who are you?" and "where are your parents?".

He crooked his head and bit his lip.

On the other hand, walking to London along the railroad seems fool proof at first glance, but what if the track separates along the way? Or what if it takes me a week to get there? I need to have enough time to arrive in London, get my bearings, find Diagon Alley, do my shopping, then be back on board the train at 11 o'clock AM. If only I had Epona…

After a moments consideration he smacked his hand with his fist then he held up one finger.

'You want to try and ask for help?' asked Navi nervously.

He nodded firmly.

'The locals haven't proven to be very friendly, and I don't know how they'll respond to someone with your…condition.' she said delicately. Neither of them liked to bring up his muteness.

He shrugged and crossed his arms.

'Well, if all else fails we can still follow the train tracks as a back up plan. Okay, sounds good to me. At first light we'll head into town and start asking questions.' she cracked her knuckles and stretched out.

'Are you tired? Maybe you should get some sleep tonight, you had a rough day.'

He shook his head. Ever since he was sealed in slumber within the Sacred Realm back in Hyrule, he barely slept.

'Alright. Then how about we end this miserable drought?'

He grinned and stood before grabbing his gear. She had read his mind.

We'll need to go deeper into the forest. Much deeper.

Dumbledore strolled down the torchlit hallway towards his office, humming a merry tune as he went down the long stone passage. Soon the castle would be filled to bursting again and such peaceful moments would be hard to find. Which was honestly how he preferred it. There was
nothing he liked more than the constant whirlwind of activity and chaos that was teaching at Hogwarts. Even with his decades of experience at the castle, he was consistently impressed with the castle's ability to surprise him. Who knew what the coming year had in store?

As he passed by a staircase landing, the old wizard suddenly stopped, just in time to dodge the massive form of the castle groundskeeper Hagrid. The half giant was carrying an armful of stinking vegetables and looked particularly agitated. Dumbledore waited patiently for the man to look down and notice him.

'Oh, Professor! I was just on my way teh' se ya. How was yer' board meetin'?' Hagrid asked in his booming voice.

'Oh, it was simply dreadful.' Dumbledore said happily, 'I suspect that Lucius has finally managed to get enough support to have me sacked.'

Hagrid scowled.

'Dem's a bunch of fools.' said Hagrid darkly, accidentally dropping one of his cabbages which splattered across the floor, 'An' that Malfoy-'

Dumbledore hastily cleared his throat, 'But enough about my problems. To what do I owe the pleasure?'

'Oh, well I's wondering what you want to have done about the grounds this year. The whole garden's a wreck an' thorns is sproutin' up everywhere. It'll be a miracle if we can get the garden past just sproutin'.'

'I trust your judgment Hagrid, take whatever steps you feel is necessary.' said Dumbledore, smiling as he stepped out of the way of a small stream of cabbage sludge that was making its way towards his shoes.

'An what abou' the forest? More critters in ther' been actin' up lately. Wot with this heat'n all.'

'I'm afraid the weather is beyond my meagre power, Hagrid. We will just have to wait for the drought to end the same way as everyone else.'

'Ay. Well, 'Nite Professor.'

'Goodnight, Hagrid.'

Link and Navi carefully navigated around the twisting roots and low hanging branches of the thickening forest. Even without leaf cover it was dark and foreboding and the wind had become something sinister. Blowing through the trees, its captured leaves rattled the branches making an eerie rasping sound; almost like some sick creature breathing. The distant stars provided only the faintest light and if it weren't for his excellent eyesight he would have had to turn back. Thankfully Navi's glow was enough to navigate by, though it seemed to be attracting followers. He had spotted several pairs of curious eyes following them in the darkness, but he wasn't too worried. He still had his bow.

Most unsettling of all though was the spider webs. While navigating around a large thorn bush,
Navi had almost flown right into a giant silk web which stretched across dozens of trees. Trapped inside, he and Navi saw the tangled cocoons of birds and small animals. Under normal circumstances he would have burned the web immediately as he hated spiders with a passion, but he didn't dare. The whole forest was like a giant tinderbox and the last thing he wanted was to start a forest fire. From that moment on Navi was careful to stay close to him as they moved deeper and deeper.

Eventually the pair came upon the old growth of the forest. The spider webs were more numerous here and the trees were towering and massive, their limbs disappearing into the shadowy canopy above. Noticing a tree trunk at least ten feet in diameter, he whistled.

'It would be a shame to lose all this ancient forest growth because of a stupid drought. Hang on buddy, rain'll be here soon!'

Coming up on a great cracked birch tree, he halted and checked his surroundings.

'This seems like as good a spot as any.'

Reaching into his tunic, he pulled out his ocarina. Beside him, Navi shivered in spite of the oppressive heat.

'Hurry Link, there is some evil in this forest. I can sense it.'

Link licked his lips and cleared his throat. The Song of Storms would bring rain for as long as he played, and the more he put into his performance the more intense the storm. Given the state of the forest, he would have to put on quite a show. Thankfully playing songs on the Ocarina of Time did not consume any of his magical energy.

Closing his eyes, he put the instrument to his lips and started to play the catchy, looping tune. Nothing happened during the first chorus, but by the second he felt the air grow heavy and the wind became muggy. By the third, large raindrops started falling, leaving small dusty craters as they hit the parched earth and at the fourth loop, the storm was in full intensity and great torrents of rain started to fall, drenching him. Even Navi, who had taken refuge in the space between his shield and his back was getting soaked.

As he played, he could almost feel the waters soaking into the ground, bringing life back to the forest. Thunder began to punctuate his notes, becoming a grand percussion. Behind his closed eyes he could see the constant strob of lightning flashing between the trees.

'I don't think I've ever made a storm this big before!' Thought Link giddily as water started to pool around his feet. 'I hope there aren't too many lightning strikes!'

Suddenly he felt Navi tugging on his ear and he stopped playing and opened his eyes. The rain was falling so thick that it was like a black curtain of water. Massive booms of thunder rattled the trees which were groaning and shaking in the rising wind. Amongst it all, lightning blasts forking over the sky made the storm look like a rapidly flickering series of still images. So constant was the lightning that he could clearly see the muddy forest floor as rushing streams created gushing waterfalls to fill every indentation.

Navi was holding on to his hair as she shouted at him, but he couldn't hear her over the storm. To make matters worse, the ground beneath his feet had become almost like liquid, threatening to sweep him away. Rather than stand around in confusion, he raised his shield above his head and started marching towards higher ground. Navi darted from his hair to his right hand, taking refuge behind his shield braced arm.
Link kept marching, moving from tree to tree for support against the torrential downpour. His senses were almost completely overwhelmed as the strobing lightning coupled with the deafening sound of the rain against his shield made navigation a nightmare. Occasionally he would stumble as his boot found a cluster of roots, threatening to send him spilling into the sweeping currents which had risen up to his knees.

This is getting too dangerous. I need to get off the ground before I get buried in mud!

Looking ahead, he spotted a large boulder around which water rushed by. It was cradled by two, giant fallen trees seemingly bracing the rock against the floodwaters. Pulling out his hookshot with his left hand and gripping Navi as tightly as he dared with his right, he fired. The automatic spear shot out, its enchanted chain pulled taught as it flew. Burying itself deep in the ancient trunk of one of the bracing trees, the hookshot pulled him forward. He retracted the chain just as he collided with the tree, landing lightly on top of the rock. Looking down into his right-hand he saw Navi looking miserable, but uninjured. Sitting with his legs raised he placed her in his lap as he lifted his shield and hunched over, creating a sort of tent for himself and her.

The rain and thunder continued to pummel the forest for sometime. Occasionally the pair would see a dead tree fall over as the storm knocked it down or lightning would flash and in a blinding flare a far distant trunk would explode in a shower of sparks. After about an hour though the thunder and rain had calmed down enough for Navi to speak to him without screaming.

'Don't you think you overdid it a bit?' she shouted loudly as water continued to rush past the pair's rocky refuge.

He shook his head and gestured at the forest before he gave a thumb's up.

'I hope so Link. On the bright side, at least your clothes won't be so bloody now.' she said offhandedly as yet another tree was washed away in front of them.

At the very least the drought is over. Thought Link satisfied. This place needs as much water as it can get!

By morning the storm had finally ended. Large streams of storm runoff still flowed however, and the ground was covered in up to half a foot of water, but at least it had stopped raining. Navi had insisted they wait until morning, else he might fall into the floodwaters and drown. With the morning light to see by the two were finally able to leave their rocky perch.

'Let's go back to Hogsmeade.' said Navi ringing her hair, 'If it's still standing that is.'

Link nodded. Using the Hookshot, he moved from the boulder to a nearby tree branch. Flying over to it, he hugged the tree trunk as he surveyed the forest. From what he could see the whole forest floor was now a shallow pool of water.

I'd say the drought is officially over. He thought, grinning to himself.

Rather than wade through the water, he jumped and hooked his way across the forest canopy, traveling from tree to tree. It was slow going, but by late morning he and Navi had at last reached the edge of the woods near where he had first made camp outside Hogsmeade last evening.
Rubbing his arm gingerly, he returned the well used Hookshot to his inventory before he and Navi surveyed the storm battered village of Hogsmeade. As they looked over the village, Link couldn't help but notice that Navi seemed slightly disappointed. Was she upset the village was still standing? After a moment, she turned to him.

'Okay Link, this is it. You have to make a good impression. Are you ready?'

'Hep!' Navi worries too much. What's the worst that could happen? They're not going to attack a kid.

Nodding, she flew in front of him then spun around to face him, looking him over from head to toe.

'Hmm, turn.'

He obeyed, holding his arms out at his sides for her inspection.

Maybe my appearance won't be such a big deal. I was able to buy potion last night easily enough after all. I'm sure we're just overthinking things. He thought as Navi continued her appraisal.

'Those bloodstains didn't come out. I had thought that maybe in all the rain…Ah well, hopefully they'll think it's mud.' she tisked and shrugged, 'Alright, just keep it simple, flash your smile, and don't get discouraged if they can't follow what you're saying right away. These are uncultured, backward, country bumpkins after all. Onwards!'

Taking a deep breath, he steeled himself and started off towards Hogsmeade.

Navi worries too much. What's the worst that could happen? They're not going to attack a kid.
As Link entered Hogsmeade, he noticed that the village was a lot less spooky during the day than the night. It was really no different than any of the countless other villages he and Navi had passed through during their travels. The only thing out of the ordinary here, was that currently everyone was busying themselves over the storm damage. Everywhere he looked he could see repairs that were needed. Shingles and assorted debris that were torn from houses and shops littered the road and many buildings had broken windows. Consequently, there were more than a few forlorn looking people standing outside taking in the damage and fretting about this or that.

Oops! Hopefully no one was hurt. Link thought guilty as he saw a robed man shaking his head at his now destroyed fence.

'I'm sure it looks worse than it is.' whispered Navi dismissively, who had tucked herself inside his hat, 'After they pick up the trash and repaint their huts, you'd never be able to tell there was any damage in the first place.'

'Uhhh…' he started as he walked past a tree that had been blown over into the front of a house. From the looks of things, these wizards were going to need a lot more than some fresh paint.

'They're wizards. They can rebuild.' she said coldly.

Coming up on a street post sign that read "High Street", he started walking through what he assumed was downtown. All the shops looked particularly battered, and none of them seemed like they were open for business.

Looks like I won't be doing any of my school shopping here.

Recognizing the post office, he stopped and peered through the open door. He could see the owner inside milling over the scattered wet papers that were thrown all the floor. Occasionally he would wave his wand causing the papers to swirl around into various drawers while a broom automatically swept up broken glass into a waiting dust bin. To his relief, the metal mailboxes looked unharmed so it was unlikely his application was damaged. He briefly considered asking the postman for directions, but found that he didn't want to disturb the man.

It would feel weird to ask this guy for help after I broke in last night. Besides he looks busy. I'll ask someone else.

He kept walking. Coming up on the Three Broomsticks, he peeked through the window to the dining area. It was empty now, abandoned save for two people. One was a massive man as big as a Goron and the other was the pretty barkeep. The two were talking while she restocked her shelves with bottles that must have fallen during the storm. As he went past the open doorway, he distinctly heard the large man say '-head off to Diagon Alley, today.'

He halted. Stepping backward, he perked his ears and hastily ducked inside. However upon entering he quickly stopped and hesitated. There was no where for him to hide in the open space of the pub. All the tables and chairs had been pushed up along the wall to allow several enchanted mops and brooms access to the floor which were working on their own accord, swabbing the hardwood floor clean of glass and water. No matter where he went, he'd be noticed.

Stepping forward as softly as he could, he moved to the side out of the light of the doorway.
Standing awkwardly next to some portraits of reveling wizards slopping beer over each other, he eavesdropped on their conversation.

'You should have heard everyone last night! They were already all worked up in a frenzy - the usual nonsense you know -' the woman said casually as she rearranged a few bottles on the wall and the huge bearded man nodded, 'But when the winds started, it was a madhouse! I swear, it was like everyone had thought He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named himself had returned!' The barmaid giggled turning around to face him. As she turned, her eyes fell on Link for a moment before she conspicuously cleared her throat.

'But that's neither here nor there. What did Dumbledore have to say?' she asked as she tapped a broken stein with her wand, its pieces suddenly flying back together again.

'Er, well he' was at a loss himself. Earlier I asked him about conjurin' some rain an' he told me that it couldn' be done, not with any spell he knows. He figures it might have been black magic-' the giant stopped short as the woman shot him a look then gestured towards Link with her chin slightly.

Guess I'm too young to hear about black magic, huh? Link thought with a flicker of annoyance. He hated his kid form sometimes.

'Oh, well, Er, anyhow I'll be headin' off, Rose. If you don't mind.'

'Alright, take care of yourself then Hagrid. There should still be some Floo powder left in the pot.' she said, waving him off before turning and facing Link, 'Alright, dear? Did you need something?'

'Uh…' he stalled, running his hand through his hair. Out of the corner of his eye he watched as the large man moved over to the smouldering fireplace. 'Na.' he said shaking his head and giving the woman a grin.

'Well alright then, are you waiting for someone from the fireplace?' she asked, studying him more closely.

Am I what? Link thought in confusion before quickly nodding. He'd figure out what she meant later.

'Well, okay then. Try not to track mud in, if you please.' she said, frowning slightly.

The bar woman gave him another strange look before she turned and walked out of the bar and into a backroom. Once she had departed, Link fixed his eyes on the back of the large man who had moved over to the fireplace. He and Navi watched as the giant grabbed a handful of green powder from a small iron pot beside the mantelpiece. Next he tossed the powder into the flickering coals which suddenly roared into an emerald blaze. Crouching down, the giant squeezed himself into the fireplace, apparently unaffected by the flames.

'Diagon Alley!' he called out loudly before disappearing in a green flash leaving behind a stunned Link and Navi. Link's mind buzzed.

Is that how people in this world travel around? I haven't seen any horses or anything, so maybe they all just teleport. Would that work for me too, or do I need to know a spell? What if-

'Link, quick! Use that powder before that woman comes back! This is our chance.' hissed Navi.

Hesitating for a heartbeat, he ran forward across the room to the fireplace. Heart pounding, he scooped a handful of the green powder and threw it into the embers. The fireplace roared once
more with green flames and he tentatively stepped in. The green flames produced no heat and looking at his legs he saw no burning.

'Diagon Alley!' shouted Navi as loudly as she could.

The next thing Link knew he was stumbling forward. Without warning he suddenly found himself in a bustling city street thronged with people. Coughing, he looked around. The bar was nowhere in sight. Instead, surrounding him were robed men and women in various styles briskly walking about, peering through tall shop windows, exiting and entering large brick buildings, and talking with one another as they hurried about their business.

'Wow, this place is busier than Hyrule Market! But where-' suddenly Navi piped up in alarm, 'Heads up, Link!'

The fireplace he had just stepped out of suddenly roared to life and a man stepped out of the green flames. Jumping sideways, he barely avoided colliding with the man who strode out into the street. He shot Link an annoyed look before walking off into the crowds. Link looked after him in surprise while some passing bystanders snickered at his reaction before walking off themselves, leaving him behind.

_Ugh…It's like Hyrule all over again._ Thought Link sourly as he patted some ash off his tunic.

When he had first arrived in Hyrule City he had been quite the spectacle what with his fairy, sword, and green tunic. He quickly learned to just ignore the locals and stay focused on his business. When you went to as many worlds as he did, you soon got over being confused about unfamiliar customs. As he studied his surroundings, he saw a man wearing what looked to be giant turnip on his head boldly walk past.

At least my clothes don't stick out. Thought Link as he watched the man weave through the pedestrian traffic, dipping and bobbing his enormous headgear with practiced ease.

Walking forward, he soon found himself gawking at the busy market. Street vendors were hawking strange looking fried foods and multicoloured candied treats while passing salesmen and women in eye-catching robes carrying trays were advertising magical trinkets. Some of these artifacts they demonstrated; shooting flames or puffs of multicoloured smoke overhead. Beyond them, he passed by crowded shops and restaurants filled with exotically dressed people who were haggling over bizarre devices or talking while they feasted on strange meals. As the robed people marched along their way, occasionally an unusual bird would swoop down from above the haze of steam and smoke that hung like fog overhead to eat a fallen treat or peck at an especially fancy hat. It was wonderfully chaotic and he couldn't stop himself from grinning at everything he saw.

This seems like a great place to explore! I bet there's something new around every corner. Who knows what stories these people have or what problems they're having? It's like exploring Clock Town all over again.

Not wanting to waste any more time merely observing, he decided to experience the novelties on display firsthand. Selecting a food cart at random, he eagerly ran up to it. At the moment, the salesman was attempting to skewer a wriggling, green eel thing with a stick. Upon noticing him, the man withdrew his slime covered hand from the eel tank and smiled.
'Fancy a Squiggle? One sickle.'

Link paused for a moment.

Did he say a sickle?

Reaching into his wallet, he drew a single green rupee and tossed it to the man who immediately tossed it back.

'Galleons, sickles, and knuts only.' said the man curtly before turning back to his tentacles.

Undeterred, Link went to the next vendor. 'I don't deal in exchanges' puffed the man when Link tried to hand him a blue rupee for a walking horn. The next vendor said the same, and the next, and the next after.

Finally, after having tried a half dozen different vendors, he stepped back from the street merchants and scratched his head in confusion.

Everyone uses rupee's as currency! Everyone! What kind of backwater world is this?

He needed more information. Stopping beside a lamppost, he watched one of the food carts and waited. Before long a yellow robed man approached the vendor who was selling screaming donuts. 'One sickle.' chirped the salesman. The yellow robed man reached into his pocket and produced a silver coin. Taking the coin, the vendor handed him a paper wrapped pastry that started to beg for its sugary existence. Right up until the man bite into it anyway. Link could only look on in utter confusion.

They take silver? Come on, my rupees can't be totally worthless. That barkeeper back at the Hog's Head took my money!

'Link! Check it out – to your right.' whispered Navi.

He looked. At the centre of a busy courtyard was a huge, white marble building. Emblazoned above the pillared roof on a giant placard read: "Gringotts Wizarding Bank, established 1474."

'I bet you they can help us out over there. If anyone understands this place's currency, it's a bank. Besides, maybe you can exchange your rupees for some wizard coins.'

'Hmmm...' he said, scowling slightly. He didn't like banks. Back in the Kokiri forest he was forced to take out a loan from the "Mido Kokiri Financial Trust Group" so that he could put a down payment on his tree house. Little did he know that Mido's "bank" was little more than an aggressive loan interest firm and as a result of their fraudulent business practices, he ended up paying his house's worth several times over during a period of a few years before eventually having to take the matter to the Great Deku Court.

'Nah.' he said dismissively, making to walk away.

Navi exhaled in frustration, 'Look Link, it's your rupee's, but we need to get school supplies and if you want to buy any sentient cookies or whatever we're going to need wizard money.'

He sighed. Shaking his head, he started walking back towards the bank.

Those talking donuts did look pretty good.
Link walked up the marble steps of the bank towards the giant imposing front doors. Standing at attention outside the entrance to the bank was a small, odd-looking creature. It was about the size of a Kokiri and had large, pointed ears, long nimble looking fingers and large dark eyes. It was wearing a button-up red uniform with white gloves and a small cap though its human dress could not disguise its sharp, pointed teeth or cruel features. As Link approached the creature bowed. As he bowed in return, he noticed the creatures sharp glinting eye's flicker to his pointed ears before it straightened.

'Welcome to Gringott's.' it said in an unfriendly tone.

Saying nothing, he walked through the heavy doors and into a massive, vaulted marble foyer. The hall was a veritable hive of activity with dozens of desks being staffed by the strange uniformed humanoids who're busy attending to their human clients. The creatures were hard at work at various stalls going over receipts, counting out and measuring currency, typing up records and talking with patrons. The whole place bustled with efficiency.

*I guess these can't be Bokoblin. They'd never organize themselves so well.* Thought Link as he looked around.

Seeing a sign that read "Exchanges", he walked over and joined a small que of waiting wizards and witches. In front of him, a girl who looked around his age was excitedly talking to her parents about wizard currency exchange rates with something called "muggle currency".

'No, no, no its one galleon to seventeen sickles, not twenty. Its twenty-nine knuts to the sickle. Which is about five pounds, I think. When you open my account can you ask them-' the bushy haired girl droned on ceaselessly before the family moved on to a teller.

*I hope I only have to exchange my currency once.* He thought looking around at the bank suspiciously, *I don't want to have to carry a bunch of different gems and coins.*

After a short wait, another booth opened and he was waved over. Seated behind the tall counter of the booth was another of the strange creatures, barely visible above the wooden frame of its desk. Standing on his tiptoes, Link craned his neck to look up at the teller. The creature's tiny black eyes glittered behind his gold lined reading spectacles as he gazed down imperiously at Link.

'And how may we help you today?' said the teller bringing its sharp teeth together in an off-putting grin.

Link held up his nearly full Giant Wallet and gave it a shake causing his rupees inside to tingle softly. The sound caused the tellers eyes to light up eagerly.

'I see. If I may?' asked the teller reaching for the wallet, a hungry gleam in its eye.

Link hesitated for a moment before he nodded, tight lipped.

Taking the wallet out of his hands with the utmost care, the teller set up a small scale. Carefully it started to shake the wallet to coax out its contents. Its tiny eyes bulged as green, blue and red rupees suddenly started pouring out onto the scale. Yelping in excitement, it tilted the wallet back, clutching the leather pouch to its chest protectively. Link narrowed his eyes in suspicion and crossed his arms.

'Ahem. Forgive me young Master for my lack of professionalism. Perhaps it would be best if we had more privacy. If you would please follow me?'
Here we go. Thought Link warily as he followed the teller to a side room.

In the decidedly less ostentatious backroom of the wizard bank, his rupees were counted and weighed. It seemed he had 140 green, 28 blue, and 10 red rupees. After doing a series of calculations, the appraisers gave him a quote of 93 galleons per green, 148 galleons per blue, and 331 galleons per red based on their "cut" and "clarity". He tried haggling, but the bankers were adamant as to their prices. Just as he was about to take his rupee's back and walk away, Navi quietly threatened to set his hair on fire and he begrudgingly accepted their terms.

When asked as to whether he would like the amount deposited directly in his own savings account or placed in an investment fund, Link simply pointed back at his wallet. This caused quite an uproar, but his stubbornness prevailed and he was able to walk out of the managers office with all 20,474 of his galleons (albeit in appropriately mixed denominations of currency of course). Next thing he knew the manager was thanking him for his patronage before having security throw him out the door.

Finally, I can have some fun! Thought Link as he took off down the street with a sprint, laughing.

Ignoring Navi's alarmed whispers for composure, he immediately ran to the first shop that caught his eye. Heading into Florean Fortescue's Ice Cream Parlour, he bought the largest ice cream they had before running out into the street again.

Precariously perched treat in hand, he spun around in wonder at all the weird shops. The whole street was open to him now.

'Link…' groaned Navi, 'Remember why we came here.'

But he wasn't paying any attention. Choosing a direction at random, he started skipping down the flagstone path while merrily eating his ice cream.

I should keep my eye open for a blacksmith. Thought Link as he went past a store filled with screeching owls, Maybe they sell masks here too?

Stopping at a juncture, he read a sign that indicated "Knockturn Alley". He looked down the dark, crooked street. It was far less crowded than Diagon Alley and appeared to be much more interesting. The few people that were walking about were wearing shabby, torn robes, their faces hidden behind hoods or masks. No doubt this was a high crime area.

I bet this is where all the cool stuff is!

Turning in, he started to jog down the littered cobblestone path, gazing around at the strange stores and displays. The alley was much narrower than Diagon Alley making it slightly more difficult for him to dodge around people, but he managed just fine. At one point a hideous witch spotted him as he leisurely hopped over a puddle of filth and she tried to corner him.

'Are you lost little boy?' said the evil looking witch in a raspy voice, her long dirty fingers reaching for his tunic.

'Nah.' he said, easily side jumping past her.
She attempted to lunge for him, but Link was too quick. Ducking beneath her grasping hands, she missed and went hurtling into a broken lamp post causing it to make a satisfying "ding!" sound. Link couldn't help but laugh at her as she collapsed to the ground, her pointed hat now flattened. Evidently, the humor of the situation was lost on her and she started screeching curses after him, but he paid no heed. Trotting away, he started merrily humming to himself before a storefront his eye.

The sign outside read "Borgin and Burkes" and it appeared to be an artifact store of some sort. Mounted in the front window display was a number of wicked looking swords and axes. As he drooled over the weapons in the window, the shop door suddenly flew open and Link half glanced over before his eyes widened in surprise. Coming out of the store was no other than the blonde man from the Hog’s Head Inn! The man's eyes were drawn down the street towards the ugly witch who was still shouting expletives at Link and he luckily hadn't spotted him yet.

Thinking quickly, Link pulled on the Stone Mask just as the blonde man turned and looked at where he was standing. Stepping out into the street the tall, pale blonde was joined by what looked like his son who was roughly Link's age. Putting his arm around the equally pale and blonde boy's shoulders, he said 'Come, Draco.' and the two walked down the street past the old, shrieking hag.

Though the Stone Mask had only been on for a second, Link could already feel his magical stamina start to wane. Ducking into the store, he pulled off the mask as the door shut behind him. He exhaled in relief, laughing slightly at how fast his heart was beating.

*He probably wouldn't have recognized me, but still...that was a close one!*

'Good thinking, Link. We still don't know what that man was up to.' Navi whispered.

He took a moment to get his bearings as he looked around the cluttered shop. Although it appeared to be a typical curio store, he could sense dark magic coming from the objects in the room. Almost everything thrummed with some measure of power, but it was a particular axe hanging up above the window that caught his eye. It had a dark wooden handle about two and a half feet long that ended in a gleaming curved axe head. It looked quite formidable.

*I've never used an axe before...*

As he considered the weapon, a sallow man with oiled back hair appeared from a curtained off room behind the counter. His eyes narrowed at the sight of Link.

'Excuse me boy, are you perhaps lost or...?' began the man in a patronizing tone.

Link directed his attention towards the man and shook his head. The man raised his eyebrows curiously.

'Then what may I help you with?'

Link pointed at the axe in the window.

'Mm, The Axe of Gullinbursti.' said the man gazing over at the window display, 'A fine relic from a different age, though I most confess I doubt it would suit you.'

Link frowned and pointed at the axe again. The man's eyes flashed with anger and his false smile waned, but only for an instant.

'If you insist.' he said, smiling tersely again.
The man stepped around the counter and went to the display while Link waited by the register.  

*I'll need a good weapon if I'm going to go around adventuring in this place. Hopefully I have enough cash.*

The man returned and carefully placed the axe on the counter, gingerly stepping back as though it might cut him. His caution was lost on Link however, who immediately grabbed the axe and lifted it, turning it over in his hands. 'The Axe of Gullinbursti.' explained Navi in his ear 'Forged during Pegan times, ancient druids would use this axe to sacrifice animals to increase their power. Gross!'  

_Navi can be such a know-it-all sometimes._

The man started speaking unaware that Navi had already identified the axe for him.  

'A fine decoration. This axe was said to be used in blood rituals in ancient times. Though I wouldn't know anything about the specifics, of course.' simpered the man and Link rolled his eyes.  

_Uh-huh._

The axe was unbalanced, but had a good weight to it and it fit well in his hands. It felt appropriately heavy. Powerful. He was sure that it was a deadly weapon. After taking a few more practice swings, he grunted in approval.  

_I like it._

One of the blessings of the Triforce of Courage was that whatever weapon or tool that Link held in his hands he intuitively mastered, bestowing him with unparalleled versatility. True it wasn't as flashy as the Triforce of Power's unmatchable physical and magical might or the Triforce of Wisdom's insight and foresight, but using its power of mastery Link had fell demons and gods all the same.  

'Of course-' started the man stepping back from the counter as the axe sailed through the air in front of him '-such a rare historic piece has great value. Yes, great value. I wouldn't be prepared to part with it for anything less than say…' Link turned and faced the shopkeeper as he returned the axe to the counter. 'Seven hundred galleons.'  

'Hmmm…' Link said ponderously, carefully keeping his expression neutral.  

_What a bargain! That's a little over seven rupee's!_

Trying his best not to look too pleased, he nodded and took out his wallet. As he started placing gold on the counter top's scale, the man suddenly broke out into a wide grin.  

'Of course I also have many other fine items of value related to the druidic circles! Uh, pardon my assumption based on your attire, good sir. May I interest the young Master in a rare bloodstone that dates back to- ' Link shook his head as he continued to pile the coins on the scale. Finally, after piling a small mountain of gold on the platter the scales were leveled and Link hefted up the axe over his shoulder.  

'Are you sure I cannot interest you in anything else, sir?' said the shopkeeper, wringing his wet looking hands. Link shook his head, raising the axe slightly in farewell.  

'Very good, sir. Please come again.'

He nodded and walked past some old furniture and out into the street. As he exited, he saw that the
witch from earlier was waiting for him. However, upon seeing the axe in his hands she yelped and quickly scurried away into an alcove away from sight. Link merely shrugged and started trotting back towards Diagon Alley.

'Now can we please get some school shopping done?' pleaded Navi as he tucked the axe safely away in his tunic.

'Mmm!' he replied as he started to run.

As he neared the end of the alley, the door to the store he was just in opened and a disheveled looking boy with black hair and glasses stepped out into the street. The boy looked after Link intently, before following down the alleyway himself.

'Hold…still…my dear!' puffed the tailor, wrestling with her measuring tape as she tried in vain to get an accurate measurement.

Link tried to restrain himself - he really did- but it was no use. Every time the woman's fingers poked into his ribs he broke out laughing. Before long she threw up her hands in frustration and set the tape aside, 'We'll just have to hope for the best.' she said in a resigned tone.

Link, still giggling, followed the woman to the register.

'The adjustments will be finished in an hour, but you can pay now.'

After paying for his new robes as well as some of "Mrs. Skower's All-Purpose Magical Mess Remover" for his tunic, Navi and he exited the clothing store.

'Your school uniform hat is so much more spacious.' said Navi wistfully 'Maybe, we should stock up on hats-

'Ahhh!' said Link, intrigued.

Hats you say? Now we're talking!

'-after we get your textbooks.'

Crap.

As they approached the bookstore he let out a long moan. There was a massive crowd of people jostling each other inside with yet more people lining up and out the door to get in. Grumbling, he got in line while Navi tutted. 'Well Link maybe instead of buying candy and weapons we should have bought our school things first, hm? If we went here after we finished at the bank…'

As Navi droned on, a strange poster on the outside of the bookstore caught his eye. A blue-eyed man with wavy, blonde hair was smiling vapidly at the people in line. The poster read:

"Today only meet the world-renowned monster hunting wizard extraordinaire, Gilderoy Lockhart!"

He frowned and rolled his eyes.

Just my luck. I pick the one day when a celebrity is visiting...
As he waited, he heard a familiar voice squeal in delight behind him. Looking over his shoulder, he saw the bushy haired girl from the bank excitedly hop up and down next to her two, extremely unenthusiastic looking male friends. Bored out of his skull, he examined the three. The bushy haired girl looked like she was about to explode with enthusiasm and was standing on tip toe trying to look over the line. While she hopped she spoke to a grim faced, freckled boy with bright red hair who was looking at a nearby Gilderoy Lockhart poster like he was about to become violently ill. To her left nodding politely was a plain looking boy with messy black hair, broken glasses, and slightly dirty clothes (not that he could criticize anyone about stained clothes). After a moment the boy with the glasses looked forward and Link and his eyes met for a half second. Suddenly self conscious, Link shifted his weight and turned his gaze towards one of the Lockhart posters on the wall. The man in the poster winked at him and he winked back before facing forward again.

_How would Navi react if I played the song of Double Time I wonder?_

After what felt like an eternity, he was finally admitted inside and he was thrilled to note that the long line up was for meeting the celebrity author Gilderoy Lockhart, and not to buy books as he had assumed. Spotting a Hogwarts First Years aisle, he made a beeline for it. Dodging around the ravenous horde of middle-aged woman and dead faced photographers who were swarming around Lockhart, he darted into the aisle and breathed a sigh of relief. Some of those women looked downright savage.

As he selected his books, he suddenly heard a voice shout: 'It can't be...Harry Potter?!!' The whole store grew quiet and he whipped his head up as the celebrity author dragged the messy haired, bespectacled boy he had seen in line earlier forward. Pulling him in close, the two posed for an onslaught of pictures.

'Must be another celebrity.' said Navi in a bored voice before suddenly perking up. 'Link-while-everyone-is-distracted-rush-to-the-front-of-the-line-go-go-go!' As she chanted, he grabbed his remaining books and sprinted to the cashier.

Meanwhile Lockhart was still talking '…I will be taking up the post of Defence Against the Dark Arts teacher at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry!' he announced and the room burst in applause.

Thanks to the momentary distraction, Link was able to shave perhaps twenty minutes off of his que time. Looking back at Harry Potter, he was startled to see the tall blonde man and his son again! This time they were engaged in conversation with what looked to be a family of nearly identical looking freckled redheads who were surrounding Harry Potter. There were six of them in total, including a balding man, his big-haired wife, a girl Link's age, along with a slightly older boy, two teenage twins and a gangly, tall older teen with glasses.

He watched as the blonde man and the red-haired man, who he guessed was the father of the gingers, started talking. The pair were too far away for him to pick up what they were talking about amidst the clamour of the packed bookstore, but he could tell that they weren't on friendly terms. As they talked, the red-haired man grew steadily more and more flush in the face while the blonde man's smirk grew more pronounced.

The two exchanged words briefly before the blonde man reached into the red-haired girl's cauldron and pulled out a book and said something, smiling smugly. At that the redhead man lost his temper and tackled the blonde into a shelf filled with books, knocking it over. Immediately the store was flooded with shouts and cheers but the two combatants were quickly lost in the crowd. Hopping up in a vain attempt to see over the crowd, Link tried to see what was happening before he suddenly he heard a deep, booming voice yell for calm.
'What's happening? Is it over?' asked Navi eagerly, shifting around in his cap.

Link shrugged exasperatedly. He'd missed all the action.

'Well whatever. It doesn't concern us, let's just focus on finishing our shopping, shall we?'

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After he finished buying his books, Navi went over the list again. 'Okay, next up we need to get you a wand.' she said. Link nodded and after getting some directions from a passerby the pair found Ollivander's wand shop.

Immediately upon entering, Link found his eyes drawn to the massive columns of stacked boxes that stretched up to the tall dusty ceiling far above.

_I bet that there's something cool up there._ Link thought looking up at the distant ceiling, _I wonder if I can climb up these boxes?_

Approaching the counter, he rang the service bell.

'In a minute!' came an older man's voice from somewhere beyond the boxes. As he waited, Link drummed his fingers on the counter and kept looking around. To his surprise, the boxes at the bottom of the pile seemed to be flattened from the weight of those above, and, based on the dust, hadn't been touched in years.

_That's weird. How is he supposed to get those ones? Are all wands identical?_ 'Hmm...' Good! _This shouldn't take too long then._

Without warning an elderly man's head popped up behind one of the many piles of boxes almost startling him. The man was about twenty feet in the hair, perched on a ladder no doubt, and had untidy wispy white hair, small framed gold glasses, and a red vest over a poufy white shirt. Behind his glinting glasses his eyes were staring at Link's face with off putting intensity.

Link spared him a glance before looking back around at the shop.

_Great, another weirdo._

Since becoming the Hero of Time, Link had the misfortune of having frequent run-ins with eccentric merchants and cryptic wisemen. The best way to deal with them he had found was to simply not engage them in their insanity and just complete his business and walk away. Link carefully withdrew his left hand from the countertop and tucked it in his pocket.

_I don't want this guy to become all prophetic on me if he sees the Triforce. I just want a wand!_

Climbing down the unseen ladder, the old man slowly stepped closer to him. As he walked he was rubbing his hands together in apparent glee while he continued to examine Link's face. Link for his part was doing his best to ignore the man and was instead inspecting the fingernails on his right hand, humming softly. This continued for an uncomfortable minute before finally Link's patience ran out. Laying his hand on the counter, he turned to the geezer and smiled politely before pointing up at one of the wand boxes.

'Fascinating, fascinating.' muttered the man softly, looking at him as though he had never seen a
boy before. 'Oh, forgive me young man, its just that I haven't run into very many young people such as yourself. Tell me, if you don't mind my asking, what is your name?'

Link shook his head and pointed to the wand box again, his smile faltering somewhat.

*Take a hint grandpa! Just give me a wand already.*

The old man bowed slightly and smiled knowingly, 'I apologize if I've made you uncomfortable.' he said as he backed away towards his boxes, maintaining eye contact. 'Just an old habit of mine. As you might have guessed, my name is Ollivander. Garrick Ollivander. Still don't want to share with me yours?'

Link said nothing and merely looked away. Despite himself, he felt his cheeks get flush slightly in embarrassment.

'Shy are we?' Ollivander said, chuckling softly and Link gritted his teeth, 'Well no worries. So, you came for a wand? Let me see, let me see…' he rasped, wiggling his fingers as he slowly passed over the boxes.

As Ollivander began inching his way down the row, Link began tapping his foot impatiently. There were a couple more stores he wanted to check out and he didn't have time for this old man's theatrics. Besides, Ollivander was *creepy*.

'Here we are.' said the shopkeep as he pulled out a dusty box, 'Ash, 13 inches, dragon heartstring. Why don't you gave it a-

However before he could finish, Link quickly snatched the wand from his hand and swished it about randomly. As it waved through the air, he felt his magical energy wane again. He was almost completely out. He was distracted from worry however as a thick, rainbow coloured mist not unlike a small cloud appeared overhead. Without warning it began gently dropping multicoloured sparks down on Ollivander and Link, much to his Ollivander's shock and Link's delight.

*Feels nice.* He stuck out his tongue and caught some of the sparks. *Tastes like burning though.*

Ollivander's mouth gaped open as he watched the light show slowly dissipate. Link was less impressed. Pulling out his wallet, he gestured it at Ollivander expectantly.

'Incredible.' he breathed, staring at Link with renewed intensity.

*Oh, great. Here we go.* Link felt a headache coming on, *Let me guess, only the chosen one can make rainbows.*

'Incredible.' he breathed, staring at Link with renewed intensity.

'Ogh!' interrupted Link shaking his head. He was no longer smiling. Holding up his wallet, he pointed at the wand and arched his eyebrows meaningfully.

'My dear boy, I beg your pardon, but in all my years practicing my craft, to have such a reaction with the first wand-'

Link sighed and shook his head again jiggling his wallet in exasperation.

Ollivander looked at him silently, searching his face and Link stared back, his jaw set. Finally, Ollivander's shoulders slumped in defeat. Suddenly looking much older and tired than before, he
took off his glasses and rubbed his eyes. Putting his spectacles back on he regarded Link with a profoundly forlorn expression.

'That wand will be six galleons, 11 sickles, and twenty knuts.' said Ollivander sadly. Counting out the money, Link promptly laid the coins on the counter and walked out the store without a backward glance. Stepping into the street, he was glad to be back in the crowds.

*There's always one…*

'That was pretty harsh, Link. But, if you give them an inch they take a mile.' whispered Navi and he nodded in agreement. As they joined the pedestrians walking past, she consulted their list from within his tunic, 'Okay, next up I think we should go pick up some toiletries. Soap, shampoo, that sort of thing. We need you smelling like you're civilized for school.'

'Huh?' said Link in shock, his face turning red.

'You don't smell *terrible* Link, but you do live on the wild side and I'm going to be in your clothes and hair while we're at Hogwarts. Plus, you want to fit in with the other kids don't you?' said Navi diplomatically.

Tucking his nose beneath his collar, he sniffed. *I don't smell anything!*

'Besides, I was thinking we could pick up something to hide the mark of the Triforce. It's unlikely anybody will recognize it in this world, but its better to be on the safe side. Who knows how many more old, weird men we'll meet, eh?' she added.

*I guess that makes sense. I don't want anybody thinking they can take it from me.*

Swallowing his pride, he ran towards a store with a giant pink sign that read: "Madam Primpernelle's Beautifying Potions".

'Let me pick out the shampoo, Link. After all, I'm going to be the one smelling it most of the time.' reasoned Navi.

Link sighed dejectedly as he entered the store. Shoulders slumped, he moved towards the hair care aisle.
In the aftermath of Link's conjured storm, many of the local streams that fed into the nearby lake had swollen with rain water. These tiny streams, normally no larger than a foot across and a hand's width deep, had been transformed from the storm into rushing torrents, sweeping the forest floor clean. On their way downstream they transported all sorts of detritus, but mostly dead wood and soil to be deposited in the lake and accompanying shore. Further uphill in the highlands proper, these streams were much cleaner.

And so, it was in the highlands that Link had decided to set up camp.

Link dove into the cold stream, touching its pebbly bottom before swimming back up. Taking a deep breath as he breached the surface, he swam against the current to the rock where he had stashed the extra strength shampoo potion. Squirting a liberal amount of the purple goo into his hair, he lathered then dove again. Surfacing further downstream.

'Don't forget to wash behind your ears!' Navi shouted from the shore as she turned the page on his potions textbook. While he bathed, she was at their make-shift campsite by the stream bank researching the various potions that the book had to offer. Beside her, a small cast iron cauldron was suspended over a steadily burning flame. The simmering cauldron was filled with an ugly brown mixture. Occasionally, a large bubble would float to the surface and pop, releasing a smell similar to burning metal.

Looking over the instructions to the invigoration potion one last time, she nodded her head.

'Okay, it's ready!' she called out.

Clambering back to shore, Link shook himself as dry as he could before joining Navi who was waiting with her fingers crossed by the cauldron. Grabbing the ladle, he poured some of the thick sludge in a bottle. Navi looked on expectantly as he took a breath, raised the potion in a toast, then chugged it down. She was silent as his face scrunched up at the taste. Wincing, he swallowed the foul concoction before he spat and wiped his mouth. Looking at Navi, he shook his head and her face fell in disappointment.

'Nothing?' she asked. Link nodded, running his tongue over his now gritty teeth.

She flew back to the book, flipping through the chapter. 'I followed the recipe exactly, it looked perfect…' her eye's darted over the directions. 'How do people in this world recover their magic?'

That was the question they had both been desperately trying to answer ever since they returned from Diagon Alley. In less than two days school was set to start and Link had practically zero magic energy left.

Normally to recover his magic power, Link would have to find a mana flask somewhere, drink either a green or blue potion, or find a Great Fairy. When he had first returned from his shopping two days ago, he had spent half a day going through Hogsmeade with a fine tooth comb, breaking into every house he could and smashing every pot he had come across. However, despite his best efforts, with the exception of cookies and flowers the pots were completely empty.

Not even a single rupee. I doubt I'll be admitted into Hogwarts unless I can demonstrate some magical ability. Thought Link as he absently grabbed a pebble and threw it towards the water.
The stone skipped only twice before sinking into the turbulent stream.

With mana flasks out, Navi had suggested they crack open his potions textbook and try to brew their own green potion. However, after nearly a day and a half of constant experimentation all they had accomplished was burning through his potion supplies. If they used any more, they wouldn't have enough for classes.

'Link.' he turned as Navi joined him at the stream bank, 'That was the last recipe we had that I thought might be a suitable substitute for a green potion. W-We should try looking for a Fairy Fountain. Maybe in the forest?'

Link nodded uneasily. If a fairy fountain existed in these hills, they had no idea where it could be. In other worlds after he played the Song of Storms, fairies could be found flying over the land. However, after he ended the drought in the forest, neither of them had seen any sign of fairies. Navi was unsurprised that they were hiding seeing as how fairies were treated so poorly in this world, but still. Link was on almost uncomfortably good terms with the Great Fairies and they had always reached out to him in the past. Where were they now?

*Just stumbling across a fairy fountain will be like finding a needle in a hay stack, but what other choice is there?*

After cleaning up the camp some, he and Navi followed the stream until they came upon the forest. The forest had flooded considerably since he had played the Song of Storms. Large sections were still draining into the distant lake and those areas that couldn't drain had become tepid ponds which would soon be swarming with insects. For now, he was grateful that he only had to worry about getting his feet wet.

Moving slowly and carefully, the pair entered the forest, eyes peeled for any sort of glow or light that might signify a passing fairy. As the woods started to get thicker, Link was pleased to see that many of the trees had survived the storm.

*At the very least we're scouting out the area.* Thought Link as clambered over some roots. *Maybe if we find-

His thoughts were interrupted however as he came upon a track of fresh hoof prints in the mud. Navi flew overhead watchfully as he knelt down to examine them. There were perhaps a dozen individual tracks and they headed off towards higher ground, away from the center of the forest. It was a strange looking print. Almost like a Lynel, but smaller. He looked in the direction the tracks led and shivered.

*A dozen Lynels all travelling together! We'll have to be more careful.* He didn't favour his chances against so many powerful enemies at once. Especially without magic.

They moved more cautiously from then on. The Lynels seemed to be headed to higher ground so he kept moving lower, and deeper, straight into the heart of the forest. Eventually they came upon the webbed trees they had seen a few nights ago. The storm had tangled some of the larger webs, matting the branches in thick gobs of silk. It almost looked like the trees themselves were being cocooned. He scowled at the thought. Although the storm had knocked down a few webs, there were many freshly spun strands as well. Navi flew closer to him as he proceeded past a tangled oak, axe in hand.

As he moved under a fallen log, he heard a faint clicking sound from above. Looking up, he saw a huge spider the size of his chest rubbing its mandibles together. It was black, with loose patches of bristling hair across its abdomen and legs. Its glittering eyes seemed to catch the dim light in the
shadow filled branches as it looked on hungrily. Setting down his axe, Link slowly drew his
slingshot. Unmoving, the spider continued to watch him malevolently. Sighting his target, he fired
a stone at the spider hitting it right in its mass of eyes. Shuddering at the blow, it fell from the
canopy and hit the muddy ground with a loud plop.

'Good shot.' Navi complimented softly as he leaned over to examine the corpse.

Even in death the spider's legs twitched and its fangs leaked venom. It was a lethal predator, but
Link doubted it was capable of creating the mass of webs that he had seen in some of the trees. He
thought back to the animal corpses he had seen in the forest a few nights ago. Such large game
would not have been taken by a spider of such small size.

There are bigger ones out here. I'll need to be careful.

Keeping a watchful eye on the branches above, he and Navi pressed on silently through the spider's
territory. The minutes passed. Occasionally they would hear more clicking, though the source
remained unseen. Parting into a small clearing, Link froze. In the far distance he saw what
appeared to be a pale light shining through the gloom of the forest.

'That doesn't look like fairy light to me, Link…' said Navi cautiously.

He agreed. Fairy light was warm and comforting, a thing of beauty. The light ahead looked cold,
and menacing. It seemed to make the shadows in the forest deeper, darker. Suddenly he felt the
back of his left-hand start to grow warmer.

The Triforce!

Reaeldig his axe, he planted his feet and carefully watched the trees surrounding the clearing.
There was something nearby, he was sure of it. He didn't have to wait long as from the corner of
his eye he spotted a long, hairy limb slowly emerging from around a thick tree trunk. Shifting
himself to face the creature, he watched with mounting disgust as the rest of the spider's body
followed. This one was much larger than the spider from before. Standing at about the size of
Epona, the giant arachnid excitedly clicked its elbow length fangs together as it crept towards him.

With deadly grace it slowly approached before suddenly lunging. Arching its massive body
upward, the monstrous spider splayed out its eight legs wide in an attempt to land on top of him.
He rolled to the side, just barely missing its reaching limbs. Before he could counter, the spider
instantly recovered from its attack, and skittered around to face him once more. Raising its front
legs, it pressed forward and made to strike. He swung his axe, but the spider easily dodged,
knocking him aside with one if it's legs. Hissing, it darted forward to capitalize on its attack. Link,
still recovering from the blow, raised his shield as the spider rushed towards him. Just before it
could reach him, he blocked the spider's bite, its fangs reaching around the lip of the metal rim
towards his arm. Link was much stronger than a normal boy, but the spider was able to leverage its
body weight and forced his shield arm down. Before he could twist away, the spider flicked its
fanged mandibles upward piercing into his shoulder.

He gasped and wrenched himself free. Keeping his shield raised, he hopped backwards. The spider
stayed still and watched him retreat to the other side of the clearing, slowly rubbing its fangs
together. He could feel the spiders venom spread like fire from his shoulder towards his chest.
Instantly he felt nausea grip him, as his body broke out into a cold sweat. With a grunt of pain, he
lifted his axe again, his arm shaking. The spider circled around, preparing for its next strike.

'This monster is too fast, Link!' shouted Navi from above, 'Stun him!'
Looking into the eyes of the monster, Link knew what he had to do and reached into his pocket. As the spider was reading itself for a second lunge, he threw a large nut on the ground in front of it. The nut exploded on impact, unleashing a blinding flash. Squealing in pain, the spider reared its front legs. Link didn't hesitate. Rushing forward he swung his axe with as much strength as he could muster. With a wet smack the axe head buried in the spider's maw. Screaming horribly the spider shuddered as Link pressed his attack cleaving through the monster's mouth and face, burying the curved blade deep. The spider flailed madly as he pulled the axe free, blue blood gushing out of the now gaping wound. Swinging a second time he sliced into one of the creature's eyes. Before he could pull the axe out however, the spider swiped at him with its legs. Sluggish from the venom, he tried to jump back, but he was too slow. The blow knocked him over on to his back, his arms falling at his sides.

With instinctual speed, the massive predator sprang forward. Landing on top of him, it quickly lined up its fangs with his head.

Din! Thought Link as the spider snapped downwards.

In an instant, a small, bright flash of fire expanded out from Link in a dome. Normally "Din" would have been powerful enough to easily dispatch the spider, but he had barely any magical energy left. The flames did only superficial damage, but the sudden brightness forced the monster backward.

Swiping his axe in front of him, he swung at the exposed lower head of the creature. Again, the axe cleaved deep as he lopped off the creature's jaw. Sputtering blood, it twitched backwards. He pressed his advantage. Standing, he charged at the creature, hacking at its torso until the beast fell dead.

As the creature calmed in its death throes, Link slouched down to his knees, gasping for breath. Wiping his brow with his forearm and panting in exhilaration, he grinned to himself through shuddering breaths.

Looks like this axe will do just fine!

While he recovered, Navi emerged from his hat and looked at his wounded shoulder.

'Link! You-'suddenly the surrounding forest was filled with an echoing clicking sound. Apparently the spider's family had been watching. Link and Navi looked around in wide eyed horror at the sound.

'W-We should go.' Navi said shakily before darting back into his hat, 'Can you move?'

He nodded, grimacing to himself as he pulled himself to his feet. Turning, he ran back the way he came and away from the mysterious light. Sprinting through the dark forest, the nightmarish clicking sound followed as though it was coming from behind every tree. Each time he rounded a trunk or pushed through a bush he expected to be faced with a dozen more spiders, but they never appeared. Instead the clicking sound gradually grew fainter and fainter until eventually the forest was silent once again. On the verge of collapse, he fell to his hands and knees and tried to catch his breath. Navi flew over his shoulder and turned facing towards the darker forest.

'That was…unpleasant.' she breathed, 'Maybe we should avoid the deeper forest for now.' he groaned in response, rolling over on to his back. His whole body felt like it was on fire.

Luckily it was the shoulder of my shield arm that was bit otherwise I might not have had the strength to swing my axe. Link thought then he laughed. Lucky me.
'Link are you okay?' asked Navi in alarm, 'Is the poison...?'

He shook his head and slowly stood. After taking a few haggard breaths, he started moving again in the direction of their camp site.

It was early evening by the time they arrived back into camp. Finally stopping by the campfire, Link stooped over and, putting his hands on his knees, nearly collapsed over in exhaustion. While he breathed hard, Navi flew down and landed on a nearby rock. She sat, looking up at him with a mixture of concern and pride.

'Impressive forest boy! I'm surprised you've held up so well all things considered.'

He grunted in acknowledgment. He felt like he had been used as a chew toy by a Dodongo, but it was true. He had recovered much faster than usual. Straightening his back, he stripped off his tunic and inspected his shoulder. The two finger sized holes where the spider fangs had pierced into him looked nasty. Dark red clotted blood had formed over the wounds and the surrounding veins were flared purple while the skin on his shoulder had turned a sickly yellow colour.

Navi flew up, and examined him as well. After a moments consideration, she crossed her arms and regarded him thoughtfully.

'You know...' she began, 'You really shouldn't be in any condition to run marathons, but you crossed from the forest all the way to camp while injured AND poisoned no problem.'

He shrugged and flexed his uninjured arm, but she just rolled her eyes.

'You're a scrappy kid Link, but you're not that tough.' she was silent for another moment before continuing, 'Your axe,' he raised his eyebrows, he recognized that voice. Something was up. 'Can you get it for me?' He nodded and withdrew the axe from his fallen tunic.

Holding the axe out for her, he watched as she landed on the handle near the blade. Carefully avoiding the dried spider blood, she put her face near the honed edge and studied it. While she conducted her inspection, he kept still and waited.

After a few moments she nodded to herself, 'I thought so.' she said, snapping her fingers, 'The enchantment on this axe is supposed to transfer the strength and vitality of those it kills to it's wielder.'

He nodded. \textit{Makes sense, after I killed the spider I definitely recovered faster than usual.}

'However, it's also supposed to curse its wielder with an insatiable bloodlust. How do you feel?'

He shrugged.

'No feelings of unending fury? Do you feel compelled to crush me in your fist? Stomp me into the ground?'

He was silent for a moment as he considered the question before half nodding, half shrugging. Navi flew up and poked his cheek.

'Very funny. The Triforce is probably shielding you from-.' she stopped upon seeing his expression
'What is it?' she asked.

He looked at her wide eyed.

_My magic! It's back! Why didn't I notice it sooner?_

'Hah!' he shouted, cheering he punched his fist in the air in triumph.

'Link, are you okay? Don't tell me the axe really is-

He shook his head, opening his tunic he took out his wand and waved it around causing the cauldron in the camp to start dancing with the ladle.

'Your magic is back?' asked Navi incredulously.

He nodded and she squealed.

'Huzzah!' she cheered, spinning around with him. 'That's it then! There's nothing left for us to do, but get to Kings Cross Station after tomorrow and you'll be on your way to Hogwarts!'

'Woo.' said Link unenthusiastically as he raised his hands in mock celebration.

'We've got to make sure you have everything! Where's that list? Ugh, you're so messy, Link.' chided Navi as she started flying around the camp.

Link sat back down again and watched as Navi poked through their stuff. His smile faded slowly as he considered his battle with the spider.

_That creature was fast! Next time I go in the forest I'll be sure to use the Song of Inverted Time to help even the odds._

As he replayed the fight in his mind, he felt a nagging sense of unease.

_What was that strange light I saw?_

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Professor McGonagall leaned back in her office chair and let out a long yawn. Covering her mouth with her quill, she reached for her cup of tea and took a small sip. For the past twenty years she had overseen the Hogwarts school admissions and in that time, there was always some last minute crisis that required her to work late into the night. No matter how much she prepared, the chaos that was Hogwarts could never be fully anticipated.

This time, the Ministry of Magic was to blame. A number of transfer students had been unusually late to be admitted when their letters of acceptance had disappeared into the bottomless quagmire that was Magical Britain's postal bureaucracy. This, coupled with the recent storm damage to the Hogsmeade Post Office had required her to send out another round of letters. Thankfully, it seemed as though everyone had responded back before class started. However, one particular student had been unusually difficult to register. A student simply named "Link" from Chad. Not only was his scholastic history completely absent from any sort of official record, but the boy (if it was a boy) had no evidence of existing period! It took some doing, but she had been able to confirm that the transfer student scholarship fund would pay for his attendance. She just hoped he understood how to get to Hogwarts. He might not even speak English!
Setting her teacup down, she returned her attention to the admissions list. In total there were 151 new students arriving this year, including the last Weasley. She smiled sadly as she read the name Ginny Weasley. *The next time a Weasley is on this list, I'll probably be retired.*

Taking off her glasses, she rubbed her forehead and sighed. It was getting late. Come what may, classes were going to start and there would be students for her to teach. Pushing her work from her thoughts, she rose from her desk and went to bed.
In spite of himself, Link couldn't help but feel a bit nervous as he made his way through Kings Cross Station. It was unlike any train station he had ever been to. The lights, the sounds, the weird gadgets; it was bizarre even for a person who had visited as many worlds as him. Besides the technology that was on display, the place was also filled to the brim with people rushing in all directions. At first he had assumed that the place was a chaotic nightmare, but to his mounting discomfort it seemed like the only person who didn't know what was going on was him.

Getting to the station hadn't been a problem. He had been fortunate enough to find a guide back at Diagon Alley who led groups of foreigners to the train station using something called a "Portkey". Unfortunately, he had managed to lose the rest of the group after he was distracted by a whole wall filled with shifting screens. Now he was left wandering around the train station alone, much to Navi's chagrin.

'Well Link are you happy? Why couldn't you just stay with the group?' she moaned, 'I swear if you miss the train...'

'Uh-huh.' said Link, trying to sound dismissive though he picked up his pace regardless.

Following the flow of foot traffic through the hallways, he couldn't help but notice the stares he was getting. Besides his tunic, slung over his shoulder was a massive sack filled with his "school loot" as Navi called it. She had suggested keeping his Hogwarts stuff separate from his usual inventory so as to stay better organized. Initially he had disagreed, but after discovering that the finicky enchantment on his tunic didn't allow him to store his school things, he had begrudgingly bought a plain cloth sack to keep his Hogwarts things in. Needless to say he was quite the spectacle as nobody else seemed to have any luggage.

Rounding a corner, he came upon a large, indoor, table filled courtyard crammed with people. The massive chamber echoed with conversation as the people at the tables yammered away, busily eating food from one of the countless vendors that lined the square. To his dismay, seated at one of the tables nearest to him were perhaps a dozen children his age. He'd need to walk past them if he wanted to continue following the flow of traffic.

He tried rushing forward, but it was no use. It was impossible to hide with all the racket his cauldron was making in his bag. Lowering their sandwiches and drinks in disbelief, they all turned to stare at him as he went clanking past.

Link carefully kept his attention focused on the back of the person in front of him, though he couldn't escape the eruption of shrill laughter.

'Look at his legs! Oh my God, he's wearing a dress! Quick! Where's the camera? Someone get a camera!'

Swallowing back his embarrassment, he forced himself to concentrate on his quest.

*If there's a plot to smuggle the crystal shard into Hogwarts, I'll need to stay alert for anything suspicious. I just hope I can fit in well enough that I can gather information from the other students. If I can't, things will be much more difficult.*

His thoughts were interrupted by the sound of more people joining in the laughter. Lowering his
head, he briefly considered just shoving his way through the crowd ahead but then he caught himself. That would only make things worse.

*At least Hogwarts has a uniform...*

At last the convoy of people led him out of the courtyard and to a series of metal staircases. To his amazement, the metal staircases moved on their own with the steps appearing from the floor by some complicated mechanism. To everyone around him this was apparently no more remarkable than the floor, but he could hardly believe his eyes.

*This place is even weirder than Diagon Alley!*

Stopping, he stared down at where the stairs were rising up from the floor.

*How did they build this?! And why?! Is a few seconds really so impor-

'Hey, kid! What's the holdup?' growled an angry voice behind him.

Link yelped. Squeezing in between the metal guardrails that lined the stairs, he adjusted his grip on his loot sack as he was silently ferried downwards.

*After all the trouble I'm going through, the crystal piece had better be at Hogwarts! Maybe I'll get lucky and whoever has it will announce his discovery or something. Navi said this might take up to a week. God, I hope not...*

Coming to the bottom of the stairs, he hopped off and found himself entering the largest room yet. It was so large that he was certain the entire Kokiri Village could easily fit inside, trees and all. This gigantic space was occupied by untold thousands, all busying themselves around the several rows of train passenger cars that were neatly parked inside. As the hordes swarmed, Link's ears buzzed with the constant noise of pounding feet, squeaky wheeled luggage trolleys, and the omnipresent roar of conversation accentuated by the occasional shout.

It was all too much. Stopping, he took a few deep calming breaths and tried to get his bearings. As he stood in the midst of the cacophony, a mystic, booming, woman's voice from above suddenly rang out:

'Attention, London to New Castle is now boarding. Repeat, London to New Castle is now boarding.'

The sound shocked him back to the present. Now was not the time to lose focus. Turning his attention back to the crowd around him, he was dismayed to find that the people he had been following had since gone their separate ways.

*Great. Looks like I'm stranded here. Ah, whatever. They probably weren't going to Hogwarts anyway.*

Quickly scanning over the bustling crowds, he searched for some clue as to where he should go. Unfortunately, he couldn't see very far. The crowds were too thick and all the adults just towered over him.

*Maybe I should use my hookshot to get a better view...*

Looking up for something made of wood, he instead spotted an illuminated sign hanging from the ceiling. It read:
"Platforms six through eleven."

'AHAH!' shouted Link, pumping his fist for joy. *Yes! I'm on the right track!*

Rushing forward, he kept his eyes on the ceiling as he ran from platform to platform, reading signs as he went.

*Six...Seven...*

Dodging around a slow moving group of arguing redheads, he pressed on at speed.

*Eight...Nine...*

*Ten...Eleven. Wait. Where's platform nine and three quarters?*

Quickly retracing his steps, he confirmed that there was no additional platform between platforms nine and ten. Could the Hogwarts letter have been wrong?

*These platforms are huge. There's no way I missed one. Unless...*

Link felt a horrible, creeping sense of doubt rear itself in his mind. What if there was a separate series of platforms for the fractions? This building was so huge, he could believe it! Lowering his sack, he frantically looked around the hall until he spotted a clock. It was already ten-thirty and it had taken him an hour just to get this far!

*I need to find a map! Quick, where's a-*

Suddenly he heard the shriek of an owl behind him.

*An owl! I bet they're going to Hogwarts too!* Thought Link desperately as he whirled around to face the source of the sound.

For a brief moment the crowds parted and he spotted a group of oddly dressed people milling around a pillar by platform ten. A few of them looked around his age, but more importantly they had owls. And luggage. Heavy luggage. Grabbing his sack, he began bumbling through the crowd towards them.

'Hey! Watch it you rascal!' snarled an old woman as he accidentally brushed against her, but he didn't care. He had to make it to that train.

Fighting his way through the last clump of people, he at last came up to the pillar the group had been standing by. To his disappointment, they were no longer there.

*Where could they have run off to?*

He quickly scanned the trickling streams of commuters. A group that size with so much luggage couldn't have just disappeared. As he stood there helplessly, he suddenly heard Navi let out a warning chime.

'Hey, listen.' she said softly, 'Something about this pillar seems off, don't you think?'

'Huh?' said Link.

He stopped and faced the pillar. It seemed perfectly ordinary to him. Examining the floor, he saw a number of footprints surrounding it on the dirty tile, but so what? There were footprints everywhere. Shrugging, he was about to go search for the group when he caught sight of the
signposts. He was a little bit over halfway between platforms nine and ten. Actually, there were four pillars now that he noticed. And he was at the third one. Wasn't that three quarters?

'Hmmmm...' he murmured as he looked from the pillar, over to signpost, then back to the pillar.

'Poor boy.' whispered Navi smugly, 'Want help?' In response he hefted the bag higher on his shoulder, bumping it against his cap. 'Hey, watch it!"

Navi said there's something special about this pillar. First that group was here. Then they disappeared...

He was still for a moment as he studied the brick pillar.

*Was there a staircase or-

'Ah!' he exclaimed, smacking his head with his free hand.

Reaching into his pocket, he pulled out a large, purple magnifying lens. This was no ordinary magnifying lens, but the Lens of Truth. The Lens of Truth was a powerful artifact that had the ability to see through any illusion and it was a tool he often used to locate secret passages.

Putting the lens to his eye, he examined the pillar and saw that what appeared to be a brick surface was actually an open passageway to a hidden room. Grinning, he put the lens back in his tunic and marched forward. Without hesitation, he walked directly into the pillar only instead of colliding into it, he phased through the illusion and into a narrow tunnel.

'Do-do-do-da-do-da-di!' chimed the Train Station PA as he entered the passage.

Passing through the short tunnel, he and Navi suddenly found themselves on a completely separate platform crowded with people.

'We must've teleported.' Navi murmured in his ear, 'And that must be the Hogwarts Express.'

There, docked on the platform, was a bright red painted steam locomotive. Its shiny brass boiler slowly chuffed and puffed as steam gently rose up along its gilded sides. Surrounding the train and its cars, children and young adults were clustered around, saying their goodbyes and hugging their parents and siblings before boarding one of the many waiting cars.

With nobody to talk to, Link boarded the nearest passenger car. Picking a compartment at random he slid open the door. Inside were four, pretty, sixteen-year-old girls wearing black and blue robes. They all stopped their conversation and stared at him quizzically.

'Hey.' greeted Link as he entered.

Plopping his giant sack in the middle of the room with a loud clump, he sat heavily in between two of the girls and smiled around the cabin. The girls all wore expressions equal part confusion and disbelief.

'Uh-' started one of the girls.

'This compartment's full.' said another girl, 'If you don't mind...?'

'Oh.'

He shrugged and picked up his bag. As he exited he heard the girls behind him giggling, but he was undeterred. Walking to the next compartment over, he opened the door and saw that it was
filled with slightly older boys in green and silver robes. Upon seeing him, they all scowled.

'Hey.' Link greeted tentatively and their scowls deepened.

He made to take a step forward, but before he could even cross the threshold of the door they all started shouting at him.

'Piss off, freshman!'

'Nice robes, house elf!'

'Slytherin only, ya dopey cunt!'

Pushing him out, they slammed the door closed with a bang.

Sighing, Link chose the next room and opened the door, ready for anything.

This compartment was empty save for a solitary round-faced boy with short black hair. In his pudgy hands he was holding a large spotted toad who he was whispering to and stroking reverently. Before Link could register what he was witnessing, the boy turned his gaze to him.

'H-Hello there! My n-name is Neville. Neville Longbottom! This is Trevor.' He held up the toad which croaked loudly. 'Will you be our friend?'

Link slowly backed away and gently closed the compartment door before hurrying to the next carriage over.

I really hate school.

After searching through over a dozen compartments, Link at last managed to find an empty cabin. Setting his bag on the floor, he stretched out on one of the seats and relaxed. He never would have imagined boarding a train could be so stressful. A short while latter a piercingly loud whistle sounded and the train began moving. Perking up, he pressed his face against the window as the skyline of London moved past.

How big was that city? Link thought as glass tower after glass tower loomed above, It must be the size of all of Hyrule!

He watched in disbelief before the cityscape gave way to the countryside. Crop filled fields and roaming herds of cattle dotted the landscape and before long he became bored with the view. Leaning back, he pulled out his ocarina and started fiddling with it.

I guess now I'll know how far away Hogsmeade is from King's Cross Station. Come to think of it, maybe once I'm done with Hogwarts I'll take some time to explore London.

Just as he was about to begin playing, the compartment door slid open. Looking over, he saw a standing at the doorway. She looked his age and had silver-blue eyes and shoulder length blonde hair. Upon noticing him, she stopped.

'Oh, um, sorry.' she said, flustered. Pulling back, she started to close the door before hesitating. Popping her head back in, she asked, 'Is this cabin taken?'
Sitting up, he shook his head and gestured to the seat across from him.

'Thanks.'

Stepping in, she went over and sat. Crossing her legs, she glanced out the window. After a second, she shifted her gaze and her and Link's eyes met. Suddenly self-conscious, he cleared his throat and looked out the window himself. As they sat awkwardly, he heard Navi snicker.

*I hope she breaks the ice soon. Man, is this what school's going to be like? Ugh...*

Back at the Kokiri Village, Link hadn't been the most popular guy around but at least everyone had grown up together. Here though he was a newcomer. Just how would they react to a mute?

Just as he was starting to get anxious suddenly the girl spoke.

'Hello, my name is Luna Lovegood.' she said in a formal voice.

'Link.' he quickly returned, pointing to himself with his thumb.

'So...are you a first year too?'

He nodded.

'Cool, uh, excuse me but did you know your hat is haunted?'

Link's eyes went up to his cap, then back at Luna.

*She knows!* He thought as Navi quit giggling and went still.

'O-Oh?' he said. Reaching up, he slapped his hat a few times.

'That's better.' said Luna, nodding, 'It'll keep coming back until you burn the hat.'

'Ooh.' Link said, shifting in his seat uncomfortably.

*This girl might be trouble.*

'B-but uh, hey whatever. So-' she continued, clearing her throat 'Where are you from? Are you excited to go to Hogwarts? Did your parents go?' she asked rapidly.

'Um.'

He opened his mouth then closed it. Then he pointed at his throat and shook his head. Luna's eyes widened slightly.

'Uh…Can you not speak?'

He shook his head again.

'Oh, I'm sorry. I wasn't- '

He waved his hand dismissively and smiled.

'Do you mind if I talk to you? I can leave you alone if you want.'

He shook his head and gestured for her to continue.
'Okay. So, um-' she paused looking around the room for a moment. Her eyes stopped on his tunic, then shifted over to the ocarina in his hands, then to his bag.

'Are you from around here?'

He shook his head.

'Are you excited to go to Hogwarts?'

He shook his head again and stuck out his tongue.

'Yeah, me too.' said the girl sadly, exhaling slowly before perking up, 'But! I'm sure it'll be fine. Everything turns out fine in the end. Usually.' She finished lamely.

Link didn't know how to respond to that, so he tried the ol' wink, smile, laugh and shrug combo. She giggled and pointed at the ocarina in his hand.

'Is that an ocarina?'

He nodded enthusiastically and carefully held it out for her inspection.

'You know my father told me that-' she paused for a moment. '-actually never mind. Do you play?'

He nodded and put the ocarina to his lips.

_Do I play? Hah! Time to show off…_

But before he could let out a single note the carriage door slid open again.

'Harry? Are you- Oh.'

Link and Luna turned and looked at the newcomer in the door. To his mild surprise it was the bushy haired girl he had seen in Diagon Alley. Before he or Luna could say anything she quickly backed out of the compartment.

'S-sorry.' she said, closing the door.

Shrugging, Link turned back to Luna. Putting the Ocarina of Time to his lips, he played New Wave Bossa Nova. Luna clapped at the end, smiling.

_I never get to play that song._ Link thought as he put the Ocarina back in his robes.

Luna and Link continued to "talk" as they train rumbled and bumped across the Scottish countryside. He listened as she spoke about her experiences in Diagon Alley, the rumors she heard about Hogwarts, and Magical Britain in general. Over the course of their conversation he noticed her eyes travel to his ears a few times, though she would always quickly shift her gaze when he noticed her staring. Since leaving the Kokiri village he had gotten used to people finding his appearance odd and it didn't bother him as much as it used to. Compared to his time as a Deku Scrub, walking around as a Kokiri was nothing.

Before long, the train began to approach Hogsmeade and he and Luna had to change into their robes. Excusing himself, he went into the washroom to change. After Navi hit him a few times for slapping her, he returned to the compartment in his uniform and the two disembarked unto Hogwarts Station.
Link and Luna exited the still hissing and puffing Hogwarts Express onto the Hogsmeade train station platform together. Looking around the throngs of students, they both stood in confusion as the older students moved past them.

Now what? He thought as hundreds of black robed students bustled around the pair, jostling and talking with one another.

'Firs' years this way!' he heard a familiar deep voice shout. Looking through the billowing steam coming off from the train, Link saw the giant he had seen in The Three Broomsticks pub the day he first traveled to Diagon Alley.

'Firs' years! Come on now, gather round, gather round, don't be shy!'

Link and Luna moved forward to join up with the teeming mass of other children their age. Most of the them were looking around nervously as they tentatively approached the imposing man mountain.

'Hullo there! My name is Hagrid and I'm the castle groundskeeper at Hogwarts.' said the man to the gathered crowd of eleven-year-olds in front of him, 'Now there's an old tradition for new students at here. When you firs' arrive, ya' always go across the Black Lake! No exceptions.'

A murmur of unease ran through the group.

'Across the lake? Are we going swimming?' asked one student.

'I-I can't swim…' said another student worriedly.

'Surely they wouldn't make us change into this uniform just to have us swim.' scoffed a third student.

'No, no, no.' said Hagrid, shaking his head in amusement, 'We got boats! Come on…'

Walking off, Hagrid led them down a muddy dirt path towards the Black Lake shore. Squelching through the muck, the first years excitedly talked amongst themselves as they tried to keep up with the long strides of the groundskeeper.

'I've never been in a boat before. Have you?' asked Luna as they marched.

Link shook his head. He was no stranger to water, but for some reason he rarely went on boats or ships.

I should've brought my blue tunic with me. He thought wistfully.

Eventually the group came upon a thick bank of fog. Entering the white wall of mist, the excited chatter slowly died off and they all subconsciously huddled closer to Hagrid as he led them down the dirt path. After a few minutes of walking in silence, the faint sounds of lapping water became noticeable. As they drew closer to the sound, the path abruptly ended, disappearing beneath the encroaching water of the Black Lake shore. Bobbling against the grassy bank in front of them was a fleet of small, wooden boats.

Link looked at the lake sheepishly. Though the lake was enveloped in a dense fog, he could tell from how far he had walked that it had swollen enormously since he last saw it.
All this from me playing the Song of Storms once? That's...odd.

Reaching down, he ran his hands through the water.

At least it's warm. Knowing my luck, one of the crystal shards is probably down there and I'll need to go diving for it. I just hope it hasn't been discovered by anyone – or anything- yet.

While he was still crouched down and examining the water, Hagrid began speaking behind him.

'Well, 'ere we are. Go on and pick a boat fer yerselves. Be careful when you climb in. We been' havin' a bit o' rain lately.'

Hagrid wasn't kidding. The wet grass of the bank was extremely slippery, and a few of the first years lost their footing and fell to the mud as they attempted to approach the boats. Some weren't so lucky.

'Just…a..little…Eeek!' one girl shrieked as she accidentally slid off balance. Unable to recover, she screeched as she went into the water. A half-second later Hagrid was fishing her out.

'Come on then. Don't be shy.' boomed Hagrid as he helped the red-faced and shivering girl to her feet, 'Boats don't bite!' Despite Hagrid's encouragement, nobody volunteered. Arriving at the ceremony wet and dripping didn't seem like a prudent social move. As the crowd hesitated, Link glanced over at the nearest boat, and bit his lip. It was temptingly close - a mere two or so metres from the shoreline.

'Go for it, Link. You'll look cool.' whispered Navi.

'Hm.'

While the other first years were tiptoeing closer to the water, slipping and sliding as they went, Link got to his feet and backed up. Once he had enough space, he took off at a sprint and leaped from the edge of the bank. The other first years gasped as he went through the swirling white wall of mist. Despite the fog, his aim was true and he landed with a loud clump squarely in the middle of the boat. Rocking back and forth, it threatened to tip over, but he managed to keep his balance.

'Good job! That's how it's done!' praised Hagrid, beaming at him.

Sitting in the front left corner of the four-seater, Link pointed at Luna and gestured for her to join him. Everyone turned to her expectantly. She looked apprehensive, but after a second she took a running jump as well.

She landed heavily and the boat threatened to tip over again, but Link was able to pull her down to safety next to him before she lost her balance.

'Thanks!' she said breathlessly.

The two grinned at each other while the boat rocked and bobbed in a slow-moving circle. At her example the rest of the first years started leaping into their own boats with mixed success. Eventually Link and Luna were joined by two other students; one was a familiar looking redhead girl who introduced herself as Ginny Weasley and the other was a small blonde boy with curly hair.

'Hullo there!' said the curly haired blonde eagerly, 'My name's Colin! Colin Creevey! Say cheese!'
The boy lifted an enormous camera and Link's eyes widened in shock. Before he could get his hands up to shield himself, there was a searing white flash and a poof of smoke.

'Wha-?'

Totally blinded, Ginny, Luna and Link began blinking and rubbing their eyes while Colin started bombarding them with questions.

Poking Link he asked, 'You were the first person to jump in the boat, weren't ya'? Do you like boats? I bet you grew up on an island somewhere!'

Still blind, Link shook his head.

'Oh, really? Weird. Hey! Are you the kid with the giant bag of stuff?'

Blinking away his tears, he nodded.

'Cool! I saw you back in the food court at King's Cross. What's with the sack? Trying to save money on luggage? My dad says that suitcases are a rip-off so I don't blame you. Have you ever been to an airport? They charge you per suitcase! How much does your bag weigh? It looks like it weighs a tonne! Hey, have you ever...'

Colin's questioning continued ceaselessly, seemingly oblivious to Link's mute participation until finally Hagrid announced that the boats would be setting off. Everyone soon settled down and the boats started underway, propelled by some unseen magic force.

Gliding through the mist, the fleet followed the lantern light on Hagrid's lead boat as the moved onwards. Besides the occasional cough, the only sounds to be heard was the rhythmic lapping of the water against the wooden hulls of the boats. The nervous tension was palpable. After drifting for a couple minutes in eerie silence the fog gradually thinned and the lights of the castle came into view.

Link joined with the others and wowed at the sight. Built on a sheer cliffside overhanging the lake, was a truly magnificent castle. Beyond the high walls that surrounded it, Link saw a complicated network of towers and structures leading off from a central keep of impossible proportions.

'It's massive! From the air it looked so much smaller, but Hogwarts makes Hyrule Castle seem tiny in comparison. Zelda would throw a fit!

As they bobbed nearer, he suddenly caught sight of a giant Octo slowly swimming closer. With a cry of alarm, he leapt up to the front of the boat, ignoring the startled shouts of his fellow boat mates. At his shout, a few of the other students began to panic as well and Hagrid quickly intervened.

'It's alright, calm down! Jus' the giant squid sayin' hello.' shouted Hagrid over his shoulder.

Slowly Link sat back down as Colin jokingly asked him if he planned on wrestling the squid. He was about to try to mime archery before shrugging his shoulders and crossing his legs.

Alright, but one of these days that Octo is going to start shooting bombs at these boats, mark my words.

'Don't be so jumpy, Link. Just relax.' whispered Navi.

As they came up on the cliffside, an ivy curtain of vines growing from the rocks parted to reveal a
low hanging dark tunnel. Passing into the cave, Hagrid had to duck to prevent himself from hitting his head on the passage ceiling. The boats moved through the dark waters illuminated only by the lanterns at the head of each boat. It was quite atmospheric. The effect was only slightly ruined by Colin's constant exclamations of amazement.

Eventually the boats exited the claustrophobic tunnel and into an expansive, lantern-lit cavern. At the end of the cavern was a water lapped stone staircase leading to an arching doorway. The boats approached the staircase and Hagrid hopped off before helping them disembark. Looking at the stone walls of the cavern, Link could see that the highwater mark was past the top of the stone doorway.

*I hope I didn't flood the entire bottom half of the castle.* He thought guiltily.

After all the students had disembarked and were standing on the staircase, Hagrid got back in his boat.

'Just wait here, Professor McGonagall will come fer' ya'. Good luck with the Sorting! I'll see ya' at the feast!' he called out, waving.

*Sorting?* Thought Link as he watched Hagrid float back down the dark tunnel, the now empty boats following his like a row of ducks.

Alone now, the students started to chat quietly amongst themselves. While he was trying to see what was at the bottom of the submerged staircase, his ears suddenly perked up. The others were talking about the mysterious Sorting Ceremony.

'I hope I don't fail the Sorting.' moaned one, 'I'd never live it down!'

'I'm not shivering cause I'm nervous! T-The fog was cold and I got wet! See? Feel my sleeve! Hah! A-As if I'd be worried! Heh, heh…'

'My brothers told me that if you fail the sorting test they kick you out. Th-They wouldn't lie about something like that, would they?'

Link turned back towards the staircase, his heart racing.

*I didn't come this far to fail now!*

As he steeled himself, he became aware of Luna staring at his left hand. Looking down, he saw that his concealment cream had washed off and the Triforce was shining brightly for everyone to see! Laughing nervously, he hastily tucked his hand in his pocket. Luna looked at him strangely, but she said nothing. The awkward moment was interrupted as the arched doors swung open.

Walking through the door at the head of the staircase was a tall, bespectacled, robed woman holding a clipboard. The students hushed as she came to a stop and surveyed them with a critical eye. Colin bravely raised his camera, but quickly lowered it as the woman treated him to a disapproving raised eyebrow.

'Welcome to Hogwarts.' began the woman, 'My name is Professor McGonagall. Before you can become students here, you must first take part in the Sorting Ceremony.' the students exchanged nervous looks. 'The Sorting Ceremony will determine your House. There are four great Houses named after the four founders of Hogwarts. Gryffindor, Hufflepuff, Ravenclaw, and Slytherin.'

Link felt his left hand get hotter and his heart beat faster.
'The house you are sorted in will be your home for the remainder of your tenure at Hogwarts. You will take classes together, eat together, and live together. Many of you will form lifelong friendships with one another. Do not take the ceremony lightly.'

'You can do it, Link!' whispered Navi, 'Whatever the Sorting is; kick its ass!' Link took a deep breath, held it, then exhaled. He was ready.

'You will be organized by alphabetical order in groups of two, boy and girl, then I will escort you into the Great Hall. When you enter the hall, you will wait quietly until your name is called. Once you hear your name you will approach the head table. Before the head table there will be a stool with the Sorting Hat resting on top of it. The Sorting Hat will be placed on top of your head and it will decide your house.'

Upon hearing this some of the students relaxed. Not Link though, and especially not Navi.

'Link you can't take off your hat and let everyone see me! They'll eat me alive! I'm done for!' Navi moaned, her earlier confidence conspicuously missing.

'After you have been sorted- '

'Link, you have to cause a distraction!' whispered Navi frantically.

'-you will take your seat with your house. Are there any questions? Very good, then line up starting with Ackler, George-

'Link!' His mind raced as he considered his options.

*A deku nut would be perfect, but there are too many people here. What if I get caught throwing it?*

'Dalmer, Jeffery.' read McGonagall ticking a name off her list.

*I know! I'll stuff my hat in my robes, fairy and all!*

'Holmden, Haley.' As McGonagall continued to read off her list, Link grabbed the top of his hat with his right hand and folded it as he took it off, turning it into a bag of sorts. Then he stuffed the slightly squirming cloth into his robes. Smiling slyly, he glanced at the surrounding students who were none the wiser.

*Sheik eat your heart out.*

'Link.' said McGonagall looking up.

He stepped forward and inclined his head respectfully. McGonagall studied him for a moment then went back to her list.

'Lovegood, Luna.' As her name was called Luna stepped up beside him.

This continued until all the students had been arranged by two's, alternating between boy and girl. Finally, McGonagall called for quiet once more before she walked through the arched doorway,
the procession of first years behind her. Entering into a winding stone passage, she led them through a series of silent and deserted halls. Occasionally they would come upon a staircase and the group would climb steadily upward, before exiting into yet more stone corridors. Turning and twisting, Link tried to get a feel for the layout of the place, but it was hopeless. The dungeon they were in was massive. They must have walked past a hundred rooms already.

*This place is going to be a real pain to map out.* Thought Link apprehensively.

Suddenly he noticed Luna glancing down at the hand in his pocket and he groaned internally.

*Why did I have to stick my hands in the water? How could I be so stupid! Now I have to keep my hand in my pocket during the Sorting Hat challenge. Everyone will probably think I'm a cocky show off or something.*

As those embarrassing thoughts started to eat at him, he became aware of the faint sound of voices coming from up ahead. More than a few of the students exchanged uneasy looks as the sound grew into a dull, persistent rumble. It seemed as though there were hundreds of people talking! Finally, the group halted as McGonagall stopped before a pair of giant wooden doors.

'Wait here for a moment.' she ordered.

She opened one of the double doors, briefly flooding the corridor with loud, excited voices and yellow light. Keeping the door open with one hand she made some unseen gesture before she stepped back into the hallway and let the door close. It shut with a bang causing everyone to jump.

' Remember: be respectful.' said McGonagall warningly as the rumbling conversation from the doors behind her steadily ebbed to silence.

Once the Great Hall was totally silent, McGonagall drew her wand and waved it. The huge double doors slowly creaked open and she walked into the hall. The first years reluctantly followed.

As Link entered the Great Hall, he felt his mouth drop open in awe. The Great Hall was certainly impressive. Countless floating candles hovered above four massive tables that were lined with hundreds of students all wearing the uniforms of their respective house. Looking up, he saw that the Great Hall's ceiling seemed to be enchanted to appear as the night sky with moving clouds and stars. At the end of the Great Hall was the head table, lined with adult's who had to be the school's faculty. Seated in the centre was an elderly, kind faced man with a massive flowing beard.

*That must be the headmaster.* Thought Link as he looked at the silver haired wizard.

Truth be told the wizened old geezer didn't look like much, but Link had long since learned that appearances could be deceiving when it came to powerful beings. As Link regarded him, he remembered the words that the blonde man had said in the Hog’s Head Inn.

*If that old fogey is Dumbledore, then I'll have to be careful. The last thing I need is a negligent crackpot who puts kids in harms way for his own amusement to find out about my quest. He'd probably send me on some deathtrap adventure or try to steal the Triforce or something.*

Following McGonagall, the students timidly walked forward, two abreast before stopping in a line between two of the four giant, crowded tables of older students. Dumbledore's looked at each of them, his piercing blue eyes shining with intensity behind their gold half-moon spectacles. When the headmaster's gaze fell on Link, he felt the Triforce surge on his hand. Frowning, he stared back at the old wizard who stirred in his chair slightly. However, it only lasted a moment and the energy of the Triforce subsided when the headmaster turned his attention to the other first years behind
him.

*What was that about?* He thought warily.

McGonagall halted and the students stopped in a line before what appeared to be a giant, old and worn witch's hat resting on a tall wooden stool. It looked harmless, but Link wasn't fooled. Many of the masks he carried looked foolish too.

When the first years had finished filing into the Great Hall the whole room became deathly still. Just as Link was about to fidget, a rip in the fabric of the hat gaped wide. Then, the hat unexpectedly started singing! Bellowing out a tuneless song, the hat sung about placing each student in their place. Link tried to parse out some meaning in the lyrics, but it just seemed like nonsense.

Once the hat finished its song, the hall burst into applause. After a few moments of clapping and cheering, Dumbledore raised his hand for quiet and motioned for the sorting ritual to begin.

McGonagall glanced down at her clipboard.

'George Ackler.' she said loudly.

The boy looked like he had just seen a Gidbo. Walking stiffly up to the stool, he awkwardly perched himself on its very edge. As he sat there hyperventilating, McGonagall approached beside him, hat in hand. Stopping over his shoulder, she slowly lowered the hat on his trembling head. The rest of the first years stared at him, their eyes wide with a mixture of curiosity and fear. Among them, Link's eyes keenly followed as the hat inched its way closer and closer.

*Alright, let's see this test!*

The Sorting Hat touched his head. The poor boy, whose chest was heaving, seemed to freeze solid as soon as he felt it and his face became a mask of terror. Link didn't get to see what expression followed though as the Sorting Hat was so big it swallowed his head entirely, coming to rest on his shoulders. Link watched carefully for any clue or sign for what the hat was doing, but the boy was still. After a minute of silence the gash that served as the hat's mouth opened.

'Slytherin!' it shouted and the table filled with those students wearing green exploded in applause.

Nodding briskly, McGonagall lifted the hat off. Revealing an extremely relieved looking boy who wasted no time in running off to the green filled table. Link furrowed his brow in confusion as he watched him go.

*What just happened?*

Several more students had their turn, but Link couldn't figure out what the test was. Some students wore the hat for only a second, whereas others had the hat on for several minutes. Was that a good thing or were they struggling? Link paid extra close attention when Colin Creevey was called. To his surprise the hat shouted Gryffindor after only a few seconds and an ecstatic looking Colin ran off to the cheering Gryffindor table.

*If Colin was able to win so quickly then I shouldn't have anything to worry about. As long as I stay focused I can win!*

'Link.' read Professor McGonagall, pursing her lips slightly as she looked at him.

'Good luck.' murmured Luna beside him.
He nodded to her. Careful to keep his left hand still concealed in his pocket, he calmly stepping forward and approached the stool. Sitting, he faced the hall. Instantly his confidence wavered as he saw the hundreds of students studying him intently, their eyes searching his face. Among them was Luna, her pale blue eyes staring into his. Link attempted a reassuring smile, but the heavy fabric of the hat brushed his hair causing a sudden flare up of fluttering deep in his stomach and he grimaced instead.

Clenching his fist in his pocket, he prepared himself for the worst as the giant hat dropped and his vision turned to black.

Give me your best shot, hat! Thought Link, gritting his teeth.

Without warning a twisting voice inside his mind laughed, setting his hair on edge.

Why are you so hostile young man? Am I really such a threat to you?

He ignored the voice. Instead he cleared his mind and concentrated on the power of the Triforce of Courage. If this was a test of resolve, then he was determined to prevail. How many world's had he saved? How many wars had he singe handily won? He was a demigod! The chosen warrior of Farore herself! Some enchanted rags were nothing to him.

The hat spoke again, though this time much quieter. Come now, really, I mean you no harm. I can tell you are possessed of immense will, but will is only a tool. My only goal is get a measure of your ideals, your past, and sort you into your most compatible House.

He hesitated. For a moment he thought back over his adventures before he caught himself. The only person allowed in his mind, was him!

I am entrusted with sacred knowledge! I won't allow you in my mind! I will not lower my guard, or falter in my duty! You will not distract me, hat! Get out!

…you...came to this school...you need to be sorted...that...is my purpose... said the Sorting Hat, much weaker.

Just pick a House then! It doesn't really matter. Thought Link determinedly.

First tell me...what do you desire?

He hesitated again. He thought back to Hyrule. Zelda, Malon, Ruto, and Saria. He thought about the Great Deku, the Kokiri and Epona. He thought about Tatl and all the others he had met. He didn't want to be here, he wanted to be back home. But then he thought about the broken staff, the crystal pieces. It seemed so inconsequential. He couldn't even remember that dark sorcerer's name, but he remembered the devastation.

I desire to do my duty. I want to save this land.

Very well. said the fading voice in his mind.

'Gryffindor!' shouted the hat.
The Gryffindor table erupted in applause. Whipping the hat off himself, he leapt out of the stool. Tossing the hat to McGonagall, he gave Luna a smile and a thumbs up before strutting across the hall to the cheering Gryffindor table.

*Piece of cake!*

Spotting Colin motioning to him in the sea of red accented robes that was the Gryffindors, he quickened his pace. As he went down the length of the table, his new House mates jostled and patted him roughly while they congratulated him. Link smiled and nodded in acknowledgment before he suddenly thought about poor Navi being battered in his robes. The thought caused him to burst out laughing.

'What's so funny?' asked Colin as Link took a seat at the bench beside him.

Link just shook his head in response and turned back to the ceremony. Navi was probably pissed!

Now that he was seated, the hall quieted once more and McGonagall called Luna forward. Looking as pale as a ghost, she stepped up to the stool. The Sorting Hat was on her head for only a moment before shouting 'Ravenclaw!'

Luna stood up dizzily and went off to sit with her cheering peers. Link applauded too, though he was disappointed that she wasn't sorted into Gryffindor.

The sorting continued unabated and he found his attention wavering. He noticed Ginny get placed into Gryffindor, which elicited a thunderous response from a gaggle of red-haired ragamuffins in shabby robes, but other than that no one else caught his interest. Gazing around the hall, he took in the giant woven tapestries and floating golden candlesticks that were floating above the tables. If appearances were anything to go by, Hogwarts probably had some kickass loot for him to acquire.

Before long the Sorting Ceremony was finished and the last student joined their uproariously cheering House. Amidst the applause, Link noticed a tall, thin man with slick shoulder length black hair enter the Great Hall from a side room. Coming up from behind, he approached McGonagall while she stood smiling by the hat. Putting his hand to her ear, the greasy black-haired man said a few words and her smile vanished. As the man spoke to her, her face slowly creased into a frown and her eyes became hard. The black haired man stepped back and she waved her wand causing the Sorting Hat and its chair to vanish before the two quickly exited the hall together.

What was that about?

Thought Link.

However, whatever it was nobody seemed too bothered and he put the matter out of his mind. The cheering continued until the old, silver haired man at the centre of the head table rose from his chair and raised his hand for calm. Slowly, the cheering subsided. Once the hall was silent, the old man spoke with a surprisingly loud and clear voice.

'Welcome! Welcome everyone to Hogwarts. My name is Albus Dumbledore, headmaster, Supreme Mugwump, and several other nicknames of which I'm sure you'll all become aware of soon enough.'

A ripple of laughter went through the hall, and Dumbledore smiled.

'Another year has come and we teachers are once more blessed with a fresh crop of minds to
culty. This year we are joined by a new instructor of great renown.’ Dumbledore paused as some girls waved and shouted wildly at a blonde handsome man sitting at the teachers table, ‘May I present the esteemed Gilderoy Lockhart!’

The man rose and waved, flashing a toothy smile. Reaction in the room was mixed to say the least. Many of the boys grumbled and applauded only half-heartedly while more than a few of the girls shrieked in excitement.

*That's the guy from the bookstore. I forgot he was coming here.* Thought Link as he watched the man bow deeply and blow kisses.

‘He will he joining us as the new Defence Against the Dark Arts teacher. I am sure his unique talents will give you an appreciation for proper spell craft.’ said Dumbledore, beaming at the man who blushed.

After the applause had died down Dumbledore spoke again.

‘I have three important announcements. First, the Forbidden Forest is, as always, forbidden. Hagrid has informed me that this year in particular the woods are especially perilous so please avoid any wanderings unless you would rather be a feast than attend one. Second, we have been blessed recently with an abundance of rain. As a result, the Black Lake has become less predictable than it usually is. Therefore, I would ask all students to exercise caution if they plan on visiting the water.’

Dumbledore cleared his throat softly before continuing.

‘Thirdly, I have been told that our very own Argus Filch has recently won the 784th annual Best in Castle Pottery and Display Award in Ceramic Excellence.’

A squinting, ugly man who Link hadn't noticed before rose from his seat at the very end of the staff table. Smirking, he bowed as a few staff members gave him a polite, but meagre reception. His pleased expression quickly changed to a bitter scowl however as two red headed identical twins at the Gryffindor table suddenly broke out into enthusiastic, standing ovation.

‘Good show, man! Good show!’ shouted one of the twins.

‘Crackin’ good crockery, Sir!’ hollered the other, ‘And at your age too!? Simply outstanding!’

Dumbledore nodded, adding a few claps himself. ‘If you would like to see his award-winning display for yourselves, you may appreciate it in the Entrance Hall.’

A mad gleam entered Link's eye. *Yes, I think I will have to make time to…appreciate his ceramic display. Yes, definitely.*

‘And I believe that does it, dinner is served.’ said Dumbledore with a smile.

To Link's great shock instantly the table in front of him was filled with great piles of every sort of food imaginable. Immediately everyone started helping themselves and the hall filled with talking. He eyed the food curiously.

*I haven't had a proper meal in weeks. I guess I should eat something, it is a party after all.*

Shrugging, he grabbed a Cucco leg from nearby platter and started helping himself, carefully keeping his left hand hidden beneath the table.

‘Do you see Harry Potter anywhere?’ asked Colin who had yet to grab any food and was instead
twisting around trying to see down the rows of excited students.

Link shook his head as he poured himself some water.

'Drats! Harry Potter is in Gryffindor, or so I've heard anyway - I've been dying to meet him!'

Near Link, the two identical red-haired boys were also looking around the Great Hall.

'Where is our dearest, handsome brother Ron?' asked one to the other. 'Probably having a little quiet time with Harry.' said the other in a stage whisper. Ginny glared at the twins who started snickering.

'Oh, sorry you had to hear like this, Gin.' said one of the twins noticing her mean look. 'But I suppose its time you learned that Harry already has a Weasley.' finished the other.

'Knock it off!' she said angrily and the twins started laughing before filling their own plates.

As Link finished his Cucco wings, a great host of ghosts flew into the room. He cried out in alarm as they started to dive past the tables eliciting screams and cheers from the students.

'Have you never seen a ghost before? Those are the ghosts of Hogwarts, there is one for each house plus a couple extras.' said a boy to his right.

Link nodded solemnly. *Ghosts! Well I can bring them peace. First chance I get I'll play the Song of Healing and set them free.*

Keeping one eye on the swirling apparitions, he returned to his meal. After a while he snuck a glance back over at the teachers table and noticed that the headmaster had vanished. Before he could consider where the old wizard had gone, he was distracted by Colin.

'You don't talk much do ya' Link?' asked Colin happily.

Link shook his head and pointed to his throat.

'Sore throat? You should eat some ice cream, lets see…Ah! Here you go!'

Colin grabbed a tub of ice cream and plopped it in front of him. Shrugging, he spooned himself some. Soon he was completely full and he leaned back to digest his food.

As he relaxed, a ghost in a nobleman's finery went drifting past the Gryffindor table. One of the two twins called out to it. 'Oy! Nick!'

Turning, the spectral man promptly drifted over and through the table towards the redhead. As it passed, Link recoiled and drew his legs back under the bench. He knew wizards were an eccentric bunch, but living in a haunted castle was almost too much.

'I don't suppose you've seen Ron and Harry, have you Nick?' asked one of the twins to the ghost.

'Our little sister is worried sick!' said the other with feigned concern as he cast a patronizing glance at Ginny.

'Oh, yes. They arrived here by a flying muggle carriage.' said Nick in a bored voice.

'They what!?' shrieked the bushy haired girl down the table. She looked like she might faint.

'Really?' asked the twins in an impressed voice. Nick nodded.
'Yes, they crashed it into the Whomping Willow and are now being interrogated in the dungeons. Poor souls.' said Nick forlornly, before floating off down the table.

The news of Harry and Ron's antics spread like wildfire down the Gryffindor table as everyone started talking at once.

'Bloody brilliant! That's legendary that is!'

'That Harry always knew how to make an entrance!'

'This'll go down in Hogwarts history!'

But not everyone was so enthused.

'I hope they don't get expelled. How can they be so stupid? They'd better have a good excuse…' said the bushy haired girl wringing her hands.

'Oh, I wouldn't worry about it Hermione. If all it took to get expelled was to steal a car, fly it over muggle property, and crash it into the school we would have been out ages ago. Isn't that right, Fred?' the other twin nodded sagely his cheeks puffed full of pudding.

'No, I don't believe it!' declared Hermione passionately, 'Harry and Ron would never do something so idiotic. They know how serious the statute of magical secrecy is. Especially after the trouble Harry got in this summer.' she said, sounding more and more uncertain with every word.

The twins shrugged and went back to their dessert.

*It being difficult to get kicked out of this school bodes well for me.* Thought Link happily as he drank another cup of water.

The headmaster, who at some point must have returned to the feast, rose and wished everyone goodnight. The room was filled with moans of disappointment as the food disappeared. With the sound of a hundred benches being pushed back, the students started to rise.

Link stood dutifully and found himself accompanying the other excitedly chatting first years. As they talked about the feast, he felt himself loosen up a bit.

*That wasn't so bad. Maybe I was worrying over nothing. A week, maybe two if I take the time to solve everyone's problems, and I'll be out of here.*

While Link and the rest of the Hogwarts students were enjoying the opening feast, a very different scene was playing out in the school's dungeons. Two boys, bruised and battered from crashing a flying Ford Angela into the Hogwarts grounds, were being chewed out by McGonagall for their recklessness. After she had thoroughly harangued them she departed, leaving a platter of cold sandwiches and a jug of pumpkin juice as their only company.

These two boys were Harry Potter and his best friend Ron Weasley. Their antics had rewarded them both with injury and detention (plus Ron's parents would have to answer for the flying car), but at least they weren't expelled.

'Wish we could've gone up to the feast…' said Harry morosely. Every day of enduring the meagre
ration at his foster family's house he had daydreamed about the food at Hogwarts. He had especially been looking forward to the opening ceremony.

'McGonagall didn't want us showing off I reckon. Doesn't want people to think its clever, arriving by flying car.' said Ron thoughtfully, before shoving two sandwiches that he had mashed together into his mouth.

'Arg leush Grinn ish Griffifoor!' stated Ron, spraying crumbs over his robes.

'Yeah.' agreed Harry, moving back from Ron slightly. Before they were apprehended by Snape, they had been able to sneak a peek into the Great Hall through the window and saw the new Gryffindors. 'But that's not all. Guess who I saw at the Gryffindor table?'

'Oough?' grunted Ron, still working down his double sandwich.

'That blonde kid from Knockturn Alley.'

Ron's face went pale and his eyes bulged. Though that might have been because he was choking. After a few moments of clutching his throat and a couple hard slaps to the back from Harry, Ron sat back up in his chair.

'That kid who bought that dark magic axe?' asked Ron incredulously and Harry nodded grimly. 'How does a kid like that end up in Gryffindor?'

'I don't know. But it must all be connected. Dobby had said that a plot was underway, and I bet you that kid is in the thick of it, I'm certain.'

Harry frowned slightly as Ron started to press three sandwiches' together.

'Jesus Ron. The sandwiches aren't going anywhere…'
With the feast concluded, the now contented students started to leave the Great Hall. Link and the other first years followed behind the older students into the bustling Entrance Hall corridor. For a moment the first years stood there uncertainly. Everyone seemed to be walking in separate directions, were they allowed to just roam free?

'First year Gryffindors! Over here!'

They all swiveled their heads. Standing by a wall was a tall, thin redhead waving them over. Link joined the others in grouping around him. As they converged, he surveyed them all critically. He had the same matching red hair as Ginny along with a pale face, freckles and slightly crooked looking glasses.

_Must be Ginny's brother. Come to think of it, she seems to have a lot of family going to school here, doesn't she?_

Once they had all gathered in front of him, he began to speak.

'First year Gryffindor students, may I have your attention please. My name is Percy Weasley and I am one of the school prefects. A prefect is a student who has been entrusted with insuring that their house mates follows the rules and exhibits the proper conduct becoming of their House. In Gryffindor, we pride ourselves on our exceptional record for good behaviour and setting an example for other students. It is expected that you will do the same.'

Link and the others nodded meekly.

'After me first-years. Come on, no need to be shy. I'll show you the way to the Gryffindor Common Room.'

Walking, he motioned to them from over his shoulder and they fell in step behind him. He led them across the busy hall and towards an open, stone doorway. Coming from inside, Link could hear an irregular grinding and booming sound.

'This is the Shifting Staircase.' Percy announced as they entered. There were collective gasps as the first years looked up at a series of staircases that were moving about, seemingly at random, to various doorways and passages.

'The Shifting Staircase is the most used staircase in Hogwarts for navigating to your classes, and in our case to Gryffindor Tower. It can be tricky at first, but you'll soon get the hang of it. Follow me please. Carefully now.'

Percy attempted to guide them up the stairs, but his instructions were in vain as almost immediately the stairwell devolved into chaos. Some of Link's fellows hesitated and missed their timing causing them to go down several levels while others ran ahead unnecessarily and got stuck on a completely different floor. Adding to the confusion, the first years from the other houses were also attempting to navigate the stairwell at the same time and it didn't take long before all the prefects were attempting to shout their instructions over each other. Rather than try and rush ahead, Link decided that it was better to just stick to Percy's side.

_This is one giant jumping puzzle. Thought Link as he watched his fellow first years get stuck or be_
taken back to the bottom of the stairs again. Oh, joy.

After a good thirty minutes everyone finally made it to the correct floor and Percy escorted them down another stretch of hallway. After walking a ways down the stone corridor, Percy stopped before a giant life size portrait of an overweight woman wearing a white dress and garland.

'This is the Fat Lady,' he said to the large woman and she bowed politely, 'She guards the entrance to the Gryffindor Tower. To enter, you must first speak the password.'

I have to "speak" the password? That's going to be a problem. Thought Link, frowning.

'If you don't speak the correct password you won't be admitted until someone else does.' Percy paused for a moment and surveyed them, 'You must never tell anyone the Gryffindor password. Never! It would be an immense embarrassment to our house if the password was released to the other houses, especially Slytherin. They're the green and silver lot with the snake symbol.'

'Why's that?' asked a girl.

'Because Slytherin is our house rival. Make no mistake, the other houses are our rivals too, but you will quickly find that Slytherin and Gryffindor do not mix.'

Percy approached the Fat Lady, 'Wattlebird.' he said loudly enough for everyone to hear.

At that, the portrait swung open revealing an arched passageway and Percy turned back to them.

'Come on.' he said motioning towards them.

Walking behind Percy, they entered into a richly decorated room that was partially full of other, older students. Tall, red curtained windows overlooking the castle grounds offered an unbroken view of the Forbidden Forest, Black Lake and the highlands beyond. Around the floor there were numerous small circular tables surrounded by comfortable chairs and in the center of the room against the right wall was an enormous stone fireplace flanked by long red couches. At the far end of the room there were two spiral staircases on opposite sides of the room that had seven different landings, each one with its own door.

'This is the Gryffindor Common Room. Here you can enjoy the company of your fellow Gryffindors and expect a mostly quiet working environment for your studies.'

Percy looked displeased as his speech was interrupted by a group of fourth years who started hooting with laughter over some joke.

'The couches are typically reserved for the senior students.' he continued, raising his voice slightly so as to be heard, 'There is no rule forbidding you from sitting there as such, but expect to be removed if you are.'

There was some grumbling at that, but Percy continued.

'The dormitories are located on the two spiral staircases at the other end of the room. The one on the right is for girls.' Percy pointed to the staircase, 'And the one on the left is for boys.' he pointed to the other. 'The dorms for the first-year students are located on the first landing of either staircase. I warn you that it is forbidden for male students to enter the girl's dorms.'

Everyone nodded in acknowledgment. Percy opened his mouth to continue, but then hesitated. Scowling slightly, he looked behind them to the door as a large group of students streamed in, laughing and talking with each other. It was starting to become quite rowdy.
'Now, restrooms are located to the rear of the room to the right. Each dorm has its own bathroom so you don't need to worry about crowding.'

The first years huddled in closer but they could barely hear Percy over the sounds of the incoming older students. The Common Room was getting packed.

'Your belongings have all been moved to your dorms! I recommend getting some rest for tomorrow! Listen! Tomorrow at breakfast, wait at the House Table! McGonagall will come by to give you all your schedules for your classes tomorrow! Goodnight!' Percy shouted.

Link looked around the crowded room in dismay.

*Jeez, there sure are a lot of Gryffindors. I hope Navi is okay! What with her still being stuffed in my hat; she's probably roasting!*

'Do you think we've got bunkbeds Link?' asked Colin excitedly.

Link turned back to him. Before he could respond, Colin suddenly shouted out, 'I call top bunk!'

'Nope! I called top bunk ages ago!' contested a second boy.

'First come, first served!' yelled a third, who immediately raced off towards the stairs.

There was a split second of hesitation. Then without warning all the first-year boys took off running for the dorms. Frantically dodging around crowds of conversing students, Link reached the staircase first. Charging up, he shouldered through the door on the first landing.

*Top bunk is MINE!* Thought Link as he burst into the room. However, to his slight disappointment there weren't any bunk beds. Instead there were a series of four poster beds set in alcoves, scattered into groups of five. Each bed had its own desk, nightstand and wardrobe. Next to the bed nearest to the door he spotted his giant loot sack leaned up by his drawers.

*I guess our beds are assigned. Kinda lame but, eh, whatever.*

Walking over, he hopped down on his pleasantly springy bed and gazed around the room. It was nice and spacious, with curtains around each bed should the person want privacy. All in all, it wasn't too bad. Hell, he was used to sleeping on grass so this was as good a place as he had ever had. Seconds later, the rest of the first-year boys burst in with Colin leading the charge.

'Shotgun!' shouted Colin triumphantly as he run into the room. Coming to a skidding halt he stopped and looked around. 'Oh. I thought there'd be bunkbeds. Never mind.'

The other boys piled up behind him. After shoving and squeezing past each other, they all ran to their own beds. Colin, who had been pushed into a corner by the stampede, looked at the bed across from Link.

'Hey Link, we're neighbours! Do you snore?' asked Colin, jumping atop his bed.

Link shook his head.

'It would be fine if you did. I'm used to it. My dad snores so loud, he sounds like trucks downshifting on the highway.' said Colin happily, bouncing up and down.

Colin noticed his blank expression and stopped.

'Oh! A truck is like a big metal carriage that carries tonnes of stuff for muggles. They're very loud.'
'Ahhh…' said Link, nodding politely.

Okay, enough screwing around. I need to get out of here and make sure that Navi is okay!

As Link got up to leave, Colin suddenly spoke to him in an odd, tentative voice.

'Hey Link. Er, I apologize if this is a weird question, but-' started Colin.

'Oh.' said Link. He repeated the same gesture he did with Luna and this time Colin understood.

'Ah…Sorry.' said Colin sympathetically. Link gave him a small grin and waved him on. 'Hey, want to go to the party downstairs? I've never been to a real party before. C'mon, let's go see if we can find Harry Potter! I heard he's really popular!

Before he could say anything, the other guys appeared behind him and despite his mute protests swept him out with them to the cheering crowds below.

Thrust into the midst the chatter, he quickly discovered that all anyone seemed to be talking about was Harry Potter. From what he could gather, Harry was something of a hero amongst those in Gryffindor House and his daring escapades was a source of endless speculation. Last year - which was Harry's first year incidentally - he had battled a troll in the girl's washroom, did a dungeon run with two of his pals, AND won Gryffindor the House Cup. Apparently this was a big deal. Especially for someone so young. Besides that, Harry was also renowned to the wizarding world in general. Link couldn't get all the details, but supposedly Harry had been able to defeat a powerful dark wizard when he was just a baby, earning him a distinctive lightning shaped scar on his forehead for his trouble. How he had managed that no one could say, but that didn't stop anyone from speculating. Wildly.

And constantly...

For some reason he couldn't help but feel a little annoyed listening to everyone go on and on about what a badass Harry was. Maybe it was jealousy. Or maybe it was just how enthusiastic everyone seemed to be about Harry's accomplishments. Whatever the case, something about Harry got on Link's nerves.

'The troll was like, fifteen, maybe twenty feet tall!' said one third year to the group of first years, 'Had a club the size of a couch! But Harry stood his ground! True Gryffindor, he is. Real courage!' Link forced himself to smile while his fellow first years all gasped in excitement.

'I killed the Demon God and stopped the apocalypse, but whatever...also saved a whole planet from a lunar collision...'

However, nobody seemed to notice his attitude. Everyone was too busy anticipating Harry's return so they could shower him with praise for his latest stunt. Nobody was sure what he had done exactly, but it involved stealing a flying car if Nearly Headless Nick was to be believed. An impressive feat, apparently.

Despite the energy in the room, Link quickly found himself growing bored. Plus he hadn't felt Navi move in his robes in a while and he was starting to really get worried. Deciding that he wasn't in the partying mood, he began working his way back to the portrait door. Slipping past his rambunctious housemates, he exited out the Common Room and into the hallway. As soon as the portrait door swung shut behind him, he let out a sigh of relief.

Finally I can hear myself think! I should find a secluded spot, like a bathroom or something so me...
Choosing a direction at random, he took off running in search of a washroom.

Finally! Thought Link as he opened the door revealing a clean, white tiled washroom. He'd been running around the halls for minutes. Whoever had built Hogwarts should have been committed to an insane asylum. The place simply made no sense. Hallways would terminate at random, stairs would lead nowhere, and he strongly suspected that the doors could move.

Entering, he slammed the door shut behind him before running down the empty bathroom aisle, pushing every stall open as he went. Once he confirmed that he was indeed alone, he opened his robes and took out his crumpled school hat. Turning the hat over, he started shaking until a very disorientated and miserable looking Navi fell out the end and into the bathroom sink with a loud plonk.

Groaning, she flopped over unto her back and took a giant gulp of air. Spreading her arms and legs against the gleaming ceramic of the bathroom sink like she was trying to make a snow angel, she looked up at him dazedly.

'Cold water please.' she croaked.

He turned the tap and a thin trickle of water began pouring from the faucet. Closing the drain, he watched as the sink slowly started to fill with Navi floating on top of the water like a lily pad.

'That was deeply unpleasant. We won't be doing that again.' said Navi with a tired sigh, her eyes closed.

Once the sink was full, he turned off the tap and waited. After a moment, she spoke again.

'How was the feast? Did you learn anything useful?' she asked, looking up at him.

He shook his head and she gave a weak nod. After resting for another minute, she jumped out of the water and flew up to the ceiling, flying around the light fixtures. Once she was finished stretching her wings, she stopped and hovered in front of him.

'We need to come up with a better solution than me hiding in your hat, Link.' she said seriously and he nodded. 'I think it would be better if I hide in your robes, thank goodness your tailor made them a little spacious.'

He ran his hand through his hair and frowned slightly, a gesture she knew all too well.

'What happened?' she asked tiredly.

Link held up his left hand, the Triforce clearly visible. She frowned. 'How did the concealment cream come off?' He splashed the water in the sink with his hand looking at her sheepishly.

'Did anyone see?' He nodded and held up one finger, 'Was it anyone important?' He bobbed his head slightly from side to side, before nodding.

'Oh, don't tell me. Luna, the girl from the train?' He nodded. 'I don't think she's that important Link, don't worry about it. Just try to be more careful next time.'
Navi looked around the bathroom again before turning back to him.

'I need to get some air. C'mon, let's go exploring.'

As Link pattered along the corridor, he noticed that though the halls of Hogwarts were empty, they weren't silent. Instead they were filled with the sounds of snoring pictures and paintings which adorned the walls, creating a distinct night time ambiance. Running down the hallway, he chose his direction at random, leaping down staircases as he came across them and poking his head into the few rooms that he could open.

So many rooms... He thought as he encountered yet another locked door, Gonna' have to collect a lot of keys.

'Are we allowed to be out right now?' asked Navi worriedly from inside his robes.

Link grinned and shook his head. Coming up on a staircase, He hopped and rolled his way down until he found himself in a familiar corridor. Looking ahead, he saw the Entrance Way passage. Glancing at the wall as he ran past, he slammed to a halt as he spotted four giant hourglasses, each as big as he was, filled to the brim with green, blue, red, and yellow rupees.

I've never seen so much cash in my life! With this, I could buy Hyrule Castle! Thought Link in awe, as he tried and failed to imagine how much money it must have taken to create this absurd decoration.

'Try not to drool too much.' said Navi sarcastically as he stood there, mouth agape.

Checking around apprehensively for any witnesses, he drew his slingshot and fired at the yellow rupee filled hourglass. Upon hitting the glass, the pebble rebounded straight back at him. Ducking, the rock flew over his head to skip and bounce across the floor.

Figures. I probably need to activate four switches or something.

After one more wistful glance at the sealed fortune, he left the hourglasses and proceeded down the Entrance Hall. On the other side, he spotted a giant glass bound display stuffed with crockery. Running forward, he pressed his nose against the case and examined its contents. Contained within was perhaps thirty or so pots. Each was vividly hand painted and depicted a different Hogwarts themed activity. He whistled and crouched down so he could read the brass adorned plaque. It read:

"Argus Filch presents: Hogwarts a Proud History in Clay" beside the plaque was a wood board sign that read "NO TOUCHING" in giant, angry red paint that looked like smeared blood.

Predictably the glass case was impervious to his slingshot as well. Sighing, he turned away from the display.

Soon. He promised himself.

Walking out of the Entrance Hall and into the grounds, he found himself in the castle bailey. Enclosed beneath the castle walls was an expansive courtyard containing a brick pavilion with several outdoor tables arranged around a softly tinkling fountain.
This is a nice castle. Zelda would be jealous.

Running around the perimeter of the keep, he carefully examined the windows and ledges, eyes peeled for Hookshot surfaces. As he studied a curious looking sloped ledge, he heard someone softly humming an off-key tune. Crouching low, he looked across the yard and spotted the giant form of Hagrid slowly plodding his way along a gravel pathway.

Curious, Link stealthily crept after him. Unaware that he was being followed, the giant ambled along, passing beneath the steel portcullis of the gatehouse and past the walls into the castle grounds proper. After a short walk through the grass yards, the giant stopped a few metres away from a thick trunked willow. Unlike many of the other trees, this one appeared to have relatively green leaves, though it was heavily damaged. Several of its branches were snapped and its trunk had a great gash across it which oozed sap.

Hagrid was muttering something, but Link couldn't quite make out what he was saying. Stepping forward, Link moved in closer. Coming in behind him, Link craned his ears.

'Blimey they really put 'uo through it. Gonna need sum' bandages. 'Spect Sprout'll-' Suddenly there was a snap and Link winced. He'd accidentally stepped on a dry fallen branch!

'Huh?' Hagrid turned.

Having nowhere to hide Link just stood there, red faced as Hagrid noticed him.

'Gah!' said Hagrid, choking on his breath as he jumped back a little 'Were'd 'uo come from? How come 'uo aren't with yer House?'

Link pointed up at the injured tree. Hagrid looked confused and looked at the tree than back at him.

'Wha'? It's a tree. What are 'uo doin' outside? Grounds are off limits past dark y'know.'

Link mimed walking with his fingers than shrugged, he pointed at the tree, then pointed at Hagrid.

Hagrid's mouth dropped open slightly and looked him in bewilderment.

'Wha'? Have 'uo been hexed?' said the groundskeeper, scratching his head in confusion.

He shook his head. He opened his mouth then closed it, pointed at his throat then shook his head. I bet I'm going to be doing this a lot in the next few days.

'Ye can't speak?'

Link clapped his hands and nodded.

'But yer at Hogwarts, how'll you…'Hagrid hesitated, 'Er, well, not that its my place to say…' he shifted his weight uncomfortably and Link frowned, 'In any case you can't be on the grounds at night.' Reaching forward, Hagrid grabbed his arm and started leading him back to the castle, 'Come on. I'm no teacher so I'll leave it be for tonight, but if ya' come out at night again you'll be in trouble.' he said gruffly.

Link briefly squirmed in the giant's grip, but quickly surrendered.

It's not worth it. This guy could probably pin me with one arm. Still though, what's the deal with
Coughing for attention, he pointed over his shoulder at the willow and raised his eyebrows quizzically.

'Aye, that's the Whompin' Willow. Been hurt by Harry Potter of all people, not too smart of 'em if you ask me. Yer curious bout Harry, is that why ya' came out 'ere?'

Link shook his head.

Jeez, Harry Potter must be a bigger deal than I thought!

'Wha' then? Just explorin'?'

He nodded and gave Hagrid a thumbs up.

'Oh.' Hagrid eyed him strangely for a moment before shrugging, 'Well yeah, that tree has been on these grounds for a while. Almost as long as me truth be told. Don't get close to it or it'll sock ya.'

The two continued on in silence for a while before Hagrid eyed him again.

'You know if ya' want to explore the grounds properly, come see me when ya' don't have class. I can give ya' a real tour o the place, seein' as how ya like trees an such.'

Link grinned and nodded.

Hagrid and Link soon entered back into the Entrance Hall. 'What's yer House?' he asked and Link pointed to the red rupee filled hourglass. 'Hmph, figures. Alrigh' come on.'

After another warning telling him to stay in the tower at night, Hagrid opened the portrait door and looked at him expectantly. Not wanting to risk any punishment, Link meekly entered the common area and the portrait swung shut behind him. Thankfully the room was empty and he didn't have to stand around like an idiot again. Climbing up the spiral staircase, he went into his dorm and found that the other boys were sound asleep. Slipping into his bed and shutting the curtains, he gave Navi the all clear and she flew from his robe and landed on his knee.

'What did that giant say to that painting? Wattlebird? Is that some sort of password?' asked Navi and he nodded, 'Well don't worry about that Link, I've got you covered.'

He nodded appreciatively and she looked over at his clock and sighed.

'Well we have six hours before class. What should we do?'

The two passed the time flipping through the rest of his spell books and looking at all the pictures. Though Navi seemed quite content to just read, Link quickly became bored. When at last dawn came, he "awoke" with his bunk mates and sprinted out of the room, ready for his first day of school.

Link ran to the nearly empty Gryffindor table and took a seat at the bench. Like last night, the table was stuffed with food, but he wasn't hungry. After all he had gorged himself on last night, he suspected that he wouldn't need to eat for another month. Instead, he helped himself to a glass of
orange juice and waited. Looking up, he noticed that the enchanted sky ceiling was filled with dreary, gray clouds.

*Looks like rain. Maybe there's some of my magic left in the sky? Strange.*

Turning his gaze to the teachers table, he saw that most of the professors, including the headmaster, were eating their breakfast and talking amongst themselves. They didn't seem to be a particularly menacing bunch, but you never could tell with wizards. Turning his attention to the other House tables he saw the pale, blonde boy that he had spotted at the curio store in Knockturn Alley seated with the Slytherins as well as a sleepy-eyed Luna over at the Ravenclaw table.

*Too bad she isn't in Gryffindor.* He thought wistfully before pouring himself more juice.

According to Percy, his school schedule would be delivered as soon as breakfast was finished so he really had nothing to do but wait. Drumming his fingers along the table, he was soon joined by some of his fellow first years, including Ginny. A few of them said good morning to him and he smiled in acknowledgment, but otherwise he just kept sipping away at his juice and looking around. Suddenly he heard Ginny gasp. Turning, he looked at her quizzically. Her face was as red as her hair and she was clutching a small black book tightly to her chest. She looked like she might faint.

'Um...' he waved his hand in front of her eyes, but she didn't react. She was totally transfixed.

Following her gaze, he saw two boys, slightly older than himself, stumbling groggily towards the table. One was a freckly redhead with slightly faded, patchy robes (probably another one of her brothers) and the other had black, unruly hair, glasses and a small scar on his forehead. Link perked up when he noticed the scar's shape. It was shaped like a lightning bolt.

*So that's the big hero Harry Potter, huh? Doesn't look like much to me...I guess that other guy is Don? Or wait, wasn't it Ron?*

Climbing over the benches a few seats away from Link, they joined Hermione who was nose deep in a book.

Suddenly Link heard the piercing shriek of an owl and his eyes shot upwards just as a host of owls flew into the Great Hall. Each one was carrying a letter or package in its beak or claws. Circling above the tables, they lapped the Great Hall before gracefully dropping their cargo into the waiting hands of its recipient. Well, except for Ron's owl which crashed head first into Hermione's cereal.

*This place is so weird!* He thought as he watched Ron, porridge dribbling down his face, stare bug-eyed at the limp bird while Hermione tentatively poked it.

'Morning Link! You were up late last night.' said Colin, sitting down beside him.

Link shrugged and reached back for pitcher again. Before he could pour himself another glass of orange juice however, an envelope hit him on the head. Grabbing it in confusion, he stared at the writing on the front. In well written Hylean script it read: "Link". Craning his head up to the ceiling, he saw a massive horned owl fly overhead.

*Is that Kaepora Gaebora?* He thought in amazement.

There was no confusing the gargantuan flying form of Kaepora Gaebora. A great horned owl the size of Hagrid, Kaepora Gaebora was an old friend of his who, along with Navi, guided him on his adventures. In times past, the great owl had been a reliable source of information and he always had helpful advice.
Link watched as before his very eyes the massive owl vanished into thin air moments before it
would have hit the wall. He looked around the Great Hall carefully, but no one seemed to have
noticed the impossibly large owl even as more than a few students were looking upward for their
own mail.

*He must have concealed himself somehow.* He reasoned numbly, *He is a great sage after all.*

Gradually, he became aware of Colin speaking to him.

'Do you see him? Over there.' Colin pointed at Harry Potter, 'Do you think I should-' but before he
could continue, the room was deafened by a shouting voice louder than Link had ever heard.
Wincing, he stuffed his fingers in his ears and looked in the direction of the commotion. It seemed
as though Ron's mail and grown a mouth and was now screeching at him.

'WHAT DID YOU THINK YOU WERE DOING STEALING THE CAR, I WOULDN'T HAVE
BEEN SURPRISED IF THEY'D EXPELLED YOU, YOU WAIT TILL I GET A HOLD OF
YOU, I DON'T SUPPOSE YOU STOPPED TO THINK WHAT YOUR FATHER AND I WENT
THROUGH WHEN WE SAW IT HAD GONE, WE RECEIVED A LETTER FROM
DUMBLEDORE LAST NIGHT, I THOUGHT YOUR FATHER WOULD DIE OF SHAME, WE
DIDN'T BRING YOU UP TO BEHAVE LIKE THIS, YOU AND HARRY COULD HAVE
BOTH DIED, WE ARE BOTH ABSOLUTELY DISGUSTED, YOUR FATHER'S FACING AN
INQUIRY AT WORK, IT'S ENTIRELY YOUR FAULT AND IF YOU PUT ANOTHER TOE
OUT OF LINE WE'LL BRING YOU STRAIGHT BACK HOME!'

The hall fell silent. While everyone was staring at Ron (who looked distinctly shell shocked), Link
took the opportunity to open his letter. It read:

"Friend, you must carry yourself with resolve and discretion in this place. Beware as you hunt for
the fragments of the Staff of Garouga, for I sense that there is another evil at work here. Should
you need my council, play my song and I will assist you."

*Another evil?* Thought Link, scratching his head as he tucked the letter into his robe for Navi to
read. *What else could be happening that could compare to the crystal shards?*

As the hall recovered from the burst of sound following Ron's embarrassing delivery, conversation
resumed and he was at last handed his schedule from McGonagall. To his dismay, the page was
filled with classes that ran for nearly the whole day.

*Oh, good. Schoolwork. Maybe this is the other evil…*

The first class on his and Colin's schedule was potions in the dungeons.

Navi perked up at that, 'Let's keep our ears peeled for tips, Link. Maybe we can figure out how to
make green potion.' she said eagerly.

He agreed. It would be so much easier to just brew green potion rather than have to go find
something to kill every time he needed to refill his magic power.

The potions classroom was as depressing as he pictured a class held in a dungeon would be. The
suitably grim decor was complete with grimy floors, chains with manacles bolted on the walls, and
an incessant dripping sound from some unseen leak. Shortly after sitting, the potions master, Severus Snape, introduced himself in dramatic fashion and spoke ominously about the power that potions held.

Link listened carefully. Though he was already familiar with the power of potions, he was shocked to learn just how many different varieties these wizards had. It seemed like they had a potion for everything from sleeping potions to bottled luck. It was all very fascinating.

*If anyone knows how to make a green potion it's this guy. Too bad he seems like an asshole.* He thought as Snape sneered at the class.

As soon as Snape had finished his no doubt well rehearsed opening monologue, he set the class to work producing a hiccupping potion. As the potion was supposed to be yellow, it wasn't one of the ones that Link had practiced making with Navi in the highlands outside of Hogsmeade. However, he found that it was actually a good deal easier than some of the others he had brewed while trying to recover his magic.

As they set to work, Link and the rest of the class quickly realized that Snape was not a teacher to be trifled with. Barely ten minutes into the lesson and Gryffindor had already lost twenty points. Luckily for him, Snape ignored him though Colin was less fortunate. While they were cutting their ingredients, he had discreetly tried to take the professors picture while Snape was busy with another student and been caught.

‘You attended muggle school is that correct?’ Snape said with a cold fury as he turned on Colin, who was holding his camera behind a face of horror. ‘What would be the punishment for someone taking pictures in class I wonder?’ Colin quickly stuffed away his camera ‘Twenty points from Gryffindor. Next time it will be confiscated.’ said Snape, his voice dripping with disdain.

*That makes forty points. Marked Link grimly, If I'm going to one hundred percent this place, I'm going to need to find a way to harvest points.*

After his potion class, they had transfiguration with McGonagall. In contrast to the potion makers dungeon, her classroom was brightly lit, with large windows and a high ceiling. Even better, there was a large grey and black cat lazily dozing on the teacher's desk (much to the delight of the girls).

'I can't believe I almost lost my camera, Link. And before I even got a chance to take a picture of Harry too!' bemoaned Colin as they went for an empty pair of desks, 'I'd have never forgiven myself!'

Link nodded politely though he was getting pretty tired of Colin constantly talking about Harry this, and Harry that. Unfortunately he seemed locked in with Colin. He hadn't gotten an opportunity to talk to anyone else.

*I'm kind of screwed. I'm a weirdo who doesn't talk and he's a weirdo who talks too much.* Thought Link as he watched Colin fruitlessly attempt to sneak up on the cat while noisily winding his camera. *I need to get someone else to talk with me before I start to go insane. Preferably someone not obsessed with Harry Potter. OR camera's. Let's see...*

Twisting around in his desk, he searched for a familiar face. As his eyes swept over his classmates, he spotted a flash of red.

*Ah, Ginny!*

Ginny had taken a seat near the back of the class and was busily unpacking her worn textbooks
from her giant, ugly schoolbag. Catching her eye, he smiled at her and raised his hand in greeting.

'Hey, Link. How's it going?' she said and he gave her a thumbs up. 'It's nice to be out of those damp dungeons isn't it?' he nodded enthusiastically before exhaling exaggeratedly. 'Yeah, it was pretty stuffy down there. Say, do you think those windows open? It's pretty hot in here too.' she pointed at the windows across the room. Shrugging, he hopped up to his feet and walked over.

Flipping open the latch, he slid the glass window up to let in a breeze. Poking his head outside for a moment, he took a long, deep breath. The air was hot and muggy and the clouds outside looked thicker than ever.

*It's going to rain soon. Somethings definitely off about the weather.*

Turning back inside, he saw that another girl had taken the seat beside Ginny and the two were now conversing. He sighed.

*Back to Colin I go I guess.* He thought glumly as he slowly went back to his seat.

Plopping himself down on his chair heavily, he rested his head in his hands and watched as Colin lined up his camera. Stretching itself out luxuriously on the desk, the cat sat up. Turning its green eyes on Colin, it treated him to an almost pitying glance.

'Good kitty! Now hold still…' Link heard Colin mumble.

However, the cat seemed to have other plans. Tensing, it abruptly leaped forward. As it flew, the cat transformed in midair into Professor McGonagall who landed neatly on her feet in front of Colin who at that precise moment flashed his camera. The class was stunned before breaking out in wild applause. Link joined in, dumbstruck at what he had just witnessed.

*No mask?! What can't these wizards do?*

McGonagall walked back to the front of the class as the students clapped. Once she reached her desk, she turned and raised her hand for silence.

'Thank you. What you just witnessed is an ability that those who have mastered transfiguration can possess, becoming an animagus. As I'm sure you realize, it is no exaggeration to say that transfiguration is one of the most versatile and useful fields of magic.'

*That would be extremely useful. Thought Link as his mind raced with possibilities Imagine becoming a wolf or a dragon or…*

'But,' continued McGonagall peering down at the class behind her glasses, 'it is also one of the most difficult and the consequences for failure can be extreme including injury, permanent disfigurement and death. To master transfiguration will require years of hard work and effort. Before we can begin with spells we must first start understanding the theory behind the magic.'

And so, the class spent the next half hour copying notes and writing out equations as McGonagall lectured on the core principles of transfiguration. Once she had finished, she passed out several boxes of matchsticks and instructed them to pull out their wands.

'For your first exercise you will be transfiguring these matches into needles. Wand movement-' started McGonagall gracefully sweeping her wand, 'and pronunciation-' Link gulped, 'is key in order to have the desired effect. The spell is "Paresperento" You may begin.'

With that everyone turned their wands on their matchsticks and began saying the phrase. The
results were about as dismal as one would expect from first years. Colin got his matchstick to reorient towards true North (though he may have nudged it while he was waving his wand around) and Ginny got hers to jump a bit but that was about it. McGonagall seemed unconcerned though and she began to hover over each student, examining their progress as they attempted the spell. While everyone else worked around him, Link just stood there, uncertain of what to do. One thing was for sure though. Obviously actually saying aloud the spell was a nonstarter, but he couldn't just stand there either.

_I'd better at least make a visible effort, even if I don't say the words._

Rolling up his sleeves, he readied his wand over his needle.

"_Paresperento_" He thought, mimicking McGonagall's movements from earlier.

Pointing his wand at his matchstick, it instantly transformed into a fine tipped, silver needle.

Upon witnessing this, his mouth dropped open in amazement before he snapped it shut and grinned smugly.

_Zelda? She has some power, still an amateur though. Ganon? Please, he can barely do card tricks!_

At that moment, he sensed McGonagall start to make her way over. Quickly adopting a straight face, he waited for her with baited breath. Sure enough upon seeing his newly transformed needle, her eyes widened. Snatching it from his desk, she inspected it closely for a moment before setting it back down in front of him.

'Excellent work, Mr. Link.' she said crisply, 'It has been some time since anyone managed a flawless transformation in the first lesson. Ten points to Gryffindor.'

He nodded casually in acknowledgement. Walking past him, McGonagall went over to Colin and began offering some advice. While they talked, Link fidgeted. He couldn't help himself. Glancing backwards at the clock, he pretended to check the time. To his immense satisfaction, he noticed that everyone was staring at him.

'Heh.'

Facing back forward, he felt his face slowly get flush.

Just barely, he heard Navi mutter, '...showoff...' and his grin widened.

_I mean, can't fault a guy for being talented. Can you?_

After that the class became filled with more forceful shouts of the spell as everyone redoubled their efforts to earn some praise of their own. Once McGonagall had finished commenting on Colin's work, he turned to Link with a look of awe.

'Great job, Link! You didn't even have to say the incantation! I've barely done anything...' said Colin looking at his matchstick enviously.

Meanwhile, Ginny slunk her way over to look at his matchstick enviously.

'Link! That was brilliant.' Ginny said enthusiastically, 'You've got to show me how you did it. Did you-'

The rest of the lesson Colin and Ginny probed him for tips and tricks on his spell work. Even
though he didn't have a clue what he was doing, he was happy to demonstrate his wand movements at least. Anything was better than more Harry Potter gossip. By the end of the lesson, neither of them had made any improvement, but at least they had some new things to talk about.

After transfiguration ended Link, Ginny, and Colin proceeded to their next class which was charms with the Ravenclaws. Upon entering, the charms classroom was crowded with Ravenclaws who were already set up and talking with one another. All of them except Luna who was seated by herself at the back, absently scribbling away at some parchment. Upon noticing them, she perked up.

'Oh, hey! Looks like we have charms together.' she said, somewhat breathlessly.

'Hi, Luna. How've your classes been so far?' asked Ginny, sitting next to her.

'They've been…fine. How about yours?'

While the two girls talked, Link and Colin got out their textbooks. As they were seating themselves, a diminutive man in a small black suit entered. He had a small tuft of white hair on top of his head and largish (for him) glasses. Climbing up a wobbly stack of books so he could see over the lectern, he patiently waited for everyone to be quiet.

'Welcome everyone to your first charms lesson.' he said in a high pitched voice, 'My name is Filius Flitwick though you may refer to me as Professor Flitwick or simply as Professor if you prefer. Now, charms is the magical school focused on bewitching the properties of objects. Like so.'

Without any warning, he suddenly pointed his wand directly at Link's head. Before he could do anything, Professor Flitwick made an upward swishing motion and Link's hat suddenly took off flying. Looking up in surprise, his hat flopped down right on top of his face.

The other students laughed and he reluctantly joined in, despite his racing heart.

If Navi were still in my hat that would have been the end! He thought, a bead of sweat rolling down his brow.

'Hey, check out his ears...' said a voice behind him.

Suddenly he heard a few whispers and some snickering. Pretending not to hear, he smiled uncomfortably as he pulled his hat back over his ears.

I was wondering when they'd notice. Whatever, I can handle a little ribbing.

However, despite himself he couldn't help but feel his friendly facade crack a little as he overheard the things being said behind him. Just as he feared, his nonhuman heritage was going to be a problem. Thankfully the whispers were interrupted by Flitwick who quickly called the class to order. After explaining some of the theory behind charms, everyone was instructed to try and get their neighbour's hat to fly and the room was filled with shrieks of laughter as they practiced the rudimentary charm that Flitwick had taught them.

Before long the class was over. Packing up his things, Link went to leave but before he could Professor Flitwick approached him.
'Excuse me, Link is it?'

He nodded and Flitwick motioned him over to the side.

'How was your first class? Good? Excellent, excellent. Er, listen-' began Flitwick, lowering his tone, '-about the hat trick I did on you earlier; I hadn't noticed, well your ears.'

'Huh?' said Link, subconsciously running a hand past his ears.

'Yes.' said Flitwick, smiling again before becoming serious, 'If I knew your situation, I would never have exposed you like that. I realize that it's a different time now, but for people like us we can sometimes still face ridicule.'

Link looked at him blankly until he noticed that Flitwick's ears were pointed like his were. Although not quite the same, he almost looked Hylean.

'I remember from my own Hogwarts days. I met many good people in that time, but... not all of the students were as understanding as they could have been of mixed parenting.'

Not knowing what to do, Link merely nodded. Mixed parenting? Does he think I'm only "part" human? Oh, great. If half humans are looked down on, then what's the situation for full on non-humans in this world?

'I didn't mean to call attention to you, if I made you uncomfortable, I apologize. If you ever feel overwhelmed by anything, remember that my office is always open.' finished Flitwick, smiling once more.

Confused, he gave the professor an awkward half nod before joining Colin, Ginny and Luna who were chatting by the door.

'Alright, Link?' asked Luna.

He nodded numbly.

Another thing to worry about. Maybe I should run off and hide somewhere so I can ask Navi's advice. Though I don't know what she could say. The secret's out now.

'I've been looking forward to lunch all day!' said Colin as they followed the crowd of students to the Great Hall, 'Hey Link, I couldn't help but notice that you didn't eat breakfast this morning. Are you more of a lunch guy or a supper guy?'

Link did his best to answer Colin's questions as they made their way to the Great Hall, but he was still thinking about what Flitwick had said. Upon arriving in the Great Hall, Ginny and Colin separated from Luna for the Gryffindor table and Link followed, waving goodbye to Luna as he went. Ginny and Colin both immediately selected seats as close to Harry Potter as possible and leaned in close. To Link's dismay, it quickly became obvious that Ginny was also quite the Harry Potter fan. Link was forced to listen as they delved into an in depth, slightly disturbing conversation about Harry's glasses.

'Did you see his picture in the Daily Prophet a few days ago? Harry looked...weird.' said Colin.

'He broke his glasses earlier that day before meeting Lockhart, that's why the picture in the Daily Prophet looked funny.' stated Ginny with certainty, 'Normally his glasses are perfect.'

Colin nodded, fingering his camera, 'But do you think he needs them? Do you think if I asked he'd
let me see his eyes without his glasses on?'

'S-see his eyes without his glasses on?' said Ginny going bright red. Link moaned and dropped his head in his hands.

*Is everyone in this school obsessed?*

After lunch, there was a short break before the next class was set to start. He looked over at Colin and Ginny to see what they planned on doing, but they seemed to be waiting for Harry and his friends so that they could follow him during their lunch break. That didn't exactly strike him as a fun time. Standing from the bench, he made to leave for the courtyard. Rather than mess around, it would probably be better to just find a private spot so he could talk to Navi. So much had happened already and he needed her advice.

However as he was leaving the Great Hall, Luna intercepted him at the door.

'Hey Link, are you heading out for your break?' she asked, falling in step with him.

He nodded reluctantly.

'Great! Erm. So am I.'

The two walked towards the outdoor courtyard just outside the Great Hall, neither of them speaking. Finally just as they left the Entrance Hall and stepped into the courtyard, Luna spoke up.

'Uh, so...Your new hat seems ghost free.' she said.

Link stared at her and nodded slowly.

Luna smiled at him and looked up, 'Looks like its going to rain again.'

'Hm.' said Link.

'Must be the work of Cokiko.' she said and he arched an eyebrow, 'Oh, that's a type of tree spirit. They try and lure people into forests so they can play tricks on them.' she clarified knowingly.

'Eh?' said Link, rubbing his neck and looking around nervously.

'Oh yes, they are these little green men that run around with flutes and try to confuse people into getting lost. It's said that with their flutes they can cast magic even!' 

*Crap!*

'Of course, all you have to do to defeat them is throw grass clippings at them. That's why I always carry grass clippings when I go into the forest.'

He looked at her dumbfounded.

Seemingly oblivious to his discomfort, she looked down at his left hand, 'Hey! You covered up your tattoo.'

Link froze then followed her gaze. The cream was still thickly applied on the back of his left hand. He looked back at her and blinked.

'H-Huh?' he said.
'Why'd you do that? Also, I've been wondering. Back at the sorting, what was that voice I heard-'

He went pale.

'-something about a distraction?'

Link ran his hand through his hair, eyes looking around wildly.

*I sure could use a distraction myself right about now.*

Miraculously, at that exact moment a boy's voice rang out from across the courtyard.

'Eeveryone que up! Harry Potter's giving out signed photos!'  

Link and Luna stopped and looked. Standing by the fountain, Harry and the pale blonde boy from the curio store were getting in each other's faces next to Colin of all people. While everyone was looking, Link decided to take his chance.

'Looks like a fight is about to break out.' said Luna dreamily, 'Do you think that-

While she was talking, Link quickly backed away from her. Slipping through the growing crowd, he took off at a full sprint out of the courtyard. Running around the side of the keep, Link stopped and checked behind him. Thankfully Luna was nowhere to be seen. Letting out a breath of relief, he cleared his throat to signal the all clear and Navi poked her head out of his robed.

'Link!' whispered Navi worriedly 'That girl knows. She knows about the Triforce! She knows about me! She might even have an idea about the Kokiri! What if she says something?'

'Mmm!' agreed Link breathing heavily.

'I don't know what the best course of action is Link. I think we need to ask Kaepora Gaebora for advice. If anyone can help us he can.' Link nodded and she continued, 'Tonight we need to talk with him. Until then just keep playing it cool.'

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Evening couldn't come soon enough. After lunch break ended, his next class was Herbology where they were treated to a tour of the greenhouse. All throughout the lesson, Link couldn't stop looking over his shoulder. He was convinced that at any moment he was going to be swarmed by angry wizards. His irritation was made worse by the class gossiping over what had happened in the courtyard with Harry and the blonde boy, who he learned was named Draco Malfoy. Unwillingly he was informed by Colin -who was right in the centre of the action as it happened- that Harry and Draco were bitter rivals who frequently clashed. Luckily before they could come to blows, Professor Lockhart had arrived to break up them up.

'To think I have a picture of Gilderoy Lockhart and Harry Potter together!' whispered Colin to Link, reverently cradling his camera as though it was his first born. Link gave him a strained smile as he looked over at the clock.

*Another hour and a half of this yet!* He thought impatiently as Madam Sprout showed the students the proper way to use a watering can.

As soon as class was over he rushed away, ignoring Ginny and Colin's cries of alarm. Dodging past
students as he ran along the pathways, he crossed the courtyard and headed through a gateway and down towards the castle grounds.

'Don't let yourself be spotted, Link. We can't have anyone following us.' Navi whispered as he eyed the distant treeline of the Forbidden Forest. Behind the clouds, the sun was still high in the sky, and there was a fair distance of open ground before the treeline. He hesitated.

*Should I go get the Stone Mask? Ah, man. I don't want to backtrack all the way to the Gryffindor Tower! Besides I can't spare the mana. I'm sure I'll be fine if I just run for it. At a full sprint I can reach the treeline in maybe a min-

'Oy! You'd better not be thinkin' of runnin' off again.' boomed a voice from behind causing him to jump. Whirling, he saw the approaching bulk of the Hagrid, 'Feasts startin' soon. Why aren't you at supper?'

'Uhhhh-' he stalled, trying to think of an appropriate mime-able excuse.

'Well don't dwaddle. Come on, it'll be dark before you know it, and the grounds is dangerous. Don't want you to be runnin' loose.' Hagrid said as he swept him back towards the castle and the Entrance Hall.

Caught again. Thought Link angrily, "It'll be dark before you know it." Please. Why can't I go for a walk outside the castle? Stupid rules...

Sensing his annoyance, Hagrid puffed up defensively, 'Don' be mad at me fer doin' my job.' he said gruffly. 'What could be so important anyways?' Link felt his face get red as Hagrid grumbled about "kids these days".

Before long the two entered the Great Hall and Link sped off to the Gryffindor table. Not wanting to draw anymore attention to himself, he sat at the end of the bench closest to the door, one leg swung out and ready to go. Checking the head table, it didn't seem as though any of the teachers were particularly interested in him. Maybe Luna hadn't told anybody? Still not hungry, he spent his time watching the clock and twirling his thumbs as the other students babbled about their first day of classes, what they did over the summer, and so on. When at last he saw a few fellow Gryffindor's get up to leave, he took that as his cue and fast walked out of the Great Hall and into the Entrance Hall.

'Link, listen!' whispered Navi sharply as he drew near the door, 'Nobody in the Great Hall was after you, which means that Luna must not have ousted us. I think you have time.' he grumbled irritably in response, 'What if Hagrid is watching again? Wait until nightfall or you'll just get caught again and then you might be in real trouble.'

Throwing up his hands in frustration, he changed course for the Shifting Staircase. It was just one thing after another. Approaching the Gryffindor Tower entrance portrait, he stopped and waited for the Fat Lady to finish sipping her tea.

'Password?' she asked, eyeing him cautiously.

'Wattlebird.' piped up Navi from within his robes.

The portrait swung open and he entered the deserted Common Room. Scaling the stairs to his dorm, he went to his bed and set in for another wait. After poking around his giant sack of school supplies for a bit and wandering around the room, he turned to the window just as a few tiny raindrops fell against the glass.
Depending on what Kaepora Gaebora says I might be leaving Hogwarts tonight.

Gazing outside, he was momentarily taken aback by the view. His dormitory had a sweeping view of the Black Lake and the highlands beyond. It was quite picturesque, but he was in no mood to appreciate the scenery. Looking over the Black Lake, he spotted the giant Octo briefly surface before submerging itself, disappearing beneath the increasingly choppy water.

Navi said she saw one of the pieces fall in the water...

He turned from the window and went over to his bed. He didn't have fond memories of exploring watery dungeons.

Just a little while longer…
As Link had suspected, escaping Hogwarts was much easier at night than it was during the day. After changing into his green tunic so as to not get his school robes wet in the now pouring rain, he was able to sneak outside without incident. Once he was free of the castle walls, he stealthily moved for the distant cover of the Forbidden Forest. As he ran across the open field separating the castle grounds from the forest, he felt a thrill of unease with every flash of lightning.

*That groundskeeper is probably watching me right now. Hell, knowing my luck lately, I'm sure I'll probably get struck by lightning.* He thought with amusement. At that moment a massive boom of thunder sounded directly above him and his smile quickly disappeared. Increasing his pace, he sprinted the remaining distance until he had at last reached the woods.

Once he was among the trees, he let out a small sigh of relief. He doubted that the giant, lumbering groundskeeper could track a Kokiri in a forest, much less during a storm, but even so he decided to take no chances. Equipping his hookshot, he spaced out his bootprints and took care to only step where the rain would wash away his tracks. Every once and a while he would use the hookshot to fling himself to a distant tree, breaking his already faint trail. Even he wouldn't be able to track himself now.

After a short while, the woods deepened and the castle disappeared behind the tree branches. Now that they were safely out of eyesight of the castle, Navi emerged from his tunic and flew alongside him. Keeping low so her glow lit up the way ahead, she let out a wistful sigh as she looked around the woods.

'Too bad it's raining again. It'll be nice to explore this place once its dried up some.'

Slogging through an especially deep mud patch, he grunted in agreement. A little water never hurt anyone, but this was among the worst, non-apocalyptic weather he'd ever seen. Rather than soaking into the soil, the rain simply pooled and flowed into the Black Lake. The drainage streams that were previously just trickling had swelled again into their post-flood volume. Dangerously swift and deep, these streams made traversing the forest floor difficult to say the least.

Pausing to take a breather, Link wiped the water from his eyes and peered up at the storm clouds above him.

*Where did this storm come from? This forest was dry as a bone a few days ago and now it rains?*

Shaking his head, he resumed his pace forward. Soon the trunks got thicker as he entered the Forbidden Forest proper. As he went deeper and deeper, his worries turned from Hagrid to the denizens of the forest itself. Besides the Lynels and giant spiders, he had no idea what other monsters might be lurking nearby. Equipping his axe and shield, he moved cautiously, ears peeled for the sound of hooves or the clicking of the spiders chitinous jaws.

'We're probably going to have to confront the monsters in these woods when we recover the crystal. Hopefully it didn't land in a spider nest.' Navi said queasily.

He wasn't so optimistic. In his experience whenever he needed something for a quest invariably the most evil, powerful thing in the area would be guarding it. Considering how deadly just one of those spiders had been, he was going to need all the help he could get.
Before long, they reached a small clearing. Stopping in the shelter of a stooped over oak, he waited to make sure there was nobody following him. After a minute or two of studying his surroundings, all he heard was the steady patter of rain on the trees.

'This spot looks good, Link.'

He agreed and pulled out the Ocarina of Time. Closing his eyes, he recalled the tune of Kaepora Gaebora and played The Song of Soaring. As the last note reverberated through the trees, Link and Navi felt the almost imperceptible beat of giant wings and rushing air. Looking up, they watched as the great horned owl alighted itself on a fallen tree in front of them.

'Ho! It has been some time, Hero.' said the deep, friendly voice of Kaepora Gaebora. Turning his head upside down he looked at Navi. 'A-Hoo! I see you found your friend.'

'Its nice to see you again, Gaebora. We were both surprised to hear from you.' said Navi respectfully as she gave the giant owl a slight bow.

'Woo! Yes, I had to journey far to reach this world. Ho! So far from where I usually fly. But for the Hero-' he turned his head back up right. '-I would fly anywhere.'

'Shaaa…' Link said, blushing.

_Does he have to put it that way?_

'Woo! So, you have played my song and here I am. How may I help you?'

'We have many questions and we need your wisdom.' said Navi eagerly.

'O-hoo! Wisdom? I will do my best. I have not soared these skies long, but I may be able to help you. Woo! Ask and I will answer.' said Gaebora, tucking his head into his body slightly.

'What do you know about the locations of the shards of the sorcerer's staff?'

'Woo! When the staff of Garouga was shattered it scattered across time. This was not due to the destruction of the staff, but rather because the staff wanted to escape the Hero. To come to another world where it could be rebuilt and used to dominate and destroy. Thus, the shards fell both with the Hero and before him, corrupting the land even as they arrived. That is what poisoned this forest so.'

Gaebora spread his wings wide at the surrounding trees. The forest certainly looked poisoned. Far more trees were dead than Link had thought and the Forbidden Forest was rapidly transforming into a bog.

'One shard lies in this forest. Held by one who can only see its light and has become obsessed with it. He is held back in a prison of memory. But, this prison is one of its own making, and in time he will escape. Unless he is stopped, Hogwarts will not survive his release.'

Link nodded.

_So it is in the forest!_

'The second shard fell into the Black Lake. Drawn to the people of the deep, it sought to bring corruption. However, fearful were they, and it was repulsed. To be returned to where corrupted things come; to the lair of the schemer.'
Link scratched his head, that one was more confusing.

Navi looked just as confused by that as he was. 'The schemer? Do you mean whoever is behind the plot at Hogwarts? We heard a man say that there was a plot to bring a dark artifact to school in the hands of a student or teacher. Is that what you mean?'

Gaebora turned his head back upside down. 'No. The plot at Hogwarts was years in the making. The chance at vengeance and a sudden opportunity. However, I sense that you must confront this evil to succeed in your quest. Steel yourself Hero, for the enemy you must face is ancient and powerful.'

Navi nodded thoughtfully before turning to Link, 'What else should we ask about?'

He pointed at his left hand where the rain had washed off his concealment cream, leaving the Triforce of Courage bare.

'Ooh yes. There was a girl who may have spotted me and the Triforce of Courage on Link's hand. What does this mean for our quest?'

Gaebora hooted again and realigned his head. 'You were right to hide yourself guardian. You would not be killed as you fear, but your discovery would cause a critical delay. As for the Triforce, this land is in need of powerful weapons. Weapons that might fight evil. Or not. If the Triforce became known, it would be sought out. Link is the rightful keeper, but the people of this world would not have the foresight to see that. Not until it was too late and great damage was done.'

He looked back at Navi to ask another question, but then the owl continued.

'As for the girl, she is no threat to you. You may befriend her if you wish. The quest does not demand it.'

Link rubbed his chin and nodded.

That's a relief. I like Luna.

'Hoo! How else may I serve you?' asked Gaebora as he flexed his mighty talons on the tree bark.

Link pointed to his ears before rubbing his hand over the pointed tips. He looked up at Gaebora questioningly.

'Ahooh! Yes, your Kokiri ancestry. In this world there is a prejudice against those of mixed blood. Your ears will be viewed as evidence of you being impure. This will result in petty insults and mockery. If you can endure these indignities than you will have nothing to fear.'

He nodded wearily.

Great.

'Now then, do you not want me to not have to repeat myself?' asked Gaebora, tucking in his head again and puffing out all his feathers. Navi turned to Link expectantly, her face featureless.

'Er…' started Link thinking about the question. He hated this stupid game. Mouthing back what Gaebora had asked him, he tried to concentrate.

'Y-Yes?' he guessed, fingers crossed.
'Hoo! Very well then. I will let you return to your journey.' Gaebora said, a hint of amusement in his rumbling voice.

*These two are always messing with me!* Link thought angrily, shooting Navi a dirty look. She merely looked back, blinking innocently.

'If you need to speak with me again, go to the school Owlery. Play my song and I will come. Farewell.'

With that the ancient sage Kaepora Gaebora spread his wings and silently took to the sky. Link waved farewell as the owl faded into nothingness in the rain. Once he was gone, Navi landed on his shoulder and stretched herself out. She let out a satisfied sigh before speaking.

'Well that was illuminating. It's nice to know we're not alone out here. And hey; from the sounds of things, we should be good to go and continue our quest.'

'Mmm!'

'So!' she said as he shouldered his axe and began walking out of the glade, 'The night is young. Forest or lake?'

Link could already see that the Black Lake was much larger than it had been yesterday. The surrounding highlands and forests funneled the rain into the bloated lake like a mosquito filling itself with blood. How much larger the lake would get remained to be seen, but it wouldn't take much more before it was spilling over to the gates of Hogwarts. Standing on the grassy shore, he looked over at the dim silhouette of the castle.

*I wonder if that boat tunnel has flooded?*

He removed the Zora mask from his tunic and turned it over in his hands. Inside the light blue, strangely scaly mask was bound the soul of Mikau, an adventurer like him who had met an unfortunate end. By wearing this mask, he would take on Mikau's form and become a Zora. The Zora were a race of mostly aquatic humanoids that he had encountered on several occasions during his travels (technically he was engaged to one, but he didn't like to think about that). When he had to explore an aquatic area, the Zora form was by far his most useful tool.

'Are you ready?' asked Navi, fluttering over the water. She could swim as well as she could fly, so the two wouldn't need to separate.

'Hep!' he said. Taking a breath, he pressed the Zora mask against his face.

Link felt the mask fuse with his face and magic pulsed through him. After a few painful moments, he looked down and saw the familiar fins sticking out of his forearms and forelegs. The transformation also added about three feet on top of his total height. It was always a surprise to have found that you have grown a few extra feet in a few seconds.

*Let's see how the water feels.*

Running forward, he jumped into the water and dove to the shallow shoreline's grassy floor. Above him he heard the pinging sounds of the raindrops hitting the lake surface, like rain against a metal
roof. The water itself was not terribly polluted, but fine grains of earth were drifting downwards to be deposited on the lake bed below. This fine muddy residue inhibited his vision and breathing some, but it wasn't unbearable. As he found his bearings Navi joined him.

'We should go to the very bottom. I bet you that's where the crystal piece is.' she said, floating beside him.

He agreed and started to follow the lake floor downwards. The waters were quite dark and even with his Zora eyes, he couldn't see more than a hundred feet in front of him. As they went they occasionally passed a sun bleached boulder or a drowned tree; yet more evidence of the flood.

*It's about a twenty-minute walk from the Forbidden Forest to the Lake. How long until the forest is underwater?*

Swimming deeper, he eventually came across a submerged wharf. It was remarkably preserved, even the glass windows of the boat house were unbroken. Whether a testament to the quality of its construction, or some magic trickery he couldn't tell but it was odd to say the least. Unable to stop himself, he went to one of the windows and peered inside.

'That's so surreal.' Navi murmured uneasily, Do you-' suddenly she perked up, 'Link! Over there!'

He turned and saw a massive shadow pass by, a dark cloud visible only by the silt it disturbed in its wake. It loomed over them for a moment before gliding away and retreating deeper into the water.

'The giant octo! I was hoping we wouldn't run into it. M-Maybe it will leave us alone?' Navi said hopefully.

He turned and faced her, suddenly very conscious of the fact that she was glowing brightly in the dark water.

'What?' said Navi defensively. He pointed at her and smothered one fist with his hand.

'Shut up! Why would it want me? I'm like a speck of dust to something that big. You're just trying to scare me…'

He turned and allowed himself a small grin before refocusing on his surroundings.

*It'll be back.*

Swimming past the wharf, they saw what the old lake bed looked like. Muddy earth stretched out gradually sloping downwards. Punctuating this gentle incline were small algal colonies that stretched upward towards the surface, swaying in the minute currents of the lake.

*No doubt a few days ago these reached the surface. Now they'll have to grow another thirty or so feet. Link thought as he swam past them.*

After following the muddy flats for a while, the gentle incline abruptly ended at a steep drop. Swimming to the edge of the seemingly bottomless chasm, he peered below. All he could see was a dark void. No doubt there would be little, if any warning about an attack from creatures down there.

'So, Link I think that's enough reconnaissance for tonight, lets regroup and…Hey!' Navi shouted as he started swimming down into the darkness.
Twisting over on his back, he looked over at her in feigned ignorance as he continued to backstroke his way deeper.

'We can come back during the daytime, fish brain!' she shouted after him as he kept swimming down. 'Daylight! Do you understand? Come back here...' He kept swimming. 'We don't need to- Ugh!' she zoomed over to his side, grumbling as he gave her a big dopey smile.

As they descended the small floating particles of dust and other debris disappeared and the water became much clearer, though this didn't improve visibility much as it was nearly pitch black.

At least I won't taste mud with each breath.

Soon the darkness was absolute and if weren't for Navi, who had begun to worriedly hum to herself, there would be no sensation whatsoever other than the constant grip of the water pressure. Link descended deeper and deeper until finally a massive shape appeared in Navi’s glow.

He tensed and slowly moved closer, but then relaxed as the shape became more clear. Before him was a giant column of algae. Stretching to unknown heights and depths, this living pillar swarmed with tiny fish and crustaceans feeding on the greenery.

Hey, that's pretty cool. He thought as he watched the shoals of silvery fish dart around, Being underwater isn't so bad. There's so much interesting stuff.

As he swam in for a closer look, suddenly four dog sized monsters came darting out from around the sides of the pillar, yipping wildly. They had humanoid heads, webbed hands and tentacles for legs. Barking like mad dogs, they shot forward, sharp teeth flashing. Without pausing to think, Link lashed out with the razor-sharp fins on his forearms at the creatures as they tried to close in. His cartilaginous bladed fins easily cut through the rubbery flesh of the monsters and as quickly as they had appeared two of the creatures were cut to pieces. The remaining two turned and swam back into the green column, screaming. Soon Link and Navi were surrounded by the still darkness again. Link looked down at Navi who was clinging by his hip.

'...why did the shard have to fall in the water...' she said softly.

Despite the danger of more of the beasts attacking, the algae was a feature outside of the void and he followed it down. Occasionally they would hear another yip or bark, but no more creatures emerged to attack. Deeper and deeper they went until far below Link gradually became aware of a growing light. Continuing on, this light eventually resolved itself into the lights of windows, street lamps, and homes.

Grinning, he turned to Navi and pointed to the village.

'What are you so happy about?' she asked sourly.

Cautiously they swam into the aquatic village. Landing on the flagstone street, Link looked around with interest. The village reminded him of Hogsmeade in many ways, except the occupants clearly had a better understanding of architecture. Slanted roofed homes, windowed shops, and mailboxes lined the paved, deserted street. Cupping his ear, he thought he could hear garbled voices from a few of the homes, but otherwise all was peaceful.
Spotting a clocktower in the distance, he read its bronzed hands.

*Half past two. Everyone must be sleeping.*

Walking toward the tower, he kept moving until finally he came upon a large empty square. Surrounding it were empty corral shell market stalls while in the centre of the square benches and chairs were arranged around the clock tower itself. On one side there was a domed, vividly painted pavilion and on the other a bricked manor house, the largest home in the village he had seen by far.

He turned to Navi and pointed at the manor house.

'Okay. We can try and ask them, but let me do the talking.'

Link nodded and the two set off for the large house. The mansion sat in the middle of the boundary of the square and was surrounded by a wrought brass fence with accompanying gate. Standing by the gate, Link rang an attached bell. The small bell sounded loudly in the water and after a moment of standing a strange figure emerged from the house.

The creature looked like a scaly human crossed with a fish. Rather than legs, its lower half was that of a fish with a large finned tail propelling itself through the water. It was curiously dressed in a black dress with a white apron. Though not laced, the edges of the apron were waved in a fashion reminiscent of a clam shell. The creature had pale, dull scales, and a flat face with no nose yet it did have nostrils. Its brown wispy hair was fashioned in a tight bun secured by a bone.

The creature approached the gate and looked at them, blinking.

'Gxoulixiushx?'

Link turned to Navi and gave her a small nudge.

'W-we come in peace.' Navi said apprehensively.

'Thxoixliyuikoilo oix bliuk.'

'I'm sorry I can't understand you.'

The creature stared at Link and Navi through the bars of the gate who stood and stared back.

'Link, maybe you should try. I think you have more experience than I do with silent communication.' Navi whispered.

But before he could do anything the creature opened the gate and bowed slightly. Link returned the gesture hastily. Seemingly satisfied, the creature held out an arm towards the manor and started swimming towards it. Following, Link trotted behind her down the path and up the steps of the porch until they stood before a large door. Opening it, she gestured with her arm again and Link stepped in.

Inside, he and Navi found themselves in a lavishly decorated foyer with a distinct nautical flair. Heavily oiled paintings depicting scenes of fantastical underwater landscapes were framed with carved driftwood. The floor was heavily carpeted with closely cropped algal mats that were both soft and satisfyingly squishy causing his flat feet to literally sink into it. Corral backed chairs and benches lined the bricked walls and an enormous brass chandelier cast a deep orange glow.

The female who offered him entrance moved down to another door. Turning she bowed to them again before opening the door and slipping through leaving Link and Navi alone in the foyer.
'So far so good, Link.'

After waiting for a minute or two the door opened again and the creature emerged. Bowing again, she gestured to the still open door and swam through it. Following her, Link and Navi went down a brick hallway adorned with yet more paintings. She opened another door and stepping through it, Link and Navi came upon a large study. Bookshelves lined the walls along with shells in glass cases and odd-looking artifacts that curved with vaguely sinister implications.

At the end of the room, a tall robed humanoid sat. He was bald save for a few wisps of white hair that gently floated in the water. His flat face was lined and he held himself with the quiet dignity of an important man. Link and Navi approached him and bowed.

'Greetings, I am Navi and this is Link.'

'Greetings.' said the man in a gravelly voice. 'I am Murcus. Chieftain of the Black Lake Selkies. Forgive me, but I do not recognize your kind.'

'Link is of the Zora, where rivers meet sea. I am a fairy.' said Navi simply.

Mrucus was silent as he looked between the two of them. Eventually he spoke again.

'To what do I owe the pleasure of your visit?'

'We are adventurers. We came to this village to seek a powerful dark artifact that fell in your shores.'

'Oh?' said Murcus leaning forward in his chair, his webbed fingers tensing on their armrests, 'And for what purpose do you seek this artifact?'

'We seek to destroy it.' she said firmly and Link nodded. This answer seemed to satisfy Murcus who leaned back again, relaxing slightly.

'I am afraid that that is impossible.'

'Why?' blurted Navi.

'If I had the artifact I would gladly turn it over to you, but alas I do not. When the gem first fell into our waters it plunged directly into our midst. Many approached the jewel before we understood its magical nature. You see, in our village we made an ancient pact with the magicians on the cliff shore. Any magic that falls below, we return above. I myself returned the gem to the school.'

'I-I see.' said Navi who looked at Link.

'It's already in the school? Does that mean the Headmaster has it? Link frowned at the thought. If it is already in the hands of a wizard...' 

'I see that I have upset you.' said Murcus. 'However, this is our way. It has been for centuries. Does the gem belong to you?'

'Not exactly, but we are oath bound to destroy it.'

'Oath bound, huh? Sounds impressive.' Thought Link dryly as Murcus stirred.

'My dealings with the wizards have not always been pleasant. However, their leader, Dumbledore, is honourable for a human. I can contact him for you if you wish. I'm sure he will oblige you in your duty.'
Not likely. I can think of few people who would willingly turn over that kind of power. If he does refuse, I'll have to fight him and if it comes to that I'd rather have the element of surprise.

Link looked at Navi and shook his head.

'Er, that won't be necessary Chief Murcus. When did you return the gem to him?'

'I didn't return the gem to Dumbledore.' said Murcus.

'Oh, then who?' she asked, puzzled.

'Like the others in the village I too felt its evil.' Murcus's voice grew lower, 'I could not bear to hold it. On the cliff side there are pipes. Some pipes push out, others pull in. I set the gem free on the currents. It is in the school now.'

Link suppressed the urge to sigh and merely nodded. He never got lucky.

'W-We understand Murcus. The gem is evil, no one should hold it.' said Navi solemnly.

'Will you seek out the gem in the castle?' asked Murcus, his voice normal again.

'Yes. Our duty compels us.'

'Then I wish you luck.'

Link and Navi looked over the Mervillage one last time before they swam upwards into the darkness. Their meeting with Murcus had been a resounding success, despite not getting the crystal.

'The sooner we're on dry land the better. Or land anyway. I'll take the rain over this abyss any day.'

Link said nothing. He was deep in thought over the implications of the crystal being in the castle.

I have to find that crystal piece before anyone else does. If a student or teacher finds it, then I'll have to fight another dark sorcerer in a castle filled with innocent people. It probably got stuck in the school pipes somewhere. Sounds like a job for Navi to me.

Steadily they moved up through the darkness until at last they spotted the ledge separating the shallows from the dark depths. As they rose to the cliff ledge, he noticed movement again in the murk of the shallows.

I knew you'd be back.

Link turned to face the growing shadow and Navi moved behind him over his left shoulder.

From out of the distant murk, loomed the creature that Hagrid had called the Giant Squid. It's name was not undeserved as it was easily over forty feet long. It was a deep purple, its giant tentacles swirling with a flexibility and strength that Link knew he could not match in his Zora form. He readied himself as the creature glided closer, disturbing the muddy cliff side in its wake.

The creature unfurled its tentacles behind it and shot towards him. He swam up and to the right
dodging past the squid's massive body. However, as he swam past a tentacle reached up behind him and grabbed his leg. Before he could react, the tentacle had wrapped itself around his knee up to his hip and began to contract. Jerking suddenly the squid whipped him through the water while contracting. Link felt as though he was being torn in half. Lashing wildly, he cut down on the tentacle closest to his knees. The bladed fins sliced through the squid's leathery flesh, releasing its inky blood in a choking cloud around him. The acrid taste of the blood filtered through his gills and entered his mouth, making him retch with its intensity. Swimming out of the cloud, he realized from the now distant cliff edge that he was upside down. Reorienting himself, he turned again to face the lurking darkness once more.

'Link!' cried Navi appearing beside him, 'Get to the cliffside! Put your back against something, it wants to drag you into the open water!'

Wordlessly, he started to swim backwards towards the cliff while keeping his eyes forward. However, before he could reach the cliff edge the squid reappeared again, this time with a burst of speed.

*If I dodge it will just grab me again with one of its tentacles! I need to attack its head.*

As the squid charged, Link swam forwards to intercept and land an attack on the its soft body. But before he could, the squid rapidly contorted itself. Seemingly enveloping around and inverting its central mass around him, Link briefly saw the infamous beak of the leviathan before he was in the creature's clutches once more. This time it was his right arm that was grabbed. With contemptuous ease the creature flexed and twisted, crushing the bone into sharp fragments. Link screamed as he brought his other arm down on the still twisting tentacle. Holding his breath this time, the black blood did not flood his mouth though he was still blinded by the cloud of gore that remained from his counterattack.

'Focus, Link. Keep swimming to the cliffside. It can't get behind you if you put your back to the cliff.'

He nodded. Rather than cautiously swim to the cliff, this time he opted for speed. Turning his back on the darkness, he put his energy into his legs while clutching his useless right arm to his side. Just as he was about to reach the cliffside, Navi shouted 'Behind you!' turning he saw as the creature was readying itself for another attack.

'Just keep swimming! Get to the cliff, Link!' Navi shouted as she shot past him towards the tentacled monstrosity.

He watched as Navi darted towards the creature as it charged. Zipping to and fro she crisscrossed before its giant yellow eyes which followed her movements curiously. Link kept swimming as the creature halted its charge and unfurled itself before the glowing light. The cliff edge was so close now.

Suddenly the squid whose tentacles were gliding gently around the waters near Navi shot out. Extending and then contracting they encased the tiny light and pulled the captured waters to the beasts waiting maw. Link froze in horror.

*Navi!*

The creature's oblong head swelled then shrunk as it expelled the muddied water from its body, retreating back into the clouded waters.

He could only float over the pit, the cliff forgotten.
Navi...

Then the tiny light reappeared, closing in towards him.

He shouted in surprise. Swimming forward, he went to meet her.

'What are you doing!? Get to the cliff edge!' she shouted angrily.

*Finish the fight first!* He turned and swam, swimming at full speed without a backward glance until finally he touched the eroded cliffside. Turning he planted his back on its uneven surface and readied himself.

He didn't have to wait long. Emerging from the darkness, the squid approached, its long tentacles trailing behind it. He watched warily as the squid passed overhead disappearing from view over the top of the clifftop. He kept his position, fearing some trap.

He waited until a cascade of mud flooded over the lip of the cliff, pouring down towards him. Rather than move out of the way, he closed his gills and hugged the precipice, letting the debris shower over him. As the debris passed by to the depths below the squid's tentacles reappeared. Gripping the rock, the rest of its shifting mass presented itself. At the root of its tentacled limbs, a lurid display of shifting tones of red surrounded a large, sharp beak.

Pressing downwards, it reached for him with its tentacles but he was prepared. Moving forwards he slashed at the thick limbs as they approached, spreading the beast's dark blood in the water. Though they were but scratches, he must have enraged it for it quickly met his advance and bore down on him. Opening its beak, Link saw the creature's gnashing whirlpool mouth of spiraling teeth. As the creature swelled, Link felt himself being pulled as the surrounding water was sucked in towards that great hungry maw. Digging his feet into the grooves of the cliff Link braced himself as the creature inhaled. Before long it had swelled to its maximum capacity.

At that moment, Link lunged forward and before the creature could expel itself away, he hacked at its central mass. Aiming his strikes around the mouth, he cut into its seemingly weightless flesh with his left fore fin. Flinching, the beast shifted and the beak snapped towards his chest but he was too quick. Spinning, he pushed up with his legs and coming towards its tentacles he slashed again, scoring deep wounds into the base of its thick limbs. In reaction the creature flailed and flattened itself against the cliff face.

Seeing his opening, he dodged around the contracting tentacles and at last faced the head. Turning its great yellow eyes on him the creature began to retreat into the swirling detritus. But before it could escape, Link gouged into its face. Ripping upwards just beneath the eye, he attempted to cut as deeply as the fin's length themselves. Blood shot out from this wound propelled by the captured water in the squid's head.

Shuddering greatly, the injured beast evidently decided that this new prey was not worth the fight and expelled the water it had drawn into itself. As it rocketed away, Link's fin ripped against the retreating monster's flesh as he pulled. A split-second later Link tumbled off the squid's body as it darted back into the swirling darkness, leaving behind only a trail of blood.

'Great job Link.' cried Navi, reappearing at his side. 'I knew you could do it! How's your arm? Can you move?'

Gritting his teeth, he nodded. Turning, he continued on to the shallows. Following the incline of the approaching shore, he surfaced and stumbled back onto land.
Clambering up on to the shore, Link barely managed to get out of the water before collapsing down on the grassy bank. Holding his right arm tightly against his chest, he flipped himself unto his back and pulled the Zora mask off with his left hand. As the magic of the mask subsided and he returned to his Kokiri form, he gasped as the pain in his arm surged anew. Looking down, he saw that his cradled right arm had swollen horribly. A giant lump ran from his elbow towards his mangled wrist and the skin was broken in a few places from where the squad had gripped him.

'It's going to be sunrise soon.'

Tearing his eyes away from his ruined arm, he looked up. Above him, Navi was hovering overhead, peering at the rain clouds. There, the faintest signs of light was appearing against the dark clouds.

'We should hurry back.'

'C-Cha.' he agreed, wincing in pain as he fished a bottle out of his pocket with his left hand.

The bottle was filled with milk that he had swiped from the dinner table. Popping off the cork, he chugged the warm, thick milk down. Coughing, he wiped his mouth and watched his arm. Slowly it began to throb less as the swelling gradually subsided. Before long, the pain disappeared completely as his bones re-knitted and his skin healed. Sighing in relief, he stood and stretched, flexing his fingers.

'Well that was horrific.' said Navi landing on his shoulder. 'But hey, it will make a great story for you and Ruto's children one day.' she said in his ear teasingly.

'Yuck!' said Link, sticking out his tongue in disgust.

'I'm sure she'll be very impressed.' Navi continued, delighted to see his discomfort. He flicked it at her with his finger, but she dodged him easily. Laughing, she jumped into his hair.

'What should we do today? Do you want to go to classes or would you rather just look for the crystal piece?' asked Navi as she crawled into his green cap.

I would rather do just about anything than sit through more boring classes and Harry Potter commentary. But, if I don't go, it'll just raise suspicion. That's the last thing I need.

'Ugh.' he said resignedly as he took off running towards Hogwarts.

'Alright, class it is. We'd better hurry or they'll wonder where you were all night.' she said and he nodded, picking up his pace.

I better not run into that giant groundskeeper again. If he sees me-

'Oh, and Link? When we get back to the dorm, make sure you have a bath.' said Navi quietly. 'You smell like seaweed and fish guts.'

'…'

'Did you hear me? I said- 'started Navi before Link cut her off angrily.
Creeping up to the Gryffindor Tower, Link quickly checked over his shoulder to make sure he wasn't being followed. On the way to the dormitories, he had almost run into the pot-maker Argus Filch. Luckily, he had the Stone Mask at the ready or else he likely would have found himself strung up in the dungeons. Even though he had managed to give the crotchety old man the slip, he couldn't let himself relax just yet. The castle was filled with secret passages and hiding spots from which you could surprise an enterprising young trespasser and he would need to keep his guard up.

*I wonder if somebody around here sells maps. Jeez, I never thought I'd ever think this but…I sure could use Tingle right about now. Thought Link as he poked the sleeping portrait of the Fat Lady awake.*

'I say!' she said, waking with a snort. 'You need to learn some manners! When I-

'Wattlebird.' said Navi over the Fat Lady's protests and the portrait swung open.

Stepping into the Common Room, he checked the clock above the fireplace. It would be another hour or so before everyone woke up, more than enough time to get cleaned up.

*I made it! And with plenty of time to spa-

'Well, well, well If it isn't a wee little first year.'

Link almost jumped out of his skin as he twirled around to face the voice. In the corner of the room sitting by the window were the two Weasley twins Fred and George.

'My, my, you look positively soaked.' said Fred looking down his nose at Link, 'How curious.'

'Perplexing.' added George as rain lashed against the window, 'How could that happen I wonder?'

'You don't suppose he's been…' began Fred and George leaned closer in open mouthed mock confusion '…outside?' finished Fred dramatically. George furrowed his brow in intense concentration while Link stood there helplessly, silently dripping water and mud on the carpet.

Finally, George spoke, 'Naw, that's ridiculous. Going out into the castle grounds at night is against the rules.'

'Oh, that's right. And a first year would never break the rules.' said Fred smacking his head, 'I guess it'll just be one of life's little mysteries.'

Fred and George snickered as he turned and stiffly walked away and up to the first-year dorms. If he didn't know any better he could swear he heard Navi snickering too.

At breakfast, Link treated himself to a cup of pumpkin juice while Colin and Ginny discussed the classes they had for the day.

'More potions.' sighed Ginny, 'I can't believe my brothers weren't exaggerating about Snape! He's
'Well, at least after this week we have flying lessons.' said Colin excitedly, before his smile faltered. 'If it's not raining that is.'

*If it rains next week too this castle might be underwater.* Link thought watching the owls swoop into the Great Hall.

'Have you ever been on a broom before, Link?' asked Colin between bites of his French toast. He paused thinking, then shook his head. *I've fought people on brooms, but I've never been on one.*

'Neither have I! You know about quidditch?' asked Colin.

He vaguely remembered seeing posters of quidditch players in the Hogsmeade post office, but that was the extent of his knowledge. He made a see-saw motion with his hand and shrugged. *'Well!' Colin started, a gleam in his eye 'It's this mental sport with brooms and bats and things. I don't know anything about it myself, but Harry Potter-' Link felt his smile fade '-' he's the youngest seeker that Gryffindor has had in a century! He's supposed to be brilliant and-'*

Suddenly Colin's face lit up as something across the room caught his eye. Sure enough, Link saw Harry, Ron, and Hermione entering the Great Hall. As the trio drew close several people called out to Harry and he waved in acknowledgment while his other two friends bickered to one another behind him.

'-all I'm saying Ronald, is that you shouldn't just be jamming a broken wand in your trousers.' said Hermione scathingly.

'-and all I'm saying Hermione, is that I'm not wearing a wand holster. What do I look like, to you? I mean honestly- '

The three seated themselves across from Link and Colin beside Ginny who instantly went stiff as a board. *'All right, Harry?' asked Colin, in what Link imagined was supposed to be a nonchalant tone.*

'Er, yes. Good morning Colin.' replied Harry politely, treating Colin to a friendly smile. Colin looked like he was about to faint with pleasure. *Yeah, I'm out of here.* Thought Link as he watched Colin start to fumble for his camera, *Before I die of embarrassment.*

He made to leave, but before he could take more than a step away, Hermione addressed him. '*So, uh, Link is it?*

Link turned around and saw that Ron, Harry, and Hermione were all staring at him. He nodded and sat back down at the table.

'Hi, my name is Hermione. This is Ron-' Ron gulped, '*-and this is Harry.' Harry nodded and said hello.*

'We're in second year. I saw you at the table last night but, um, I didn't get a chance to talk to you. So…' said Hermione smiling nervously. *'Um...How're you finding Hogwarts?' she said weakly,*
looking over at Harry and Ron for assistance.

He grinned and gave a thumbs up.

'I remember my first day at Hogwarts. I was new to the whole magic thing. Do you come from a wizarding family?' asked Harry, putting jam on his toast.

'Uh…' he considered the question. Seeing no advantage or disadvantage to lying he chose to be vague. Shaking his head, he suddenly gave a nod, then shrugged.

The three looked at each him in confusion before Colin piped up, 'Oh. Link can't talk. He's mute.' Ron's mouth dropped open. 'Wha? But what is someone like you doing at- ' Before he could continue Hermione elbowed him hard in the ribs.

'Forgive my friend. He's, well, an idiot.' said Hermione apologetically as Ron doubled over coughing.

'Pardon me if this is a rude question, but how is it that you can do magic with a wand if you're mute?' asked Harry.

Link looked at Harry, but before he could do anything Colin spoke again, 'Oh, he doesn't need to speak! He just points his wand!'

'Yeah.' squeaked Ginny, joining into the conversation, 'He does the movements though. It's what he did in classes yesterday.'

Harry turned to face her quizzically and she suddenly went bright red. Ducking around, she began fumbling in her bag for something. Link merely nodded.

Well it was bound to get out anyway. Frankly I'm surprised I wasn't called out sooner.

'Hang on.' said Ron coughing as he recovered from Hermione's attack. 'How do you get in the Tower if you can't say the password?'

Link froze.

'Shit!'

'Mmm…' stalled Link looking around, trying to buy time.

'Ronald!' said Hermione angrily, elbowing him again. 'Be more sensitive! Obviously, his friends help him! Sorry for Ron, Link. I try to help him, but…' she looked down at Ron pityingly who lifted himself back up to the table.

Link gave them small smile before he stood up and quickly walked away. For a moment it looked like Harry wanted to ask him another question, but thankfully the other second year Gryffindor boys arrived and interrupted him. As he left the Great Hall, he wiped his brow and whistled in relief.

That was close! Thankfully I'm charismatic enough to deflect any suspicion.
After breakfast, news quickly traveled around the school that he was mute. Professor McGonagall was especially shocked and demanded some proof. Thankfully after he repeated the *Paresperento* spell wordlessly she was convinced.

'It is uncommon, but people with your condition are able to perform nonverbal magic more easily than others. Still, oftentimes they require additional instruction. If you require my help on any of your classwork please let me know.' said McGonagall not unkindly.

In his charms lesson, Professor Flitwick was also quite impressed and spoke to him at length about how his own challenges made him into the wizard he was today. It was actually quite touching. Luckily Navi was there to ground him in reality.

'Don't think you have some extra special skill as a magician, Link!' she hissed as he walked to potions class, 'If it wasn't for the Triforce and the blessings of the sages, I doubt you could even-

Oof!' At that moment he "accidentally" collided with the dungeon room door before taking his seat beside Colin. In contrast to his other classes, potions proceeded normally. If Snape knew he was mute he didn't show it. In fact, he even took points off from Gryffindor from both him and Colin for talking in class. Link preferred it this way though. Snape treated him the same as all the other Gryffindors. He just wished that the default treatment wasn't like trash.

As bad as Snape could be though the worst reaction by far was from the Defense Against the Dark Arts instructor Professor Lockhart. Upon learning that he was mute he made him sit in the front row, first seat so that Lockhart could "hear him" better. After, he went into a long, winding speech about the importance of including Link in all discussions as "The quietest voice can sometimes speak the loudest."

*Well if this doesn't get me bullied, I don't know what will. Thanks Lockhart!* Thought Link, shrinking in his seat as the class started snickering.

Aside from the teachers, reactions from the students were mixed. Most of the students subsequently ignored him, albeit politely. Which suited him just fine. The Slytherins though found it amusing to ask him complicated questions and have him attempt to mime out the answer. He quickly learned to ignore them though. All in all, it was nothing he wasn't used to already.

By dinner time, he felt a sense of relief. One of his secrets was out and nobody seemed to care too much. As he walked to dinner he saw that Luna was sitting by herself at the Ravenclaw table, alone and isolated from her peers. He remembered what Gaebora had said to him.

*I should talk to her, I did just run away awkwardly before.*

Leaving the gaggle of first year Gryffindors behind, he went up to Luna and waved cheerily.

'Oh, hello Link. How are you?' asked Luna, surprised.

He sat beside her and grinned, shrugging.

'Are you allowed to sit with other houses?' she asked, glancing around.

Link shrugged and ducked down slightly.

'Well I suppose as long as nobody notices... So Link, about yesterday I'm sorry if I freaked you out or anything.' she said morosely.
He pointed at himself and raised his eyebrows before waving his hand dismissively and grinning at her.

'Well you looked pretty freaked out.' she said seriously.

He laughed nervously and shrugged again.

'Still, I have a bad habit of saying what's on my mind and I…see things that other people don't. Sometimes that makes people uncomfortable,' said Luna. She looked down the table at the other Ravenclaws who all were busily chatting with each other. 'It hasn't made me very popular.' she said confidentially.

He nodded solemnly.

'But I would like it if we could still be friends.'

The two then spent dinner together at the Ravenclaw table. Link noticed a few looks from the other Ravenclaw first years and some snickering from the Slytherins but he and Luna comfortably ignored them. At dinner's end, the two said their friendly farewells and separated with their housemates to their respective common rooms.

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Thursday and Friday passed slowly for Link and Navi. Despite reasoning that the crystal pieces were somewhere in the lower castle, their expeditions into the castle depths were slow and fruitless. Try as they might, they could not locate the secret dungeon that the piece had no doubt been washed into. To further complicate their searching, the recent heavy rainfall had managed to swell the Black Lake to the point where the lower most dungeons had flooded and they were subsequently closed off.

By Friday evening the clouds had finally broken over Hogwarts, but Link and Navi couldn't enjoy the weather. Instead they spent the night running through the castle dungeons, going back and forth, room by room, searching for some clue. At last, in the early hours of Saturday morning, Navi broke first.

'Link, maybe we should shake up our approach. Try something new.' she said hopefully as they poked through yet another damp and moldy storeroom. While she examined the walls and floor for any unusual cracks, Link was busy trying to arrange the crates in such a way as to create a pathway to a nook in the corner.

'If the crystal piece is in the castle, it sure isn't going anywhere that's for sure.'

' Hmm.' he replied thoughtfully as pushed a crate against the wall.

'And unless someone found it already, I think we have time to do other things. Maybe we should explore the grounds?' she suggested as she flew over a shelf full of pickled animal remains. 'It sure would be nice to get out of these…pantries? Why does a school need a room like this?' she said as she inspected what appeared to be a long forgotten mummified monkey. At least she hoped it was a monkey.

Link grabbed another crate and pushed it, creating new space.
Almost there. He thought with rising excitement.

'Anyway, what say you?' she asked, turning away from the creature remains.

'Hah!' Link shouted as he at last created a path to the hidden alcove. Running, he gleefully rushed at the treasure he had discovered. His expression quickly turned from happy excitement to frustration however as he had uncovered yet another vat of pulsating toxic slime.

'Gah!' he said, scowling. Kicking a piece of fallen masonry into the evil looking fluid, he turned to the exit and sighed.

'I know. How about we do some side questing? We should take a break anyway.' she said as they left the room with Link scampering back down the wet dungeon corridor.

'Mmm!' he agreed, skipping over a water filled hole in the floor. He could only take so much disappointment after all.

Link ran down the corridor towards the Gryffindor tower humming to himself softly. Today was the first day where he didn't have classes and as a result he could roam the castle freely. He had originally planned on using the day to find, explore, and conquer whatever dungeon the crystal piece had washed up in, but Navi's proposal of doing some side questing appealed to him.

Maybe I'll even have time to get some fishing in. He thought slyly. Navi didn't share his appreciation for the fine art of fishing and even claimed he used it as an excuse to procrastinate. Preposterous!

As he approached the Gryffindor Tower entrance, the portrait swung open revealing none other than Harry Potter and Colin. Harry looked dead on his feet as he stumbled out of the Common Room carrying what looked like a witch's broom. Colin on the other hand was bright eyed and wide awake, camera in hand. As usual he was bombarding Harry with questions.

'That broom you're carrying, is it heavy?'

'…no…'

'Have you ever tried sweeping dirt with it?'

'…no…'

'Can I touch it? I won't drop it. I promise!'

'…no…'

Harry and Colin stopped as they spotted him coming down the corridor towards them and he raised his hand in greeting.

'Oh, hey Link!' said Colin breathlessly, 'Your feet are all wet.'

The flooding is getting worse. I hope that dungeon water isn't contaminated or something. Thought Link as he looked down at his shoes.
He looked back up at Colin and Harry and blinked. He couldn't think of anything to say.

'Harry was just heading off to Quidditch practice! He's the most important player on the team!' said Colin excitedly and Harry groaned. 'Did you want to come watch practice with me?'

He shook his head and mimed putting his head on a pillow. Colin looked slightly disappointed as he slinked past the two.

'Hey, Link-' said Harry from behind him, '- how long were you waiting to be let into the Common Room? You didn't spend all night out there or something, did you?'

He turned back to Harry slowly. Before he could think of a response Colin spoke up.

'Oh, Link gets up really early Harry. He's always the first one to the breakfast table.' said Colin happily.

Link grinned slightly and nodded his head.

*Thank you, Colin.*

'Oh.' said Harry blankly as he twirled his broom in his hand. for a moment he looked confused about something, but Colin quickly interrupted the lull.

'Come on then, Harry. Show me the pitch! Why is it called a pitch by the way? Is it-' Colin continued to ask Harry questions as the portrait door closed. Link frowned once they disappeared from view.

*People are already becoming suspicious of me. I need to think of some sort of excuse as to why I'm up at such odd hours. Maybe sleepwalking? No, that's stupid...hmm...*

He turned back into the Common Room and got cleaned up. Once he had bathed and changed into his signature green tunic he considered his options. Milling about were several characters who were sure to provide him with some interesting problems and information.

Well you see it's my toad, Trevor.' said Neville sadly as he lifted up a sofa cushion and peered underneath, 'He's gone missing again, see? If you find him, can you bring him back to me?'

Link nodded.

*Find Neville's toad.*

'Hey there Link. Word to the wise, stay away from Argus Filch.' said Seamus.

Link raised his eyebrows questioningly.

'Yeah. Him and his cat Mrs. Norris. If he's after you just run. Don't bother hiding, his cat will sniff
you out. He has a key to every room in the castle so locked doors won't slow him down either.'

Link nodded.

Argus Filch has a Master Key.

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'Hey, uh, Link right? What's up?' said Dean Thomas with a yawn as he walked down the spiral staircase.

Link shrugged casually.

'How're you liking Hogwarts so far? Pretty fantastic isn't it? Fantastic, but crazy. Say, here's a tip for you, you remember that big guy who escorted you across the Black Lake? Hagrid?'

Link nodded.

'Well he lives on the grounds just a ways north of the castle. Seeing as how it isn't raining right now, why not take some time to visit his cabin? He's always friendly with us Gryffindors.'

Visit Hagrid.

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Link gripped the rusted-out gutter of the Gryffindor Tower's conical roof tightly as he slowly crawled hand over hand to a distant ledge. He wasn't afraid of heights, but he had enough experience climbing around old buildings to know that it was always better to take your time than rush. The gutter of the old tower shuddered every time he moved, but he wasn't worried. These wizards seemed to have a few tricks up their sleeves when it came to engineering. Once positioned, he carefully dropped himself on the wet angled tile of the rooftop that ran beneath the tower. The rain slick shingles were more slippery than he anticipated and he started to slide forwards towards the roof edge. Thankfully, clumps of moss growing from the centuries old wood planks provided him with enough purchase that he could recover his footing.

Standing carefully, he looked out from his new vantage point over the Hogwarts grounds. The Black Lake had nearly doubled in size since the Sorting Ceremony and choppy waves crested and fell across its surface.

Somewhere down there is that giant Octo. I hope I don't regret not finishing it off.

Looking in the opposite direction he spotted a tall stadium like building with raised bleachers that he assumed was the Quidditch Pitch. He could just barely make out black figures zipping around in mid air.

Must be the quidditch practice Colin was talking about.

As he continued to take in his surroundings, he heard a loud croak. Turning towards the sound, he saw a large toad splashing around in the scum filled rainwater that had collected in the gutter.
Trevor! Well that was easy! Thought Link, grinning to himself.

Slowly as to not lose his footing again, he crept over to the toad. Kneeling down, he reached into his tunic and pulled out a mask. It looked like a giant, green, over sized frog head with vivid yellow eyes. It's name was Don Gero's mask, and though it looked like it belonged in a novelty shop, it's enchantment enabled its wearer to speak to any animal they held in their hands. Admittedly not a very useful ability, but sometimes he liked to tease Navi by getting into long philosophical debates with mice. The squeaking drove her crazy.

Placing the frog head mask on his head, he plucked up the slippery toad from the gutter and, gripping it firmly, held it up to his face.

'Hi there. Trevor I presume? What are you doing out here on the roof?' croaked Link.

'Oh, I was just looking for some nice and dirty rain water.' croaked back Trevor haughtily. 'Is there a problem?'

'No, I don't mind.' answered Link politely as he slowly started to stand back up, toad in hand. 'But your friend Neville has been looking all over for you.'

'Humph! That fool boy worries too much. Can't an amphibian have some alone time?' grumbled Trevor. Link didn't know how to respond to that.

'Well, I can leave you in the gutter if you prefer...'

'No, no, no. I don't want to cause a fuss. I'm finished here, you may take me back to him.' croaked Trevor dismissively.

Link tucked the frog into his pocket before slowly climbing back up the angled roof. Moving carefully, he hopped up to the Gryffindor Tower's eavestrough and started back towards one of the tower windows where a pale faced Neville stood watching.

Aligning himself with the window, he started to swing back and forth to build up momentum for his leap. Realizing what he was about to do, Neville yelped in panic and scampered back from the window just as he leapt. Nimbly arching through the window, he rolled as he hit the floor. Standing, he smiled at Neville and held out the grumbling Trevor.

With pasty white shaking hands Neville reached out and took the toad from him, clutching it to his chest closely. 'T-that was c-c-crazy.' stammered Neville, 'H-how did you do that?'

Link shrugged. He had climbed a lot of trees in his day. It was actually one of his most useful skills.

'W-what are you wearing?' said Neville looking up at his frog head mask.

Oops! Thought Link as he pulled off the mask, grinning sheepishly.

'Well t-thanks L-Link. I'll m-make sure T-Trevor stays away from windows f-from now o-on.' said Neville stepping away, Trevor in hand. The frog let out one last mournful croak as the two climbed back up the spiral staircase.

One down, two to go.
Argus scowled as he limped forward through the dripping hallway. All the damp in the dungeons was making his bad leg sore. He was getting old. Too old for all the stairs in this damned castle. Rounding a corner, his scowl deepened as he saw another pool of water, this time running the entire length of the corridor. It was shallow, but there was no point in cleaning it. He had spent the last few days endlessly mopping, but it was no use. With all the rain and flooding, the water seemed to be seeping in from the very walls. At this rate, the whole of the dungeons would become uninhabitable.

If he didn't hurry he would miss breakfast. It was either cross the puddle and get his feet wet or walk around to another staircase. Swearing, he walked forward across the water.

*splash *splash *splash

'For twenty years I've been asking Dumbledore for an assistant. Twenty years…' mumbled the caretaker under his breath.

*splash *splash *splash

Argus stopped suddenly as his leg flared up.

'Damn wet and…'

*splash *splash

Argus whipped around, wild eyed and squinting.

'Peeves? Peeves, I'm in no mood today. No mood!' shouted Argus, squinting down the empty hallway.

But there was nothing there. After a moment of peering down the hall suspiciously, Argus grunted and turned back.

'…Damn castle…' he muttered as he limped down the corridor.

Once he had disappeared, Link pulled off the Stone Mask with one hand and held up the master key ring with the other.

*That was a close one!* He thought as he held up his prize.

'You've found the master key ring! It should open all the locked doors in Hogwarts. Well, all the locked doors that need keys to open anyway. Useful!' chirped Navi happily.

He tucked the heavy set of keys in his pocket.

*Two down, one to go.*
'You're in a good mood this morning.' noted Navi.

'Mmm!' he said as he kicked the stone a little further down the path.

_I sure got a lot done compared to the last two days of wandering around those gloomy dungeons. It might not be the main quest, but hey; progress is progress._

'That's great, Link. I told you some side questing would do you good. I wish I could fly around with you right now.' said Navi wistfully.

Link lightly patted his breast pocket where she was hiding.

_Once we're done with Hagrid I should see if I can sneak off to the forest. That way Navi can have some time to fly and I can get some scouting done. Nobody should bother us there._

Shortly after, he spotted Hagrid's wooden cabin off in the distance. It was a humble abode, typical in its construction just scaled up for Hagrid's size. Coming up on the large wooden door, he pounded heavily on its timber frame. After a few moments, the door swung open revealing none other than the sharply dressed Professor Lockhart.

'A-hah! A student has stumbled upon us Hagrid! Did you get lost, Link?' Lockhart said dotingly.

Taken off guard by Lockhart's sudden appearance, Link hesitated.

'Er.' he said, shifting his feet.

'Well don't worry, I can escort you back to the castle. Right after I finish helping my good friend Hagrid. Hagrid, you see, is in a bit of a pickle! Yes, a curious dilemma…'

Looking past Lockhart and into the house, Link spotted the groundskeeper glowering at Lockhart's back. He looked like he wanted to smash Lockhart in the back of the head with the gourd he was holding.

'Kelpies!' exclaimed Lockhart with dramatic flair, 'This will take a while.' said Lockhart straightening his robe, 'But I will explain to you both how to solve dilemma's. Albeit with a rather extreme example, the Bandon Banshee!' Hagrid and Link looked at each other.

_Y'know, I can come back later. Such a nice day this. I think I'll go find those spiders after all._

He turned. But before he could sneak away, Lockhart threw his arm over his shoulder. 'Come then, Link! No need to be frightened, I promise I will spare you the grisliest details.' he said, pulling the silently protesting boy with him into the cabin.

Shutting the door, Lockhart rather unceremoniously hauled Link back with him and smiled again. Hagrid, who hadn't moved from his sink rolled his eyes.

'So! Where were we?' Lockhart said, lightly patting Link across the shoulders who just stood there miserably, 'Ah, yes. So, it all started a few years ago. I was studying in the Himalayas at the time, when-'

Before he could say another word Hagrid cut him off.

'Well, er, professor its mighty, er, generous of you to offer to help me with one of yer'...stories, but I don't really give a damn to be frank with ya.' said Hagrid plainly. Lockhart reeled as though he had been punched, 'Besides, I don' have time to be gabbin' as such. What with the grounds bein' in the
state they is.'

'I-I see.' said Lockhart, his fingers suddenly digging into Link's shoulders, 'Well then I will leave you to your work. But I tell you what Hagrid, I am committed to being an advocate for you. So, I will have a copy of "Break with a Banshee" mailed to you. The illustrated edition, never fear.' he said, eyes twinkling. Hagrid looked murderous.

'Well then we'll be off.' Lockhart said and Link started squirming anew. Lockhart laughed, 'Don't worry Link, I'll have you back in the castle safe and sound in no time.'

Link looked at Hagrid pleadingly.

'Oh, er- actually professor I asked Link ter' come over this mornin' I was gonna' take him ter' see my… pumpkins.' said Hagrid.

'Oh?' said Lockhart in surprise looking down at Link who started nodding enthusiastically.

'Er, yeah he is, real… interested.' said Hagrid lamely.

'Well then.' Lockhart beamed, 'Good for you, Link. Overcoming your handicap, aiming high. Pumpkins seems like an ambitious hobby for you.' Link gawked and he heard Navi giggle. 'I must say my lessons have done you a world of good. Learn well my lad, and maybe, just maybe, you can grow pumpkins like our big friend Hagrid here.'

With that Lockhart let out a cheery wave and bid the two goodbye, flourishing his robes, he strolled out and closed the door behind him.

'Ruttin', idiot that one.' growled Hagrid, 'Well you wanted to go on a tour, did you?'

Link nodded and smiled gratefully.

'Well tha' can be arranged.' Hagrid said throwing his gourd into the sink. 'Tell me though, what makes you so interested in tree's an such?'

He shrugged, distracted by the large dog which had woken up. He beckoned the hound closer and it approached eagerly. Coming into reach, he began scratching under the dog's chin.

'Jus' like em' do you?' asked Hagrid as he seated himself in a large chair.

Link, who was still preoccupied with the dog, nodded again without looking over.

'Well I'd be happy to take ya' on a tour. Just let me-'

All of a sudden there came a loud knocking on the door. Link and Hagrid looked over and the hound woofed.

'Blimey, if it's that overstuffed pigeon again I'll-' Hagrid started as he stood and crossed the room to the door.

However when he threw open the door he revealed none other than Harry, Hermione, and a green faced Ron.
Without waiting for an invitation, Harry and Hermione piled into the groundskeeper's cabin dragging Ron between them.

'Hagrid! We need-' Harry stopped upon noticing Link, 'Oh. Hello.' said Harry awkwardly, 'If you have company Hagrid- ' before Harry could continue, he was interrupted as a giant, pulsating, green slug oozed out of Ron's mouth and plopped on the floor with a wet smack.

Link's jaw dropped.

*Holy crap!*

'Come in, come in.' waved Hagrid.

The three quickly entered and Hagrid closed the door behind them. Once they were inside, Hermione fled back to one of Hagrid's giant chairs and seated herself, while Harry dealt with Ron. Ron did not look well. His usually pasty skin was a distinct shade of green and his lips were coated in mucusy slug slime. Link watched in horrified fascination as Ron doubled over again.

'Here, here, just a second.' Hagrid turned and grabbed a shiny pot from his wall and dropped it down in front of Ron 'That'll do ya! Just work em' out, Ron. Better out than in I always say.'

Hermione gagged as Ron obliged, spewing more slugs into the basin in a thick stream. The sight of someone vomiting slugs was a first for Link who kept absently scratching the dog's ear while he watched Ron.

_They just keep coming and coming..._ Thought Link in numb amazement as the slug flood continued, _How much did he eat?!_

Harry, who had begun rubbing Ron's back, wrinkled his nose slightly, but otherwise said nothing as the retching continued. Though Link couldn't help but notice that Harry was careful to keep his eyes away from the pot. Link didn't blame him.

Hagrid didn't seem too disturbed though. Humming merrily, he went back to the kitchen and Link heard the clanking of cutlery. In his absence, all was silent as Ron continued to retch out slugs into Hagrid's pot.

Returning from the kitchen with an old biscuit tin piled high with a funny looking dessert, he offered it to the four.

'Are you guys hungry? Go on, eat up. Got plenty ter' spare.' he said jovially.

Hermione whipped her head back and forth in refusal, her mouth clamped shut. She was starting to look a little green herself. Link too shook his head.

Still not hungry. He thought. Harry took the tin and started working the candy into his mouth slowly, like he was chewing on some very thick tar.

'So, what brought this on?' asked Hagrid, unperturbed by the slugs filling his pot.

'Ronald cursed himself at quidditch practice today.' said Hermione queasily as Ron retched again.

'Accidentally.' managed Ron between slug waves.

'There was an argument on the pitch. The Slytherins showed up and Malfoy called Hermione a, uh…' Harry looked at Hermione uncomfortably.

'A mudblood. It doesn't mean anything to me.' said Hermione, shrugging.
Evidently though it was quite an insult as Link noticed Hagrid's face grow dark with anger.

'Malfoy! That boy...' growled Hagrid.

'What does it mean exactly?' asked Harry over the sound of slugs slapping metal.

'It means yer blood isn't pure, Harry. It's an old insult to people that have muggle family members. Some wizarding families, like the Malfoys, believe that if you have a muggle family member or your parents are muggles or whatever, that you are unworthy of being a wizard. It's all nonsense.'

'Yeah, unworthy.' Ron snorted, 'Hermione has the highest marks in the whole school- ' she blushed ' -meanwhile I'm pureblood and I can barely scrape through class.'

Hagrid humphed in agreement as Ron's praise was interrupted by another slug wave.

'Don't listen to that sort Hermione. In a few generations they'll probably not be any more of this pureblood nonsense anyway.' Hagrid said sitting down. As he sat, the dog left Link's side and went over to its master.

'Why was Lockhart here?' asked Ron between breaths.

'Oh, he was giving me "advice" on getting rid of kelpies' grumbled Hagrid, 'Bloomin' idiot.' Hermione shifted in her seat uncomfortably as he continued, 'Always butting in on everything. Bah! He should keep his mouth shut about things he don't understand.'

'There is more than one interpretation on how to approach situations with magic, Hagrid. I'm sure that he means well even if his methods seem unconventional.' said Hermione, slightly shriller than usual.

Hagrid snorted, but dropped the subject.

'So why're you here, Link?' asked Harry, shifting his attention to him.

Link stopped trying to coax the dog back over and looked up at Harry. Before he could do anything, Hagrid spoke for him.

'Oh, he's with me. I was gonna give him a tour o' the grounds. Do ya' wanna come?'

All three of them looked at each other. 'Er, well no I don't think we can manage, what with Ron as he is you know?' said Harry glancing at Ron as he burped up another fat slug. 'Besides, I think Link wouldn't want us spoiling all the…uh…surprises.'

Hagrid's face fell slightly, but he nodded regardless.

'Alright, then I'll see you three later. Don't hesitate to come visit.' said Hagrid as Harry and Hermione rose to leave. Ron gave one last blast of slugs into the basin before handing it back to Hagrid.

After the three had left and closed the door behind them Hagrid turned to him.

'Alright' just let me rinse this and we'll be off. Okay?'

'Hep!'
could see Harry and his posse slowly making their way back to the castle, occasionally stopping for Ron along the way.

*Seems like those three are everywhere I go.* He thought uneasily and he felt the Triforce pulse.

'Well!'

He turned and faced Hagrid who was putting on his moleskin coat while his giant dog loped around him, barking happily.

'Shall we go?'
Link, Hagrid, and his dog Fang spent the next few hours hiking through the muddy castle grounds at their leisure with Hagrid acting as guide, pointing out all the features that the school bounds had to offer. While they inspected the moat, Link couldn't help but notice that the waters had spilled over to cover the whole eastern lawn, even with it draining into the lake.

'Never seen anything like this before. Whole valley 'll drown if this keeps up.' murmured Hagrid as they sloshed through the ankle-deep water.

After they went around the walls, Hagrid showed him the school's vegetable gardens as well as the animal yards including the Cucco pen. Just watching them all strut around like they owned the place almost made him go berserk right there, but he managed to restrain himself for Hagrid's sake. Once Hagrid had finished showing him around the interior lawns surrounding the keep, they went over to the Black Lake. He was pleased to learn that fishing was permitted (much to Navi's dismay). In fact, the groundskeeper himself held the record for largest fish caught. When Hagrid told him it weighed over fifty pounds, Link's mouth dropped open in shock. Hagrid got a good laugh out of this.

_He can't be serious! The largest fish I've ever caught was a 17-pound Hylian Loach. Then again, they do have pretty big Octo's around these parts…_

'I don't see the big squiddie.' said Hagrid, frowning slightly as he squinted over the choppy water, 'On days like these, you can usually you can see em' gliding along the top o' the lake. Well, must be all this new water we're gettin'.'

'Hmmm…I wonder where he could be, Link?' whispered Navi slyly, 'I wonder, I wonder…'

_He attacked us! It was self defence!_ Thought Link, carefully avoiding Hagrid's eye as he looked out over the water.

Later, they revisited the Whomping Willow which was still recovering from being smashed into. Hagrid remarked that the tree would need at least another two months before its limbs had healed. While they were at the tree, Hagrid asked him if he had been sneaking out of the Gryffindor Tower and he dutifully shook his head.

'Humph.' snorted Hagrid, an amused look in his eye. 'O' course, o' course.'

Letting the subject drop, Hagrid explained the territorial nature of the Whomping Willow and how it could sense intruders if they got in range of its powerful limb like branches.

'Link promise me you won't try to tease that tree.' whispered Navi sternly as they followed Hagrid away.

'…'

'Link, you- ' began Navi but she fell silent when Hagrid started talking again.

'Ya' know I figured there was somethin' about ya' back when you jumped on that boat.' said Hagrid looking down at him, 'Somethin' different about ya'.'
Link was silent. He had really only done it to look cool in front of Luna, truth be told.

'Then ya snuck out on yer first night. I dunno, I thought ya was doin it just to be a troublemaker. Maybe ye' were. But I don't think a common troublemaker would go on a tour with me. Look at a bunch of plants n' things.' said Hagrid seriously.

He didn't know how to respond to that so he said nothing.

'Well, come on. There's one more thing I can show ya'. It's the treeline to the Forbidden Forest. We're not going in the forest proper mind you, but we can poke around the outskirts.' said Hagrid as he resumed walking again.

He followed as Hagrid began walking downhill, away from the castle lawns and through the steadily deepening water. After a messy journey they were at the marshy boundary to the Forbidden Forest.

He and Hagrid stood as close as they could to the treeline without having to flood their boots (though Link had already soaked through his soles). The forest appeared rotted. Trees that had died from the drought or were killed off by the flood had fallen over into a foot-deep expanse of brown, debris clogged water. Normally he would have expected the woods to be filled with the sounds of birds, yet the Forbidden Forest was oddly silent except for the sound of floodwaters still escaping into the Black Lake.

'It didn't used to be like this. Floodin' seems to have washed all the good stuff out. Nothin' but… well things ya' don't want after ya'.'

Hagrid sighed, 'I can't even go in very far now. The muds' so thick ya see?' Link nodded. 'Got to be careful at the best o' times in the forest. Ya' don' want to get stuck.'

'Hm.' Link murmured. *Mobility will be key. If I get ambushed while waste deep in mud...*

He dry swallowed at the thought.

*All I need to do is recover the crystal and in time the forest will heal.* He told himself as he surveyed the rotting landscape. *As long as I can keep a level head-

'Er. Tell you the truth I'd been meaning ter' ask you somethin'.’ Hagrid said, interrupting his thoughts.

' Eh?' Link said, glancing up at him. When he saw the serious look in Hagrid's eye's, he felt his heart race a little.

*Does he know something about the rainstorm?*

'Back when I was a student at Hogwarts-' started Hagrid his voice cracking, 'I had this pet see.'

*A pet? What is he...*

'But it wasn't just a pet to me. It was my best friend. I took care of it from birth.' continued Hagrid, choking up a little.
Oh God, that Octo wasn't his pet was it?

'And it was real clever, too. It could even talk-'  

It could talk?

'-and it understood me an' everything. Anyway, when we were walking aroun’ the school, I heard this little voice coming from your green hat thing there.' said Hagrid pointing at his hat.

Uh oh.

'I ain't sayin' you have got a little creature in there or nothin'!' said Hagrid quickly upon seeing his panic expression. 'I don't mean to put you in a spot either. I guess you just remind me of me I guess.'

Link stood there, taken aback.

'It doesn't bother me none and I think ya' know what yer' doin.' said Hagrid looking back into the swamp, 'You just got to be careful though. Not everyone understands…'

For a moment it looked like Hagrid was about to say more, but then he shook his head and turned back to him.

'Anyways, let's get back to the castle. It'll be supper soon and ya' went and missed lunch already. You must be starved.'

With that the two walked back to the castle, leaving the swamp behind them. Once they reached the Great Hall Hagrid said goodbye and Link smiled and waved. To his shock Hagrid took the gesture with surprising emotion and nearly went for a hug which he dodged by ducking and running away.

'He's nice. Link.' said Navi as Hagrid lumbered away. 'I like him.'

'Mmm.'

After his hike, Link went back to the Great Hall for dinner. As he entered he spotted Luna sitting alone again at the Ravenclaw table and she waved him over. As he took his usual seat beside her, he noticed a few stares from the other Ravenclaws and a couple of Slytherins whose house tables were next to each other, but he didn't care. After what Hagrid had said to him, he had much more important things on his mind.

Just as everyone was getting settled, Dumbledore stood and the hall fell silent.

'Everyone, I know we are all looking forward to our dinner so I will be brief. Sometime today our caretaker Argus Filch's keys went missing.' said Dumbledore. Filch, who was standing at his side, looked murderous.

'I cannot understate the severity of a missing master key ring; therefore, I would ask all students to please keep their eyes open. If you find these keys, please turn them in to your Head of House. If a student has the keys and is hiding them- Dumbledore's eyes swept over Link and he felt a brief thrill of fear '-the consequences will be severe. Thank you.' said Dumbledore, sitting. Once he had
sat, the tables filled with food and conversation picked up again.

*That was fast.* Thought Link nervously as Luna loaded up her plate, completely unconcerned, *So much for taking my time. I should explore the whole castle tonight, top to bottom. Once I'm finished, I'll leave the keys where they'll be found and that will hopefully be the end of it.*

'I was wondering Link, I don't think I've ever seen you eat anything. Don't you get hungry?' asked Luna as she poured gravy into the miniature caldera she had spooned into her mashed potatoes.

'Mmm.' he replied, half nodding.

'I see. Well as long as you're not starving I guess.' she said, shrugging to herself.

'Oh, look Loony and the Mutey are on another date together.' said a nearby Ravenclaw to his friends who chortled.

'That's Terry Boot.' said Luna once the laughter had subsided, pointing to the boy with her fork. 'He's not very clever so he picks on the first years to feel smart.' Link nodded sagely.

Terry snorted 'I suppose everyone in your year must be an idiot too then because they all make fun of you as well.'

'Well maybe they are.' said Luna simply. Terry rolled his eyes and went back to talking to his friends.

'Anyway, what are you doing tomorrow? Do you want to come to the library and study with me? We could do our charms homework together.' she said and Link nodded.

'Great! How about we meet after lunch then?'

He nodded again.

*Tonight; explore. Morning; avoid suspicion. Afternoon; study. Evening; conquer forest. Sounds like a plan to me.*

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Back in the Gryffindor first year's boy's dormitory, Link, Colin and the others were getting ready for bed. Of course, Link didn't actually sleep. So, in order for him to fool his fellow bunkmates he would put on his night clothes and climb in bed and wait. Usually they were all in bed by 11:00. By 12:00 they should be sound asleep. However just to make sure, he would play the Goron Lullaby on his ocarina. The Goron Lullaby would make anyone sleep deeply. Then he would be free to leave without anyone being any the wiser.

*I'm so clever.* Thought Link smugly as he lay on his bed, looking up at the ceiling. *I'm two steps ahead of everyone!*

'Hey Link you left your "Witch's Secret Shampoo" in the bathroom again.' said a snickering first year, who threw the pink, rose shaped bottle to him.

Link blushed as he caught the shampoo bottle and quickly stashed it back inside his nightstand drawer.
Did Navi have to pick the most embarrassing brand possible? He thought angrily as the other boys snickered around him.

'Hey, Link!' called out Colin as he walked in, 'Guess what? I got my pictures developed! They even move and everything! Want to see?'

This ought to be interesting Thought Link, sitting up as Colin pulled out a dark purple binder from his trunk.

'Here, take a look!' Colin walked over and opened the binder for him. Flipping through the pages, Link saw that in the short time he had been at Hogwarts Colin had taken hundreds of pictures. Most of them were of Harry Potter trying to get away, but in the top row of the first page there was the photo that Colin took of the opening ceremony boat ride. The picture featured Link, throwing his arms up to shield himself from the camera flash, a stunned looking Ginny, and a dazed Luna blinking with her mouth slightly open.

He laughed and gave Colin a thumbs up. However, looking at the photo he couldn't help but feel uneasy for some reason. But after seeing the other photo's in Colin's scrapbook and everyone's laughing reaction to them, he promptly forgot his concern and instead focused on his upcoming mission. Exploring the castle.

Later, he crawled under his covers and waited. Navi had made him promise that he wouldn't get impatient and sneak off early, so he was stuck twiddling his thumbs. Colin was usually the first one to fall asleep. Then the other four would drift off. Minutes then hours passed until after what seemed like an eternity, his bedside clock read midnight. Slipping out of his sheets and tiptoeing over to his green tunic, he grabbed his ocarina and played the Goron Lullaby.

After the song was finished and the enchantment took hold, Navi piped up, 'Excellent! Change and let's go. We've a lot of ground to cover, and not a lot of time to do it in.'

He held up the ocarina again.

'No, Link. We can't mess with time anymore than we need to.' said Navi patiently.

He grumbled as he pulled on his tunic and boots, just as he was pulling on his hat Navi landed on his head and was covered. He was ready.

Ducking through the dormitory door, he saw that the Common Room still had some older students studying and chatting amongst themselves. Pulling on the Stone Mask, he walked across the room to the door. Before he could reach it though, an exhausted looking Harry stumbled in, his glasses crooked on his face. Yawning, Harry staggered over to the staircase. Before the portrait closed, Link slipped past him and into the hall.

Guess Harry finished his detention.

'Alright Link, every locked door, every room, top to bottom. Ready?'

He pulled off the stone mask and started to do some warm up stretches. His magical stamina was getting low.

I'm going to need to kill something with my axe soon.

After a deep breath he took off down the hallway.
Link quickly ran through the room, flinging open the cupboards and peering beneath the desks. It was a strange place, filled with clocks of all makes, shapes, and sizes. The incessant ticking was almost deafening.

*If I had class in here, I'd go crazy.* He thought as he tipped over a clock shaped like a mermaid.

*Nothing.*

'Another room down Link, lets keep it up.' said Navi under his hat.

He nodded and ran out of the room. Once in the hallway he stopped to listen. When Hogwarts was quiet, like it was now, he could hear the pointed boots of the wizards on the stone floor from a mile away. Of course, that didn't include the caretaker's cat Mrs. Norris…

*I expected more security tonight, seeing as how the master key set was just stolen. I wonder where everyone is?*

He ran down the hallway before stopping in front of a bathroom door. It was a girl's bathroom with a large "Out of Order" sign on the door.

*I-I guess I should search everywhere. Still though…*

'…'

'Link?' whispered Navi, 'Clock's ticking, come on.'

He glanced around the hallway nervously before approaching the door. Just as he reached for the door handle, it started to open. Yelping in surprise, he hastily stepped back as, to his absolute horror, Ginny stepped out.

Laughing nervously, he threw his hands to his hips and tried to look innocent as Ginny emerged into the hallway. She looked at him briefly, before pushing past him, an empty expression on her face. Surprised, he looked at her eyes as she walked past. They were glassy and dull.

*Is she sleep walking?*

He watched perplexed as she calmly walked away down the hall before disappearing around the corner.

'That was close.' breathed Navi. 'But what was she doing here of all places? She definitely noticed you, too. Hell, she practically knocked you over.'

He gulped.

'Well, I'll think about it later. Keep exploring Link, we're on the clock.'

He nodded as he ran past the bathroom.

*No need to tempt fate twice.*

'But.' started Navi in her teasing tone 'What will sweet Princess Zelda think, when she finds out - And she will find out, trust me - about what you almost *did*, Link?'
As Navi started laughing, he imagined flushing a certain fairy down the toilet.

It was almost daybreak by the time he and Navi had went through the locked doors to the castle. He had come across many bizarre rooms and strange objects, but no crystal shard. There were still a few rooms that he didn't find a way to open, Navi guessed they probably needed a password, and no doubt he had missed a secret passage or two, but under the present circumstances he was pleased with himself.

*I can't believe I almost got busted by Ginny in the girls 2nd floor restroom. I would have never lived it down.*

There was only one thing left for him to do.

Creeping stealthily through the passageways, he silently moved towards the Entrance Hall. As he descended the Shifting Staircase he kept his ears peeled and his Stone Mask at the ready in case he needed to beat a hasty retreat. In the distance he heard what sounded like a sawmill cutting through some especially thick and dry old lumber.

Running on his tip toes as quietly as he could manage, he moved down the corridor towards the source of the sound. Peeking around a corner, he spotted the snoring caretaker Filch, dead asleep on a wooden chair, his hands clutching a nasty looking spiked club while Mrs. Norris lay curled at his feet, purring softly.

Filch was sitting facing towards his prized pot collection that lay tantalizingly out of reach behind the display glass. To his surprise, rigged up to the cabinet door was an elaborate series of ropes, pulleys, and counter weights attached to a large bell hanging from the ceiling that certainly wasn't there before.

Link scratched his chin as he studied the contraption.

*Someone's been busy...*

From what he could tell, if the cabinet doors were disturbed in any way, then the ropes would go slack, and the bell would ring.

'Hmmmmm...'

'Don't do it, Link.' moaned Navi, 'It's not worth it.'

'Shhh!' he whispered, *This will take every ounce of my concentration.*

'Give me a break...' Navi sighed, but he ignored her.

Looking around the room, he saw that for all of the mechanical complexity at work here, it all depended on the bell itself ringing. Normally he would just cut the rope, but it was under tension. If the rope was tampered with in any way the alarm would sound. But, without the bell to sound the alarm, it was just an over designed tripwire.

*I have to take out the bell then.*

Pulling out the Bow of Hero's, he charged an ice arrow and aimed for the very tip of the tongue of
the bell. Taking a breath, he steadied himself. If he was off by even an inch, he'd hit the bell and he'd be toast.

'Link! Are you sure about this? Won't the arrow just hit the bell and-' Link ignored her and fired.

At the moment of striking its target the air around the arrow froze into a giant block of ice, completely encasing the bell. Before the tongue could strike it was flash frozen just half a foot from sounding his doom.

He looked down at Filch and Mrs. Norris. Filch was still slumped over in his chair, snoring loudly and Mrs. Norris curled her tail but otherwise kept dozing. Grinning broadly, he unlocked the cabinet door and opened the display. Sure enough the ropes went slack but with nothing to trigger, they hung there useless.

'Just take one, Link. We don't have the time and we can't take the risk for you to haul thirty pots out.'

He nodded.

_Navi's right, but which one to take? Decisions, decisions._

Looking through the available pots, he selected the biggest one in the collection. It featured two red haired students hanging from chains in the dungeon, screaming in agony as they dangled above roaring flames.

Taking the pot out carefully and setting it on top of his head, he ran back the way he had come, careful to keep his balance. Running up the Shifting Staircase, he went to the very top ledge. Looking down, he began to grin savagely.

'Don't forget to return the keys.' reminded Navi who had flown out of his robe and onto the ledge handguard. He nodded and gently set the pot on the balcony. Taking the keys from his pocket he placed them inside the award-winning pot.

All was still for a moment. Closing his eyes, he took a deep breath.

_This is gonna be a good one. Yes. I can feel it!_

He opened his eyes. Letting out a tiny, mad giggle, he lightly coaxed the pot over the edge. The pot slowly rotated as it fell, tumbling end over end. As it passed down the stairwell, it narrowly dodged through the shifting staircases; almost as if they were moving out of the way for the ceramic missile. To Link it lasted seconds that almost seemed to stretch into minutes. A timeless period of beautiful freefall. Finally, it hit the stone floor far below and exploded into a million hand painted shards. Countless hours of loving artistic dedication and craft, gone in a micro instant. It was glorious.

Link closed his eyes and exhaled, clutching his heart. Leaning back upright, he replayed the exquisite sight over and over again in his mind, committing every detail of his vandalism to memory.

'Link, you need help.' whispered Navi seriously as he felt tears start to form in his eyes.

His moment of ecstasy was interrupted by an echoing howl of rage from the bottom of the stairs. Filch had awoken, and boy did he sound pissed.

_Time to go._
Jumping away from the balcony, he began to run back to Gryffindor Tower.

_He can't catch me, I'm faster than anyone. I'm-_ His thoughts were interrupted by another howl. Louder than before.

Link felt his confidence fade and his face drain of colour. Something that he hadn't considered until just now was that the castle had many secret passages and shortcuts. Shortcuts that Filch was rumored to know better than any other member of the faculty. Picking up the pace, he started to sprint as though Ganon himself was chasing him. Over his shoulder, he started to hear noises. Pounding feet; wheezing breath.

_No. No! It couldn't be! There's no way!

Flying down the corridor, he nearly ran through the portrait as he came to a stop.

'Wattlebird! Wattlebird!' said Navi fearfully as Link checked behind them.

The corridor was empty, but in the distance they could hear frenzied cries. The sound of a blood mad beast on the hunt. Abandoning any pretense of calm, Link started to rapidly poke the Fat Lady's face. Stirring groggily, she awoke with a snort.

'Huh? What? What is it?' said the Fat Lady blearily.

'Wattlebird!' cried Navi frantically.

'Oh, its you. The green boy with the weird voice-' started the portrait in an annoyed tone.

'DEATH!' shrieked Filch, much louder and nearer than Link would have thought possible.

'-you know it is customary to sleep at night-' she continued, puffing herself up as she looked at him haughtily.

'THIS TIME! THIS TIME!' bellowed the nearly unrecognizable voice of Filch. He sounded more animal than man.

'-I certainly try to. But you seem to think that-' she continued, wagging her finger.

_The stone mask won't work on someone who's enraged! He's too alert, he'll see through my illusions!

'Hey! Listen!' shouted Navi in her most severe tone. The line caused Link to flinch reflexively. 'Open this door! Wattlebird!'

'Why, I never…'

The portrait door opened and he dashed in. Just before slamming it shut, he saw Filch's looming shadow appear on the far wall.

With the portrait shut the blood curdling cries of Filch were suddenly cut off, but it was a moments respite. Link moved without hesitating.

_In a few seconds he'll be at the door. I have to move fast! If I'm not in my bed, it'll be a dead give away!_

Taking the stairs three at a time, he catapulted himself up to the boy's dormitory. Sprinting into the first-year dorm, he breathlessly glanced around the room. His bunkmates were still sound asleep,
blissfully unaware of the approaching storm.

_**Goron's Lullyby is still affecting them. For now.**_

Throwing off his tunic, he heedlessly pulled on his pyjamas as fast as he could. While he changed, Navi fluttered away into the depths of his bedding. Once he was in his nightclothes, he dove under the covers of his bed and waited.

There was a second of silence. Then another.

A third second passed.

Then the portrait door opened.

'WHERE ARE YOU!?!' screamed Filch, his terrible voice piercing through to every room in the tower. 'YOU RED-HEADED BASTARDS! COME OUT! COME OUT!'  

Filch had come to deliver his reckoning. Link recoiled as he heard Filch hobbling up the spiral staircase, his voice growing louder as he grew closer. The other boys in the room awoke slowly, the ocarina's enchantment over them broken by the noise.

'Wha-what's going on?' said Colin sleepily.

'ARGH!' bellowed Filch as he moved past the first year's room and Colin threw his covers over his head, shaking in fear.

Everyone in the room lay frozen as they listened to Filch hound down the Weasley twins. Before long he had them in his clutches and was hauling them down the staircase.

'Well Fred, this is the end.' said George off-handily as he was hauled bodily down the stairs.

'That's putting it lightly, George.' returned Fred, stifling a yawn.

'SHUT UP!' screeched Filch.

*Sorry Fred, sorry George. Should your spirits be broken, I will lay them to rest. Thought Link guiltily.*

As quickly as he had appeared, Filch was gone. Fred and George were hauled out of the tower and all was silent again.

In the aftermath of Filch's vengeance, the entirety of Gryffindor House had awoken and had crammed itself into the Common Room to talk about what they had just seen.

'I almost had a heart attack when I heard!'

'Fred and George are goners, goners! No way they aren't expelled assuming they did what I think they did.'

'What could they have done? You don't think they smashed his pots, do you?'
Link was seated by the window with all the other first years after they were shooed away from the fireplace by the older Gryffindors. At the moment, he and a few others were trying their best to calm down Ginny who was in a state of panic.

'Mum'll kill them if they get expelled! It couldn't have been them. It just couldn't have been!' she said, sobbing.

*If it comes down to it, I'll take the blame. But maybe they'll be exonerated by the lack of evidence!* Thought Link as he patted her back comfortably.

The other Gryffindors did not seem as optimistic in the possibility of a fair trial however.

'Filch has had it in for them since first year. They're screwed.'

'Poor Fred and George. Cut down in the prime of their lives…'

The portrait door swung open and everyone turned their heads. It was non-other than Professor McGonagall. She looked especially tight lipped and angry, and beneath her gaze the room fell silent.

'Professor McGonagall - ma'am.' said Percy pushing his way to her. He took a deep breath, 'Fred and George, have they been expelled?'

McGonagall looked at him, 'No.' she said tersely and there was shouts of relief from around the room, Ginny looked like she could start crying again.

'However, at this moment an investigation is ongoing. In the interest of Gryffindor House, I have volunteered your co-operation. I ask that each student before leaving this room, present their wand to me for inspection. After which, you will proceed to the Great Hall and sit quietly. Understood?'

There was some nervous shuffling of feet before McGonagall continued. 'Do not worry. I know that none of the students in Gryffindor House would be so recklessly stupid - so incredibly insensitive, to attempt what happened tonight.'

McGonagall called the first-year students up first. Holding each of their wands in turn, she muttered an incantation with her own wand held aloft. Every time she did so a different effect would occur. When she did it to Link's wand, he noticed that a nearby stack of papers flew slightly.

*Did she recall the last spell I cast? Interesting. It's a good thing I only use my wand for classwork.*

After she had examined his wand he was permitted to leave the tower. Walking down to the Great Hall, he saw that the House tables were also filling up slowly with pajama clad students. However, only first years were in the hall so far. Link didn't dare go sit with Luna under these circumstances so instead he went to sit with his fellow Gryffindors. Amazingly he saw that Fred and George were seated at the table, crowded by excited first years.

He joined them, sitting as close to the twins as he could.

'What did you guys do this time?' asked a blonde girl he didn't know.

'Well, we have been accused-' started Fred

'Accused only mind you.' interjected George

'Yes. Accused of sabotaging ol' Argy's piss pot collection.' finished Fred nonchalantly, clearly
enjoying the attention.

The first years started to shower them with praise which they received magnanimously. The effect was undone somewhat by the arrival of Ginny who dove into them for a hug, much to their embarrassment. After about two hours, all of the students from first to seventh year had arrived and each table was filled with people talking about what was going to happen next.

Before long Dumbledore entered the hall and everyone fell silent. Accompanying him were the four heads of house, each one looking especially displeased.

'Well it seems as though we've all had quite an eventful Sunday. I'm sure most of you have by now heard of what has transpired tonight, but to prevent rumour I will tell you all why we're here.' said Dumbledore to the room. He was not smiling.

'Sometime this morning before five, the master key set that had been taken from our caretaker Argus Filch was used to open the "Hogwarts a Proud History in Clay" display in the Entrance Hall. To do so the culprit first performed an unusual spell that I have not seen before-

Link smiled in spite of himself before quickly regaining his composure.

Now's not the time to feel smug!

'-to bypass the security at the cabinet. Once this person had bypassed the security, they stole a ceramic art piece titled "Just Desserts". Then, pot in hand, they retreated up the Shifting Staircase and dropped it from the top floor.'

Nobody dared make a sound as Filch, who was standing by the headmaster's shoulder, appeared ready to explode.

'Now as of yet, we have no suspects, but if anyone knows anything, I would urge them to come see me.'

The hall was silent as everyone looked at each other. More than a few people looked towards Fred and George who were smiling vacantly.

'Now then. As we are all gathered, let's have breakfast.'

With that eggs, sausage, pancakes, porridge, cereal, and the other usual fare appeared on the tables.

There was no applause to greet the meal this time however. Instead everyone turned to each other with one question on their lips "Who did it?".

Everyone except for one blonde boy, who was becoming increasingly aware of the fact that his shirt was on inside out.

Later after breakfast, Harry, Hermione, and Ron stood in the Entrance Hall looking up at the alarm bell above the display case. It had been completely frozen. Despite the warm temperature of the hall, the only sign that it was thawing was a faint trail of steam rising from its translucent blue surface. It would melt no doubt, albeit extremely slowly.

'So, Hermione what do you reckon?' asked Ron as he shoveled crisps into his mouth.
'I don't know. It's very strange. It doesn't look like anything I've read about. There are plenty of spells that create ice, but...' Hermione shrugged, 'Honestly if Dumbledore couldn't identify it, I doubt anyone else in the school can.'

'I don't know about that.' said Harry confidentially to the other two.

'What do you mean?' coughed Ron as he worked through his crisps. 'You think this is connected to that plot Dobby mentioned?'

'It has to be.' said Harry confidently. 'And what's more, remember back at the breakfast table when Dumbledore was talking about what happened?'

Ron swallowed, 'Yeah?'

'Well when Dumbledore mentioned the spell he didn't recognize, Link suddenly started smiling. Smiling! Of course, he stopped himself really quick.' said Harry frowning.

Hermione looked unconvinced, 'Link is in first year, Harry. Plus, it would be even harder for him to cast that spell because he's mute.' Harry looked back up at the bell as she continued, 'Besides, what motive would he have to sabotage Filch's pot display? It's totally irrational.'

'Maybe he has some sort of pot grudge?' suggested Ron darkly as he reached for another handful of crisps. Harry and Hermione looked at each other.

'Don't be thick, Ron.' said Hermione, rolling her eyes.

'Maybe it's not so irrational. Maybe he wanted Fred and George out of the picture. Everyone knows that they would top Filch's list of suspects.' said Harry grimly.

'But why though?' said Hermione quizzically.

'I don't know. Let's find Fred and George and see what kind of run-ins they've had with Link.' said Harry and the three walked out of the Entrance Hall.

Link didn't dare do anything suspicious after what the headmaster had said. After breakfast, he followed some other Gryffindors back to the tower, meek as a mouse. After explaining the situation to Navi, the two agreed that they should be extra careful. Changing into some casual clothes, he hung out with the other Gryffindor's who mostly just talked about how exciting the morning was.

After lunch, which he also attended, he went to meet up with Luna in the library. He was grateful to have someone help distract him from the "pot fiasco" as Navi had called it and the two did their homework assignments and talked about their classwork. After a few hours they both went to dinner together and afterward he retreated to the Gryffindor Common Room.

_I'm probably just being paranoid_. He thought as he sat in the Common Room with Colin happily chatting away in his ear. _Nobody suspects me. Everything is going to be okay._
Harry, Hermione and Ron didn't have any trouble finding Fred and George. They were busy sitting in the courtyard, basking in their latest notoriety as students furtively whispered around them.

'Fred, George, you two look concerned.' said Harry sarcastically as he, Hermione, and Ron approached their bench.

'Hey Harry. Listen, I don't think you should be seen around us.' said Fred over his shoulder.

'You might get burned.' said George ominously.

'Very clever. Did you two do it or not?' said Hermione, crossing her arms.

Fred and George glanced at each other. After a moment they appeared to come to some unspoken consensus. Motioning for the three to come closer, they leaned in.

'No, but don't tell anybody!' whispered Fred.

'It would devastate our reputation.' added George.

'Do you have any idea who did?' asked Hermione.

'Naw' the two twins said together shaking their heads.

'I sure would like to meet them though.' said George in admiration, much to Hermione's disdain.

She leaned back up, frowning down at the two giggling twins. While she scolded them, Harry furrowed his brow in thought.

_This confirms what I already believed. For as devious as the twins can be, I doubt they'd lie about this. Its just not their style. The real question is, what could Fred and George have possibly done to get targeted by Link?_

Clearing his throat, Harry interrupted Hermione's lecture.

'Fred, George, erm, this is a bit of a weird question, but what do you know about the first year student, Link?' asked Harry.

'The mute kid? Nothing much. I know he hangs out with Ginny and some Ravenclaw girl.'

'He's never done anything, I don't know…odd?'

'Well, we know he snoops around at night. Outside. In the rain.' said George.

Harry, Hermione, and Ron's mouths dropped open in shock.

'And you didn't think to say anything?' said Ron dumbfounded.

'No, we didn't think to say anything.' said Fred impersonating Ron in a mocking tone. 'Who do we look like to you? Percy? Honestly…'

Suddenly Hermione gasped. Next thing Harry knew she was hauling Ron and him away from the twins who resumed trying to look cool.

'That's it! Harry, the twins saw Link come in at night, alone!' said Hermione excitedly.
'So?' said Ron confused.

'So Ronald, the point is that Link is supposedly mute.' explained Hermione patiently.

'So?' said Ron, still confused.

'Link is mute and it was the middle of the night. Everybody was asleep except for Fred and George. How did he get into Gryffindor Tower if he can't speak the password?' said Hermione triumphantly.

'Link must not be mute.' concluded Harry, nodding at Hermione.

Ron still looked confused.

'The only question is though, why would he lie about something like that? It seems hugely inconvenient.' mused Hermione, biting her lip.

'I don't know. We'll need to keep an eye on him though. Who knows what else he's hiding? Plus, what was he doing out of the tower?'

Hermoine and Ron were silent as they considered this new information. Harry was certain now. Whoever Link was, he was up to no good.
As Link feared, due to the rising water level of the Black Lake, the whole of the lower levels of Hogwarts were closed off. Not only were the potions classes relocated to the upstairs class rooms, but Snape himself had to vacate his office and the Slytherins were forced out of their common room and dormitories. Slytherin House was thus redubbed Homeless House by the Gryffindors and Snape as Head of Homeless. To say that this exacerbated existing tensions between the two rivals was an understatement.

During this, temporary lodging was located for the Slytherins near the Great Hall putting them unpleasantly close to the Gryffindors. This prompted many confrontations and resulted in a few hallway skirmishes.

Due to the brawling, a strict curfew was imposed on the Gryffindors by McGonagall making leaving Gryffindor Tower much more difficult for Link. Normally he would just use the Stone Mask for his evening reconnaissance, but unfortunately his magic reserve was getting low again.

Casting a wizard spell here or there didn't consume much magical energy in and of itself, however he was doing a lot of wand magic in his classes and it was starting to add up. At the present rate of consumption, he estimated that he would have about a quarter of his magical strength when he began his assault on the Forbidden Forest, a dangerously low amount considering the enemies he was likely to face. He would delay his attack and try to get some mana through other means, but the Forbidden Forest had started to really worry him. Day after day, the weather continued to get worse. Rain lashed at the school constantly and the grounds had turned to fields of mud.

As a result, he had decided to postpone his search of the castle until the Forbidden Forest was clear. True the crystal piece that had washed into the school's pipes from the Black Lake had the potential to be discovered by some mad wizard, but as far as he was aware no one in the castle had found it floating in their bathtub so it wasn't like it was going anywhere. Besides, the piece in the forest was responsible for the rainstorms. He was sure of it.

*I just have to make it through today.* He thought, stirring his cauldron while Snape stalked past. *Then I can finally go to the forest and end this evil weather once and for all.*

At class's end, he turned in his potion and Snape waved him away without comment. Returning to his station, he absently watched Colin who was struggling to bottle his dark yellow slop. The weekend can't come soon enough. He thought as he watched Colin spill the ooze all over his robes, promptly setting himself ablaze.

One positive of the ceaseless rain was that he had the afternoon off. Due to the poor weather, flying lessons were cancelled. He had been looking forward to learning how to fly, but under the circumstances he was pleased to have one less class with the Slytherins.

As soon as class was over, he, Ginny and a still charred Colin, set off for lunch. When they got to the Great Hall, he moved with the two to sit at the Gryffindor table. He would sit with Luna, but as a result of the recent uptick in Gryffindor/Slytherin hostilities, McGonagall asked that all Gryffindors sit at their house table. Settling in beside Colin and Ginny (who had once again elected to sit as close to Harry as possible), he gave Luna a wave before grabbing a cup for himself.
While Ginny and Colin began filling their plates, he looked up at the enchanted Great Hall ceiling. Angry black clouds swirled overhead accompanied by the occasional strobe of lightning. He sighed. The weather had been the same for weeks. Pouring himself a glass of juice, he resigned himself to another meal of Harry Potter talk.

'Alright Harry?' asked Colin as he grabbed a sandwich.

'Hullo, Colin.' replied Harry unenthusiastically, 'How was your classes?'

'Good, good. The Slytherins were gits again, but everything went smoothly enough.' said Colin, brushing some singed hair from his robes. 'So Harry, when you were in first year, did you-

As Colin prattled on, Link threw back his juice and started daydreaming. Soon the black clouds disappeared and he found himself back at Lon Lon Ranch atop Epona, chasing Cucco's and helping Malon with her chores while her lazy father slept in his rocking chair on the porch. Good times.

'Uh, Link? Excuse me.'

He snapped back to reality. He was surprised to see Hermione speaking to him.

'Seeing as how we're all Gryffindors, um, I was thinking we should get to know each other.' she gave him a small forced smile and he blinked, 'I was just wondering about you, like uh-' she started. Biting her lip, she glanced over at Harry and Ron.

'Where're you from?' blurted out Ron, his mouth overflowing with french fries.

'Uh…' he said blankly.

What did I write down on that application form again? Ted? No, it was…

'Oh, I know!' said Hermione, fishing in her bag. 'Here.' she passed him a scrap of parchment and a quill.

He looked down at the parchment then back up at Ron, Hermione, and Harry. They were all staring at him intently. Sighing, he grabbed the paper and quill. He hated communicating like this. Back at Kokiri Village, Mido used to try and force him to write out what he wanted to say too, refusing to interpret his "stupid sign language". This led to quite a few fights before finally the Great Deku himself had to intervene.

Writing his response, he handed the note back to Hermione.

"Chad?" read Hermione in surprise, 'You mean in Africa?'

Link nodded. Sure, why not.

'Where's Chad? Are there wizards there?' asked Ron befuddled.

Hermione shot Ron a pitying look, 'Ron there are wizards everywhere, don't be rude.'

'What?' said Ron indignantly, 'It's an honest question!'

Harry ignored him. 'So, what is someone from so far away, like yourself, doing at Hogwarts?' asked Harry pushing the paper back.

Link took the paper and twirled his quill as he thought what to write. I need a non-answer. Something cliché…
Scrawling as generic a response as possible, he handed the note back to Harry.

"I came to Hogwarts to meet new people, experience a new culture, and attend the best magical school in the world." read Harry, eyeing him askance.

'Hey! I have a question.' piped up Colin suddenly, 'Last night in the dorm, why did you and the other guys laugh when I said I wanted a McGonagall photo?'

Link snatched the paper from Harry's hands and quickly scribbled the answer before passing it to Colin.

"Because you said I want to get McGonagall to pose for me." read Colin slowly. He looked back up at Link in bewilderment, 'So? What's so funny about getting McGonagall to pose for some photos for me?' Colin looked around as Link and a couple others, including Ron, started snickering, 'What?'

As Colin looked around in confusion at the laughter, Link drummed his fingers across the table for a moment.

_Well that wasn't so bad. Maybe on my afternoon free I'll check on Hagrid and see how he's doing._

He stood up to leave, but before he could take more than two steps, Harry quickly shouted after him.

'Wait! Link?'

He turned, eyebrows raised questioningly.

'Have you heard anything about Filch's pot attack?'

He paused then leaned over. Taking the quill back, he scribbled his response on the parchment scrap before leaving.

Harry grabbed the parchment and read, "I heard it was Fred and George."

'See you later, Link.' called out Colin before he turned back to Harry and resumed his questioning.

_That was interesting. It's a good thing I remembered where I'm supposed to be from._ Thought Link as he skipped away, oblivious to the three pairs of eyes following him.

At last it was Saturday morning and Link leaped out of his bed like it was Christmas. While his room mates tossed in their sleep, he threw on his tunic, and ran down the stairs. There was really no point to rushing. In light of the new curfew, the portrait had been enchanted to only open after 6:00 am. But lately all his school work coupled with the tedious exploration and curfew nonsense had been driving him crazy and as much as he hated spiders, he could hardly wait for a good, proper battle.

The Common Room was empty as he impatiently paced back and forth before the exit, eyes darting to the clock every few seconds.

'Do you have everything?' asked Navi while they waited.
'Mmm!' replied Link, rocking on the balls of his feet. They had already done inventory while he was in bed. He had one bottle of milk, over forty arrows and bombs, a nearly full sack of deku nuts, twenty percent of his magic energy, and his axe and mirror shield.

*I'll equip my gear once I'm out of sight of the castle. Any second now…*

Finally, curfew ended and the portrait unlocked. Charging out, he ran straight for the Shifting Staircase. With practiced ease he jumped and rolled from platform to platform. If any of the teachers saw his reckless acrobatics no doubt they'd have a stroke, but he knew better. He had become a pro with this puzzle. Flying out of the stair landing and into the Entrance Hall, he ran to the giant wooden doors leading to the grounds. Grabbing the handle, he began to push.

*This thing weighs a ton!* Thought Link, grunting with effort as the door slowly gave. Immediately upon cracking the door open, rain lashed at him and a great echoing wind howled into the castle. Once it was opened enough, he squeezed through and into the castle grounds.

Outside cataclysmic storm was raging. The sun was completely hidden with the only light coming from the blue flashes of forked lightning which revealed a nightmarish sky of black clouds. They shifted with such terrible speed, that Link couldn't help but feel tiny and powerless beneath them. To make matters worse, the raindrops - accelerated by the gale - were like tiny frozen bullets peppering his skin.

Not wasting any time he trudged forward, his boots sinking into the mud with every step. Only through constant movement was he able to keep himself from getting stuck in the muck. After an hour of hiking through the mud, wind, and freezing rain, he at last came upon the treeline. Or what used to be the treeline. The marsh stretched before him now and only vague tree shapes could be discerned through the heavy rain. Satisfied that he was far enough away from the castle, he equipped his axe and mirror shield. As well as his bow, bombs and deku nuts.

Lastly, he pulled out the Ocarina of Time. He was able to convince Navi that in order for him to conquer the Forbidden Forest and make it back to Hogwarts in time (and in one piece) it was necessary to play the Song of Inverted Time. Navi raised the point that the magic of the ocarina seemed to have an effect on the magic of the crystal pieces, perhaps even emulating its effects, but even so he decided it was worth the risk and she reluctantly conceded.

Putting his lips to the ocarina, he played the Song of Inverted Time. When the last note rang out the magic of the Ocarina of Time was released and he suddenly felt strange. He was still being hit by the rain but each raindrop was much slower, much less impactful. The wind went from a hurricane gale to merely a strong breeze instantly. He smiled as he pocketed the ocarina.

*Now that time is moving at one third it's normal pace, the Forbidden Forest will be much easier to handle.*

'Don't get over confident, Link.' reminded Navi, 'There are spiders, Lynels, and god knows what else in there.'

'Mmm!'

Wading into the marsh, he started to advance into the forest of leafless trees. He tried his best to keep his eyes focused on the path ahead of him, but it was difficult terrain. Though shielded from the worst of the wind, the rain and tightly spaced vegetation still limited his field of few significantly. What's more, every few steps he would slip and fall into some cluster of submerged roots or a sink hole and have to swim back to secure footing.
He slipped and fell time and again, always getting tangled in some underbrush that had been swallowed by the flood. After a few minutes of struggling, he shook his head in frustration and stopped.

*Enough of this. I need to get my bearings.*

Equipping his hookshot, he fired at a distant tree top. Hooking itself into the bark it yanked him up and out of the marsh. Spitting out a mouthful of rainwater, he released the hookshot and landed on the swaying boughs of the tree to survey the forest.

From his perch, the bobbing tree tops looked like a sea of arms moving back and forth. Grasping up to the sky, the leafless and twisted boughs looked unnatural and evil.

*The piece will probably be where the forest is deepest, darkest, and most dangerous.*

From what he could tell, the trees were thickest to the east. But that was not all he could see. Far ahead at the limits of his vision it looked as though the treetops were completely enveloped in a dense, white fog. To him it appeared as though clouds suddenly appeared there, though no fog could endure this wind.

'I bet you that's where we have to go, Link.' said Navi uneasily.

'Mmm!'

He decided that the treetops were better than the marshy forest floor and so he continued by jumping from tree branch to tree branch towards the white fog. Moving through the forest this way was faster, but no less difficult as some of the trees were covered in rotted bark or long dead branches. These would slide or break easily and if it weren't for time being slowed he would have repeatedly fallen into the churning waters below.

After about thirty minutes of travel, he finally reached the mist covered treetops. Upon closer inspection he saw that it was not mist at all, but rather layers upon layers of thickly spun silk. The shimmering film flowed from one tree to the next, binding the branches together so tightly that not even the storm's winds could shake them.

'We're going to have to go under that canopy, Link.' said Navi. 'We'll be open to attack from all sides. Are you ready?'

Link felt the Triforce of Courage on his left hand burn once more and he nodded his head.

'I'll do my best to watch your back. Let's go.'

He dropped down to the waters below. The water was shallower here and the earth felt spongy; like layers of moss piled on top of each other. Horrified, he looked at his feet brushing water aside with his hand, but he was only standing on thickly packed vegetation that had been submerged.

He sighed in relief. For a second, he thought he had landed in a spider web.

He looked around the covered forest. The tree trunks were barely visible, appearing like shadowy columns in some flooded temple and an eerie stillness hung thick in the air. Above him, the webs
were illuminated a dark, pulsing grey from the lightning, but that light was not cast on the trees and forest floor below. Under the webs, it was perpetual twilight with each roll of thunder falling like some distant drum beat, made deeper and longer by the Song of Inverted Time.

*At least its not pitch black...*

He advanced cautiously, wincing as his feet sloshed through the water loudly. Each sound felt horribly magnified; like some transgression against the awful tranquility that filled this place.

*What happened to the rain?* He thought, listening intently. He couldn't hear raindrops anymore. Instead he heard what sounded like running water. Looking around, he saw each tree trunk was covered in gently flowing water. The webs were funnelling the rain flow down the trunks to the forest floor. The effect was like a hundred faucets all quietly running at once.

'Why would spiders spin their webs like this? Is this how they've adapted to the rainstorms?' wondered Navi quietly.

He said nothing. Instead he listened to the sounds the trees and water were making. It sounded like an offkey imitation of the Song of Storms. It was almost imperceptible, but he could recognize the melody layered in the rustling webs.

*The spiders must be spinning their webs to imitate the Song of Storms, but why?*

He briefly considered the possible motives the spiders might have before he cleared his head.

*That doesn't matter right now. What matters is recovering the crystal. Without the crystal as a magical catalyst, I bet the spider webs will just be clumps of silk.*

Moving forward slowly with his axe at the ready for any sudden ambush, he went deeper and deeper into the spider's lair. Before long he saw faint shadows shifting in the grey web above. The shadows were small, no larger than his shield, but there were many of them.

*With the noise I'm making I'll never have the element of surprise on my side.*

Keeping his pace forward, the scurrying shadows eventually melted away into the silk.

'They're going to attack us soon.' said Navi firmly.

He nodded, but continued his cautious advance, carefully eyeing the trees around him.

Even with time slowed there was only about ten feet of open space around each tree. When the attack came, he would have to react quickly.

In the corner of his vision, he saw something dart out at him. Swinging his axe reflexively he cut into a spider in mid air. As he followed through with his axe stroke, he saw two more spiders pounce, their undersides raised, fangs glistening with venom. He drew back his axe and cut through the first, raising his shield he bashed the second. Its twitching body flying back against the tree it had launched itself from.

'Above!' called Navi.

Jumping backwards, he barely dodged another spider as it fell down from the canopy attempting to land on his head. He caught it with his axe while it was still falling, cutting through it's soft body easily. Without pausing, he spun rapidly, looking in all directions, readying himself for further
attack.

He stood still for a moment, waiting, but no new spiders emerged. Looking up, he saw no shifting shadows in the canopy either.

'I don't see anything.' murmured Navi 'Link, you're shaking.'

He nodded, shivering slightly. His heart was racing! With each heartbeat he felt whatever energy the axe had collected flow into his body through his grip on the wooden axe handle. It was oddly pleasurable.

_This damn axe. Still, what a rush!_

As the energy coursed through his body, he felt his magical energy recover some. It wasn't close to the same amount as when he killed the giant spider, but another skirmish like this and he would be at almost full capacity.

When it became apparent that no further attack was coming, he bent down to examine one of the spiders he had slain. These were different from the ones he had killed in his first encounter. Those spiders had sharp eyes, chattering fangs, and were covered in thick bristling hair. In contrast these spiders had milky white, dull eyes and pale, flaccid bodies. Their flesh seemed as soft and spongy as the ground beneath his feet.

_Rotten._ He concluded, _This is the work of corrupting magic, I'm certain of it._

He looked ahead, the dark forest loomed. He didn't bother to clean his axe and instead pressed forward.

When he was visualizing his assault, he had expected to hear the clicking of the spider's fangs harangue him with every step he intruded in their domain, but instead all he heard was the flowing of the water against the dark trees. It was unnerving that his first few kills didn't reward him with some cry of alarm.

_They probably know I'm here already._

As he rounded a dead oak, he spotted his first cocoon. The silk pouch was hanging from a tree branch to head height above the water. It had burst sometime ago, leaving only bones behind. Walking forward, he saw many more cocoons. Most had burst, though a few were still intact.

_These spiders aren't picky eaters._ He thought numbly as he looked around him. Hundreds of cocoons of varying sizes filled the trees. How long before the forest was completely empty and the spiders began venturing out of the forest for prey? Maybe they already had.

As he stood and looked around at the spider's victims, he suddenly became aware of a dim light in the far distance.

_What is that? Could it be-_ 

Suddenly he heard a noise and he turned, axe ready. There, hanging from a tree was a partially cocooned deer. Panting horribly, its eyes rolled in its head as the silk beneath it pulsed sickeningly. The creature's legs laying broken and tangled in the web around it, twitching in pain.

'Link…' started Navi but he was already moving. Drawing his bow, he knocked an arrow and fired, piercing the deer's skull. It slackened over, dead.
The pulsing in the cocoon continued however. Disgusted, he drew another arrow and charged it with ice magic. Firing it, he flash froze the unfortunate creature's corpse and whatever else occupied the cocoon.

Before he could move on, he heard the sound of a branch snapping behind him. Whirling, he saw a massive ochre white spider creeping towards him, its bulk the only thing that spared him. Bow still in hand, he knocked and fired another ice arrow. The spider and the tree it was climbing down flash froze instantly. However the ice didn't stop there. Spreading down the frozen trunk, it reached the water line, rapidly freezing the surrounding water and nearly trapping Link in shin-deep ice.

*I need to be more careful with my ice magic in this water!*

He turned around and notched another arrow as several more giant spiders emerged from behind the trees. Their pale, hairless flesh appeared almost translucent reflecting the water slick bark behind them.

*Too many.*

He pulled out a deku nut and threw it against a tree. A blinding flash and a crack rang out stunning everything nearby. Or so he assumed.

Instead, one of the spiders lunged, its front legs sweeping down. Link jumped to the side and turned to face a third spider. The monstrous arachnid was the size of a horse. Tensing its hideous body, it leapt. Link ducked and rolled sideways, across the ice he had created and faced the spiders. There were four of them now all moving forward, spreading themselves out so as to attack him from all sides. He looked into one of the spider's hollow white eyes.

*They're blind! My deku nuts are useless!*

He drew another ice arrow and fired it at the closest spider. The arrow caught it just as it lunged, freezing the monster in mid air. The frozen spider sailed past him as he directed his attention to the next closest spider. The fourteen-foot-long monstrosity had been working its way into his blind spot. Drawing his axe, he charged forward.

Rather than engage though, the spider retreated. Allowing the other two spiders to rush forward. In response, he changed course and charged them as well, but they fell back, separating into opposite directions. He turned and faced the first monster. It was creeping forward again, slowly.

*Surrounded!*

He stopped moving, gripped his shield, and hefted his axe over his shoulder. The spiders crept closer, and closer. Link readied himself. Slowly, surely, they advanced. Keeping their distance just enough that he would have to turn to face any one of them. As they approached, he saw the giant begin to drool venom.

With a sudden burst of speed that was impressive even in compressed time, the giant reared itself up to attack. Link felt the shadows of the other two as they also lunged.

*Din!* Thought Link, releasing the spell.

He didn't hold back. A wave of flame shot out from him in all directions, scorching the pale spiders around him. The flames of Din seared then cracked their rubbery skin until it burst outward as their foul blood boiled, rupturing from their mutated flesh. Thrashing in death the three spiders, fell backwards, tossing in the water.
There goes most of my magic. He thought grimly as he watched the three succumb to their wounds. Suddenly he felt a piercing pain as a spider's fangs sunk deep into his back. He cried out as he was pushed underwater and pinned, his face crushed downward with awful strength into the putrid, rotting forest floor below. Gritting himself, he tried to push himself up, but the pressure was too great. He could only manage to raise himself an inch at most.

It's going to drown me.

Suddenly he felt the pressure lessen, turning over and springing up with his axe in hand, he saw the spider batting at Navi. Bringing his weapon down, he drove the cursed axe head deep into the creature's head. Ripping it loose, he struck again. The creature lowered its legs to parry, but he jumped forward axe raised high. Bringing it down where he had first struck, the blood slick blade cut the monsters face in two.

The spider fell back, its limbs flailing as blue blood burst from its former head. Thrashing, the spider scuttled away and crashed into a tree; shaking a half dozen desiccated corpses loose from above. They tumbled from the tree branches, bursting apart on the ground like ripe fruit. Link gripped the handle of his axe and readied himself for more attacks, but the fight was over. Slowly the spider curled in its twitching legs and grew still.

With the battle won, Navi flew to his side, 'Link! I'm so sorry. I saw Din's flame thaw that spider, but-

Wincing in pain, he shook his head dismissively. He had mixed fire and ice magic in combat enough times that he should have known better. Pulling out his bottle of milk, he chugged it down and slowly he felt his throbbing back start to heal as he recovered his breath. The axe likely would have healed him as well, but too slowly.

I should have realized the spiders were blind. What with those empty eyes of theirs. He looked at his feet and sloshed them through the water. Being blind isn't a disadvantage for them with all the racket I'm making.

Navi was silent as he wiped his mouth and straightened up. Turning, he looked back towards the light. It glowed slightly, catching the reflective surface of his shield.

Wordlessly, the two advanced forward.

The trees were becoming larger as Link and Navi pushed onward. The trunk of each was easily ten feet in diameter and seemed to stretch past the clouds. Though really, they were just lost in webs. They kept advancing, pausing regularly, ready for any attack.

Moving through the still water, Link caught sight of a massive cocoon. Inside he saw a Lynel, its dried-out husk contorted in agony. Its leathery skin was wrapped tight around its eyeless skull, face twisted in the pain of its death throes. Link felt a bead of sweat fall down his face.

It's small for a Lynel, but still. How big do these spiders get?!

Killing a Lynel was no joke. Looking around, he saw more massive cocoons illuminated by the pale white light. Many contained deer, though a few contained bears, elk, and even what seemed to
be several humanoids. Shining through the hanging graveyard, the light beckoned them onwards.

Climbing to the top of a large rock, he faced towards the source of the light. Ahead was a clearing in which a great, grey pond shimmered with the reflected light of an indistinct orb imprinted in the centre of a perfect web spun between two massive fallen trees. The pool itself was surrounded by a five foot mound of dirt, damming the water from flowing in or out.

*If I climb in there I won't be able to climb out easily. This HAS to be a trap.*

Turning his gaze upwards, he considered the light above the pond. It had to be the crystal piece, nothing else could produce such an evil, corrupted place he was sure of it. But for such a precious treasure, why was it left so exposed? He moved forward to the lip of the dam and looked around. Everything was still and silent. A great dome of webbing stretched across the shimmering grey pond and he saw no shadows moving across its surface.

'Let's get what we came here for, Link.' said Navi confidently.

He jumped into the pool. Landing with a splash, he felt a crunch with his feet. The pool was shallower than he expected. Looking down, he saw that he was standing on the scattered bones of innumerable creatures. All around him; the whole pool was just a shallow cover overtop of the skeletons of thousands upon thousands of animals of all shapes and sizes. Everything the forest had had to offer, was in the reflecting pool.

*This place is a massive killing floor! Hard terrain for a fight...* He thought worriedly as he tried to get his footing. The shifting bones were making him unsteady.

Suddenly a shadow passed by the light and he saw something shift and fall. The water around him trembled slightly as some great thing fell at the base of the trees supporting the web. Moving around the tree island at the centre of the silver pool, Link saw the largest spider he had ever seen. It had a mottled ivory blue body, eight pure white eyes, and fangs that steadily leaked a thick white fluid that clouded the water it touched. It was at least the size of the great squid in the lake, and as it approached it towered far above him. Link readied himself as the elder arachnid abomination stopped just out of reach.

'So...you are the music...maker. The one...who called...the storm.' rumbled the spider slowly, its body unmoving.

*It can talk?* Link's mouth fell open in amazement.

'When the forest...was drying...and my children...were starving...I believed that soon...I would have to sacrifice...my body to allow...the hive to survive.'

Link said nothing instead he kept his shield and axe ready.

'But then...a shard from heaven...fell into the forest...and I knew that with its...power...I could return life. Return the water, but I didn't understand how...Not until I heard your song. I heard you...play your...wonderful song.'

Link detected movement around the lip of the pool. Scanning the edge of the earthen mound, he saw that it was lined with albino spiders of various sizes. They were all facing him with their blind eyes.

'With the...power of heaven...flowing through the...the webs we spin, we call...the rain down. And with the rain has come such a...bounty.'
"That "piece of Heaven" has made you all into freaks! You can't even see how disgusting you are!" shouted Navi at the giant monstrosity.

"Our eyes? A…weakness. There is nothing left…that can challenge my children now…the water senses our prey for us…"

The giant spider advanced again slowly.

"Come…nourish the…hive." said the abomination, its fanged mandibles spreading wide.

Link had heard enough. Jumping backwards, he slung his axe and drew the Hero Bow. Readying an ice arrow, he fired it at one of the creature's, great unseeing eye's. Upon impact it released a cloud of frozen air, yet the creature moved through it unfazed. In mute surprise, he dashed away from the creature just as it jabbed at him with its front legs, geysers of water and bone flying up from where he had been standing.

*Wherever I stand in this pool it can hear me! This damn water...*

He kept running and the immense arachnid patriarch turned to face him. With a great rush of force, it swept a foreleg across the surface of the pool creating a cascading wall of water in its wake. Impossible to dodge, Link braced himself and raised his shield, catching the blow like a hammer against an anvil. The force of the strike sent him skipping like a stone across the water almost to the opposite side of the pool. He was stunned for a moment before Navi cried in alarm. Looking behind him, he saw the spider brood swarming after him. He immediately darted away from the dirt mound just as the swarm of giant spiders rallied there, their long limbs reaching hungrily.

Panicking, he readied himself for their charge, but it didn't come. Though they all paced and frothed on the earth barricade, they did not set more than a leg into the silver water.

*Its almost like their fishing.* He thought as the spiders crawled over and pushed one another in a fight for the closest position to him.

"Focus on the big one, Link! I'll watch your back." said Navi over his shoulder.

He nodded and turned back to the giant. The elder spider was striding across the pool towards him, its mouth trailing white death.

*If ice won't work, maybe fire will.*

Running away from the boundary of the pool, he knocked an arrow as he went. Charging it with fire magic, he fired it towards the creature's eyes again. It exploded in a flash of flame and smoke on the monster's head, but it moved forward uninjured. Again, it attacked and he jumped away from its jabs. Water and animal remains showered over him as he kept his shield raised, wary for another sweep.

*I have the Giant Mask. If I put it on I could crush him!*

He checked above. The dome of webs stretched above him, thick and impenetrable.

*No good! The web looks so thick I might get stuck and swarmed by a thousand spiders.*

He felt his sweat grow cold as he imagined being cocooned and eaten alive by the hive. Clearing his head, he looked over at Navi for advice while he retreated.

"Link, there is a strand of web connecting the spider to the crystal piece!"
'Huh?'

Sure enough, nearly invisible in the strange shimmering light, he spotted a thickly spun coil of thread connecting the monster to the web around the crystal piece.

_That explains the magic resistance. Now I just need to cut the web._

Dodging around the next flurry of blows, he focused on the tether and waited for his chance. He didn't have to wait long as the creature bore down on him once more, raising itself to strike. With the strand exposed, Link shot a fire arrow at the tether. The shaft struck true, but the flames were quickly smothered by the newly spun, wet, silk thread. He returned his attention to the creature's limbs but too late. It caught Link without his shield fully raised and sent the hard metal edge of his shield into his axe arm and shoulder. Again, he was sent tumbling through the water. Raising himself, he rolled just as the albino tried to grab him with its serrated, edged feet.

The creature reared its front legs menacingly and Link without hesitating ran beneath the creature's body. The monstrous predator was confused by his sudden disappearance, but only for a moment as it quickly dropped itself down. Thankfully, Link had a lot of experience fighting creatures much larger than himself and as the creature dropped its body, he turned and sprang to the side at the last moment. Emerging at the behemoth spider's flank, he found himself facing the captive crystal.

_If I can't destroy the cord, I'll take the crystal from the web!_ Thought Link as he sprinted as fast as he could through the corpse filled water.

The great spider did not waste any time hesitating. Even with inverted time on Link's side, it easily caught up with him. Rearing its great legs again it prepared to strike. Before it's feet could fall though Link had drawn his hookshot. Firing it, he grappled onto the right most tree just as a wave of water and debris showered over him. Soaring out of reach, he released his hookshot and landed on a broken branch of the fallen tree, just beside the web. He slung his shield behind his back and drew his axe, gripping it with both hands.

Axe still raised, he glanced back at the monster. It was still in the water, it's great legs twitching, no doubt feeling for his presence.

_Hah! I'm not in the water anymore, dummy!_

Turning back to the web, he eyed the tether connecting the crystal piece to the abomination's thorax.

_I bet as soon as I start to cut the crystal down he'll feel it. Well, here goes nothing!_

Readying himself, he wound up his arm and swung with all his might. The taught, thick webs gave way with a snap as he chopped into them. The beast let out a low moan of rage and rushed towards the web linked tree, but it was too late. By the time it reached his position he had already fired his hookshot again, this time to the other tree. As he soared away from his perch the monster raked its body across the fallen tree behind him, desperately grasping at nothing.

Upon detaching the hookshot, Link immediately began hacking away at the webs around the second tree. As the great spider turned towards him the final strand was cut and the web holding the crystal fell to the pool bottom. Without hesitating, Link slid and jumped down the tree trunk after the crystal piece. However, before he could even hit the water, the monstrosity leaped off the tree. Landing back in the pool with an immense splash, it scuttled backward until it was in the middle of the hollow, trailing the crystal piece with it.
As he landed back in the water he paused, studying the monster. It was still, body seemingly frozen on top of the crystal piece. Submerged beneath the water, the crystal shone, illuminating the pool and the great spider from beneath in an eerie glow.

*If it can hear every step I take, how can I get close?*

Suddenly he heard more splashes. Looking around, he saw the spiders that had been standing on the edge of the pool had started to enter the water. They were pressing in on all sides around the arena. With a cry of alarm, he ran forward as the spiders quickly closed the distance towards him.

Driven closer and closer before the hive, he was herded towards the waiting patriarch. Suddenly at the edge of the light in the pool, the ravenous horde slowed. They scurried to and fro jostling each other, but they had ceased their advance. Link looked back at the giant. It remained still, body tense and alert.

*As soon as it hears me move in range its going to attack.*

Link looked down at the spot where the glow was brightest. It was right beneath the behemoth.

*If that monster comes crashing down on top of me, not even Nayru's Love could save me. But would it really crush the crystal to kill me?*

'Link, they're moving!' said Navi. He looked behind him as the spider horde had started to slowly advance inward, closing in the two combatants.

*No more time. I need to stop it from moving, get in close…*

He drew his bow once more and charged an ice arrow. Rather than fire it at the beast however, he fired at the creatures submerged foot. Upon hitting the water, it quickly froze, encasing the foot in ice. The monster twitched suddenly as it tried to withdraw its foot from the frozen water. During its confusion, he dashed forward firing more ice arrows at the water surrounding the legs closest to him.

The creature stumbled as its feet froze to the pools bottom. Though its body was resistant to his ice magic directly, the water around it could still freeze. Without stopping his rush, he ran towards the crystal as fast as he could manage. The great spider hissed sending twin rivulets of white venom spraying across the pool. Link raised his shield and pushed through the toxic spray. Passing beneath the creature's head, he ran closer and closer. As he ran under the spiders torso he heard the ice start to shatter.

*I'm too close to pull back now!* He thought as he came into arm's reach of the light shining in the pool.

Diving his hand into the water, Link gripped something cool and hard.

*The crystal!* Lifting it with one hand, he saw the thick strand of web connecting the spider to the light. The webbing pulsed rhythmically, like an umbilical. Drawing his axe, he swung. With a wet snap the cord was severed. Instantly he heard a great, moaning cry of agony. Looking above, he saw the elder spider was reeling, the limbs it had free were flailing blindly, striking at the water and the spiders that had circled around it.

Its magic resistance now gone, he drew his bow and sent a fire arrow at the underbelly of the creature. Flames erupted across its lower abdomen and it shrieked anew. Before he could fire again it ripped itself free, flesh tearing against the ice, it scuttled back to face Link, trampling through the spiders that had surrounded them.
He launched another fire arrow this time at the creature's eyes. The arrow exploded in a fireball on impact causing the spider to sweep its legs through the pool as flames erupted from one of its empty eye sockets. Mad with pain, it careened backward.

'Behind you!'

He turned just as a spider leaped at him. Link pushed forward and struck the flying spider with his shield. With a mighty crunch it fell into the water. Swapping out his bow for his axe, he swung down, cleaving into the spider as it thrashed in the pool.

Straightening himself, he saw several more spiders rushing towards him.

*Din!* Thought Link and fire erupted from his body, pushing the blood crazed swarm back.

'Go. Link!' cried Navi flying above him, 'Run!'

Link pushed forward as the pool descended into chaos. Two more dog sized spiders leapt at him but with a twirl of his axe he cut them down. As he sprinted to safety, a few more spiders moved between him and the barricade, but he kept moving, cleaving through the monsters that got in his way. Confident that Navi had his back, he concentrated on running. Coming into range of his hookshot, he drew and fired at a tree bordering the enclosure. Flying up and out of the pool, he released the chain and landed on the earthen mound.

He turned back on the pool and saw that the spider's lair had descended into an indescribable scene of carnage. The spiders, seemingly mad with hunger, had sprung forward at the sight of their weakened champion and were now swarming over its smoldering body. Tearing into it and each other in their frenzy, they devoured one another. In the dim light, Link saw that the water churned with black blood as greater spiders ate their lesser kin even as they themselves succumbed to their many wounds.

'Well Link, looks like we nourished the Hive after all.' quipped Navi.

Link tore his eyes from the grisly scene and stared at her. For a split second his mouth hung slightly open before he broke out into a grin and gave her a thumbs up.

*Perfect!*

At that the two turned and ran for their lives as the spawn of Aragog feasted and perished.
Needle in a Haystack

Link didn't come across any more spiders as he ran through the silent domed forest. Upon exiting the web covered woods, he used his hookshot to fly up to the treetops were he was greeted with the sun parting the clouds. The rainstorms had finally ended and the forest should be much safer now. Even better, he had recovered the crystal piece and killed a giant spider (which was always a plus). True he was covered with cuts from the bone shards in the spider pond (and he would never look at a spider web the same way again), but at least he had no serious injuries. All things considered, his adventure had been a resounding success.

I'm sure I'll be nice and bruised tomorrow though. Thought Link with a grimace as he waded through the water.

Upon his return to Hogwarts he wasted no time messing around. As soon as he was back inside, he immediately ran over to the Owlery tower. Covered in muck and blue spider blood, he was oblivious to the smirks and open-mouthed stares the other students gave him as he rushed by. Instead he continued on until he had climbed up to the top of the lonely tower.

Bursting through the tower spire door, he instantly gagged. The stink was unbearable. Retreating back to the stairs, he took a few deep breaths of fresh air before plunging back in. Pinching his nose, he looked around the tall, cone shaped room. Every available surface from the floor to the rafters was caked in guano so thick that he could have sworn it was snow. The source of the guano was obvious as lining the crisscrossing beams above him were hundreds upon hundreds of shifting owls. They sat perched on the many rafters of the spire, dosing and fluttering. Once he was sure they were alone, he signaled to Navi that it was safe to come out. Flying from his pocket, she too pinched her nose and scowled in distaste.

'Sheesh, and I thought I was already used to bad smells.' she muttered.

'Hey!' he shouted, startling the owls.

'Oh, er. I was, uh-I wasn't talking about you, silly. Now, c'mon! Hurry up. The sooner we're free of the crystal piece, the better.'

He shot her a withering look before drawing his ocarina and playing the Song of Soaring, much to the annoyance of the sleeping birds who hooted indignantly at the disruption. As he lowered the instrument, he felt a rush of wind behind him.

Turning, he saw Kaepora Gaebora alighting himself on a wooden beam. The other owls hooted grumpily as they moved away from the colossal newcomer.

'A-Hoo! You return Hero, and I sense you have a piece of the staff as well.'

Link nodded and pulled the crystal from his tunic. As he drew it, the Owlery became bathed in its faint blue light causing the owls to shift uneasily in its glow.

'Hoo! Well done, Hero. Give it to me so that I can dispose of it.' said Gaebora, craning his head up high.

Link tossed the crystal to Gaebora who caught it deftly in his talons.
'What are you going to do with it?' asked Navi curiously.

'I will drop it at the boundary of a far away time. In a nameless place, to be scattered so none may ever find it again. A-Hoo!' said Gaebora solemnly.

Link and Navi shared a skeptical look at the "none may find it ever again" part of Gaebora's promise. These evil artifacts had a habit of being rediscovered.

'Remain steadfast friends, I will leave you now for I have a long way to fly. Should you need me, I will come.' at that Gaebora spread his wings and flew, disappearing into nothingness before reaching the Owlerly roof.

He turned to Navi and shrugged.

_Now what?

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Link grumbled as he sat in the giant, pearly white bathtub, shampooing his hair. Upon exiting the Owlerly he discovered that a red-faced Filch, along with an eager Mrs. Norris, had been following his muddy blue tracks up the tower stairs. Only the Stone Mask had spared him from detention, though now he was forced to soak in a tub for an hour lest he be subjected to another of Navi's lectures on the importance of hygiene.

_I do NOT smell! No one has ever complained! Navi is just full of it..._ He thought to himself bitterly as he lathered for the fourth time.

After he had scrubbed himself pink and changed into fresh clothes, he went back to his dorm and jumped into bed, bouncing to rest on his quilt. Currently the first-year dormitories were empty along with most of Gryffindor Tower as everyone was off enjoying their supper. As he couldn't sit next to Luna, he saw no point in going down to the Great Hall just to listen to endless Harry Potter gossip. Instead, he was content to just relax.

'Clean?' asked Navi quietly from behind his pillow.

'Mmhmm.' he replied, scowling faintly. _I'm not a little kid, Navi._

"Do you feel like sleeping?" she asked as she popped her head out from behind his pillow.

'Nah.'

He stretched out. No matter how comfortable his bed was at the moment, he was still pumped full of adrenaline.

_One down, one to go. _He thought, grinning.

'So,' began Navi, 'a piece is hidden somewhere in the castle. In the lair of the schemer whatever that means. We're going to have to search the castle again, Link.' he sighed and nodded. 'I know it's tiresome, but it has to be done.' she said in a resigned tone.

Staring up at the ceiling, he thought over what he knew about the castle's layout.

_Hogwarts is filled with secret passages and rooms, but if I use the Lens of Truth I'm sure I can find
them all eventually. The only problem is my magic stamina. To comb through this castle with the Lens, I'll need a steady supply…

'Hm, Link did you leave your shampoo bottle in the bathroom again?' asked Navi gently.

'Oh!' he exclaimed.

Jumping out of bed, he sprinted back to the washroom.

_It took me two weeks to get the first piece. But I was still learning my way around and such. The next piece will be faster. I'll be back in Hyrule before I know it._ He thought with satisfaction as he picked up his hair potion from the side of the tub.

But much to his dismay, the second crystal piece was nowhere to be found. Despite searching the dungeons again (this time underwater) and going through the castle from the top floor down, he still couldn't find any trace of the crystal piece.

_I need to use the Lens of Truth to search for the dungeon entrance, but I don't have the mana!

To make matters worse, his magic supply was starting to get low again. Though the axe had replenished his supply at the battle in the Forbidden Forest, a week of classes had taken its toll and he once again found himself at about twenty percent power.

In desperation, he had even returned to the Forbidden Forest looking for something he could kill to replenish his strength, but he found nothing. The spider hollow was a rotting battlefield now and the rest of the forest had fallen silent. After traipsing back into the dorms from another fruitless search, Navi came up with a plan.

'Link, I've been doing some thinking.' he sighed and looked at the pillow Navi was hiding behind, 'I'm convinced that the effect that enables your axe to replenish your magic and stamina can be replicated with a potion. I mean, it must be possible.'

Link rolled his eyes.

_We must have tried a hundred different potions. I think we may have to just accept the fact that there might not be a magic replenishing potion. Nobody else seems to need to replenish their powers in this world._

'The only problem is that the enchantment on your axe is dark magic and dark magic isn't taught to students. Your potions textbook only covers recipes that are included in the class syllabus. We need to figure out how to make more advanced potions. We need to get access to the forbidden section at the library.'

'Hmmm…' said Link, quietly.

'There is a book that's referenced in some of the antidote recipes, "Moste Potente Potions". I think that's our best bet.'

He shrugged. _What have I got to lose?

The next day was Sunday so he didn't have to worry about classes. The only thing he had to do was
meet up with Luna after lunch to review their homework. That left him with all day to somehow trick one of the teachers to grant him access to the Forbidden Section.

The following morning, he resolved himself to get a permission slip, whatever the cost.

_I guess I should start with the potion master._ Thought Link as he brushed his teeth. _I'm sure he'll applaud my learning initiative and happily sign the form._

Minutes later, he was standing silently in Snape's temporary office as the greasy haired man glared at the note that he had passed him. The tiny room was cramped with furniture and overstuffed with glassware and pungent potions ingredients. While Snape considered the note, Link was distracted by a giant yellow eye floating in a glass jar. It's pupil seemed to be focusing on him.

'Absolutely not.' said Snape coldly, glowering up at him.

Link stopped trying to dodge around the eye's gaze and looked at Snape quizzically.

'Let me guess,' said Snape standing up from his desk and over Link, 'you think that just because you have met the _bare minimum_ of my expectations-'

_Uh oh._ Thought Link as he started backing up to the door.

'-in my _first-year_ potions course that you are entitled to whatever knowledge you please. However-' He kept backing up as Snape moved from behind his desk.

'-what you don't realize is that despite your meagre achievements, you are thoroughly, utterly, unexceptional.' Snape thrust the paper back at him. 'Get out.'

Link took the paper and fled Snape's office. As Snape slammed the door behind him, he let out a sigh.

_Well that went horribly. Maybe McGonagall will be more receptive._

He turned down the corridor. As he ran, he passed by the giant green curtain that walled off the school corridor from the Slytherin's temporary dorms. Nobody except the Slytherins had seen inside, but rumor had it that they were all sleeping on bunk beds in the hallway, with only one bathroom to share amongst them. Link suspected it was all nonsense. Still he was willing to believe it as it pissed the Slytherins off when the other houses made fun of their living arrangements.

The man in the portrait in front of the curtain peered at him over the wineglass he was swirling. Spotting his uniform, he snorted. 'Humph! Begone Gryffindor.' the man said with disdain, absently sipping his drink.

Link stuck out his tongue at the man, but kept running. He could tease the portrait later, right now he had business to take care of. Increasing his pace, he sprinted down the hall. A short while later, he reached McGonagall's office and knocked on the door.

'Enter.'

Opening the door, he stepped into McGonagall's office. She didn't pause from her writing as he entered instead she gestured to one of the two chairs in front of her with her quill. Taking a seat, he decided it would be best to just wait patiently. Tapping his knees, he glanced around. Pictures of Gryffindor classes from years past dotted the walls between full bookcases that appeared neatly arranged. It was spacious and clean. He thought back to Snape's tiny office and giggled.
After a moment McGonagall stopped writing and looked up at him.

'How may I help you, Mr. Link?'

Smiling brightly, he passed her the note. However to his surprise she spared it only a brief glance before passing it back.

'I'm afraid that will not be possible.' said McGonagall dismissively. His face fell and she sighed.

'Mr. Link, you are doing remarkably well. Your wand work is truly exemplary; indeed, I cannot recall the last time I had so fast a learner. But- she said lowering her glasses, carefully regarding him. '-there is no need to rush ahead. First you must master the basics. I suspect Professor Snape would tell you the same.'

He looked at her pleadingly, but she shook her head.

'I am sorry, but my answer is no.' she said before returning to her writing.

Link exited the office and looked right and left down the hallways. He was stumped.

'Flitwick?' suggested Navi.

He nodded and headed down the corridor to Flitwicks office, but he declined as well.

'I'm sorry, Link.' squeaked the diminutive professor, passing the parchment back to him, 'As impressive as your performance has been in class, I'm afraid this book contains information that is beyond you for now. Failure with advanced magic has disastrous consequences, potions even more so.' He smiled encouragingly at Link who sighed in disappointment, 'Perhaps Professor Snape feels differently, but I'm afraid I must decline.'

He exited Flitwicks office and let out another long sigh.

This is more difficult than I thought.

'How about Sprout? She likes you, I bet you she'll help you out.' suggested Navi and Link took off for the green houses.

But again, his request was refused, Sprout declined. As did Hooch, Binns, and all the rest. After crossing all over the castle and visiting all of his teachers there was only one professor left for him to ask.

Link rapped on the door to Lockhart's office and waited, silently dreading what was to come.

'Yes? Just a moment.' said Lockhart's cheery voice. A second later the door opened to reveal Gilderoy Lockhart in all his splendour, gloriously draped in yellow and pink robes.

Link held back his laughter. He looks like a shower curtain.

'Ah, Link! My favorite, most quiet student. Please come in, come in.' said Lockhart, sweeping him into his circular office and towards a chair. The room was filled with pictures of Lockhart who all started winking and smiling at him. It was deeply unsettling.
'So.' said Lockhart scooting behind his desk, 'What can I help you with?'

Link reached over the desk and passed Lockhart his note. Lockhart looked at it for a second then back at Link.

This is my last chance. Link thought, carefully keeping his face calm as he returned Lockhart's gaze.

'Oh, Link.' said Lockhart shaking his head slightly, 'Link, Link, Link. My poor sweet boy.' He felt his heart sink.

He's going to say no.

'You can't hide behind books, Link!' said Lockhart smiling, his eyes shining brightly. Link blinked. What?

'You need to get out there, meet people!' said Lockhart passionately, pumping his fist.

Link stared at him in open mouthed confusion. Lockhart sighed and continued.

'Listen, Link my boy-' said Lockhart shaking his finger slightly 'I've heard that the other students mock you. Constantly even.'

He blinked. He has? I didn't think I was THAT unpopular.

'But you can't let yourself be bogged down in this-’ he started waving the note around 'tedium! Do you know what tedium means, Link?'

Link nodded.

Lockhart clarified regardless. 'it means you're wasting your time.'

Link frowned. Is that what tedium means?

'If you want to stop the bullies. Stop them from calling you half breed, nitwit, mutey,-' Lockhart started counting on his fingers ‘-spaz, Link the loser, goblinoid,-’ Link gritted his teeth, 'pretty boy, sissy boy, girly boy...you get the point. Then you'll need to change your approach.' he finished in a gentle tone.

Link nodded stiffly. Where was he going with this?

'I heard you use Madam Lyrisa's Witch's Secret, Link.' whispered Lockhart conspiratorially. Link blanked for a moment then went bright red.

Lockhart held up his hands in defence at his expression 'It's a good product! Lord knows I've used it myself on occasion. And clearly the results speak for themselves. Your hair looks great, fantastic even! But-’ Lockhart licked his lips and paused ‘it's just that, well, it's a very feminine product, Link. Not a good look for a boy in school.'

He, Gilderoy Lockhart, is calling me feminine?!

'I worry about you, Link. I worry that you might be headed down the wrong path. Getting strange books about potions?' he said waving the note again, 'That is definitely not a good move.'

Link gawked. In all of his time adventuring, he'd never been so insulted!
'I'm sorry, Link.' he said finally. 'But my answer is no.' he held out the paper for him to take.

Time seemed to stop as he looked at the unsigned permission slip. *I need that paper signed. I need that book. Whatever the cost. Dignity be damned, I'm not leaving without that signature!*

Taking a deep breath and holding it, Link screwed up his face and let out a choked sob. Doe eyes weren't going to cut it this time. He'd need to bring out the big guns. Putting a hand to his face, he stealthily worked his fingers past his hair and grabbed his ear. Readyng himself, he gave it a sharp, painful twist.

'Link are you…Oh…Oh my poor sweet boy.' said Lockhart moving from around his desk to sit beside Link who now had tears streaming down his face.

'Listen. I know it's hard, being so unpopular. No doubt you see me and my looks and my popularity and you said to yourself: "That could be me! I could have great hair and a great smile too." and so you bought that shampoo and- oh, Link.' Lockhart offered Link his handkerchief who took it, dabbing at his eyes.

Lockhart hesitated 'Look, I can see this is something you care deeply about-' Link blew into the handkerchief noisily '-so I tell you what. Just this once, I'll give you permission.' Link sniffled and looked up at Lockhart with hopeful eyes and Lockhart smiled, 'But come class tomorrow, I'm going to help you work towards becoming more popular. I'm going to start a special section in class, just for you, about how to make friends.' he beamed. Taking his giant peacock quill, he signed the slip and passed it back to Link, who took it standing.

'Goodbye for now Link, see you in class tomorrow.' said Lockhart nodding at Link like a proud father.

He nodded back. Wiping the tears from his eyes, he shuffled out of the office. As soon as the door shut behind him, he broke out into shivers.

'Gyaaaaugh.' said Link as he felt his skin crawl from the humiliation.

*That may be the most embarrassing thing I've ever done.*

'Link *I* think you're cool.' said Navi affectionately, patting his chest from inside his robe.

*Whatever, just don't think about it.* Thought Link as he looked at the signed permission slip in his hand. *I sure aren't looking forward to class tomorrow though that's for sure.*

Not wanting to spend another moment by Lockhart's office, he took off running for the library. He would have time to browse through the book before he and Luna got to studying. Hopefully she wouldn't be able to tell he had been crying.

Link walked past rows and rows of giant dusty shelves, piled with books, manuscripts, and tomes. In his hands he held "Moste Potente Potions". The librarian had been awfully suspicious but, in the end, she turned over the book.

*Let's hope this was worth it.* He thought as he sat at secluded table in the corner of the library. Link propped up the book on the end of its spine so that it covered his chest, allowing Navi to poke her
head out from his robes unseen.

'Alright, let's have a look.' she whispered, so softly that he could barely hear her.

Navi had to take care to keep her voice low or she would attract the attention of the sharp eared, bitter librarian who ceaselessly prowled the bookshelves. Link kept the book upright for her as she read, keeping a sharp lookout, and turning the pages when she asked him.

Before long she spoke up, 'Link, check it out.'

He looked down at the book. The page was titled "Serum of Youthful Rejuvenation". The book claimed that the potion drew on the vitality of the ingredients to imbue the drinker with a surge of strength and prowess. He looked at the brewer's guide skeptically. It seemed no different from the other potions he and Navi had tried.

'Meh.' he said.

'Link, trust me I think this will work. It comes from the same time period as your axe does, it was even used in pagan ceremony! It's our only option at this point.' whispered Navi.

He checked over the ingredients list. He had never used any of the components the recipe asked for and the instructions seemed very complicated as well. He tapped the ingredient list and exhaled in frustration.

'I know, Link. You're going to have to steal all this stuff...or if you prefer we could sneak off to Hogsmeade to buy it, or we could steal it there. Whichever.'

He nodded as he pulled out his quill and started copying out the recipe.

_I doubt they'll sell a kid all this stuff, but we'll give it a try first. If not then they'll make a "contribution" to the greater good._

Just as he was almost finished copying out the required steps, he heard a faint shuffling noise. Link gazed over the bookshelves briefly before returning to his copying. He cleared his throat and Navi quickly disappeared back into his robes. From behind the bookshelves he could tell he was being watched.

_It's probably just a Slytherin or something messing with me._ Thought Link irritably as he continued copying. _Just a few more minutes..._

At last he finished copying. Scowling, he closed the giant book and stood up.

_I'm not going to confront them. I can't do anything to them anyway._

He walked away from the inquisitive bookshelf and moved to the book return slot at the library counter.

_I can always reuse the permission slip and take out the book again if need be._

He glanced at the clock. It was lunchtime. He didn't feel like waiting around the library while he was being spied on so he left to see if he could find Luna in the Great Hall. As soon as he exited the quiet of the library and entered the hallway he took off running.

_Maybe if I find Luna we can do our homework outside._ Thought Link as he jumped down the stairs, rolling as he hit the bottom and loudly startling a group of fourth years. _If we're done soon_
enough, I can quickly run off to Hogsmeade and buy those potion ingredients.

He had heard that the third-year and up students got to go to Hogsmeade on the weekends. Hopefully nobody would care that Link, who was certainly too young to be a third year, was buying stuff. Much less weird potions ingredients. He dashed into the Great Hall and spotted Luna at the Ravenclaw table. Sitting around her were three other Ravenclaw girls.

He felt uneasy as he watched the three other girls start laughing while Luna looked visibly upset about something. Suddenly one of the girls pointed him out and said something in her ear. Luna spotted him and quickly got up, fast walking away from the three girls who kept laughing at her back.

'Hey Link, do you want to get out of here? Let's go outside.' said Luna, swiftly wiping her eyes. Link nodded and fell in step beside her as she exited the Great Hall.

The two walked through the Entrance Hall towards the outdoor courtyard. As they walked, Luna kept her head turned while she dug through her bag.

Should I say something? Link blinked and exhaled softly and looked away from her, pretending to be interested in some distant birds. What could I even say? Start telling her I'm sorry I'm her only friend? Oh, and by the way I can talk, sorry I forgot. No I'll just...keep my mouth shut.

Instead it was Luna who broke the silence.

'It's so nice to see the sun again. I thought it wasn't ever going to stop raining.' she said in a cheery voice though she still sniffled a little.

He nodded.

'I know, how about instead of doing homework in the boring library, we just hang out outside instead?' she said, looking at him.

'Mmm!' he said enthusiastically. That was fine with him. He had been humiliated enough today and didn't want to run into whoever was spying on him in the library.

'Great! It would be a shame to waste such a nice day.' she said happily as the two strolled over to the courtyard tables.

Predictably all the tables were full as everybody was outside eating their lunch and enjoying the weather. In truth it wasn't that warm out and it was a bit windy, but the sun was shining and that was good enough. Link and Luna didn't spot any first years with which they were on friendly enough terms to join at the tables, so she suggested they go to the stone steps just outside Hogwarts Castle.

Walking back to the Entrance Hall, they seated themselves on the stairs looking out over the grounds. In the distance they could see Hagrid's Cabin, the Forbidden Forest, and the Scottish highlands beyond. Considering how dreary the weather was the past couple of weeks, the rolling landscape sure was a sight for sore eyes.

'Have you talked to Hagrid since the Sorting?' asked Luna, brushing her golden hair behind her ear.

Link nodded.

'He seems like the gentle giant type. Maybe we should go pay him a visit.'
He grinned and gave her a thumbs up. That wasn't a bad idea. Despite never really meeting under the best of circumstances, Hagrid was always nice around him and never seemed to be as awkward as the other teachers or students had been.

The two sat in silence for a little while longer and appreciated the scenery. Eventually, Luna spoke up again.

'Link…' she said slowly, 'I really want to say something. Promise you won't freak out, okay?' He looked at her and nodded. His mouth suddenly felt very dry.

'Back in the courtyard a few weeks ago I pointed out your tattoo and-and those voices I heard, during the sorting?' she said shakily, 'W-Well for the past…while actually, I-I've tried to talk to people about the things I see…and they all think I'm crazy.' her silvery eyes welled with tears and she looked away for a moment brushing her eyes with her sleeve.

'My father-' the word stuck in her throat '-has always believed me, and he said he saw similar things too.' she was quiet for a moment, 'But nobody believes my father either…Are we both just crazy? Everyone calls me Loony Lovegood, everyone but you…but you can't speak, Link.' she was silent as she stared searchingly at him. 'Did I really hear something, Link? Did you have a tattoo, or did I imagine it?'

Link was quiet as he looked back at her. Her silver blue eyes. Her golden hair. She looks so similar, it can't be a coincidence… Suddenly he smiled and stood he ran over to a puddle and showed Luna the back of his left hand.

'Uh…' started Luna, but he continued. Dipping his hand in the puddle he started to rub his hand. After a few moments the cream washed off and he went back to her and showed her the back of his hand again, the Triforce shining brightly.

Luna's breath caught in her throat, 'Your tattoo, I thought I saw it, but-' he grabbed her hand and pulled her up. Taking her in stride he walked with Luna away from the castle towards a slight embankment. Once they were partially shielded from few he stopped and Luna looked at him confused.

He fluttered his robes slightly, patting them down.

'Um, Link what are you doing?' asked Luna, but he ignored her. Instead he kept rustling around his robes.

Come on Navi, don't make this weird…

Link started to become progressively more and more embarrassed until finally Navi flew out of his robes. At the sight of the blue glowing fairy, Luna gasped in astonishment. Jumping back, she accidentally dropped her bookbag into the mud.

'I sure hope you know what you're doing Link…' said Navi waringly as she came to a hovering stop in front of Luna. Blue eyes blinking in total disbelief, Luna gulped.

'Is-is that a Griskswaggle? I've never seen-' started Luna her eyes wide with shock.

'No, I am not a Grisksaggle. Whatever that is. I'm a type of fairy.' said Navi warily.

'And-and you can talk!' blurted out Luna excitedly.
'Yes, I can talk. I'm talking to you right now.' said Navi patiently.

'But y-you really exist! I can see you and everything! Can I hold it?' asked Luna looking back at Link.

Navi sighed and flew unto Luna's shoulder. Before she could reach, Navi pinched her cheek lightly before flying back to Link. Luna stood there rubbing where Navi had pinched her. Her mouth open as she looked between the two. Link put his hands on his hips and grinned.

'I've never heard of a fairy that can speak to wizards before!' said Luna in amazement. 'What are you doing with a fairy, Link?'

'We're companions. We've been together for a long time, going around...d-doing stuff.' Navi looked at him for help, but he just shrugged.

'Mostly I just keep Link out of trouble.' said Navi fluttering closer to Luna.

Luna appeared to be at a loss for words and merely stood there. Sighing, Navi flew down to her level.

'Listen. I heard what you said about nobody believing you about the things you've seen.' said Navi kindly, 'But hey: I'm real. The mark on Link's hand is real. You're not crazy. It's okay, I know the teasing hurts, but kids your age are just stupid. Trust me I know.'

Link rolled his eyes.

'We have a favour to ask you, Luna.' started Navi in a serious tone. 'Me and Link, we have a job to do. And nobody *Nobody* can know that I exist. Including your father, your mother, anybody. Do you understand.'

'U-uh, yes...I-' stammered Luna.

Link walked up to her and put his hand on her shoulder and looked into her eyes. She looked back, wide eyed and wondering.

'Promise us, Luna. Promise you won't tell anybody about me or Link's tattoo.' said Navi landing on his shoulder and crossing her arms.

Luna took a deep breath 'I promise.' she said earnestly.

Link smiled and hugged her, she yelped in shock slightly and went stiff. He pulled back and grinned. Luna went pink and ran a hand through her hair.

'W-well I mean y-your job must be real important so-' she started, shuffling her feet slightly.

'Yes, it is important. Lot's of people could get hurt if we don't succeed. It's only me and Link, Luna. We cannot be allowed to fail.'

He nodded behind Navi's back.

'I-If you don't mind my asking, what is your job exactly?' asked Luna.
Navi decided it would be best to continue their chat somewhere more secluded. Not wanting to get covered in mud, and with the inner grounds and castle teeming with first- and second-year students, they settled on a lonely Ash tree near Hagrid's hut. Kneeling down in the shade of the runty tree in some muddy grass they started their meeting.

Navi explained their quest, but omitted a few key details. She didn't explain the Triforce or that Link was from another world. As Luna understood it, he was a transfer student from far away that was chasing down a dangerous artifact that had wound up in Hogwarts. It was a crystal that drove anyone who possessed it insane and it was up to Link and Navi to track it down and destroy it.

'But who sent you?' asked Luna once Navi had finished her tale.

'We weren't sent by anyone officially.' said Navi carefully, 'It's just our responsibility.'

'Isn't there anyone older who could've done this? No offence Link, but you're just a kid. Couldn't you have told an adult about this crystal?'

'There was no one we could turn too.' said Navi sadly. 'It's just me and Link.' there was silence as Luna opened her mouth as though to say something then she closed it. A gust of wind blew between the three.

He looked at Navi out of the corner of his eye. Don't overdue it, Navi! I don't need some tragic backstory.

'I'm sorry.' said Luna softly. He just shook his head and waved his hand in a carefree manner.

'So, what are you up to now?' asked Luna, eager to change the subject. 'Do you have any leads?'

Navi sighed, 'Right now we're at an impasse. Me and Link are trying to gather ingredients for a potion we need, but we're going to need to find them first.'

'What ingredients?' asked Luna, her brow creased.

Link smiled slightly as he looked at her. She had never looked more animated and excited before.

'Link, the recipe?' Navi turned to him and he hastily got the parchment.

Luna read the recipe a few times before shaking her head and handing it back, 'Sorry, I don't know what any of that stuff is. I don't know where you could get it either.' she said frowning.

'That's okay. Me and Link were going to sneak into Hogsmeade today to buy it.' said Navi. Luna turned pale and gulped.

'Today? You guys will get into so much trouble if you get caught.' said Luna nervously.

Link shrugged. 'We have no choice.' said Navi simply.

'D-do you want my help? I've never been to Hogsmeade, but I'm sure I can help out.'

'No, that won't be necessary. Me and Link can handle this. We've been to Hogsmeade before, don't worry about us.' said Navi reassuringly.

Luna looked disappointed and relieved all at once. Is there anything else I can do?' she asked looking at Link. Link looked at Navi his eyebrows raised.

'Yes, actually. We know that there is some sort of plot at Hogwarts. We don't know if its related or
what but, if you hear anything, anything suspicious or weird. Please tell us.' said Navi and Link nodded enthusiastically.

Luna nodded and smiled, 'I've never been on an adventure before.' she said breathlessly 'This is exciting!'

Navi nodded 'Just be discrete. Remember, none of this happened, okay? Come on, Link. It's getting late and we need to get moving before the stores in Hogsmeade close.'

'Hep!' said Link jumping up.

'Hey Link-' he stopped brushing grass off himself and looked at Luna '-thanks for trusting me with all this. I thought I was going crazy.'

He grinned at her and patted her arm.

'One last thing,' said Luna looking down at the tattoo on the back of Link's left hand, 'What does your tattoo mean? If you don't mind me asking.'

He looked down at the Triforce.

_I forgot about that._

Pulling out his can of concealing cream, he rubbed it all over the back of his hand while Luna looked on puzzled.

'That tattoo, it's just a symbol that Link wears. It's a reminder to be brave.' said Navi casually.

'Why do you hide it.' asked Luna frowning, 'Doesn't that defeat the point?'

He let out a bark of laughter and shrugged. She had a point.

'Well…Link is a stranger in these parts. He's mute. He's…different enough you know?' said Navi carefully.

_Clever._ Thought Link with a flicker of annoyance. Navi sure was working the bullied and alone angle. Couldn't he just be a wandering badass for once?

'I don't think you should hide anything. Link. You shouldn't have to.' stated Luna.

Link felt himself blush at the sincerity in her voice and he quickly looked away.

'Well…anyway we should really get going. We'll talk later Luna, okay?' said Navi.

Navi flew back in Link's robes as he ran off in the direction of Hogsmeade while Luna watched. She stood there until he disappeared from view before heading back to the castle, a smile on her lips.
Link and Navi had heard that the road to Hogsmeade had been washed away by the storm and they were unsurprised to see that the rumors were unexaggerated. Large sections of the road were covered by waist deep bodies of water and the surrounding woodlands were equally flooded. As a result, they were forced to take a looping detour through higher ground before finally arriving at the outskirts of Hogsmeade by late midday.

'Looks like the storms didn't spare Hogsmeade. Hopefully everyone will be too excited with their shopping to notice us.' murmured Navi as they approached the village.

Link grimaced slightly as he saw a large cluster of black robed Hogwarts students in the distance. Due to the storms, this was the first opportunity that Hogwarts had given to the students to leave the castle and from the looks of things, they were making the most of it.

*I bet every store is going to be filled to the brim. But what choice do I have? I won't last another week of classes if I can't recover some of my magic.* Thought Link uneasily as he entered the village proper.

He hurried down the muddy side streets in the direction of the excited shouts of the students. As he ran past the houses, he saw up close the effects the rainstorms had on the once quaint little village.

*The last few weeks have not been kind to Hogsmeade.* He thought as he passed a blown over wooden shed.

Every window in every last house had been boarded up. Mailboxes lie knocked over or sinking into the mire and gardens and lawns had become pools.

After a short jog past the storm besieged houses, he came upon High Street. Slowing to a walk, he emerged from the alley wall of a shop and carefully peered into the street. Predictably, it was crowded by excited students who were hopping from dry spot to dry spot to the various stores. Throngs more were visible through the windows and doors of the shops as they constantly streamed in and out, arms laden with bags of sweets and novelties, laughing and talking happily.

*They boarded up the houses, but not the storefronts? I guess the stores need the business...*

He drew up his hood as he watched the older students scurry about. It honestly looked like everyone from third year and up was jammed into Hogsmeade.

*There are so many...Maybe I can hide in plain sight? What are the chances that anyone will notice another black robe?*

Drawing his cloak up around him, he stepped into the street. Unfortunately, he wasn't as anonymous amongst the school population as he would have liked. His habit of sprinting everywhere and jumping down staircases (much to the shock of those below) had earned him a small reputation with the student body. Beyond his peers, the students weren't his only concern. Every Hogsmeade trip was chaperoned by an instructor and he had no idea who was leading this trip.

Walking down the path, his heart raced as he passed a group of third year Hufflepuffs. Thankfully they were all too entranced by their colour changing lollipops to pay him any mind.
At least I know all of my professors are back at Hogwarts. Thought Link as he passed Madam Pudifoots, its windows filled with nervous couples sitting around steaming mugs, Otherwise I'd be noticed for sure.

Suddenly he spotted none other than Percy Weasley directly ahead. The tall redhead stood watch on the sidewalk, Prefect badge gleaming in the sun, as he surveyed the students attentively.

Shit! Thought Link as Percy's gaze fell upon him. He stopped and turned around slightly, pretending as though he was lost. Just before he turned around fully, he saw Percy suddenly perk up and start to stride toward him purposefully. Link started to walk stiffly back the way he had come, expecting Percy's hand to clap down on his shoulder at any moment but to his amazement Percy marched right past him and continued down the street. Link watched as Percy approached another Prefect, a Ravenclaw, who was talking to a woman wrapped in a loose shawl.

That was a close one. He thought, sighing in relief.

Turning, he immediately collided with another student.

'Oh, sorry.' said the other student clutching his bag of sweets closely. He looked down at Link and blinked, a slight look of confusion on his face. Link recognized him from the Gryffindor Common Room, his younger brother was a roommate of his. Link smiled weakly and hurried past the older boy who stood staring after him.

I need to hurry up! This is getting ridiculous. Thought Link shaking his head, Sooner or later someone will report me!

Thankfully just ahead he spotted the green and white sign of the potions store, J. Pippin's Potions. Link quickly entered before he could run into a group of fifth years who were hopping from flagstone to flagstone to avoid dirtying their robes. Shutting the door behind him, his eyes darted around the store.

Thankfully the potions store wasn't as busy as the other shops though there were still more than a few students browsing around the variety of labelled products and ingredients. Luckily no one spared him a glance as he walked in. Rather than wait around, he went directly to the counter behind a Slytherin boy.

'That'll be 12 sickles and four knuts, love.' said the chubby shop keep, her long curls dangling perilously close to a tank of giant blue crabs.

The Slytherin paid wordlessly and left, tucking his potion into his robes. Once the lady was free, Link stepped up to the counter.

'Hello, dearie. How may I help you?' asked the witch, smiling down at him.

He handed her the parchment that he had written the ingredients on for the Rejuvenation Potion. As the shop keeper read the list, her eyes got wider with every word.

I hope this doesn't cause a scene. Thought Link nervously as the woman shook her head and frowned.

'This a school thing?' she asked as she looked up from the note. He nodded briskly. The woman gave the list one last look then let out an amused snort, 'Good thing we just restocked. Let me see...' she mumbled as she turned and walked into the backroom.

Adjusting his hood, he shifted his weight and bounced on his feet restlessly.
Hurry up! Come on!

'I heard the schools dungeons flooded. Did Professor Snape lose some of his storerooms?' called out the woman from the back.

'Mmhmm!' said Link worriedly, glancing around the store. There was nobody waiting in line behind him, but a few more students had entered.

'Well if he needs anything more, tell him to send an owl first, yeah?'

He said nothing. Instead he just willed the woman to go faster. As he stood there, a pair of gossiping girls got in line behind him. Biting his lip, he couldn't help but groan softly. Were they Gryffindors? He didn't dare turn and look.

After an agonizing minute of waiting the woman finally stepped out of the back room.

'Here we are.' she said, putting several small boxes on the countertop. 'Is that everything?' she asked as she grabbed a larger empty box and started filling it with the smaller packages.

He nodded. The girls were still chatting away behind him.

'This'll be a might expensive. Hope Snape didn't stitch ya.' said the witch, winking at him as she finished packaging.

Link forced a small smile in response and lifted his wallet.

'Well that'll be 121 Galleons, 16 sickles, 12 knuts. Snape has expensive tastes, eh?' said the witch as he pulled out his money. He was painfully aware of the fact that the conversation behind him had stopped as he filled out the money counting scale on the store counter.

After he finally finished paying. The woman handed him his receipt.

'Better not drop it in the mud! Snape'll eat ya!' she said jovially as he grabbed the large box off the counter.

Without a backward glance, he exited out to the crowded street and immediately started to trot back the way he had come. Initially, he feared that his box would make him more noticeable, but the foot traffic had become so thick, and the crowd so rambunctious, that nobody spared him a second glance.

At least this crate is shielding my face some. Thought Link as he carefully snuck by Percy who was now talking with the other Prefect.

At last he passed the row of shops on High Street and he felt himself relax. Less than a block and he'd be back in his alley.

Almost there. He breathed in relief. Maybe I should go to Hogsmeade more often? I'm sure there's lot's of cool stuff here.

Rounding the corner to the alleyway, he suddenly found himself face to face with Fred, George and their friend Lee Jordan who was just as much a troublemaker as the two Weasley Twins.

Uh Oh. Thought Link as the three boys stopped their conversation and glanced at him. To his dismay, Fred and George quickly broke out into wide grins.

Busted...
'My, my, my if it isn't everyone's favourite loudmouth.' said George loudly causing him to flinch.

'How's it going their Linky?' asked Fred, just as loud.

'Um…' said Link, gripping the package tightly to his chest.

At that moment Lee Jordan who had been standing to the side, snapped his fingers.

'Hey, I know this kid. This is the guy who runs around rolling and jumping all the time.' exclaimed Lee Jordan in surprise, looking at Fred and George, 'Isn't he in first year?'

'They grow up so fast.' said George sadly, 'One day, they're breaking out of the school dorms, the next they're breaking out of school completely.' he wiped an imaginary tear from his eye as Fred nodded sadly, 'We're just so proud of him.'

Link laughed nervously and made to dodge past the twins, but they quickly formed up in front of him.

'Say Link, we're all friends here right? I mean here we all are, up to mischief in an alley.' said George jovially.

'You're buying a bunch of potion ingredients. Probably to poison the school water supply-' said Fred lifting his right hand

'-we're about to toss a few stink bombs…' continued George lifting his left hand.

'All the same right?' said the twins together. Lee Jordan smiled and shook his head.

Link nodded slowly.

'Well as we're such great pals, we thought we'd ask your help.' said George throwing a brotherly arm around him and leading him back towards High Street. 'You see that woman over there?' he said, pointing with the hand he had wrapped around his shoulder, 'The bony witch, big glasses, plates for earrings?'

Link nodded. It was the woman he had seen earlier with the shawl. She was standing on a flagstone surrounded by mud and water. Biting her lip apprehensively, she restlessly shifted her weight from one pointed boot to the next as she eyed a distant drypatch on the path ahead. From the looks of things, she was mustering the courage to jump.

'Well you see, she's something of a celebrity at Hogwarts.' said Fred.

'A seer.' added Lee, grinning.

'Yeah. And do you know what she predicted last week? That the Hogsmeade trip was doomed to suffer a great calamity.'

'Doomed.' repeated Lee.

'Well. As you can see, there has yet to be any doom manifesting.' said George sadly.

'It's shocking. Devastating even. We were really looking forward to the chaos.' said Fred earnestly.

'So, we thought we'd help things along.' said Lee pulling out what looked like a small red and green capsule from his pocket.
'What say you, Link? If you throw this little stinker here, right down ol' Trelawney's neck wrap, we can all move along quiet like.' said George in a sinister tone.

'Otherwise, we might be so inclined to call our dear brother Percy over and tell him that a certain first year is trespassing.' said Fred in a condescending baby voice.

'What do you say, Link?' said George taking the stink bomb from Lee and holding it up to him, 'Are you the hero the prophet foretold?'

Link sighed resignedly and lowered his package down carefully to a dry patch of ground. Gingerly, he took the deku nut sized stink pellet from George.

'That'a boy, Link! Remember, right down the ol' rag.' said Fred excitedly.

Link nodded and concentrated. It was a windy day, and the woman was a good thirty feet away. Turning the pellet over in his hands he got a feel for its weight. Gripping it between his pointer finger and ring finger, he lined up his shot.

_I wish I had my slingshot on me._

Fred, George and Lee Jordan hunched down to his eye level, giggling like school girls.

_Sorry lady. It's for the greater good._ Thought Link as he got a bead on the shawl wrapped woman.

With a flick of the wrist, he launched the pellet. It sliced through the air and smashed against Trelawney's gong like earrings with a sharp ringing sound. The pellet exploded on impact, filling the air around her head with a thick green cloud of swirling gas. Squawking loudly, she lost her footing and, slipping off the flagstone, landed rump first in a giant muck hole with a resounding splat.

Link, Fred, George, and Lee quickly ducked around the corner barely able to contain their laughter. Stopping to pick up his package, Link chased after the other three away from the howling Trelawney and to safety.

Once they had run a ways away, the four stopped and began laughing.

'Ah!' said Fred, clutching his sides, 'The universe is in balance once again.'

'Don't feel guilty, Link. We're all just pawns of the cosmos after all.' said Lee as Fred and George nodded.

Link grinned mischievously and nodded. _That's a pretty good excuse! I wonder if Navi would ever buy that..._

'Well, don't let us keep you from your work, Link. Godspeed.' Fred and George saluted. Adjusting his grip on his box, Link waved farewell to the trio before setting off for Hogwarts.

_It was late evening by the time Link and Navi returned to the castle. Not wanting to take any chances with the potions ingredients falling into the bog, he opted for the long, safe route through the hillside. All along the way he was subjected to Navi’s scolding about proper hero behaviour, but he wasn't really paying attention. He couldn't stop thinking about those stink bombs that Fred_
and George had. Where did they buy them he wondered? They might make a useful addition to his arsenal. Sprinting up the Shifting Staircase, Navi mercifully fell silent as they approached the tower entrance. Milling around in front of the Fat Lady stood Neville muttering to himself. Upon noticing Link, his round face perked up.

'Hi there, Link! You're cutting it pretty close. Curfew starts any minute! Are you heading in?'

Link came to a skipping stop and nodded breathlessly.

'Here let me open the portrait for you. Um, what's the password again? Waitle or Wattle…'

Link stared at Neville intensely as though he could beam the password into the forgetful boy's brain. After a few seconds, he let out and exaggerated sigh and set his package down. Netting his fingers together, he began to flap his hands like a bird. Neville stared at him dumbfounded for a moment before comprehension slowly dawned on him.

'Oh, yeah, Wattlebird.' said Neville proudly. Link gave him a thumbs up before scooping up his package. Running into the Common Room, he saw that there were quite a few students crowded around. Curfew was about to begin soon and nobody wanted to provoke the wrath of McGonagall by staying out late.

*I'll get these ingredients sorted. Then it's off to have a quick bath. Afterwards, Navi and I can start brewing this potion!* Thought Link eagerly as he started up the spiral staircase.

'Hey, Link!'

Stopping midway up the stairs, he looked in the direction of the voice. Harry Potter of all people was calling for him from one of the couches. Seated around him was his usual entourage of followers, plus Colin who was waving him over. He hesitated, biting his lip.

Pleasantries can wait. I need to get this stuff stashed.

Feigning ignorance, he waved back at the group before turning and hustling up the stairs. Running to his empty dorm room, he checked to make sure they were alone before giving the all clear to Navi.

'What a crazy day.' said Navi tiredly as she flew out of his robe into his bed, 'Go on and get washed up. Make sure to stash the potion ingredients!'

He nodded and shifted the large box in his hands as he considered his loot sack that he kept filled with his school supplies.

*I probably shouldn't mix my school stuff with my quest items.*

He turned to his green tunic and tried to stuff the over sized box in his pocket, but it wouldn't fit. The enchantment didn't seem to like the ingredients for some reason.

He snorted. *Figures.*

Looking around the room for a suitable spot for a moment, he eventually just shrugged and kicked the whole thing under his bed.

'Hey! Watch it.' scolded Navi from down below.

*I'll find a better spot for that stuff later. I want to get cleaned up before the bathroom gets too busy.*
Satisfied, he grabbed his PJ's and towel (as well as his gloriously pink shampoo) and headed out for the bath.

Harry, Ron, and Hermione collapsed into the chairs of the Gryffindor Common Room, totally exhausted. They had tried to follow Link all day but they couldn't keep track of him for more than a minute.

'This-' huffed Hermione as she took off her shoes and began rubbing her feet. '-is ridiculous!'

Harry nodded, wincing at the cramp in his side.

'I'm not-' Ron yawned, ' -I'm not getting up early again Harry. My body can't take it!'

Harry started to muster the energy to argue, but found himself yawning as well. Ever since the twins had told him that they had found Link covered in rain and mud one day, they had heard stories that he had been sneaking around the castle. From what they could tell, Link was always waiting for the portrait to unlock first thing in the morning. He was also almost always the last person in before curfew. For the past week they had attempted to figure out what he was up to by following him as he left the Tower, but he was just too fast. He always took off running at full speed wherever he went and despite his limited time at Hogwarts, he really knew his way around the secret passages.

'Where does he get his energy?' groaned Ron half-consciously, 'It's not fair.'

At that Ron began slumping over in exhaustion towards Hermione who instantly tried to redirect his limp body away from herself. While they fought, Harry sighed in disappointment as he thought over what they had accomplished. They had resolved to finding out what Link was doing, but all they could figure out was that he had apparently criss-crossed the entire school. The only time they had caught up with him is when they had stumbled across him in the library; borrowing a book from the Forbidden Section of all things. According to Hermione the book he was reading, "Moste Potente Potions", was quite advanced. Who knew what he could be up to?

'Hermione.' started Harry, looking over at the struggling girl who was trying to push Ron off, 'Do you think you could get that potions book? It would help if we knew what he might have been looking at. Maybe something would stand out.'

'I can try Harry, but it's going to be hard to get permission to sign it out.' replied Hermione, still wrestling with Ron.

Finally she managed to send him flopping back into the cushions.

'He's in first year guys.' moaned Ron, 'I doubt Link even knows how to make any advanced potions. Do you think we could have brewed anything in that book in our first year?'

Hermione gave him a slight frown. Harry shrugged. He had a point.

At that moment, Harry noticed Colin spot him from across the room. Harry watched with growing dread as the smiling boy made a beeline for their couch, zigzagging around the other tables like a homing missile.
'All right, Harry?' asked Colin as he slipped into the seat between Ron and Hermione.

'Hullo, Colin.' replied Harry automatically. He wasn't sure if he had the energy to deal with Colin after chasing Link up and down Hogwarts's staircases all day. Mercifully, Hermione engaged him before he could begin his usual interrogation.

'Hey Colin, I have a question for you. You partner with Link in potions, don't you?' asked Hermione.

'Yep!' said Colin, fishing out his camera.

'How is he? With the coursework I mean.'

'Does he and Snape get along?' added Ron, sitting up in the sofa.

'Oh, he's really good at potions! I don't think I've seen him make a mistake yet. He's the reason I'm even passing that class.' said Colin to Hermione happily. He turned to Harry, 'I've set myself on fire a few times.' he said in a confidential tone.

Harry nodded. Real good at potions, eh? He looked at Hermione and could tell she was thinking the same thing.

'But what about him and Snape?' asked Ron eagerly, Hermione rolled her eyes.

'About as good as anyone else in Gryffindor I guess.' replied Colin, shrugging.

At that moment, Harry heard the portrait door bang open and he looked over. Unsurprisingly, it was Link bursting in at his characteristic speed. His appearance drew a few snickers from around the Commons. His robes were covered in mud and his hair had twigs in it. Pausing for a moment, he panted, a giant package in his arms, completely oblivious to the stares he was attracting.

'What's he got in there?' asked Harry as the four watched Link take off running towards the dorms.

'I doubt we'll ever find out. Probably ran over to Diagon Alley to grab himself some lunch.' said Ron morosely as Link navigated the crowded room at speed.

'Why don't you ask him?' chirped Colin, 'Link'll tell you.'

Harry sat up. It wasn't a bad idea. Its not like he could hide anything in the Common Room anyway.

'Hey, Link!' called out Harry to the blonde who had by this time sprinted halfway up the spiral staircase to the first-year dorms.

Link paused and looked down at him. Harry saw Link's eyes dart across their faces, hesitating. After a moment Link suddenly hefted the box up with one arm and gave them a cheery wave before turning and disappearing into his room.

'Ah, there he goes. Probably going to have a bath.' predicted Colin confidently as they watched him disappear. 'He's very particular about his baths. I think he bathes more than he eats!'

Harry slumped over in his chair again before suddenly sitting upright. He had a plan.

'Ron, lets go.' Ron started moaning as Harry hauled him up on his feet, but he persisted. They didn't have a moment to lose. Colin looked between the two and started to stand as well, but Harry quickly spoke before he could get up, 'Er, Colin can you tell Hermione all about your pictures?
She's been real curious for a while now, but she's been too shy to say so.'

At that Hermione started blustering out denials, but Colin smiled eagerly.

'Sure! Gee Hermione you don't need to be shy. Here have a look at my scrapbook…' Colin sat back down next to the flustered looking Hermione.

'Invisibility Cloak.' whispered Harry in Ron's ear as he pulled him towards the spiral staircase. Perplexed, Ron followed as Harry hobbled up the staircase. Once they were in their dorm, Harry started to yank out his things as he fished for the Invisibility Cloak at the bottom of his steamer.

'Uh, Harry?' started Ron uncomfortably, 'We're not…we're not going to watch Link bathe, are we?'

Harry turned back to Ron in complete disbelief.

'No, you dunce! We're going to find out what's in that box, duh. This might be our only chance!'

'Oh.' said Ron, looking relieved.

At last Harry found the Invisibility Cloak. Harry carefully lifted out the weightless, silvery garment. A gift from his late father, when worn it allowed its wearer to become totally invisible and undetectable by any means. If it was worn correctly that is. Your breath could still be heard and any body parts that were left uncovered were visible. Thankfully the cloak was large enough that both he and Ron could cover themselves with it easily. Throwing it over himself and Ron, the two exited their room and started down the staircase to the first-year dorms. As they climbed down the stairs, Harry spotted Hermione still with Colin who was excitedly pointing out his pictures to her while she nodded politely.

Entering the first-year dorms, it didn't take Harry long to figure out which bed was Link's. Mud and grass were tracked all over, especially in front of his wardrobe, bed, and giant, sack type thing that he used instead of a steamer.

'Let's hurry, Harry. One of Link's mates could come in any second!' whispered Ron, glancing over his shoulder to the door anxiously.

Harry agreed. Quickly the two approached the giant bag and opened it. Poking through, the pair saw school books, telescope pieces, scales of various sizes, and a cauldron cleaning kit all thrown in with no real care or reason.

'If Mum saw this she would freak.' Ron muttered under his breath.

'You can say that again.' agreed Harry softly.

Harry wasn't a stickler for neatness, but years of housework under the cruel eye of his Aunt Petunia had made him quite diligent with cleaning up after himself. By contrast if the state of Link's room was any indication, his parents were probably slobs.

'It's not here. Let's try the wardrobe.'

Shifting away from the messy bag, the two opened the giant wardrobe. Inside they saw that it was organized about as well as the burlap sack. Socks, cloaks, shirts, and his school uniform were all heaped in a crumpled pile on top of each other. Curiously, hanging neatly in the corner was the strange green tunic that Link wore whenever he was out of uniform.

No axe? Maybe he didn't bring it with him...Or it's hidden somewhere.
Looking at the bottom of the wardrobe, Harry was surprised to see that it was piled with circular tins of cosmetics. Ron reached down and grabbed one.

'Concealment cream.' said Ron, reading the label on one of the tins, 'I remember last year Percy was begging Mum for some to cover up his acne. I guess Link must be a tad self-conscious.' Ron snickered and Harry grinned.

'You don't suppose he took it into the bathroom with him, do you?' said Ron as they closed the wardrobe door and went to his desk.

'I hope not. We might not get another chance as good as this one.' said Harry as he opened up the drawers in the desk one at a time.

Just like with Link's other belongings, his schoolwork was a mess. The desk was crammed with rolls of parchment covered in a mixture of class work, doodles, random lyrics to songs, and sheet music.

'What in the world?' mumbled Ron as he held up a piece of parchment. It depicted a stylized, cartoon version of Link stabbing a giant man in the forehead with a sword. A smiling girl in a dress and crown stood nearby, hands clasped together in joy.

Harry shared a confused look with Ron before going back to the drawers. Picking up a random piece of parchment, he read:

"…the effects of improper transfiguration on liquid objects can often be identified with changes to the liquids base properties. These being volume, colour, and viscosity. If these changes are not identified- NAVI I KNOW YOU'RE READING THIS! STOP FIDGETING!"

The page was filled with little message like that. Was Link writing notes to someone in class? Harry put down the paper, perplexed. After fruitlessly poking around for a while the two closed the desk drawer.

'Here, lets check under the- ' started Harry when all of a sudden another first year came in. He was humming softly as he went towards his bed. Harry and Ron froze as the boy walked past them to his bedside chest. While the first-year was digging around his steamer, the two backed up and out of the room. After exiting the first-year dorms he and Ron returned to their room and stashed the Invisibility Cloak back in Harry's trunk.

'Phew.' said Ron once the cloak was stored away. 'That was a close one.'

'Yeah.' said Harry sighing 'But we didn't find the box or learn anything useful.'

'We learned that Link is as messy as Fred and George.' pointed out Ron as the two headed down the staircase back to Hermione. She looked like she needed to be rescued.

'And see! And see! This is a picture I took of Harry eating pudding! And this one- ' Colin excitedly flipped the page, 'this is a picture I took of McGonagall as a cat! Do you think she gets hairballs? I betcha' she does! And this one- ' Harry and Ron rejoined the pair and Hermione looked up at the two with unexpectedly bright eyes.

'Harry! Ron! Come see this one picture Colin took. No not that one Colin, the first one.' Colin flipped through the book grinning and Harry and Ron looked at each other confused.

'Er, actually I think we're good thanks.' said Harry and Ron nodded quickly.
'No, trust me. You should see it.' said Hermione meaningfully.

Colin flipped his scrapbook back to the first page and pointed at the first picture.

'Check it out! I took it on the boat ride.' said Colin happily.

Harry and Ron leaned in to get a closer look.

In the picture Ginny, the blonde Ravenclaw girl that Link fancied, and Link himself were sitting together in a boat. Ginny and the blonde girl looked shocked by the sudden flash of the camera while Link threw up his arms to shield his face from the light. Looking at Link raise his arms, Harry noticed something gleaming on the back of his left hand. It appeared to be a faintly glowing gold symbol.

The symbol looked like a pyramid comprised of three triangles. Two of the three triangles were hollow, but the third triangle making up the bottom right half of the pyramid next to Link's left thumb was filled in gold. Harry had never seen that particular mark on Link before. Harry looked at Hermione and nodded.

Colin took the book back and started talking, oblivious to the significant looks shared between the three 'Yeah, that's one of my favourites…I know! Seeing as how you're here Harry, why don't I show you-'

Colin continued yammering about his scrapbook for what felt like an eternity. Finally, after exhausting his supply of photos he yawned and stood up.

'Anyway guys, I've got to get to bed! Classes start up again tomorrow, you know. Hey! We should do this again sometime once I have more photos.' said Colin as he tucked away his scrapbook. Harry, Ron and Hermione moaned feebly. After waving goodbye to them a final time, Colin happily skipped away.

'I wouldn't wish that on my worst enemy.' murmured Ron darkly as Colin started up the stairs.

'So,' started Hermione eagerly, 'did you two see Link's hand in the photo? I've never seen that glyph on him before.'

Harry nodded, 'Do you recognize it? A gold pyramid with three triangles…'

Hermione shook her head, 'I have no idea, Harry. I've never seen that particular symbol anywhere.' she leaned back and regarded the two suspiciously, 'Well anyway what did you two run off for?'

'We snuck into Link's room to search for that box.' said Harry.

'And?' asked Hermione excitedly, eyebrows raised.

'Nothing. We did find concealment cream though.' said Harry thoughtfully, 'Must be how he's hiding that mark on his hand.'

'Why hide the mark on his hand though?' asked Ron scratching his head 'It's not against the rules or anything, far as I know.'

'Because it might be more than a simple tattoo. In the picture it was glowing gold, and those symbols looked like runes. Enchanted runes. They could impart all sorts of magical effects on the person wearing them, but I don't know that much about runes to be honest.' confessed Hermione crossing her arms in frustration, 'And of course we don't start runes until next year!'
Harry sighed and leaned back in the sofa.

'It seems we only get more questions, never answers. Between that dark artifact Link bought in Knockturn Alley, his strange expeditions at night, his "muteness"- ' said Harry making quotation marks with his hands "-his potion research, and his strange tattoo, I think that its safe to assume that Link is involved in whatever plot Dobby was talking about.'

Ron nodded his head in agreement, but Hermione frowned.

'What?' said Ron, 'Surely you agree that Link is awfully suspicious!'

'Yes, but what are we suspicious of exactly? Nothing has happened.' said Hermione exasperatedly, 'Maybe Dobby just got-got confused or something.'

Harry was unconvinced. Someone had tried to stop him from reaching Hogwarts. There was a plot. He just hoped he could figure it out before it was too late.

Link skipped back to his room, squeaky clean after his bath. As he entered, he jumped from the doorway and straight down on top of his bed. He let himself bounce to rest against the soft sheets, humming Saria's Song to himself as he settled. Today had been a good day.

One of his bunkmates looked over at him, 'Link, I don't know where you get your energy from.' he said shaking his head. 'If I ran around as much as you do, I'd have a heart attack.' Link looked over at him and grinned. Turning over so he could lie on his back, he gazed up at the ceiling of his room.

I sure hope that potion works. Otherwise I WILL have a heart attack.

'...Link...Link...' he heard Navi say faintly. He sighed in annoyance and stood up off the bed.

'Don't JUMP on the bed Link! You'll CRUSH me. Is THAT what you want?' Can't even act my own age sometimes... Link thought irritably as he sat on the chair by his desk, Whatever. I can't let that spoil my good mood. I'll make the potion, and I'm sure everything will work out.

He looked down at his desk and his messily arranged classwork. ME and Luna didn't do our homework today. I guess I can do it at night over the week.

As he looked over his papers, he noticed that the drawer to his desk was slightly ajar. Opening it, he saw that his work was in a different order then he remembered.

That's strange, weren't my history notes up top and my transfiguration notes at the bottom?

Alert now, he turned and noticed that his bag was slightly open. Whenever he went through his school loot he always spun the bag around to seal it up tight. It was an old habit he picked up in his early adventuring days. The last thing you wanted was to be losing loot 'cause your loot bag was too loose. The loot bag however was definitely not tightly wound up and was instead definitely loose. Something was up.

He strode over to his bag. Opening it, he took a quick poke through his school supplies.

Nothing seems to be missing...
Next, he walked over to his wardrobe. He opened it and reviewed his clothes and items.

*My tunic is still here, my socks, my...hey! What happened to my little pyramid?* Link had arranged his cans of concealing cream into a little pyramid. He did it for no real reason, he just liked stacking them.

He scowled as he closed the dresser. *Was somebody in here? Did one of my roommates go through my stuff? Are they messing with me?*

He looked over at his bunkmate suspiciously. The boy was relaxing on his bed while he read wizard comic book of some kind, completely at ease with himself. For a moment Link thought about going over to him before he sighed and layed back down on his bed.

*I'm just being paranoid. Who would want to go through my stuff? My bunkmates have all been really nice to me all things considered. I should just calm down and concentrate on the potion making me and Navi will have to do tonight.*

'Link!' whispered Navi as loudly as she dared.

'Hmm?' he replied absently.

'Link! Some guys broke in here! They were looking through our stuff!'

'KYIAAA?!' cried Link in alarm, jumping out of his bed.

Link's bunkmate was so shocked that he too jumped out of bed, slipped on his bedside rug, and fell flat on his face.

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Later that evening, Link stood on the roof of the Gryffindor Common Room next to the conical tower of the boy's dorm, grumbling to himself irritably. The clear skies were filled with brilliantly shining stars and despite the cold breeze, it was an otherwise beautiful night. The ambiance was lost on him though as he fumed silently, ladle in hand, while Navi gave him the instructions for the potion.

'Twelve turns counter clockwise, okay? One...two...three..' said Navi as she read from the scribbled recipe in front of her.

*Harry Potter and Ron Weasley. And I was so nice to them too!* Link thought, glaring at the glowing orange potion.

'...six...seven...eight...'

*I heard those guys are troublemakers. Crashing stuff into trees, fighting trolls, big deal! I killed a dragon inside a volcano!*

'...ten...eleven...twelve and stop! Okay, let it simmer for a minute, then consume immediately.' finished Navi with satisfaction. Upon seeing his expression, she flew over to his side, 'What's up Link? You look mad.'

'Eugh.' he responded, running his hand through his hair.
'Oh. Well, don't worry about it. Listen, Harry and Ronald? They're not important right now. We have a mission and we can't let ourselves get distracted by some hooligans. But I know you know that.' she said, punching his arm with her tiny fist playfully.

Link exhaled and looked up at the starry night sky.

'Tell you what, Link.' started Navi carefully, 'If you happen to stumble upon any more of those stink bombs, I won't stop you from giving Harry and Ron a little payback. Oh! The potion should be done! Quick, drink!'

He grabbed the cauldron with his mitts and poured it into a waiting funnel and bottle. As soon as it was filled he crossed his fingers and chugged it down. The hot potion was unpleasantly sticky in his throat.

'Guagh!' said Link, wincing as he swallowed. Immediately he felt a rush of energy and adrenaline fill his body. Exactly like when he killed one of the spiders with his axe. Grinning he gave Navi a thumbs up as he felt his magical reserves refilling.

*Finally! We've discovered magic potion!* Link thought. Despite himself, he couldn't help but laugh as he watched Navi pirouette in delight in front of him.

'Perfect! Well that's a load off my mind.' said Navi smiling, 'Of course, you need to drink the potion as soon as it's brewed or it loses its potency so you won't be able to carry a bunch with you. But still, not bad! And to think, you doubted me. Tisk, tisk.'

Navi glowed a little brighter as she beamed at him, 'Want to go look for that secret dungeon now?'

He nodded. Navi was right. They had work to do.
Trick or Treat

Link spent the rest of the month of October searching the castle again. Except this time, he was able to do so using the Lens of Truth. Thanks to his new supply of magic potions, he could now afford to slow down and really take his time with the lens. It was tedious work, but they were making progress.

Before he knew it, it was October 31st and the school was preparing a giant feast to celebrate a holiday they called Halloween. Apparently, it was quite the occasion as the whole castle was buzzing with excitement. Indeed, Colin was so excited that he accidentally spilled acid all over the temporary potions classroom floor. Rather than be forced to miss the feast, Colin had begged Snape on his hands and knees to let him clean it up at lunch instead. Amazingly Snape had relented and as soon as Charms ended, Colin sprinted out of the classroom to clean the floor.

As Link was gathering his school things, Luna approached him.

'Hey Link, you're going to stay for the entire Halloween feast, right?' she asked as he hefted his books.

He nodded, smiling uneasily. He had actually planned on going through more of the upper floors of the castle with Navi, but the way Luna asked him told him it would be a mistake to say no.

'Great! Oh, hey Ginny.' Luna said as she passed them by. Ginny sneezed into her sleeve and turned to face them.

'Hey Link. Hi Luna.' Ginny croaked, 'How's it going?'

Link took a small step back as she sneezed again. There was a cold going through the ranks of the student body and from the looks of her, Ginny must have had a particularly bad one. Besides her beet red nose, she had dark bags under her eyes and her previously well kept hair was unkempt and messy.

'I'm okay. How are you? You look terrible.' said Luna bluntly.

Ginny was taken aback for a moment before she sighed, 'Yeah, I know. I haven't been sleeping well lately. I was thinking I might leave the feast early to get some rest.'

Luna patted her arm, 'I hope you feel better. If you're up for it, how about after the feast we all hang out together? Not that I'm very good company...'

Ginny snorted in laughter before she started coughing. Eventually she spoke 'No, we can hang out after the feast. I just don't know for how long. I think my cold is getting worse.'

'You should drink some concentrated carrot juice. My dad says that colds can be caused by these little monsters called Norbless that-'

Luna and Ginny continued to talk as they went into the Great Hall for lunch. The Great Hall was already partially decorated in a wide variety of Halloween ornaments. Bats, carved pumpkins and various graveyard themed memorabilia covered the hall. As they neared the tables, Luna said farewell to him and Ginny as she reluctantly walked to the Ravenclaw's.
'I wish McGonagall would end the seating restriction already.' said Ginny stuffily as she and Link went over to the Gryffindor table. 'Just because Slytherin are a bunch of gits we all have to suffer…'

He nodded earnestly. He knew that when Luna was alone she was teased by her classmates, but there was nothing he could do.

At least we get to hang out on the weekends. Thought Link as he and Ginny sat beside each other.

During these weekend meetups, Luna and Navi got to speak openly to each other as they walked around the grounds. Luna always had endless questions for Navi about fairy society and culture. Most of the things she brought up were nonsense, but he could tell that Navi enjoyed the company. For her part, Luna's mood had improved significantly upon discovering the existence of the fairy and being vindicated on at least one of her crazy theories.

'Ooh, paper hags! I love Halloween.' said Ginny fondly as she gazed at some papier-mâché creatures at the end of the table. They didn't seem very appealing to Link. The long-nosed witches were stooped over a small cauldron, cackling evilly as students passed.

Link shook his head in disbelief. In all his travels, he had never seen anything like Halloween before. According to Colin, Halloween was a holiday where all things scary were celebrated. You would attempt to scare your friends and yourself in various activities while eating candy until you got sick. Even though he didn't quite understand the purpose, he certainly appreciated the sentiment.

Most interesting of all was that apparently it was customary for students to dress up as monsters and attempt to scare one another. As he glanced around the hall he saw some students were already wearing their Halloween costumes. A few trolls, zombies, vampires and other monsters were sprinkled through the House Tables, chatting away with their friends. Fred and George had bravely chosen to dress as crude caricatures of Snape and Filch and were busily scolding students for infractions such as not having greasy enough hair or having a normal nose.

'Are you going to dress up, Link?' asked Ginny.

Without hesitating he nodded his head. As it so happened wearing strange masks to shock people was one of his favourite pastimes and he had just the mask to wear for the holiday too.

'Good. I was going to dress up, but between my cold and all our homework I never found the chance to put a costume together. What are you going to go as?' she asked. He looked around the Great Hall until he spotted a Gibdo and pointed it out to her.

'A mummy? That's a good choice.' she said as she ladled herself some chicken soup.

Before long Harry, Ron and Hermione were seen approaching the table and he groaned inwardly. Ever since he found out that Harry and Ron had snooped through his stuff he had noticed that they'd been sitting as close to him as possible during meal times. Eavesdropping on his conversations, watching him, and even following him around.

At first he suspected that they were just messing with him. After all, Harry and Co. had a reputation as rule breakers and he was a popular target for mockery. However, it had been over a month and he was still waiting for the other shoe to drop. The more he thought about it the more he suspected that they were after something more than comedic material. Their questions were too pointed, too focused on his past.
I'll just ignore them. He thought as they got closer, I'm sick of answering pointless questions.

Turning to his juice, Link pointedly looked at one of the bats flying around the Great Hall as the three drew close. Despite himself he couldn't help but pick up their conversation.

'But Harry, do we *all* have to go?' asked Ron in a petulant tone.

'I told Nick we would be there. Sorry, Ron.' said Harry as the three sat down across from Link and Ginny. Ron's lip started quivering.

'Last year trolls, this year ghosts!' said Ron sadly, looking around at the decorations. After a moment's contemplation, he turned his attention to the food laden table.

'Well, I'd better enjoy myself while I can.'

At that Ron immediately started to gorge himself on the bounty the table had to offer. Hermione looked on in disgust and Harry cleared his throat uncomfortably as Ron began shovelling food into his mouth at an unsettling pace. Averting his gaze, Harry turned towards Link and Ginny. Link noticed Ginny fidget next to him, her face turning pink. It was a well-known secret that Ginny had a crush on Harry.

*I never see her talk to Harry though. She must be shy.* Link thought as he quickly drank a glass of pumpkin juice. *Or maybe she's just embarrassed because her brother is always around. Eh, whatever. It's none of my business.*

An awkward silence descended on the table while Ron noisily inhaled his meat pie.

*It's times like these that I wish Colin was here.* Thought Link as the silence continued.

Hermione looked between Harry and him, her mouth opening slightly.

*Here it comes.* Thought Link with a flicker of annoyance. *What's it going to be this time?*

But before Harry could say anything, he was unexpectedly interrupted from behind.

'Mr. Potter…' said an oily voice.

Harry gasped and spun around to face the voice then groaned when he saw it was only Fred in his Snape costume. Tittering, the two twins sidled down the bench towards Ron who hadn't noticed them yet.

'Ronald Wea-' began Fred before he stopped his act, 'My God Ron, slow down. Save some room for the feast.'

Ron stopped gorging himself and with great effort swallowed 'We're not going.' he managed before taking a deep breath and slicing himself a thick cut of ham.

'Why?' sputtered George looking at Ron like he was insane.

'We're going to Nearly Headless Nick's Deathday Party.' piped up Harry, as Ron worked his food down. 'I promised him that me, Ron and Hermione would go after he saved me from Filch.'

'That's some favour.' said Fred shaking his head in disbelief, he turned to Link. 'Hey Link, got any plans for Halloween?' Link nodded and grinned mischievously.

Fred and George both gave him a nod of approval, before they turned to Ginny.
'So, Ginny feel like sharing some of your love poems with us?' said George in a simpering voice. Ginny turned even darker red, and she scowled fiercely.

Fred turned to Harry, 'We figure she's got a whole library of 'em, Harry. See, she's got this little book she keeps scribbling in. Course she won't let me and George have even a little looksee. We figure it must be pretty steamy stuff if-' Fred stopped as Ginny got up, her violent red hair whipping Link in the face. For a moment she looked like she was going to say something before she stormed out of the Great Hall.

Hermione glowered at Fred and George who started snickering.

'She's your sister! I'd expect even a pair of dimwits like you to be more…more compassionate!' said Hermione scowling fiercely. Fred and George rolled their eyes.

'But we are helping her. It's not healthy to bottle up all your feelings, Hermione.' said Fred running a hand through his oiled mane. 'Speaking of which, how's Gildy and you looking? Personally, I think he might be gay, but to be fair that might not be an issue in your case.'

While Hermione and the Weasley twins started to fight it out, Link finished his drink and stood.

*What do I need for a Gibdo costume?* He thought rubbing his chin ponderously as the shouting behind him grew louder and louder.

Link stood in front of the mirror in his empty dorm inspecting himself while Navi watched him from atop the mirror frame, a faint frown of disapproval on her face. He had wrapped himself completely in thick bandages that he had "borrowed" from the infirmary. His body looked pretty convincing, but try as he might he couldn't wrap his head very well. Blonde hair jutted out of his bandages and his face was barely covered but that wouldn't matter when the mask was on.

*I kind of look like Sheik! Now to complete the look.*

Scampering over to his tunic, he retrieved the Gibdo Mask from his inventory. The Gibdo Mask was a foul artifact that he received after he broke a curse on an unfortunate man back in Termina. At first glance the mask would appear to be a common burial mask, painted white to mimic the appearance of funeral wrappings, but when worn it exuded the same sinister aura as a Gibdo allowing its wearer to move past the undead unharmed. As a bonus it also freaked people out.

Putting the mask on, he looked back at the mirror. His appearance was so convincing that even he jumped.

'Link, you might be overdoing it a little.' said Navi apprehensively as he rubbed his hands together in glee.

He shook his head in denial as he practiced his slow, Gibdo shuffle.

'They might think you're the real thing, Link! What if they attack you?'

*That would be so cool. He thought, grinning under his mask.*

'And just where am I supposed to hide in your costume? I guess I don't get to go to the feast?'
He lifted up his mask and frowned.

_Crap._

She threw up her palms and smiled, 'I'm just teasing. Don't worry about me. To be honest with you, I didn't want to be cooped up in your clothes during the feast anyway. Go and enjoy yourself.'

He smiled appreciatively before he stopped. What was she going to do? Pointing at her, he gestured at the bed with his chin.

'No, I think I'll fly around tonight. Everyone will be at the feast so the halls should be empty. I'll see you when you get back.' he nodded as Navi opened the window and flew outside. Pausing, she turned and waved goodbye before disappearing outside.

Link turned back to the mirror and lowered the mask.

_Tonight, is going to be a night to remember._

After taking a few minutes to practice his Gibdo shriek he was finally satisfied with his performance. Glancing over at the clock on his nightstand, he figured that the Halloween Feast was just starting.

_I'll be able to make a grand entrance!_

Exiting his room, he began carefully shuffling down the spiral staircase, mindful so as to not tear his bandages. As he descended the stairs, he noticed that there were still a few people hanging around the Common Room, chatting and putting the finishing touches on their costumes. Some of them looked pretty good, though they weren't nearly as menacing as his.

_I wonder what Luna is going to say?_ He thought happily.

As he descended, he felt the staircase railing shudder slightly as someone from below started to scale the stairs. He quickly got into character, trying to rattle his breath and moan like the Gibdo.

_I'll get some practice on this guy._ He thought, lurching forward eagerly.

Coming around the corner of the staircase, was Neville. The unlucky boy was absently fumbling with his robes and muttering to himself, totally unaware of Link's presence. Then; catching sight of Link's bandaged legs, Neville's eyes flicked upward to his mask.

'Eeargh!' screeched Link in his best Gibdo impression.

Neville face went sheet white and his body locked up. Eyes bulging, he wordlessly worked his mouth, unable to scream or breath. Link watched as his eyes suddenly rolled up in his head and he collapsed on the stairs.

_THIS IS AWESOME!_ Thought Link as he stepped over Neville's crumpled form on the stairway. True, Neville wasn't the hardest guy to scare, but even so. He slowly made his way to the Tower portrait, his Gibdo performance undermined somewhat by his excited giggling.

_I bet you this is going to be the greatest Halloween costume Hogwarts has ever seen!_
Link sighed as he stood in Dumbledore's circular office, smoke still rising from the tattered remnants of his costume. It was so calm now. He was surrounded by the portraits of dozens of previous headmasters and headmistresses of Hogwarts who were snoring gently in their frames. Various magical instruments lightly puffed and vibrated in their exquisitely crafted yet delicate looking casings while a fireplace provided flickering warm illumination to the tall bookshelves that curved around the room.

The peaceful ambiance was a drastic contrast to the scene that he had left behind.

When he had first entered the Great Hall, everything had been going as planned. There were gasps, there were screams. It was all very dramatic. But then the ReDead showed up. Link couldn't have anticipated that the school would hire a group of dancing skeletons for the Halloween Feast. He also couldn't have anticipated that the enchanted skeletons would be driven into a frenzy by his Gibdo form. Naturally the school staff and students didn't react favourably to the appearance of what seemed to be a dark magic monster in their midst, not after last year's troll attack, and promptly hexed and cursed him into oblivion. Regrettably there was some collateral damage as more than a few students were caught in the crossfire.

Sometime during the barrage he had been set on fire, and seeing that things were getting out of control, he decided to pull off his mask and break the spell on the ReDead. He had intended to clear up the whole undead uprising as a simple misunderstanding, but the faculty didn't seem to see it that way. After he was restrained, he was promptly escorted to await judgement in Dumbledore's office by McGonagall herself without even getting the chance to sample the feast. Of course, it wasn't the punishment he was fearing.

*If Harry and Ron didn't get expelled for crashing into the school on the Opening Feast I doubt I'll get expelled for spicing up the Halloween Feast.*

Instead he worried about the questions they would ask. Namely: How did he do it? He didn't want to reveal the existence of a single one of his masks. Luckily when he had pulled off the Gibdo Mask he was able to camouflage it in the smouldering remains of his costume, but that wouldn't help him when they asked him to explain how he caused so much chaos.

It had already been over three hours since he was marched into the Headmasters Office and he didn't know how much more waiting he could take.

*I hope Luna isn't upset that I couldn't hang out with her and Ginny.*

Finally, he felt the spiral secret staircase that lead to the Headmasters Office begin to move and he quickly adopted his most sorry expression as professors McGonagall and Dumbledore entered the room.

'Well, well, well. What an eventful feast we've had this year eh, Minerva?' said Dumbledore as he swooshed past Link and towards his magnificent desk.

'Yes. Eventful.' said McGonagall. Turning to him, she pointed at one of the two chairs in front of Dumbledore's desk and motioned for him to sit.

He quickly stepped up and got in his seat.
'So Link, I suppose in a way you are to be congratulated.' said Dumbledore with a faint smile though his eyes were hard, 'Oh, yes.' he added upon seeing his confusion, 'I believe that the last time the yearly Halloween Feast descended into such fearful anarchy was some three hundred odd years ago when Headmaster Hargrave turned out to be a vampire.'

He grinned hopefully, but Dumbledore didn't return the gesture so he quickly adopted a straight face again.

*Looks like I'm not getting off the hook so easily. He thought nervously.*

'However, there is such a thing as going overboard.' Dumbledore continued looking down at him disapprovingly. 'Your costume, though undoubtedly effective, lead several students to panic.'

He remembered. Unfortunately, when the spells started flying he had been in the middle of the Great Hall between Hufflepuff and Slytherin House. Though not as intense of a rivalry as the one between Slytherin and Gryffindor, there was no love lost between Hufflepuff and Slytherin and Link was sure that a few students had decided to take advantage of the chaos to take out some of their enemies.

'You were unbelievably fortunate, to emerge unscathed.' said Dumbledore solemnly.

'That is putting it lightly, Albus.' added McGonagall tersely.

*I mean, I was set on fire. Thought Link.*

'And we were all fortunate that no students suffered permanent injury.' added Dumbledore.

Link tried his best to act penitent, shifting in his chair and looking at his feet.

'As it is I will defer to Professor McGonagall for her recommendation on punishment.' said Dumbledore turning his attention to her.

'Detention.' said McGonagall immediately, 'It is expected that first year students demonstrate common sense.'

'So it is.' said Dumbledore putting his palms down on his desk, 'By all accounts you are student of considerable promise, Link. It would be a shame to see you waste your talents on fruitless mischief.'

Link didn't know how to respond to that so he just sat there while Dumbledore looked at him intently. While Dumbledore studied him, he felt the Triforce surge briefly, just like it had during the Sorting Ceremony. Link resisted the urge to fidget and look at his left hand, instead he just looked back at the Headmaster, blinking innocently.

'Well it is quite late. Off you go, Link.' said Dumbledore finally, frowning slightly.

*No questions?*

Link looked at the headmaster incredulously, he couldn't believe it. Not wanting to push his luck, he immediately jumped out of his chair, spun around, and ran for the door without a backward glance.

'Mr. Link?' called out McGonagall, he turned around slowly, 'I will escort you back to the Common Room. Please wait outside in the corridor for me.' she said sternly.
Link bowed his head and sighed.  

*Looks like I'm not out of the woods just yet.* He thought glumly as he walked out of the room.  

After another thirty minutes of standing in the empty hallway, Professor McGonagall finally exited Dumbledore's office.  

'Come Mr. Link.' she said briskly as she strode down the hall.  

He trotted beside her. She was moving at this awkward pace where it was too slow for him to run and too fast to walk.  

'I will notify you about how you will be serving your detention tomorrow after breakfast.' said McGonagall as he skipped beside her. She looked down at him, 'I understand that you may be feeling some pressure to...put yourself out there, Mr. Link. But remember what the Headmaster said; it would be a waste of your talents to become a mere prankster. I expect to never see you in the Headmasters office again. Next time I will not be so lenient, I assure you.'  

'Mm.'  

The two continued the rest of the journey in silence. Arriving at the Tower, McGonagall spoke the password for him and he walked into the empty Common Room. Now alone, he ran up the steps to his dorm room to find that his roommates were already asleep. Looking out the window, he noticed a faint glow reflected on the edge of the metal window frame. Navi was waiting for him outside. Walking over to his tunic, he retrieved the Ocarina of Time and played the Goron Lullaby just to make sure everyone really was asleep before he moved over to the window and opened it for Navi. After she flew in he closed the window again.  

'So.' said Navi taking in his charred appearance, 'How'd it go?'  

He smiled sheepishly.  

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Navi sat on Link's chest cross legged while she questioned him about his evening. When she had at last learned everything that had transpired she leaned back on her hands and sighed.  

'It could have been a lot worse.' she said shaking her head, 'I can't believe he didn't ask you any questions about how you did it. Maybe he already knows, or he thinks he does anyway. Hmmm…' she crooked her head to the side in thought.  

Sitting up in his bed, Link looked down at Navi and gestured at her.  

'Me? I just flew around the castle grounds for a while. I didn't go too far.' she said off handily. He looked at her skeptically, but she didn't elaborate, 'You're going to have to lay low for a while. Just do the detention and stay out of trouble for the time being. The last thing we need is for you to take any unnecessary risks when we've finally started to search the castle proper.'  

'Mmmhmm.' said Link. *Obviously.*  

Navi looked up at him pensively, 'Y'know, I'm still not sure why you went and did all this, Link.'  

He merely shrugged. *I thought the point of Halloween was to scare people.*
Navi kept looking at him before she suddenly snapped her fingers, 'Ah! I know why.' she proclaimed. Link looked down at her, scowling slightly.

_Here it comes._

'Remember when Harry Potter smashed into that tree on the first day?' he nodded, 'And how it was all anybody could talk about for weeks?' Link rolled his eyes and dropped his head back down on his pillow, 'Don't tell me, you're...jealous of the rebellious hero Harry Potter, the boy who lived?' said Navi teasingly as he glared at her.

'It all makes sense now. You want Colin to be your Ron and Luna to be your Ginny!' continued Navi laughingly, 'Oh, Link-' started Navi in a breathless, girly voice '-the way you got set on fire was just so brave! I-' Link threw his quilt over her, scowling.

_I hope that's not what people think._ Thought Link sullenly as he heard Navi's muted laughter from beneath his blanket.

However, his fears of being badgered constantly by his fellow students turned out to be unfounded. Amazingly, his act was upstaged by an even bigger discovery.

'You should have seen it, Link! Written in blood, all over the walls, "The Chamber of Secrets has been opened. Enemies of the heir, beware. ", it was mental! I took a picture I'll show you later…' said Colin over breakfast.

_The Chamber of Secrets has been opened? What's that?_

All around him people were asking the same question and rumour abounded.

From what he could gather at the breakfast table, the Chamber of Secrets was some sort of old myth about Hogwarts. Supposedly it was a legendary lost dungeon guarded by a monster, but that was all anyone knew. What had really got the school's attention was beside the ominous writing, Mrs. Norris was found strung up, stiff as a board. Apparently struck by some dark magic.

_It's a good thing Navi wasn't there!_

And who had discovered it all? None other than Harry Potter. Apparently sometime after the feast the golden trio had stumbled upon the message and the cat at exactly the same time the feast ended. According to Ron, who was acting as unofficial spokesperson for the group, Mrs. Norris wasn't dead but petrified. Their alibi was that they were in the wrong place at the wrong time. The three had been at a Deathday Party for Nearly Headless Nick that night (a sort of death birthday party for ghosts) instead of going to the Halloween feast.

What had raised the most suspicion was that after the party was finished, instead of trying to get some supper or going to the Gryffindor Tower, they chose to wander around the third-floor corridor "for some reason" and they stumbled across the writing just seconds before everybody else did.

While this explanation may have carried some weight with the Gryffindors, it didn't extend much further beyond that. At the neighboring Hufflepuff table, Link heard several students openly suggest that Harry was responsible and this was all a Halloween prank. It was hard to disagree with
their reasoning.

As he listened to Ron retell the same story for the umpteenth time, he began thinking about what the writing had said.

*Draco Malfoy's father said that he had evidence that there was going to be some sort of plot at Hogwarts. I wonder if this is it? Kaepora Gaebora said that the crystal piece is tied to the plot in some way, what if the crystal piece was washed into the Chamber of Secrets? If Harry or someone else discovered the Chamber...*

His thoughts were interrupted as Professor McGonagall approached him.

'Link, your detention will be with Hagrid. He personally requested your services on the grounds this evening. After dinner, you will report to his hut for your punishment.' she said crisply.

He nodded while trying not to look too pleased.

*Detention with Hagrid sounds perfectly fine to me!*

'What have you got detention for?'

Harry, Hermione and Ron were all staring at him intensely as the breakfast table babbled on around them.

'Uh…' Link started running a hand through his hair, *How can I explain this?*

'Poor, Link.' interrupted Lee shaking his head, the four turned to look at him, 'You should have seen it Harry, it was brilliant. During the Halloween Feast, Link came out into the Great Hall and hexed the skeletons into a dancing frenzy. People were screaming, curses were flying, it was fantastic, a moment for the ages really. But you just can't compete with petrifying Mrs. Norris mate. Sorry.' said Lee sounding genuinely sympathetic.

Link nodded in appreciation and raised his empty glass in salute to the kind words.

'Wait, you attacked the Great Hall with skeletons?' said Ron in confusion 'How didn't you get expelled?'

Link shrugged and Lee continued, 'He didn't attack the Great Hall so to speak, just made the skeletons act more interesting. You should have seen Link though. Jumping and twirling as everyone was trying to blast him. Good show, Link.'

He nodded a final time before he got up from the table and started following Colin to their first class.

'What? Why did you-' Link heard Hermione say, but he was already walking away. Classes were starting soon and he didn't want to get in any more trouble.

Later that day during the after-lunch break, Link met up with Luna with the intent to apologize for not meeting up with her and Ginny at the feast, but she just waved it off.

'You don't need to be sorry, Link. You gave quite a performance. I'm just sorry your costume got
ruined.’ she said patting his arm.

'Meh.' he said shrugging. He pointed at her and raised his eyebrows.

'Huh?' asked Luna.

He bit his lip then pointed to Ginny who was sitting by herself a few tables away; busily writing in her journal like always.

'Oh, me and Ginny were fine. She's really nice actually. She said she was feeling sick about an hour after you were dragged off though so she missed most of the entertainment. But she got to see your act so she didn't really miss anything too crazy. Speaking of which, I heard you got detention?'

He nodded happily.

_I'd rather be outside scrapping slugs off of the school cabbages then be stuck inside the Gryffindor Tower another evening._

'I'm glad you weren't expelled, Link.' said Luna seriously.

He grinned and gave her a wink. Turning from her, he looked back at Ginny. She was hunched over her book, her eyes and nose as red as her hair. She didn't look well at all.

_She looks worse today than she did yesterday…_

Link pushed those thoughts out of his mind though as Luna started describing all the weird things she had to eat at the feast.

The sun was setting as Link ran across the grounds. As always he was grateful to be outside the confines of the castle. Classes had been for the most part uneventful, albeit with some extra teasing for his theatrics during the Hallowean Feast, but not as much as he expected. Most people were still talking about the Chamber of Secrets. Whatever the Chamber of Secrets was, it had to have been something special considering how him running around on fire wasn't as interesting in the minds of the student body. It was all anyone seemed to be talking about.

'Sheesh, what a day.' said Navi as Link took a detour over a small grassy hill.

'Mmm!' he responded as he ran over the mound towards Hagrid's distant wooden shack.

'So, I'm just going to say what we're both thinking.' said Navi her voice hitching slightly as he jumped over a rock. 'The crystal piece is in the Chamber of Secrets.'

'Hep!' said Link. _A secret dungeon that holds an ancient monster? Absolutely._

'But where could it be…’ asked Navi rhetorically. Link had been thinking the same thing all day. According to the students, the Chamber of Secrets had never been discovered in Hogwarts history. There weren't even any clues as to where it might be. But based on what Murcus the Merfolk chieftain had told him, he was sure it was accessible by water.

_Someone must've found it though if the writing in the wall is to be believed. The mysterious 'Heir of Slytherin'. I wonder who it could be?_
'That is unless this was all a Halloween prank by Harry Potter and his friends.' Navi said dryly.

_That's the most likely explanation, but why now? I'm searching the castle for a secret dungeon and one just so happens to be discovered by some mystery person? On the one hand, Harry certainly seems to like attention and last night gave him plenty of that, but the timing…it can't be a coincidence._

'We'll just have to keep at it, Link. Sooner or later we'll come across the entrance. It's just a matter of time.' said Navi as he came up on the hut.

Running up to the door, he pounded on its heavy timber frame.

'Just a sec, just a sec.' he heard Hagrid say over the booming barks of his dog. The door swung open and Hagrid greeted him.

'Come in.' Link walked inside and closed the door, 'When I heard ya' got detention this mornin', well I thought it best if we had a little chat.' said Hagrid as he grabbed a giant crossbow and bucket of meat from his wall.

'Me an you are goin' for a walk o' the grounds. There are these bait traps, see? I need to check on em'. Here-' he said passing him the giant bucket of offal, 'let's get going. Its quite a walk.' Link followed Hagrid outside as Fang loped alongside them.

'So, I expect you heard…about the Chamber n'all?' asked Hagrid as the two made their way through the grounds.

'Mmm!' replied Link, the giant bucket of gore balanced on top of his head as he ran to keep up with the long strides of the groundskeeper.

'Well, I jus' wanted to warn you to keep yer' head down.' said Hagrid. 'Er, metaphorically speaking that is.'

'Eh?'

'Yeah. See, remember when I was sayin' we was both kinda alike? We's both good with nature and have our own…pets?'

He nodded slowly.

'Well, back when I was a student at Hogwarts, geez maybe forty years ago now, there was this incident, yeah?' Hagrid said hesitating, 'The Chamber was opened.'

'Aayaa?' cried Link in surprise.

'Yeah.' Hagrid was silent for a moment before he continued, 'Well, it was opened and nobody knew what was going on. People was getting attacked and a…and a student was even killed.'

Link was silent.

'Well, people started panicking. Not just the students, but their parents too a' course. In fact, they was even going to shut the school down. It got real bad.' said Hagrid quietly.

'Course in times of panic everyone goes looking for someone to blame. The Minister o' Magic, the headmaster, everyone. And they found me.' he said bitterly, 'There I was a half-giant halfbreed who was real interested in misunderstood creatures and such in a school where a monster was attacking
people. Didn't take em' long to dress me up as the culprit and when the attacks stopped after I was gone…' he trailed off meaningfully.

'The fact that me being in Gryffindor and the creature being Slytherin's monster, the fact that I don't have pure blood, the fact that I hadn't hurt anyone me self. Didn't matter to anyone!' shouted Hagrid his face red, clearing his throat he continued, 'cept Dumbledore of course. He knew tha' I was innocent.'

There was silence for a while before Hagrid spoke again in a much calmer tone.

'Anyway, watch yourself Link. If history repeats itself then we both have a reason to worry. They won't care if it doesn't all fit, or if you are just a first year or whatever, they'll be lookin' for a scapegoat.'

Link nodded.

They spent the next couple of hours replacing Hagrid's bait traps. Finally, when the sky was filled with stars Hagrid escorted him back to the Gryffindor Tower.

After he had spoken the password for him he turned to Link, 'Remember what I told ya', Link. Keep yer head down.' said Hagrid in a low voice.

Link gave him a thumbs up and Hagrid grunted in acknowledgment. Turning, he left Link and Navi alone in the Common Room. Once the portrait door was safely shut, Navi spoke up.

'Well that was interesting. You know, you have been getting a lot of attention recently.'

Link stopped and sighed. Turning, he ran into the bathroom. After checking to make sure it was empty he went to the mirror. Standing in front of it he waited until Navi popped out of his robes.

'What is it?' she asked curiously, looking at his reflection.

He pointed at his forehead. Using his finger, he made a squiggle gesture then pointed at his eye,

'Yes, Harry Potter has been watching you, so what?' said Navi, 'We knew that already.'

He looked at her expectantly.

'Link, assuming what Hagrid told us was true about the circumstances surrounding his expulsion, I see very little reason for you to worry.'

'Huh?' said Link quizzically.

'That was fifty years ago, with a different headmaster. Harry and friends only know-'

He shook his head. Digging through his robe, he pulled out his wand. Holding it in one hand he made a fist with the other and put his fist at the tip of the wand.

'The crystal piece.' said Navi slowly, 'What about it? Yes, we already figured the crystal piece is in the Chamber of Secrets. Gaebora himself said that you would need to confront an ancient evil to succeed in your quest.'

He made a go on gesture, twirling his hand.

'What? The ancient evil in the chamber of secrets is part of a plot-' Navi stopped as Link snapped his fingers and pointed at her in the mirror.
'The plot.' said Navi blankly.

Link pointed at his forehead again.

'The plot involves Harry Potter.' said Navi slowly.

He nodded and gave her a thumbs up.

'Well duh, Link.' said Navi shaking her head in mocking disbelief, 'Of course Harry Potter is involved in the plot. He's probably the one who opened the Chamber in the first place.'

He scoffed and rolled his eyes.

'I bet you I'm right Link. I always am.' said Navi and he shook his head slowly in disagreement, frowning at her. She tisked and continued, 'What confuses me is that if the Chamber was opened by someone, say Potter and pals, why didn't they remove the crystal? It's a powerful dark artifact, you'd think they would jump at the opportunity for something so valuable.'

'Oh!' exclaimed Link, rubbing his chin.

That's true! Maybe whoever opened the chamber took the crystal piece. Maybe Harry, Ron, or Hermione has it right now!

He snapped his fingers and turned around for the bathroom exit. Navi looked at him in alarm before retreating back into his robes.

Exiting the bathroom, he ran across the Common Room and up the spiral staircase to his dorm. Upon entering, he saw his roommates all peacefully asleep. Tiptoeing over to his dresser, he grabbed the Stone Mask, the Lens of Truth, and the Ocarina of Time from his tunic. Even with their peaceful slumber, Link quickly played the Goron Lullaby.

*Man, I've been playing this song for my bunk mates so often...I wonder if I've like, permanently affected their sleep patterns or anything?*

Once the song was finished and the enchantment had taken hold, he slipped on the Stone Mask. Exiting his dorm, he went back to the spiral staircase and ran up to the second-year boy's dorms.

Link stealthily poked his head inside. All the boys in the room were asleep including Harry who was tucked away in the corner of his bed and Ron who lay splayed out snoring loudly.

*I'm taking no chances.* Thought Link as he pulled out the Ocarina of Time. Softly, he played the Goron's Lullaby. As the enchantment took effect, all the sleeping boys began breathing deeper, or in Ron's case snoring louder. Satisfied, he turned towards Harry's bed first.

He crept over to Harry's trunk and opened it. Carefully he searched the chest with the Lens of Truth feeling through every nook and cranny. The only thing noteworthy that he found was a silvery cloak. Obviously magical in nature.

*It's pretty cool looking, but I'm not some common thief.* Thought Link. He paused, frowning. *Well actually I guess I am a common thief, but I'd never get away with stealing this. Maybe next time.*

He returned the cloak and turned over to Ron's shabby looking luggage carrier. As he pried it open, its rusty hinges creaked loudly making him wince. Glancing around, he saw that the boys slumber remained undisturbed.
Aided with the Lens, he rummaged through the chest but came up empty. Aside from his second-hand school supplies, empty inkwells, and some dried rat feces, Ron had nothing to offer. After a cursory examination of the boy's desks, wardrobes, and around their beds, he determined that the shard wasn't in the room.

*Maybe Hermione has it.*

He exited the boy's dorms and looked across the Common Room to the girl's spiral staircase. According to Percy, no boys were allowed to go into the girl's dorm.

*These are extenuating circumstances. Thought Link rationally, Even Zelda would agree that what I'm doing is for the good of the students and is in no way creepy at all. No sir.*

Jumping from the staircase to the Common Room floor, he ran over to the girl's staircase. Link started to run up the stairs, but by the sixth step the staircase suddenly transformed itself into a slide and a deep wailing alarm sounded. Shocked, he slide down to the carpeted floor of the Common Room below.

'HEY! Which creep is trying to spy on the girls!? I'm telling McGonagall!' screeched a girl's voice from above.

He recoiled in spite of himself and quickly dashed into the shadows beside the boy's staircase.

'Link!' whispered Navi in a scandalous tone, 'I never! Rest assured Princess Zelda will hear about this!'

He began sputtering indignantly but quickly shut his mouth as a scowling girl's face suddenly appeared hovering over the hand rail at the top of the girl's staircase.

'Where are you creep?' said the girl angrily. 'Lumos.'

Link froze as a beam of light shot out from her wand and swept over the Common Room. His heart stopped as the beam briefly lingered on his position before it moved on across the room.

'What's going on?' called out a sleepy voice that Link recognized as Percy's.

'Percy! One of the boys tried to sneak into the girl's dorms!' shouted the girl, 'He's hiding somewhere down there.'

'Ooooh! Who is it!' squealed an unseen girl in excitement from one of the dorms, 'Who could it beeee?' she called out in a sing song voice.

'I bet its Fred or George!' said another girl appearing on the staircase.

'Sorry ladies!' came the twin voices of Fred and George from the boy's staircase.

'We would never betray the sacred trust of Godric Gryffindor!' declared Fred passionately.

'Yes, we are paragons of virtue! We stand amongst the righteous!' affirmed George.

'SHUT UP!' yelled a boy's voice.

'Search every bed. Percy! Find him!' cried the first girl as she advanced down the staircase to the Common Room floor.

*Oh, no! Not like this!* Link thought frantically as he sprang up to his feet.
'Better move, Link.' whispered Navi evilly.

He didn't need to be told twice. Turning on his heel, he sprinted up the stairs. The illusion created by the Stone Mask would persist as long as he didn't bump into anyone, but that was easier said then done on a staircase. Running up the stairs two at a time, Link heard the doors of the dorms fly open as more and more eager faced Gryffindors appeared on the staircases. Everyone was waking up, they smelt blood in the water, and soon they would feast on the embarrassed tears and fumbled excuses of the damned.

_The first and second year boy's dorms have been enchanted by the Goron Lullaby. I don't need to worry about them finding me. I just need to make it to my bed before the third years or older find it empty!_

He sprang with renewed speed, there was hope! Just a little faster…

The thundering of boy's feet filled his ears and made the staircase vibrate with their footfalls. Frenzied hooting and cruel shouts echoed around him as the boys sallied forth to see which bed was empty, who was to be socially flayed.

Whirling madly, he rounded the stairs, and fled towards his room. The door was ajar.

_Am I too late?_

Without thinking he dove through, flew past his still sleeping roommates, and sailed through the air to his bed. Landing with a crash, he grabbed the covers and threw them over his head. Fumbling under the blanket he pulled off the Stone Mask, his shoes, and his robe.

'Faster, Link.' teased Navi as she scurried down into the space between the headboard and the mattress. Just as he pulled his trousers off the room suddenly filled with light.

'Get up first years!' cried a hoarse boy's voice.

Holding his breath and feigning grogginess, Link rolled back his covers, blinking as though the light was blinding.

Several older Gryffindors were pouring into the room. They spotted him in his bed before turning to his roommates.

'Up!' said one, brutishly grabbing Colin's bedding and tossing it. At the boy's touch, the Ocarina of Time's enchantment was broken as Colin was sent crashing to the floor.

'Wha! What-what's going on?' cried Colin in the looming shadow of the house seniors.

'Someone's tried to sneak into the girl's dorms! Up, up!'

The remaining first years were likewise roused. Confused and shuffling awkwardly, they waited until every bed was searched. Once the goon squad had finished tossing the place, Percy entered the room, gazing around the first-year dorm.

Percy was counting under his breath. When at last he counted the final boy, he stood silently regarding them. Frowning he said, 'That's everyone…? Wait, we must have missed someone. Check the Common Room bathrooms.'

The seniors left as though they were war hounds sent after the retreating wounded of an enemy army. Percy walked after them. Just as he reached the handle he turned, 'Clean up this room, we're
Gryffindors. Our symbol is a lion, not a pig.' giving them one last look, he walked out.

As soon as he left everyone started cursing and grumbling as they picked up their scattered bedding. While they were sorting out whose sheets were whose, Link took the opportunity to stash his mask and clothes in his wardrobe.

His heart felt like it was beating a thousand times a second. Taking a deep breath, He grabbed his blankets and threw them haphazardly on his bed. Just as he was finishing up he heard the voice of the girl from the stairwell yell out:

'Everyone get in the Common Room! Now!'

Grabbing his pajama bottoms and top, Link quickly dressed himself and joined Colin and the others as they filed downstairs.

'I was sleeping so peacefully too.' said a first-year boy morosely.

'Me too. I was having the best dream-

They continued complaining as they joined the rest of the Gryffindors in the Common Room.

'Alright!' said the girl Link recognized as the first girl who appeared at the girl's staircase. She was wearing a bright "Head Girl" badge on her moon and star themed sleeping gown, 'Seeing as how none of you wants to fess up, and Percy can't count-' she scowled at Percy who hung his head in shame, '-we're going to do this one at a time and figure out who has an alibi!'

'Oh, fuck me. Do you know how long that's going to take Carolyn? I need sleep.' moaned a sixth year boy.

'Shut up! You'll do as I say, or I'll get McGonagall! Now, who is the most likely culprit…'

Initially the boys were called up one by one and publicly questioned with a few of the more popular boys being questioned more extensively than others. It quickly became apparent to Link that this questioning was just a way to fish out gossip from rumored couples and determine who had a crush on who. A few girls stepped up and accused some other girls of being in on it or being too nosy. Predictably the whole thing descended into chaos and at some point during the confusion, Colin must have retrieved his camera as he was able to take a photo of all the girls in their sleeping clothes and without makeup. This resulted in the poor boy having to run for his life to the dorms. Unfortunately for him, the girls could climb the boy's staircase just fine and they soon captured him. Screaming like a piglet, Colin was brought to Carolyn at the centre of the horde.

All this just to search the girl's dorm. Thought Link as he watched poor Colin beg for mercy while his prized camera was torn from one girl's hands to the next.

Eventually a furious faced McGonagall arrived to restore order and everyone was sent back to bed under threat of an even more restrictive curfew. By the time everyone had funnelled into their beds it was almost time to get up for classes, and the whole Gryffindor house became a laughing stock for the rest of the day.
Next time will be different. Resolved Link firmly as his fellows settled in for a nap during History of Magic class. Once I rule out Hermione, I can get back to exploring the school.

The next evening Link took his chance and climbed around the outside of Gryffindor Tower and through the window of the girl's dorms. Thankfully whoever built the tower didn't take mountaineering voyeurs into consideration when they designed the place. His efforts were for naught though as after a thorough search he was forced to conclude that Hermione did not have the crystal piece either.

'Maybe Harry and his pals aren't as involved as we thought Link.' whispered Navi as he put away his gear, 'Or else they stashed it somewhere…'

He shook his head as he sat down at his desk.

This doesn't make any sense. If it's not Harry Potter then who?
The Plot Thickens

The week grinded on agonizingly slowly for Link. As it turned out, exploring the castle was a much more daunting task then he had originally anticipated. To his dismay, the Lens of Truth alone was sometimes not enough to reveal hidden rooms in Hogwarts. The Lens would dispel illusions just fine, but the majority of passages were concealed through plain old clever construction as he discovered when he tumbled through the false bottom of a giant urn and into a mirror filled torture chamber. Faced with this revelation, he was forcing himself to revisit previously cleared rooms in case he missed anything.

Sometimes this resulted in unexpected and interesting discoveries, but more often than not his efforts were met with disappointment. Such was the case with the third-floor corridor.

'Wait, this is it?' cried Navi as she flew around the empty room, Link groaned and put his head against the cool stone wall.

Another dud.

'After the chessboard, the flying key puzzle, and the plant monster, all we get is an empty room?' said Navi in disbelief. She shook her head vehemently, 'I don't believe this. I can't! Link, use the Lens, something has to be here.'

Dutifully he scanned the room, but there was nothing. Aside from the doorway and a small set of stairs leading to a recessed stone platform, the room was empty. Just to be sure, he pushed all the loose stones in the walls and tried pulling the torch brackets but alas, it really was a dead end.

He turned to face Navi and threw his hands up in frustration.

'Gah!'

'Alright Link...lets go.' she said bitterly, disappointment etched on her face.

Dejected and surly, the pair turned and walked the long way back to the castle corridor. After a few minutes he clambered up onto the stone floor from the hidden passage below. Rolling the rug back over the secret entrance, he let out a disappointed sigh.

And that one seemed so promising too. I got all my gear and everything.

'Curfew will probably start soon. Better run, Link.' said Navi before she flew into his robes.

He ran out into the corridor and began to head towards the Gryffindor Tower. Turning around a corner, he almost collided into a group of Slytherins. Tensions between Gryffindor and Slytherin were especially high currently as tomorrow was the season opener Quidditch game and the two houses were doing everything in their power to antagonize each other. A common tactic that the Slytherins had developed against the Gryffindors was to attempt to delay them in the evening for as long as possible so they would miss their curfew.

The Slytherins quickly reacted to his presence and attempted to block off the hallway and surround him, but he dodged around them easily. Slipping past, he resumed his hurried pace without a backward glance.
'Is it your bedtime already?' shouted one after him.

'Hey mutey! Can you act something out for me?' another called, but he had already started climbing another flight of stairs. The Slytherins taunts grew faint as he distanced himself. Link sorely wished he could teach them some manners, but as impulsive as he could be, he knew it would only make matters worse.

If it wasn't for this stupid curfew, I probably would have found the dungeon already!

He continued running until he came upon the Gryffindor Tower portrait. Standing beside it was Percy and McGonagall who were deep in conversation.

'Surely the curfew cannot continue much longer Professor?' asked Percy, rubbing his hands together.

'I'm afraid until the dungeons have been completely dried, it will have to go on for as long as needed.' replied McGonagall stiffly.

'But, you must agree that we have all been remarkably restrained. It's the Slytherins who're-'

'I am aware Percy. But that is a matter for Professor Snape to address. As for myself, I hold Gryffindor to a higher standard.'

The two stopped talking and turned as Link came to a halt in front of them. Despite his foul mood, he gave them both a wave and a smile. Albeit a somewhat strained smile, but a smile nonetheless.

Now I'm cooped up all night again. Hurray.

'Ah, Link. There you are, and barely a minute to spare.' said Percy checking his watch, 'I'll open the- ' he paused, looking over Link's head, 'Ginny?'

Link checked behind him. Sure enough Ginny was running down the hallway, juggling a small book in her hand. Tucking the book safely away into her robes, she came to a panting halt before them.

'Slytherins. Tried to...block me off.' she stammered, gulping for air with each word.

Percy turned back to McGonagall and pointed to his sister, 'See? Slytherin! Every time-' he started, but McGonagall raised her hand.

'I will talk with Professor Snape about the harassment in the hallways. But in the meantime, I want you to remind all the students that even if provoked I expect the Gryffindors to take the high road. No matter the outcome of tomorrow's quidditch match.'

'Yes, ma'am.' said Percy resignedly and McGonagall nodded crisply before walking away.

'It's not fair.' pouted Ginny once McGonagall was out of earshot, 'Snape lets the Slytherins get away with anything.'

'Just go to bed Ginny. The Slytherins will get what's coming to them tomorrow on the quidditch pitch.' said Percy exasperatedly. He looked between them and frowned, 'You two are always the last ones back. Try to be more mindful of the time and maybe this wouldn't happen.'

At that Percy turned to face the portrait. With his back turned, Link rolled his eyes and Ginny looked on sullenly as he spoke the password allowing them entrance. As they stepped inside,
Ginny turned to Link.

'Are you going to the quidditch game tomorrow, Link?' she asked as they crossed the raucous Common Room.

'Mmm.'

*I need to get out of this castle or I'll go crazy. Besides, this "quidditch" sport is supposed to be a quite the spectacle if Colin is to be believed.*

'Are you going with Luna?' she asked and he nodded again, 'Cool. I'm sure she'll have fun.' she said approvingly. He eyed her curiously.

*What does she care I wonder?*

Once they reached the spiral staircases, he waved goodbye to her before he started climbing the stairs. However, before he could climb more than a dozen steps, she shouted out to him.

'Hey, Link!'

He hopped on the railing and looked down at her quizzically.

'Are you guys sitting on the Ravenclaw side or the Gryffindor side?' he shrugged, 'Sit on the Gryffindor side, I'll join you. Grab Colin too, we can all hang out.'

He nodded and gave her a thumbs up.

'Alright, I'll see you tomorrow then. Good night.' she said with a wave.

At that he hopped back and resumed climbing up the stairs. However, he barely took two steps before he heard a shout.

'Oi! Ginny!' called out an unseen voice that Link recognized as Ron's.

Curious, he halted on the stairs and perked up his ears.

'What are you talking to him for?' asked Ron.

'I can talk to whoever I please! What do you care?' replied Ginny hotly.

'I dunno, he's weird. Hey! I don't mean it like that. He just does…suspicious stuff. Hey! Ginny!'

Link heard Ginny storming up the girl's staircase. He briefly considered going down the stairs and confronting Ron before he caught himself.

*Patience, Link. Patience. None of this school drama matters. Just focus on that last crystal piece.*

He continued climbing and entered his room. It was going to be another long, boring night.
Every once and a while the two would shoot her a curious look as she "ooo'd" and "ahhh'd" at what she was reading, but they stayed at the table. She had insisted they finished their homework. As a result of having to chase Link around the school they had both started to fall behind, and Hermione was adamant that they spend the evening catching up.

'History of Magic.' Ron grumbled 'Pointless. Who knows what Link is up to while we're stuck in here…'

'You won't be able to do anything about the Chamber of Secrets if you both end up flunking out.' stated Hermione matter of factly as she turned a page in the mottled, old book. 'Besides, Harry has a big day tomorrow, he needs to rest up. The last thing he needs is to get exhausted chasing Link around on the eve of the big match.'

Harry agreed that he needed to rest up for his quidditch match against the Slytherins tomorrow, but he didn't particularly agree with Hermione's idea of relaxing. Already his head felt like it was spinning and he was only half way through his charms homework. From the looks of him, Ron wasn't doing too much better.

'I don't get it. When does Link do his homework? Shouldn't he be in here working too?' grumbled Ron as he squinted at his history essay like it was written in hieroglyphics.

'Maybe his Ravenclaw friend helps him. Lord knows how you two would manage without my help.'

'Ol' Loony? I heard those two are always off strolling around the grounds. Nutters deserve each other to be honest with you.' said Ron absently scratching his neck with his quill, oblivious to the ink spilling down his collar.

Hermione looked up at Ron angrily, but Harry cleared his throat and intervened before she could retort, 'So Hermione, have you found anything that Link might've been interested in?'

She sighed and looked back down at the book, 'Not anything specific. This book is filled with useful potions that in the right circumstances could be used for any number of things, but there are just so many…'

Harry nodded. He had feared as much. So far, they had been unable to find any information on Link or his goals whatsoever. Nobody seemed to know anything about him. Even Colin, who Link shared a room with and sat next to in all his classes, hardly seemed to know him.

When they had asked Professor McGonagall about him, all they had learned was that he was a transfer student from abroad and if they wanted to know more they should ask him themselves. However, Link seemed to have gotten wise to their questioning as soon as he saw them coming. Previously they could at least catch him during mealtimes, sitting next to Colin or Ginny, drinking some juice or milk. Lately though he had been skipping whole meals, returning only for his classes and for curfew. Far as they knew the only person he actually spent any time with was Luna.

'If only we could hear what he and that Ravenclaw girl talk about, then I bet you we would make some progress.' said Harry as he scratched out another misspelled word on his charms essay.

'Maybe we could use-' Ron glanced around then lowered his voice '-your cloak to find out what they're up to.'

Harry shook his head, 'If we did that they might not say anything. What we need is a way to
directly question Link. Like a truth serum or something.'

'But Link can't talk. Supposedly.' said Ron thoughtfully, 'Although I guess a truth serum would clear that up. Hey Hermione, that book have a truth serum recipe in it?'

'Better.' she replied grinning, motioning them closer. Huddling together, she flipped to a page and showed it to the two.

"Polyjuice Potion." read Harry aloud.

'The Polyjuice Potion lets you take on the appearance of another person. We could use it to get in close to Link and find out his secrets. Change into someone he trusts...' whispered Hermione excitedly.

'As who? Loony? One of us would change into a girl?' asked Ron nervously.

'Not permanently Ron. The potion only lasts for limited amount of time.' explained Hermione.

'How long?' asked Harry excitedly.

'Depends, but that's not the issue. It requires quite a few rare ingredients. And considerable brewing time.' she said, frowning slightly.

'How much time?'

'A month.' said Hermione.

Ron and Harry gawked at her, but she just shrugged, 'If you want to question Link then I think this is our best option. We could ask him whatever we want and he would likely give us a straight answer. Assuming he trusts Luna with his secrets that is.'

'A month though…' said Ron scrunching up his face and shaking his head, 'That's no good.'

Hermione sighed, 'Do you have a better idea Ron?'

After a moment of strained concentration, he shook his head in resignation, 'Alright, fine. A month it is then. What should we ask him?'

Harry leaned back in his chair 'Where to start? What was he doing in Knockturn Alley? Why is he always missing? What was he doing on Halloween? What does he know about the Chamber of Secrets? Really we have so many questions that it's hard to even know where to begin.' he finished. Thinking about Link was definitely not helping his headache.

'We'll have to be very careful in choosing our questions so he doesn't get too suspicious.' said Hermione.

'Right. We'll probably only get one shot at this. We'll need to figure out how Luna and Link talk together so we can figure out how to impersonate her.' said Harry.

Hermione and Ron nodded in agreement. At that moment the portrait door opened. Even though curfew was just about to go into effect and almost every Gryffindor was in the dorms or the Common Room, there was always a few stragglers. Looking over, Harry saw the late arrival was Link. This wasn't surprising. Link seemed to hate being in the Gryffindor Tower for whatever reason. However, interestingly, Ginny was walking alongside him.

Ron groaned as he saw the two talking while they walked through the Common Room.
'Why's she with Link? Ugh, just a sec guys, I'll be right back.' muttered Ron darkly as he stood.

While Ron strode off after his sister, Hermione turned to Harry and bit her lip worriedly.

'Hopefully we'll be able to clear some things up soon, Harry.' she said.

'Yeah. I just hope we're not too late.'

That night was particularly bad for Link and Navi. After a long night of reviewing his homework, rereading his textbooks, and doodling, the morning of the big quidditch game finally arrived. Link joined his fellow first years and marched with the procession of Gryffindors in all their red and gold glory as they made their way to the pitch. Accompanying him to the stands, was Colin and Ginny. Predictably, they were both declaring their confidence in Harry to him every step of the way.

'This is going to be great! I just know Harry is going to pull off a win for us, Link! I just know it!' said Colin excitedly. Link looked at Colin skeptically and arched his eyebrows. Colin caught his look and grinned sheepishly 'Well...yes, it's true the Slytherins have waaay better brooms. But c'mon Link! Have some faith! Harry is the youngest seeker in over a century! That's got to mean something.'

Ginny nodded, perhaps a tad bit too excitedly as she whipped Colin with her hair.

'We have to win! I don't think I can stand those smug Slytherin scum winning!' she said.

To his surprise, Link found himself agreeing. Much as he might dislike Harry for his constant snooping, he disliked the constant jeering and thuggish attitude of the Slytherins even more. As they moved closer to the wooden stadium, he saw Luna scanning the incoming Gryffindors. Upon spotting him, she moved over to join him in line.

'Hey Link! Ginny. Colin.' said Luna nodding to the two as she fell in step beside them.

'Hello Luna. Are you cheering for Gryffindor?' asked Colin quickly.

'Of course. I don't think anybody except Slytherin is cheering for Slytherin today.'

She wasn't wrong. Many of the other houses members were carrying small gold and red flags or streamers. Upon entering the stadium, Link beckoned Luna to sit with him in the Gryffindor stands with Colin and Ginny. The excitement and tension in the air was palpable. For the Gryffindors, the quidditch game was their one outlet for sticking it to Slytherin, but things were looking grim. If the rumours Link had heard the past few days were to be believed (and his time adventuring taught him to always believe rumours) then Draco Malfoy's father had spent a small fortune buying them the latest and greatest in racing brooms. With the exception of Harry, the Gryffindor team were still using the same old brooms they'd been using for decades. They'd have to be in top form to even stand a chance.

The four jostled their way through the crowds and to the rapidly filling stands. Seating himself beside Colin with Luna at his left, he made himself comfortable on the wooden bench as all of the surrounding Gryffindors buzzed excitedly around them.
'Link, have you ever watched a quidditch game before?' asked Luna.

He shook his head.

'Neither have I. Not in person anyway. I'm told the game will go on until the snitch is caught. We might be here all day.' she said dreamily.

Link laughed nervously. Navi had conceded him some free time after the annoyances of yesterday's dungeon run, but he didn't think she would be too pleased if he spent all day watching people fly around on brooms.

'Speaking of which, where is your, uh, friend today?' asked Luna coyly.

How did she know Navi wasn't with me?

He turned and looked at her in surprise. Pointing, he indicated back at the castle. Before he had left, Navi told him she was going to scout around the castle towers and see if there was anything of interest.

'Will she be okay alone?' asked Luna seriously.

He waved his hand dismissively though truthfully, he always got worried when he and her separated.

'Are you going out with her tonight?'

He bobbed his head.

'Cool. Maybe I'll join you two.' she said distantly before she turned to him grinning nervously, 'If I can. I don't want to interrupt your work.'

He smiled and playfully nudged her arm. The moment was suddenly interrupted by a loud, echoing voice.

'Good morning ladies and gentlemen and welcome to the first quidditch match of the season!' shouted the announcer to hoots and heavy applause.

I recognize that voice. Looking at the casting booth, he saw Lee Jordan at the microphone.

'Today's match…Gryffindor!' shouted Lee.

At that the seven Gryffindor players entered the pitch, shabby looking brooms slung over their shoulders. The stands cheered deafeningly for the gold and red players as they advanced to the centre of the field.

'There's Harry!' squealed Colin, 'The, uh, the smallest player! He has a Nimbus 2000! Used to be the best broom money could buy, not anymore though!'

Looking down from the seats, Link thought that Harry looked small indeed. He was twirling his broom in his hands and shifting his feet as he stood with his older teammates. The way he was moving he was either extremely nervous or eager to get started.

Probably a bit of both. Thought Link as he watched the young seeker jerkily wave his arm to the crowd. I wouldn't want to be him if Gryffindor loses.

'And their opposition…Homeless-I mean Slytherin!' shouted Lee, a discernable note of derision in his voice.
At that the seven green and silver clad Slytherin players strutted onto the pitch, their matching ebony brooms catching the sun. They were greeted by a tremendous chorus of boo's from the other three houses. The Gryffindor's hatred was well understood, but Ravenclaw and Hufflepuff had their own reasons to cheer against Slytherin. Ravenclaw were cheering for the underdog (if only to increase their own chances of winning the Quidditch Cup later) and Hufflepuff still remembered catching all that "friendly" fire from Slytherin during Link's Halloween stunt.

'Look it's Malfoy!' cried Colin dramatically, pointing at the platinum haired pale boy who looked equally as small as Harry, 'He's Harry's rival! They've been fighting for ages. I heard his dad bought the Slytherins those fancy brooms so he could play on the team.' said Colin and Ginny snorted.

'Malfoy is so pathetic. He probably doesn't even realize how sad it is that he had to have his father bribe the team so he could play. Slimy git.' said Ginny with disgust.

Link automatically agreed. He remembered the fight that broke out in the bookstore back at Diagon Alley between the red-haired man and Draco's father. Evidently, the Malfoy's and the Weasley's had quite the feud going as well.

As the two teams postured to one another, Madam Hooch walked out onto the field carrying a large wooden box.

Once she had reached the centre of the field, she lowered the box to the grass and turned to the players. After she briefly addressed them and the two team captains shook each others hand, the fourteen players kicked off and took to the skies. The crowds cheered as the players did a whizzing flyby of the stands before assembling in hovering formation above the grass turf of the pitch. Madam Hooch turned back to the wooden box she had left on the ground and began fumbling with the latch.

'Look! See that box? The snitch is inside. Oh, they're gonna release it! See if you can follow the snitch, Link!' said Colin.

Link watched as the box was opened. Inside he could make out four balls. The largest ball, which was red and textured with odd craters, sat still in its casing. Two smaller, black balls were at either side of it, secured with leather straps. He could see them rocking back and forth as they struggled against their restraints. The fourth ball appeared to be a small golden orb, visible only by the slightest gleam.

Madam Hooch released the small golden orb first and it took off zigzagging across the pitch erratically.

'And the snitch is off!' shouted Lee as the crowd cheered.

Reminds me a bit of a fairy. Thought Link as the small winged orb hovered momentarily by the Slytherin goal posts before zipping away again. I hope Navi doesn't fly over the quidditch pitch...

Next Madam Hooch released the black balls which took off careening into the sky.

'The bludgers have been released!' cried Lee, and the crowd let out another roar.

Lastly, Hooch grabbed the large red ball and threw it straight up into the air. The assembled crowd waited with baited breath, watching as the ball climbed higher and higher. When the ball reached its apex, Madam Hooch blew her whistle and the fourteen players set off, six after the red ball, and four after the black balls.
'The quaffle is in play and the game is on! First possession goes to Slytherin! And its Pucey to Flint over to-' Lee Jordan began to narrate as the players zoomed over the pitch. Link meanwhile kept his eye on the snitch which had started to roam towards the bottom of the field.

Barely a minute into the game and the buzzer rung, 'And it's ten to nothing! Slytherin gets first goal!' announced Lee.

The Gryffindors all groaned and murmured angrily as Flint flew a victory lap. Flint made sure to slow down as he passed the Gryffindor stands, a smug smile plastered across his face. The Gryffindors responded with obscene gestures, shouted insults, and thrown popcorn. He laughed at the barrage and sped away, his powerful new broom rapidly accelerating him out of range.

Link was barely aware of this though as he remained fixed on the snitch, his eyes following it as it flew around the perimeter of the stands.

Following the snitch reminds me of how Navi taught me to use Z-targeting. Thought Link, smiling at the memory. I hope she's okay. His smile faltered as he felt a small tinge of worry. The castle was almost deserted right now so she shouldn't be caught, but even still.

His thoughts were interrupted by Ginny who cried out in alarm. He looked over and saw that she had covered her face with her hands. Turning back to the game, he saw that Harry was dipping and bobbing around Fred and George who were beating a bludger back with their bats.

'Oh boy, that bludger thing sure wants to cream Harry!' said Colin happily as he took a picture.

'Is that...normal?' Link heard a girl say over his shoulder.

'Naw, something is definitely up with that bludger!' said a boy's voice. His words punctuated by the crunch of potato chips.

Link glanced over his shoulder and was startled to see that Ron and Hermione were sitting right behind him!

He quickly turned back to the game before they could notice him peeping.

Where did they come from?! He thought, sweating slightly.

As the game progressed the Gryffindor's hopeful enthusiasm slowly gave way to despair and anger. Ten nothing became twenty. Then thirty and forty. Before long, it was fifty nothing and still the Gryffindors had yet to maintain possession of the quaffle for longer than half a minute before the superior speed and handling of the Slytherin's brooms enabled them to reclaim control of the ball.

This was further hampered by the fact that both of the Gryffindor beaters were concentrated around defending Harry from a particularly persistent bludger that was dead set on attacking him and no one else. When Lee announced sixty to nothing, the Gryffindors called a time out and rallied on the ground of the pitch.

'They have to change their strategy if they want to win.' said Luna, 'The snitch is only worth 150 points and if this keeps up it won't matter if Harry catches the snitch or not.'

'I'm sure Harry will get to the snitch before then.' said Colin, a tinge of doubt in his voice, 'I mean, he's just, uh, y'know, the youngest seeker in a, uh, century.' he finished lamely.

Link nodded dutifully, but he - and the rest of the crowd for that matter - were becoming
increasingly skeptical. So far neither of the two seekers had gotten very close to the snitch while the Slytherins just kept out performing the Gryffindors with the quaffle. True, Harry had spent the majority of the game evading the rogue bludger but, in a few minutes, it wouldn't matter.

*Time's running out.* Mused Link sourly. *I expect the Slytherins will be even more insufferable for the next few weeks.*

After a minute of heated conversation, the Gryffindors took flight again and play resumed. Link watched as Harry took off at full speed. Predictably the bludger gave chase, cutting him off at every opportunity. To his credit Harry was dodging the heavy iron ball quite well, albeit with little grace.

Link turned his attention from Harry back to the snitch. It's random flight path had taken it right next to Malfoy's face.

*There we have it. It's over.* Thought Link, sighing to himself.

Link became aware of the shouting of the Slytherin team captain who was pointing at the snitch next to Malfoy's face. Evidently, he had seen it too.

To Link's amazement however, Malfoy did not grab the snitch that was floating mere inches from his shoulder, but instead started taunting Harry who was rolling through the air above him.

He couldn't hear what Malfoy had said, but whatever it was it certainly got Harry's attention. Harry looked down at the smarmy platinum blonde and slowed. At that moment, the bludger at last made contact, smashing into his arm like a cannonball. The Gryffindors all let out a collective moan of despair as he lurched on his broom. Ginny yelped and Link heard Ron swear behind him.

*Hope he remembered to bring some milk.* Thought Link as he watched the bludger arc around for another pass.

However, much to his surprise rather than take the opportunity to heal himself, Harry shot forward towards Malfoy. The Slytherin seeker's smug face quickly transformed to one of terror as he swerved away from Harry, completely ignoring the snitch that had been lazily floating beside him.

Link watched in disbelief as Harry dove upwards, reaching for the snitch with his good arm. Amazingly, he was able to keep his balance with only his legs and grabbed the fluttering snitch.

'*HE'S DONE IT! HARRY POTTER HAS THE SNITCH! 150-60 GRYFFINDOR! GRYFFINDOR WINS!*' shouted Lee into the magical microphone as the stands erupted into cheers.

Link was stunned. *I didn't think he'd pull it off!*

He was aware of Luna on his left grabbing his arm and cheering while Colin held on to his right cheering just as loudly.

However, the cheers came to an abrupt halt as Harry careened into the ground, his tiny body crashing and rolling before being splattered out on the green grass of the distant pitch below. The silence lasted for only a second however until Harry rolled over. At that sign of life, the crowds once more broke out into frenzied cheering.

'*We did it! I knew Harry would pull it off! I've got to go get his picture!*' Colin cried, jumping out of his seat and running out of the stands.

Link felt Ron and Hermione also jump out of their seats and rush behind him towards the stairs.
'Oh, oh, oh!' cried Ginny grabbing Luna while she kept her eyes on Harry 'Do you think he's okay?'

'I'm sure he's fine, Ginny,' said Luna sympathetically, 'Look a professor is already on the way to… to help…' Luna paused, 'Oh, its Lockhart.'

The Gryffindors watched as Lockhart trotted towards their fallen hero, arms held out to his sides, his bright red cape fluttering in the wind behind him.

'And it seems as though…Yes! The hero himself, Professor Lockhart ladies and gentlemen. Rest easy, Harry's life is in good hands.' said Lee sarcastically.

Lee Jordan's mockery was lost on Lockhart who stopped halfway to Harry to take a few leisurely bows. His theatrics were met with mocking laughter and applause before he straightened up and resumed his flamboyant charge. By the time he had reached Harry, a small crowd of his teammates and friends had circled around him and Link could tell from the flashes coming from the huddled group that Colin was amongst them.

_Say hello to your yearbook photo's Harry._ Thought Link, trying but ultimately failing to suppress a small grin.

After the quidditch game, Link separated from Luna who decided to spend some time with Ginny. Evidently watching Harry crash into the quidditch pitch had upset Ginny greatly so he decided it would be best to leave the comforting to her while he rendezvoused with Navi back at the Gryffindor Tower.

_Wait till she hears about the game._ Thought Link as he ran to the portal entrance.

'Password?' asked the Fat Lady as he came to a halt in front of the portrait.

_Damn._ Thought Link scowling, _I forgot about you._ He bit his lip.

_Everyone's probably at dinner. I won't be able to get in for another hour and a half at least… nobody is around…Screw it._

After glancing left and right to make sure he was alone, he moved in close to the portrait of the Fat Lady. She started fanning her face and eyed him uncomfortably as he practically stood with his nose touching the portrait.

"Wattlebird." he whispered.

He moved back as the relieved looking portrait swung open and he rushed inside. Climbing up to his dorm and opening the window, he stood and waited. Any minute now Navi would return and they could resume exploring. While he waited, he thought over the match.

_Quidditch wasn't nearly as boring as I thought it'd be. I didn't know some players got bats or that people could get seriously injured! Too bad I can't join the team...stupid flying lessons. Whatever, at least Slytherin lost. Ha! I bet Draco is real popular right now._

As he reviewed the match in his mind's eye, he remembered Hermione and Ron sitting behind him and he felt a twinge of worry. He knew they were probably just watching the game same as
everyone else, but he couldn't help but feel uneasy for some reason. Sighing, he looked over at the
clock. He had been waiting for half an hour already.

*C'mon Navi. I don't have all day.*

The minutes rolled by. Eventually he sat on the window sill and frowned, Minutes changed to
hours and the Sun traveled the full length of the valley, but still Navi was nowhere to be seen.

Harry sputtered and choked as he swallowed a mouthful of the acrid Skele-Gro Potion. It felt like
he had just drunk a spoonful of acid. Overcome with coughing, he hunched over. As he tried to
work the potion down, Hermione passed him a glassful of water. Taking a gulp, he felt some of the
burning in his throat subside.

'That's dreadful.' croaked Harry weakly, slumping back into his bed.

'The worst is yet to come I'm afraid.' said the school nurse Madam Pomfrey bluntly as she poured
him another shot of Skele-Gro, 'Drink up. As unpleasant as having no bones is, you don't want to
know what only having half your bones feels like.'

Grimacing, he took the potion from her and chugged it down. Wincing, he quickly took the offered
glass of water and drank before the foul concoction could climb out his throat. Gasping, he fell
back on the bed, sweat breaking out over his body.

Hermione patted his leg sympathetically while Ron shuffled around Madam Pomfrey who was
busying herself around his bed. Once he was settled back in the sheets, Madam Pomfrey took the
empty glasses and walked out of the curtained enclosure leaving the three alone.

'Just tell me it was worth it.' said Harry coughing slightly.

'Oh, it was.' said Ron his face lighting up, 'Everyone but Draco saw the snitch. No matter how
much his father pays to have his son compete, he can't buy the little git talent. He's a laughing
stock.' finished Ron gleefully.

'Yes, it was satisfying to watch that bigoted weasel get knocked down a few pegs!' agreed
Hermione grinning viciously before she suddenly grew serious again, 'But Harry, we have got to
tell you something!'

'What?' said Harry looking between the two, sitting back up.

'Well-' started Ron before checking behind the curtain to make sure they were alone ' -during the
game we got seats behind Link and Luna. And they started talking…'

'What did they say?' asked Harry eagerly.

'Well its kind of confusing.' started Ron looking at Hermione.

'Luna asked him if he was seeing his friend tonight. A girl.' said Hermione quietly.

'His friend? Like Luna you mean?' asked Harry puzzled.

'No. Someone else. Luna asked him if it was okay for her to be alone without him.' said Hermione
looking back at Ron.
'Yeah, and Link nodded at that.' said Ron, 'Then she asked if she could join the two of them tonight. When he goes to meet her that is.' clarified Ron.

'And this is the strangest part Harry. She said she'd meet up with the two of them, but that she didn't want to interrupt his work.' said Hermione.

'What does that mean?' asked Harry confused.

'I have no clue.' said Hermione, shrugging helplessly.

'When would he meet *her*? Gryffindor is under curfew.' said Harry slowly, 'Unless he plans to sneak out.'

'Maybe he's going to see *her* after dinner or something.' said Ron, 'Maybe that's were he goes off in the evenings.'

'I thought he spent all his time with Luna.' said Harry quizzically, looking between the two of them. 'Wait.' said Harry sitting up, 'You don't think…'

'What?' said Hermione anxiously as Harry sat silently, 'Harry! What?' asked Hermione stomping her foot in frustration.

'Well remember when a boy tried to break into the girl's dorms?' said Harry.

Hermione gasped, 'The girl he's meeting is in Gryffindor? But who could it be? The only other girl Link talks to is…' Hermione swallowed uncomfortably and looked over at Ron.

'What?' said Ron looking between Hermione and Harry, 'No…you don't think…'

'Ginny is the only other girl that Link talks to Ron. And she is in Gryffindor.' said Hermione uneasily.

'But that makes no sense!' said Ron loudly before Harry and Hermione started shushing him. Lowering his voice Ron continued, 'Ginny met Link for the first time aboard those little boats on the Black Lake. How could she be involved in any of this? I know my own sister!'

'Maybe she is being controlled somehow.' said Hermione gently, 'Would you say she has been acting strangely? She sure has been sick for a while…'

Ron shook his head 'No, it can't be. She just has a cold, she's lovesick is all.' Harry squirmed uncomfortably, 'There is just no way.'

'We'll have to keep a closer eye on her Ron. See if she's acting suspiciously.' said Harry, 'In the meantime you guys need to find out what Link is up to tonight.'

Hermione and Ron looked at each other.

'He's…really hard to follow.' said Hermione, scratching her arm.

'I know, but you've got to try. Whatever it is, we know that Link has something planned and he's doing something tonight.' said Harry firmly.

Hermione and Ron looked at each other. Following Link around meant running a marathon. A marathon down hard stone hallways and up steep staircases.

'At least it's only until curfew. Link can't be out all night.' said Ron with a faint optimism.
Hermione nodded weakly.

At that moment the rest of the Gryffindors burst in. Ripping back the curtains they crowded around Harry's bed. Swooping down, one of his fellow teammates Alicia gave him a kiss on the cheek, much to his shock and embarrassment.

'What was that for?' stammered out Harry.

Fred and George beamed at each other, 'McGonagall has retracted the curfew! We're free!'

At that the Gryffindor quidditch team started hooting and cheering again. Amidst their revelry Harry looked at Ron and Hermione. They had expressions of utmost dread on their faces.

Meanwhile back in the first year boys dorm, Link continued to wait and wait. However, Navi was nowhere to be seen. Before long, dinner came and went as the other Gryffindors filed into the tower, excitedly talking about the game.

*Where could she be?* Fretted Link, his left-hand pulsing, *She wouldn't go exploring without me…*

'Brrr!' said one of his roommates, startling him, 'Shut that window, will you? It's freezing outside.'

Reluctantly, he closed the window and turned around as more first year boys entered the room.

'Hey Link, did you skip lunch again?' asked one of the first years.

'Wha? Uh. Mhmm.' he mumbled. He was too busy worrying about Navi to pay his roommates much attention.

'So, you didn't hear the news?'

Eyes wide with alarm, he whipped around and shook his head, a tightness forming in his chest.

'Well, in light of our good behaviour, McGonagall has rescinded the curfew!'

Link exhaled in relief. *For a second, I thought he was going to say Navi had been discovered!*

'Yeah! She said that our win over Slytherin will gave us an opportunity to demonstrate how gracious we can be in victory, or something like that.' he said happily, clearly not intending to do anything of the sort.

'But! If anyone goes taunting the Slytherins we'll be locked up again! So, don't go talking shi… uh…Well anyway we can finally come and go as we please! I'm sure that'll really piss off those Homeless bastards.' said another first-year with glee.

Link nodded and smiled, but inside he was starting to feel the slow build of dread.

*I haven't seen Navi since this morning before breakfast. That was over seven hours ago! Something must have gone wrong. I need to find her. What if the monster got her? No more standing around. I need to act!*

Ignoring the other boys around him who were discussing the match, he quickly changed into his
green tunic and patted down his pockets.

Ocarina, bombs, axe, shield...I'm good to go.

Without a backward glance, he ran out of the room and down the spiral staircase. As expected the Common Room was packed with rambunctious Gryffindors who were celebrating their victory and new-found freedom. Through the crowds, he noticed Ron and Hermione perk up as he ran across the floor, but he took no heed. Pushing past everyone, he ran into the boy's bathroom. Once the door was shut he quickly checked to make sure he was alone.

Time is of the essence. Thought Link as he pulled out the Ocarina of Time and put it to his lips.

I hope Navi was wrong and this doesn't disrupt the time stream or something.

He quickly played the Song of Inverted Time. As the last note rang out from his ocarina, he felt the air grow still. The loud, excited chattering outside grew low pitched as for everyone except Link, time was now moving at one third its normal pace.

Putting aside the ocarina, he focused on his magical stamina.

Over half. I hope that's enough. Unless I kill something, I won't be getting more until I have Navi back.

He took a moment to limber up before he ran towards the bathroom door. Pulling it open, he glanced around the Common Room floor. Moving at a light jog, he zigzagged through the crowd. Ducking underneath high-fiving students, sidled around the crowded couches by the fireplace and hopped around the tables, he was a blur to the eye.

Coming to the portrait door, he gently pushed it open and closed it behind him.

I'll check the Owlery first. Maybe she went to visit Kaepora Gaebora?

Link sprinted towards the Owlery tower. Oblivious to the rushing wind that rattled the portraits in his wake.

Link dropped down into the mirrored room. After a quick search, he clambered back up through the urn to the corridor above.

Nothing. Where could she be?

To the outside world it had only been ten hours, but to Link he had been searching for over thirty. Through liberal use of the Stone Mask, he had infiltrated every classroom, broke into every store room, revisited every corridor and side passage and even plumbed the flooded depths of the school dungeons. But his search was fruitless. The only rooms he had left to search were the headmasters office, the other House's dorms and Common Rooms and a few scattered hidden rooms.

There's only a few places left! I've been everywhere! Link felt his stomach sink. Unless she found the Chamber of Secrets...

He took a deep breath and cleared his head. No. I will not panic. If she's in the Chamber, then that just means I can kill two birds with one stone when I find her.
He focused on his magic power. By his own estimation, he was down to a tenth of his strength. If need be he could make the magic refilling potion himself, but he had never done it without Navi’s help before.

*I’ll keep searching until I run out of magic.* Thought Link as he dashed down the 3rd floor corridor at an impossible speed. *If I don’t find her by then, I’ll regroup at the tower rooftop and consider my options.*

Shouldering open the door, he entered the room that led to the dungeon that he and Navi had searched a few days ago.

*What a disappointment this place turned out to be.*

He looked at where the trap door was hidden and his heart jumped slightly.

*The rug looks disturbed!*

Heart now pounding, he dashed forward towards the trapdoor. One corner of the carpet covering the trapdoor had been rolled back. With a mighty throw, he grabbed and tossed the rug aside. It flew across the room to impact against the wall in a massive cloud of decades old dust.

Reaching down, he grabbed the metal latch on the trapdoor and yanked it open. The hole at his feet was pitch black. He felt his heart sink again.

*I thought for sure…*

Suddenly at the bottom of the pit, he made out a faint blue light on the flagstone. Without hesitating he jumped downwards. Rolling as he hit the ground he called out.

'Heya!'

From down the corridor a blue light appeared growing brighter and brighter as it approached.

'S-S-s-s-s-s-s-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-"kो I couldn't…' Navi stopped in front of him confused, 'Uh, Link what did you just do?' she said, looking at him and the ocarina.

Without waiting for another word he reached out and grabbed her, pulling her into as tight a hug as he dared.

'Ack! Link…what's gotten into you?' Navi said, struggling to get free as he compressed her, spinning her in circles as he went. Finally, he let her go and she went twirling down the hallway, carried by his momentum.

Catching her breath, she looked at him wide eyed while he grinned at her. Still gasping she landed on the floor and leaned up against the wall.

After a few moments of recovering herself she flew back up to his eye level. Wiping her brow, she asked 'How long was I gone? You didn't play Zelda's Lullaby and reset the time stream or anything did you?'
In answer to his unspoken question, Navi told him what she had been up to. To her embarrassment, she confessed that she had returned to the third-floor dungeon to see if they missed anything.

'With the whole school at the quidditch match I thought I could do some exploring of my own. I know it wasn't a very smart idea but-' she said, guiltily. However, she quickly changed her tone once she noticed his smug face.

'Hey! Listen! Do you know how frustrating it is to be cooped up in your stinky clothes all day? You get to explore Hogwarts freely! I can only see this place through a buttonhole in your robes!' He raised his palms in surrender.

'Well anyway, I didn't find anything. And believe me, while I was stuck down here I looked thoroughly.' Pointing over his shoulder with his thumb towards the exit, he raised his eyebrows.

'Yeah, lets get out of here. Hey, isn't it past curfew?' He shook his head.

'Oh? It felt like I was done here for hours. Well, let's head back before we get noticed. The last thing we need is to get even more attention drawn to us.' she said, tucking back into his tunic.

Once Navi was secured, Link turned and jumped back up to the room on the third-floor corridor. Grabbing the rug, he hastily threw it haphazardly over the dungeon entrance. It was shoddy work, but it had been a long search and he was past the point of caring about that crummy old hole in the floor.

Not wanting to spend another second in that miserable dungeon, he exited out into the corridor and slammed the door shut behind him. The banging door echoed loudly down the deserted hallway, making him and Navi jump slightly. Besides the flames gently flickering in their torch brackets and the peacefully snoring figures in their portraits, all was silent. As he went he became increasingly aware of the soft pitter patter of his leather boots on the stone hallways. Running past a winding staircase, he abruptly stopped as an unfamiliar sensation worked its way up his chest.

He yawned loudly. Eyes closing, he relaxed his shoulders and leaned back against the wall.

'Link...' said Navi softly 'Do you want to try sleep tonight?'

He murmured unintelligibly, his eyes still closed.

*How long has it been since I last slept? How many months now? Or has it been a year? All this time travel, I forget…*

As he roused himself he heard a soft, coursing sound against the stone floor at the bottom of the staircase. It sounded like a bag of sand, spilling as it rolled.

Link opened his eyes.

The empty stone corridor of Hogwarts stretched before his eyes in front of him.
I'm not ready to sleep yet. He thought, stretching languorously, I can go another month or two, a few more weeks at least.

Slapping himself, he took off down the hallway again. Suddenly he heard a high-pitched yelp from behind him. As quick as it had sounded it was cut off. Turning, he looked down the hallway he had just come from.

As he stood there he heard the sound again, though much softer. It was a raspy, smooth sound. A stealthy sound.

Link felt the Triforce of Courage flare up in his left hand and he drew his mirror shield and axe. Wordlessly Navi flew out from his tunic and hovered above his shoulder. Weapons at the ready, he moved back towards the staircase, listening carefully for any further sound.

He hopped around the corner and faced the winding staircase, shield raised but there was nothing there. Gritting his teeth, he slowly climbed down the stairs, axe drawn back. Step by step he moved downward, carefully focused on the winding stairs beneath him.

*If only I kept time inverted!* In such close quarters I won't get much reaction time. I have to be ready to strike.

He noticed a shadow on the wall. Whatever had made that sound was just around the corner. Tightening the grip on his axe and bracing his shield, he leapt around the corner, axe singing through the air.

*Colin!*

Link froze, his axe nearly touching the back of Colin's curly blonde head. He sighed in relief, eyes wide.

*That was a close one! Another hair's width and Nearly Headless Nick would have had some company!*

Fast as lightning, he holstered his axe and shield while Navi darted back into his hood. Once everything was concealed, he cleared his throat loudly.

Colin stood unmoving.

'Um.' said Link, clapping his hands together.

However, Colin didn't react. Link's eyes narrowed and he drew his axe and shield again. The skin on the back of Colin's neck was pale and waxy and his shoulders were perfectly still. His hands were held up in front of his face, elbows locked.

*He's not breathing.*

He carefully moved around Colin and examined the boy's face. His features were frozen, eyes wide and unblinking. Colin's camera was held a few inches in front of his face and there was a wisp of black smoke gently rising from its chassis. It smelt foul, like burning tar. Link glanced down the hallway that Colin was facing. It was empty now, but he was sure that just moments ago there was something moving through this passage. Something large and silent.

Navi flew to Colin's face and prodded him slightly.

'He's been petrified.' diagnosed Navi looking grim.
Link nodded in agreement.

*Petrified. Just like Mrs. Norris. This must be the work of the monster from the Chamber of Secrets.*

Suddenly he heard the sharp clack of heels on tile.

*McGonagall!*

Pulling out the Stone Mask, he put it on and moved against the wall beside Colin. As the footsteps got louder he began to hear a merry tune being hummed.

*Should I hide with the stone mask or run? Thought Link frantically as the footsteps grew closer. I have barely any magic left, what if I'm trapped here for a while and I'm discovered? I'll be framed! Framed like Hagrid! Time to run!*

Without wasting another second, he turned and ran. As he neared the end of the hall, he glanced over his shoulder for any sign of pursuit, but there was none. Without thinking about it he found himself running back to the Gryffindor Tower. As he scaled the Spiral Staircase, Navi let out a sharp breath of excitement.

'That was a close one! We almost caught the monster right then and there!' she said.

Link nodded his racing heart gradually slowing.

'Link, things are starting to get serious. Remember what Hagrid said? Now that a student's been attacked, I think that definitively proves that the Chamber has been opened. They're going to be looking for the culprit in earnest now.'

He thought back to Hagrid's words.

*He said he was scapegoated because he wasn't completely human, but will the same thing happen to me? I get made fun of for my ears every now and then, but will it really spiral into accusations of being Slytherin's Heir?*

While he considered Hagrid's words, he reached the top of the Spiral Staircase and turned down the corridor leading to Gryffindor Tower. As he ran, he was surrounded by the sounds of sleeping painting's and portraits. Before he could stop himself, he yawned again.

*What is with me right now?*

'Link it's definitely past curfew! They'll know you were out in the hallways when the attack happened!'

'Oh. Nah.' said Link.

'What? Has the curfew been lifted?'

'Mhmhm.'

'Huh, that's good news.'

Running down the hall, he came before the sleeping portrait of the Fat Lady. Nudging the slumbering woman awake, he ignored the blustering woman's angry comments and waited for Navi to speak the password but she said nothing. After a second, he cleared his throat expectantly.

'Sorry Link, but I don't think we should head in.' said Navi slowly.
'Huh?' said Link, scratching the back of his head.

'I think you need to be seen entering with someone just to have an alibi otherwise people will ask questions. If no one comes around then, as crazy as it sounds, I think we should just camp in the hallway tonight.' said Navi glumly and he groaned.

'We can't afford to be reckless anymore. You can act like you just lost track of time and got stuck outside. Sorry.'

He tossed his head, but said nothing. Slumping down next to the wall, he stretched out his legs and sighed.

_Makes sense I guess. Hopefully some students are out enjoying the first curfew free night and I won't be stuck out here all night. Then again, maybe not. What if someone else gets attacked?_

He yawned again. The adrenaline from his discovery of Colin had departed and he was left with a lingering, rare exhaustion. As he half lay there, he found the cool stone wall surprisingly comfortable. He let his head drop down to his chest as he relaxed.

'Link! As much as I would like you to get some sleep, I don't think taking a nap in a hallway while a monster is on the loose is a good idea!' whispered Navi sharply in his ear.

He nodded absently, bringing up his knees so he could rest his head on them.

_Listen! When was the last time I recited the history of the Kokiri, the Great Deku Tree, and the Great Fairies?_

He sighed again and tried to remember when he had last heard the Forest Histories.

_All fourteen thousand, six hundred, and seven verses? I dunno, never? That was Saria's duty as the Forest Sage._

'Ugh.' groaned Link as he adjusted himself against the wall.

'Well listen up then, because I'm about to take you on an adventure through history five thousand years in the making!' said Navi theatrically.

_I thought she wanted me to NOT fall asleep?_

Suddenly from down the hall, he heard someone walking. He listened for a moment. The footfalls were headed toward them. Standing quickly, he prepared himself for a confrontation.

'Link, you're still armed.'

_Oops._ said Link as he quickly removed his axe and shield.

_Getting sloppy._

He just managed to remove his gear as Ginny came around the corner, muttering to herself. She quickly stopped when she spotted him and her face turned pink with embarrassment.

'Huh, guess Ginny must've been wandering around again.' murmured Navi.

Relaxing back against the wall, he watched as she approached. As she moved down the hallway, she coughed into the sleeve of her robe and stumbled slightly. From her hand she dropped the little black book that she seemed to keep with her at all times. Swearing softly, she knelt down and
picked it up.

Luna was right, she looks terrible. Is her cold that bad?

Shaking her head, she came up to the portrait and looked at him, sniffling.

'Hey Link, did you get locked out?' she asked in a stuffy voice.

He smiled sheepishly.

'Here, I'll get the door for ya'. It's great to not have to worry about a curfew now, huh?'

He nodded in agreement as Ginny woke up the Fat Lady again and spoke the password.

As the irate portrait door swung open, music and laughter blasted through to the corridor, startling the pair. From the sounds of things, the party was still going strong. Swallowing, he tentatively stepped in after Ginny into the surprisingly full Common Room.

'Well g'nite Link. I'll see you tomorrow.' said Ginny with a slight wave.

He scratched his chin as he watched her navigate her way through the clumsy night owls and up the girl's staircase.

Why's she up so late? Didn't she say she needed to get some rest?

After a moment of consideration, he let out a tired sigh and shook his head.

It's been a long day. I'll think about this later.

Turning, he ignored the people around him and trudged towards the boy's stairs. To his surprise, sleeping on the fourth step of the staircase was Ron. He was splayed out with his legs jutted out across the length of the steps, a thin trail of drool leading off his collar as he snored deeply.

He looked extremely uncomfortable. How he was able to sleep with his neck at such an awkward angle was a mystery.

Link carefully stepped over him and slowly proceeded up to his room. Upon entering he saw that all the beds were filled with sleeping boys. All except two.

He felt a pang of sadness as he looked at Colin's empty bed.

Colin may be an annoying chatterbox, but he was never mean to me. Or anyone really. I'll find out who attacked you Colin. I promise you that.

Closing the door softly behind him, he retrieved his ocarina and softly played Goron's lullaby to deepen the slumber of his roommates before he let himself sink down into the soft quilted sheets. Before his head touched the pillow Navi flew out from under his hat and hovered over him.

'I guess all's well that ends well. Thanks for looking for me Link, I didn't mean to worry you.'

He waved his hand dismissively as he relaxed.

'I should let you get some sleep. We can brew that potion tomorrow.'

He shook his head and shifted in his bed.
After I drink that restoration potion I'll be back at full energy anyway.

As he made to stand, Navi put a hand to her hip and frowned.

'There's no rush, Link. I tell you what, why don't you just relax for a bit while I double check the steps for the recipe? Lay down, I'll be right back…'

At that she flew off to the little nest she had made for herself between the mattress and the headboard. It seemed odd that she would need to check the recipe given how often they had made the potion, but those thoughts soon left him. Sighing, he leaned back down into his pillows and after a few minutes he felt his breath start to slow, and he let his eyes close.

What a day. How long was I running around during slowed time? Felt like a week…

'Want to change?' he heard Navi say faintly.

Change? No, no point I'll be up soon.

'Link, just relax…'

Once I…catch my breath…I can…brew that potion with you…just a sec.

At that he drifted off to sleep.
Link gasped and flailed, clawing up at the air as he awoke. For a moment he forgot were he was and he looked around in wide eyed shock at the empty dorm before he remembered his quest. Dropping back down to his pillow he let out a long breath of relief.

Thankfully his dorm mates were out and in their place a peaceful silence filled the room. It was quite the whiplash from his dreams. Hastily rubbing the sleep from his eyes, he glanced over at his clock. It was half past ten. Stretching out on the bed, he relaxed once more, sinking into his soft quilt. For a second he was tempted to just stay there, but a hero's work was never done.

He whistled softly. After a moment Navi appeared beside his nightstand. Landing beside his left shoulder she appraised him brightly.

'Ah, you're awake. Did you sleep well?' she asked cheerily.

'Mmm!'

'Good. While you were asleep there was no mention of any attack. Maybe the school staff announced it at breakfast though. Since waking this morning, none of the other boys have come back.'

'Hmm…' said Link thoughtfully. Suddenly he became aware of a dull ache in his stomach. *Its been awhile since I've been this hungry.*

'Listen I don't mean to upset you but- ' Navi took a breath, '-while you were asleep Ron poked his head in here.'

'Huh!?' he shouted, bolting upright.

'It was only for a second.' Navi said quickly, 'He didn't come in the room or anything. Just looked at you and left.'

'Guh!' he spat, sticking out his tongue.

Gee, thanks for the reassurance! Can't let my guard down for a second, can I? The one time I sleep…

He climbed out of bed. He was still wearing his adventuring tunic. Walking over to his messy wardrobe, he considered his outfit options while Navi kept talking.

'So, for today I was thinking we just sit tight and get a feel for the situation in the school.'

He nodded as he removed his tunic and hung it up neatly above the heap of creased clothes at the bottom of the wardrobe.

'We need to brew more magic potion, but other than that we should only do typical student activities for today. Maybe after our study meeting with Luna we could go see Hagrid.' she suggested as he regarded his choice of pants. The only pair he had that weren't dirty were his black school uniform school trousers. He pulled them on.

*I'd be interested to hear what Hagrid has to say now that a student has been attacked.*
'In the evening, we can go on the hunt.'

'Hep!' he agreed as he dug through his shirt pile.

*I'll start by checking the corridors around where Colin was attacked. Maybe I can pick up its trail.*

'I doubt the monster will be roaming the halls during daylight hours. Still, we'll have to be careful.'

He considered himself in the mirror.

*Without my tunic on I won't be able to carry my weapons with me. I'll be down to my wand only.*

He looked down at the wand on his dresser in disappointment. He had hoped that by this time he would have learned some useful offensive or defensive spells, but so far Lockhart had spent the entire semester having the class reading through his adventure books and teaching them how to be popular. True to his word, Lockhart had tailored this lesson series specifically for shy, awkward boys who didn't speak. Needless to say, this wasn't lost on the rest of the class who were quite diligent in reminding him at every opportunity of Lockhart's insightful tips. Link had definitely paid a high price for the magic potion recipe.

'In any case, we should get started on the potion now. If we hurry, we can have it ready before you're due to meet Luna in the library this afternoon.'

Link's stomach grumbled as he laced up his shoes.

*Typical. One of the few times I'm actually hungry and I have to skip lunch.*

After he got dressed, he gathered the necessary potions ingredients from beneath his bed before climbing out the window of the dorm and up onto the rooftop of the Gryffindor Tower. It was a chilly, windy day. Frost clung to the metal fixtures atop the tower and the roof shingles were slick with a fine coating of ice. Sidling around the rickety tower gutter, he carefully dropped down to the Common Room rooftop where he and Navi had set up their impromptu potion's lab.

After brewing the foul orange potion and consuming it he felt his magical energy return to him, though his stomach was now growling louder than ever.

*I shouldn't let myself become so depleted in magical power again. I might get into battle with the monster at any moment.*

'Let's go, Link. We need to get over to the library pronto!' said Navi chipperly as he tidied up the rooftop lab.

Doing his best to ignore his hunger, he made the perilous climb back to his dorm. As he grabbed his school work, he looked over at his hanging tunic in his wardrobe and hesitated.

*I shouldn't be unarmed, but I can't exactly carry around my bow or axe around. Let me see...*  

Reaching into his inventory, he grabbed a deku nut and put it into his trouser pocket.

*Worst comes to worst; I can use this to escape.*

Satisfied, he exited his dorm and entered the Common Room. There were a few Gryffindor's returning from lunch and based on their unconcerned expressions, he surmised that news of what happened to Colin hadn't circulated around the school yet. After he exited the Gryffindor Tower, he made his way to the library where he found Luna and Ginny sitting together puzzling over their
homework. They lifted their heads as he approached and he raised his hand in greeting.

'Hey Link. Ginny asked if she could join us after the game yesterday.' said Luna.

'Hi, Link. I hope you don't mind…' said Ginny looking up at him. She still looked tired, but she wasn't as pale as she was yesterday.

He shook his head and waved her concerns away before grabbing a chair and sitting beside her across from Luna.

'Thanks. I'm not very good at homework.'

'Neither are we.' admitted Luna, 'But between the two of us we usually figure things out well enough. We'll do even better with you here.'

Ginny nodded appreciatively as she rearranged her papers.

She looks much better now. Maybe she's on the mend?

'Next time we should invite Colin. Do you know where he is Link? We could quickly go grab him.' said Luna.

He slowly shook his head, his lips pressed shut.

'Hm. Next time I guess.'

He turned back to his schoolwork and the three spent the rest of the afternoon going through their notes. It was dinner by the time they finished their astronomy homework and the three went off to the Great Hall together.

'Hey, now that the Gryffindor curfew has been lifted, we can sit beside each other again!' said Luna happily.

He nodded and gestured towards the Ravenclaw table.

'Actually, why don't we sit at the Gryffindor table so we can all eat together.' said Ginny, Luna looked happy at that so he agreed.

Seating themselves, Link eagerly portioned himself out a generous amount of food much to Luna's amazement.

'I pretty much never see him eat anything.' said Luna to Ginny as he diced his sausage into tiny chunks. 'This is quite the occasion.'

Ginny sighed, 'I wish Ron wouldn't always stuff himself…'

The three looked down the table at Ron. Currently he was bent over his plate, cheeks ballooned with creamed ham and mashed turnips, as he shoveled yet more food down his gullet. Seated beside him, Harry and Hermione appeared to be in deep conversation about something. From the way they were slightly stooped over, Link figured they were discussing something important. Suddenly Ron looked past Hermione and saw the three staring at them. Without warning Ron ejected the food from his mouth in a fit of coughing and sputtering all over the bench. Hermione, who was seated next to Ron, got the worst of it, followed by Percy, then Fred and George.

Ginny covered her reddening face with her hands as the bench railed against Ron with Hermione leading the assault. While Ron was getting pummelled, Harry was doing his best to be interested in
a ketchup bottle. Link joined in the table wide laughter as the spectacle unfolded while Luna merely shook her head. After dinner, Link said goodbye to the two girls and went out to visit Hagrid. However, to his surprise he couldn't find the giant anywhere.

'I guess we can start the patrol early.' said Navi as he ran back through the Entrance Hall. 'C'mon, let's get your gear.'

Later, while Link was scouring the hallways for monsters, Dumbledore was seated in his office behind his desk deep in thought. He had just finished writing a letter to Colin Creevey's family detailing what had happened to their son. Though he appeared calm, internally he seethed. How could this possibly be happening? Had Voldemort recovered his physical form? Was he hiding amongst the students?

Worst of all he felt powerless. As headmaster, he was entrusted with the safety of everyone who walked the halls of Hogwarts. There was a monster on the loose and yet, here he sat in his office, doing nothing. He knew that as soon as he announced the attack Lucius Malfoy would demand the board of governors convene to evaluate his performance. He had always managed to survive Lucius's investigations, but the board had been steadily changing over the years with those that were sympathetic to Lucius's views. if the attacks continued…

Dumbledore's train of thought was interrupted when he heard a loud knocking on his door.

'Come in.' he said, straightening up his desk.

The door swung open to reveal the massive bulk of Hagrid. Stooping down, he entered into the circular office, his coat and hair wet with snow. He approached the headmaster, his face deep red. He looked extremely upset about something.

'Hagrid, what has happened?' asked Dumbledore in surprise, rising from his chair.

'It's-It's Aragog sir. He's-he's'- Hagrid choked, Dumbledore waited for him to recover, 'He's gone! Passed!'

'Hagrid, I am very sorry.' said Dumbledore softly, moving around his desk to pat the sobbing giants back 'He lived a long, long, time. The colony will survive him.'

Hagrid shuddered anew, racked with fresh tears he turned towards Dumbledore.

'Naw, sir. The-the whole colony….Jus' gone. All gone!' croaked Hagrid.

Dumbledore looked at Hagrid with renewed interest.

'Gone? The whole colony? Please Hagrid, tell me what you found.'

Hagrid collapsed into one of the chairs in front of his desk and Dumbledore quickly sat by his side. Fetching him a tissue, he waited while Hagrid noisily blew his nose. After a few shuddering breaths Hagrid began to speak.

'Well with the holidays comin' up I decided to go down to visit the nest. I hadn't been down there since the summer, what with the rains an' all, and I was getting' worried.' Hagrid blew his nose
again before he continued, 'Well I came up on ther' nest an' I see they expanded. Hugest nest I ever saw, bigger than any I ever heard of either. An' I think the colony is doin' great.'

Dumbledore stirred, but said nothing.

'So I walk an' I walk and I see they must'v been feedin' like crazy, sir. They was eatin' everythin'! Even saw they'd snatched a-a centaur, didn't recognize 'em, but I saw him.'

'You're certain it was a centaur?' asked Dumbledore sharply. The centaurs and Hogwarts had shaky relations at the best of times. This could be a serious complication.

Hagrid nodded, 'Yeah. No mistake. I didn't recognize him though. Must'v been one of the more shy ones. Anyway, I head into the ol' pit where Aragog used to be an I saw...I saw...' Hagrid paused then, and shuddered. Wiping his face, he swallowed. His face had gone pale. 'They was eatin' everythin' Professor. Everythin'. The bones. I saw all the bones underneath the ice. No wonder I haven't seen nothin' in the forest for months. Its been picked clean.'

Dumbledore leaned back in his chair, a solemn expression on his face. Acromantula were among the more aggressive magical beasts, but to his knowledge they did not feed and kill needlessly. Usually, they maintained a specific population relative to their territory.

'Anyways in the centre of the hallow, I saw Aragog or what...what was left of em'. I saw his legs. They was massive, Professor. Impossible. No other way to describe it. But they weren't just big, they was...strange.'

'Strange? In what way do you mean?'

Hagrid hesitated his mouth working as he tried to find words to describe the sight.

'They was white. No hair. His brood too. I found a few - frozen see? - got a good look and they all looked diseased. Maybe it's why they killed each other.' Hagrid shook his head, 'Never seen such a thing before. I don't know what else it could have been.'

Dumbledore was thoughtful for a few moments before he stood up.

'Hagrid, you will always have the memory of Aragog. Healthy, strong, and faithful. I must confess I'm greatly saddened to hear about the loss of so much life in the forest, including the spider colony. I will need to contact Firenze as soon as possible to determine the extent of the damage caused to the centaurs. I am sure that the herd will agree that nature follows its own course, but I would sooner apologize then leave any room for grudges.'

Hagrid stood from his seat as well, 'I've not seen the herd since the summer, sir. I hope that they weren't chased off, or worse.' Hagrid shook his head again, sighing, 'I don' get it. Never heard o' a disease that makes Acromantula change like how I saw. Don' make no sense.'

Dumbledore nodded. Walking back behind his desk, he sat back down in his high-backed chair.

'Thank you for telling me this Hagrid, we will need to continue keeping a close eye on the castle grounds. Be on the lookout for anything suspicious. In the meantime, this spider you found preserved in the ice, is it...recoverable? I would like to examine it myself if you have no objection.'

'I think I could manage tha' sir. It'll take me a little while, but I can haul it over soon enough.'

'Thank you, Hagrid. And once again, I'm sorry for your loss.'
That Monday, Dumbledore announced to the students that there had been another attack. As Hagrid had predicted the atmosphere in the castle changed completely. Before the student population had been eagerly looking forward to their Christmas Holiday and getting a break from their homework, but now all anyone talked about was leaving to go home.

Link found that his classmates travelled directly to classes and ate their meals exclusively in the Great Hall, huddling together in their dorms or common rooms, rarely venturing into the halls alone. Everywhere he looked he saw worried faces.

Ginny seemed to take the news of Colin getting attacked particularly hard. She had even broken into tears when she sat down beside his empty seat in Charms class. Thankfully Luna was able to switch to Colin's empty seat and keep her company from then on. For his part, Link was determined to kill the monster before it struck again. Over the next two weeks he maintained nightly patrols in the corridors, searching for any sign of the monster but his search was fruitless. He could find no trace of the monster, whatever it was.

Before long Christmas vacation was just around the corner and he was informed by McGonagall that he needed to indicate whether or not he would be staying for Christmas holidays or going home. At the school notice board, he found the list of attending students and checked it over. Unsurprisingly, hardly anyone was going to spend their vacation at Hogwarts. Ginny was going to stay, but Luna was going home. He couldn't blame her what with the monster on the loose.

This is the perfect chance for me to search through the school! I can run around all over and almost nobody will be around to stop me!

Link rubbed his chin thoughtfully as he imagined how much exploring he could get done. This was a golden opportunity, and he couldn't afford to let it go to waste.

'What are you smiling for, mutey?' asked Draco in his nasally drawl.

Link turned to face him. Since the attack on Colin, Malfoy had become even more obnoxious. He seemed to be delighting in the panic. Without waiting for an answer, Draco pushed him away from the sheet and signed it along with his two Bokoblin like henchmen Crabbe and Goyle.

'Hope you're not planning on getting too comfortable over the holidays Tinkerbelle, what with Slytherins monster on the loose.' sneered Draco as his two-henchman chortled stupidly, 'A half breed like you will be a nice little snack.'

Link rolled his eyes, Mido was twice the bully you'll ever be Draco.

'Or actually, now that I think about it, I doubt Slytherins monster would eat a thing like you. It might get indigestion. I bet that's a consolation, eh?'

Link shrugged and turned back to the message board, browsing as though they weren't there. Draco curled his lip and snorted.

'I really should tell Dobby to act more like Link here. Always so quiet and demure. If nothing else you would make a fine house elf. See you long ears.' said Draco as he and his goons walked away, laughing.
Link absently brushed his hair back over his ears as the three's echoing laughter bounced down the hallway. A poster on the notice board had caught his attention.

*Join the Hogwarts Dueling Club for our inaugural meeting Friday, December 17th! Learn proper dueling etiquette and technique, hone your reflexes and master powerful defensive spells! Warning: Not for the faint of heart.*

'Hmm!' he murmured excitedly.

*Learn powerful defensive magic, eh?*

He felt Navi shift around in his robes. Sensing that she wanted to see the note for herself, he signaled to her that the coast was clear and she poked her head out of his robe.

'Interesting.' she whispered as she finished reading, 'You should go, Link. Maybe you can learn some new magical attacks.'

Link joined the excited crowds of students in the Great Hall along with the rest of the first years for the Dueling Club Meeting. All the other guys in his dorm had been eager to attend, either to show off their totally real and impressive magical skills or to actually learn some defensive magic for a change. The four giant house tables had been pushed to the sides of the dining area and in their place was a single long stage, about four feet off the ground, fifty feet long and ten feet wide. This stage was marked with differently coloured lines and glyphs that Link didn't understand.

*Those markings must be related to the rules of dueling. Link reasoned. I hope they go over more than just the rules today. I want to see some action!*

He saw Luna and Ginny talking at the front of the table and he went over to join them.

'Hey Link, are you excited?' Ginny asked when he reached them.

Link grinned and twirled his wand.

'Me too. I'm actually really looking forward to seeing what defensive spells are supposed to look like. Its not like we learn any in Lockhart's class.' said Ginny and he nodded.

'Speaking of which…' murmured Luna as she looked across the hall. Ginny and Link followed her gaze to the smiling, wand master himself.

'Augh.' groaned Link, slumping his shoulders in disappointment and throwing his hands into his pockets.

His reaction was not unique. Around the room there was several audible moans. Despite his reception, Lockhart strode forward undiscouraged, giving a wave and wink to the crowd. Lockhart hoisted his long billowy purple robes about his waist as he pranced up the steps to the dueling platform.

'Welcome everyone! To the first meeting of the dueling club.' announced Lockhart flourishing his robes as he bowed to the crowd.

'In light of the recent unfortunate events, I was able to convince Dumbledore that you, the treasures
of Hogwarts, needed to be better prepared to face the challenges that await you in the world. You see, Dumbledore, though a powerful wizard himself, does not quite possess my expertise in the subtle art of...sudden wand play!' he shouted, drawing his wand dramatically. Many students let out a collective gasp, many more looked on in wide eyed disbelief.

'Yes. It can be shocking, I know, to see a dueling master draw his wand. But know this! Even I started as a novice.'

There was some snickering. Lockhart tossed his hair lightly and chucked, 'It is no jest! Difficult though it may be to believe, I was once like you. Helpless and afraid. But fear no longer, for I will instruct you in the ancient ways of arcane combat!'

The crowd broke out into mixed applause. Link absently joined in though he wasn't really paying attention. Instead he was fixated on Lockhart's swirling robes.

_I wonder when he's going to trip on the hem of his dress thing?_ He wondered.

Lockhart waited until the applause subsided before continuing, 'Now then! I feel it would be prudent to first demonstrate how a proper wizard duel is conducted. Professor Snape!'

Instantly Link snapped out of his trance as his heart leapt with joy.

_Is he really going to duel Snape?!

'Would you join me please?'

Wordlessly, Snape stepped out of the shadows of the Great Hall and walked towards the dueling lane. The assembled students starting murmuring excitedly and parted away in front of him. Climbing the small stairs, he advanced down the dueling lane until he stood about twenty feet away from Lockhart.

'Pay attention now.' said Lockhart throwing off his restrictive robe to reveal a white vest with matching leggings, 'And do not fear! Professor Snape has volunteered his services to us this evening so that I may demonstrate the correct dueling etiquette. Please watch me.'

Lockhart stepped forward towards Snape, a cocky smile on his face, his shiny black boots clicking softly as he advanced.

Link felt a twang of disappointment. _I guess I won't see him trip over his robe, but this should still be pretty good!_

The crowd watched with rapt interest. The hall went completely silent as Lockhart moved towards the malevolent potions master. Once he and Snape were about five feet apart he stopped.

'First we bow.' Lockhart bowed deeply and Snape gave a small jerky nod, disgust painted on his face.

'Then we turn our backs to each other and walk ten paces' said Lockhart as he ambled down the aisle. Snape strode ten paces, his eyes gleaming with anticipation.

Link watched in open mouthed excitement, slightly bouncing on the balls of his feet.

'And now we turn and assume our stance!' Lockhart raised his wand like a fencer, one hand behind his back while Snape merely raised his wand slightly, not quite pointing it at Lockhart. The excitement in Snape's eyes had faded. He was now emotionless and focused.
'At the count of three we will direct our wands at each other.' said Lockhart, 'Do not worry, we are only aiming to disarm. Professor Snape will be unharmed.' he said confidently.

Link balled his fists in his pockets his heart rate rising, his breathing becoming shallower.

'One.' said Lockhart, casually flicking his wand.

_I don't believe this!_

'Two.' said Lockhart, winking to a girl in the audience.

_Here it comes!

Somewhere in the crowd, Trevor croaked.

'Thr-' started Lockhart

'Eeya!' shrieked Link. Unable to contain his excitement any longer his hands flew to his face. When he did so, he pulled his hands out of his pocket with such force, that he ripped out his pocket lining. The speed with which this occurred was sufficient enough to cause the small emergency deku nut that he had been carrying in his school pants to be launched outwards. Flying past Lockhart's face, it hurtled towards the opposing wall behind him.

As soon as Lockhart finished pronouncing the word three. The deku nut exploded on the wall. Releasing a blinding flash of light across the hall. Half of everyone present, including Link and the unfortunate Professor Snape were stunned.

But Professor Lockhart wasn't.

'-ee!' Lockhart finished. Leveraging his wand, he took aim. Unaware of the flash behind him.

'Expelliarmus!' cried Lockhart, desperately wiggling his wand about in Snape's direction.

As he was stumbling backwards from the unexpected flash, the disarming charm caught Snape totally unaware and his wand flew from his hand. Arching gracefully through the air, Link's vision returned just in time for him to see Lockhart catch Snape's wand. True he fumbled with it somewhat, but he caught it nonetheless.

The room was filled with a hushed silence as Snape looked at Lockhart in shock. Everyone's mouth hung open at what they had just witnessed, including Lockhart's.

After a second Lockhart recovered. 'Er, yes. Yes! That's how it's done.' he said nervously, lowering his wand. Snape's face began to twist with rage, 'L-Let's all have a round of applause for Professor Snape everybody. G-Good show.' said Lockhart recoiling slightly from the look of pure, concentrated hatred on Snape's face.

Nobody dared applaud. Instead the hall slowly filled with whispers and murmurs. Some students pointed at Snape, others at Lockhart who was still clutching Snape's wand in his hand.

_Whoopsie!_ Thought Link, sweat breaking out over his body.

'D-did Lockhart win?' asked Ginny slack-jawed.

'Did Snape…lose?' asked Luna blinking in confusion.

Slowly the hushed conversation gained in volume as everyone recounted what they had just seen to
each other. Snape rose slowly. He stared at Lockhart, who went white as a ghost, then Snape looked at the wall behind him where the deku nut had exploded. Slowly his eyes panned the crowd. Snape eyes briefly locked with Link's and he felt the Triforce surge but only for a moment as Snape's eyes travelled to others in the room.

'Well.' said Lockhart shakily, 'Let's divide up the students for practice, hmm?'

All around the hall students were dueling. Many students shouted the charm at each other to no effect. Many others simply traded wands. Of these dueling pairs, Link stood facing Luna, his wand raised.

'One…two…Three!' shouted Lockhart.

*Expelliarmus* Thought Link flicking his wand up to Luna.

With a yelp Luna recoiled as her wand snapped out of her hand and flew towards him.

Reaching, he caught it easily and threw it back to her.

'You're really good at this, Link.' grumbled Luna, rubbing her wrist.

He tried to look humble as he shrugged, but he couldn't stop a small smile from appearing on his face. If he didn't know any better he could have sworn she sounded annoyed.

'Link! Nobody likes a show off! Let her win the next one.' whispered Navi.

*Nobody likes to be condescended too either!* Thought Link, frowning slightly.

However, before they could have another match Lockhart's voice rang out across the hall.

'All right everyone, wands away!' called out Lockhart from atop the dueling table, 'I think that's enough for our first club meeting. Next time we'll divide up the students and organize a little tournament! How about that?' said Lockhart beaming as the students all started whispering excitedly to each other.

*Oh, I'm winning that tournament. Just watch me!* Thought Link, his face set.

'Remember! You must all solemnly swear to uphold the ethics of proper wizard dueling, and not go abusing your power.' said Lockhart in a grandiose tone, 'Until next time!'

Link and Luna joined the other students as they filled out of the Great Hall.

'What's the hold up?' said someone behind him as they formed a que.

Link jumped to see over the crowd.

Standing at the doorway to the Entrance Hall was Snape. To say that he had taken his loss to Lockhart poorly was an understatement. After staring down Professor Lockhart, he had spent the rest of the dueling lesson wordlessly travelling from one pair of students to the next locking eyes with each one.
When Snape went up to him and Luna, Link again felt the Triforce grow hot in his hand. The sensation lasted for as long as Snape gazed into his eyes before finally Snape moved on, his face like a mask.

Luna thought that he was trying to read their minds and he found himself agreeing.

Now it appeared as though Snape wanted to have one last chance to stare everyone down. He was standing in the middle of the doorway positioned so that students would have to walk past him to leave. As the students approached him they involuntarily hushed themselves, trying to look inconspicuous. He stared into the face of every student with cold intensity as they exited. When his eyes fell on Link, he felt the Triforce surge. When eye contact was broken however, the pulse subsided.

'That was really creepy. Worse than a Flugbat.' shuddered Luna as they entered the Entrance Hall.

"That settles it. Some wizards can read minds. When the Triforce protected me from the Sorting Hat it felt the same way. Also, when I was in the Headmasters office and Dumbledore stared at me I felt the same heat then too. They must require eye contact to do it. Why else would Snape lock eyes with everyone? He's searching for whoever threw that Deku Nut!"

Luna sighed and he tore himself from his thoughts and looked at her quizzically. She had a strange expression on her face.

'This was our last lesson before Christmas Break. I guess I won't see you for a few weeks…' she said, looking into his eyes.

Link nodded somewhat stiffly. Despite her protests, Luna's father had insisted that she come home for the holidays. He couldn't blame him what with the attacks and all. Suddenly Luna sprang forward, startling him.

What is she…

Pulling him in, she gave him a tight hug.

'You two take care of yourselves. Good luck and happy hunting!' with that she released him and hurried off towards the Ravenclaw dorms.

Link stood stunned for a moment before he shook his head clear. Grinning slightly he started running back to the Gryffindor Tower.

'That was so cute!' squealed Navi as quietly as she could from inside his robes.

Link felt his face burning as he scaled the Shifting Staircase.

_I won't let you down, Luna._

As soon as the dueling club ended, Hermione sprang into action. Leaving Harry and Ron behind, she rushed for the exit. Nudging and pushing her way forward through the que, she tried her best to sight of Luna.

'Hey watch it!' said a Hufflepuff girl angrily as Hermione accidentally stepped on her shoe.
'Sorry.' said Hermione automatically. Manners had to wait, she had a mission to accomplish.

_I can't believe they're forcing me to do this! Those two spineless..gutless..babies!_ Thought Hermione furiously as she continued to fight her way through the crowd.

For the last week Hermione had been trying to get a sample of Luna's DNA. Some hair, some skin, anything! Luna's cells were the last ingredient they needed for the Polyjuice Potion, but acquiring a sample had proven more difficult then she had imagined. Initially, she had figured that she could grab a few strands of loose hair off of her robes, but it turned out the Luna was maniacal about her hair's upkeep. She simply didn't lose hair.

A few days ago, she had brought up the matter to Harry and Ron and they were unsurprised. 'You'd have to have great hair if you're Link's girlfriend. Haven't you heard? Link uses a bottle of hair potion a week, or so I've been told. It's bizarre!' said Ron snickering.

'Stupid wizard shampoo! I wonder what brand she uses? Pfft...magical cosmetics is cheating!' muttered Hermoine bitterly. Jumping up, she spotted Luna's blonde hair through the crowd. She was gaining.

Well this time Hermoine was coming prepared. Reaching into her robes, she checked her pocket. Her fingers found the cold steel of her Herbology shears and she smiled darkly.

_Of course, those two idiots can't help ME for once! Ooh, she'd suspect a boy, Hermione! We're too noticeable! Ooh, Hermione is the potion ready yet? You haven't made any mistakes, have you? Ooh, can we copy you’re charms homework? Please? My scar hurts._

Hermione snapped out of her griping as she spotted Luna and Link walking together just ahead.

_Passing by Snape, they entered the Entrance Hall._

_If I lose sight of them they'll disappear somewhere. This is the last chance I'll have! Move it, Granger!_

Coming before Snape, Hermione slowed down and tried to look nonchalant. As she went past he glared at her, his gaze setting every hair on the back of her neck on end. However, it only lasted a moment before she was out into the Entrance Hall.

_What's his problem? No matter! Where are...Ah!_

She quickened her pace. At the end of the Entrance Hall corridor, Link and Luna had stopped and were facing each other. Ducking behind a pillar, she peered around the stone column and watched.

'This was our last lesson before Christmas Break.' Luna said while gazing deeply into Link's eyes, 'I guess I won't see you for a few weeks…'

Link nodded, his face turning pink.

Without another word she fled, hurrying off towards the eastern section of the castle. Link looked after her for a moment before he spun around and ran towards the Shifting Staircase.

_Happy hunting? What kind of a bloodthirsty pair…_

Rousing herself, Hermoine ran off towards where Luna had gone. It was almost certain that Luna
was headed towards the Ravenclaw Common Room but she could never be sure with Luna. She tended to meander when she walked the halls. In any case, if she made it to the Ravenclaw's Tower then they would need to rethink their entire plan.

Running up a flight of stairs, Hermione saw Luna walk in the direction of the library, a distinct bounce to her step as she hummed a strange tune to herself.

*She hasn't noticed me. Now is my chance!* Thought Hermione as she pulled out her herbology shears.

Luna tossed her golden hair absently over her shoulder as she walked, looking at the snow fluttering past the window, oblivious to Hermione's approach.

*Almost...almost...* Hermione opened the scissors in front of her, a maniacal gleam in her eye. Luna's sashaying hair was nearly in reach.

'Heads!'

At that moment an ink balloon exploded against Hermione's cheek. Hermione froze as sticky, black ink dripped down her face and neck and soaked through her robes. Peeves, the school poltergeist, cackled manically as he flew overhead.

"Oh, danger! It's Granger! Watch out for those shears! She's jealous! So envious! Her hair is quite queer! Run goldie, ol' Loony, she wants those soft locks! She's crazy, that lady! Her mirror's in shock!"

Hermione was still for a second before she filled her lungs. 'PEEVES!' she screeched, bursting with rage.

Peeves grinned. Blowing a raspberry at her, he somersaulted through a wall and disappeared.

For a moment she just stood there, half blinded. There were a few brays of cruel laughter around her. She started to wipe her face with her sleeve. She could feel tears well in her eyes, though whether from the stinging ink, embarrassment or her own frustration she couldn't tell.

'Here.' said a voice, pressing a handkerchief in her hand.

'T-Thank you.' stammered Hermione. Eyes burning she took the handkerchief and cleaned the stinging ink out of her eyes as best she could. Once the ink was cleared, she was startled to see Luna standing in front of her. She was regarding her coolly with her silver blue eyes.

'Um...Thanks.' said Hermione again.

'You're welcome.' said Luna. She looked down at Hermione's other hand, 'What's up with the shears?'

'Oh!' yelped Hermione before she cleared her voice and said shakily, 'W-Well, Herbology!'

'Herbology.' repeated Luna her eyes flicking back up to Hermione's face, 'And why do you have them now?'

'W-well the, uh, the shears are a-a-a rather, e-e-essential part of p-plant care!' stammered out
Hermione loudly her mind turning numb. 'They-they are, uh-
'I thought Herbology was cancelled today because of the snowstorm.'
'Y-yes so it was.' Hermione said tonelessly.
Luna looked at her blankly, neither of them said anything. Finally, Luna broke the silence.
'I've noticed you looking at my hair for a while now, Hermione.'
'Oh?' asked Hermione weakly.
'Listen, I know what its like to be made fun off. Don't let it get to you.' said Luna sympathetically.
'I beg your pardon?' said Hermione indignantly.
'You know.' Luna said, lowering her voice, 'The nicknames? Wire head, Granger Bush, I'm sure you've heard.'
'Oh.' Hermoine replied, visibly deflating.
'Just because people make fun of your hair doesn't give you the right to sabotage other peoples though.' said Luna seriously.
Hermione went bright red. The combination of black ink and her red skin made her look like a blueberry.
'No! No, you totally misunderstand. I'm just, uh-' started Hermione desperately, but Luna pressed on.
'I don't just wake up with my hair looking like this you know. There's a lot of maintenance involved. A lot of hard work. I brush it twice a day-
Hermione was forced to listen meekly as Luna rattled off her hair care routine, nodding occasionally. The sight of the two gathered the attention of quite a few passersby. Some snickered at Hermione as they walked past.
This is humiliating.
'-and I never, ever, over wash. If you adopted a similar regime, I'm sure you could have great hair too.' said Luna enthusiastically. A few nearby girls who had stopped to listen nodded in approval as well.
Hermione's eyes lit up suddenly.
'Really? You don't suppose I could touch yours, do you?'
'Uh…' Luna hesitated
'It's just, mine is so unruly. I've never really had any one show me such a kindness before. Please?' asked Hermione sweetly through gritted teeth.
'Well…' Luna's eyes flickered over Hermione's ink stained robes and face before she relented, 'Of course, you may.' said Luna graciously.
She reached and felt Luna's hair. It really was quite luxurious. Tensing slightly, she gave a sharp
'Ouch!' said Luna jumping back a little.

'Oops, sorry. You were right. Very healthy roots.' said Hermione, pocketing a few strands of hair. In her peripheral vision she saw a group of girls who were eavesdropping nearby look at her like she was a psychopath.

Luna rubbed her head and looked at her like she might suddenly bite her. 'Uh, yeah. Just remember what I said…about respecting other peoples hair and the importance of conditioner.' she said taking a step backward.

'Yes, I'll keep that in mind.' said Hermione in what she intended to be an understanding tone. However, her voice ended up sounding aggressive.

'Good luck. Um, you can keep the handkerchief.' said Luna, giving her a worried smile before quickly walking away.

Without another word, Hermione spun around and headed for the Gryffindor Tower. As she left she heard the people who had been watching them break out in whispers. She was sure they were talking about the bizarre scene they had just witnessed, but at that moment she didn't care.

_**Harry and Ron had better not say a single word!**_ Hermione fumed as she stomped down the corridor.

Meanwhile, Dumbledore, Hagrid and the care of magical creature's instructor Professor Kettleburn were standing in the old storehouse of the castle gatehouse. In front of them was a tarp covered object that Hagrid had just dragged in from the Forbidden Forest.

'Brr! It's like an icebox in here! Let's hurry this up, shall we? I don't want to miss the train.' said Kettleburn, blowing into his freezing hands.

'Yes. Hagrid, if you would please.'

'Course Professor, here it is.'

At that, Hagrid grabbed the tarp and threw it off revealing a giant block of crystal clear, blue ice. Frozen within was a massive spider, easily the size of one of the school carriages.

'Ahoh! What a beauty! My word, Hagrid you have truly discovered something here!' exclaimed Kettleburn before moving closer to the specimen, his pegged leg clomping loudly as walked next to the spider's frozen head.

'Do you recognize it, Kettleburn?' asked Dumbledore.

'Yes. Yes, this is defiantly Ancromantula. The fangs, the structure of the mandibles, characteristic of Ancromantula communication organs. A little atrophied though. Very fascinating. How did it get frozen I wonder?' mused Kettleburn, producing a monocle from his pocket so that he could better see the creatures long, pointed fangs.

While Kettleburn was examining the frozen spider, Hagrid shuffled beside Dumbledore.
'I was thinkin' bout it.' said Hagrid softly as Kettleburn fawned over the spider, 'An I think this here is the same blue ice that was hangin' over the Entrance Hall. Wot' you think, Professor?'

Dumbledore smiled, 'I believe you're correct, Rubeus. The magic used to create this ice does appear to be the same as the magically created ice in the Entrance Hall.'

Before Hagrid could say anything, Kettleburn called out to them.

'Curious. This is an Ancromantula, but it must be a subspecies of some sort. Definitely an off breed. The size of this specimen would not be unusual for a patriarch, but this specimen appears to be a mere hunter drone. I shudder to think what its father looks like!' Kettleburn shook his head and faced Dumbledore and Hagrid, 'Were I a younger man I would venture into the forest myself to look for the rest of the hive but alas, I am too cold and weary as it is! Gentleman, thank you for the curiosity, but I must be off.'

After Hagrid and Dumbledore said their goodbyes to Kettleburn, Hagrid turned back to the headmaster.

'So, you figure whoever was involved with the pot smashing was also fightin' spiders in the forest?' How's that make sense?' said Hagrid, scratching his bearded chin.

'The same person, yes. Whatever they're up to, they would appear to have a very convoluted plan. I cannot imagine how petty vandalism of Argus's decorative pots would factor into their motives… or perhaps they are exceptionally reckless.' mused Dumbledore frowning slightly.

'But who would go around pulling pranks on Filch one day then go an' fight giant spiders the next?' asked Hagrid.

'Who indeed? It does seem very silly doesn't it? Hardly the work of a mature mind.' replied Dumbledore, his brow furrowed in thought.

'Professor?'

'A child Rubeus. I believe this was the work of a child.'
Finally, Christmas holidays had arrived. It was an odd experience walking through Hogwarts in its current state. The castle had never felt so empty and quiet. Still, despite the few students and staff that had elected to stay for Christmas the castle was magnificently decorated with tinsel, magic snow, ornaments, Christmas Trees and the like. All of this was lost on Harry at the moment though as he was stuck in the rather unpleasant 2nd floor girl's bathroom next to an even more unpleasant smelling cauldron.

Sequestered away in one of the filthy stalls, he, Hermione, and Ron had been secretly brewing the Polyjuice Potion in the haunted washroom for the past month. It had been hard, stinky work, but it would all be worth it if they could trick Link into incriminating himself. They had just come back from the Great Hall Christmas decorations to see if they could spot him. Funnily enough actually cornering the pointy eared bastard was a major weakness in their plan. Link was a notorious roamer, and he never seemed to stop moving. However, as long as they could get him to sit still for a few minutes, the three hoped that they could have the entire mystery of the Chamber of Secrets sorted out by supper.

'It's ready.' said Hermione, peering into the bubbling cauldron. A more unappealing liquid Harry had difficulty imagining. It looked like lumpy, grey sewage. He didn't envy Hermione. His experience with Skele-Gro taught him to never underestimate the potential for potions to taste terrible.

'Okay.' she muttered to herself, wiping some sweat off her brow, 'All I have to do now is add the hair...' she produced a small glass vial from her robes. Inside were the hairs that she had managed to take from Luna. Harry and Ron carefully kept their expressions neutral. They had both heard about what she had done outside the library but, fearing for their own safety, the two had privately agreed to never speak of it.

Hermione dumped the hair in the cauldron and the potion turned a milky blue colour. Taking one of the bottles from her potions kit, she poured the unpleasant smelling slop into the container before corking it tightly.

'There! Now according to the recipe, Polyjuice potion can be consumed as needed. Every serving I take is another hour or so of time in the shifted form. With this amount of potion, I should have about three hours to make Link talk.' stated Hermione.

'Hermione, if you prefer me or Ron could-' started Harry before she cut him off.

'No! We're breaching Luna's privacy enough as it is! Besides do either of you two oafs think you can pass off as a girl?'

Harry and Ron dutifully shook their heads and she snorted.

'I'll keep my disguise on under my robe. Once we have a chance, I'll transform into Luna and start to question him. It will be up to you two to distract him long enough for me to approach him though. Oh, and you'll also need to keep a lookout for any teachers. I'm sure that if they spot me, they'll see through our little ruse.' said Hermione.

'Have you thought about your cover? He'll want to know why you're here after all.' asked Ron
scratching his chin thoughtfully.

'Yes. I plan on giving him this…' she pulled out a small blue and yellow wrapped present, 'I'll tell him I just had to give it to him in person. I bet he'll fall for something sappy like that.'

'What is it?' asked Ron eagerly.

'It's just a bag of Gobstones.' she said, shrugging.

'Wha? I wanted Gobstones…' sulked Ron.

'Have you decided on how you're going to try and question him? Even if he can talk as we suspect, I doubt he'll break character easily.' pointed out Harry.

'Well I was just going to stick to questions that have a simple yes and no answer. I'm going to ask him about the plot that Dobby mentioned, the Chamber of Secrets obviously, and what he's been doing running around the school all the time.' said Hermione as she cleaned up her cauldron.

'Thanks for all this Hermoine. Me and Ron really appreciate it.' said Harry sincerely and Ron quickly nodded.

'You're welcome.' Hermoine said, treating them both to a small smile, 'I just hope that this is the end of it.'

'You can say that again!' said Ron longingly, 'No more early mornings, no more running around-

'I think we're as prepared as we can be. All we have to do now is find him.' Harry declared confidently.

Once Hermoine had finished packing her things away, the three set out for the dorms. Come what may, they were going to solve this mystery and end the plot before anyone else could get hurt.

Link paced back and forth across his dorm, impatiently waiting. Today was the big day of celebrations for the Christmas Holiday and he needed to be seen, as troublesome as that was. Truth be told he wasn't too bothered by the delay, though he wished he didn't have to quit searching just to eat a boring old meal. The Christmas break was proving to be a golden opportunity for him to explore the castle in peace and he wanted to make the most of it. Without classes or bystanders to hold him back, he had been able to search everywhere on the first floor with the exception of the temporary Slytherin dorms. He looked at his clock. It was almost six in the morning.

I'm so close I can taste it!

All of his roommates had left for the holidays. In fact, the whole of the Gryffindor dormitories was almost deserted. Only the Weasley family, Hermione, Harry, and perhaps a dozen others were left in all of Gryffindor.

As he grumbled to himself, Navi flew up from his bedding and landed on top of his bedside lamp. Crossing her legs, she checked the time herself.

'Quarter to six. Hm. Everyone's going to be waking up soon to open their presents. You might as well relax until its time to make an appearance. Come here, take a load off.'
He ran over to his bed and sat down on the edge of the mattress. For the last few days even the
looming spectre of Slytherins monster couldn't dampen the student's excitement for Christmas
morning. From what he could tell it was a good holiday, filled with gift giving and spending time
with your family.
Flopping back down on his bed, he felt something sharp poking him beneath his covers. Puzzled,
he pulled back the sheets to reveal a tiny, parchment wrapped present.
'Kyaaa!' cried Link in surprise.
Navi flew around gleefully, 'Didn't see that coming did you? Open it!'
He plucked up the tiny, card sized package and gingerly unfolded the envelope like wrapping.
Inside was a small, brass figurine of an archer. It was pleasantly heavy and its polished surface
caught the light and gleamed brightly.
'I found it while I was exploring the tower awhile back. Do you like it?'
'Uh-huh!' said Link happily as he examined the tiny figurine. He had seen students play chess with
similar figurines in the Common Room sometimes.
I wonder…if I were to put this piece on a chessboard, would it come to life?
Link marveled over the little archer for a few more seconds before he suddenly had a terrible
realization.
I should have got Navi something!
'Erm.' He started, rubbing the back of his head and looking at the floor. Navi giggled.
'Oh don't worry about me, Link. I know you'd have got me a present if you had the chance.
Although, having said that, you should really think about getting Luna something before she comes
back. I think she would really appreciate it.'
Link felt his heart drop and he looked at Navi wide eyed.
Navi's right! I totally forgot about Luna! I wish she wouldn't have left before I learned about the
Christmas holiday rules!
He groaned. Flopping back in his bed, he stared up at his ceiling and sighed.
Dammit!
'Relax Link. You can still get her something once she comes back. What do you think she would
like?'
'Hmmm…' he said concentrating while he turned the archer figure over in his hands.
What can I get Luna? Bombs? I could spare a few bombs…
'Link.' said Navi as he was imagining how she would react to a bombchu, 'Let me give you a tip.
None of the stuff in your inventory would make a very good gift for a girl who's your age.'
'Huh?'


What am I supposed to do then? Thought Link. Stumped, he shook his head and Navi laughed.

'I'm sure you'll think of something. Here, we have time before breakfast. Let's chat, eh? We're stuck here anyway.'

Although Link had planned to be out by six, he and Navi spent the morning talking. The pair reminisced about Hyrule and the Kokiri forest and their other adventures. For the life of him, he couldn't remember the last time he and her just talked.

Hours passed before finally Navi gave a stretch and stood.

'Well we should probably get going to the breakfast table. It's almost ten.' she said, glancing at the clock. He sighed and reluctantly got out of bed. For the last few days mealtimes had been especially embarrassing. The reduced number of students meant that he was far more noticeable and as a result he couldn't hide his eccentricities in plain sight as well as he used to.

To the other students his near non-existent appetite coupled with the fact that he was always the first one to leave the table caused many to speculate that he was suffering from some sort of holiday depression or something.

As long as I can make it through today, I'll be fine. I just need to be seen. Thought Link as he stood before the closed dorm doorway. Taking a deep breath, he opened the door.

Predictably, all the remaining Gryffindors were crowded around the fireplace, laughing and talking. Torn wrapping paper littered the floor and open boxes were piled in front of each of them as they all basked in their holiday bounty. Each of the couches were occupied by a separate clique, the largest and loudest of which was the Weasley troop (easily identified by their truly awful looking festive sweaters), plus Harry and Hermione who had joined them.

In order to make it to the hall, Link would have to conspicuously walk past all of them. Alone.

I really wish I could just wear the Stone Mask right now.

He hesitated. So far no one had noticed him, but the moment he stepped on the Common Room floor he was sure he would be. He took a deep breath and closed his eyes.

It's Christmas Day! I'm happy, I'm excited! The world is my oyster and I don't have a care in the world!

Opening his eyes, he adopted a cheery grin. Hopping atop the spiral staircase guardrail, he slid down the banister before leaping to the hardwood floor with a soft thump. With a bounce in his step, he lightly skipped to the portrait, humming the tune to a Christmas carol he had heard in the halls. Out of the corner of his eye he noticed that a few of the groups had turned to look at him. Most only gave him a passing glance before returning to their conversations, however the Weasley Clan was looking at him a little too keenly for his comfort.

Just a little bit further!

'Merry Christmas, Link!' called out Ginny.
'Merry Christmas!' chorused the twins.

Without missing a beat, Link twirled and waved, treating the watching Weasleys to a smile, before he turned again, still moving at his jaunty pace. As he neared the portrait door, he dropped his bounce and quickened his stride.

Almost home free!

'Hey, Link! Where you goin'? It's Christmas!' called out one of the two twins.

Mid step Link’s mind raced.

Ignore? Too rude. They'll ask questions sooner or later. If I run now it'll only be worse later. Maybe…

'Come 'er!' called out the twins again.

Screw it. I'll deal with the consequences later.

Pretending not to hear them, he pushed open the portrait door and darted outside into the corridor. Just before the portrait swung shut behind him, he heard the twins call out his name one final time.

Fred and George are the sort that will drag me, kicking and screaming if need be, to that couch. They'll want to include me in their celebrating. They'll ask questions, sing songs, tell jokes. Very kind hearted of them really.

Link felt a small smile creep on his face as a thrill of nervous energy ran down his spine.

But they'll have to catch me first!

At that he took off at a dead sprint down the corridor. Rather than choose the shortest path that broke line of sight, he decided to go down the long hallway towards the Shifting Staircase.

If I'm fast enough I'll be out of sight by the time they get to the portrait door! They'll never suspect I took this route.

Upon reaching the end of the corridor, he shot a sideways glance towards the Fat Lady portrait. It was just starting to open.

Made it!

Laughing, he jumped and rolled down the Shifting Staircase with reckless abandon. Now he had all morning and afternoon to explore.

What's gotten into him?’ said Fred incredulously as the green clad blonde darted out the tower, 'Hey, Link!'

'He's probably just shy.' said Percy matter of factly, 'With you two calling for him, I can't exactly blame him either.'

'We get along with Link. We've even been a party to each others evil schemes.' said George
indignantly. The two twins stood up and started to quickly walk to the Common Room portal exit. Harry, Ron, and Hermione looked at each other in alarm.

'What? What do you mean evil schemes?' asked Ron, struggling with the Treacle Fudge he had in his mouth.

But the twins didn't elaborate. Instead, they continued on to the portrait door.

'Ginny, do you know what Fred and George were talking about?' asked Harry.

'Oh! Um, no I don't. Sorry.' she said, avoiding his eye.

After a few minutes Fred and George returned red faced, panting, and empty handed.

'How can he move so fast?' asked Fred faintly before collapsing on the couch.

'He can run, but he can't hide.' said George grimly before he keeled over next to his brother, 'Actually, I hope he doesn't hide either.' he moaned.

Ron and Hermione nodded in understanding. Neither of them had forgotten just how fast Link had ran out of the bathroom the day of the quidditch match versus Slytherin. When Link wanted to run, he ran fast.

'Fred, George, before you said you had helped Link in the past. What did you mean by that?' asked Harry.

The twins looked at each other then back at Harry, 'Why so curious?' returned Fred, grabbing a gingerbread cookie from his stocking.

'Uh, no reason. I don't know anything about him. Might try to break the ice later.' said Harry nonchalantly.

'Hm. Yeah, we ran into him at Hogsmeade.' said Fred casually as he bit into the cookie. Harry, Ron, and Hermione gawked at him, mouths dropping open in surprise.

'You what!?' hissed Percy rounding on Fred, 'And you didn't say anything? Do you know how serious-

'Yes. Yes. So serious. As if me and Fred didn't sneak off to Hogsmeade a million times ourselves, Percy.' said George, rolling his eyes.

'T-This is-I'm a Prefect! I must-' sputtered Percy.

'It's Christmas you git.' said George, 'Give it a rest.' Percy snapped his mouth shut and glared at the twins before looking away sourly.

'Why was he in Hogsmeade?' asked Harry.

George shrugged, 'We didn't ask him.'

'Do you have any ideas though?' said Hermione leaning forward eagerly, 'Was he meeting somebody or-

Fred rolled his eyes, 'Me and my big mouth. He was just doing some shopping is all! Buying potions ingredients at Pippins.'
'Do you have any idea what he could have been buying?' asked Ron breathlessly, finally having swallowed his fudge.

'Who cares? Are you trying to be a Prefect too, Ronny?' scoffed Fred.

'Am not! Its just, what if he was, I dunno, buying dark magic stuff?'

'They don't sell any dark magic stuff at Hogsmeade, Ronaldo.' explained Fred patiently in his most condescending tone.

'But,' interrupted Hermione hastily before Ron could retort, 'You could use potions ingredients to brew something really foul. And if you wanted to make something restricted, you'd need to get the ingredients outside the school so as not to raise suspicion.'

'Like what? He's in first year. Snape doesn't even teach you any of the good stuff till you're in your fifth year anyway.' said Fred taking another bite out of his cookie.

Unless you teach yourself. Thought Harry grimly.

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Link dug his fingers into the small space between the locked wooden cabinet door and its frame. Gritting his teeth, he started to pry it open. The old warped wooden door flexed and buckled, but did not give.

Old spongy wood is the worst...

He grunted and adjusted his grip before pulling again, slightly harder. The door started to creak loudly as it was slowly pulled against its lock. Finally, with a loud snap the door flung outwards. Link went falling backwards as the frame of the cabinet ripped messily from the bolts holding the lock in place.

'Oof!' he said as he hit the floor, fragments of rotted wood landing around him.

Without the key, there's no graceful way to do this sort of work. If I ever get the chance I'm going to ask Sheik to teach me how to pick locks. Thought Link, rubbing his backside.

He jumped back up and examined the busted cabinet. Navi, who was stationed at the door keyhole where she was keeping watch, glanced over.

'Anything good?'

'Ummm…'

Inside he saw rolls of dusty, crumbling parchment alongside various stamps, quill tips and long since dried up bottles of ink. The only items of interest were several smoke-filled glass orbs that swirled mysteriously. He grabbed one of the balls and examined it. It was about the size of his fist and around the middle ran a thin silver band, long since tarnished with age. The orb was nearly weightless and cold to the touch. Navi left her post to inspect the orb alongside him.

'I wonder what that thing does.' she said, tapping her fist against the glass, 'Is that smoke? It doesn't look like any smoke I've ever seen.'
Link threw the ball up in the air and caught it. He looked at Navi who shrugged. Sighing, he returned the glass orb to the cabinet.

*Another mystery. If I stopped to investigate every little thing I found, I'd never leave this castle.*

He walked over to the door as Navi sprang back in his tunic. Opening it slowly, he poked his head out into the hallway. Once he confirmed that it was all clear, he stepped outside.

*I should finish this corridor today. Then after supper I can get started on-*

He stopped and looked out the window. It was quite late in the afternoon.

*Wait. What time is it?*

He groaned. Turning he started to run towards the Great Hall. Navi quickly caught on and groaned herself.

'How could we lose track of time? Hopefully we're not too late.' she whispered.

As he ran through the Entrance Hall, he could hear the faint sounds of laughter and conversation coming from the Great Hall. Entering, he saw that to his dismay all of the students at the four house tables were seated as close to the head table as possible. Ignoring the magnificent decorations, he ran for the Gryffindor table as quietly as he could to avoid any unnecessary attention.

His efforts were fruitless however as the staff noticed him immediately and he drew stares from some of the students sitting at the tables.

Once he was in range, he slid down the bench, coming to rest near a sullen looking sixth year who was absently poking at her mashed potatoes. Dusting himself off of some cabinet debris, he examined the spread. Stuffed turkeys, hams, gravy and treats aplenty were spread on the table. Most of the other students were enthusiastically filling their plates while they discussed their Christmas haul. Ron in particular seemed determined to eat at least seconds of everything, and merry conversation abound.

Link grabbed a pitcher of what looked like off-colour milk. He gave it a sniff then cautiously poured himself a glass. Kicking his feet under the table, he rapidly emptied his cup.

*Tastes like...sweetened, spiced cream?*

He shrugged and poured himself a second glass.

*Might as well treat myself...*

Behind him, he heard Draco and some of the other Slytherins laughing uproariously at something. In spite of himself, he focused on their conversation.

'...exactly like a Christmas elf, exactly!' said Draco

*Laugh it up Draco.* Thought Link glumly as he considered the food in front of him.

He sampled the desserts the table had to offer while Dumbledore led the students in some Christmas carols. Lightly eating a bowl of chocolate pudding, he spied on the teachers. With the exception of Professor Lockhart, all of the core class teachers were present and seemed to be in high spirits, even with the threat of Slytherin's Heir. Dumbledore himself looked particularly
cheerful as he warmly called out Merry Christmas to a few of the students. When his eyes passed over Link, Link quickly looked back at his plate. The last thing he wanted was a shout out.

The minutes dragged on and Link felt himself becoming increasingly uncomfortable. However, no matter how tempting the exit was, he remained rooted to his seat.

_**I refuse to be the first person to leave. I have some pride at least.**_ Thought Link stubbornly as he slapped his pudding with his spoon.

Eventually everyone had their fill and just sat at the table talking to one another. To his dismay the person he had been sitting next to stood up and left to join a friend at the Hufflepuff table leaving him painfully isolated. Uncomfortably exposed, he started to debate whether or not he should just cut his losses and run off.

_**I should have brought a book.**_ Thought Link staring up at the swirling, snow covered skies of the Great Hall.

He remained seated in the congenial atmosphere for what felt like hours. Finally, he heard a bench pull back from the table. Turning, he saw Draco and his henchmen stand up and start to move towards the exit. Link watched eagerly as they slowly made their way down the rows of benches towards the exit.

He swung one leg over the bench as Draco, Crabbe and Goyle passed through the doors. As soon as they disappeared from his line of sight, he sprang up.

_Free!_

'Oi! Link! Get over here you.' shouted Fred and George. 'You're not getting off that easily!'

It took every ounce of his will power to not just run away. Instead, he turned and looked at the twins. They had cleared space between them and were waving him down.

'Come on, it's Christmas! Give yourself a break for once.' said Fred.

'Yeah, come here!' pipped up Ginny.

Link sheepishly trotted over took the offered seat between the twins. Throwing an arm over his shoulders, the two squeezed in on him. There was no getting out now.

'So, Link where have you been all day? Looking to kill Slytherin's monster?' asked Fred.

He nodded seriously and Fred and George guffawed.

'But seriously though Link. What are you up to? I swear you must run a hundred laps around the castle a day.' asked George keenly.

'Uh…Hmmm…' started Link before Fred changed the subject.

'Hey Link. Do you reckon I can lobe a chocolate frog into Ron's mouth?' whispered Fred conspiratorially.

Link grinned and motioned for him to try.
To Link’s surprise, being held captive by the Weasleys wasn’t as bad as he had imagined. They didn't bombard him with questions as he had been dreading, but instead just continued on as they had. Occasionally they would talk to him, but mostly he just spent his time sandwiched between the two twins who continued to joke around with the other Gryffindors. Amazingly even Harry and pals didn't pester him, preferring instead to talk amongst themselves. All said and done, he found that he was enjoying himself.

After an hour or so of pleasant company with the Weasleys, other groups of students had finally started to leave the feast. Amidst scattered sighs of reluctance and contentment the Weasleys also rose to leave. Seeing his chance, Link stood and followed them to the Entrance Hall. Once they had reached the corridor, he pivoted and started to slink off in the opposite direction. He still had a good deal of searching to do.

'Off for a stroll?’ said a voice behind him.

Startled, Link turned and was shocked to see none other than Professor Dumbledore smiling absently behind him. He quickly looked down at Dumbledore's feet. He was wearing goofy looking white, fur slippers.

*Comfortable and quiet. But even with the Weasleys talking, I should have been able to hear him behind me. Sneaky old man!*

Looking back up he scanned the elderly wizard's face. There was a wrinkle of amusement around his golden rimmed spectacles as he gazed back at Link dotingly.

'Oh, pardon. I said, "Off for a stroll’? repeated Dumbledore.

Forcing a small smile, Link nodded.

'Excellent, excellent. May I join you? I find that a nice walk always helps to work down a good meal.'

Link inhaled sharply and considered his options. Before he could answer however, Dumbledore moved beside him.

'Thank you. I am most grateful for some company. Please, lead on.'

Link turned slowly and started to walk with Dumbledore comfortably matching his pace. He was aware that the Weasleys had stopped to look them curiously, but that wasn't a concern right now.

*I need to ditch this old geezer so I can get back to work!*

As they approached a set of stairs, he turned and started to climb.

*I'll take him to his office. I'm sure that once we pass by, he'll leave me be. He thought as Dumbledore wished merry Christmas to a portrait of bickering old witches. They stopped their perpetual argument to wish him a happy new year before returning to screeching at each other.

'So, how have you been finding your holiday's?’ asked Dumbledore as the two headed down the hall.

'Hep!' said Link nodding, then he shrugged.
'Ah, I imagine you wish your friend Miss Lovegood were here. But under the circumstances…' Dumbledore frowned, 'I would never begrudge a parent for wanting to keep their children safe. I myself try my hardest to ensure that Hogwarts is a safe haven for scholarly minds.'

Link looked at Dumbledore slyly.

That's not what I heard Professor.

Dumbledore noticed his expression and chuckled softly, 'But we shouldn't dwell on such things. Today is a day of celebration! How did you find the feast?'

Link nodded and gave him a thumbs up.

'Yes, I found the ham to be quite succulent myself.' said Dumbledore fondly, 'I imagined you enjoyed the two glasses of eggnog and four spoonfuls of pudding you had as well.'

Link felt his hand twitch. He looked up at the headmaster and grinned broadly who looked down at Link and smiled just as widely.

'Far be it from me to question my student's appetites. I imagine that your friend Ronald Weasley more than compensates for any potential leftovers. I just want to be sure that you're enjoying yourself.'

'Hm.'

'I'm happy to notice that you've been keeping yourself out of trouble.' said Dumbledore jovially, plucking a wooden splinter from his tunic. 'And from what I hear you've managed to exceed your teacher's expectations. I'm told you're quite the quick study. Well done.'

Link took the compliment silently as they rounded a corner. His high marks were more a testament to Navi than himself, truth be told. She was the one encouraging him to study each night.

'I really must commend your previous instructors. You attended Kokiri Forest School did you not?'

Link swallowed and nodded weakly, carefully keeping his eyes facing forward.

Did I really write that on my application letter? Stupid!

'I admit I'd never heard about them before I read your application, but I really must pay them a visit if I ever get the time. To be able to churn out such a talented student, well it's really quite remarkable.' continued Dumbledore, seemingly oblivious to his discomfort.

'Heh, heh, heh.' laughed Link nervously, he felt very hot all of a sudden.

'It has long been my belief that children in Britain begin their magical education too late into their childhoods. After all, you're evidence of how important an early start can be in refining a mind. It would seem that we at Hogwarts can learn a great deal from the more loosely regulated educational system of Chad.'

At last they came before Dumbledore's office. Link stopped and Dumbledore turned to face him.

'Well this is me. It was very gracious of you to escort me back to my office. These are perilous times and it is always good to have someone to turn to and lend a helping hand. Goodnight, Link. Try not to stay up too late.' said Dumbledore with a twinkle in his eye.

'Mmm.'
Backing away, Link gave the aged headmaster one last look before he ran off down the corridor he
had just come from. Once he had rounded the corner, he increased his pace to put more distance
between himself and Dumbledore. After a few moments Navi piped up.

'That was dreadful.' whispered Navi in horror, 'He was watching you eat? That's not unsettling at
all. And Link, what were you thinking writing Kokiri Forest School on your Hogwarts application
letter? You really should have run that by me first.'

Link rolled his eyes. He distinctly remembered her reviewing the application and saying it looked
good, but he didn't press the issue. Either way it was careless of him.

'Link, if he tries to find that school…' whispered Navi anxiously.

'Mmhmm.' said Link biting his lip.

*Another thing to worry about. I'm running out of time. I need to get this adventure wrapped up already!*

He quickened his pace. The encounter with Dumbledore had left him feeling on edge.

*Some peaceful exploration will calm me down. It's about all I can do anyway.*

'H-Hey! Link! Stooop!' called a feeble voice from behind him.

What is it now? Thought Link irritably as he turned.

To his surprise, it was Harry and Ron. Link stopped and watched as the two jogged over. Panting
and heaving, they came to a shuddering halt in front of him.

'W-we just…saw you with Dumbledore. W-wanted to talk to him. Office?' gasped Harry as he
doubled over, hands on his knees.

'Huh?' said Link confused.

'Can…you…take…us…to…his…office?' wheezed Ron weakly, wincing as he clutched his side.

'Oh!' said Link momentarily caught off guard. Ron and Harry had never asked him for something
like this before. He wasn't sure what exactly the two wanted with Dumbledore but given the state
of them, it had to be urgent. He nodded and motioned for them to follow. They gasped out their
thanks as they limped after him.

*I don't know what good this will do. You need a password to enter Dumbledore's office anyway.* He
thought, walking slowly so the shambling duo could keep pace with him. As they walked, Link
eyed the two.

Harry was almost tripping over his feet, glasses askew with an expression of agony on his face. In
contrast Ron's face was completely blank. He was walking perfectly upright and clutching his side
with both hands. It would almost seem like he was trying to keep something from falling out his
pockets if it weren't for his eyes watering with pain.

*They should have gym class at this school. Thought Link, shaking his head sadly, Nobody seems to
exercise around here.*

Eventually they arrived at the Gargoyle. Hopping up to its pedestal, Link wrapped his knuckles on
its stone forehead, before turning to Harry and Ron expectantly.
'Thanks.' said Ron resting his head and shoulder against the wall, 'We…can…manage…now.'

'Cha.' said Link casually as he walked past the two.

_They shouldn't have pigged out so much._ He thought as he started to run back down the corridor he had just come from.

'Link!'

Sighing, he turned.

_Now what?_

To his immense shock, Luna was walking down the hallway towards him.

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'Hi, Link.' said Luna, smiling as she approached.

Link looked at her in stunned silence.

_Where did she come from?!_

Luna seemed to have read his mind and quickly spoke.

'So, you're probably wondering what I'm doing here.' she said, her smile suddenly disappearing, 'Well I was at home celebrating Christmas with my…family. When I remembered that you would probably be here all alone so I convinced them, my, Er, family that is, to let me come here and wish you a merry Christmas. So, uh, merry Christmas!'

He continued to stare at her while she stretched her sweater collar open slightly with one finger. She was sweating profusely. Link noticed her fidgeting uncomfortably so he quickly shifted his gaze.

_She came here to see me?_ He felt his ears grow hot.

'HA!' she shouted suddenly causing him to jump, 'Well this is so funny, how about we go somewhere we can talk? You know, someplace private.' she said meaningfully.

Link swallowed. He gestured to a nearby classroom, but she shook her head.

'No, we have to talk about something really serious, Link. You know, that thing?' said Luna arching her eyebrows, 'We need to go somewhere where nobody would ever find us. D-Do you understand?'

'Hmmm…' said Link quietly, glancing around to make sure that they were alone.

_Somewhere private, eh? I think I can manage that. Let's see..._

Suddenly he had an idea. What if he took her someplace extra cool as a Christmas present? There was one place he knew that he was sure nobody knew about. It was a little tricky to open, but it was weird and creepy. And if there was one thing he knew Luna liked, it was weird creepy things.
Grinning, he motioned for her to follow him and he started walking down the hallway. Running up to his side, she quickly fell into step beside him.

'So…how was the feast?'

He made a seesaw motion with his hand and shrugged.

'Mm, I know what you mean.' she said sympathetically, 'That is…I-I can imagine anyway.'

The two continued in silence for a while as he led her to the secret room. As they went, he couldn't help but feel a rising sense of excitement.

*She'll get a kick out of this place, I'm sure of it!*

Stopping in front of a totally unremarkable section of wall, he knelt down and started fiddling with an oddly coloured stone.

'Oh! What are you…?' started Luna, but he ignored her. If he screwed this part up then he wouldn't be able to retry again for another five minutes.

*All the way to the right...all the way to the left...right twice...left once.*

With a satisfying click the stone slide inward and the surrounding masonry turned in upon itself to reveal an unlit winding stairway that disappeared into near pitch blackness. From within, came the faint dripping of water down cold stone. Standing before the entrance, a chilling draft blew out from within.

'I-I…' Luna started, her eyes wide.

Link walked forward. Stopping at the shadowy entrance way, he turned and beamed at Luna while offering her his hand. However she kept still. Staring past him and into the secret passage, she gulped.

'Eh?' Link prompted, waving at her.

She jumped. Suddenly stepping forward, she quickly took his hand. Grinning to her, he led her into the darkness. Walking in a few steps, they left the flickering torchlight of the hallway behind, and came to the long, carved stone staircase. Link took the first step down. As soon as his foot touched the stair, the hidden door sealed behind them with a resounding boom that echoed around the walls and cut off the light.

'Eep!' exclaimed Luna, jumping in fright.

He looked back at her. Through the gloom he could see that her eyes were wide with fear and her palm felt covered in sweat. Smiling reassuringly, he gave her hand a squeeze before slowly descending down the steps.

*I hope this place isn't too damp for her.* Thought Link, frowning slightly. When he had first discovered this place, it had been ankle deep in water. Thankfully the water levels had receded enough that they could walk without getting their feet wet, but the floor and walls were still slick with an oily film.

They journeyed in the darkness for a while, deeper and deeper.

'I-I d-don't suppose you would mind terribly if I lit my wand, do you?' squeaked Luna.
'Ah!' exclaimed Link, slapping his head. *Where are my manners? It's almost pitch black! She probably can't see a thing.* He drew his wand.

*Lumos* Thought Link, holding his wand in front of him.

Instantly a beam of light shot from the tip of his wand revealing the stairs. However, that wasn't all they illuminated. With the blast of light, dozens of startled bats suddenly took flight. Chirping wildly, the swarm of black twisting shapes flew between them, passing mere inches from where they stood.

To Link's surprise, Luna let out a high pitched scream. Covering her face from the leathery wings, she would have tripped and fell if Link hadn't reached out and caught her. Once the flock had passed, the passage once more descended into silence.

*Oops! Sorry.* Link thought as he released her. Looking at her apologetically, he watched as she shakily regained her footing. *Maybe this was a bad idea.*

'Heh, heh...silly me. B-B-Bats. Of course there are bats.' Luna rasped. Clearing her throat, she looked at him and gave him a tense, almost deranged, smile.

'Th-Thanks for the light, Link. Lead on.'

He gave her another smile and resumed his slow descent, more carefully this time. As they walked, he started to wonder why Navi was still in his tunic. They were in private and Navi usually took any chance she could to fly.

*Navi sure is being quiet right now. Is she asleep?*

After over ten minutes of walking down, then up, then down again the stairs ended at a roughly cobbled antechamber. Outlined on the far wall of the room there was a large stone door covered with once fine scrollwork. It was masterfully done, however whatever detail there was had long since been covered in the grimy ooze that leaked from the walls leaving the decorative carvings indistinguishable. Still, they remained impressive and suggested at some long-forgotten importance that the room once had.

Coming to a halt, Link drew his wand again and conjured two chairs. The chairs were somewhat plain, being high backed and wooden with a thin padded cushion on their seat, but they were the best he could do. Next, he summoned a small heatless flame and set it to hover between the chairs just slightly to the side. The flickering orange orb glowed steadily, casting shadows across the arcane glyph covered walls. In this light, the walls seemed to almost shift ominously, much to his satisfaction. In times past, he had shown Luna some of the rooms he had discovered and she had always liked the creepy places most.

He turned to Luna and grinned, however to his surprise she didn't seem too happy. Instead, she was glancing at the walls in fear.

Arching his eyebrows, he gestured around at the room.

'Hm?' he said hopefully.

'Oh! Um, yes! Magnificent! Truly, uh, the legends don't do it justice!'

Link, who had grown accustomed to her strange take on things, couldn't help but gawk at her.

*What is she talking about?*
Noticing his expression, she quickly swallowed again.

'I-I think I'll just sit down.'

Fast stepping towards one of the chairs, she quickly sat, stiff as a board.

Sighing, Link joined her.

*This isn't how I thought things would go at all.*

Removing his hat and laying it on his lap, he ruffled his hair and crossed his legs. Once he was comfortable, he looked over at her expectantly but she was still looking around the room. Link watched as her eyes carefully traveled from one symbol covered wall to the next before finally coming to rest on the ornate stone door.

'Is that…?' she asked in a hushed tone, her face pale.

He glanced over at the door and frowned. Truth was there wasn't anything back there but another boring old empty room. Honestly the antechamber was more impressive. Before he could respond though, she shivered and changed the subject.

'S-So how goes the plan? Is o-our friend being c-cooperative?' she asked nervously.

Link laughed and shook his head. He suddenly felt Navi squirm around, but she still wasn't talking.

'Does that mean that…well, what does that mean exactly?' asked Luna gripping the armrests of her chair 'Is Slytherin's monster just…running rampant or something?'

He leaned back and considered the question.

*If the monster in the Chamber of Secrets was running rampant, I expect many more students would have been attacked by now. No, my gut is telling me that Colin was deliberately targeted by the monster.*

Sighing, he shook his head.

'So, the p-plot…the plan, t-t-targeting the students I-it's still on schedule?' said Luna, her fingers shaking.

*No thanks to me it is. For all my work I have nothing to show for it.*

He nodded grimly.

*Whatever plot was hatched to smuggle in a dark artifact has certainly succeeded so far.*

Suddenly a tiny bell chimed and Luna let out an odd squeak.

'Um…excuse me for just a second.'

He watched as she drew out a small glass bottle filled with a milky blue potion. With shaking hands, she tried to pull out the cork. Her hands, slick with sweat, couldn't get a good grip though and as she tried to dig her fingernails into the cork it slipped from her grasp.

'No!' she cried as the tiny glass bottle shattered on the dungeon floor leaking potion into the damp floor.
Acting fast, Link waved his wand and the glass bottle instantly repaired itself, but the potion was gone. Once spilled and contaminated it was likely ruined and he didn't know a spell that could recover it. He looked at Luna apologetically as she stood up. Her eyes wide and unblinking.

'Uh, okay. Well that was really all I needed to ask you.' she said in a toneless voice. She gave him a quick smile before her face returned to one of blind panic, 'I…need to go to the restroom. Is the passage behind me clear?'

'Uh…' started Link before he nodded quickly. The passageway would open automatically if you went to the exit.

'Okay. I'll talk to you later, bye!'

With that she spun on her heels and went running up the stairs.

'Huh?!' said Link, jumping out of his chair.

'D-Don't worry about me! I'm fine, really! I'll see you later!' cried Luna from somewhere up the stairway.

As her clicking shoes grew more and more distant, he stared up after her, scratching his chin in confusion.

Was it something I said?

As he stood there trying to make sense of what had just happened, Navi flew out of his tunic and faced him.

There you are. Did you have a nice nap? Thought Link dryly, but then he noticed the expression on her face. Somehow, he had just screwed up.

'Link, do you know what just did?' asked Navi in a dangerously soft tone.

Link gulped and shook his head.

'You just framed yourself.'

Link was struck dumb at Navi’s words. Eventually he managed to choke back his confusion and respond.

'W-Wha?'

'Link, think! What were those questions? Whoever that was, and it WAS NOT Luna, was fishing for information! Luna doesn't talk like that. She doesn't even sound like that! Luna sort of sounds like she's always…sleepy?' suggested Navi before she shook her head, 'Whatever, what's important is you practically admitted to being involved in the attacks on the students unwittingly!'

He shook his head stubbornly.

I didn't admit to anything! Did I?
He started to think back to the questions that Luna had asked him. He had said that his friend was being uncooperative and that the plot was still going forward. Of course, he was just joking about how Navi wouldn't make an appearance. Navi was the uncooperative friend! And as for the plot, he had been trying to take it apart for months now but to no avail. But if they didn't know that Navi existed or that he was trying to stop the plot not help it…

He groaned as Navi inspected the spilled blue potion on the floor. As stupid of a misunderstanding as it was, it was plausible. After a while she spoke again.

'You know, there's a potion that lets you take on another person's appearance, but it has to be consumed regularly for the effect to last. I read about it in Moste Potente Potions. What if this is that potion? I don't know how we would confirm it, but…' Navi flew back to him.

'Link! We have to track down that impostor! Follow her! We need to know who that was!'

Link nodded and waved his wand, vanishing the chairs and flame into thin air. Deluminating his wand, he pulled out the Stone Mask and slipped it on before mounting the stairs. Running through the darkened stairway was much more difficult than walking, but he was able to maintain a respectable pace regardless. It wasn't long before he caught up with the fleeing form of Luna who was holding her wand aloft so she could see ahead of her. Every so often she would cast a frightened glance behind her before continuing up the stairs at an ungainly speed.

'More running…of course more running…running in a dark dungeon…' she huffed as she fled.

Now that he knew something was off, he could tell that the voice wasn't Luna's. Her voice was different now, shriller. He had definitely heard that voice before.

_Hermione?_

The imposter slipped and stumbled a few times. Violently swearing each time she fell, but for the most part she kept up her pace. After about five minutes or so of running over the zigzagging, up and down staircase she reached the doorway. Reacting to her presence, the archway pulled itself apart for her as she charged out secret staircase like a marathon runner crossing the finish line. Once in the hallway, she twirled around and, with a shaking hand and heaving chest, pointed her wand back down the passageway straight at him, but he was undisturbed. Thanks to the Stone Mask he was as interesting to her as a rock on the ground. Moving through the archway himself, he stood next to her as the doorway started to close.

Once the secret passage had slammed shut again, the doppelganger lowered her wand and took off at a limping jog down the corridor. Link silently followed her as she limped along. Occasionally she paused to check behind herself for some pursuit, but each time she failed to notice him. Eventually she came to a stop before the 2nd floor girls restroom. Ripping the door open, she darted inside.

Link hesitated for only a fraction of a second before sidling his way in after her. Inside the bathroom, he spotted nonother than Harry and Ron standing in front of a closed bathroom stall.

_Why am I not surprised? _Thought Link, glaring at the busybodies beneath his mask.

'Hermione, did it work? Did you find the Chamber of Secrets?' asked Harry urgently.

'Is he the heir of Slytherin or not?' called out Ron, pressing his ear to the bathroom stall.

'Just a minute! I can feel myself starting to transform. Any second now…'
Link stood and watched silently as Harry and Ron threw up their hands and waited for Hermione to come out.

'Did he like the gobstones?' asked Ron morosely.

'Oh, I Er, forgot to give them to him. I-It seemed like a bad idea, what if he mentioned them to her later? I guess you can have them. Catch.'

A small wrapped package flew over the stall wall and Ron caught it eagerly. After about five minutes or so, she exited from the washroom stall.

'I think I twisted my ankle running up those damn stairs.' said Hermione rubbing her shin. Limping, she hopped up on the porcelain countertop and grimaced.

'Well? Did you find the Chamber?' asked Harry eagerly.

'Yes! He took me through this ancient stairway to this dark, stone chamber. You should have seen it Harry. It was awful.' said Hermione, shivering at the memory.

'Go on! Did you see the monster?' blurted Ron, his eyes wide in a mixture of horror and fascination. Hermione shook her head, 'There was this giant door, but he didn't open it. We just sat in the lobby and talked for a little bit.'

'He talks?' asked Harry quickly, 'You actually heard him speak?'

'No, I mean I talked he just nodded his head and the like.'

Ron opened his mouth then closed it. Frowning deeply, he said, 'Maybe he doesn't trust Luna as much as we think he does.'

'So, what is he doing with Slytherin's monster? Were you able to figure out his plan?' asked Harry.

Hermione sighed, 'No, I-I ran out of time.' Harry and Ron looked at each other as Hermione continued, 'It's all a little confusing, but I don't think Link has the monster fully under his control.'

'Wait, back up. What do you mean you ran out of time? You had enough Polyjuice Potion for three hours.' said Harry.

'I spilled it.' said Hermione shamefully, but she quickly puffed up as Ron and Harry groaned, 'Hey! It was creepy and wet and dark and-and I slipped! It could've happened to anyone!'

'What did he tell you? Did he say why he is doing this? He's not exactly what I would call prime pure blood material. What with the pointy ears and all.' asked Harry.

'He didn't say why. He only said that the plan was on schedule, whatever that means.' said Hermione frowning.

'What about Ginny? Did he mention her at all?' asked Ron leaning towards Hermione, his fists balled up.

'Sorry Ron, it never came up. Really I wish—'

'No, it's fine. Who knows what would have happened if you chanced it. Stuck in that room with that freak…' muttered Ron darkly. Link, still unnoticed in the corner, rolled his eyes.
‘You’re the ones who stole someone’s body.’

‘What about his tattoo?’ asked Harry.

Link flexed his left hand and scowled.

‘So they learned about that did they?’

Hermione shook her head, ‘I only had a few minutes guys…’

‘No, you did great Hermione. More than enough really,’ said Ron and Harry nodded.

‘Now we have to decide what we'll do now.’ said Hermione as she ran a tap of water to wipe off her face.

‘We know where the Chamber of Secrets is! We should go to Dumbledore's office right now and tell him we found it! He'll be able to defeat the monster, Link will be expelled, and the Mandrake Potion will heal Colin and Mrs. Norris, no problem.’ said Harry immediately.

‘Yeah, that would be the smart thing to do.’ Thought Link glumly.

‘I agree, but I think we should go to McGonagall's office first. She might be easier to get a hold of.’ said Hermione.

‘Should we go now or wait until morning? For all we know he's still down there with the monster. He could be caught red-handed!’ said Ron excitedly.

‘Yeah or maybe he would unleash it if he heard people coming to get him.’ pointed out Harry. Hermione and Ron fell silent.

‘Let's go to the Common Room. When Link comes back, we'll go see McGonagall and tell her everything. Then they can apprehend Link while he's still in bed, case closed.’ said Harry.

‘I like that.’ Ron said, nodding, ‘Hermione?’

Hermione finished cleaning her face and faced them, ‘I think that plan is best. I don't know how the teachers will react though. This is quite the accusation, and on Christmas night too no less.’

Harry shrugged, ‘Yeah it sucks but, I don't see any other way.’ Ron and Hermione nodded in agreement, ‘Right then, let's go. Can you walk Hermione?’

Link remained motionless as the three filled out of the bathroom. After a few moments had passed, he pulled off the Stone Mask.

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Navi flew from Link's pocket and perched herself on a stall divider. Sitting, she pulled her hair into a ponytail and looked at him thoughtfully.

‘Well Link, I know this seems bad-’ she started carefully.

Link nodded emphatically. Miming a noose, he made a choking sound and acted like he was being hung.
'but let's think about this rationally.' she said, putting her hands in her lap, 'C'mon, take a load off.' He laughed mirthlessly. Shaking his head in disbelief, he hopped up on the counter and waited for her to begin.

'The good news is that the room you took Hermione to isn't the Chamber of Secrets and you are not Slytherin's heir. I don't know how you could prove that second part but, hey, it is what it is. At the end of the day they have zero evidence.'

'Hm.'

*It's my word versus theirs. They can't back up any of their claims. But! In order to prove that I'm not the ancestor of Slytherin I'll have to provide some record of my ancestry. Records which don't exist. Plus, it's not like a lack of evidence saved Hagrid back in the day.*

'The bad news is that you're going to be examined with a fine-tooth comb. And your backstory is not exactly airtight. If anything I-

At that moment the toilet in the stall that Navi had been sitting on exploded and water showered everywhere, drenching the pair. Link sprang off the countertop, sputtering indignantly.

'OOOoooooOOOOoooo' came a wailing cry, 'Who is it now? Who is here disturbing me? Can't I get any peace or do you people just live to torment me?'

From out of the toilet rose the translucent ghost of a bespectacled teenage girl. She had a dour expression and her lower lip trembled as she surveyed Link and Navi.

'Who are you?' she repeated sniffling, 'What are you doing here? Thought you could have a bit of Christmas fun at my expense, did you? I don't even get to have Christmas anymore!' said the ghost starting to cry, 'I'm stuck in this bathroom because people like you-

Without waiting for another word, Link pulled out the Ocarina of Time. Putting the instrument to his lips he began to play the Song of Healing. As he played the haunting tune the air grew heavier and the lights from the meagre candles shone brighter. The piercing notes seemed to reverberate through the very walls of the bathroom and into the soul of all who heard it. Once the song was finished silence descended in the dingy bathroom which somehow seemed much less depressing then before.

'That-that song. It's beautiful…' breathed the ghost as she hovered motionlessly, 'Many years ago I used to hide from my bullies in this bathroom. I used to crouch in the stalls here and I would cry and cry until I eventually worked up the courage to leave. One day though, after I had been crying I heard a voice. A snake's voice. I'd never heard anything like it before. You can't blame me for getting a little curious. I remember I opened the door and then I...I died. The last thing I saw were yellow eyes by the sink…It was so long ago…too long. Now that I think about it, why would I want to stay here? I think I've cried enough. Thank you…' with that the apparition glowed brightly before fading into nothing, finally at peace.

Link and Navi were silent for a while. The Song of Healing was always a sobering experience, even while soaked in toilet water.

Link stepped forward and looked at the sink.

*A snake's voice?*

Pulling out the Lens of Truth, he examined the sink. The porcelain basin was ordinary, but a small
scratch on the faucet glowed brightly under the magnifying glass's gaze. Putting the Lens aside, he
leaned down and felt around the faucet. His fingers soon found a small engraving. There, etched on
a small metal pipe was a curious looking snake figurine.

Link poked, scratched, and rubbed it but nothing happened.

*This is definitely a dungeon entrance of some kind. A dungeon guarded by a powerful monster to
boot.*

Link grinned and looked at Navi who was wringing out her hair.

'What are you smiling about?' she asked tersely.

He pointed at the faucet eagerly.

Sighing, she flew down to the sink. Hovering over to the faucet she peered at the snake figurine
before turning back to Link.

'Link…I-I think this is it! The monster of Slytherin! The snake sounds! The hidden snake emblem!
It all fits! This has to be it! This is the entrance to the Chamber of Secrets!'

Overcome with excitement, he and Navi began to dance around each other, heedless of their dirty
environment.

'If this is the entrance to the Chamber then that girl who died here must be the student that Hagrid
talked about fifty years ago! Now all we have to do is figure out how to open this dungeon door
and the second crystal piece will be ours!'

'Hiiaa!' cried Link, arms raised in triumph. The search was finally over.

As Link ran back to Gryffindor Tower, he knew that he should be feeling worried about all the
trouble he was in, but he couldn't shake the rising feeling of excitement. His diligence had finally
paid off. Sprinting up to the Gryffindor portrait he saw Harry, Ron, and Hermione chatting
causally by the tower entrance.

'Oh, hey Link. You were still up? We were just about to head off to bed ourselves. Thanks for
taking me and Ron to Dumbledore's office.' said Harry in a care free tone.

Link waved his hand magnanimously and tossed his still damp hair.

'Uh, right. Here let me get the portrait for you. Wattlebird.' said Harry, graciously stepping aside so
he could move through.

Stepping past them, he raised his hand in thanks before strolling inside. Predictably, they didn't
follow. Instead they just watched him enter then shut the portrait closed behind him. Their fake
smiles fading.

*That Harry Potter, such a friendly boy. I suspect me and him will become good friends. Thought
Link, snickering to himself.*

Ignoring the inviting warm glow from the fireplace and pleasant conversation, Link ran through the
Common Room and up to his room. He didn't have a moment to lose.

*I need to look like the very picture of innocence.* Thought Link as he grabbed his toiletries.

After a five-minute bath he rushed into his bed and scurried beneath the covers.

'Sooner or later they're going to come for you, Link. Be pre-parrrrred.' said Navi in a sing song tone.

Link giggled in response; positively giddy with excitement. Besides discovering the Chamber Entrance, he loved the feeling of being chased and although this wasn't a typical race, he was confident he would win in the end.

*I just hope nobody gets expelled. Especially me!*

The minutes rolled by and Link kept waiting and waiting. While under his covers, he tossed and turned and fidgeted. He practiced his sad face and his surprised face, both tools he was sure he was going to need soon.

*I have too much energy right now. I feel like I'm about to burst!*

Finally, the door to his room creaked open and he immediately froze. From beneath his covers he heard a muffled woman's voice say:

'Link?'

He remained motionless. Curled up in his giant four poster bed, he tried his best to look like a sleeping little angel.

'Link?' said the voice again. He recognized it as McGonagall's voice.

*McGonagall? Perfect. She has a soft spot for me, I'm sure of it!*

He heard her slowly make her way across the room before stopping at his bedside. A tentative finger poked his shoulder, but he kept still.

'Link.' she said, louder now as she poked him again, 'Link.'

With that Link stirred himself, looking up sleepily. Upon seeing McGonagall's silhouette in the darkness he shot up.

'Aaaaah!' he shouted in alarm.

'No, Mr. Link, calm yourself! It's just me, Professor McGonagall!'

'Aaaaaahhh!' He yelled again, louder this time.

*This is fun!*

With a wave of her wand the dorm room suddenly flooded with light. Raising his arm to shield himself, he blinked drowsily.

'Wha?' he said with faux exhaustion, rubbing his eyes.

'I'm very sorry for this Mr. Link, but there is an important matter that unfortunately requires your immediate presence.' said McGonagall not unkindly, 'Do you need your housecoat?'
'Um.' He paused, looking around his room. After a moment he shook his head and jumped out of bed.

'In that case, would you follow me please?' said McGonagall moving to the exit.

He complied. Obediently trotting alongside her, she led him out the tower and towards her office. Entering, he was mildly surprised to find the office empty.

_I wonder where Potter and pals are?_

'Please have a seat, Mr. Link.' said McGonagall pointing at an empty chair. Beside the chair there was a small drawing table along with a roll of parchment, quill, and an inkwell.

_Interrogation time._

Swallowing his nerves, he went up to the high-backed chair and sat. Once McGonagall had seated herself at her desk, she straightened in her chair and regarded him coolly for a moment before speaking.

'Earlier this evening a group of students approached me with some troubling accusations, Mr. Link. They told me that you were Slytherin's heir and had been responsible for organizing the attacks against your classmate Mr. Creevey and Mr. Flich's cat Mrs. Norris.' said McGonagall, her lips pressed thin.

He opened his mouth in surprise.

'Yes, serious accusations indeed. They told me that you had accessed the Chamber of Secrets and were involved in some plot to harm Hogwarts.'

He shook his head vehemently.

'After these students approached me, myself and a few other staff members investigated what they claimed was the Chamber of Secrets. Thankfully we found no evidence to support their accusations against you. However, there are still a few questions I must ask.' said McGonagall.

He nodded slowly.

'Is it true that you discovered a secret chamber in the west section of the first floor?'

He nodded again.

'Why were you searching the castle? In writing please.' asked McGonagall, indicating the roll of parchment beside her.

He grabbed the quill and started to write.

"I found that secret room a while ago when I first started exploring Hogwarts. I've been exploring the castle almost every day since I first arrived."

McGonagall looked down at her desk at a sheet of parchment where writing suddenly started to appear. Her eyes moved across the page, reading his response.

_That's a neat trick._ Thought Link as he looked down at his own paper. His response had disappeared.

Once she had finished reading, she turned her eyes back up to him, 'And why did you not reveal the
existence of this chamber? Why did you keep it secret from everyone?"

He bent back to the parchment and wrote:

"Is that against the rules? I'm sorry! Lot's of students discover secret passages and hidden rooms and they don't tell anybody. I thought that's how things work here."

McGonagall read his response and her eyes narrowed.

'I am aware of the unfortunate habit of secrecy regarding hidden lore about Hogwarts. It is a rather ingrained element of western magical tradition I'm afraid. Still, under present circumstances you should have informed a member of the staff.' said McGonagall exasperatedly.

He nodded meekly.

'The students who approached me told me that you had told them about some plot. A plot that you specifically mentioned was on schedule. What were they talking about?' asked McGonagall.

He started writing.

"I don't know what they are talking about. I have been working towards exploring every chamber in the castle if that is what they mean. It's my hobby."

'So, you are not aware of any plot against Hogwarts?' asked McGonagall sharply.

"I know the Chamber of Secrets was opened. But everyone knows that."

McGonagall read his response then turned her steely gaze back up at him. After a few moments of peering at him she spoke again.

'To be clear, you have no idea, not the faintest clue, as to the current whereabouts of the Chamber of Secrets or the heir of Slytherin?'

"No." wrote Link immediately, sharply punctuating the parchment.

McGonagall sighed and leaned back in her chair.

'I am very sorry to have had to do this to you Mr. Link. And on Christmas night of all times. But these claims were serious enough to warrant an immediate investigation. I have been told that you met with your friend Miss Lovegood tonight is that correct?' asked McGonagall uncomfortably.

Link nodded uneasily.

'I'm afraid that who you thought was Miss Lovegood was actually your…fellow Gryffindor Miss Granger.' said McGonagall in a tired tone. Link stirred in his seat and furrowed his brow in confusion.

Bending back to the parchment, he hastily wrote:

"No, it WAS Luna. Me and her walked around and talked for a while. She said she came by to see me."

McGonagall read his response and looked at him pityingly, her eyes watering slightly.

_Maybe I should hold back on the innocent lonely child act a little._ Thought Link guiltily.
'Please allow me to explain. In the Chamber we found the spillage of what Professor Snape has identified as Polyjuice Potion. This potion allows one to take on another's physical form. Miss Granger used this potion under the pretense of trying to get you to confess to being Slytherin's Heir by taking the form of someone you trust. Do you understand? Miss Lovegood is not at Hogwarts. She is likely at her home enjoying the holidays.'

Still looking confused, Link wrote on the paper.

"I don't understand."

She sighed.

'I wish it wasn't the case, but it's true. It is a grave violation of one's personal privacy to take someone else's physical form for your own uses exactly for this reason. Not only is it highly illegal to do so without consent, but it is also highly immoral as well. To think that a Gryffindor would do such a thing is just unconscionable to me.' said McGonagall her voice heavy with emotion.

Link sat still in the chair and stared at McGonagall blankly.

'Needless to say, Miss Granger will be punished severely. Normally this would be grounds for immediate expulsion from Hogwarts, but Miss Granger has insisted that she, fearing for her life, decided to investigate the matter herself.' said McGonagall with a humph, 'Supremely foolish of her, and to think I had considered her to be in the top of her year. Unbelievable.'

Link frowned and wrote on the paper.

"But why did she think that I'm Slytherin's heir? I'm in Gryffindor and I'm not "pure blooded". How could anyone suspect me?"

McGonagall read his response, frowning. After she had finished, she adjusted her glasses and appeared to be composing herself.

'The best explanation I can offer you Mr. Link is that old prejudices still linger. And in these uncertain times, hysteria and panic can overwhelm common sense. I know that you've had to deal with some ignorant bigotry during your tenure here. I am ashamed to see it surface in this day and age. Especially in my own house.' said McGonagall softly looked at him sadly for a moment before she cleared her throat.

'Try and carry on as you have Mr. Link. You continue to surpass my every expectation and you can already hold your head high with confidence.' she stated firmly.

He nodded uncertainly.

'Now then, let me get you back to bed. I'm sure that I've given you a lot to think about, but please try and get some rest.' said McGonagall rising from her desk. The meeting over, she escorted him back to Gryffindor Tower.

Once he was back in his room, he crawled back under the covers of his bed and reported to Navi everything that had happened.

'I wouldn't want to be Hermione right now.' said Navi shivering slightly, 'She was only doing what she thought was right and her intuition wasn't wrong. You were up to something. Would we have done things any different?'

He shook his head. In the past he had done terrible things to people for the sake of the mission.
Being a hero, sacrifices came with the territory.

He leaned back and sighed.

*As long as I gather the crystal pieces and seal off the Chamber, it will have all been worth it. What's a little deception in comparison to people's lives?*

However, despite his justifications he still felt guilty.
The Stubborn Door

The following morning was especially awkward for Link. Coming down to the Common Room, he was confronted by a red-eyed and trembling Hermione who made a tearful apology for what she had done. Listening to her stammer out "Sorry." between choking sobs and wet sniffles made him squirm with guilt. He tried his best to assuage her by writing out that he completely understood where she was coming from, but it seemed to have little effect. He suspected that she was sorrier for what she had done to Luna then what she had done to him.

Even worse, Hermione's punishment was incredibly harsh. She had weekly detention every weekend for the rest of the school year and was banned from accessing the Forbidden Section of the library ever again. To someone like Hermione, this sort of punishment was particularly devastating. She always had a book with her and now, the most interesting volumes from Hogwarts famed library were forever out of her reach.

To make matters worse still, it didn't take long for word to break out amongst the holidaying students about what she had done. Apparently trying to steal someone else's appearance was every bit as taboo as McGonagall had made it out to be and Hermione, who was already unpopular, was now shunned by everyone except the Weasleys and Harry Potter. Predictably, Draco's teasing increased dramatically.

In the hallways and Great Hall Link heard the girls whisper about Hermione behind her back viciously, suggesting such scandalous things like she had been weirdly obsessed with Luna. In an attempt to confirm their speculation, Link found himself cornered by a pack of Hufflepuffs and Ravenclaw girls who demanded that he tell them everything. Sprinting away, he just barely managed to escape their clutches.

*If they're like this to me, I can't imagine what they'll be like to Luna.* Thought Link sweating beneath the Stone Mask as a herd of inquisitive girls of all ages stormed past the suit of armour he was hiding behind.

Under Navi's advisement, he took the initiative and braced Luna for what Hermione had done, urging her to show mercy on the poor girl and not take it too personally. Entrusting the letter to Kaepora Gaebora, he waited with baited breath for her response.

While dealing with the school gossip, he also became aware of the continued animosity of Ron and Harry. Evidently, Hermione had taken all of the blame for the Polyjuice Potion and the pair were able to escape McGonagall's wrath unscathed - probably to avoid them getting expelled. However, their good fortunes didn't change their attitude towards Link in the slightest. They treated him politely enough, but he got the sense that they were watching him like hawks, waiting for the slightest sign of anything suspicious so they could pounce.

To get around the social pressure, Link spent the next few days hidden away in the 2nd floor girl's washroom trying to breach into the Chamber of Secrets. He tried everything from punching the faucet snake to playing the Slytherin House Anthem on his ocarina but nothing worked.

'Look on the bright side, Link. Eventually the heir of Slytherin will show up here and once he does you can nab 'em.' said Navi as he struggled to rip the sink out of the wall.

Losing his grip, he fell back and let out a low growl of frustration.
True but I don't want to be a creepy weirdo who stalks the girl's washroom all the time!

Before long Luna responded to his letter. She informed him that Hermione had already written out to her and she was willing to let the whole thing go.

*I doubt Luna's attitude will be shared by many of the other students.* Thought Link grimly as he finished reading her response.

Once Christmas Break ended and the school term resumed it took less then half a day for the rest of the school to learn about what Hermione had done. The reaction was insane. Hermione went from being an unpopular, but respected student to the most reviled scum in Hogwarts in under a day. Similarly, Luna went from being an unpopular nobody to the most talked about girl in school. Everywhere Luna went girls would come up to her to speak with her and say how insulted they felt on her behalf; about how if was them they would be furious and that they, acting in her interest of course, swore to never let Hermione off the hook for what she had done. As a result, whenever Hermione was in the hallways, the air buzzed with waspish remarks and barbs about her. Consequently, she spent the majority of her time barricaded in the Gryffindor Tower, emerging only when she had classes and for mealtimes.

'There is nothing we can do about it, Link. What could you say?' said Navi while he fiddled with the faucets on the snake marked sink.

'Hm.' grunted Link.

Navi sighed and put on a high pitched nasally voice, 'Oh, Hermione was right Mrs. McGonagall, I am involved in the plot but don't worry I'm a good guy. Oh, by the way here is the real entrance to the Chamber of Secrets. Let's kill the monster together. Also, don't mind me, I'm just going to take this powerful magic artifact for myself, thank youuuu.'

*I do NOT sound like that!* He thought, scowling over at her through the bathroom mirror.

She shook her head, 'Maybe once all this is over we can help her out, but first things first; we need to secure the crystal piece.'

He turned his attention back to the sink. He wanted to argue, but there was no point. There mission was too important to jeopardize now. Suddenly the doorknob to the bathroom started to turn and he quickly slipped on the Stone Mask. However, it was just Luna.

Closing the door behind her she called out softly, 'Are you guys in here?'

Link took off the Stone Mask and Navi popped up from behind the bathroom stall divider she had been hiding behind.

Luna jumped when she suddenly noticed him standing right in front of her.

'H-How did you do that?' asked Luna.

'Magic!' said Navi happily.

Luna smiled uncertainly before looking back around the stalls and sinks apprehensively.
'I was told that nobody ever went in here. Everyone has always said that this bathroom was haunted.'

'Yes, it used to be haunted, but it's all clear now.' said Navi.

If Luna found this unusual she made no mention of it. Merely nodding, she moved over to Link's side by the sink. Kneeling, she leaned down by the pipe and ran her fingers over the snake figurine.

'Is this it?' she asked and Link nodded, 'That's so weird. I would never expect the entrance to Salazar Slytherin's super secret dungeon to be in a girl's bathroom of all places. Which makes sense now that I think about it. Have you made any progress in getting it open?'

'No. No progress.' said Navi in a frustrated tone, 'So, how're things going with you?'

'Dreadful. Everywhere I go people try and stop me to talk about Hermione. I preferred it when they all ignored me or called me crazy.'

Link could sympathize. He hadn't been approached as much recently, but when the news had first broke he was bombarded with questions about whether or not Hermione had tried to kiss him in Luna's body. Outside of fighting his own shadow, it was the most off-putting thing he had ever experienced.

'Must be some monster down there.' remarked Luna looking back over at the sink, 'What do you think it is?'

'Actually, I have no idea.' admitted Navi sheepishly, 'I know almost every monster that exists, but this world is...strange. I figure it's a giant snake of some sort. Slytherin seems like the sort of guy who would have a giant snake as his signature creature.'

Link remained silent as he thought back to the night Colin was attacked. He remembered hearing a strange rasping sound. It could very well have been a giant snake of some kind.

_But if Colin was petrified by a snake, where were the bite marks? He was untouched..._

The lack of wounds on Colin and Mrs. Norris made him feel uneasy. If they weren't bitten, then it had to have been a ranged magical attack of some kind, and a powerful one at that. While he was thinking, Navi piped up again.

'I wish I could figure out what kind of giant snake petrifies its victims without biting them, but that would require research in the library...and me and Link can't exactly leave our post...' trailed off Navi meaningfully.

Luna gasped. Quickly standing, she accidentally bonked her head on the counter on her way up.

'Ow!' she said, rubbing her head, 'Y-You want me to find out what kind of monster is in the chamber?' she asked excitedly.

'Yeah! I think you'd be perfect for this mission.' said Navi encouragingly.

'Sure! Anything to help the team.' gushed Luna, 'Maybe I'll rent out some books this evening before the Duelling Club! Um, are you still planning on going to that at least Link?' she asked looking at him expectantly.

'Hep!' said Link grinning.
I want to see if anyone can beat me!

'Cool! I should probably get going then before the library closes.' said Luna, smiling herself, 'I'll meet you there, okay?'

He waved goodbye and Luna left the dingy bathroom. Once she was gone, he went back to work trying to force open the door.

I hope we fight more duels today! Maybe Snape and Lockhart will have a rematch!

Wand in hand, Link confidently strode into the Great Hall. Like before, the house tables had been set aside only this time instead of their being one large central dueling table, there were sixteen smaller tables positioned neatly throughout the room.

Searching around the Great Hall, he spotted the bright red hair of Ginny standing beside one of the tables. He navigated through the crowd and stood beside her.

'Hey Link.' said Ginny as she fumbled with her bookbag. Once it was clasped shut she looked up at him. 'We never really talked after Christmas Supper. Why is that? Have you been avoiding me?' she asked seriously.

He quickly shook his head and waved his hands in denial, but she just laughed.

'Relax, I'm only teasing. Where's Luna? Did she not come with you?'

He stood on his tip toes and looked over the crowd. He didn't see her anywhere. He turned back to Ginny and shrugged.

'I'm sure she'll be along soon. I was talking to her earlier and she said she'd come tonight.' said Ginny. Shifting her eyes to those around them she moved closer, 'Listen, I was wondering if I could talk to you about Hermione.' she said under her breath.

I really would rather not. Thought Link wearily, but then he noticed Ginny's serious expression so he quickly nodded.

'I just…I hope there are no hard feelings.' said Ginny in a tired voice, 'Hermione is a really nice person. Like, genuinely a good person and…I just hate to see her suffer so much over a misunderstanding.'

He said nothing so she continued.

'She's probably cooped up in the tower right now. Depressed and alone.' Ginny swallowed, 'I know she really wanted to be here but…what with all the horrible rumors, y'know. The last few days have been really rough on her.'

He nodded uneasily.

Trust me I noticed.

'I don't know. Luna said she's not that bothered by the whole thing, but Hermione still feels terrible. You and Luna are close, maybe you could talk with her about it? There has to be some way we can
cheer Hermione up."

'Hm.' murmured Link as he thought it over.

*I don't know what I can do. It seems like it's everyone else who has the problem, not Luna. If Hermione broke some wizarding taboo, I don't know what I can do to sway people's hearts and minds. Maybe if I beat Slytherin's Monster that will distract everyone and things will go back to normal.*

As he considered his options, Lockhart boldly strode into the hall.

'Welcome back! I see you've all returned! Couldn't get enough last time, eh?' he chuckled, 'Excellent, excellent…'

Everyone turned and gave him their attention as Professor Lockhart took up position in the center of the room. Once he had managed to get himself up on top of one of the tables, he beamed at them all magnificently.

'Aafter the resounding success of our last session, I thought we might expand the dueling club. After all, I'm not the only skilled wizard at Hogwarts, and several of the other professors expressed interest in seeing my technique!'

*Interest in seeing how you managed to bamboozle Snape more like. Thought Link,* smirking. *Please let there be a rematch! Please, please, please…*

'But don't worry. I told them that I didn't start this club to showcase my own skills. Its not about watching me, but helping you! These are dark days and we must all be as ready as we can to face the evil forces that are conspiring against us!'

*Aw man! What a gip! Thought Link, kicking his feet.*

'So on that note, let me welcome back Professor Snape-' the dark robed professor stepped into the light by the far end of the hall, scowling as always. Where he had been hiding was a mystery. '-and a special guest, Professor Flitwick!' The diminutive Professor climbed on top of one of the dueling tables and waved to the students cheerily.

'Professor Flitwick was telling me that he had some experience in wizard dueling, a former champion in fact!' Lockhart said proudly and Flitwick bowed as the hall broke out in applause.

'And so I thought it would be helpful to invite him to our little gathering. Having an *experienced* duelist assist me this time-' Snape's scowl become more pronounced, '-would be most beneficial to all of you. After all I can only be in one place at a time! Anyway. As promised we reconvene! To learn of the graceful dance of wand and spell!' finished Lockhart dramatically.

Link laughed along with many of the other students. Snape looked like he was about to walk out while Flitwick was shaking his head in embarrassment.

'Woo!' called out one of the Weasley twins from somewhere in the crowd, 'Hell yeah!'

Lockhart chuckled, 'Yes. Yes, I know it is all very exciting, but remember you must not let your eagerness get the better of you as Professor Snape can very well attest!'

At that Snape turned his head slowly and stared at Lockhart's back, his lip curling in rage.

Sensing his peril, Lockhart quickly clapped his hands together, 'W-Well! I'm sure we are all eager
to begin yes? Very well, me and my esteemed colleagues will help pair you off.'

While the professors were divvying up the crowd, Luna entered the hall. Link waved to her, and she spotted him and moved over to join them. In her hands was a torn-up book that looked like it had been mauled by a bear.

'Hey you guys. Did I miss anything?' asked Luna, hefting the book under her arm slightly.

'Yes! The intro was brilliant.' said Ginny happily, 'What's that you have there Luna?' she asked, looking curiously at the book she had under her arm.

'Monster book. I'm trying to find if they have a chapter on Greasels.' said Luna matter of factly.

'Oh, Greasels eh? Let me know what you find.' said Ginny laughingly.

Luna nodded and shot Link a meaningful. Link winked in response, causing her to blush slightly before Snape descended on them. Dividing them apart, Luna was sent to the other side of the hall while Link was sent to a table filled with Slytherins and Hufflepuffs. As he approached he noticed that the two houses had segregated themselves and were talking animatedly. Nobody seemed to have noticed the lone Gryffindor.

He examined the dueling table. Though it was much smaller than the dueling table in the first lesson, it still had all the same markings and symbols.

I wonder if we are going to be taught any new spells today? He thought, twirling his wand between his fingers. The last spell "Expelliarmus" was good and all but it would really only work against someone with a wand.

'Oh, look. It's the Halloween prankster.' said a third year Hufflepuff in a drawling tone.

Link froze as all the Slytherins and Hufflepuffs turned to him, their eyes narrowing. A few of them cracked their knuckles.

'Heh, heh, heh…' he laughed, giving them all a nervous smile.

Thankfully he was rescued by the arrival of Professor Flitwick. 'Hello everyone! As I understand it, you've all drawn your wands in an attempt to disarm each other before yes?'

They all nodded.

'Well tonight we are going to be doing things differently. I will show you the proper rules of the wizard duelling lane…'

Link and the others listened patiently as Flitwick explained the rules. They were actually quite simple. Each duel started at a predetermined distance, usually ten paces, and they had to consent to a countdown, at which point they would draw their wands. The objective was either to disarm or knock your opponent off the table. As it turned out, the complicated markings on the table were for more professional duelists and wouldn't be a concern for novices.

After Flitwick had finished explaining the rules, Link was grouped up with the other first years who were all posturing to each other and waving their wands about eagerly.
Joining them, Link waited eagerly for his time to shine. Unsurprisingly, the duels started with the seventh years who all seemed quite competent, then the sixth years who were likewise competent, then the fifth, then fourth. By the time it was the third years turn the quality of the spell work had really started to deteriorate. Spells were nervously shouted and the wands were raised and waved erratically. Oftentimes the duelists spells had little if any effect on their opponents. The second years also performed dismally with only a couple of the students being able to cast the disarming charm successfully.

'Okay, first years turn.' said the Ravenclaw prefect who was acting as referee, 'Let's start with...hm...Link...aaaand you! Hufflepuff kid!'

'My name's Thomas.' said the Hufflepuff student shyly.

'Thomas, whatever. Get on the table.'

The Hufflepuffs and Slytherins all looked at Link, grinning evilly but he wasn't worried. He figured he would be the first one called. No doubt they were all eager to watch him suffer after his Halloween stunt. Sidling through the hostile crowd, he nimbly hopped up on the table and got in position while his opponent awkwardly clambered up opposite him.

'Go for it Thomas! Show'em what for!' cried a fifth year Hufflepuff. The other Hufflepuffs cheered encouragingly as their uncertain champion got his bearings. 'If the spell fails, rush him!' jeered a Slytherin. Thomas drew his wand nervously and assumed his stance.

'Ready then?' asked the Ravenclaw prefect. Link nodded eagerly, his opponent did the same.

'Okay. One…Two…Three!'

\textit{Expelliarmus.} Thought Link, lazily flicking his wand up at his opponent.

Before Thomas could even blink the spell hit him in the centre of the chest, staggering him back. His wand went sailing over to Link's waiting hand who caught it with an eager smile before just as quickly tossing it back. The wand hit the befuddled Hufflepuff, before clattering down to the table.

'Wha...?' Thomas said dazedly.

The crowd stood gawking for a second before quickly recovering. While the Slytherins boo'ed, the Hufflepuffs broke out into over exaggerated groans of grief as a red-faced Thomas stepped down from the table.

\textit{Sweet, sweet gratification!} Thought Link, grinning smugly while the booing intensified, \textit{I think this dueling club is my new favorite mini-game!}

Once he was finished being insufferable, he made to hop down. However before he could, the Slytherins formed up along the edge of the table and blocked him.

'Hey Mutey! Where do you think you're going? Hufflepuff had their go so now it's Slytherins turn! Ryan, you're up.' said a Slytherin boy who pushed a pale faced youth to the front.

'Hey, that's against the rules! One duel per student.' said the Ravenclaw prefect warningly.

'Come on Penny! He doesn't mind, do you?' said the Slytherin, shooting Link a dangerous look. Link dutifully shook his head.

The Ravenclaw shrugged and the Slytherin's cheered as Ryan took to the dueling lane. Link
grinned at Ryan. Ryan was about as kind to him as any of the other Slytherins had been, which is to say not very. Still he was saintly in comparison to Draco.

'Ready? One…Two…Three!'

*Expelliarmus.* Another flick of the wrist and his opponent was disarmed, much to the disappointment of the Slytherins. Shamefacedly, Ryan caught his wand as Link threw it back to him, flinching under the reprimands of his older housemates.

'Hufflepuffs turn! Go on Sarah, show'em who's boss!'

This continued until Link had defeated over a dozen other first years. One would think that he would derive no satisfaction from defeating lesser skilled opponents so easily, but Link was very competitive and very, very, petty. He always made time to win at silly carnival games and pointless competitions in all his adventures and this was no different.

*I'm going to win the grand prize in this dueling club. Whatever it is.* Thought Link as his last opponent hoisted himself down, cowering under the rebukes of his disappointed housemates.

While Link was waiting for his next challenger suddenly there was a loud collective gasp from across the hall. Turning, he saw Harry Potter and Draco Malfoy were in the middle of a fierce duel. Trading spells, the two appeared to be closely matched. Link watched as Draco suddenly summoned a large black snake and sent it after Harry. The gathered students gasped again as it slithered forwards, angrily hissing as it went.

*That's definitely not on the approved spell list. Typical. If anyone else tried some crazy magic like that I bet they'd get detention. Not Draco though.* Thought Link as he watched Harry flounder before the giant reptile.

'Don't move Potter, I'll get rid of it for you.' Link heard Snape say. However before Snape could do anything Lockhart suddenly appeared.

'Allow me, Professor Snape.' said Lockhart springing forward. Whipping out his wand, Lockhart flicked his wand upward and sent the snake flying through the air. It twisted and spun before landing on the table with a loud smack.

Unsurprisingly this seemed to only enrage the viper who, upon landing near the edge of the table, raised itself in front of one of the bystanders who stood frozen in fear.

Link felt his pulse quicken as he watched the scene across the Great Hall unfold.

*If only I had my bow!* Thought Link helplessly as the snake readied itself to strike.

However, before the snake could lunge, Harry stepped forward and started to hiss at the snake. Turning itself, the snake stopped and faced Harry quizzically. Harry hissed again and, to Link's amazement, the snake lowered itself back down. Smiling, Harry looked at the student who was nearly bitten.

'What are you playing at?' shouted the student at Harry.

Link saw Harry's face fall as he watched the Hufflepuff storm out of the Great Hall. Professor Snape, looking confused, waved his wand and the snake vanished in a puff of smoke while the hall quickly broke out into murmured conversation.

'Was Harry…talking to a snake?'
'Potter's a parseltongue? Wait, do you reckon-' 

'I thought only dark wizards were parseltongues?'

'Justin said that Harry was being weird to him ever since he let slip that he was muggle-born, you don't think that Harry Potter is Slytherin's heir, do you?'

All around him Link heard the Hufflepuffs and Slytherins start to debate with one another over what they had just witnessed. For his part, he was confused by the sudden controversy.

*Everyone's saying Harry Potter is a parseltongue. Which I guess means he can talk to snakes? Why is that a bad thing?*

Before he could consider this new information, Lockhart disrupted his train of thought.

'Erm, yes. I think that's enough for today!' announced Lockhart in a wavering tone, 'We'll meet again next week. Club dismissed.'

Few people seemed to be paying him any attention though as they were busily discussing what they had just witnessed.

'Remember your table!' shouted Flitwick and the hall went silent, 'Next time we'll divide you all into teams!'

*Teams you say? Thought Link perking up. The plot thickens…*

Link traipsed with the other Gryffindors back to the tower. Luna hadn't been able to show him the book before they parted ways and he found himself wishing he had it with him, if only to distract him during his bathroom vigil. Once he and his classmates arrived back at the tower, Percy opened the portrait and they all started to funnel into the Gryffindor Common Room. When he entered, Link noticed a flash of movement by the girl's dorms. He briefly saw Hermione before she quickly closed her dorm door behind her.

*She's barricaded herself in her dorm again. Just like that ghost from the bathroom. Thought Link glumly.*

Climbing up to his own dorm, Link listened in as all his bunk mates were fervently talking about the row between Harry and the Hufflepuff boy who he learned was named Justin. Though nothing had happened, evidently just the ability to talk to snakes was a mark of a dark wizard.

'What was Harry thinking? Do you think he was really trying to get Justin killed?' asked one of the boys.

'Maybe. I heard that Harry and Justin had a falling out after Justin told Harry about his muggle parents.' said another, 'You know…Colin was muggle born too. And Colin sure did annoy Harry a lot.'

The other first years started nodding to each other.

Suddenly one of the first years gasped and they all turned to look at him, he had gone pale.
'I-I introduced myself to Harry a couple of months ago! I told him I was raised by muggles like he was! You don't think-'

The boy's frightful conversation continued for a few hours before eventually everyone drifted off to an uneasy sleep.

*If the spotlight turns on Harry, I can expect him and his buddies to be after me all the harder.* Thought Link as he changed into his tunic for his nightly watch, *Hermione seems cowed, but I guarantee that she still thinks I'm the Heir of Slytherin. I'll need to watch myself.*

A few days later, Link and Luna sat side by side in the library pouring over the book she had discovered. It was titled 'Reptiles Most Foul: A Guide.' Where she had found it, he had no idea but it seemed like it was quite comprehensive. Perhaps too comprehensive.

'I wish this book was alphabetized…' said Luna under her breath and Link nodded weakly in agreement.

His concentration was slipping. As fun as it was to learn about monsters, he couldn't help but feel that the author had been paid by the word. He kept finding himself rereading the same lines over and over. Leaning back in his chair, he pinched the bridge of his nose. All these reptiles were giving him a headache.

'Another toad…another toad.' droned Luna as she flipped through the pages before stopping suddenly. 'Ah! Link look at this!' she said excitedly.

"Shhhh!" hissed the irate librarian from beyond one of the bookshelves. Luna and Link cowered, flinching.

"Look at this, Link!" whispered Luna breathlessly.

He looked at the page.

"The King of Serpents: The Basilisk"

He perked up and started to read.

"Fear the great basilisk, breed from a frog egg hatched under a hen, the corrupted horned wyrm is truly the king of serpents. All who meet the basilisks gaze suffer instant death as nothing can look it in the eye and live. Therefore, all creatures with advanced sight, in particular spiders, flee before the basilisk for its deadly ochre eyes cannot be avoided by such creatures."

"Should ye encounter the King of Serpents, beware! For blindness alone will not save thee. The basilisk is a keen predator and its venom is among the most potent of all beasts in the magical kingdom. Any who feel its bite are doomed to die in agony in minutes unless the basilisk first feeds on their still warm flesh."

"The basilisk may survive for centuries in the damp swamplands and ruins it calls home. Over their life span the basilisk will continue to grow and ancient specimens have been found to be the length of five men lying end to end. The mighty basilisk has but one weakness; the crowing of a rooster. Should the basilisk hear its morning call, it shall fall dead on the spot."

'Well? What do you think?' whispered Luna.

'Hm.' said Link holding up the book to his chest so Navi could read the passage.
It definitely seems like the sort of creature that Slytherin would keep as a pet, but there are several problems here. If a basilisk kills on eye contact, then how is it that anyone could have survived? Colin had his camera covering his face true, but Mrs. Norris? Why didn't it eat them? Also, the basilisk is massive. Five men is what, twenty-five or thirty feet? How is it able to roam around the castle?

'Well?' whispered Luna again, moving closer.

'Promising. Great job Luna.' whispered Navi from inside his robes.

Luna beamed at Link who scratched his head. He was still thinking.

'We should get going Link, class starts soon.' said Luna giggling at Link's befuddled expression. After carefully marking the basilisk page with one of her quills she stood. He shrugged and joined her.

Stepping out of the library, they joined the jostling traffic of the hallway together.

'So Link, after classes do you want to-' began Luna before she was interrupted by the magically enhanced voice of McGonagall echoing through the halls.

'Attention all students!' the hall went silent, 'Please return to your house common rooms immediately!' boomed the voice.

Link and Luna looked at each other.

'Do you think…?' asked Luna looking at him with a worried expression.

'Mmm!' said Link. Pivoting on his heel, he started off in the direction of the 2nd floor staircase.

*I need to get to the Chamber of Secrets entrance! Maybe I can catch the heir as they try to leave!*

Leaving Luna behind, Link went as fast as he could through the crowded hall. As he dodged passed the nervous students, he considered his current gear.

*I have a deku nut in my pocket, my wand, and nearly all of my magic stamina. It's not ideal, but if it comes down to me versus just another wizard I can probably take them!*

He sprinted up the stairs, ignoring the alarmed remarks of the students he shoved away as he raced to the washroom.

*If the monster shows up I'll stun it first then scorch it with the flames of Din! I'll end this all right now!*

Scaling the stairway, he sprinted down the last stretch of hallway just as Ginny suddenly came around the corner. Her eyes were wide with panic and her hands were pressed together, hugging her bookbag close against her chest.

Ginny looked at him with a frantic expression as he slid to a stop in front of her. 'L-Link? What's going on? Why are we being called back to the Tower?'

He shook his head and shrugged helplessly.

'There hasn't been another attack has there?' asked Ginny fearfully, her eyes welling with tears.

Link gave her a compassionate pat on the shoulder and pointed in the direction of the Gryffindor
Tower before he started off down the hallway again.

'W-wait where are you-

Ignoring her calls, he rounded the corner and burst into the washroom. Despite his doubts from earlier, he found himself shielding his eyes with his forearm as tried to survey the room.

The washroom appeared to be empty. Only the gentle drip of water from one of the cracked sinks disturbed the eerie silence. Never one for subtlety, Link quickly ran to each of the washroom stalls and kicked in the door to confirm that he was alone. Meanwhile Navi flew overhead to get a bird's eye view.

'I think we're clear, Link.' said Navi.

He walked over to the washroom sink with the snake faucet. The faucet was the same as always, but there was a small pool of dirty water around the pipe connecting the sink to the floor. Kneeling down, he carefully examined the tiled floor. Against the chipped white tile, he could just make out a series of small footprints walking away from the sink.

Link frowned as he looked at the prints.

*Everyone in this school wears the same damn shoes. Stupid uniforms!*

Bending down, he studied the print closer, desperate for any clue. It looked as though there was a faint heel to the shoes, but it could have just been a partial print. Also, the print was small. Either a small footed boy or a girl. He sighed.

*This is a girl's washroom after all. It could be that this print is from someone who wanted to use the washroom and it has nothing to do with the Chamber...*

He shook his head and stood up as Navi flew back into his robes.

'Shall we go? We don't want to be too late coming back.' urged Navi gently.

Link exhaled angrily as he turned and walked out of the washroom.

*So close!*

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Upon returning to the Gryffindor Tower Link was scolded, as usual, by Percy for his dillydallying. After he hung his head in shame sufficiently chided, Percy opened the portrait door and allowed him entry. Stepping into the Common Room, he headed over to the gaggle of first years who were excitedly yammering about what was going on. Leaning up against the wall by the window, he started to eavesdrop. As he feared there had been another attack, but this time there were two victims. One was the Hufflepuff boy Justin Finch-Fletchley and the other was Nearly Headless Nick, the Gryffindor House patron ghost.

The juiciest part of the story though was that Harry Potter was discovered standing over the petrified victims before he was discovered by Peeves.

'T-this confirms it!' said a first-year girl frantically, 'Harry already tried attacking Justin once before, but he couldn't finish him off. So he tracked him down and-'
'Stop!' cried Ginny looking like she might throw up, 'Harry would never!'

The girl bit her lip before responding, 'All the evidence-'

'No! You don't know what you're talking about! Harry wouldn't-' started Ginny before the other girl rounded on her.

'You don't know anything! Just because you have a crush on him you can't see how creepy he is. He can talk to *snakes*, Ginny! Snakes! He's Slytherin's heir!'

'B-But!' started Ginny before she was cut off.

'But nothing! How can you be so thick? Slytherin was a parseltongue, Harry is a parseltongue! How many parseltongues do you know? It's the mark of Slytherin's heir!'

Link suddenly shot upright from against the wall.

_The ability to talk to snake's is the mark of Slytherin's heir!?_

'How many more people-' continued the girl before Ginny suddenly pushed her aside. Without listening to another word, she stormed off to the girl's dorms in tears. Everyone fell silent as they watched her leave. Once Ginny was gone, conversation resumed.

'You shouldn't have upset her, Haley. You know how she gets.' said one of the other first year girls reproachfully.

'Whatever, she'll cry over her diary and write about how I'm a jerk then she'll be back to normal. She's too sensitive.' said Haley crabbily.

Wordlessly, Link quickly moved away from the group and up to the boy's dorms. Climbing the spiral staircase, he entered his deserted dorm room. With shaking hands, he seated himself at his desk and pulled out a piece of parchment.

"I know something you don't know." wrote Link on the paper, a smug smile on his face.

Navi read the note and sighed, 'Oh? Do tell.'

"I know how to enter the Chamber of Secrets!" wrote Link messily, barely able to suppress his excitement.

'What? How?' asked Navi incredulously.

He yawned and stretched in his chair, relishing in Navi's ignorance.

'How Link!? Lives are in the balance! How!?'

Giggling like a manic he started to write.

"You have to tell the Snake symbol on the sink to open in parseltongue, obviously. It's the mark of Slytherin's heir after all."

Navi was silent for a moment.

'Okay…' To his delight, Navi sounded excited, 'But how will you open the door? You can't speak snake, and Harry isn't exactly your friend. I don't know if he'll help you.' whispered Navi slowly.
"What do you mean, Navi? Have you forgotten? I can speak to snakes just fine."

'Uh, no you can't.' said Navi bluntly.

Shooting out of his desk, he sprang to his dresser and went for his tunic. Rifling through his pockets, he soon found what he was looking for. Holding it in such a way so Navi couldn't spot it through his robes, he returned to his desk and sat back down.

"Want to bet?" wrote Link laughing. His laughter grew louder as he heard Navi growl in frustration.

'What did you grab?' Navi was no longer whispering. She sounded genuinely angry.

"You know Navi, I worry about you. I think you might be too old to go on adventures with me anymore." wrote Link, ignoring the increasingly hard pinches to his chest.

'Link…' began Navi in a dangerously low tone.

"Tatl would have realized right away! Maybe its time you retired. I could buy you a nice bottle and you can spend your days-"

'Link! Listen! You tell me right now! How you can talk to snakes?' shouted Navi heedlessly.

With relish Link dropped Don Gero's mask on the desk in front of him. Navi was silent for a moment before letting out a long, winding moan of understanding. To Link's ears there was nothing sweeter.
Link was fully equipped and ready for battle. Axe and shield in hand, he stood facing the entrance to the Chamber of Secrets. He would have looked quite fierce if not for the ridiculous frog head mask he was wearing.

'Anything?' asked Navi as he concentrated on the snake symbol in front of him.

After a moment of silence, he shook his head. Try as he might, he couldn't channel the language of a snake by just looking at the faucet.

Navi seemed unperturbed, 'Figures. You'll need to have a snake in your hands for the magic of the mask to work correctly. We'll have to come back once you've found one.'

He sighed in disappointment. He didn't think he would be able to enter the Chamber of Secrets tonight anyway, but it was worth a try. He removed Don Gero's mask and stepped away from the secret entrance.

Where can I find a snake? Thought Link as he exited the bathroom and headed back to Gryffindor Tower.

I should ask Hagrid.

Link proceeded down the hallways cautiously. After the attack on Justin and Nearly Headless Nick the curfew was reinstated school wide. Prefects and teachers patrolled the hallways at night and anyone caught outside of their dorms would be punished severely. Luckily he had the Stone Mask to help him along.

Soon I'll have to start climbing through the window if this keeps up. Thought Link as he entered Gryffindor Tower.

The next day, Link struggled through the blindingly white snow to Hagrid's hut, note in hand. He'd better be home. He thought as he kicked his way through a large, fluffy snow drift as tall as his waist.

'Too bad it's winter.' said Navi from inside his tunic, 'We could have found a snake in the grass somewhere.'

Link nodded idly. He didn't mind the cold weather too much. He was on the clock is all. As he journeyed across the grounds he gazed over at the Black Lake. It looked like a giant blue mirror the way the sun glaring off of it. At that moment a crisp winter breeze blew through his hair and he smiled. It felt good to be outside after spending so much time babysitting the entrance to the Chamber of Secrets in that damp old bathroom.

Coming up to Hagrid's hut, he knocked on the door hard enough to cause a miniature avalanche of
snow and icicles to come tumbling off Hagrid's roof. After waiting for a moment, the door swung inwards.

'Hullo?' said Hagrid suspiciously before looking down, 'Oh! It's you. Come in, come in.'

Entering the hut, Link greeted the great slobbering hound Fang who bounded up to him enthusiastically. Hagrid did a double take when he noticed Link's clothes.

'Woah! You must be freezin' in that getup of yers! Here..' Hagrid moved over to the fireplace and added a few bark covered logs. After poking at the fire a bit with his umbrella, Hagrid was able to have a cheery fire blazing away.

'So, what can I do you fer ya?.' asked Hagrid as he settled in his chair.

Turning away from Fang, Link pulled out a small note and passed it to Hagrid. He took the note and read it aloud.

"Hello Mr. Hagrid. I need a small live snake. Do you have one?" read Hagrid. He looked up at Link.

'What do you need a snake for?" asked Hagrid befuddled.

Link motioned for Hagrid to turn the note over and he flipped the note around.

"I just want one for a little while." read Hagrid aloud. The giant looked up from the note and chuckled.

'Sorry Link, all the little guys I know are asleep this time o' year.'

Link handed Hagrid another card.

"Do you know where I can get one or buy one." read Hagrid slowly. Pulling out a long wooden pipe, he took a few puffs and exhaled.

'Well, you won't find any snakes in Hogwarts, that I'm sure of. Unless Snape has one. Hm. Nope, only place I can think of is Magical Menagerie down at Diagon Alley. Course yer won't be able to buy from them. They don't do mail order delivery, unfortunately.' said Hagrid, puffing away on his pipe.

Link squared his shoulders and nodded his head.

'Looks like I'll be sneaking off to Diagon Alley then.'

Bowing slightly, he turned to go before Hagrid called out to him.

'Hey, Er, Link. I was wonderin' if I could talk to you 'bout somethin'.'

He faced Hagrid again and raised his eyebrows questioningly.

'Well, you see. It's about Harry, Ron, and Hermione.' said Hagrid shifting in his chair, 'I heard they've been watching you and yer' friend Luna, thinkin' yer somehow mixed up in that business with the Chamber.'

He nodded.

'Well they is good people, Link. They don't mean nothin' by it. I reckon they is just the naturally
inquisitive sort. They'll come around once Dumbledore gets all this mess sorted out.' said Hagrid confidently.

Link smiled slightly and gave Hagrid a wave.

'All right, see ya. Stay safe now.'

Link opened the door and went back outside. At first he followed the path towards the castle, but once he was safely out of sight from the groundskeeper's windows he swerved off the path and began running towards the Hogsmeade road. As he ran out of the school grounds and into the frozen marshes surrounding the Forbidden Forest, Navi emerged from his tunic and flew alongside him. It was a long trek to Hogsmeade, but the trip wasn't so bad. If anything, it felt oddly nostalgic. Though neither he nor Navi said it, they both knew that the adventure would soon be over.

The sun was setting by the time Link laid his eyes on Hogsmeade. Wafting plumes of black smoke rose from the oddly shaped chimneys of the quaint, snow covered homes whose windows glowed an inviting yellow. Along the cobbled streets, slender iron poles topped with cheery lanterns illuminated tiny robed figures who hustled about their business. From the looks of things, the sleepy little village had finally repaired the storm damage and now it wouldn't have looked out of place in a snow globe.

While he appreciated the view, Navi hovered overhead.

'Yes, it's quite pretty. I just hope we can pass through town unmolested.'

Link couldn't help but giggle and Navi rolled her eyes.

'If worst comes to worst maybe you can bribe your way out of trouble. Just remember: we only have about three hours before curfew and it will take about an hour to get back to Hogwarts so try not to waste any time.'

'Mmm!'

At that, Navi retreated back into his tunic and he charged across the field towards Hogsmeade. Coming upon High Street, he ignored the surrounding stores and people and headed straight for the Three Broomsticks. Stopping by the windows of the inn, he peered inside. The place was filled to bursting as witches and wizards, many of which were still bundled in their winter clothes, filled every available stool and table.

'Can't tell who's who under those heavy robes. Thought Link nervously. Dumbledore could be at one of those tables and I'd never know…'

Turning his attention away from the patrons and to the far wall, he spotted a merry fire roaring away in the fireplace. As he watched, a woman who had been standing by the bar came over and reached for the jar on the mantle. Taking a handful of powder, she threw it into the fireplace. Upon contact, the flames flashed green and she stepped into the fireplace before disappearing. Link narrowed his eyes as he focused in on the container of Floo Powder.

Stepping away from the window, he ran over to the front door. Retrieving the Stone Mask from his inventory, he took a deep, calming breath.
Alright, here goes nothing.

Pressing the mask to his face, he opened the door and stepped inside.

If the inn seemed busy from the window, inside it was chaotic. Giant steins of frothy beer slammed together in toast over heaping piles of steaming food while their drinkers loudly shouted arguments and anecdotes to one another in happy celebration. Floating near the ceiling, a flotilla of drinks each a different colour and in a differently shaped glass, arrived at the tables full and departed empty in a never ending chain. All this to the drunken tune of the men and women who lined the bar before the pretty barmaid.

What would happen if I just grabbed the powder and teleported away? They would notice the flash, but I’d already be gone. Would someone chase me? He hesitated.

'It is better to ask for forgiveness then permission, Link.' whispered Navi, seemingly reading his mind.

If I ask to use the fireplace someone could spot me, or she could refuse my request or report me. Better to just sneak away.

Maneuvering his way between the tables, he skillfully dodged the splashes of beer, shaking hands, and stumbling winos. Even without the mask, the restaurant was far too busy for anyone to notice him and he was able to make it to the Floo Powder pot without incident. Grabbing a handful of powder, he glanced at the barkeep.

Please don’t freak out.

Taking a deep breath, he threw the powder into the fireplace and the flames immediately turned bright green. Without wasting any time he quickly jumped into the flames while Navi shouted 'Diagon Alley!' and the two vanished.

The next thing Link knew he was stumbling out from the fireplace and into the cold street of Diagon Alley. He quickly removed the Stone Mask and stepped away from the public fireplace. Looking around, he noticed that the streets were much less crowded then they were when he was shopping for school supplies that summer. All the street vendors were gone and the businesses seemed to be winding down for the day.

'Let's hope the pet store is still open.' said Navi worriedly, 'Get a move on.'

He didn't need to be told twice and took off running down the street. It didn't take long for him to locate the pet shop. Looking in the pet store window, he saw a worker fitting a curtain over a brass cage filled with blue and yellow songbirds.

Link ran up to the door and tried to open it, but it was locked. Looking up, his face fell as he saw a sign on the door.

"Closed." read Navi in a disappointed voice, 'We're ten minutes too late.'

Link ran over to the shop window and knocked on the glass. The worker looked over at him and shook his head.
'We're closed.' said the muffled voice of the wizard.

Link knocked on the window again and pressed a shiny gold galleon against the window. The shopkeeper looked at the galleon then back at Link. Rolling his shoulders, he hemmed and hawed for a moment before shuffling over to the door.

'Alright kid, but make it fast. I've dinner waiting for me.' said the man gruffly as he unlocked the door and opened it.

Flashing the shopkeeper his prize smile and tossing him the coin, Link dodged around him and ran through the store.

*Owls, bats, mice, fish, frogs, ah!*

He skidded to a halt in front of a tank filled with copper coloured snakes with orange and brown stripes. Next to the tank was a display. It read:

"The Penny Snake: Native to the hot desert sands of Egypt, this fearsome predator was used by ancient pharaohs to guard their treasure hordes. The Penny Snake has a preternaturally keen memory and long-life span, both highly useful traits for a tomb guardian. It is so named for its love of shiny metals and will polish metal against its scales to increase its lustre. The Penny Snake is also known as a Sand Dancer as they can be induced into a hypnotic trance via flute or horn. Warning! The Penny Snake has a deadly bite and potent venom. KEEP HANDS OUT OF TANK!"

'Hm. The Penny Snake. Looks good to me, Link.' whispered Navi after she finished reading the display for herself.

*I should test it first.*

He peeked around a habitat filled with strolling cacti and checked on the salesman. Currently, he was busily trying to coax a giant white hairball into spitting out his shoe and likely wouldn't notice him. Retreating backward softly, Link put on Don Gero's mask.

*Don't mind me…*

With the mask on, he slowly worked his hand into the tank. Plucking up one of the dozing snakes by the neck, he held it up to the glass by his face.

'Hey! What's the big deal?' spat the snake angrily.

'Sorry! I'm shopping for a new snake and I, uh, thought you were dead!' hissed Link quickly.

The snake flicked its tongue out at him as he lowered it back down on its rock.

'Did you say something?' called out the worker, 'Have you found what you were looking for?'

'Uh-huh!' replied Link, swiftly returning the snake and taking a step away from the tank.

Muttering bitterly, the man walked over.

'Well, which?' blurted the worker, his phony customer service smile barely present on his drawn face.

Link pointed at the Penny Snake.

'Really? Okay then.' the man snorted.
Walking over to the store counter, the man grabbed a large box peppered with airholes and returned to Link. Putting on some heavy gloves, he reached into the tank and grabbed one of the dozing snakes by the back of the neck. Lifting it carefully, he quickly transitioned it into the carry case. Walking back to the counter, Link followed behind him, wallet at the ready.

'Now you do know that Magical Menagerie is not responsible for any injuries sustained from handling your new animal, correct?' asked the man in a bored voice.

Link tore his eyes away from the snake in the case and looked back at the man and nodded.

'You also realize that the animal you purchased is, in fact, not domesticable and is, in fact, a venomous, lethal predator?'

Link rolled his eyes and scoffed. Evidently the man was used to dealing with bratty kids as he didn't even bat an eye at his insolence.

'That'll be three galleons, four sickles.' intoned the man.

Link put his money on the counter and lifted up the crate.

'This carry crate here is enchanted. For the next twenty-four hours she'll be warm enough, but you're gonna want to put her in a proper cold-blooded habitat tank. Do you have such a tank?' asked the shop keeper skeptically.

'Uh…'

The worker rolled his eyes and turned around. Behind him he pulled out a small glass case. Inside a glowing yellow light, not unlike a small sun, shone above a sandy bottom.

'This here will do you. Temperature controlled environment and self cleaning too. All you need to do is feed her. It's a steal at eleven galleons.'

Dutifully Link counted out eleven galleons and placed it on the counter.

With an amused look in his eye, the man once again transitioned the snake from the carrying case to the much larger reptile tank.

*How am I going to carry this?* Thought Link worriedly.

'You know what Penny Snakes eat?' asked the man and Link groaned.

A few minutes later, Link stumbled out of Magical Menagerie, his arms loaded with boxes. The salesman sure had run him through the ringer. When all was said and done he had ended up paying twenty-eight galleons, eleven sickles, and fourteen knuts for his snake, snake food, brass scale polisher, hypnotic comfort curtain, and sunning rock. Walking out to the cobbled street, he awkwardly adjusted his grip on his mountain of packages.

...*God dammit*...

'Oh and kid…'

Link looked back at the salesman who was watching him from the doorway.

'I just love your hat.'

Link felt himself blush as the man laughed at him. Once the shop door was closed, he quickly
transitioned his packages to one arm, and swiped off Don Gero's mask with the other.

*Why do I always forget I have a mask on when I'm wearing my stupidest looking masks!?* He thought angrily as he stuffed the green frog head mask back in his tunic.

'Ooh, Link! We should have bought a rooster! How about we go back and-' started Navi but he was already stomping away. There was no way in hell that guy was getting any more of his money.

Marching away from the pet store, Link spotted a clock mounted street post. It was twenty past six and curfew started at nine.

*I have to be on my way back to Hogwarts by eight. Seeing as how I have the time, I'll shop around for an hour. Maybe I'll spot something I need for the assault on the Chamber.*

To his disappointment however, besides the restaurants everything in Diagon Alley had closed for the evening.

'What about the place we picked up your axe? I bet they're still open.' suggested Navi.

'Hm!' said Link, intrigued.

*Maybe they've restocked! I could use some more arrows and I'm starting to run low on Deku Nuts.*

Turning from the well-kept, brightly lit shops he headed down Knockturn Alley. To his surprise, his friend the shrieking crazy woman was still there and she remembered him too. After dancing around her while she tried to grab his throat, he got her to trip over her robes. Trotting down the alley away from the howling witch, he was pleased to see that the axe store, Borgin and Burkes, was still open.

Grinning, he pushed open the door with his snake case. The bell rang pleasantly as he entered and the familiar face of the oily man poked his head out from the black curtains at the chime of the bell. He looked at Link suspiciously for a moment before breaking out in a wide grin.

'Ah, yes of course. The young druidic gentlemen returns! How may I help you?' said the man bowing deeply.

Link gently placed the covered snake tank on the counter of the store. Looking around, he spotted a cluster of arrows in a neat pile on a shelf. He pointed them out to the man who smiled as he moved to get them.

'Oh, yes. Bodkin arrows from Transylvania said to be tipped with vampire teeth. Quite an amusing tale behind them…'

The silver-tongued proprietor started to detail the arrows history to Link as he turned them over in his hands.

*They seem to be the correct length. These'll do.*

Link looked back at the shop keep and placed them on the counter.

'Interested? Forty galleons per arrow.' said the man, smiling hungrily.
Link did some quick mental math.

It was a little over ninety galleons per green rupee so this comes out to over two arrows per rupee! What a steal!

Link nodded and counted out enough arrows to fill his quiver up to an even fifty.

'Very good sir, very good. Would you like these wrapped or…?'

Link shook his head as he piled gold on the scales. Once he had paid, he pulled out his own quiver and filled it with the barbed arrows.

'Will there be anything else, sir?' asked the man. His humble tone undone somewhat as he noisily swept the gold off the scales and into a seemingly bottomless pitch-black counter drawer.

'Mmm…' said Link, looking around the store. He spotted a few masks that looked cool, but they were obviously cursed. After browsing around for a moment, he shook his head.

'Very well then sir. Please come again should you need anything else.' said the shop keep with a sweeping bow. Link waved to the man before he grabbed his snake case and exited the store.

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'You know Link, we could use some more potions ingredients. And a new cauldron, ours is getting pretty corroded from being outside Gryffindor Tower all day.' mused Navi eyeing the apothecary down the street.

'Kay.' said Link, trotting his way over.

However to his chagrin, it took a lot longer to buy potions ingredients then he had counted on.

'Perfect for the dark arts!' cackled the sales witch evilly as she dropped the ingredients in a stained paper bag.

'Ooh.' said Link politely, slapping away the hand that was furtively reaching towards his head. The sales witch's assistant kept trying to snip off some of his hair for some reason.

After he had collected the ingredients for his magic restoration potion, some Floo Powder of his own for the return trip, and his shiny new cauldron, he found that he was out of time.

Its half past seven. Plenty of time to get through Hogsmeade and back to Hogwarts.

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Link stepped through the green flames and into the crowded restaurant space of the Three Broomsticks. Immediately upon exiting he noticed that despite using the Stone Mask, quite a few of the patrons were staring at him.

'Well, well, well.'
He turned. The barkeeper was looking right at him, a distinct scowl on her face.

_Damn. The mask didn't work. She must have been expecting me._

'Do a little shopping did we?' she said, eyeing the pile of packages in his arms.

Link hesitated. This was hardly an ideal location for a scuffle. The pub was filled with people and if he ran for it he might get trapped. Still what choice did he have? Pivoting slightly, he faced the door, but before he could make his move, the bartender called out again.

'Hey! Don't even think about it you little rascal! Come here.'

A few of the patrons in front of him eyed him warily, subtly angling themselves towards him. It looked like they were going to try and block him. Sighing, he walked over to the bar, unpleasantly aware of all the eyes on his back.

_Maybe I can talk my way out of this. If things go sideways though, I've got to be ready to run._

He stopped in front of the bar counter and looked up at the bartender innocently. She did not look pleased.

'You can't just use other people's Floo Powder, kid.' said the barmaid crossing her arms, 'That stuff is expensive!' her face scrunched up as she looked at him closely, 'What is that horrible thing on your face?'

_Argh! Stupid masks!_

He had forgotten he was wearing the Stone Mask.

_Well, if puppy dog eyes won't cut it, how about some gold?_

Reaching into his wallet, he withdrew a handful of wizard currency and dropped it noisily on the counter top. The lady's eyes bulged at the sight of the clattering coins.

'W-Where did you get all this?' she asked incredulously before her eyes narrowed, 'You didn't steal this too, did you?' she asked in an accusatory tone.

He quickly shook his head. The situation was getting out of control.

'You're a student at Hogwarts, aren't you? You shouldn't be here. I'm-'

Before she could say another word, Link threw down a deku nut. Instantly everything went sideways as the room was stunned by the flash. Tables were overturned, drinks went flying, and tipsy patrons knocked each other over as everyone flailed blindly. Not wanting to waste his chance, Link hoisted his packages and ran out of the store. As he dashed down High Street, he heard the angry shouts of witches and wizards behind him.

_Will they give chase?_ Thought Link, grinning to himself. This wasn't the first time he'd been chased out of a town and it wouldn't be the last.

Casting an eye behind him, he was startled to see the barkeeper sprinting after him. The look on her face was one he knew all too well.

'Uh-oh!' exclaimed Link as he too started sprinting.

He tore down High Street past the closed-up shops and down the alley headed to the outskirts of
town. As he ran he nimbly passed over packed snow and around obstacles with ease. However, the barkeeper was still hot on his heels.

_I must have really pissed her off._ He thought as he looked behind himself again.

The barmaid's face was red with effort as she pumped her arms back and forth to match her stride. In areas where Link had lightly stepped over the snow the lady ploughed straight through. Rather than go around obstacles, she vaulted over them. He had figured that once he had run past High Street she would have given up, but instead she was still in hot pursuit.

_She'll give up sooner or later. Once I'm outside the village, she'll turn around._ Thought Link as he redoubled his efforts.

Even overburdened with heavy packages, he was still able to put out an impressive pace. Running past the houses he passed by the occasional wandering villager who stared at the sight of the running green clad boy precariously balancing a tower of packages followed by the shouting barkeep. Eventually he passed by the last house's yard and entered the empty field separating Hogsmeade from the Forbidden Forest.

_Where am I going to keep this snake? Maybe Hagrid will want it._ Thought Link as he started to slow to a jog.

However, his planning was interrupted by the sound of crunching snow. Glancing behind him he was shocked to see that the barkeep was still chasing him and was closing the distance! With an alarmed yelp, he started to sprint again, but it was no good. The cumbersome boxes coupled with the deep snow were proving to be too much of a handicap.

_This is ridiculous!_ Thought Link frantically as he jumped through the deep snow.

'Ooooooh! Don't let her tackle us, Link!' cried Navi from within his tunic.

'Come…back…here…punk!' huffed the woman as she zeroed in on her prey.

_I need to do something, fast!_

Lifting the packages in one hand, he spun around and readied a deku nut. The woman's determined face slackened monetarily in surprise as he faced her.

'Kiaa!' he shouted as he threw the nut.

With a resounding crack the nut hit the terrifying woman in the forehead. With a cry she lost her balance as she was blinded and stunned. Arms like pinwheels she stumbled forwards, diving headfirst into a giant snowbank, sinking in past her waist.

Link didn't waste any time gloating. Re-gripping his packages, he took off again at full speed. Reaching the forest, he dodged between the trees while the woman screamed promises of bloody vengeance behind him.

'The Three Broomsticks.' murmured Navi, 'I'll add it to the list.'
situation. While the barkeep hadn't seen his face, she had definitely seen his distinctive green tunic and the heavy packages he had been carrying. Everyone in Hogwarts knew about him and his "weird green dress" as they called it, and he couldn't exactly get to Gryffindor Tower without being seen with his huge packages either.

Coming up on the castle he half expected to see the angry barmaid waiting for him at the Entrance Hall but thankfully she was nowhere in sight. Running into the castle, he quickly checked the time. He had a little under thirty minutes before curfew ended.

'Stash this stuff by the Chamber Entrance. We'll worry about tomorrow, tomorrow.' said Navi quietly.

He nodded in agreement. Making his way to the 2nd Floor Girls Washroom, he ignored the looks the other people gave him as they walked past. A few people asked him where he was going and what he was doing, but he ignored them too.

*I hope all the trouble I went through to get this snake is worth it.* Thought Link grimly.

Coming up the stairs, he gasped as the door to the washroom came into view. The bathroom door had been opened and it was just swinging shut. Someone was inside!

'Link. Get ready.' Navi said excitedly.

Creeping forward, he set his packages down on the wall beside the doorway, and equipped his weapons. Once he was ready, he burst through the door; ready for a fight. However, the bathroom was empty.

'Somebody was in here, Link! They must have entered the Chamber!' said Navi.

Link knew what he had to do. Turning, he quickly went back in the hall, got his supplies, and piled them in the corner of the bathroom. Throwing on the mask of Don Gero, he reached into his tank and picked up the Penny Snake.

'Hey! Don't you know how much you've been shaking me? I was trying to sleep!' spat the snake angrily.

'I'm sorry. Just bear with me a moment longer and I'll let you sleep for as long as you want.' he hissed back.

Snake in hand, he walked over to the snake figurine on the faucet.

'Open for the heir of Slytherin.' hissed Link.

As soon as the words were spoken the sink began to rotate and fall. In a flash of light, the illusion was dispelled revealing a large hollow pipe into nothingness. Link peered down into the darkness below, but he couldn't make anything out. Pulling out a knut from his wallet, he dropped it into the pipe. Perking his ears, he winced as the coin rattled, scraped, and bounced its way down.

*There goes the element of surprise, but at least I know it's not a straight drop.*

Returning the Penny Snake to her home, he cracked his knuckles and strode back to the Chamber of Secrets Entrance; shoulders set.

'Wait Link, are you sure you want to do this right now?'
'Mmm!'

*If I wait, even another day, there might be another victim. This ends now.*

Standing before the entrance, he pulled out the Ocarina of Time. Navi cleared her throat and murmured something inaudibly as he pressed the ocarina to his lips. Without waiting for her permission, he played the Song of Inverted Time. The stuffy air of the bathroom grew even heavier as the magic from the song flowed outwards and into the world. Time was on his side now.

'Link! Remember, the monster is likely a basilisk! It will kill you if you look into its eyes! Y-You do you have a plan to fight it right?' Navi asked anxiously.

He paused then nodded before checking his pockets.

*Deku nuts, bombs, bow. I should have everything.*

'I think you should use Farore's Wind. If you climb down there, you might not be able to climb back out.' said Navi.

He hesitated. Farore's Wind was a spell that allowed him to teleport to a predetermined point. It was an extremely powerful tool, however creating a teleportation point and teleporting to that point consumed most of his magical stamina. Still, it might be worth it.

*I have no clue what the environment is like down there. If I get trapped or lost I can use Farore's Wind to escape at the very least.*

Focusing his power, he summoned Farore's Wind. The tiles and stall doors vibrated and shook as powerful gusts of air filled the bathroom for a moment. Then just as suddenly as the winds had appeared they vanished.

Satisfied, he braced himself to jump.

*Three...Two...On-

'Hey, wait! Link?'

Interrupting his movement, Navi caused him to stumble slightly. Shooting her an angry look, he raised his eyebrows questioningly.

'You still have Don Gero's mask on.'

Link was still. After a few seconds he calmly reached up and took off the frog's head mask. For a moment he was tempted to chuck it in the garbage, before he caught himself. He'd gone through a lot of trouble to assemble his mask collection and he wasn't about to start throwing them away now. Returning it to his inventory, he once again turned his attention back to the pit.

*Here we go.* He thought as he jumped down the hole.
Sliding down into the darkness, Link felt his body twist and turn as the pipe corkscrewed and banked downwards. Slipping through the damp, cool pipe, he became aware of his building speed as indistinguishable features of the stone work whipped past.

*I hope there's something soft down there.* He thought worriedly as he descended faster and faster.

Eventually the pipe leveled out and he was spat out of the tube like a dart. Skidding across the hard grimy feeling floor, he came to rest near the edge of a large reservoir filled with murky grey water. Immediately he was assaulted by an almost unbearable stench. Gagging, he pinched his nose and shuddered.

*The floods must have flushed every disgusting thing in the castle down here!* 

Still recovering his senses, he forced himself to stand. He was clearly deep in the bowels of the castle's sewage system. Above him he could see dozens of pipes crisscrossing the ceiling and walls, randomly twisting and merging before emptying their contents into unseen depths or grated off basins. The roar of rushing water filled his ears as the multitude of pipes around him were emptied.

*Considering how the dungeons are still flooded, this whole place should be underwater.* Thought Link as he drew his shield and axe, *Maybe the drains can keep up? Or, its just magic trickery...*

Squinting, he tried to get a sense of his surroundings. The room was nearly pitch black, but far against the wall he could just barely make out the entrance to a passageway near the edge of an almost impossibly huge *something* that the sewers seemed to be draining into. As he tried to peer through the gloom, Navi flew out of his tunic and hovered low, her glow illuminating a filth encrusted cobbled floor.

'Careful Link. The floor here is likely riddled with open pipes and rusted out grates. If you fall down one of those, I don't think you could climb back out.' warned Navi.

Link nodded and cautiously began moving towards the passageway, watching where he stepped as he went.

Suddenly a shadow darted along his side. Readyng his weapons, he shifted to face it but it was only a rat. He glared at it, but it merely returned his gaze, its tiny black eyes hungrily gleaming. Ignoring it, he moved onward. Beyond the piles of unidentifiable refuse, the skeletons of rats, bats, and other vermin littered the roughly hewn stone. Just barely visible in the dim gloom he could just make out the shifting shapes of swarms of great mangy vermin picking through the bones of their kin. As they gnawed at the ivory shards, their sharp black eyes watched him closely. When he drew near, they would retreat. Always keeping a careful distance, no doubt hopeful that they could feast on his corpse soon as well.

As he drew closer to the passageway, he was able to see that the pit the sewers were draining into was actually a massive cistern. Coming up on its edge, his curiosity got the better of him and he peered below. Ridged archways lined the great chasm with the water disappearing into the darkness of the impenetrable abyss. Link couldn't hear the waters impact, though he thought he could hear something else. Holding his breath, he cupped an ear and focused. Over the sound of
the roaring waterfall, he swore he heard some faint rhythm originating from within the throat of that nameless blackness, a throbbing bass line of blood curdling familiarity.

*It must be my imagination.* Thought Link, quickly pushing the thought from his mind. Lifting his gaze from the darkness of the pit, he studied the surrounding stone walls that lined the cistern.

The intriguingly ancient arcades were unquestionably older and of a different architectural style than the drab and basal masonry above, perhaps hinting at some earlier period of construction likely predating Hogwarts itself. Judging by the detailed, finer craftsmanship of the more ancient stonework, he concluded that the school was built upon some fantastical ruin of unknown purpose.

*What lies beneath Hogwarts earliest foundations? How deep can these waters possibly flow?*

He briefly entertained the possibility of future exploration before he caught himself. A lack of concentration in a place like this would surely lead to his death. Clearing his mind, he focused instead on the task at hand and his immediate surroundings. The darkness, the rush of water, and the omnipresent stench of rot.

Turning away from the abyssal pit, he readied himself before carefully advancing through the arched entrance of the only available passage. It was long and winding, sinuously guiding him downwards. Every so often a drainage pipe would appear on the ceiling or walls, creating a yawning black hole in the tunnel. Most of these openings were clogged with centuries worth of indescribable filth, but a few remained unobstructed. Link felt a thrill of fear as he walked past these darkly dripping, drafty tunnels. He was sure each one was occupied by some waiting horror ready to drag him in for a warm meal. However nothing came and he was able to continue unchallenged until slowly the sound of roaring water faded and the passageway grew more and more silent. Eventually, even the drainage pipes stopped appearing. Now, there was only the path ahead, lit solely by Navi’s glow.

Following Navi, he carefully kept his eyes focused on the darkness ahead.

Journeying through the gloom, they came across yet another skeletal carcass of some animal. Flying low above the skeleton, Navi suddenly cried out in alarm as a giant rat pounced at her, its great teeth flashing. Springing forward, Link cleaved the rat in half before it could intercept her flight.

‘G-Good job Link. Stay sharp.’ she stammered.

‘Mm.’

Moving forward they suddenly heard a great chorus of chattering and squealing. Whirling around, the pair watched as a massive pack of vermin who had been silently following them swarmed over the corpse of the rat Link had just killed. Within seconds the corpse was torn to pieces. The pack of cannibalistic scavengers had to be in the hundreds, each one the size of a small cat.

*They're waiting for us to encounter the monster or fall into some pit. Then they'll feast on the scraps.* Thought Link grimly as he watched the carnage.

‘Let's keep moving.’ said Navi weakly and Link was inclined to agree.

Turning away from the grisly scene, they willed themselves forward. Eventually he saw a faint light reflected on the slick stone face of a distant wall.

*That must be the light of another crystal piece! So it was washed in here with the flood waters...*
Moving towards the light, they followed the passageway as it curved and weaved its way downwards. With every step the light grew brighter until finally the passageway leveled out and he could see without Navi’s aid.

Before him was a circular vault like metal door left open leading into an enormous chamber. At the distant end of the chamber, silhouetted against the light, he saw a gigantic statue with a comparatively tiny robed person at its feet. Moving forward, he and Navi went through the doorway and into the chamber which was easily the size of the Great Hall. Lining each side of the rectangular room were great stone pillars, about which curled giant carved serpents. In the serpent's eyes brightly shining emeralds blazed in the blue light, making Link feel like he was surrounded on all sides. At the end of the Chamber of Secrets stood a giant stone statue, fifty feet in height. The statue depicted a cruel looking man with a long, thin beard and high cheekbones. The light of the crystal shined from the statue's feet, casting the top half of the monument's face in shadow.

_Salazar Slytherin, I presume._ Thought Link as he looked at the statue.

Gazing down toward the statue's feet Link saw that the mysterious robed individual was standing motionless, its back turned to him at the other end of the chamber. Link started to walk forward. After he had gone a few feet, he heard a sharp clang. Looking behind him, he saw that the door had closed, sealing him in. No doubt it would remain locked until he had defeated his foes.

_This is it._ Thought Link as he faced forward again.

Link and Navi resumed their cautious approach. Slowly he began to see that there was something off about the robed individual. It seemed oddly immaterial, like a shadow or a ghost. Flowing upward around its body was a vaporous mass which hung onto its shoulders. Though Link couldn't quite make out what the creature was, he could sense its evil presence even from across the chamber.

'That's far enough I think.' said a distorted voice calmly, echoing around the chamber walls, 'Why did you come here?'

Link and Navi stopped.

'We came here to stop Slytherin's monster and retrieve the crystal!' said Navi and Link nodded firmly.

'Oh.'

The figure turned and Link recoiled.

Standing in front of him was Ginny Weasley though it was not the shy faced girl that he knew. Her skin, once fair and tinged with pink was now pale and waxy, like a corpse. Her lively friendly brown eyes were now bloodshot and rolled back into her skull. And most disturbing of all her mouth hung open through which flowed the same vaporous substance which clung to her like a vulture over its meal. Link saw that in its left hand it held a small black book and, in its right, it held a wand.

'This crystal, you know of it?' asked the figure.

Link quickly got over himself and nodded tersely. Eyes narrowing as he sized up his foe. Normally against spectral enemies he would have used light arrows, but he hadn't had access to those for some time.

'Strange.' remarked the presence with vague curiosity, 'In my time I never heard or experienced
anything like its light before and I travelled far in my quest for power."

*His voice is undistorted by the Song of Inverted Time? How is that possible?*

The figure was silent for a moment as it regarded Link.

'You come oddly equipped. Is that little thing your familiar? How quaint. And what's that your holding? A cursed axe and…is that a mirror on your arm? The basilisk is immune to its own gaze you know, if it were not it would die at the sight of its own reflection in water.'

*So it is a basilisk!*

'We didn't bring a mirror to fight the basilisk. Oddly equipped? You should talk! You're possessing an eleven-year-old girl!' shot back Navi.

'True, but I had little choice over who found me.' replied the figure in a bemused tone.

'Aha!' said Link. Grinning, he gestured at the book with his axe. The figure lifted the book and frowned slightly.

'Yes, very clever. I am the memory of the last one who opened the Chamber of Secrets, preserved in my diary. Now if you would indulge me for a moment I have a question. What exactly is that glowing rock and why do you want to retrieve it?'

'Hm.' said Navi frowning slightly, 'I suppose the answer won't do you any good anyway. That "glowing rock" is a magical catalyst - a very powerful one. And we want it because its our duty.'

'And why won't this information do me any good?' asked the figure eagerly.

'Because we're going to destroy you.' said Navi as though the answer was obvious and Link nodded his head in agreement.

The corners of Ginny's mouth stretched slightly in what Link imagined was supposed to be a smile. Spinning around limply the spectre raised Ginny's arms and from her mouth emerged a long, spitting and hissing sound. Before Link could charge forward, he saw the giant mouth of the statue slide open with a loud grinding sound. From the open mouth of the statue Link glimpsed a dark shape stir.

'Link! Shield your eyes!' cried Navi as she dove behind his shield for cover.

He immediately braced his shield against his face and started to move backward away from Ginny. As he retreated, he heard a loud wet smack as some great thing fell on the polished tile floor. From behind his shield he heard more hissing. Casting his eyes downward, he saw himself reflected on the floor.

His face was slick with sweat and he was panting heavily while his heart beat was thudding deafeningly in his ears. Hastily he flicked his gaze back to his forearm bracing his shield.

*I can't look down! I might see the creature's reflection.*

Over the sound of his racing heart and panicked breathing, he once more heard the dry rustling sound that he had heard the night Colin was attacked.

*How close is it? How far? Will it strike my shield or go for my legs?*

As he moved backward he became aware of a hot glow in his left hand. Link took a great
shuddering breath and held it. After a moment he exhaled slowly, forcing himself to ignore the growing sound of scale on stone.

*I've fought enemies I couldn't see many times before. It's just like fighting in the dark.*

'Link! I'll fly behind one of those pillars and keep my eyes on his back! If you can distract him for a little bit...' said Navi.

He nodded. Holstering his axe, he grabbed a deku nut from his pocket. Shutting his eyes tightly, he dropped his shield and threw the nut at the floor in front of him. When he heard the loud crack of the nut exploding, he forced his eyes open and looked.

Not twenty feet away from where he stood writhed a massive, green serpent, its heavy scaled eyelids were shut against its giant snub wedged face as it roiled back. Its tongue was flicking the air as it attempted to recover its senses. It wouldn't stay stunned for long.

Without wasting any time, Link drew the Hero Bow and prepared to fire an ice arrow. However, when he tried to tap into his magical energy he could sense nothing.

*What? I-* Thought Link momentarily hesitating. Shaking his head, he forced himself to act.

Steadying his arm, he loosed the arrow before slamming his eyes shut again. With a great hissing shriek he knew that he had found his target.

'Great shot, Link!' called out Navi from somewhere above him, 'That's one eye down!' He nodded as he started to retreat to his left. Holstering his bow, he raised his shield again.

'I-I think its recovered, Link! Straight ahead, it's facing you!'

He stopped moving to the left and started to back up. Drawing his hand into his tunic, he grabbed a bombchu. Hefting the heavy clockwork contraption and bracing it against his chest and shield, he awkwardly started to wind up the mechanical mouse.

'It's coming, Link!' shouted Navi.

He heard the bombchu click. Dropping his shield again he released the explosive automaton blindly in front of him. With a mechanical whirring sound, the mouse took off, guiding itself towards the King of Serpents.

For a moment the basilisk paused as the clicking and puffing blue mouse zoomed in an erratic path towards it. Over the centuries it had hunted countless rodents but never had they rushed forward so eagerly to their death. The brazenness of the contraption confused the great horned serpent and uncertainty rippled its way through its mind. Speeding forward, the bombchu moved unerringly towards the basilisk. Arching itself slightly the snake attempted to evade the strange device, but it was too late. Before it could dodge away the bombchu's shining yellow nose pressed into its hard-scaled body.

With a massive explosion the bombchu detonated. He felt shards of tile pepper his body as the explosion ripped through the Chamber of Secrets. The massive blast rocked the columns of the chamber and streams of dust fell from the loosed ceiling tiles.

'Got'em!' cried Navi triumphantly.

He kept his eyes closed as he heard the pained spitting of the monster. Grabbing another deku nut, he threw it in front of him.
Opening his eyes, he saw the snake attempting to coil its ruined body. A great hole had been blasted into its flesh which barely managed to cling itself together. Soon the creature would succumb to its wounds, but even so Link drew his bow and readied another arrow. He had learned long ago that even when heavily injured, a monster was still more than capable of killing.

He loosed the arrow into the creature's other eye. It let out another great hiss as the arrow thudded into its flesh. Reaching into his tunic, he grabbed another bombchu and wound it up. Dropping the guided bomb, he closed his eyes again, just to be safe.

The basilisk heard the bombchu approaching, but it could do nothing to stop it. Beneath the gaping hole in its body its lower half was left paralyzed and spasming uselessly against the floor. Its head flailed in vain as it tried to escape the humming rodent. Baring its fangs for a final time, the basilisk hissed as the bombchu detonated.

Link felt another massive explosion thunder through the Chamber. Heavy stone blocks fell from the ceiling above to smash into the polished marble floor below. After a few moments of crashing debris, the hall grew silent.

'You can open your eyes now, Link. It's dead.' said Navi from above.

Cautiously, he opened his eyes and peered towards the creature. Of the basilisk only tattered flesh remained. Its once great body lay mutilated almost beyond recognition in the stone rubble. As he inspected the corpse, Navi flew back to his side.

'Amazing, Link! All that stands between us and the crystal is a measly little ghost! Ha!' said Navi over his shoulder.

Reequipping his shield, he walked around the gore filled crater. Moving around a pillar, he peered back at the giant statue of Slytherin. The possessed form of Ginny was silently waiting for him at its feet.

'That serpent was as old as Hogwarts itself you know.' said the spirit as Link approached. Link thought he heard a distinct note sadness in his voice as he spoke.

Stopping about ten feet from the ghost, Link shrugged.

'I suppose I should congratulate you. Very few have managed to best a basilisk. Now I will have to kill you myself.' said the apparition, strands of vapour extended down from Ginny's shoulders to her wand arm. Like a puppeteer's strings, the mist coalesced into a faint yellow strand. While Link considered his options, the strand was suddenly pulled taught and the wand jerked upwards pointing at his chest.

'Avada Kedavra!' cried the apparition in a harsh voice.

A beam of green light shot from Ginny's wand and towards Link. Reflexively, Link caught the beam with his mirror shield. Bouncing off the polished surface, the jet of energy flew back towards Ginny. Lurching itself to the side the apparition dragged Ginny's limp form with it, narrowly avoiding the spell. The green blast continued past her and collided with the wall leaving a smouldering black scorch mark. Link looked at the smoking crater uneasily.
Link readied himself as the apparition recovered.

'How ruthless of you.' said the apparition in an amused voice, 'Over the months I have become intimately familiar with this girl's memories. She is quite fond of you, you know. But I guess the feeling isn't mutual?'

Link sprang forward.

*Just need to remove her wand. Without a wand, these wizards are defenceless!*

The ghostly creature moved, whipping Ginny's wand to the side. Before he could close the distance, Link felt something hard collide with his chest. The impact knocked him to the floor. Smashing the side of his head on a rock, he was momentarily dazed. The spectre raised Ginny's wand again and he quickly rolled to the side. Just as he rolled a green beam of light flew towards him. The blast missed him by mere inches as he sprang to his feet.

Charging with shield raised, Link saw in his peripheral vision a stone tile lift itself from the floor and rocket towards him. Reacting instantly, he blocked the heavy marble tile which exploded against his shield. Through the powdery debris he saw Ginny's wand tip glow green and without thinking he rolled as a jet of light soared over him.

*I need to attack!*

Grabbing a deku nut, Link threw it at the feet of the possessed girl. The nut exploded in a great flash and he charged again.

'Amusing.' said the spectre as a stream of blue flames erupted from Ginny's wand.

Link yelped as he jumped away from the roiling blue plasma. The blue flames flowed like water across the chamber floor forcing him to dash away.

*No effect!*

Reaching into his inventory, he grabbed his boomerang and threw it at Ginny's wand hand. The apparition responded with a contemptuous flick of Ginny's wand and the boomerang halted in mid flight and clattered to the floor.

'You sure are fond of your little toys. You do have a wand, don't you?' said the spectre in a taunting tone as it sent another barrage of stones towards him. Link ground his teeth angrily.

*If I could use my magic this would already be over!*

Link deflected and bashed the stones with his shield while he barely managed to dodge another lethal green blast. Retreating, he faced Ginny warily as he recovered. As he panted he felt blood start to drip down his face. His body was covered in tiny cuts. Though his wounds were only superficial, he could feel himself start to get slower. He had milk on him, but he didn't dare divert his attention away from his duel.

Link scowled as the ghostly form laughed.

'It's been a very long time since I've had this much fun. Go on. Draw your wand. I'll let you live a little longer.'
He looked over at the crystal then back at Ginny. He couldn't understand it.

*Why isn't he effected by the Song of Inverted Time? Why can't I use my magic? Is the crystal suppressing me somehow? Why can HE use HIS magic? This makes no sense!*

Seeing Link's frustration, the ghost laughed again and he growled. Tightening his grip on his axe, he prepared himself for another charge. However before he could move, he felt Navi brush up against his ear.

'Link! Listen! Your type of magic might not be working, but wand magic seems to be working just fine! Use your wand, Link!' she whispered.

He hesitated. He might not be having much luck with his axe, but wand magic wasn't exactly his strong suit. Then again, if this ghost was as smug as it seemed, maybe he could trick it into letting him get close. Grunting in acknowledgment, he reached into his tunic and pulled out his wand. Compared to his axe it felt flimsy and weak in his hand. Considering how few spells he knew, he didn't imagine he would last long against a bona fide dark wizard, ghost-creature...thing.

*I sure hope you know what you're doing, Navi.*

Seeing this, the apparition lowered Ginny's wand.

'Excellent! Now we can have a proper duel.'

The creature forced Ginny's head down then jerked it back up again, raising her arm it issued a sort of crude salute.

Link raised his wand.

'I believe you've had experience-' started the apparition in a smug tone, but before it could continue Link had already loosed his first spell.

*Expelliarmus!* Thought Link charging forward again.

Link's sudden attack caught the ghost off guard, but only for a fraction of a second. Before Link's spell could reach Ginny the ghost had already countered.

*Protego!* seethed the apparition, deflecting Link's spell harmlessly away *Avada Kedavra!*

Link rolled under the beam of green light. As soon as his feet touched the ground he raised his wand again.

*Expelliarmus!* Thought Link again as he jumped closer.

*Protego!* cried the ghost sending Link's curse careening back at Link. Link dodged the blast easily as he moved in closer. Suddenly Ginny's wand made a complicated motion, *Imperio!*

No light or flash emerged from Ginny's wand as the spell was cast. Instead Link felt as though he had been plunged into pleasantly warm water.

'Stop!' commanded the apparition.

Link heard the voice issue the command and for a moment he hesitated before halting midstep. Ginny was so close now. Another step and he could touch her, but it was no use. For some reason, he had no desire to move forward. Instead he just waited. Seeing him obey, the apparition made Ginny lower her wand.
'Yes. You fought better than most. Now, tell me everything you know about the crystal.'

Link heard the voice's command and he opened his mouth to answer. However, before he could speak he became aware of a growing pain in his left hand. Looking down, he felt the now searing pain spread throughout his body, forcing the pleasant warmth away.

'Link? What are you doing?' he heard Navi say.

Something clicked in his head.

*What AM I doing?!!*

With a sudden yell, he dove forward. Ginny's eyes widened in surprise and she attempted to raise her wand, but he was too close. Tackling Ginny to the ground, he reached out and twisted her wrist sharply, forcing the wand from her hands.

'Stop! I command you to stop!' screamed the vaporous mass.

Link looked down at the writhing form of Ginny beneath him.

*The book!*

Reaching down, he wrenched the small black book in Ginny's left hand.

'Nooooo!' cried the ghost as Link tore the book free.

Once the book was out of Ginny's grasp she suddenly went limp and collapsed to the floor. The yellowish cloud that had been hunched around her was pulled from her body. Link held the diary at arms length as the foul essence of whatever had latched itself to the girl retreated back into the book.

Link shook his head and wiped some of the blood off his face. Laughing he turned to Navi and wiggled the book at her.

'Link! You did it! You beat the, uh, Book Guy!' announced Navi proudly.

The battle over, Link turned back to Ginny. Her face was no longer as pale as it had been but she still looked deathly ill. Crouching, he felt for her breath and Navi flew in close to the girl's face. Her eyes were rapidly flickering against her eyelids and her skin was cold to the touch.

*She's breathing, but this cold stone floor isn't doing her any favours.*

He stood back up and examined the book Ginny had been holding. It was just a plain, cheap looking book - albeit one that reeked of dark magic. Flipping through the pages he saw that it was empty. Shrugging, he dropped it on the ground and pulled out his axe.

With a mighty two-handed stroke he struck the book. To his amazement torrents of steaming ink shot out from its pages like he had just chopped into a person's neck. Scowling, he pulled back the axe and struck again. More ink erupted from the book as he hacked it again and again. Eventually he stopped as the book oozed ink slowly, its pages and cover in unrecognizable tatters.
Frowning, he stood back up and looked over at the crystal at the foot of the Slytherin statue.

'Get the crystal Link, I'll watch Ginny.' said Navi.

Link nodded as he started to run over to the feet of the statue. The light blue crystal was almost blinding in the dull gloom of the dungeon. As he drew close to the crystal he found himself having to shield his eyes it was so bright. Reaching, he picked up the crystal and squinted at it.

*Months of searching. Months of poking through slimy holes and crawling through cobwebs. Months of classes and melodrama. But in the end I beat you!*

Grinning, he tucked the crystal into his tunic. As he did so he felt his magical powers rush back to him.

*So, it was the crystal suppressing my magic? How strange.*

Without the crystal's light the Chamber of Secrets was plunged into total darkness. The only light visible was Navi's glow as she hovered over Ginny.

'Link! Come here.' called out Navi worriedly.

Running back to Ginny's side, he crouched down beside her and Navi.

'Link, I think that creature did something to her. I can still feel some tainted presence, can't you?'

She was right. Ginny's eyes were still rolling in their sockets and her breath came in halting gasps.

He reached into his tunic and pulled out his ocarina. Closing his eyes, he began to play the Song of Healing. The notes reverberated around the blackened tomb of the basilisk. Despite the gruesome battles that had just occurred, whatever evil was left in the bitter reliquary of Slytherin's hateful legacy seemed to fade with the tune of the song and the Chamber seemed to lose a bit of its ominous power.

Opening his eyes, he saw that Ginny was now breathing normally and her skin had returned to its normal, healthy hue. Her wrist was still broken though. The Song of Healing could mend the spirit, but not the body.

'Link…the book…' Navi whispered.

He looked over at the destroyed journal. From its gashed pages a shower of light emerged. Like a plume of sparkling white smoke, it rose from the journal before disappearing into the darkness of the chamber ceiling above.

Link and Navi looked at each other. They'd never seen that before. Shrugging, Navi dove into his tunic.

'Let's get out of here, Link.'

'Hep!' he replied as he hoisted Ginny up in his arms.

Rising, he steadied himself. Once he was sure he had a good grip on Ginny, he summoned the Wind of Farore. Instantly the Chamber filled with gusting winds which concentrated around him. Rapidly building speed, they twisted around him like a tornado. Shutting his eyes, he held Ginny tighter against the swirling cloud of dust. Then just as quickly as it had appeared, the tornado collapsed and the Chamber of Secrets was empty once more.
All Hail the Hero

With a burst of wind Link, Navi and Ginny emerged from nowhere and into the 2nd floor bathroom. Stepping out of the miniature cyclone, Link saw that the bathroom was how he left it. His Penny snake was asleep in its cage, his potion ingredients and cauldron were still in their packaging, and the entrance to the Chamber of Secrets was still open.

As he looked around the room, he caught sight of himself in the mirror and stopped. Beneath his sweat soaked matted hair, his face was bloodied and covered in cuts while the side of his head was bruising an angry purple. Looking down at his tunic, he saw he was covered in slime and marble dust from his battle. Ginny was little better. Sighing, he adjusted his grip on her.

*We look like hell. No doubt the teachers will throw a fit once they see us. I could clean myself up, but I don't know enough about magic to heal Ginny. Whatever. I guess it doesn't matter if I get in trouble, she needs to get to a healer right away.*

Before he could step out of the washroom though he heard something squeak sharply. Link turned and looked around the bathroom. All was silent. Frowning, he made to step forward again before he heard the same squeaking noise.

Eyes narrowing, he kneeled down and peered underneath the stalls. They appeared to be empty, but he was sure he had heard something. Standing back up, he went to the first stall. Bracing himself, he gave the wooden stall door a sharp kick. With a bang, it flew open revealing nothing but a toilet.

*Empty.*

He moved over to the second stall and kicked open the door.

*Empty.*

Walking over to the third stall, he kicked it in.

The door burst inward to reveal nonother than Professor Lockhart dressed in his resplendent robes of pink and even more violent pink.

'Eeeek!' screamed Lockhart in terror, throwing his hands over his face. He was crouching on the toilet seat and his high heeled boots were squeaking as they moved against the porcelain.

'Huh?' said Link in disbelief.

Lockhart remained still, his face covered by his shaking hands.

'Please, please, please, please…' mewled Lockhart in a piteous voice.

'Ummm.' said Link confused, but Lockhart must not have heard him as he continued blubbering.

'No! I'm too pretty to die! Please I-'

Link cleared his throat loudly.

Slowly Lockhart parted his fingers so he could see who was in front of him. Once he spotted that it
was Link, he quickly dropped his hands.

'Uh, oh, erm…'

Link stepped back as the Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher daintily hopped down from the toilet and smoothed down his robes.

'Um, Link! W-What are you doing out at this hour? What happened to you? And…my God. Is that Ginny Weasley? I-Is she alive?' said Lockhart, looking like he might throw up.

Link nodded quickly. At that moment Ginny moaned helpfully.

'W-What happened to you two?' said Lockhart in a frightened tone, 'W-were you a-attacked?'

Link nodded and pointed at the hole.

Shell shocked, Lockhart stepped closer to the chamber entranceway, his face drawn in fear and disbelief.

'D-don't tell me…Could it be?' murmured Lockhart as he inched forward over the tunnel.

As Lockhart moved closer, his freshly polished designer unicorn hide boot suddenly slipped on the wet floor. Link would have grabbed his flailing hand, but his arms were full. With a high-pitched scream Lockhart tumbled down the pipe to the Chamber of Secrets, his wail slowly became more and more distant until it faded to nothing.

*Sorry Lockhart, but it was either save you or drop Ginny. Good luck with the rats!*

'Do you think he'll be alright down there?' whispered Navi from inside his tunic.

Link shrugged.

Pushing through the double doors of the Hospital Wing, Link stumbled into the dimly lit white tiled space, Ginny held tightly in his arms. Upon their arrival, the school nurse Madam Pomfrey rushed out of her office.

'What are you doing at this…'

The Matron stopped. Glancing from his face to Ginny, she swiftly drew her wand. Without another word she came up to him and guided him to a bed where he gently lowered Ginny down. He stepped back as Madam Pomfrey started saying incantations over her. After a few moments she stopped and pointed her wand at him. He was still as she examined him. After saying a few spells he didn't recognize she stopped.

'Here, lay down.' said Madam Pomfrey, ignoring his silent protests as she pushed him back into a waiting bed.

'What happened to the two of you? Was it the monster?' asked Madam Pomfrey as she went back to Ginny's side.

'Mmm!' said Link.
Madam Pomfrey looked at him sharply then relaxed, 'Oh, yes. You can't speak, correct?'

Link nodded.

'I understand. Just lie back. I'll be with you in a moment.'

Madam Pomfrey continued to work her magic over Ginny. Before long Ginny was no longer having difficulty breathing and her face was clean. Without skipping a beat, Madam Pomfrey turned to Link. Waving her wand over his wounds, he was surprised to see his cuts and bruises disappear almost instantly. Of course, some milk would have done the same, but still.

*I should learn more spells.* Thought Link enviously as she healed his wounds.

After about twenty minutes, Madam Pomfrey finished her treatments. Lowering her wand, she instructed him to stay in bed while she sent missives to Dumbledore and McGonagall.

*How am I going to talk my way out of this one?*

While he was thinking about his next move, Ginny stirred in her bed and slowly sat up. For a moment she just sat there, blearily looking around at her surroundings before noticing him.

'L-Link? Where are we? Am I...Is this a dream?' started Ginny drowsily.

Leaning up himself, he tried to peer into Madam Pomfrey's office. It looked like she was still trying to contact the other professors. Turning back to Ginny, he gave her a reassuring smile.

'What's going on? The last thing I remember I was in the chamber...fighting you? And then I fell. My arm hurt. Then music...' Ginny stopped as she struggled with her words. Shaking her head, she swallowed before continuing, 'I remember something carrying me away. Did-did you save me?'

Before she could continue, the hospital doors banged open. Link and Ginny turned away from each other as Dumbledore, McGonagall, and Madam Pomfrey rapidly approached them. The three adults came to a stop before their beds and Dumbledore spoke:

'Madam Pomfrey tells me that you were attacked by the monster. Under normal circumstances, I would allow you to rest before I came to question you. However, time may be of the essence so I would ask you two to try hard to remember all that you can of your encounter.' He faced Ginny first, who shrank back, 'Please if you would Miss Weasley, what happened?'

Link, McGonagall, Dumbledore and Pomfrey listened as Ginny tearfully detailed how the small black book had appeared in her bookbag one day. She explained how as she wrote into the diary, the diary would write back. Over time she started to consider the diary a close friend and she began to tell it her darkest secrets and deepest desires. Slowly though Ginny said she started to notice strange things happening to her. She would wake up in her bed still exhausted, she started experiencing memory gaps, and she found herself dreaming of standing before a giant stone statue in a chamber filled with blue light. Eventually she explained how in her darkest hour she saw Link hovering over her who carried her out of the chamber and away to safety.

'There was this beautiful song...I can't remember it, but I remember it pushing the other...thing's thoughts out of my head. I'll never forget it. Did you hear it too, Link?' said Ginny looking at Link
with shining eyes. The others also turned to him.

He shook his head.

Ginny looked at him for a moment before continuing, 'The next thing I remember is being carried out of the chamber through a windstorm. I heard voices…talking to each other? Then I woke up here.'

'Fascinating,' said Dumbledore with the utmost sincerity, 'Link. How does her account measure up with yours?'

Drawing his wand, Dumbledore conjured a long piece of parchment and a quill on his bedside desk. 'Please tell us, in your words, what happened.'

Link grabbed the quill and bent over the parchment.

*I can't tell them the truth. Whatever else happens, they must not find out about the crystal. How can I get out of this…?*

Suddenly he had an idea. Smiling slightly, he started to write.

"There I was minding my own business, when I heard a strange sound coming from the 2nd floor girl's washroom. Knocking on the door I heard what sounded like a scream. Normally I would never go into a girl's washroom, but after all the attacks I thought someone was hurt so I ran in. I didn't see anything out of the ordinary except this big hole in the floor. Standing over it, I tried to see what was at the bottom but I must've slipped because I fell. As I fell, I shouted out for help until I landed in a sewer that was filled with these giant rats. I couldn't climb my way out so I stayed put hoping that someone would come save me. Thankfully just before the rats got me, Professor Lockhart suddenly fell from the ceiling. It's a good thing he came when he did or those rats would have gotten me for sure! He told me that he heard me shouting for help and asked what I was doing. So I told him that I heard someone yelling that's why I fell in the hole too."

"Telling me to stay behind him, Lockhart and I moved through the sewers and eventually we came to this giant chamber with a big statue. Once we entered we were attacked by a giant snake that Lockhart said was a basilisk. He told me to shut my eyes or it would kill me so I didn't see what happened, but I heard explosions. After the explosions stopped, Lockhart told me I could open my eyes again. When I did I saw that he had killed the basilisk! That's when we noticed Ginny. She was at the other end of the chamber and it looked like she was being possessed by this ghost thing. The ghost said that it was the spirit of the person who opened the Chamber of Secrets fifty years ago. Lockhart and the ghost that was possessing Ginny dueled. I can't tell you what happened during the duel because Lockhart was just so fast, but he won in the end by pulling the diary to himself and tearing up the pages of the book with a magic knife that he conjured with his wand."

"Once the diary was destroyed the ghost disappeared and Ginny fell to the floor. Professor Lockhart told me to carry Ginny while he led the way back to the tunnel we had fallen down. He told me he was going to stay down there to make sure there weren't any more basilisks. Then he cast a spell that shot us back up to the bathroom and I came straight to the Hospital Wing."

He kept silent as Dumbledore and McGonagall read his yarn. As they read, their expressions began to change. McGonagall became more and more incredulous, her eyes growing wider with every word while Dumbledore looked to be getting more and more amused, a faint smile forming on his lips. Once they had both finished, they turned their attention back to him.

'This is how you remember it happening? Exactly how?' snapped McGonagall, sharply placing the
paper back down on the bedside table.

Link nodded enthusiastically and her eyes narrowed dangerously.

McGonagall opened her mouth to question him further, but Dumbledore raised his hand, 'We can verify accounts later Minerva, for now we must proceed to the 2nd floor girl's lavatory immediately. Please contact Professor Snape while I gather Professors Flitwick and Sprout. I will meet you there.'

McGonagall seemed ready to argue, but amazingly she relented. Bowing stiffly, she quickly walked out of the Hospital Wing. Once she had gone, Dumbledore turned to Link and Ginny again.

'Please remain here while we attend to the matter in the washroom. I promise you, you'll be safest here.' said Dumbledore, giving them both a reassuring smile before he faced the matron.

'Madam Pomfrey please keep a watchful eye on these two. I'm sure that after the ordeal that they have been through they need plenty of quiet and rest.'

Madam Pomfrey nodded, 'Of course Headmaster. Please be careful.'

Dumbledore bowed to them all, his eyes twinkling before he too hurried with his long stride out of the Hospital Wing.

'Alright you two, rest! And no talking. There will be plenty of time to discuss things tomorrow, but for now you must both get your sleep.' said the Matron not unkindly as she laid a pair of pajamas before them, 'Once you've dressed, please place your dirty clothes in your hamper and then try to rest, understand?'

'But-But-' started Ginny.

'No buts!' interrupted the Matron, drawing the curtains shut between the two, 'Change and then its off to bed with you!'

Link kept still as he listened to her walk away from the curtains. Once she had gone far enough that he was sure she couldn't hear him, he grabbed his testimony off the bedside table and read through it.

*Lockhart needs to get this or he'll ruin everything!*

Pulling out a crumbled piece of parchment from his pocket, he began copying. Writing as fast as he could, he rewrote word for word his testimony. The scratching of the quill must have alerted Ginny however as he heard her stop changing.

'Link? What are you doing? A-Are you writing?' asked Ginny curiously and the curtains began to rustle.

However, before she could part the curtains, Madam Pomfrey's voice cracked out like a whip.

'I said no talking! Sleep! Miss Weasley back in bed! Now!'

Link heard Ginny start grumbling followed by the sound of creaking bed springs.

*That was close!*

Finishing up his copy, he wrote a small note beneath it which read:
"LISTEN LOCKHART! This is what I told them happened! Keep to this story and you can have all the credit! Think about all the books you'll sell! Don't mention anything about a blue light or a song! NO SONG! NO BLUE LIGHT! NO MATTER WHAT ANYONE SAYS, THERE WAS NO BLUE LIGHT!"

Satisfied, he stuffed the copy beneath his pillow before he got changed. Just as he finished buttoning up his shirt, Madam Pomfrey drew back his curtains.

'Changed? Good. Now try and sleep. I'm sure it will all be over by morning.' she said kindly as she moved his hamper to the side.

Link nodded and climbed into his bed. After Madam Pomfrey left, he sprang into action again. Sliding out of bed, he quickly arranged his pillows and sheets to make it look like he was lying in bed asleep.

I wish I could use the Effigy of Emptiness right now, but Ginny and Pomfrey would hear. Thought Link sadly. He never got to play the Effigy of Emptiness.

Just as he was putting the finishing touches on his pillow double, Navi popped her head out of the hamper. Flying over to his shoulder, she leaned in his ear and whispered.

'I don't know what you're doing, but it seems risky.'

He turned to her and grinned. Rolling her eyes, she jumped into his breast pocket.

Satisfied with his dummy, he removed one of his pillow cases from his pillows and went over to the hamper. Reaching in, he found his tunic pocket and grabbed the crystal piece. Careful so as to not expose the room to its light, he quickly transferred it into the pillow case and sealed it up tight. Next, he grabbed the Stone Mask and his copied testimony. Putting the Stone Mask on, he dropped to the floor and crawled underneath his curtains. Looking over at the Matron's office, he saw Madam Pomfrey was sitting at her desk with her back to the door.

Crawling past her, he stealthily made his way out into the hallway. Once the hospital doors had closed, he took off at a dead sprint for the Owlery.

Link's bare feet slapped against the cold stone of the stairs as he ran to the top of the Owlery Tower.

As long as I send the crystal piece away then it won't matter how much trouble I get in.

Coming to the door, he threw it open. Just as he was about to step inside, Navi chimed warningly.

'Check the floor, Link.' she said.

He looked down. The floor was covered in Guano. How had he forgotten that?

Pulling out the Ocarina of Time, he played the Song of Soaring from the doorway. Thankfully, Kaepora Gaebora wasn't being picky and he materialized within view. Alighting himself on a wooden beam, he primed his feathers and started to speak.

'Hoo! You return once-' started Gaebora.
Before the sage could say another word, Link threw the crystal piece towards him. Gaebora snapped his beak shut as he snatched the crystal with his talons. Link waved at him once before he spun on his heel and sprinted back down the stairs.

'Ah-Hoo?' inquired Gaebora, puzzled.

'Sorry! Time is of the essence.' yelled Navi exasperatedly just before the door shut.

Alone now, the great owl chuckled to himself and ruffled his feathers.

'You have a difficult job, guardian.'

With that Kaepora Gaebora spread his wings and soared away into the timestream, the crystal piece held tightly in his talons.

Shoudering through the door to the Defence Against the Dark Arts classroom, Link sprinted past the rows of desks and up the small staircase to Lockhart's office. Throwing the door open, he ran inside and up to Lockhart's desk, copied testimony in hand.

'Link, I think your plan is a little…optimistic.' said Navi as he came to a screeching halt.

'It's a longshot I know, but I'm sure Lockhart's first instinct will be to take all the credit!' said Navi as Link unceremoniously swept Lockhart's desk clear of inkwells and autographs so that his instructions would be more prominent, 'Lockhart is a liar and a blowhard and I'm sure he'd kill for the chance to be the hero of Hogwarts, but in order for this to work he can't say anything to Dumbledore or the others that will contradict your story when they discover him in the Chamber. I mean, don't you think they're at least going to ask him how he did it?'

'Meh.' said Link as he set the note down squarely on the desk.

'I thought you'd want to just run away. Or just let yourself be expelled. That would be easiest. We have what we need after all.' she said, looking at him intently, but he was silent. When he made no response she just sighed.

'Well, no matter. I have to admit, I'm kind of curious to see what happens next.' she glanced over at the clock. A smiling Gilderoy pointed to half past eleven.

'It's been over ten minutes, we should get back before you're noticed.'

His message set, he prayed for luck then ran back to the Hospital Wing. Walking on tip toe, he saw that Pomfrey still hadn't moved. Parting the curtains around his bed, he put the Stone Mask back in his tunic pocket before laying down. Looking up at the ceiling, he put his hands behind his head and relaxed.

*I guess we'll see what happens tomorrow.*
Lockhart stood at the far end of the Chamber of Secrets staring dumbfounded at the giant statue of Salazaar Slytherin. Whoever the person was in front of him, he sure had a great sense of fashion. As he examined the statues pose, he heard the faint knocking sound of stone on stone. With a yelp he spun around, illuminated wand raised above his head.

He sighed in relief as he saw that it was only tiny flecks of rubble falling from the ceiling. Whatever battle had happened here, he had just missed it.

Sighing to himself, he sat down on one of the Statue's feet. How had it come to this?

When he had first been offered the Defence Against the Dark Arts job last summer, he couldn't believe his luck. Teaching at Hogwarts payed well, it was extremely prestigious, AND it gave his credibility a much needed boost. The only reason he hadn't tried to get the job sooner was because he knew he could never manage to get through the interview. Which is why when Lucius Malfoy had offered to just appoint him to the position, he had been over the moon with happiness. Looking back on it. It did seem odd. He'd always heard that Lucius was quite shrewd, but he wasn't going to look a gift horse in the mouth.

Oh, but how foolish he had been. Of course the one year a legendary monster starts attacking people is the one year he is teaching. How would it look, if he, Gilderoy Lockhart, the famed adventurer/playboy extraordinaire was unable to put a stop to the attacks? Honestly, Lucius couldn't have hired a worse person if he had tried. Maybe the stories were true and the Defence Against the Dark Arts position really was cursed.

Needless to say he had no intention of fighting anything. When the attacks had first started and he and the rest of the teachers had been given nightly patrol duty, he had tried explaining that an experienced monster hunter such as himself was best left to his own devices, but they had accused him of cowardice!

They were right of course, but did they have to be so rude about it?

Naturally he had no intention of actually fighting anything. Instead he had been using his watch shifts to catch up on his beauty sleep. One of his favourite spots to nap as of late was the second floor woman's restroom. No one ever went in there for some reason, and it was one of the few places he could reliably get some peace and quiet.

Just as he was settling in, who should come ruin his evening but that weird crybaby Link. Not only that, but apparently, God had a sense of humour as he had by some unbelievable coincidence actually managed to choose the exact location of the entrance to the Chamber of Secrets. And now here he was, stuck in this filthy, disgusting, dungeon. The only thing keeping him from breaking entirely was that he knew there was an opportunity here. If this was indeed the Chamber of Secrets then he could at least claim he was partly responsible for saving Hogwarts. Maybe even more! Were the public really going to believe that some half-breed was able to defeat Slytherin's monster? Besides, Link was mute! All he needed to do was find the little bastard. Maybe perform a little memory therapy...

Standing, he looked around the chamber helplessly. It was only a matter of time before those vicious rodents that had chased him down here came back. There had to be a way out!

Moving over to the walls, he started to push and prod the giant stone masonry, looking in vain for some clue. While he was trying to get his wand unstuck from a crack in the wall, he suddenly heard the sound of faint voices. Listening closely, he could swear he heard footsteps.
Link and Ginny must have told the professors I was down here. I'm saved!

With a mighty pull he yanked his wand tip free sending him pinwheeling backwards. Landing on his rump with an undignified thud, he started to awkwardly climb back up to his feet.

'Damn!' he said angrily as he noticed his stained pants. Hippogriff skin was extremely expensive to clean.

As he was wiping himself off, he suddenly perked up. The footsteps were getting louder. Looking back at the entrance way, he saw wand light shining forward.

Giddy with relief, he quickly ran over to one of the coiled pillars beside the dead snake (was it a snake? He couldn't be sure) and put on his literally trademarked smile.

'Ahoy there!' he called out with a wave.

The light stopped advancing for a moment as it focused on the source of the sound. He waved again and the footsteps resumed. After a few moments the light resolved itself into four wand points. The wands dimmed as they approached and Lockhart saw the faces of Dumbledore, McGonagall, Snape, and Flitwick.

'Well, well, professor. It seems as though you've arrived before us.' said the cold voice of Snape.

Despite himself, Lockhart couldn't help but feel his smile falter at the sound of Snape's voice. The other teachers were bad enough, but Snape? Snape terrified him.

'Yes. Yes, I'm afraid I just couldn't wait. Had to spring into action you know, lives at stake and whatnot.' Lockhart managed to say in his most chivalrous voice.

McGonagall gasped as she pointed her wand at the dead snake thing beside him.

'Albus, is that…' McGonagall said in a fearful tone. All the other wand tips alighted on the snake's corpse.

'A basilisk. Yes. It would appear as though there is some truth to young Link's story.' said Professor Dumbledore in a calm voice. The other professors quickly fanned out, their wands pointed in all directions.

'Ah! Yes, Link. Um, you know. Kids and their stories. What, uh, did he tell you?' asked Lockhart in a casual tone.

'Actually, perhaps it would be better to hear your account first.' said Flitwick.

Lockhart felt sweat break out over his body as McGonagall, Snape, and Flitwick glared at him. He laughed nervously.

'Come now. Accounts can wait until after we have secured the chamber! I mean…I've already secured the chamber, but…' he felt the words die in his throat as Dumbledore began striding towards him.

'I-I-' he started.

However Dumbledore swept past him towards the giant statue. Blinking, he quickly turned to chase alongside Dumbledore, jogging slightly to keep up with the taller man's stride.

'S-So as you can see the monster is dead! Hogwarts is saved. No need to thank me of course, just
doing my duty.' He paused to wipe some sweat off his brow, 'It's quite humid down here. My hair must be in a state.' he said jokingly, but he was met with stony silence.

Dumbledore came to a stop in front of the ink-soaked diary.

'Ah, yes. That. Bit of unfortunate business really.' said Lockhart frowning slightly. When he had first entered the chamber, he hadn't seen the book on the floor and accidentally slipped on the pool of ink and stained his boots. Unicorn hide was extremely expensive to clean too.

Dumbledore picked up the diary carefully, his eyes full of thought.

'What is it Albus?' asked McGonagall concernedly.

'I think that-' started Dumbledore slowly, 'I will need some time to consider what has happened here tonight. He looked over at Flitwick. 'Filius, would you be so kind as to return Professor Lockhart back to his office? I'm sure he is tired after his battle.'

Lockhart stared at Dumbledore blankly before smiling. Some rest would be excellent, especially as his nap was disturbed.

'Y-Yes. Exhausted really. Fighting the basilisk really took it out of me. Need to-' He felt his knees go weak as he noticed the looks that the three professors were giving him, 'recover.' he finished, swallowing.

Flitwick shook his head in disgust before sharply gesturing for him to follow. Without needing to be told twice, he sprang over to Flitwick's side, giving the glaring Professor Snape a wide berth. As he walked, he felt his fear ebbing away.

'Pomona is waiting back at the bathroom entrance. Come.' said Flitwick in an annoyed tone, but Lockhart didn't notice. He was too busy cataloguing his thoughts.

_Battle of the Basilisk? No, no. Secret of the Serpent? Hmmm..._

As the sun dawned over Hogwarts Castle the curtains around Ginny and Link's bed were thrown back. Link rose from his covers with a fake yawn and luxurious stretch as Madam Pomfrey arranged a food tray before him.

'Good morning!' Madam Pomfrey said crisply, 'I just received word from the Headmaster. After you've eaten he wants the two of you to meet him at his office.'

Ginny nodded numbly. She looked so nervous she might throw up. Link had heard her tossing and turning in her bed all night and she probably didn't get a wink of sleep. Madam Pomfrey's expression softened upon noticing her discomfort.

'Don't worry dear. I doubt anyone will hold you responsible for anything. So long as you tell the truth-' Pomfrey shot Link a look and he smiled back at her innocently, '-you'll both be fine.'

After she set the breakfast trey down in front of Ginny, she walked away back to her office. As soon as Pomfrey was out of sight, Ginny didn't waste anytime before questioning him.

'What happened last night?! What did you tell McGonagall and Dumbledore?! Can I see?!' she
pointed at the parchment in front of him. Moving his breakfast aside, he hopped out of his bed and handed the parchment to her.

Ginny quickly read through the note. Once she was finished she looked at him like he should be in a straightjacket.

'Are you serious?' she asked in a hushed voice.

He nodded slowly. To his alarm she let out a high-pitched tittering laugh like a madman. Her eyes were wide with fear, as she shook her head.

Link's smile faded as he heard her suicidal laughter.

*I thought it was a pretty good story!* Thought Link haughtily as he took a sip of his orange juice.

After Ginny managed to get a grip she rounded on him.

'Link, this isn't what happened!' said Ginny, her frenzied smile disappearing, 'I remember being in the chamber and fighting you. I remember a...a song and you carrying me.' she shook her head, 'Lockhart, really? Really?!' He looked away from her accusatory stare, 'Why are you lying? Are you trying to get yourself expelled?' she asked in a dumbfounded voice.

Link scoffed indignantly and pointed at the paper.

'No.' stated Ginny crossing her arms and scowling, clearly not buying any of it, 'You're up to something, I just know it.'

He shrugged and turned back to his breakfast.

After a few minutes of silence during which neither one of them touched their meal, McGonagall entered the Hospital Wing and approached them.

'If you're ready, the Headmaster will see you both now.' said McGonagall curtly.

Still in their hospital pajamas, they rose from their beds and went with McGonagall through the empty halls to Dumbledore's office. Along the way, Ginny walked like she was heading to her execution. Seeing her worried expression, Link couldn't help but feel a pang of sympathy for her.

*There's no way she can get expelled for being possessed. That would be ridiculous.*

After a tortuously slow walk, they finally came before the gargoyle statue. Speaking the password, McGonagall led the pair up the staircase to Dumbledore's office.

'Good morning.' said Dumbledore as the three walked into the circular office. The morning sunrise was streaming through the windows and Dumbledore's glasses twinkled as he warmly regarded the pair.

'Morning.' said Ginny somberly and Link gave a slight nod.

'Please, have a seat.' said Dumbledore, pointing to one of the four chairs in front of him.
Rushing forward, Link chose the chair on the far left and quickly seated himself while Ginny sat on his right and McGonagall maneuvered herself beside Dumbledore's desk where she stood facing them, a stern expression on her face.

'Now then. While you two were recovering, myself and Professors Sprout, Flitwick, McGonagall, and Snape went to the 2nd floor girl's washroom where Link had informed us he had discovered a mysterious hole.' said Dumbledore, smiling at the two.

Ginny and Link were motionless as Dumbledore continued.

'True to Link's word, inside the lavatory we found the hole and upon entering, we arrived in an ancient extension of the Hogwarts sewer system just as Link had described. After moving through the tunnels, we located the fabled Chamber of Secrets and our very own professor Lockhart.'

Ginny's mouth dropped open in surprise. Link carefully kept his expression blank as Ginny sputtered.

'W-What?' said Ginny.

'Oh, yes. We found him next to the corpse of a basilisk. Apparently, the rumours of Lockhart's prowess in battle were not exaggerated and he was able to defeat the serpent in single combat.' said Dumbledore in an impressed voice. Ginny blanched and McGonagall shifted her weight uneasily.

'It is a pity you could not witness the battle, Link.' said Dumbledore forlornly, 'To my knowledge, no one has ever defeated a basilisk by themselves without using a rooster.'

Link laughed slightly and shrugged. Running a hand through his hair, he careful avoided McGonagall's eye. She was staring at him intensely.

'Moving beyond the dead basilisk, we found this.' from an unseen drawer behind his desk, Dumbledore produced the destroyed black diary. Holding it up, he showed it to the two and Ginny recoiled, 'Do not worry Miss Weasley. Whatever power this book held has been broken. Do you know what this is?'

Ginny shook her head vehemently, 'I know it's Tom Riddle's diary, but that's all I know.' she said pleadingly.

'That is correct.' said Dumbledore proudly as though she had just answered a question in class, 'In truth, what you cannot have known is that this is actually an object of dark magic. A trap as sinister as it is ingenious in its construction.' Dumbledore considered the diary and frowned. Placing it back on his desk he turned his attention back to them.

'Tom Riddle was a once promising student. Perhaps the most talented Hogwarts has ever known. I'm afraid his ambition proved to be his undoing however. Now Miss Weasley, I have a question for you.' continued Dumbledore looking at Ginny who squirmed beneath his gaze, 'You described the Chamber of Secrets as being filled with a blue light, correct?'

Ginny nodded quickly.

'Hmm, the chamber was in darkness when we greeted Professor Lockhart. Link when you were there earlier, did you see any blue light?' he asked turning to Link.

Link shook his head firmly. Dumbledore considered him for a moment before he spoke again.

'It is possible that the light was extinguished as part of a trap to defeat Lockhart. Although it
puzzles me as to why the heir would do so. After all, when fighting a basilisk darkness is your ally. If you cannot see their eyes, you do not have to fear their gaze.' said Dumbledore sagely.

While Dumbledore regarded him and Ginny, Link heard the distinctive click of expensive shoes on stone and the door to Dumbledore's office opened.

'Headmaster. You summoned me?'

Link and Ginny turned. Lockhart, clad in a splotchy blue and orange vest with black pants, strode towards them. A cocky grin on his face.

'Ah! The Hero of the day returns to us. How was your well-deserved rest? Satisfying I hope.' said Dumbledore, beaming at the man.

'It was!' assured Lockhart merrily as he approached the headmaster's desk, 'No rest is sweeter than after having conquered evil!' stated Lockhart enthusiastically, raising his fist as though in triumph. McGonagall snorted.

'Wise words. Wise words.' agreed Dumbledore sagely. Link noticed that McGonagall had a distinctly Snape like expression on her face as she glowered at Lockhart.

'Would you please have a seat, Professor? I'm just wrapping up my explanation of last nights events to young Link and Ginny here and I was hoping to hear your account from the mouth of the story master himself.'

'Gladly!' said Lockhart, smiling as he settled himself into the comfortable chair.

With remarkable enthusiasm, Lockhart launched into his tale. He spoke loftily of how he had often longed to teach the ways of magic. To be a father figure to those who needed guidance, and where better to teach than at Hogwarts, the most famous magical school in the world! Dumbledore smiled at this and nodded understandingly while McGonagall drew her lips tighter.

He had heard that the Defence Against the Dark Arts position at Hogwarts had a reputation for being cursed of course, but he wanted to enlighten young minds so badly that he just had to take up the position, regardless of the risk to himself. For the good of the children.

When he first arrived at Hogwarts he was overcome by the friendliness of his fellow staff and students, but lurking beneath their smiling faces he sensed that something was amiss. There was a dark force at work amongst the student body, but as he was a new professor he could not pinpoint it precisely. It was at this time that he met a young shy boy named Link. Link was exactly the sort of child that he had come to Hogwarts for. A bullied mute, who was harassed constantly for his heritage as a non-pure human wizard.

Link felt his face grow red as Lockhart described how he would oftentimes catch him crying in the halls or at the dining table, mercilessly tormented for his pointed ears and quiet demeanour. However, what the other students and staff did not realize was that beneath his shy, awkward, shell was a talented young wizard who had mastered nonverbal magic! All he needed was a coach, someone to build his confidence and teach him how to carry himself in the modern wizarding world.
Dumbledore nodded wisely 'A noble sentiment. I have often said that teaching does not end in the classroom. What happened next?'

Lockhart then explained how reaching Link was initially difficult. Link would often reject his advice and storm out of his classrooms as he was unused to being shown affection. However, that all changed when Lockhart heroically saved him from three seventh year bullies using naught but his words. From that moment on they shared a sacred bond.

'Really?' asked Dumbledore eagerly, setting aside the tea and biscuits he had summoned for his guests 'And how would you describe this bond? Like a father and son perhaps?'

'Exactly.' said Lockhart. He looked over at Link fondly and Link shrunk back into his chair, avoiding eye contact with everyone now.

'Go on. Your bond of trust established, what did you do when the attacks started?' said Dumbledore, sipping his tea.

Lockhart nodded. When the attacks began the students and staff became paralyzed with fear. He explained how he felt as though he had failed the school. He had become distracted with his responsibilities as a teacher and mentor, and as such a student had paid the price. Worse, it was Colin Creevey. Another awkward child who was Link's only friend, besides himself of course. He then detailed how he and Link spent their evenings searching for the entrance to the Chamber of Secrets. Their goal was simple. To save the school and end the legacy of terror that was Slytherin's monster.

'You had a first-year student search the school for a monster at night?' asked McGonagall bitingly.

'He couldn't be stopped! Motivated by a need for vengeance and a desire to prove himself, I couldn't keep him away! Were all my lessons of heroism for naught?' Lockhart said passionately.

McGonagall scoffed. Link sensed she was staring at him again, but at that moment he was trying his hardest to will himself invisible.

After a few months of searching and misadventures the pair at long last discovered the entrance to the chamber. Lockhart reasoned that they should retreat, gather the other professors and attack in force. However, before he could do anything, they heard a scream from inside the tunnel. It was Ginny! Overcome with emotion, Link leapt down to her aid.

'Wait. What do you mean he was overcome with emotion at the sound of my voice.' asked Ginny confused.

'It was love.' said Lockhart in a grandiose tone.

Link, who had by now reconciled the fact that he couldn't turn invisible, had retreated into his happy place.

'Did you not know?' Lockhart said to Ginny who had gone scarlet, 'For months now, he has been infatuated with you. Only he never worked up the courage to tell you how he feels.' he said, softly patting her arm while she worked her mouth speechlessly.

'Few have the courage to confess their love.' said Dumbledore sadly, before perking up, 'But at last, we are at the Chamber! Do go on Gilderoy.'

Taking a moment to collect himself, Lockhart resumed his story. After Link had jumped down, he had followed without hesitating. Landing in the dungeon below, he caught up with his young
protegee, fighting off a horde of rats in the process. He had urged caution, but Link was insistent on pushing forward to save Ginny. He considered arguing but, in the end, he agreed to help. After all, had he not done the same countless times before? Whether for love or otherwise? Moving together they came upon the shadow wrapped chamber itself.

'Wrapped in a shadow as dark as the abyss itself?' repeated Dumbledore, looking at Lockhart intently, 'That is how you describe it?'

'Yes. It was pitch black.' he said nodding before looking over at Link. Link nodded carefully.

'I see. Sorry for the interruption. Please continue.' said Dumbledore.

Upon entering the chamber, Lockhart said he immediately became aware of a monster stalking them in the darkness. He, recognizing the characteristic hiss of the basilisk, instructed Link to close his eyes. Then, casting a blinding charm to protect himself, he did battle against the scaled behemoth.

Link carefully controlled his expression as Lockhart described his battle with the giant snake. Funnily enough it wasn't that different from how the basilisk was actually beaten. Though he did wish that Lockhart kept the sound effects to a minimum.

'And then bam!' Lockhart shouted, slapping Dumbledore's desk, 'The basilisk had fallen into my trap. With a huge explosion the slithery fiend was torn asunder.'

Dumbledore stroked his beard while he marvelled at Lockhart's ingenuity, 'To think; being able to combine a weight measure charm with a blasting curse all while having to transfigure the tiles beneath the snake into highly explosive dragon dung! Astounding!'

'While blind…' added McGonagall in an empty voice.

'Yes. All while blind.' said Lockhart smugly, 'Though I'm sure the two of you could do the same, maybe with a little practice…'

'What happened next?' prompted Dumbledore before Lockhart could get distracted.

'Oh, this is the best part!'

After the basilisk was defeated, he and Link saw Ginny standing alone at the far end of the chamber. Link tried to spring forward to his love's side but he pulled him back. Surrounding her was a subtle but immensely powerful dark energy. She was ensnared. Ensnared by the evil spirit of the one who opened the chamber fifty years ago!

Dumbledore's face suddenly became grave and he stared at Lockhart seriously, 'And how did you know this?'

Lockhart's smile wavered. Licking his lips, he looked over at Link for help. Link glanced at Lockhart briefly before he wiped his mouth and looked away.

'B-because he told me so, of course!' said Lockhart smiling again, 'He was quite boastful about being the last heir of Slytherin!'

Dumbledore tapped his desk a few times before he nodded and smiled again. He motioned Lockhart to continue.

Lockhart explained how after the usual exchange of pleasantries he and the dark spirit started to
duel. Under normal circumstances the duel would have been trivial, but the spirit was using Ginny as its vessel and Lockhart refused to harm an innocent. Instead he used his keen observational skills to determine that the ghost was using a small black book as its medium. Summoning the book to himself, Lockhart conjured a knife and destroyed the book.

'With the book destroyed the wraith was banished. Evil had met its match and Ginny was freed!'

'Bravo!' said Dumbledore rising in applause. Link and Ginny reluctantly joined in while McGonagall stood still, scowling.

Lockhart rose and bowed deeply to the applause, a toothy grin on his face.

'Once the Last Heir of Slytherin was no more, Link rushed over to Ginny's side. He volunteered to carry her to the Hospital Wing while I secured the chamber for reinforcements.' Lockhart said, smiling at Ginny and Link who were matching shades of red.

'It must have been quite a moment for you, Link.' said Dumbledore smiling serenely, 'To have rescued Ginny. Why I daresay after such an experience your love for each other must be fated!'

Link and Ginny glanced at each other uncomfortably as Dumbledore laughed. To Link's surprise, McGonagall started chuckling quietly as well.

Clapping his hands together Dumbledore settled back in his desk, 'Well I think that settles it! Lockhart your account of events matches up perfectly with Link's.'

'What?!' shouted Ginny, jumping forward in her seat, 'But-but what about the song!? And the lights!?'

Dumbledore smiled at her, 'I do not doubt that you are telling the truth about what you think you experienced.' he said kindly, 'But you were not in full control of your faculties.'

Ginny slumped back in her chair, 'I know what I saw…what I heard…'

'Perhaps things will become clearer in time.' said Dumbledore softly, before addressing the room again. 'For now though, I think we've all sat in this office long enough. Lunch will start soon and I have to prepare the announcement to the students.' He swept his arm towards the door.

Link didn't need to be told twice. Jumping out of his chair, he sprinted for the exit.

'Oh, but one last thing.'

Link froze and turned slowly.

Dumbledore had stood up at his desk. In his hand was Link's boomerang.

*My boomerang! I must have forgotten it!*

'I believe this belongs to one of you? We found it on the chamber floor.'

Lockhart flapped his mouth in dumbfounded confusion as he looked between the boomerang and Link. Sighing, Link ran forward and accepted the boomerang from Dumbledore.

'You're welcome.' said Dumbledore, smiling.

Link returned the smile weakly, stepping back. Before he could get away, Dumbledore started speaking again.
'Oh, and Link?'

He snapped his eyes back to the headmaster.

'I believe you left your potions ingredients, cauldron and pet Penny snake on the floor of the girl's washroom.' said Dumbledore.

Link stared blankly before comprehension dawned on his face.

'As I understand it from Madam Rosmerta, you used her fireplace in the Three Broomsticks to travel to Diagon Alley to do a little shopping yesterday evening?'

'Uh.' started Link, paused awkwardly in mid stride, trying to come up with an excuse.

'Oh, that was my doing Albus. Sorry about that I was, uh, testing some theories on serpents and I thought it best if I had one on hand you know. Experiments and such.' Lockhart said magnanimously.

'Oh?' said Dumbledore turning to Lockhart, 'Such an admirable thing, to have so much trust in another. Very well then Link, as it was by Professor Lockhart's instruction, I will let the matter slide this time. But- he paused, his expression suddenly becoming firm, '-you should have asked for Madam Rosmerta's permission first before you used her Floo powder and fireplace. I think twenty points from Gryffindor will suffice as a reminder.'

Link felt a lump form in his throat. Swallowing, he gave a small nod.

That was close.

Dumbledore nodded, 'All right then, off you go.'

Link spun and took off for the door. Ginny looked as though she wanted to speak with him, but he had endured enough unpleasant conversation for one day. Racing ahead of her, he ran down the spiral staircase and back to Gryffindor Tower.

Once Lockhart, Ginny, and Link had all left the circular office, Dumbledore settled back down in his chair while chuckling softly to himself.

'I must say, Lockhart has a true talent for theatrics. I can see how he's managed to become so popular. I can't recall the last time I was so entertained! I really must thank Lucius for hiring him.' said Dumbledore as he straightened his golden glasses, 'So, Minerva. A penny for your thoughts?'

'Link is lying.' said McGonagall without hesitation, 'He knows what happened in the Chamber last night and it damn sure wasn't what Lockhart described. Transmutation of marble to dragon dung...' she muttered darkly, scowling at the memory.

'Yes, Link is lying.' agreed Dumbledore, smiling, 'In this case, Legilimency is easily trumped by a teacher's intuition. I daresay whoever trained the boy in Occlumency should have also given him acting lessons!'

'But why is he lying, Albus? The monster was defeated, the girl rescued, he could be called a hero. What possible motivation would he have to endure the humiliation he just went through?'
'I truly do not know.' said Dumbledore, frowning. He looked down at the black diary on his desk, 'I am having the rather unpleasant sensation that I am missing something of crucial importance. Miss Weasley made two claims that puzzle me. One, was a mysterious song she heard. As I recall Link indicated that he was a proficient musician on his application letter correct?'

'Yes. But why would he play music in the Chamber of Secrets of all places?'

'Perhaps it was more than mere music. Ginny claimed to have been quite affected by it after all.' said Dumbledore thoughtfully.

'And Ginny's other claim, the light?' led McGonagall and Dumbledore nodded, 'What do you make of that?'

'I haven't a clue.' said Dumbledore absently, 'Very mysterious.'
Link entered his dorm room and quickly looked around to make sure he was alone. It seemed as though everyone had already left for lunch. Hurrying over to his wardrobe, he saw that his tunic had been cleaned and now hung neatly. Stripping out of the hospital pajamas, he changed while Navi took her time torturing him.

'Link do you have any idea how hard it was to stay composed during Lockhart's story?' she asked, her voice full of mocking laughter.

'Mmhmm.' he grumbled as he checked his pockets.

Nothing seems to be missing...

'I had no idea you wanted a role model so desperately.'

'Mmhmm!' he growled, glaring up at the fairy that was wisely flying just out of reach.

'I mean, I noticed you were crying more than usual, but I didn't know all those bullies were getting to you! Maybe I- ' Navi was interrupted as Link grabbed his pillow and started swinging at her. Laughing, she dodged away while continuing her taunting.

Their fight was suddenly interrupted by a knocking on the dorm door. Link and Navi paused mid struggle and glanced at each other. After a moment the knocking came again, more forcefully this time.

Link dropped his pillow and Navi dove under his bed. Walking over, he cautiously turned the door handle.

As soon as the door was cracked open, the door flew open. Stepping away, Link was forced back as Ginny stumbled into the room. Chest heaving, she sucked in air in great breaths and pointed at him.

'S-Stay there!' she gasped.

He watched as the dishevelled redhead slowly recovered. Wiping sweat from her eyes, she stood back upright and glared at him. He raised his eyebrows quizzically. Without warning she drew back her fist and punched him in the arm as hard as she could.

'Ow!' exclaimed Link, jumping back slightly.

'Where are running off to?! Didn't you know I wanted to talk to you?! Now the whole school saw me running around in pajamas!' shouted Ginny angrily.

'Eh-' started Link. But before he could do anything however she punched him again.

'Ow! Hey!'

'And what was with that story?! I'm your true love?! That's such crap! You and Lockhart are lying, admit it!' said Ginny, raising her fist threateningly.

Link sighed as she searched his face.
After all she went through she deserves the truth. Maybe not all of it, but enough so she won't hit me anymore at least.

He nodded, smiling roguishly.

'Why?' she exclaimed, slapping her sides.

Walking over to his desk, he grabbed a quill and some spare parchment. Scribbling a response, he passed her the note.

"Not everything Lockhart said was a lie. Most of it was just exaggerated." read Ginny in a flat tone. She paused for a moment before advancing on him with her fists raised.

'You expect me to believe that?!' she shouted, her face red with fury.

Link swallowed. He nodded slowly.

'Argh!' she cried in frustration. Punching him one last time, she stormed from the room, slamming the door shut behind her. After a few seconds Navi poked her head up from under his bed.

'I think that went surprisingly well.'

Link didn't want to go to lunch to hear Dumbledore's announcement, but Navi insisted he attend.

'Think how it will look if you don't go. You know how this school is with gossip. They'll be kicking down the door to talk to you.'

Link groaned as he dutifully left his room. Marching to the Great Hall, he spotted Luna sitting by herself as usual. Moving over to her, he sat down next to her.

'Hey Link. What's wrong?' she asked, noticing his forlorn expression.

He looked at her sadly.

Once I get labelled a laughingstock I probably won't be able to show my face around here anymore.

With effort he pulled his grimace into an insincere smile. Luna looked back at him with a bewildered expression as Dumbledore called for calm. He felt a cold pit of dread start to form in his stomach as everyone fell silent while Dumbledore beamed at the students.

'Everyone, I have an important announcement.' said Dumbledore, his voice carrying itself through the hall, 'Last evening the Chamber of Secrets was located and it has been resealed. Permanently.'

The hall was silent for a moment as everyone processed what they had heard before erupting into thunderous cheers and applause. Luna whirled to face him. Grabbing his arm, she almost yanked him over.

(Link, is it really over?!' she asked excitedly and he nodded, grinning nervously.

Dumbledore surveyed the hall as everyone cheered and hugged each other. Well almost everyone.
There was a small cadre of students, Draco Malfoy amongst them, who looked distinctly upset.

'And that's not all,' continued Dumbledore and the hall grew quiet in anticipation of his next announcement. 'The person we have to thank for freeing us from the looming shadow of the beast of Slytherin is…' Dumbledore paused dramatically. Luna tightened her hold on Link's arm, mouth open in breathless anticipation as the whole hall waited on the edge of their seat.

'Gilderoy Lockhart!' shouted Dumbledore, extending his arm towards the grinning professor who popped out of his seat and did a sweeping bow. There were a few wild shrieks, but most people looked at each other in confused silence.

'D-did he say, Lockhart?' asked Luna, looking at Link like she must have misheard. She wasn't the only one. All across the hall people started wondering if this was some sort of joke.

He nodded sheepishly, a small pained smile on his face.

'Now, I know you all want details...' started Dumbledore teasingly, and Link dropped his head into his hands.

Here it comes. Oh God, I'm done for. I hope they don't make fun of Luna too. Maybe I shouldn't have sat next to her. As soon as its nightfall, I'm packing my bags and-

'But! Professor Lockhart has indicated to me that he would prefer his deeds be kept anonymous for now while he works with his publisher. However, rest assured that soon the whole record of what occurred here will be released for the world to read and enjoy!'

Link snapped his head back upright, his jaw dropping in surprise. He couldn't believe his luck! Though he was confused. No mention of him at all? What was Dumbledore playing at?

I guess it doesn't matter. By the time Lockhart's book is ready, I'll be long gone. Ha!

Slowly everyone processed what they had just heard. Eventually they got over their shock and a few people started to applaud. Lockhart bowed and the hall slowly filled with cheers, whoops, and shouts. After a few seconds of cheering the students started to rise, giving him a standing ovation while he kept bowing and blowing kisses.

The professors, who were still sitting, looked on darkly.

'I believe this calls for a celebration.' boomed Dumbledore, his voice barely audible above the crowd. 'Enjoy!'

At his gesture the tables suddenly filled with mountains of food. At its appearance the hall erupted into fresh cheers. With new found enthusiasm everyone began reaching for their favorite dish and the hall quickly broke out into laughing conversation. The relief in the air was almost palpable as worried expressions dissolved into smiles and a long overdue feeling of normalcy returned.

While everyone celebrated around them, Luna turned to Link in amazement, 'Wha-What happened? Did Lockhart really-

Link shook his head and stood up from the table. Beckoning for her to follow him, he led her out of the Great Hall. Everyone was so preoccupied with their feast that nobody noticed them leave.

'What's going on, Link? What happened with the Chamber of Secrets?' asked Luna excitedly.

Link looked at her and held a finger up to his lips. Motioning her to keep following him, they
jogged out of the Entrance Hall and into the castle grounds.

'What's going on?' said Luna once they had reached a safe distance, 'C'mon, I can't take the suspense!'

Navi popped out of Link's tunic and waved at her.

'Hi Luna. What Dumbledore just said is true, the Chamber of Secrets was sealed. Me and Link were able to recover the dark magic artifact and the plot against Hogwarts is over.' said Navi cheerfully.

'That's great! Why do you look so down then?'

'Well, Link had to do some embarrassing lying to make sure he wasn't caught…' said Navi. She explained the whole tale to Luna who listened patiently. To her credit she barely laughed.

'Well, what's done is done. What matters is you saved Ginny, Link.' said Luna, giving him a pat on the shoulder, 'Does she know?'

He hesitated before giving a half nod, half shrug.

'So Ginny suspects something is up. Maybe you should just tell her what you told me. I trust Ginny. She's a good person.'

'Yes.' said Navi slowly, 'But the more people who know a secret, the less secure that secret is. Trust is important, but right now our mission takes priority.'

'Mmm!' agreed Link, nodding seriously.

Luna shrugged, 'If you say so. Now that you stopped the plot and recovered the artifact, isn't your mission over though?'

Link and Navi glanced at each other.

'Maybe. We're going to need to talk to someone first. Once we know that our quest is over, Me and Link can go home.' said Navi happily. Luna stopped smiling and faced Link.

'Wait, what?' said Luna, suddenly alarmed, 'You're just going to leave?'

He coughed into the back of his hand and looked away from Luna for a moment before looking back into her face. She was looking into his eyes, visibly upset.

'Well, once our quest is complete, we don't tend to stay for very long. We have responsibilities elsewhere.' said Navi gently.

'But-but it's the middle of the school year! You can't just go! You won't be able to come back to Hogwarts next…next year…' finished Luna her voice cracking. Tears started to form in her eyes as realization started to dawn on her.

'I'm sorry Luna. Link doesn't belong here. He has a home of his own to get back to.' said Navi, a tinge of sadness in her voice.

'O-oh...' said Luna. She tuned away from Link for a moment and wiped her face with her sleeves before turning back to Link, 'I-I should be getting back to the feast.' she said smiling briefly before turning back around, 'Talk to me later, okay?' she said shakily as she started to quickly walk back to the castle.
Link watched as her walk slowly turned into a running jog. He sighed and shook his head. After a minute Navi spoke up.

'We should speak with Kaepora Gaebora. If the crystal pieces are all secured, we can leave immediately.' said Navi calmly.

'...' It always ends the same. He thought as he watched Luna disappear beneath the gatehouse.

Navi was silent as Link slowly climbed up the stairs to the Owlery.

Now that the crystal is in Kaepora Gaebora's care I don't see any reason why I should stick around...

As he climbed, he looked out a window into the grounds below. Off in the distance he saw Hagrid's hut and the frozen lake beyond.

I never did take Hagrid up on that fishing trip. Also, I wonder what happened to the squid? He must've survived. Do the Merpeople have to deal with him? Feels like a loose end to me...

He turned away from the window and resumed climbing up the stairs. As he climbed he thought about what else was going on in Hogwarts.

I guess I'll be leaving the dueling club behind. I really wanted to be the champion of the tournament Lockhart mentioned too. Also, shouldn't I make sure that Colin, Justin, Mrs. Norris and Nick recover? I guess they're in good hands. How will they even administer a potion to Nick anyway? He's incorporeal.

He stopped and frowned.

The ghosts! I forgot about them. Wasn't I going to use the Song of Healing to lay them to rest? I suppose they'll eventually pass on without my help, but still I could ease their suffering at least...It's no big deal for me to just play a song...

He began climbing again. Before long he reached the top of the staircase. Pushing the door open, he entered the pungent conical tower room. Moving to the centre of the floor, he pulled out his ocarina and played the Song of Soaring. With a rush of wind, he saw Kaepora Gaebora glide into being and settle down on a wooden beam, scattering owls in his wake.

'Ah-Hoo! Link! I am pleased to see you again. Hoo! And Navi?'

Navi flew out of his tunic and greeted the massive owl.

'Hello Gaebora. Are the crystal pieces safe?'

'They are. Once again you have prevailed over evil, hero. The crystal pieces have been taken to a far distant time where they can cause no harm to anyone. You have saved this land and its people from a future of darkness. Hoo!'

He nodded and forced himself to smile. Even with all the loose ends he had left, at the moment the
only thing he could think about was the look on Luna's face when she had turned away from him.

Kaepora Gaebora rotated his head sideways as he regarded him, 'As promised I can return you to Epona and Hyrule now, hero. A reward earned a thousand times over. It is the least I can do.'

Link inhaled sharply as he looked up at the giant owl.

*I can be with Epona again! I can visit the Kokiri forest and see the village and the Great Deku Sprout. Not to mention I can be catch up with Ruto, Malon, Zelda and…and Saria.*

Navi joined Gaebora in watching him expectantly.

*But what about all the people here? I can't just leave without saying goodbye. Luna still needs me. The least I can do is see her through to the end of the school year…*

'So hero, shall I return you to Hyrule now?' asked Gaebora turning his head right side up.

He took a deep breath and shook his head.

'N-no.' said Link in a pained voice. He swallowed hard as Gaebora and Navi stared down at him in surprise, 'Uhm...I-I…'

He shot Navi a desperate look for help.

'Maybe not yet, Gaebora.' Navi piped up, looking back at the great owl, 'We've got some loose ends to tie up. You can still take us back when we're finished, right?'

'A-Hoo! Of course! I'll be nearby. All you need to do is play my song, and I will be at your service.'

With that Kaepora Gaebora spread his wings and took flight again; disappearing from time and space. As he watched the owl fade, Link scratched his chin. He thought he heard a distinct tone of amusement in the great horned owl's voice just now. Sighing, he turned to Navi and smiled gratefully.

'I think you made the right choice, Link!' she said landing on his shoulder and patting his cheek, 'Let's go find Luna. I'm sure she could use some company right about now.'

Weeks passed and Easter Holiday arrived and the Gryffindor Tower was decorated in bright blue and yellow. The Commons was emptier than usual as a fair few students had gone home for vacation. However, many more had decided to stay at Hogwarts as compared to the Christmas Holidays. Now that Slytherin's monster was defeated, there was nothing to fear but the upcoming exams. Amidst the sounds of pleasant conversation and relaxation Harry, Ron and Hermione had secluded themselves at one of the round tables. Despite the pleasant atmosphere, the three appeared haggard and despondent. There was no brevity to be found at their table.

Hermione's bag lined, watery eyes narrowed at Harry sharply.

'So that's it then? It's over, just like that?' spat Hermione bitterly. Harry gulped and nodded. He would have to chose his words carefully. These days it didn't take much to send Hermione rushing off to her room. He'd be lucky to speak with her again in a week if she had another fit.
'Well not necessarily.' said Harry delicately, ignoring the weary expressions of his two friends, 'Dobby just said that the plot is over. What ever the plot was it failed when the Chamber of Secrets was closed.'

At that Hermione let out an abrupt bark of shrill, mirthless laughter. The people seated nearest to them looked at her in alarm before standing up and scuttling away.

'So everything was for nothing then? We could have just stood around and let Lockhart do his thing and it wouldn't have mattered at all.' said Ron glumly.

Harry tried to muster the energy to disagree, but he couldn't. It felt so wrong. Everyone in school knew that Lockhart was an idiot and yet they all seemed to be blindly accepting what Dumbledore had told them had happened. Lockhart was, for better or worse, a hero.

Harry stirred, 'Maybe Link-' he started but Hermione and Ron groaned. They had listened to this a hundred times before.

'Ah, come off it!' snapped Ron. Harry recoiled in shock and Ron sighed.

'It doesn't matter anymore. You won't learn anything chasing Link around and he isn't talking.' said Ron desperately. Hermione drew her lips, her hands clasping together tightly.

Harry opened his mouth to argue before he clamped his jaw shut. It was maddening. Whatever had happened in the Chamber of Secrets, Link was at the centre of it he was certain. But neither Ron or Hermione seemed interested in pursuing the matter any further. For the last few weeks, he had been forced to investigate Link by himself.

The first person he had questioned was Ginny but for all her apparent animosity towards Link, she was actually quite defensive about him. Well, when he wasn't around anyway. All she had told Harry was that he "Wasn't a bad guy." This was a bit rich coming from her as all she seemed to do was badger him every chance she got. But no matter how much Ron and Harry questioned her she refused to talk.

With Ginny being a dead-end, Harry had questioned everyone Link had ever hung around with. His bunkmates, Luna, everyone! But nobody seemed to be willing to tell him anything. Harry winced as he remembered questioning Hagrid. He hadn't expected the friendly groundskeeper to react as angrily as he had to his questions about Link, but Hagrid seemed to have taken an odd personal liking to the green clad boy.

While he was hunched over in thought, he noticed Ron and Hermione share a look.

'Harry, you should give it a rest with the Link stuff mate. Seriously.' said Ron concernedly, 'People are starting to talk.' Hermione nodded in agreement.

Harry looked up at the pair, 'What do you mean?'

Ron swallowed, 'Well, just that you're always asking about him-

'And he seems to be nice to everyone.' interjected Hermione tentatively.

'...people think you're a bit. I dunno, obsessed with him or something. Face it, if something happened we missed it, mate.' Ron and Hermione looked at him imploringly. Harry suspected his two friends had finally reached the end of their patience for him.

Harry sighed dejectedly, 'I won't give up guys. I can't! I have to know what he did down there.' Ron
and Hermione looked at each other despairingly.

At that moment the group heard a door slam from the dormitories above them. Looking round, Harry saw Link slide down the arm rail of the spiral staircase, a carefree grin on his face. Rolling as he hit the floor, Link heedlessly sprinted past them and towards the portrait door, humming a catchy tune as he went.

'Link! Where are you going?' yelled Ginny angrily from across the room.

Link looked over his shoulder. Upon seeing her, his grin rapidly transforming to a look of horror. Whirling, he darted through the portrait door and disappeared.

'Link!' bellowed Ginny, racing after him.

Harry briefly thought about giving chase himself before he slumped back in his chair. He needed to pursue this. He needed his friends support on this. But how could he convince them when everything was a dead end? Harry stirred back up in his chair.

'How'd he get in the Common Roo-' he began before Hermione cut him off.

'Selective mutism.' she said instantly, 'Link isn't totally mute. His condition is caused by stress or emotional trauma that.'

'Yeah, yeah, yeah.' Harry said frowning deeply.

In the aftermath of the Christmas disaster, Hermione had done some research into mutes and discovered that Link likely suffered from a well documented psychological condition brought on by some traumatic past event. Whatever the case, if Link really wanted to, it was not unfeasible to believe that he could open the portrait door.

'What about the marking on his hand. That has to mean something.' said Harry feebly in a final attempt to motivate his friends.

Ron leaned in closer, his face firm, 'Harry, what if its just a tattoo? Not some mysterious, ancient, thing or whatever, but just a tattoo?'

Harry looked over at Hermione pleadingly but she just stared down at her hands, mumbling indistinctly. At last he finally relented. Taking off his glasses he wiped his eyes. It was over.
The Great Hall was buzzing with anticipation as everyone crammed inside for the conclusion of the Duelling Club tournament. Normally, the Quidditch Cup game would have been the big end of school year event, but due to all the skipped matches from the monster attacks it had been cancelled. To combat the whining and as a special reward for Lockhart's deeds, Dumbledore had decided to indulge him and allow for a grand dueling competition.

The rules of the tournament were simple. Each team was comprised of a student from every year of the student body, making seven team members in all. Each team member would duel against their respective year and if they were able to disarm their opponent they would score a point. If they knocked their opponent off the stage they would score two points. If after all of the seven duels were completed and the scores were tied, the victors from each round would duel each other until there was only one team left standing.

Unsurprisingly the students had quickly taken to the sport and for the past three months had been locked in fierce competition. Slowly the competing teams had been whittled away until there were only two teams remaining. Now, with the school seated in rows before the dueling table set up at the centre of the hall, the title of champion would be decided.

Waiting at one end of the long wooden table, Link and his six other teammates stood, fidgeting nervously as the crowds hollered and shouted around them.

'I like our chances more and more! They look like they're ready to crack!' said one of Link's teammates, a Ravenclaw prefect named Penelope Clearwater, as she stared down the dueling table.

Link looked over. The opposing team appeared no more nervous then his did. In fact, if anything they seemed more resolved than ever to emerge victorious.

I suppose I'm at least partially to blame for that. Thought Link, grinning slightly.

At the other end of the table, Ginny was glowering at him. She still hadn't forgiven him for including her in his lie with Professor Lockhart. Standing beside her was Harry, who looked just as determined.

He waved at Ginny and she shot him a venomous glare in return. Laughing, he turned back to his team. Unsurprisingly, nobody seemed particularly relaxed. Even their star member, a fourth year Hufflepuff named Cedric Diggory, was tense.

'I don't know how I favour my chances against Jeffry.' said Cedric, grimacing, 'I hear he's been practicing nonstop since his last match.'

'You'll do fine. I've got to beat Harry after all. I don't think he's lost a point yet.' said their second year rep anxiously, a Ravenclaw named Lisa Turpin.

Link glanced back over at his competitors. They were having a little pep talk by the side of the table.

*If Lisa losses to Harry, It'll be up to me to take him on in a tiebreaker...Assuming I beat Ginny that is.*
So far Link's bracket had been easy. The vast majority of the first years were unable to perform the disarming charm (in no small part due to Lockhart's incompetence) and so it was a cakewalk for him to emerge as undefeated in his age group. However, he hadn't faced Ginny yet, and from what he'd been told, she had been practicing her charms and stuns religiously. If looks were anything to go by, she was going to be trying to draw blood in their matchup.

'Alright everybody, huddle up.' called Oliver Wood, their sixth year rep.

Link joined with his teammates as they gathered around each other, shoulder to shoulder.

'Now I can't say we're doing this for our house, but we've all got our reasons to win this tournament. For me personally, I can't go back empty handed after the quidditch cup was robbed from me.' said Wood gulping back a pained grimace, 'This might not be as prestigious as quidditch, but we can at least come home with something dammit! So, lets win this thing, eh?'

Link gave a cheer along with his other teammates and they turned to face their opposition. Link would be called up to duel first. Looking over at Ginny, he felt a tiny thrill of fear. She was saying something at him. He couldn't hear her voice over the crowds, but he could read lips well enough to know that he didn't like it.

She could stare down a basilisk with that expression. He thought as Ginny pointed at him threateningly.

Shifting his eyes, he watched as Lockhart clambered up on top of the dueling table in snow white robes with matching gloves, boots, and cape.

'Everyone! May I have your attention please!' cried Lockhart raising his arms for calm.

Slowly the conversations in the Great Hall died down. Once the room was silent, he began to speak.

'Here we are at last! The final dueling session of the season. We have all gathered here today to bear witness to the end of a year's worth of tutelage in dueling honour and technique. Who will taste the sweet tang of victory? Who will feel the bitter sting of defeat? Not even I can say…'

Link snorted. According to Lee Jordan who was operating as unofficial bookie for the event, Link's team was favoured to win by a considerable margin. Though you'd never know it from Cedric's modest behavior, he was actually a very good duelist. Probably the best in the school all things considered. Thanks to him, they'd won every match quite handily. Still, Link couldn't fault Lockhart for playing the crowd.

I guess Lockhart needs to sell the denouement to his story. Thought Link as the white clad professor rambled on.

'But in the end there is no need for either shame or sadness, as everyone who competed in this tournament is a winner. A winner for having stood up and-

'GET TO THE MATCH ALREADY!' clamoured a brash seventh year.

'Now, now.' tutted Professor Lockhart, 'There is no need to-

'START THE MATCH! START THE MATCH!' chanted a group of seventh years. Before long the whole hall had joined in, drowning out Lockhart and his speech. Finally throwing his arms up in frustration, he motioned for Link and Ginny to take to the dueling channel.
'Get her, Link! No mercy!' shouted Oliver Wood in his ear.

Hopping up the table, he and Ginny advanced towards each other. As they drew closer, the crowd started hollering in amusement.

'Lover's quarrel?'

'Link! You wouldn't hurt a girl, would you?'

'Oh, the drama!'

Link couldn't help but smile as he watched Ginny's face become progressively deeper shades of red. Although Dumbledore's announcement didn't include the tale that he and Lockhart made up about what had happened in the Chamber of Secrets, it hadn't taken long before most of the details were leaked. Rather than try and argue against all the teasing and questioning that was thrown his way about him and Ginny, Link decided to just go with it. As soon as the rumours broke, he declared, in his own mute way, that everything was true. Swearing his undying love for Ginny, he claimed that he braved Slytherin's Monster itself to rescue her from the Chamber of Secrets. Lockhart stood by his protégé and backed up his claims fervently, stating that they could read all about Link and Ginny's romance in his new book that was due to release that summer.

Naturally Ginny had not reacted well to his rampant lying. Not well at all. He would even go so far as to say that she had become downright hostile.

Poor Ginny. He thought as he watched her march up to him, grinding her teeth together. It would have been so much easier for you if you just went with the flow.

He and her met each other at the centre of the table. As the stood facing each other, more and more people joined in the teasing until the hall was filled with hoots and catcalls. A vein started to throb dangerously in Ginny's temple while he smiled at her vacantly. As the air became more and more charged, Professor Flitwick, who was acting as a co-referee alongside Lockhart, popped his head up to the table.

'Right!' squeaked Flitwick, trying his best to be heard over the audience, 'You both know the rules. Let's have a nice clean match, shall we?'

Link and Ginny nodded, keeping their eyes on each other.

'Now bow…' said Flitwick.

Ginny jerked her head down by about an inch before returning to her threatening posture. Link on the other hand gave her a great sweeping bow with his arms held out slightly. Standing, he gave her a playful wink, much to the delight of the crowd. Ginny was less enthused however and her nostrils flared while her eyes blazed with fury.

I'm having too much fun right now. After the match is over, she might just kill me. Thought Link, laughing.

'Now retreat ten paces…'

Link and Ginny spun around and started walking to their positions. As they went down the long, narrow table, the hall began to quiet in excited anticipation. As a rule, first year duels were boring, little more than sparks being shot at each other really, but Link and Ginny had so much drama going on that this bout was actually among the most hyped of the tournament. Upon reaching his position, Link drew his wand and faced Ginny.
'One.' shouted Flitwick.

Ginny raised her wand menacingly, mumbling under her breath.

'Two.'

Link spotted Luna in the crowd and gave her a small smile, causing her to blush slightly.

'Three!' 

With a twist of the wrist, he snapped his wand upwards and squarely at Ginny.

*Expelliarmus.*

Before Ginny had even began to move her hand, her wand was thrown from her grasp towards him. Catching it deftly, he held up her wand for the crowd and the hall burst out in thunderous shouts and applause.

'How could you Link?'

'Has the flame died?'

'I saw you looking at Luna! You heartbreaker!'

As the crowd shouted and cheered, Link - who was trying his best not to look too pleased with himself - walked back down the channel to Ginny who looked as though she might just die of shame.

'Good show! Good show! Masterfully done, Link!' exclaimed Flitwick, clapping his hands together.

Link acknowledged him with a nod before focusing back on Ginny. As tempting as it was to keep messing with her, he actually did feel kind of guilty for embarrassing her so much the past couple of months. Deciding that he would exercise restraint for once, he held out Ginny's wand for her politely. She quickly snatched it back without making eye contact, eyes trained on the floor.

'Now then lets have another bow…'

Link bowed normally this time and Ginny gave him an almost imperceptible nod. Turning, he started walking back to his end of the table where his cheering teammates were waiting for him.

'Well done, Link! That's us one to nothing!' said Oliver Wood happily, thumping him on the back. 'Lisa, you're up.'

Lisa gulped, 'Wish me luck!' Link gave her a thumbs up as everyone else offered her words of encouragement.

Unfortunately, Lisa was a little too slow on the draw and Harry was able to get his disarming charm to land first. Shoulders slumped, she returned to her teammates.

'Sorry guys, I tried my best.' she said sadly.

'Don't worry. You did fine!' said Cedric and Link nodded in agreement.

'One to one. No big deal.' added Oliver casually.
Next up was the third-year representatives. Unfortunately Link's teammate, Zacharias Smith, fumbled with his wand on the draw and lost by dropping it on the stage. Crimson with embarrassment, he trudged back to his teammates while stammering out excuses.

'O-okay, down by one no big deal…Cedric! Crush that Weasley!' said Oliver Wood fervently.

Cedric nodded as he got up to face Fred Weasley. Smooth as silk, Cedric outdrew Fred and hit him with a powerful stunning charm. Unable to keep his balance, Fred tumbled off the stage. The crowd broke out into frenzied applause. Knocking your opponent off stage was difficult, but was worth the extra point.

As Cedric climbed down to his teammates he was swarmed by cheering teammates.

'That's done it!' cried Oliver pulling Cedric into a hug, 'Three to two! You've no idea how much I've wanted to do that myself incidentally.'

'Right! Well, looks like I'm up.' said Penelope Clearwater.

'Show that Gryffindor whose boss!' shouted Lisa as Penelope faced down Percy.

In a remarkably close duel, Penelope was just barely overcome by Percy with a disarming charm after a brief exchange of stuns and curses. Penelope returned shaking her head in disappointment while Harry's team cheered wildly.

'Tied' moaned Wood as he hitched up his robes to climb up the dueling channel, 'But it's no problem. If I can knock Gary out of the ring then we're almost sure to win!'

'Just go for the disarm!' shouted Cedric after Wood, 'Leave it to Elizbeth! Don't get cocky!'

_I hope Oliver doesn't do anything foolish._ Thought Link anxiously as he watched the sixth-year bow to his opponent.

Drawing on each other, Wood lead with a quick shield charm before following it up with a rapid disarm. To everyone's amazement, Wood's opponent tripped as he tried to recover his wand and fell off the stage, netting them two points.

Shouting in excitement, Oliver ran back to his equally excited teammates, 'That's how its done boys and girls! Five to Three! They'll need to knock you off just to tie us Elizbeth.'

The tall blonde girl exhaled slowly and nodded.

'Hey Elizbeth, if you throw down your wand we'll win automatically.' said Penelope deviously, 'Just something to consider.'

'No!' shouted Cedric and Oliver together, 'We can't win by technicality! Go for it Elizbeth!' encouraged Oliver. Link nodded fervently.

_Even if she gets knocked off and we enter a tiebreaker I think we can still win._ Thought Link looking over at the opposing side. The opposing team was crowded around their last member offering words of encouragement.

'Right, well here I go.' said Elizabeth anxiously.

Link watched as she faced off against her grim-faced opponent. With lightning speed her opponent drew his wand and hit her with a body paralyzing curse. Before she could hit the mat he quickly
used a levitation charm to throw her body out of the ring.

'What?' cried Oliver, 'That's dirty! She was already down! Professor Flitwick, sir! Can I get a ruling?'

'Elizbeth's wand was still in her hand. Its legal!' shouted Flitwick to the crowd.

The Great Hall erupted into cheers as the scores were tied. Now it was victor versus victor.

Link felt an odd stirring in his chest as he locked eyes with Harry across the table. At that moment he realized something. He'd been wanting this. He'd been wanting this for a long time. He thought over all the times Harry had questioned his classmates, had followed him, had snooped in his room, even going so far as to impersonate Luna. Good intentions or no, Harry had been quite the annoyance for the last eight months and now it was time for some payback.

Link felt the triforce pulse in his hand and he grinned. Dimly, he was aware of Oliver speaking behind him.

'Okay! We may be down a seventh year but we've got more players left overall. Link!' he snapped his attention back to the group. 'If you can beat Harry, then if Cedric gets another knockout, we'll win! Go for it, Link! Go for it!'

He didn't need to be told twice. Jumping atop the table, he began to confidently walk down the aisle towards Flitwick who stood waiting in the middle.

'Take him down, Harry!' Link heard Ginny scream as Harry likewise climbed up the matted table, 'Knock that stupid grin off his stupid face!'

Reaching Flitwick first, Link drew his wand and began to absently twirl it in his hand as he centred himself.

'Psst! Link! Over here!' said a voice, barely audible over the cheering crowd. He glanced around, confused.

What the...?

'Down here!'

He looked down. By the edge of the stage, he spotted Lockhart motioning him closer. Crouching down, Link turned his ear towards him.

'Link! You've got to beat Harry!' said Lockhart in a stage whisper, 'Think about it! If my protégé beats THE Harry Potter, it will make a perfect ending to my book! A big climatic showdown between the famous bully and the plucky underdog. It will be great! Just make sure you win!'

Link grinned and gave Lockhart a thumbs up.

'Excuse me! Are you a judge or not?' cried Flitwick incredulously upon noticing Lockhart, 'Get back from the dueling table!'

Lockhart hastily scurried away as Harry came up to face Link. Harry looked at the retreating Lockhart quizzically.

'Hmph!' said Flitwick, scowling as Lockhart scrambled away, 'Alright well, you know what to do boys. Bow…' He and Harry bowed to one another.
He and Harry stood back up. Turning they went to their respective positions. After walking ten paces, Link faced Harry and studied him. Harry was slightly red-faced, his breathing deep and his wand gripped tight, but his eyes were focused. Link had no doubt that Harry was going to be trying his very best to win.

'Get him, Link!' shouted Oliver from behind him, 'Don't let him intimidate you!'

Link waved over his shoulder in acknowledgment and the hall slowly quieted as the two faced each other. Once the hall was silent, Flitwick started to count.

'One!'

'Two!'

'Three!'

Link watched as Harry began to raise his wand. Mouth opening, Harry began to shout.

'EXPE-'

Link twisted his wrist, snapping his wand up to Harry in an instant.

Stupify.

With a jolt, a red beam of light shot from his wand hitting Harry high in the chest. Without thinking about anything else, Link recast the spell.

Stupify.

Colliding with Harry again, the second red beam sent his already crumpling form flying backwards. Now airborne, the hall watched in shock as Harry Potter, the Boy who Lived, the single most renowned wizard of the generation went soaring beyond the edge of the table, over his clustered teammates who stood frozen in horror, and past the matted section of floor. Still falling, he went arcing backward and out of view. A split second later, Link heard a heavy thud. As though on cue, the Great Hall exploded in cheers.

'Professor! He was hit already! That shouldn't count!' shouted Fred hoarsely at Flitwick.

'Sorry, but Harry was still holding his wand.' said Professor Flitwick in a firm but not unkind tone.

At that Harry's team threw up their hands and turned on one another. Bickering over Harry's unconscious body, they began pointing fingers and shouting. Link merely grinned and re-holstered his wand.

Now THAT was satisfying.

Returning to his team, he was immediately sandwiched on all sides by the hugs and cheers of his team. Their victory was practically guaranteed now. Sure enough, Cedric was able to easily disarm the third-year girl on Harry's team and win the match eight to five. Taking to the stage, Link and his teammates bowed before the audience's applause. As Link stood smiling and bowing before the crowd, Lockhart joined him.

'Can you believe it!' said Lockhart choking in happiness as he pulled Link into a hug, 'My very own pupil! You conquered adversity and faced your demons!' Lockhart quickly twirled Link
around to face a photographer whom he had somehow smuggled into the Great Hall. Beside the photographer stood Colin Creevey grinning broadly with his own camera in hand.

After a few photos Lockhart released him. Still partially blind from the camera flashes, Link hopped off the stage and rejoined his team.

'Link, that was brilliant.' said Oliver, roughly patting him on the back, 'I can't believe it.' he said, shaking his head, 'We've won! Hah!'
While he was celebrating with his teammates, Link spotted Luna waving him over. Rushing off, he met her by the Entrance Hall exit.

'Link you were incredible!' exclaimed Luna before she calmed herself, 'I hope there's no hard feelings between you and Ginny.'

He laughed and nodded before the two started to walk out to the castle grounds together. Navi had been watching the match from the castle windows and was waiting to rendezvous with him outside. As they strolled around the fountain, Luna turned to him.

'So, I guess now that the Dueling Club is finished all you've got left is your exams, huh.' she said.

'Mmhmm!' said Link looking back at her.

Over the past few months he had been tying up all his loose ends across Hogwarts. Besides the dueling club, the last thing that he had left to beat was Hagrid's fishing record. However, just last week he was able to finally land a 61-pound monster and claim the title of Hogwarts fishing champion. Nobody knew but him and Hagrid of course, but it meant a lot to Link.

Walking over to the windowed wall of the Great Hall, he and Luna kept a sharp lookout while Navi darted into his robes.

'So Navi, what did you think of Link's duel?' asked Luna as the pair resumed walking.

'Excellent work Link, but you really shouldn't tease Ginny so much. I thought she was going to punch you when you were bowing to each other.' Navi said disapprovingly.

'It's very tiring having to keep you two from tearing each other's throats out all the time.' agreed Luna in an annoyed tone, 'I wish you two could just go back to being friends instead of...oh look, speak of the devil.'

From across the courtyard they spotted Ginny and Colin approaching them. Ginny was marching over, her robes a flutter in the warm breeze, while Colin scurried alongside her, happily yammering away.

'What was Harry saying to you guys after you lost? Ginny? Was Harry upset when he woke up? It looked like he landed on his neck, did he hurt it? Huh? Huh?' Colin seemed oblivious to his peril as Ginny became more and more crimson. Thankfully he noticed Link and Luna before she exploded.

'Oh, Hey Link! Great match! I can't believe you beat Harry Potter in a duel! I was able to snap some pictures of you knocking him off stage and guess what? You know that photographer that Lockhart had? Before Professor Flitwick chased him out of the hall, he offered me a galleon for a copy of my photo's! My pictures are going to be in Lockhart's new book! Isn't that great?'

Sounds like he's ripping you off to me. Thought Link, but he nodded all the same.

Giving Colin a playful tap on the arm, he turned to Ginny expectantly. She took a deep breath.
'I just wanted to say,' she started in a strained voice, 'that that was a good, fair match, Link. I hope that we can duel again sometime.'

'Mmm!'

A faint scowl crossed her face.

'S-So Colin.' said Luna before Ginny lost her self control, 'How does it feel to not have to worry about final exams?'

'Okay, I guess.' shrugged Colin, 'Summer school is going to suck though. I'll miss you guys.' he said sadly before perking up, 'But at least I'll be at Hogwarts, right? Maybe I'll do what you did Link and just explore the whole castle. Who knows, maybe I'll find another secret chamber!'

*You'd better not, Colin. I won't be around to save you guys next time.* Thought Link as he grinned at the curly haired boy.

'Hey Ginny, want to come study with me and Link? We were just heading off to the library.' asked Luna. Ginny's swallowed, her ears going pink.

'S-sure I'll come. I just need to grab my stuff from the tower first. I'll meet you guys there okay?' she said. Giving Link one last angry look, she quickly walked off towards the Entrance Hall.

'Do you want to come too Colin? You might learn a thing or two.' asked Luna.

'Naw, no thanks.' said Colin as he pulled out his camera, 'I'd just distract you guys. I'll see you later!' With that he too ran off for the Entrance Hall.

Link and Luna watched Colin dash away, camera in hand. Once Colin had disappeared, she turned to him and smiled.

'Well, shall we?'

He nodded. As they made their way to the library Luna started talking about what they had left to cover in their studies. There was history, potions and lastly transfiguration all of which were sure to be tough. Before long they were joined by Ginny and the three started to cram for their upcoming final exams. Combining their notes, they soon found that they weren't nearly as prepared as they thought they were. Each time they stumbled across a problem they didn't know the answer to they would inevitably start panicking; scrambling up the papers on the table as they frantically searched for the answer. Then, when all hope seemed lost one of them would miraculously find the missing page and order would be restored until the next problem came up and the whole thing would repeat itself.

While they worked, Link found himself genuinely enjoying the company. Even though he loved the thrill of combat, picking through ancient ruins, and slaying monsters, there was something to be said for just relaxing with friends. At that moment, he wished they could just continue on forever. After all the things he'd done, surely he was entitled to a little normalcy? How many times did a guy have to save the world? But it was a fleeting thought. He was a hero. And wherever there was evil, he would be there to confront it. His friends were dear to him and he wouldn't trade their time together for anything, but in the back of his mind he knew that soon it would be time to say goodbye.

As he had done countless times before.
The small hourglass on McGonagall's desk started funneling out its final grains of sand. While the last few wisps fell, the room filled with frenzied scribbling as everyone tried to write in their final few answers.

'Quills down.' said McGonagall curtly. The room broke out into collective moaning, 'Please remain quietly in your seats while I gather your exams.'

Link looked over his exam paper while McGonagall went around the room sweeping up the papers from her anxious looking students.

*I think I did okay.* He thought as he looked over his answers.

Link knew that he shouldn't really care about this test seeing as how he was going to be leaving this world permanently anyway but he was a completionist. If he was going to do something, he always saw it through to the end.

After his paper was collected, he exited the room with his dazed looking classmates.

*Well that was my last exam. The only thing left to do is take a final inventory, secure my loot, and wait out the clock until Tuesday.*

Link started off in the direction of the Gryffindor Tower at a leisurely pace. During his first few months at Hogwarts he had been so focused on finding the crystal pieces that he hadn't taken the time to appreciate the many quirks of the castle. Now that he wasn't on the clock, he found himself taking the time to look everything over. Stopping in front of a painting of two wizards dueling over a braying donkey, Navi started to speak:

'I think you did quite well, Link. By your standards anyway.' whispered Navi in a smug tone and he rolled his eyes, 'If it had been ME taking the exam I would have-' Link started noisily clearing his throat and Navi quickly went silent. Ginny was approaching, and she looked mad as always.

'Well that was dreadful. No doubt you did great though.' said Ginny coldly as she walked up to him.

He shrugged and continued towards Gryffindor Tower. Ginny moved in step beside him.

'Well I guess it wasn't too bad...Thanks for letting me study with you. I mean it, you probably saved me from getting chores for the rest of the summer.' said Ginny in a surprisingly soft tone.

He gave her a thumbs up and she bristled.

'Well! Anyway, now that classes are all finished are you and Lockhart going to go adventuring together? I'm sure you and him can go to the moon next time. Maybe discover Atlantis while you're up there.' she said scathingly and he laughed.

*I've already been on the moon.* Thought Link amusedly.

To his surprise Lockhart popped around the corner. Turning his head, he spotted Link and he began to stride towards the pair. Link felt Ginny shrink next to him, as though she hoped could hide in her own shadow.

'Link my boy! I hate to interrupt you while you're saying goodbye to your close friends before
summer holidays-' said Lockhart, his eyes twinkling. '-but I was hoping to have a quick word with you. Shall we?' 

Link nodded and waved goodbye to Ginny who stood watching after the two. Her eyes were narrowed in suspicion as they quickly moved away from her and into an empty corridor.

'Well Link I guess we won't be seeing each other much anymore.' said Lockhart sadly, 'I really do have to thank you for everything you did. As a token of my appreciation I wanted to deliver you this.' Lockhart reached into his robes and pulled out a green and black book. Beaming he handed it over to Link. Link read the cover:

"The Hissing Halls of Hogwarts! By Gilderoy Lockhart. With special forward by Albus Dumbledore."

The cover of the book featured Lockhart and Link shooting beams of light out of their wands towards a giant green snake, their faces covered with blindfolds. In the background Link saw an ominous redhaired figure watching in the shadows.

'It isn't in book stores yet. I'm hoping to have it distributed in time for end of June. Go on, read the synopsis!' said Lockhart, gleefully wringing his hands.

Link grinned as he turned the book over and read the back.

"After touring the world slaying evil and protecting the innocent from the worst horrors known to wizard kind, rogue playboy Gilderoy Lockhart found himself wishing for the quiet life. Taking up a position as the Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher at the fabled Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, Lockhart prepared to use his talents to inspire the next generation of hero's. But things are never that simple. Finding a student body held hostage in the hands of Harry Potter, a popular wizard who uses his fame to crush his fellow students dreams of greatness, Lockhart discovers a young mute, half blood wizard in desperate need of guidance. However, little did Lockhart realize that old habits die hard, and the forces of evil never go on recess. Can Lockhart save the students of Hogwarts while inspiring his new ward in the ways of heroism? Will his protegee save the girl he loves?"

Link looked down at the reviews section.

"Schools back in session for Lockhart. - Rita Skeeter, Daily Prophet."

"A truer tale of love and heroism has never been put to word. - Xenophilius Lovegood, The Quibbler."

"A triumph. - Albus Dumbledore."

Link looked back up at Lockhart who was positively bursting with pride.

'I couldn't have asked for a better partner! I never thought that I would be able to top "Magical Me" but here we are, and it's all thanks to you!' Lockhart hesitated for a moment before pulling him in for a tight hug. Link felt Navi start to squirm as she was crushed between them, 'Take care of yourself Link.' said Lockhart softly, his voice brimming with emotion. Pulling back, he gave Link one last toothy smile before striding away down the corridor.

'Th-that was surprisingly touching.' said Navi after she had recovered enough to speak.

He nodded as he watched Lockhart disappear from view.
The next few days passed too quickly for Link. Without any classes or responsibilities left, he and Luna spent their last days together just hanging out. He showed her his fishing spot, how to throw a boomerang, and the joys of pot destruction. It was almost like a dream come true. However, before they knew it, the final day at Hogwarts dawned.

While all the students walked towards the train station, he and Luna went off to the side of the path to say their goodbyes.

'I guess this is goodbye Link. Are you sure you can't ride the train at least?' said Luna looking at him with her wide, silver eyes.

He shook his head sadly.

'Goodbye Luna. Don't let the world get you down. Remember you're a lot more perceptive then the people around you realize.' said Navi hovering beside him.

'Thanks Navi, I'm going to miss you too.' said Luna, stifling a sniffle.

Moving forward, she took his hand into hers.

'This might be goodbye for now but I'm sure I'll see you again. Promise to write to me, okay?'

Link nodded his head and squeezed her hand. He had become exceptionally good at lying to the people he cared for over the span of his adventuring career.

Slowly he extracted his hand from hers. Luna said nothing as he backed up away from her. With one last look into her pale blue eyes, he hefted his loot sack and ran off into the lightly wooded area outside Hogsmeade. As he ran he thought he heard the faint sound of crying, but he told himself it was just his imagination.

Link jumped over a fallen tree and took off running through a field of waist high grass. He sighed as he ran, the grass swaying in the breeze.

*What a crazy adventure.* He thought as he looked at the clouds drifting through the sky.

'It's a beautiful day Link. I can't even imagine what would have happened here if some evildoer had got their hands on those shards.'

'Mmm.' said Link absently, trying his best not to think about Luna.

'I wonder what the weather is like back in Hyrule? I bet you-'

'Ack!' he shouted suddenly as his foot caught something. Falling, he went face first into the dirt, his massive loot bag crashing down on top of him. Navi gasped as he pushed himself up groaning.
'Jeez, Link! Are you okay? What happened?' said Navi flying down to his face.

Rubbing his knee, he sat up and looked at where he had tripped. In the dirt he saw what looked like a pair of faded yellow shoes sticking up out of the ground.

'What's that thing?' said Navi curiously.

Moving closer, Link started to dig up the tripping hazard with his hands.

_I hate littering!_ He thought irritably as he started to excavate the trash. _Whoever threw out their… Hey! Is that…?

He cheered as he pulled up a faded yellow bunny ear hat.

'I don't believe it! The Bunny Hood!' exclaimed Navi incredulously.

Cleaning the dirt off of the bunny ears, Link put the mask on. Grinning broadly at Navi, he picked up his loot sack again and started to run. Laughing, he felt the air rush through his hair as he accelerated to an incredible speed.

_I've missed this!

After running for a short while, he came upon a secluded copse of trees. Looking around to make sure he was alone, he removed the Bunny Hood and put on the Goron Mask. Using his powerful Goron form, Link quickly dug a deep pit with his massive spade sized hands. Clambering out of the pit, he inspected the hole. Satisfied, he pulled out his wallet and upended the small leather pouch.

_I guess all this money will go unspent. Pity._ He thought as a torrent of gold, silver, and bronze fell down to the earth below.

Once the avalanche of money had ended and his wallet was empty, he dropped his loot sack unceremoniously on top of the treasure trove. After covering it all with dirt, he reverted to his normal form and examined his work. No doubt over the summer the grass would regrow and there would be no trace of his fortune except a small mound.

_I wonder if anyone will ever find my stuff? Probably not._

'Ah!' he exclaimed, smacking his head. _I should have made a map and hid it for someone to find! Aw, man…

'Link you didn't leave Lockhart's book in your sack, did you?' asked Navi in a motherly tone as he wiped his brow.

He gave Navi an affronted look, and shook his head.

'Okay, okay just making sure.' she said, pinching his cheek.

Shaking her off, he pulled out the Ocarina of Time and played the Song of Soaring. Soon after he felt rushing air as the great owl Kaepora Gaebora landed on a nearby tree.

'A-Hoo! Hail hero. How is our charge guardian?' asked Gaebora as he fluffed out his feathers.

'He has left no stone unturned and said his goodbyes. I'd say he's ready to go home.' said Navi proudly, hovering in front of Link.

'Is this true hero? Are you ready to go back to Hyrule?'
The great horned owl and the glowing fairy waited for him to respond while he turned his gaze towards the distant spires of Hogwarts. As he looked at the impossibly giant castle with its mismatching towers, its countless hidden passages and dungeons, and its lively classrooms and eccentric teachers he felt his breath get caught in his throat.

As far as dungeons go, Hogwarts was pretty cool.

Turning back to Kaepora Gaebora, he nodded.

'Yeah, I'm ready. Take us home, Gaebora.' said Link holding his arms out at his sides.

'Certainly.' said the great sage. Just as Navi darted into his tunic, Kaepora Gaebora swooped down and grabbed him by the shoulders. Lifting him delicately between his massive talons, the owl soared through the sky before disappearing into the cosmos, and into another world.
Harry, Hermione, and Ron sat in sullen silence as the Hogwarts Express rumbled back to merry ol' London. To say that the school year had been hellish would be an understatement. Harry remembered the train ride last year. It had been bitter sweet. He may have been heading back to the Dursleys but he had just had the best year of his life. He had discovered magic, made new friends, and even defeated Lord Voldemort, winning the house cup in the process.

That was last year though and this time there was no silver lining. How could everything have gone so wrong?

To start with, thanks to his and Ron's foolishness Mr. Weasley had been demoted at the Ministry of Magic from head of the Misuse of Muggle Artefacts Office to an assistant position. This humiliation was exacerbated by the foul influence of Lucius Malfoy who was leveraging his prominent position in the magical community to inflict whatever harm he could on the Weasleys. Now their already precarious financial situation was cast into even more uncertainty and all because of a stupid stunt with a car. Somehow Harry doubted he'd be invited back to "The Burrow" for the holidays.

Besides Ron and his home problems, poor Hermione had fared little better. Thankfully, after the Chamber of Secrets was closed most of the insults had subsided, but she was still kept at arms length by the rest of the girls. The stress from being ostracized in this way had caused her impeccable grades to slip and she found herself doing quite poorly on her exams; a first for her. Naturally as their tutor, Harry and Ron had also performed dismally. If they even passed their classes was as good as anyone's guess. To make matters worse, in addition to being considered a pariah by the student body, Hermione had apparently been placed on some sort of wizarding watch list. What this meant for her future Harry wasn't sure, but it wasn't a good thing he knew that much.

As for Harry himself he had lost nearly everything. He wasn't able to enjoy his classes as he had spent all year chasing after Link. He hadn't been able to enjoy quidditch as it had been cancelled early due to the attacks from Slytherin's heir. He hadn't been able to uncover the mystery of the Chamber of Secrets. He was never able to satisfactorily clear his name after he was ousted as a parseltongue. He suffered a humiliating defeat during the dueling tournament. And to cap it all off his entire reputation was ruined thanks to Lockhart's ridiculous rumour mongering.

Lockhart was another issue entirely.

Harry had been dreading today for some time. Besides being the day he was sent back to Private Drive, today also marked the release of Lockhart's new book. Nobody had read it yet, but Harry had been able to parse out enough details to know that he wasn't going to like it. Evidently, Lockhart had constructed this narrative that Harry was a bullying, ego driven monster who had tried to frame Link as Slytherin's Heir. Initially most people laughed the rumors off as simple sensationalism but over time he noticed people looking at him differently. Even Colin had stopped hanging around him.

It was true that he had been following Link around and asking people about him, but he never actually accosted him in the hallways or anything! And so what if Hermione tried to literally become his girlfriend, she had apologized! And while Ron had confronted Ginny a few times over her friendship with Link, it wasn't that strange if you thought about it. He was just worried about his sister. It all just seemed so unfair…
While the once Golden Trio was stewing in their misery, the cabin door opened and Neville poked his head in.

'Hey Harry, Ron.' said Neville, distinctively ignoring Hermione.

'Hello Neville, what's up? Want to join us?' Harry asked hopefully.

Neville licked his lips and looked around the room nervously, his eyes lingering on Hermione briefly.

'N-No I'm good thanks. I just wanted to stop by to give you this…' he handed Harry three copies of a green and black book. They all recognized the two figures on the cover and Harry groaned.

'Where did you get these?' asked Harry in a drained voice as he took the books from Neville.

'Malfoy. He-he bought a whole bunch of them. There's a big pile of copies for everyone to read out in the dining car.'

Harry, Ron, and Hermione looked at each other, the colour fading from their faces.

'Just thought you should know,'

At that, Neville retreated from the room and quietly closed the door behind him. Left alone again, the three looked at the books in Harry's hands. For a while nobody said anything.

'H-How bad could it be right?' said Ron with false bravado.

Taking a book from Harry, they all started to read in silence. Page after page; they kept reading until the sun had set and the sky was filled with stars. Ron was the last to finish. Looking up at Harry and Hermione, Harry thought that he had just had a stroke.

'Wha-why is- what?' sputtered Ron incoherently, his short-circuiting brain unable to form sentences.

'Yeah.' agreed Harry sadly.

It was everything Harry had feared and more. He hadn't realized that the book would contain so many photos. In particular, photos of him losing in spectacular fashion to the boy he had supposedly been trying to destroy all school year.

'At least they changed most of our names.' managed Ron after his brain fog had cleared.

Harry nodded, though it didn't do much to obscure anyone's identity. Harry Potter's "troll like side kick" had been name changed to Donald Geasley and the "flame haired temptress" became Finny Geasley.

'They did it so that they wouldn't have to pay any royalties I suspect.' said Hermione emotionlessly. She looked very tired, 'That's why I'm…Garboine Quanger.' she said, wincing.

'B-But they kept Harry's name.' said Ron looking befuddled.

'He's famous enough that they can argue it's a matter of public record.' continued Hermione in the same dead voice, 'In any case, all the students know who is who. From there, kids will tell their parents. Parents will tell their friends, etcetera. Everyone will know.'

At that moment the three heard uproarious laughter coming from outside their cabin.
'I-I'm dying mate! Gar-Gar-Garboine! Gar-Garboine Quanger!'

Hermione sighed and put her head against the cool glass of the window. They would all have to leave the cabin soon to change out of their school uniforms and from the sounds of things, they weren't the only ones to have read Lockhart's book.

A bead of sweat rolled down Harry's face.

_Maybe being with the Dursley's for the summer won't be so bad after all._ Thought Harry as the laughter in the halls grew louder.

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**THE END**

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Author's Note:

-Well, there you go. A story successfully ported. Sorry about the wait times between chapters. I was busy with other things and I got lazy. Anyway, at the end of my stories I like to give some fun facts, but I'll spare you. When I was posting this, I made the mistake of actually re-reading this story and man is this writing bad. Scenes don't flow well, descriptions are out of order relative to their placement in a scene, some plot elements are rushed while others are bloated; the list goes on and on. If you suffered through this story then you have persistence I'll give you that. Personally, I don't think this story is very good.

-I set things up for a sequel, but I doubt I'll ever write one. Although you never know. The sequel is plotted at least and I think there's room for more of Link's adventures (and Harry's revenge).

-If I do write a sequel, bear in mind that I don't upload stories chapter to chapter. Instead I wait until the whole thing is finished and edited before uploading. Not that I'm an expert, but I believe that periodic updates are antithetical to good storytelling. I think readers like having the whole story so they can read at their own pace. Besides, there is nothing worse then getting invested in a dead story. What this means is, I might not write anything for months, only to upload a whole story one day.

-If you liked what you read here, my primary writing profile is "TickBeard" on FFN. I upload rarely, though I am currently working on a new story.

**Thanks again for reading!**

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